

Vladimir CVETKOVSKI

THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER AND SOME LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS IN A PLURILINGUAL CLASS

It is a well-known fact that Yugoslavia is a country of many nations and nationalities. After the Second World War each of them was given the right to use its own language freely in the schools and the government administration in the area where the respective ethnic groups live.

In places where there is a large concentration of a particular nationality, schools have been opened in which education is carried out in the language of that nationality, both at elementary and secondary school level, especially in the grammar schools. All subjects are taught in that language, consequently basic instruction and explanation of the grammatical structure of a foreign language are given in the mother tongue of the pupils.

This principle, however, can not always be applied, either owing to the lack of trained teachers of the same nationality or when it is not possible to offer instruction in all subjects in the mother tongue of the pupils, particularly in the specialized schools, such as medical secondary schools, school for nurses, technical schools, traffic schools, commercial schools, etc. In such schools, as a rule, all subjects, including foreign languages, are taught in the official language of the Republic. In most cases, where the pupils are of different nationalities, the foreign language teacher avoids the use of the mother tongue of the pupils of these nationalities.

The analysis of the situation made in this paper is based upon the school system in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia in Yugoslavia.

In Macedonia the majority of the population consists of Macedonians but there are also Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, and Rohms.

In specialized schools it is common to find pupils of these nationalities in the same class as Macedonian children, who still, however, constitute about 90 percent. I have interviewed several teachers who teach English in such schools. As they are all Macedonians, they do not speak the language of their pupils of the other nationalities, and they use the Macedonian language as the sole language of their instruction and teaching. This certainly causes some drawbacks in the course of the teaching process and hampers the acquisition of the foreign language.

Psychologists have emphasized the role of the positive transfer in the learning of a foreign language when structures of the source language are

parallel with similar structures of the target language. The Macedonian teacher looks for such structures in Macedonian and English, or for structures that are not parallel in order to drill them contrastively and avoid or diminish possible negative transfer. Very often structure that are parallel in Macedonian and English are not so in, say, Albanian and English, or Turkish and English.

Since the Macedonian foreign language teacher has no knowledge of these languages he is not able to realize the nature of the mistakes that his Albanian or Turkish pupils may make, which, it can be said, differ in a structural way, from the mistakes of the Macedonian pupils.

The basic obstacle to foreign language teaching in these schools is the language of instruction, which the Albanian and Turkish students who are bilingual may not have mastered accurately and basically have no knowledge of its grammatical structure. These pupils, who often come from Albanian or Turkish elementary schools where instruction is given in the respective language, find that in the secondary school of their choice the training is in a language which they have not fully mastered. This obstacle is particularly pronounced in the learning of a foreign language which in such cases is their third language. The problem is not the pupils' alone. The teacher very often feels helpless to find successful methods for presenting the foreign language material. He is not aware that the pupils' failure to acquire a good knowledge of the foreign language does not lie in the teaching method but in inadequate knowledge of the teacher's language of instruction.

An analysis of mistakes in written tests clearly explains their origin, particularly those that Albanian and Turkish pupils make.

Among other items, the teacher has assigned some Macedonian sentences to be translated into English in order to check up on the uses of the tenses of the English verbs as counterparts to structures in Macedonian.

This is the Macedonian text:

1. *Ke ти дадам сладолег ако си добра.*

2. *Зошто не дојде на кино? Бидејќи заборавив.*

This is how the text was translated by some Albanian and Turkish students:

**Why didn't come to cinema? Because forgot.* (Turkish) Correct translation:

Why didn't you come to the cinema? Because I forgot.

**Will you give ice-cream if she good.* (Albanian)

Correct translation:

I'll give you ice-cream if you are good.

Some of the above mistakes have originated as a result of the peculiar structure of the Macedonian text which the students translated word for word. The personal endings of the Macedonian verbs *дам* {am}; *дојд* {-e}; *заборав* {-iv} indicate the respective subjects of the predicates, consequently the subject forms of the personal pronouns *јас* 'I' and *ти* 'you' are implied and it is not necessary to use them. The Albanian and the Turkish

students, however, unaware of this property of the verbal endings and their respective meanings and syntactic function, assign a similar quality to the English verbs, and since the subject pronouns in the Macedonian text are missing they do not put them in their English text.

The language interference in the learning process has its effect and strengthens the negative transfer, particularly in syntactic environments which are not parallel in the source and the target language.

In the second example the Albanian student has made three different types of mistakes. He has avoided the subject of the sentence; he has put the object pronoun before the verb — in the place it occupies in the Macedonian text — and have tried to assign the feminine gender of the Macedonian adjective *dobr -a* to the English equivalent in the way in which it is done in Albanian, using the personal pronoun *she* as a gender marker of the adjective.

In Albanian, since the adjective has only one form for the three genders, a gender marker is used before the adjective:

Vajza {e} mire 'a girl she good'
Djili {i} mire 'a boy he/it good'
Njeriu {i} mire 'a man he good'

The adjective in Turkish is very much like the adjective in English:

Iyi kiz 'good girl'
Iyi çocuk 'good boy'
Iyi adam 'good man'

In Macedonian there is gender agreement of the adjective with the noun it precedes:

dobr {-a} devojka 'she good girl'
dobr {-o} momče.. 'it good boy'
dob {-ar} čovek 'he good man'

The notion of definiteness in English, Macedonian, and Albanian is expressed by means of a definite article, in Turkish that notion is implied in the nominal inflections.

