

PEHPP 2019

Pedagogical Education: History, Present Time, Perspectives

ON THE READINESS OF TEACHERS FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION OF SCHOOLCHILDREN

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Abstract

The article dwells on the present day of bilingual education which should meet the challenges of new century. A closer look at existing types of bilingual education programs is taken. Despite a fairly well-developed theory of bilingual education, still urgent is the need for a comprehensive study of the issue of training teachers with sufficient competencies to implement bilingual education programs. An insufficient number of bilingual teachers often become crucial for promoting bilingual education ideas in general. In particular, the training of subject teachers capable of conducting classes in a foreign language becomes a prerequisite. The article considers the issue of readiness of school teachers to teach subjects in a foreign language and presents the results of a small-scale study among Russian school teachers having different work experience. The research results allow for a conclusion that mostly young teachers are willing to work in a bilingual format. For a young teacher, bilingual skills can be the key to a successful career and help expand the scope of teaching. The financial support of teachers ready to go beyond the traditional teaching is necessary for promoting bilingual education; the development of bilingual subject competence should start during the training of would-be teachers.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Bilingual education, bilingual competence, foreign language teaching, teacher training.



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1. Introduction

The current process of globalization concerns a large number of areas of human activity. The growing globalization of the world economy has led to the fact that the labor market has become international, and the mobility of people associated with job search has become global. Since the 1990s, researchers have noted that the phenomena of globalization, “Europeanization”, increased competition in the world markets for scientific and educational services and the internationalization of education organically associated with them have had a significant impact on the formation of the identity of secondary and higher education institutions. (Harari, 1989; Hornberg, 1999; Grin & Kraus, 2018; Knight, 2004; Oonk, 2004; Yemini & Fulop, 2015). Internationalization is seen as a contribution to economic growth, an investment in the future system of economic relations, and an essential parameter of foreign policy (Weber, Ivanov, & Pevzner, 2012, p. 27).

In the XXI century knowledge of the native language only is not enough for the educational and career growth of a person. The effectiveness of globalization would not be so high without people knowing a foreign language, which, moreover, is a necessary instrument of internationalization. First of all, of course, we are talking about the English language, since at present most of the information on the Internet, almost all international legal, regulatory and other types of documents are presented in English. The English language is capturing a growing educational space. Many researchers talk about the ambiguity of the situation with the dominance of the English language; the spread of English and its strong position as the main foreign language in educational institutions is seen not only as a key to the economic success of countries and individuals, but also as a tool for creating social, political and economic inequality (Pennycook, 2017; Ricento, 2018). Bilingual education, i.e. teaching in a foreign language, when a foreign language is defined as a means of communication in a professional context, can ensure the integrity of the subject, language and intercultural components in educational and vocational training of students, as well as contribute to the formation of a person who can easier adapt to the internationalization of education, science and production.

2. Problem Statement

Over the past decades, a lot of research has been done on bilingual education, vocationally-oriented teaching in a foreign language, and the formation of conditions for the personal growth of students in bilingual education (Aliyev, & Kazhe, 2005; Bhatia, & Ritchie, 2004; Komorowska, 2011). However, the need remains for a comprehensive study of the issue of training teachers with sufficient competencies to implement bilingual education programs in educational institutions of different levels.

Nowadays, bilingual education requires a new content, as well as a new approach to the organization of the educational process. The first aspect implies a shift in emphasis to teaching technical and natural sciences specialties simultaneously with the support to humanities; the second aspect means the involvement of distance learning technologies in the education process, the training of subject teachers who are able to conduct classes in a foreign language.

In interpreting the phenomenon of bilingual education, it is first of all worth separating the concepts of bilingual (two languages) and multilingual (many languages) training. Some scholars hold the view that

bilingual education can be classified as multicultural (Baker, 2011; Habarova, 2011). So, in modern didactics, Dyachenko (2006) considers bilingual education as instruction on a bilingual and multilingual basis in international schools (p. 112). In contrast to this opinion, Azimov and Schukin (2009) define bilingual education as “interconnected and equivalent mastering of two languages (native and foreign) by a student, development of a native and foreign language culture, development of students as bilingual and bicultural individuals” (p. 39).

Often the complexity of the definition leads to an incorrect interpretation of the concept. So, for example, teaching a foreign language to migrants is often mistaken for bilingual education. However, in reality bilingual education essentially differs from the content of classical programs for teaching a foreign language. The main difference is that in most language educational programs a foreign language is a subject of study, while bilingual training programs resort to it as a learning tool - the transmission of subject content is made in a non-native language. This aspect is reflected in the definition by Cubillos (1988):

Bilingual education is education in two languages, with the help of which students get the opportunity to receive knowledge from sources in a foreign language and to more successfully realize themselves in the learning process. Language in this case is not the purpose of learning - it is a means of penetrating the culture of another country, a way of understanding the mentality, thinking and creativity of another nation, the key to understanding its essence, the path to new knowledge (p. 43).

