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SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONDITIONING AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONSEQUENCES OF SECOND-LANGUAGE LEARNING: EXAMPLE OF THE ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL TEACHING OF THE CROATIAN OR SERBIAN LANGUAGE CONDUCTED IN THE LANGUAGES OF THE NATIONALITIES WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF CROATIA*

The teaching of language is consistently a socially determined process. It is by way of syllabuses, teaching materials, and the training of teaching staff that society shows the need for the language qualification of its members. By determining the direction and extent of language skills of the population, the society projects the types of potential models of communication practice in the medium of language.

In the case of the mother tongue, this can be demonstrated as follows: if the language spoken by the population differs from the standardized variety, the teaching of language imposed by the society either hampers or facilitates the integration of the speakers of nonstandard varieties into the social communication practice making use of the standardized variety; hence the shift of the population up and down the ladder of social success is similarly hampered or facilitated. Therefore language culture does not equal language elitism. Furthermore, if - quite properly - the concept of language culture is conceived of as including not only the speaker's individual language skills but also the concept of linguistic tolerance, then the two notions (language culture and language elitism) clash and destroy each other, so that only the former can be included in the description of language medium as the most universal means of human communication.

All this becomes quite complicated in those social communities which are not at the same time also single-code language communities. The destiny of speakers of one or another language of a social community manifests itself as homogeneity or non-homogeneity of a language community. The number of speakers of the two languages defines the degree of bilingualism attained in the social community which can be described as entirely bilingual only if all of its members are actual (competent) speakers of the two languages alike. A low degree of bilingualism in a two-code social community favors the appearance of vertical stratification of language use with markedly social connotations.

Certain societies react to their two-codedness by setting up bilingual instruction. It is second-language teaching which underlies every bilingual instruction, regardless of its scope and its organization. For the present purposes, it seems adequate to define the second language as the language which is neither the mother tongue (the language learned first) nor a foreign

* Original: Serbo-Croatian

language (a living language which is not the native language of a given social community). In certain parts of SR Croatia, the Croatian or Serbian language has the status of a second language, being used as such by native speakers of Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Ruthenian, and Slovak languages. Consequently, in the schools of these regions where teaching is conducted in the languages of the nationalities, the Croatian or Serbian language is taught and learned as a second language.

It can be assumed that every student attending a school using a nationality language as the language of instruction has gained some linguistic experience in the second-language medium (in this context, Croatian or Serbian). It is proper to distinguish the student's receptive language activity from his/her productive language use. One must be aware that these students, native speakers of - say - Italian or Hungarian, realize the minimum receptive language practice in the Croatian or Serbian language simply by being exposed to the mass media that embody the social communication practice (radio, television, the newspapers, songs, the movies, perhaps children's puppet theaters, various performances and shows, etc.). Some linguistic units are adopted through life in the social community: names and appellations (of people, places, streets, work organizations...). Certain linguistic units do get anchored in first-language speech practice, either in their original form or grammatically - usually phonetically and morphologically - adapted to the first language (*Vesna e mia amica. Vengono dal Treči maj*). This is the earliest use of linguistic units of other language, but one that cannot yet be regarded as productive language use/practice. In the context of this topic, productive language practice occurs when the communication of some kind has been achieved in the other language; it need not amount to more than a simple "Hello" used in a speech situation in which this linguistic unit carries the semantic function of "I greet you/I return the greeting."

The implication here is that in starting organized teaching of the language (second-language instruction in the first grade of the elementary school), one should take into consideration the results of spontaneous language learning (exposure to the language in the communication practice of a bilingual social community). This pre-instructional language experience is characterized by the duality of language influence, being the same as that to which the new second-language speaker will be permanently exposed within his/her linguistic community. The point in question is the difference between the colloquial and official language use by the native speakers of Croatian or Serbian wherever the students live who attend the schools in which teaching is conducted in the languages of the nationalities. More specifically, in Istria the Chakavian dialect is spoken; on the basis of this dialect, urban speech has developed in Rijeka and Pula whose linguistic repertory consists of disparate components in terms of their origin, including as it does, for instance, specific linguistic contributions of the settlers and elements of classic city slang. On the other hand, dialects spoken in Slavonia-Baranya are well-known for their composite structure comprising Ikavian-Ekavian-Jekavian speech features. It may be useful to note at this point that cases of the corresponding duality observed in these students' use of standard and nonstandard forms can be ascertained from their

