

ARTICLE

Bilingualism and Culture: Psycholinguistic Aspect

Veronika Viktorovna Katermina^{1*} Olga Logutenkova²

1. Kuban State University, Russia

2. Candidate of Philology, Cyprus, Paphos

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 24 April 2020

Accepted: 28 April 2020

Published Online: 30 April 2020

Keywords:

Bilingualism

One-person-one-language

The language of the family is the language of society

Folklore-linguistic picture of the world

Linguistic and cultural potential

ABSTRACT

The development of bilingualism of a bilingual child is inextricably linked with the formation of an individual folklore-linguistic picture of the world. In this regard, proverbs, sayings, riddles and folk phraseology as universal phenomena of folklore of the Russian and Greek languages, which have important linguistic and cultural potential, are of particular interest from the point of view of their presence in the bilingual speech and thought activity. The quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the functioning of paremiological and phraseological units in a bilingual speech determine the content of folklore language worldview and directly depend on the type of formation of the child's early bilingualism. Phraseological and paremiological composition of the folklore picture of the world of natural Russian-Greek bilinguals is asymmetric and directly depends on the type of early bilingualism – in bilinguals who learn two languages on the principle of “one-person-one-language”, asymmetry prevails in favor of the Greek language, children from Russian-speaking families whose bilingualism develops according to the principle “family language is the language of society” exhibit better knowledge of Russian folklore elements compared to Greek.

1. Introduction

The early practice of the simultaneous use of several languages in communication has a significant impact on the formation of the brain. The brain of an early bilingual grows and develops under the influence of the need to distinguish between speech signals of different languages, organize speech material, switch from one code to another one^[1,3,4].

Early mastery of languages starts the formation of neural ensembles necessary for the quick solution of the problem of choosing an option directly in the process of implementing a program of activities, both verbal and non-verbal^[8]. A monolingual brain cannot activate a similar neural ensemble in solving such problems. In general,

compared with the brain of a monolingual, the bilingual brain is more plastic and dynamic, it is able to instantly switch from one type of activity to another, work in a multifunctional mode^[9,10].

The relevance of the topic is due to the growing importance of bilingual communication in conditions of close linguistic contact between ethnic groups in the modern world, as well as the wide and active nature of Russian-Greek bilingualism, caused by the growth dynamics of Russian-speaking immigration in Cyprus, which determines its mass character. At the same time, along with the processes associated with the globalization of society, the tendency to preserve the cultural, and, first of all, linguistic roots of modern communities living in bilingualism

*Corresponding Author:

Veronika Viktorovna Katermina,

Kuban State University, Russia;

Email: veronika.katermina@yandex.ru

becomes apparent, which causes interest in the problems of the functioning of the elements of the folklore space within the worldview of the Russian-Greek bilinguals. In this regard, problems of an ethnocultural nature are of increasing interest to researchers and the study of the folklore-linguistic picture of the world is of particular importance, since it is in this fragment of the linguistic picture of the world of any people that its culture and history are concentrated, and, therefore, folklore units carry a special pragmatic-cultural load^[2].

2. Methodology

The quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the functioning of paremiological and phraseological units in a bilingual speech determine the content of folklore language worldview and directly depend on the type of formation of the child's early bilingualism, developing depending on the strategy of cultural and linguistic behavior chosen by the parents ("one-person-one-language" or "the language of the family is the language of society" models), which is the leading factor determining the structure of folklore language worldview of bilinguals. Associated factors include the dominant language of society, the general cognitive abilities of the individual, his psychological characteristics, etc^[5,6].

The psycholinguistic experiment was carried out in several stages at each stage of the study and included the method of directed associative experiment, the method of completion without a given set of reactions, and the method of subjective definition. At the stage of analyzing the experimental data, we simultaneously used a post-experimental conversation with informants^[7].

The algorithm includes a series of steps: processing the questionnaires, quantifying the answers received depending on the type of bilingualism and the study language, bringing the data into uniformity, assigning an adequacy score for the interpretation of the parameters, drawing up summary tables and diagrams of the received data. a series of psycholinguistic experiments, including several stages, which were carried out on the basis of the Russian school of Paphos with the participation of Russian-Greek bilinguals from 2015 to 2018. In total, 4 experiments were carried out, each of which was aimed, respectively, at revealing the peculiarities of the proverbs and sayings, folk signs, folklore riddles, and folk idioms in the folklore worldview of bilinguals.

3. Results

Paremiias and phraseological units possess the highest communicative value, the structural-semantic equivalence

of which does not coincide in the languages being compared – these are language units containing toponymic components, names of saints and other proper names, as well as paremiias and phraseological units that reflect historical events, customs. It is precisely such paremiological and phraseological units that were of the greatest interest for our experimental study, since, being distinguished by significant national and cultural features, they play a special role in the formation of folklore worldview of bilinguals.

Experiment No. 1 devoted to identifying the features of the proverbial fragment of the folklore worldview of bilinguals included three stages. At the first stage, the informants were asked to write down any proverbs and sayings of the thematic groups "Time" and "Money" in Russian and Greek.

