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Introducing the Challenge of Multilingualism to Standard Language Teaching

Georgii Khruslov & Sjaak Kroon

Introduction

Most nation states and societies in the world can be characterized in terms of linguistic heterogeneity. According to various prognoses the linguistic and cultural diversity of European societies will still grow considerably in the near future (EuroStat, 1996; Extra & Vallen, 1997). Linguistic minorities will have to live and communicate in a context that has a dominant majority language which is not their mother tongue. To say nothing about the 'old' historical and traditional indigenous minorities but to mention only 'new' ones, including refugees, migrants, repatriates or asylum-seekers, and their educational and linguistic rights makes clear what enormous tasks confront modern education and language pedagogy (Baker, 1996; Kroon & Vallen, 1997).

International research in the field of language teaching in multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual contexts until now mainly focused on special educational provisions for minority children in the field of second language teaching or ethnic minority language teaching. There are hardly any empirical data available on the teaching processes that constitute the everyday practice of monolingual majority language teaching in multilingual classrooms (see however Gogolin & Neumann, 1997). Especially the investigation of these teaching processes is likely to lead to answers to the question in which way culturally and nationally determined concretisations of ideas on mono- and multilingualism become evident in teaching methodologies and teacher behaviour.

This book is a result of a five-year (1993-1998) cooperation between members of IMEN and Russian researchers within the INTAS project 'The Challenge of Multilingualism to Standard Language Teaching' (Reference Number INTAS-93-1531).

IMEN stands for International Mother Tongue Education Network, a European network of researchers in the field of mother tongue/standard language education with its office in The Netherlands. INTAS stands for International Association for the Promotion of Cooperation with Scientists from the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union, an international non-profit association with its office in Brussels. One of IMEN's projects has been 'Language Teaching in Multilingual Schools' in which Flanders, England, the Netherlands and Germany cooperated in carrying out international comparative case studies in multilingual primary school classes. Within the INTAS context in addition to these case studies also a comparative case study in a Moscow multiethnic school was carried out. Russian researchers in this project were mainly represented by the staff of the INPO (Institute for National Problems of Education) located in Moscow and also by invited participants

In this introductory chapter we will first of all briefly introduce the INTAS project 'The Challenge of Multilingualism on Standard Language Teaching'. After that we will go into some aspects of the Russian multilingual and multicultural context as a background for better understanding the Russian contributions to this book. Finally we will give an overview of the book's content.

Research objectives, activities and results

The objectives of the project as formulated in its work programme are:

1. Getting mutually acquainted with mother-tongue/standard language teaching in the multicultural and multilingual context of Flanders, England, Germany, The Netherlands and Russia.
2. Getting acquainted with each others' backgrounds and research methodologies, especially the interpretive methodology of IMEN, and contributing to the development and implementation of this methodology.
3. Conducting classroom case studies and discussing their results in international comparative workshops.

For each of these objectives a number of specific research activities have been carried out.

The first objective of the project (exchange of information on language teaching and multilingualism) was mainly fulfilled by drawing up annotated bibliographies of key references and by providing copies of existing articles and other written material referring to specific national aspects of the topic under study, and writing original contributions on language teaching in multilingual contexts. These materials were discussed at a number of international workshops and conferences (Amsterdam 1993, London and Milton Keynes 1994, Hamburg 1996, Moscow 1997, Bonn 1997). The outcomes of these workshops lead to decisions with respect to carrying out the empirical phase of the project. The resulting bibliographies and contributions on multilingualism and standard language teaching in Flanders, England, Germany, The Netherlands and Russia are included in this book in Parts 2 and 3.

A main result of these activities has been that the participants really became informed about specific characteristics of each others' societal and educational arrangements in the field of language teaching and multilingualism. Attention has been paid in this context to historical and contemporary data on migration movements, multilingualism and language teaching, language and education policies, educational provisions and arrangements, the position of first and second language teaching in the curriculum, the role of the mother tongue and/or the second language as a medium of instruction in various curricular subjects, forms of bilingual and multilingual education, the position of specific language minority groups, and more general ideas about multicultural education. The process of discussing and comparing these country specific data has led to a double insight. First of all it became clear that, although many things in the participating countries at first sight seem to be more or less the same, one should be very careful in too easily assuming that solutions that seem to work in one context can also be applied, and with the same success, in another context. It, however, also became clear, that although there turn out to be clear differences, these differences do

not imply that there are no similarities (and similar solutions) at all. On the contrary: the development of multiculturalism and multilingualism in the participating countries and their consequences for education, clearly have comparable characteristics that make mutual learning from each others' policies and approaches possible and useful.

