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TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEAR-ABROAD CADETS IN THE CONDITIONS OF POLYCULTURAL EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

Abstract

The work is dedicated to the English teaching of near-abroad cadets in the conditions of polycultural education environment of the Russian Military Higher Education Institution. Different scientific approaches for definition of trilingualism, some specific features of teaching bilingual cadets and character of interaction of contacting languages during learning third (English) language are represented in the article. To enhance effectiveness of teaching cadets it is important to reveal additional bilingual opportunities which are in their socio-cultural, philological and linguistic experience. Thus, a teacher has to consider the positive impact of bilingualism in terms of foreign language acquisition, take into account the level of development of each cadet's bilingualism, use the socio-cultural, philological and language experience of bilingual cadets in order to prevent and overcome difficulties in teaching.

Key words: foreign language teaching, bilingualism, trilingualism, polycultural education environment, philological and linguistic experience

Internationalization of modern higher education makes actual the problem of foreign students teaching various subjects, including a foreign language, in the Russian higher education institutions. Russian higher education institutions are also affected by the influx of young people from Russian regions, where Russian language is the national language (more than 190 nations and nationalities live in the Russian Federation), as well as from the countries of the near abroad, where Russian language is studied in addition to the native one. This contributes to the creation of a multi-ethnic and multicultural educational environment in many higher institutions, and teaching of such students has its own features, which is mainly due to the linguistic, psychological and socio-cultural characteristics of the students.

The strengthening of the international military cooperation and the expansion of intercultural communication including communication between the armed forces of different countries have led to an increased social significance and demand for military specialists who know foreign languages at the level that allows them to use it practically both in the professional sphere and for further self-education. Thus, for a cadet and a graduate of the Military higher education institution, a foreign language acts as a source and means of obtaining new professional knowledge. That's why in the modern Russian Military higher education institutions, special attention is paid to the cadets' language training. In practice, however, the foreign language teaching of Russian cadets and foreign cadets differs significantly. Due to various reasons the majority of cadets-foreigners have some problems while learning the foreign language. According to a number of investigations the reason is concluded in the inability of foreign students to overcome linguistic and socio-cultural difficulties.

Therefore, it is relevant to analyze these features, evaluate the interaction processes of contacting languages in the context of trilingualism, and determine

the positive aspects of trilingualism that will help overcome difficulties and improve the effectiveness of the foreign language teaching. So, the importance of this topic is determined by the following factors:

- the extension of international educational contacts between the countries;
- the increasing in the number of young people who want to get professional education in the Russian Military higher education institutions;
- the intention of Russian Military education institutions to increase the number of foreign cadets who provide internationalization of education;
- the implementation of the best practices of foreign education in Russian Military higher education institutions that stimulate internationalization of education;
- a low level of foreign language proficiency among foreign cadets caused by the inability to overcome difficulties of a linguistic and socio-cultural nature independently when studying in the multicultural educational environment of the Military institution.

In modern scientific literature a multifaceted and complex phenomenon of multilingualism integrating the category of psychology, sociology and linguistics is indicated by different authors who use various terms: "multilingualism", "bilingualism", "bilingualism", the "polyglossia", "diglossia", "aquilinguis" ("equilingual bilingualism"), "linguistic dualism", "contact languages", "language contacts", "ambilingual", etc. Using a variety of terms complicates the analysis of the problem" [4, p. 8-9]. Today, there is a sufficient number of works by domestic and foreign researchers devoted to foreign students teaching in English. These include the publications of such researchers as M. M. Fomin, V. V. Vinogradov, L. V. Shcherba, I. A. Zimnaya, Ur. Weinreich, N. V. Baryshnikov, A. L. Tikhonova, M. G. Astvatsatryan, and others. M. M. Fomin developed a typology of bilingualism and identified the relationship between the variety of terms and

various disciplinary approaches to the problem. He divided the terms in accordance with their using, due to one or another disciplinary approaches – linguistic, socio-historical (sociolinguistic), didactic-pedagogical, psychological and psycholinguistic approaches.

In the context of this approach, it is considered appropriate to learn "the concept of "multilingualism" as generic, and the concepts of "bilingualism", "bilingualism", "trilingualism" as specific". V. V. Vinogradov («linguistic dualism as a synonym for the terms «bilingual» and «bilingualism», Z. U. Blyagoz («language contact»), T. P. Ilyashenko ("polyglotism as casual and personal use of languages"), Charles Ferguson ("diglossia"), J. Ronja ("polyglossia"); John. K. Catford ("ambilingual"), Yu. A. Zhuktenko ("equilingual") studied the interaction of contacting languages in the linguistic aspect. The psychological aspect of was studied by N. V. Imedadze and I. A. Zimnaya studied the notion "bilingualism" from psychological point of view [4, p. 10]. V. Shcherba, N. V. Bagramova, V. I. Abaev, A. G. Zorgenfrei, A.V. Yarmolenko, V. A. Avrorin, M. K. Kabardov took up the problem of "bilingualism", "bilingualism", and "multilingualism" from didactic and pedagogical aspects [4, p.11].

It should be noted that there is no unique interpretation for determining the phenomenon in which three languages come into contact during the learning process. For example, E. Haugen and L. N. Geveling consider trilingualism as a multiple bilingualism or bilingualism. They explain this that adding a third language does not change the nature of problems. M. M. Fomin believes that trilingualism is an extended bilingualism (multilingualism). On the other hand, N. V. Baryshnikov considers the term "individual trilingualism" as an even more complex phenomenon. It is the coexistence of three languages in the speech of a person who uses these languages in various communicative situations depending on the purpose of communication. This is one of the special cases of multilingualism. This complex phenomenon is characterized as a confident command of the native language (L1), far from perfect but sufficient at the communicative level command of the second language (L2), and imperfect command of a foreign language (L3). The third studied language (English) "becomes a component of trilingualism not from the moment when it is studied, but from the moment the learner reaches a certain level of proficiency L3". N. V. Baryshnikov identifies typical characteristics of trilingualism: artificiality, subordinativity and confusion [1, p. 53].