Traditional programs aimed at mastering a foreign language are often focused on a non-native language under study, while bilingual educational programs in one form or another employ not one language, but more, at least in some part of the training. According to current points of view, bilingual education programs can be divided into the following types:

- The language of instruction is different from the native language of students; moreover, the native language is excluded from educational programs or is used only at the stage of preparation for learning. The main goal of such education is linguistic uniformity and integration through the means of language. This type of training includes such methods as submersion and immersion. Submersion is the organization of training in a multi-ethnic school, when some students do not speak the dominant language (the language of the teacher and the majority in the class), but they study together with others. Immersion is a method of teaching a non-native language when the entire class (group) is constantly learning in a language different from the native language of the students.
- The language of instruction is different from the native language of the students, but the latter is part of the educational program in the form of a subject of study or a non-dominant language of instruction. The goal in this case is unification and integration in the absence of insurmountable borders between different linguistic and cultural spaces.
- The non-native language and the language spoken by the students are equally present in the content of the educational program and are involved in the implementation of educational activities. The goal of this type of bilingual education is bilingualism and biculturalism.

- The student's native language is the main language of instruction, which is characteristic of the initial stage of instruction. At a certain period, a second language is included in the educational process, gradually acquiring a dominant role in learning. The goal is to reveal the academic and developmental capabilities of the language as a tool for learning and teaching (Azimov & Schukin, 2009; Habarova, 2011).

According to another classification, all the curricula of any educational models related to bilingualism are divided into three types: enrichment programs; transition programs; language preservation programs. Enrichment programs are a random collection of subjects taught in a language that is not native to students. Mastering the second language is dynamic and effective, a double result can be considered as its characteristic feature - a student acquires both new knowledge and language skills. In some countries this kind of training is aimed at children who come from high society and thus are better prepared and more capable if compared to other students. For this reason, this type of bilingual education in some cases is considered an elite education. The major task of transition programs is to introduce children of ethnic minorities to the language of the predominant population. To this end, in bicultural classes, instruction is conducted in two languages: approximately 50% of subjects are taught in the main language, others according to the bilingualism program. Language conservation programs target both students from prevailing language groups and students belonging to national minorities, as well as endangered cultures. At the initial stage, classes are taught in the native language. The second language is of less importance. In this way, the necessary socialization of students is achieved, and attempts are made to preserve an endangered language. Thus, different types of bilingual education do not equally affect the process of development and loss of bilingualism and its outcome - the quality of the formed bilingualism. Therefore, the choice of a bilingual education model depends on the goals that a particular society poses before the educational system. The difference in the language training at school should be provided for in the teaching methodology (Solntseva-Nakova, 2012).

In the studies of Russian scientists, the question arose repeatedly about the need for the formation of continuous bilingual education due to the wide range of educational services associated with bilingual education and its individual elements (Shirin, 2006). The consistent construction of a training system requires the training of subject specialists who are capable of carrying out the educational process in foreign language at all educational levels. Up to now, there is no universally accepted solution to this issue. There are following approaches to the organization of the educational process on a bilingual basis:

- classes are taught in a foreign language by a subject teacher;
- a foreign language teacher teaches any additional subject;
- two teachers conduct a bilingual lesson: a subject teacher and a foreign language teacher (Aliyev & Kazhe, 2005).

Currently, the situation with the introduction of bilingual education has become particularly relevant, since most teachers turn to the informational capabilities of the Internet both within the framework of self-education, in preparing for classes and during the lessons. According to statistics, as of August 2019, 54.3% of all sites on the Internet use English as the main language (Historical trends..., 2019). English is the main

language of scientific communication. Thus, a modern teacher has a need not only for general knowledge of the English language, but for knowledge of scientific terminology in a foreign language in a specific subject field and the ability to use this scientific language in the classroom as a second language (Pankratova, 2016). Consequently, there is an objective need in development of educational bilingualism in the school, and it is advisable for a modern subject teacher to have bilingual subject competence.

3. Research Questions

3.1. In order to determine the readiness of school teachers to teach subjects in a bilingual format, our research posed the following questions:

3.2. Does a modern teacher strive to develop bilingual competence?

3.3. What conditions are necessary for a teacher to switch from a traditional to a bilingual format for conducting lessons?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose is to analyse the results of a study conducted among secondary school teachers in order to determine their readiness for bilingual format of teaching a school subject and necessary conditions for the transition to teaching in bilingual mode.