The second objective of the project (getting acquainted with research methodology for doing ethnographic case studies in multilingual classrooms and contributing to a further development of this methodology) was fulfilled mainly in the project workshops and conferences (see above) in which case study data, especially classroom transcripts, were jointly discussed and analysed. This analysis was done on the basis of methodological input of the IMEN participants mainly. The methodological approach for doing classroom case studies that has been developed (further) within the project is the so-called 'reconstructive ethnographic account approach'. This approach is reconstructive in as far as the claim is that the result is a collaborative reconstruction of the socially constructed reality of the respondents on the basis of which they get the potential to reconstruct their reality in ways they were not aware of before. It is ethnographic because of the adopted ethnographic perspective and its ontological, epistemological and methodological implications. It implies an account because of its rooting in ordinary knowledge of the respondents and the ethnomethodological reconstruction of that knowledge. Within this approach the analytical concept of 'key incident analysis' plays a central role. In the comparative analysis and interpretation of key incidents the concepts of 'homogenisation' and 'monolingual habitus' are of central importance. They refer to the fact that the fabric of language teaching in multicultural and multilingual contexts has to be understood against the background of education trying to create cultural, linguistic and didactic homogeneity, as a historically speaking 'natural' reaction on the threatening diversity that resulted among other things from migration movements. This tendency, although it may take different forms in different contexts, can be observed in all participating countries. Part 2 of this book contains some contributions on research methodology including an additional bibliography.

The third objective of the project (conducting comparative classroom case studies) was fulfilled by all project teams in carrying out a case study in multilingual education in their own country. The design, methodology and organisation of the cases studies was comparable and they all took place in more or less comparable situations, i.e. regular primary and secondary school classrooms that are characterised by the fact that a considerable amount of the pupils stem from a language minority background.

The basis for the case studies were ethnographic corpuses that had been composed by data gathering through field work. These corpuses consisted of taped lessons, classroom observations, tape recordings of long interviews with the cooperating teachers and all kinds of written materials on the classes under investigation. The data that had been collected in this way were the various modalities that could be found in the way in which teachers dealt with multilingualism.

After the construction and analysis of classroom portraits, the field work was used to select so-called key incidents for further detailed analysis of instances in which the teacher implicitly or explicitly dealt with the multilingual character of his/her classroom, by, for

example, reacting on the use of minority languages by pupils, forbidding other languages than the national standard language, using a second language pedagogy, etc.

Given this comparable starting point, the focus of the case studies could of course differ per country. In the following for each case study some very brief remarks are made. Detailed reports are included in Part I of this book.

In the Flemisch case study the focus was mainly on the way in which the teacher dealt with the issue of linguistic correctness and communicative adequacy in a multilingual classroom. These concepts were put in the context of a broader discussion of language as a system and language as a means of communication.

In the Dutch case study the focus was mainly on the way in which teaching/learning processes in multilingual and multicultural classrooms are characterized by processes of homogenization. A central concept in this case study turned out to be the teacher's professional practical knowledge, both as a starting point for understanding her teaching behaviour, and as a starting point for reflection.

The English case study, dealing with a series of lessons on Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Julia' in a London multilingual girls school focussed on the process of creating subjectivities of pupils through teaching and subject content. Special emphasis was given to the issue of how pupils are defined as 'different' in terms of language, culture and ethnicity.

The German case study focussed on misunderstandings between teacher and pupils in the field of orthography teaching, stemming from linguistic differences between the various mother tongues of the pupils and German, the main language of instruction. The assignments given to pupils, in many cases only could be fulfilled on the basis of a taken for granted proficiency and metalinguistic knowledge of German that they do not all have. This taken-for-grantedness is explained by using the concept of the 'monolingual habitus'.

The Russian case study focussed on, among other things, aspects of tradition and modernity in language teaching in multilingual classrooms, such as e.g. the teaching of obsolete words (passive vocabulary) as part of human culture and literacy and their crucial role in understanding Russian classic literature and poetry, the reactions of teachers to the use of sublanguage and jargonism, especially paying attention to words from the Soviet era, the teaching of phraseological units and word formation, and regional studies in a linguacultural approach. According to the report on the Russian case study 'The common conclusion to all the analyzed lessons is that interests of pupils of non-Russian nationalities require constant, conscious and guided attention. (...) (The research results) will help to unite efforts of experts of different profiles - historians of pedagogy, linguists, methodologists, teachers, textbook authors, curriculum designers, etc. - in one common task: to determine the state of mother tongues education in multilingual and multicultural European countries (which all of them are without exception) and to make mother tongue education more creative, effective and joyous for children.'