In the three languages the English equivalents of: *the good girl the good boy, the good man* are:

In Macedonian:

dobra {-ta} devojka 'she the good girl'
dobro {-ro} momče 'it the good boy'
dobri {-ot} čovek 'he the good man'

In Albanian:

<i>vajz</i> {-ë} {e} <i>mir</i> {-a}	'the girl she the good'
<i>djal</i> {-ë} {i} <i>mir</i> {-i}	'the boy he/it the good'
<i>njer</i> {-i} {i} <i>mir</i> {-i}	'the man he the good'

In Turkish:

<i>Gördüm iyi adam</i> {-i}	'I saw the good man'
<i>Gördüm iyi kız</i> {-i}	'I saw the good girl'
<i>Gördüm iyi cocug</i> {-u}	'I saw the good boy'

The differences do not exist only in the structural distribution of the morphemes; it is more complex when one language requires a definite article which the other renders with zero.

In English the possessive adjective modifies the noun by itself; in Macedonian the definite article is required with the possessive adjective:

I have a book in my hand translates as:

Imam niga vo moja -ta raka. 'I have a book in the my hand'

When the Macedonian sentence *Ne sum patuval podaleku od Skopje* was given for translation in class, an Albanian student translated it as **I have not travelled further than the Skopje*, it is clear, then, that he was translating the Albanian notion: *S'kam shkuar më larg Shkup* {-it}.

These linguistic problems show that the problem of bilingual speakers can be very complex in the course of their education when instruction is given in what is for them a second language and their knowledge of that language is not perfect. This not only inhibits successful learning of the foreign language, but also causes double interference in the negative sense: the negative transfer of the mother tongue, which the teacher is not able to detect, and the negative transfer of the structure of the second language — the language of instruction — which is structurally different from the pupils' mother tongue. Thus there appear to be two languages in fact as the 'sour language', each with a different structure, and the conflict between the two structures is reflected in the mistakes in the target language. In such cases the teacher can select and explain the grammatical quality in the target language of those mistakes that are due to the linguistic interference of his own source language, which is for him his first and very often his only language. The second class of mistakes may seem inexplicable to him — they are the result of the linguistic interference of the pupils' mother tongue.

Can this problem be solved successfully? It is necessary that the cc teacher should obtain at least a bird's eye view of the language structure of the pupils of other nationalities and help them to avoid such mistakes due to the interference of their mother tongue. If several mistakes of the same kind occur in one or more tests it is a signal that the structure of the

mother tongue is leading the pupil to produce similar structures in the foreign language he is learning. Very often the teacher comes with the remark: „How can you make such mistakes as *the Skopje, the Paris* etc. „*We don't say Shopje-to, Periz-o* etc., but the truth is that the Albanians do say so.

This problem requires more detailed and deeper investigation in order to find some practical solutions which will enable more successful instruction and pedagogical work in schools of bilingual and polylingual communities.

REFERENCES

- Alatis, J. E. 1968: *Report of the Nineteenth Annual Round Table Meeting of Linguistics and Language Studies. Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics* No 21 Washington D. C.
- Demiraj, Shaban: 1971 *Morfologja e gjuhës së sodme shqipe*. Prishtine.
- Di Pietro, R. J. 1971: *Language Structures in Contrast*. Newbury House.
- Filipović, R. *The Yugoslav Serbo-Croatian-English Contrastive Project*. Zagreb.
- Swift, L. B. 1961: *A Reference Grammar of Modern Turkish*. Bloomington.

Владимир ЦВЕТКОВСКИ

НАСТАВНИКОТ ПО СТРАНСКИ ЈАЗИК И НЕКОИ ЛИНГВИСТИЧКИ ПРОБЛЕМИ ВО РАБОТАТА СО ПЛУРИЛИНГВАЛЕН КЛАС

(Резиме)

Наставата по странски јазици, поради специфичностите во процесот на учењето на странскиот јазик, наидува на специфични лингвистички проблеми во училиштата каде учениците се од повеќе националности.

Познато е дека структурата на мајчиниот јазик — *изворниот јазик*, во процесот на учењето на странскиот јазик — *јазикот цел*, го тера ученикот да образува структури на странски јазик според утврдени обрасци од мајчиниот јазик. Таму каде што структурите не се паралелни доведува до формирање на „неграматички состави“ кај јазикот цел, при што доаѓа до таканаречениот негативен трансфер што го инхибира учењето на странскиот јазик.

Наставникот за да го спречи влијанието на негативниот трансфер, контрастивно организира вежби и ја разјаснува разликата во структурите на изворниот јазик и јазикот цел. Меѓутоа, не секогаш тој е во можност тоа да го чини. Во средните стручни училишта, во најголем број случаи, наставата по странски јазици ја изведуваат Македонци, а во класот се случува да има ученици од албанската па и од турската

народност. Поради непознавање на структурите на овие јазици, наставникот не е во состојба да ја разјасне природата на грешките што учениците од овие народности ги прават во англискиот јазик. По совјата структура нивните грешки, се разликуваат од грешките на македонските ученици.

Со споредување на неколку морфолошко-синтаксички структури од македонскиот, албанскиот и турскиот јазик, овде се прави обид да се расветли различната лингвистичка интерференција на овие јазици при создавањето соодветни структури на англиски јазик кое доаѓа како резултат на разликите што постојат во структурите на споменатите јазици.