Let's consider the phenomenon of bilingualism in practice. The Military Academy of Telecommunications teaches the cadets from more than 34 countries. The educational environment of the academy is considered as multicultural ones, and some features of this environment are most fully described in the scientific research of T. A. Glebova. Thus, according to the author's opinion, "a multicultural educational environment is a system of organizing the educational process created in the educational organization and focused on *forming* a multidimensional socio-cultural representation of students, teachers and employees about the ethnic diversity of the modern world and the

need for intercultural dialogue, *developing* multicultural literacy and tolerant attitude to representatives of different cultures, *improving* intercultural communication as a basis for building a high level of professionalism in the chosen specialty" [2, p. 318].

At the Military Academy of Telecommunications most foreign cadets study Russian as a foreign language except the cadets from neighboring countries particularly from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the countries that are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The level of Russian language proficiency of these cadets allows them to learn English as a foreign language. They study English during 2.5 years and the process consists of the Basic English course (2 years) and the English course for professional purposes. Near-abroad cadets are united into the separate study groups, and although such cadets have the greatest number of problems with foreign language learning (compared to Russian cadets), nevertheless according to the academy's guideline documents they become integrated into the general educational process and have the same qualification requirements as Russian cadets.

According to the Federal State Educational Program approved by the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, August 11, 2016, No. 1035-DSP, all graduates who have mastered the specialty program must have the ability to written and oral business communication, to read and translate texts on professional topics in a foreign language. Therefore, the course "Foreign Language" is a communication-oriented and professional-oriented discipline. Its tasks are determined by the communication and cognitive needs of the signals officer. The discipline tasks are expanding the volume of proficient vocabulary to 3000 lexical units mainly due to terminological vocabulary, developing the ability to work with technical texts (reading and understanding texts in the specialty), and developing dialogical and morphological speech. The content of the foreign language discipline includes mastering speech activities (listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation) by forming phonetic, lexical and grammatical skills and communication skills on the text material of general cultural, military and professional direction.

Teaching English to near-abroad cadets has a number of features. From the point of view of psychological processes of native and Russian languages interaction these near-abroad cadets' groups can be represented as follows. There is a group of mixed bilinguals consisting of both natural bilinguals (Russian language acquisition occurs from early childhood using it as a mean of communication along with the native language) and artificial bilinguals (learning Russian in an artificially created environment without direct contact with its native speakers). Here English will act as a foreign language studied in an artificially created environment through the prism of Russian language proficiency. On the basis of psychological criteria the group will consist of *reproductive bilinguals* (reproduction aloud and reading to themselves a speech act in the Russian language) and *productive bilinguals* (understanding, reproduction aloud and speech act production

in the Russian language) [3, p. 59]. Russian language proficiency will be higher for cadets from Belarus than for example for cadets from Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan. This fact is explained by the structural similarity of the Belarusian and Russian languages. The group will include *direct bilinguals* (unconsciously-intuitive practical languages skills) and *indirect bilinguals* (the second language is associated with thinking through the native language). Therefore, in the process of learning English as a foreign language the level of language proficiency of each of three languages within the same educational group will be different. The interaction of contacting languages will differ in degree and direction of influence and depend on each level of language proficiency.

It should also be noted that cadets have philological (linguistic and psychological), linguistic and socio-cultural experience which contributes to a more "dynamic development of probabilistic forecasting mechanisms and has a positive effect on the skills and abilities formation and strengthening" [3, p.46]. Individual linguistic experience gained in the process of learning two or three languages before entering the academy allows the cadets to identify similarities and differences in the studied languages, more deeply understand and quickly learn a new foreign language. Thus, the studying of English as a foreign language occurs "through available cadets experience, through the awareness that there are different ways of thoughts shaping, specific grammatical phenomena," etc. [5, p. 113]. Psychological experience allows cadets to "transfer acquired skills and abilities during the learning one language to the second or third language" [6, c 182-183]. Language experience occurs in spontaneous recognition and conscious comparison of lexical units and grammatical structures of a foreign language with similar phenomena in already known languages, in the ability to understand the meaning while using language guess [6, c. 6]. As the researches show that verbal behavior of bilingual cadets is characterized by rapid grammatical operations, rich auditory associations, contextual guess. In each group in a greater or lesser degree socio-cultural characteristics of the trainees are appeared. It is because the cadets from different countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, etc.) study in one group. Therefore, each cadet has its own unique social and cultural experience that is in evidence differently at the level of understanding, behavior and attitudes to learning process.

In our opinion, the effectiveness of English teaching to near-abroad cadets in the multicultural environment of a modern Russian Military higher education institution can be ensured if:

- we consider the positive impact of bilingualism in terms of foreign language acquisition. Bilingual cadets have already developed two speech mechanisms (in their native and Russian languages), which have positive effect on the study of the third (foreign) language. The teacher should rationally manage the training cadets' activities taking into account the language situation and the degree of influence of the contacting languages.

- we take into account the level of each cadet's bilingualism development, which will be reflected in the individual nature of language interaction when teaching a foreign language. At the same time, the influence of previously learned languages depends on a specific aspect of the language and is manifested as follows. At the phonetic level students are under the influence of L1 regardless of the degree of development of bilingualism. At the grammatical and lexical levels students experience a combined impact of L1 and L2.

- in the process of learning English language it is appropriate to use the socio-cultural, philological and language experience of bilingual cadets in order to prevent and overcome their difficulties.

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