5. Research Methods

The main research method was a survey of secondary school teachers in the Novgorod region and St. Petersburg (Russia) to determine their readiness for bilingual lessons. The interview involved 44 people with different practical experience at school. 44% of the questions asked were open, 56% suggested an unambiguous positive or negative answer with the possibility of commenting at the request of the respondent. The method of comparative analysis made it possible to compare the attitude of young teachers and long-working teachers to the issue of teaching school subjects in a bilingual format.

6. Findings

The questionnaire offered to secondary school teachers consisted of nine questions. In addition to personal questions regarding the general length of service, a taught subject, a foreign language studied earlier (currently under study), respondents were asked to assess their level of knowledge of a foreign language, indicate whether they ever exchanged experiences with foreign colleagues, or if they had to study foreign literature in their subject field. They also answered the question of whether they have a desire to teach their major or another subject in a foreign language. The questionnaire included questions about the need for financial incentives for teachers and the need for special course in bilingual teaching for students of pedagogical universities.

An analysis of the answers to the question about work experience divided respondents into two categories: category I - young specialists (up to 7 years of work experience) and category II - experienced teachers (more than 7 years of work). 12 respondents (27% of the respondents) belong to the first category,

32 teachers - to the second category (73%). Out of the total number of respondents, 4 teachers teach foreign (English) language at the school. Others are teachers of biology, computer science, history, music, the basics of life safety, some of them work at primary school.

The worldwide trend of the dominance of the English language in curricula and the all-Russian trend of the gradual replacing of other foreign languages in schools by the English language were proved by the respondents' answers to the question about the studied foreign languages. It turned out that 13 people (40%) of the experienced teachers studied the German language, while among the young specialists there was only one teacher who did not learn English at school (8%).

Most young teachers rated their level of foreign language proficiency as conversational - 8 people (67% in the first category, 18% of the total number of respondents) - moreover, 3 of them claimed that they know a foreign language at a relatively high level, which we during the interview identified as level B1. Among teachers whose total experience exceeds 7 years of work, 21 people (66% in the second category, 48% of the total number of respondents) defined their level of foreign language skills at the moment as minimal due to the lack of communication practice or interest in maintaining a conversational level.

However, we would emphasize that among the other 34% of respondents, 5 people called their level average or above average, which directly correlates with their experience reflected in the framework of answers to other questions.

When asked about the experience of working with foreign colleagues, a positive answer was given by 3 teachers (7%), 2 of whom have a long pedagogical experience and hold administrative posts at their schools. These respondents gained experience in communicating with foreign teachers during international conferences, as well as at professional development programs. Another respondent, as part of self-education, participated in online conferences conducted by an English-speaking specialist.

An analysis of the answers to the question about working with professional literature in a foreign language showed that 5 young specialists (42% in the first category, 11% of the total number of respondents) and 13 highly qualified teachers (41% in the second category, 30% of the total respondents) have used or continue to use foreign scientific sources in the framework of their professional activities.

When asked about the desire to teach a school subject in a foreign language, 8 people, i.e. 18% of respondents (5 teachers from the first category (42%), 3 from the second (9%)), said they were ready to teach in the bilingual format and professionally develop in the field of bilingual education. These respondents rated their level of knowledge of a foreign language relatively high. It is noteworthy that only one teacher among them is a teacher of a foreign language. This fact indicates that subject teachers are ready to increase their level of knowledge of a foreign language in order to obtain additional competencies as bilingual educators.

Answering a question about financial incentives, 100% of respondents, regardless of their own desire to work in a bilingual mode, gave a positive answer. The question of the need to train university students in teaching a subject in a foreign language did not meet such unanimity. 30 teachers (68%) spoke positively, however, adding in the comments that such training should not be massive, but rather take place as additional, elective courses. 14 people (32%) spoke out negatively, these 32% were dominated by representatives of category II (11 people).

Thus, out of the total number of respondents, only 8 people (18% of the total number of respondents) would like to become bilingual teachers, most of them are young subject teachers. The young generation of teachers, who are from childhood freely surfing the Internet and striving to quickly acquire new knowledge, has great potential for their own professional growth and for developing the potential of their students in bilingual lessons.

7. Conclusion

The problems of training bilingual teachers and the willingness of teachers to work in a bilingual format remain very acute, despite the general, innovative, climate of the modern school. An insufficient number of bilingual teachers is often fatal for promoting the ideas of bilingual education in general. A teacher who has managed to overcome the problem of using two or more languages in teaching a school subject shares a noteworthy experience with the students, thus becoming an example to follow. For a young teacher, bilingual teaching skills can be the key to a successful career and help expand the scope of teaching.

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