The Russian context

In the INTAS project a number of new approaches have been applied to investigate the field of multilingual and multicultural education, mainly based on case studies in multicultural and multilingual classrooms, against the background of the recognition of linguistic human rights and the dynamic understanding of languages and cultures in which each of them is treated as equal. These mainly ethnographic research methods and the proposals for teaching/learning methodologies in multilingual classrooms following from the research results, may be very useful as a starting point for research and innovation in the Russian context because classroom studies in Russia have traditionally gone along different lines than in the Anglo-Saxon world. At the same time some important items have to be kept in mind to understand the Russian specificity as regards these studies properly.

First, as far as the term 'mother tongue education' is concerned. 'Teaching the mother tongue' has been the phrase chosen in IMEN to denote at the same time teaching Dutch in Flanders and The Netherlands, German in Germany, French in France, English in England, etc. (Kroon & Sturm, 1991). However, it is not the case of one language for one country as regards Russia with its about 150 languages every of which may be regarded as a 'mother tongue language'. While discussing the concept of a 'mother tongue' in Russia non-Russian researchers actually mean a non-Russian language whereas Russian is for them the official state language of the country. So, the case studies of mother tongue education in Russia have to rely not only on Russian but on more diverse ethnic and linguistic patterns.

Second, the notion of a 'standard language' is also a subject of specification in the Russian context (Khruslov, 1995). In Russian (also in French and Italian) linguistic tradition it is more common to speak about the 'literary language' ('literaturnyj yazyk'). This term has its drawbacks because there are at least two meanings in it: (a) language of belles-lettres, and (b) codified form of a language. These two meanings do not coincide. Each of them may be broader than the other one. On the one hand, literary language comprises not only language of belles-lettres but also language of journalism, science, public administration, business, oral presentation, colloquial speech, etc. On the other hand, language of belles-lettres may include into itself elements of dialects, city half-dialects, jargonisms, etc.

In its turn the term 'standard language', more widely circulated in English speaking countries and in Japan, presupposes the existence of a common norm on all levels of the language system, i.e. this term may be applied only to a certain type of literary languages. So, the question persists what kind of a language, its functional styles and norms, should be taught at schools, in general, and in multilingual contexts, in particular.

Third, the background of school-children under survey is often different in the Russian and in the Western case studies. Whereas in many European countries they are children of minor ethnic groups of 'new-comers' striving for survival in a strange country (Turks in Germany, for example) in Russia they are indigenous populations of the country, born Russian citizens. Statistically but not politically many ethnic groups in Russia may be labeled as minorities, and it is again a question of how relevant is the experience of foreign minorities for the Russian Federation as regards teaching of the major official language and minor mother tongue education and cultivation.

The book's content

In Part 1 the reports of the five case studies that have been conducted in Flanders (by Koen Jaspaert and Griet Ramaut), England (by Euan Reid), The Netherlands (by Sjaak Kroon and Jan Sturm), Germany (by Ursula Neumann) and Russia (by Georgii Khruslov) are included. They all focus on the analysis of one or more key-incidents with respect to standard language teaching in multilingual classrooms and as such give five different but comparable reactions to the challenge of multilingualism to standard language teaching. Some brief remarks on the contents of the respective case studies have already been made in section 2 above.

Part 2 contains, in alphabetical order, the contributions that were read at the final project conference that was held at the Institute for National Problems of Education in Moscow, 10-15 May 1997.

The paper of Vladimir Alpatov is devoted to language problems of post-Soviet Russia. His general conclusion is that, while maintaining the objective dominant role of the Russian language, measures for the expansion of the functions of the languages of minorities are taken in many regions of Russia. The number of national ethnic schools increases; the publication in languages of minorities are actively supported; the official correspondence in these languages is revived. The problems in question are treated, in particular, with Kalmyk and Khakass as examples.

Olga Artemenko and Maryam Bezrukikh stress aspects of different educational load which may greatly differ territorially. A non-titular child in a titular non-Russian republic (for example, an Even in Yakutia) may be obliged to learn his/her mother tongue, the official language of a titular republic and Russian as the official language of the Russian Federation. It makes the questions of choosing proper pedagogical technologies and health control most acute.