first-language use. This means that the student attending a nationality-language school initially finds himself/herself in an extremely complex situation: he/she develops his/her linguistic skills by learning spontaneously two languages, both in nonstandard (communication) and standard (mostly reception only) varieties, while at the same time he/she learns - on an organized basis - only the standard varieties of the very same two languages. Such a learner should therefore develop a very high degree of sensitivity to appropriate usage in the first or second language also with respect to both nonstandard and standard varieties of these languages. The school can counteract resistance to the learning of one or both languages - resistance which might result from difficulties in acquiring and using them - only by relying on the joy that the learning of a language can provide if the self-motivation function of developing language skills is taken advantage of. This function is the most significant motivation expedient in any serviceable teaching system, which is revealed by as rapid as possible a process after which the "new" speaker is capable and qualified to verify the results of the work put in (namely the learning of language) within the framework of actual communication by participating successfully in the speech situation that requires the use of the language he/she is learning.

The curriculum for teaching Croatian or Serbian as the second language (i.e. the language of the social environment) takes into account the linguistic situation in the social community and devotes its basic part to the task of training the students to become integrated with direct communication practice, enabling them to gain well-rounded skills as soon as possible. At this point, two tasks quoted in the curriculum must in particular be singled out for special mention, viz.:

- **Task no. 1:** That students be introduced into the communication using the Croatian or Serbian language, and that they gain the skills necessary for participating in all the communication situations that are realized in that language;

- **Task no. 8:** That students qualify for communication with their coevals who speak Croatian or Serbian as their native language, and later also for communication with their entire social environment. Finally, that students be qualified for taking active part in the currents of our self-managing socialist society also in the Croatian or Serbian language.

(**Gazette of the Republic Committee on Education, Culture, Physical and Technical Culture of SR Croatia, No. 3, Zagreb, 9 April 1985**)

The former of the preceding two tasks in fact centers on the integrated nature of language use, whereas the latter discusses the strict application of the principle of gradualness in language learning. The syntagm - also in the Croatian or Serbian language indicates that the instructional program is implemented in the social community that tends to have an integrally bilingual character.

As given in the program (or in the curriculum), the integrality of language use is built on several levels. The first, which

focuses on the student, breaks down speech activities into four distinct aspects of the overall speech behavior, viz., listening, speaking, reading and writing. The first two of these are the groundwork for the initial stage of language learning, a prerequisite for the student's successful coping with the other two which, naturally, during later stages of the learning process come to play the central role in the course of linguistic self-education.

Assessing the student's pre-instructional experience formed in the stage of spontaneous language learning via listening, the curriculum pays special attention to developing this very aspect of the student's linguistic competence. Active listening enables him/her to get acquainted with and then to acquire all the values inherent in the spoken language, comprising all those language functions which can be expressed through sound.

It is by guided listening that the student effectuates the speech activity, comprehending either globally or individually the factors making up a given speech situation. This in turn fosters the development of receptive linguistic skills and hence promotes the possibility of integrating the student into actual social communication. Conversation represents the basic form of social speech actualization. The orientation of the curriculum toward qualifying the student for communication practice can be followed in several ways and from different viewpoints, for instance, in terms of the order of introducing language units with respect to the selection of lexical items, and the like. Here, however, it seems best to cite in full the first sentence appearing in the curriculum unit entitled Conversation, which forms part of the chapter Speaking, itself incorporated in the part entitled Speech Activities. We quote the first sentence as given for each of the eight elementary-school grades.

The First Grade: Establishing speech contact with one's classmates and with the teacher, in basic communication situations of classroom life and games.

The Second Grade: Accomplishing speech contact with one's classmates and with the teacher, in all the communication situations of classroom life.

The Third Grade: Accomplishing speech contact beyond classroom situations.

The Fourth Grade: Accomplishing speech contact in the communication situations associated with traveling and trips.

The Fifth Grade: Accomplishing speech contact in communication situations beyond the classroom, i.e. out of school.