Jill Bourne discusses the position of ethnic minority language and culture teaching philosophies and provisions in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and the city of Sheffield. The examples given of a search for new 21st Century language policies, show serious attempts to try to meet the need of all citizens to operate flexibly as bilingual and multilingual language users in these new cultural contexts of globalisation and of languages increasingly in contact. They might as such be also applicable to other contexts.

With the educational background of the republics of the Northern Caucasus Nazir Ekba reconstructs different typology of national schools according to the language of tuition. He states that the task of modern school is to provide full development of bilingualism of school-children of the national school, i.e. parallel acquisition by them of both their mother tongue and Russian.

Ingrid Gogolin's contribution mainly deals with research methodology. She discusses the concept of the 'monolingual habitus' as a 'tertium comparationis' in international comparative research in teaching the language of the majority. The concept of the 'monolingual habitus' is developed in the context of both historical research and case study research in German multilingual classrooms. A key reference in this respect is the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

Galina Gorodilova & Elisabetha Khamraeva discuss the concept of the federal obligatory minimum of teaching Russian in the national school. The minimum strives to provide basic educational level in the subject irrespective of the type of a national school. It aims at development of functions of Russian as the official language, interrelated teaching of Russian and a mother tongue, harmonization of cross-national relations.

Ruslan Khairulin touches upon the ways of development of educational systems for ethnic minorities in Russia. Analyzing the content of their education he sees three cultural components: ethnic one (native languages and cultures); federal one (Russian language and culture); world one (world languages and cultures), and speculates which one is most favourable for ethnic minorities in a polyethnic state like Russia.

Nariman Khassanov in his reflections on multilingualism and mother tongue education refers to the language situation in the Russian Federation according to its qualitative and quantitative signs, covers the history of mother tongue education in Russia (with the focus of Turkic languages) and brings forward scientific foundations for learning mother tongues from the point of view of linguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics and pedagogy.

Georgii Khruslov presents the results of a survey conducted on teaching Koryak, a minor endangered language in the Russian North-East. Its fate is at stake, and measures of linguistic engineering are analyzed which can give it a chance to survive, among them: standardization of Koryak; promotion of its use in administration and public services; increase of school tuition and change of its minor status at schools, etc.

In his paper Mikhail Kouzmine writes on the place and role of the national school of Russia in processes of modernization in a polyethnic society. The author states that the national school is a specific kind of an educational institution in the Russian system of education with its own language of tuition, special goals, curriculum and content of education. It cannot be treated as an ordinary regional variant of a school of general education. It must also effectively solve integrative tasks of providing bilingualism, biculturalism and bimentality.

Sjaak Kroon discusses some aspects of multilingualism and school language policy. Referring to the Dutch situation mainly, he makes a plea for the explicit acceptance of minority languages in education. This includes their acceptance as a means of communication and learning, their acceptance as a language of instruction and their acceptance as a regular school subject.

Galina Perfilova suggests to reform content aspects of teaching German as a mother tongue of Russia's Germans. She comes out in favour of bringing into concordance the didactic approaches and actual conditions in teaching German, specifying the principles of tuition according to the polyethnic and polycultural composition of schools where Russia's Germans are taught.

Griet Ramaut deals with the history, development and contemporary situation of ethnic minority language and culture teaching in Flemish schools. She concludes that the integration of minority languages into the mainstream is only efficient if it is supported by the whole school context. An important aspect here is that schools need to have a clear language policy and an openness to other languages and cultures.

Euan Reid discusses a number of questions that are basic to the field of multilingualism and education. These questions include (1) Is the distinction between 'autochthonous' and 'allochthonous' minorities useful or even defensible, as a basis for deciding language policies in either the Russian Federation, or the EU, or anywhere?; (2) Is the dichotomy between 'native-speaker' and 'non-native-speaker' of a language any longer tenable?; (3) Have not the terms 'nation/nationality', 'ethnic group/ethnicity', and the consequent educational categories used in many European countries outlived their usefulness?

Zemphira Sakhpova shares her experience of designing primers for school-children not mastering a learned language. She sees ABCs goals as to develop children's abilities to comprehend elementary speech, to accurately pronounce the sounds of a language, to build up vocabulary necessary to speak it, to teach correct reading of words, sentences, short texts, to teach elementary skills of writing, etc.

Jan Sturm's contribution, finally is of a methodological nature. He sketches the history and research programme of IMEN and then deals with the so-called 'reconstructive ethnographic account' approach which is used in IMEN as a common research methodology. His paper contains also a brief bibliography on interpretive research methodology.

Part 3 contains the annotated bibliographies on multilingualism and standard language teaching in Flanders, England, The Netherlands, Germany and Russia.

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