The Sixth Grade: Accomplishing speech contact in situations associated with social and economic characteristics of the area in question (maritime affairs, tourism, agriculture).

The Seventh Grade: Accomplishing speech contact in communication situations related to cultural performances, sports events, and the like, whether in school or elsewhere.

The Eighth Grade: Accomplishing speech contact in situations related to socio-political aspects of school life and of the social environment.

Of course, this list is not intended to exclude other communication situations in which language activities are carried out. It simply stresses the gradual broadening of thematic complexes in those contents of student speech by which language activities follow the integration of an individual into the framework of broader social interaction and illustrate the societal and socializing function of knowledge of a second language (language of the social environment).

The integrality of language use subsumes utilizing the language in all of its many-sided complex functions. It would be wrong not to include under this heading reflections on sociolinguistic conditions and consequences of introducing the student to the expressive and poetic functions of the second language. To do this, however, would mean to beg a host of questions, among which the dominant ones appear to be the relations between the mother tongue and the second language as subjects of instruction, and in this respect the function of the second language in the actualization of creative language use making part of an individual's speech production, and the participation in the cultural life and cultural heritage of a social community whenever the language used to achieve that aim is the student's second language. Therefore these questions refer not only to school, as they are by nature to the same extent also social and linguistic.

In the total instructional process conducted in the student's mother tongue, the nature of things is such that the central concern is fostering and developing such complex skills as those which emanate from the interrelationship between speech and thought. This is the language in which the student attains cognition and expresses himself/herself, the world, and his being within the macrocosm. It is important to note that this does not happen because of the concrete idiom in question, but rather because the developmental nature of language and the relevant psycho-mental functions interact. In other words, the fundamental thing here is the student's overall language behavior and not the idiom she/he employs while learning it. On the other hand, the reception of a linguistic message is conditioned, among other things, by the degree to which the receiver's language skills have developed. They too are dynamically interrelated. Such questions are dealt with by sciences such as psycholinguistics, developmental psychology, language pedagogy, language teaching methodology, and others. Suffice it here to establish the fact that there is no reason that expression or reception should be linked to the idiom; they should be related to linguistic competence in that idiom. It follows from this that the student is able to express himself/herself also in the second language provided she/he possesses the means of linguistic expression and on condition that the language repertoire she/he has internalized is structured in such a manner as to enable the formation of creative combinations of linguistic units, so that the message realized through them functions as language expression. If we accept the view that each and every message, regardless of its structural complexity and semantic range, is considered creative

whenever it represents a personal choice of a linguistic expedient used to communicate a personal experience, the beginnings of creativity in language can be traced as far back as the initial stage of second-language learning. In this context, we can regard as an example of language creativity a novel, functional intonation pattern applied to a previously adopted unit of the referential code of the type, "This is a toy," provided that the intonation imparts a new, contextually appropriate meaning to the utterance. Likewise, choosing a felicitous adjective which, when actually used in the language-expression process becomes an epithet rather than keeping its former function of an attribute, can also be judged an instance of language creativity. In other words, the degree of the development of language competence required for giving actual shape to a substantial semantic base by using the means of language expression will come sooner the less we wait for it to come. This fact derives from the nature of language medium that manifests itself in the self-motivation function of fostering linguistic skills: the use of language creates the need for acquiring new linguistic units by which semantic units containing the communicated reality can be expressed; the level of linguistic competence thus attained opens up the possibility of internalizing a novel linguistic expedient. The spiral of increasing internalized units is a process that goes on throughout a person's lifetime.

On this basis, the students are introduced - right from the initial stage of second-language learning - to the expressive and poetic functions of the second language. This is not in opposition to the hitherto highlighted communicological orientation in second-language learning; rather, these are directions of one and the same course, because they are parts of the same whole - integrated language use. Proportions of language material proper to this or that orientation and the precise delimitation of their function are elements that have a decisive role here. This can be explained in the following way: if the teacher is in the situation of having to choose one of the semantically related verbs, say, *teči* (English: run, flow) and *zboriti* (English: babble, burble), she/he will doubtless explain to the students the thematic verb *teči*, but without failing to take account of the onomatopoeic value of a running mountain stream. Here, like in the case of the other components of language learning, the point in question is first and foremost the principles of functionality, appropriateness and gradualness of methods, expedients, and the contents of subjects that are to be taught.

It will have become clear by now that the students of a second language are to be introduced to the literature written in that language, right from the start. This, however, does not give us grounds to conclude that it is only the second-language subject of instruction that is used as a vehicle - the sole vehicle - for communicating knowledge of literature and of the other forms of non-material culture expressible in the language of the social environment. After gaining the basic literary education as well as literary sensitivity in the mother tongue, the student supplements it and deepens it in the second language as the subject of instruction by applying his/her mother-tongue accomplishments; the extent to which this can be achieved

corresponds with the extent to which the advanced or not-so-advanced degree of his/her linguistic basis allows for the reception of a literary-artistic text (whereby the linguistic basis develops further). The matter in question is therefore a markedly complex body of instructional and non-instructional questions which are much easier to solve in theory than in teaching practice. The socio-culturological truth that the most integrated knowledge about a nation and its customs can - apart from life in the national community concerned - be derived from its literature clashes with the teaching practice imposing curricula, school equipment, and especially school libraries and what they supply.

The complexity of this situation can be illustrated by adducing the policy of presenting literary texts in each of the two languages as given in each of the curricula: national literary works created in Yugoslavia and in the mother country of the language in question are in the mother tongue; works belonging to world literature appear translated into the language of the nationality; part of works making up the literature of the Yugoslav peoples and belonging to the Yugoslav core-section of the program as well as certain other works of Yugoslav authors which are either traditional parts of the program (thus time-tested) or just happen to have been translated, form part of the body of translated literature.

Works included in the program of Croatian or Serbian as the second language were entered according to the following criteria: from the results of the comparative analysis in which students attending the schools where teaching is conducted in the languages of the nationalities made decisions on reading matter making up part one of the reading program from among standard works figuring in the syllabuses covering the integral instruction in the Croatian or Serbian language and which the authors of the syllabuses estimated to be linguistically accessible to the age-group for which they were intended, and from that part of the Yugoslav educational core program which was not included in the mother-tongue program. It follows from the above that students are introduced to the literature of the Yugoslav peoples and nationalities both in their mother tongue and in the second language (i.e. Croatian or Serbian). Whether this is good or bad has yet to be shown by a scientific assessment of both the conception and the implementation of the program. One thing is certain, however: if a second language is acquired only according to curricula and actual teaching, knowledge of this language is such that it cannot be used successfully and integrally in the learning of the literature written in Croatian or Serbian - to fulfill the requirement or rather the truism that it is best to learn literature in the language in which it was originally written, and on the other hand, to be in agreement with the opinion that the emotive-aesthetic and other riches inherent in a literary-artistic text make it the most valuable treasury of the given language, and that certain characteristics of some texts (such as melodiousness and rhythm) make the literary-artistic text very suitable for use in language learning, as it facilitates the learning of language. Of special importance is the fact that one's incorporation into the integrated communication practice carried out in the given language subsumes participation in all

the aspects of social interaction occurring in that language, thus including the literary-artistic text in terms of its reception and communication about it.

Such a command of a second language would indicate that full bilingualism has been achieved by all the members of a given community. Second-language instruction can contribute significantly to such an optimum state of language affairs, but it cannot attain it by acting in isolation from other socio-cultural factors. Suffice it therefore to add here only a few observations on its orientation:

Second-language instruction does away with the need for the vertical stratification of language use with respect to the idiom (i.e., division into an official idiom and an idiom serving private purposes). This means that diglossia would emerge only with horizontal strata, representing a geographically conditioned transition from a bilingual linguistic community to a monolingual one, that is, to another bilingual community with an identical language and another new language combined in communication practice.

Good second-language instruction in bilingual communities dispenses with the need for a socially motivated alteration (change of the idiom-code in communication practice), but amply provides for the linguistic expedients necessary for the change of code-idiom whenever the participants in communication find it suitable for personal reasons.

Note

1. Kriz, J., 1983, "Program domaće lektire u osnovnim školama na jezicima narodnosti" (Reading Program for National Literature in the Elementary Schools with Nationalities' Languages as the languages of instruction), *Obrazovanje i rad*, No.3.