The second stage of the experiment included questioning with the omission of lexical units; in the third stage, we used the subjective definition technique, which is widely used in psycholinguistic studies of recent years. The bilinguals were offered Russian and then Greek paremiias of the thematic groups "Money" and "Time" (15 units of each group in each language), who needed to give a brief descriptive explanation in an abstract (abstract from the literal meaning) form. The results of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of respondents' answers at all three stages of experiment No. 1 allowed us to come to the following conclusions:

(1) The composition and structure of the proverbial fragment of the folklore picture of the world, presented by the thematic groups "Time" and "Money", varies depending on the type of early bilingualism. Bilinguals 1 demonstrate a higher level of proficiency in Greek phraseological units with a significantly lower level of proficiency in Russian phraseological units compared to bilinguals 2.

(2) Most of the reactions of the second stage of the experiment were speech variants that were as close as possible to the linguistic form of phraseological units, for example: *Each vegetable (variation – fruit) has its own time; You cannot buy the mind for money (variations – you will not receive, you will not get, you will not change)*. Nevertheless, reactions that went beyond the limits of normative variation were recorded in 12%, deforming not only the form of phraseological units, but also their semantic content, for example, *The spoon for lunch and red egg for dinner are precious; Chickens with hens count; If you miss a minute, everything will be lost*.

(3) The answers of the third task of the experiment, assuming a free interpretation of paremiias, are more varied among representatives of the 1st type of bilingualism which may indicate both a more developed creative think-

ing of the bilinguals of this group and the lack of fear of error, which is inherent in mono-ethnic bilinguals regarding the Greek language.

(4) The recorded cases of code switching within the same sentence are more characteristic of bilinguals 1 (85%) and, in our opinion, are a sign of balanced bilingualism. For example: *Who wants money, he does not sleep day and night. – He has a psychology (this is in Greek).* The mark in brackets is made by the student, the specified Greek word indicates the presence of psychological problems. *To the late guest – bones. – You will be late – you will remain νηστικός (hungry).* The translation strategy, which is mainly used by bilinguals from mono-ethnic families when defining the Greek language phraseological units, indicates the interfering and stimulating role of the Russian language in the speech activity of bilinguals 2. For example: *ήο σήμερα είναι νωρίς, τ'άριο αργά θα είναι. – Today is early, tomorrow will be late; Ο καιρός είναι γιατρός (Time is a doctor), etc.*

(5) The level of paremiological competence of bilinguals depends not only on the amount of language material (input) received in educational and everyday discourse, but also on the general level of the child's cognitive and speech development, its ability to correlate the general and particular, the external image and the internal content of proverbs and sayings.

In experiment No. 2, aimed at identifying the features of the fragment of the folklore language picture of the world, represented by folk signs, informants were asked to continue the started signs (a total of 264 units) containing the observation, the forecast they predicted. The experiment was carried out in several stages. At the first stage, bilinguals worked only with signs of the Russian language, at the second stage – in 6 weeks – with signs of the Greek language. In both cases, the task was accompanied by a request to answer the following question: do the bilinguals and their families adhere to the beliefs indicated by putting the corresponding signs “+” (yes) and “-” (no).

Quantitative and qualitative processing of the experimental results allowed us to draw the following conclusions:

(1) Greek folk signs, observed by bilinguals in life, accounted for a larger percentage compared to Russians, which is explained by the respondents' better knowledge of the signs characteristic of the Greek-speaking society as a whole. As the analysis showed, the most relevant are signs about money, among which the most popular in the analyzed case are the following: *If you throw out the trash after six in the evening, there will be no money; If you count the money after sunset, you will be left without money; Αν σε τρώει το δεξί σου χέρι θα δώσεις χρήματα (If*

the right palm itches, you will give money); Αν σε τρώει το αριστερό σου χέρι θα πάρεις χρήματα (If you scratch your left palm, you will get money), etc. In the second place in both languages are signs indicating the unfavorable nature of the forecast, which is formulated in an extremely abstract way: *bad, unfortunately, to failure.* The most popular sign was a black cat. The results of the experiment showed a higher percentage of knowledge of Greek everyday and natural folk signs, due primarily to the fact that Greek is dominant in the language environment of the bilinguals participating in the experiment. Moreover, in general, students showed a low level of knowledge of signs in both languages, and household signs in both cases were better known to them than natural ones.

(2) Among the signs of the Russian language that were unmistakably continued by bilinguals, 70% belong to the signs that we selected as a group of absolute equivalents (AE) for Russian and Greek, while absolute equivalents of the Greek language were continued correctly in 45%. The greatest difficulty in completing the task was caused by weather and calendar signs, for example: *If it's sunny in winter, winter will be late. / Αν της Υπαπαντής έχει ήλιο, ακολουθεί χειμώνας όψιμος; If the month is in a dull haze, there will be bad weather. / Όταν το φεγγάρι σκεπάζεται από ομίχλη, θα έχουμε κακοκαιρία; If the sun is in a dim white haze, it will rain. / Όταν ο ήλιος είναι άσπρος και θαμπός, θα έρθει βροχή; If the stars flicker strongly, there will be inclement weather. / Άμα παίζουν τ'αστρα, θα έχουμε κακοκαιρία.* At the same time, weather and household signs related to certain animal behavior were quite well known to bilinguals: *Καλός οιωμός θεωρείται και ότι θα έχουμε ευτυχία αν δούμε το ουράνιο τόξο. / If you see a rainbow in the sky – you will find joy; Όταν πετούν χαμηλά τα χελιδόνια, τότε θα βρέξει. / If the swallows fly low, it will rain; Αν νίβεται η γάτα σου θα σου έρθουν ζένοι. / If the cat is washing, there will be guests, etc.* Despite the fact that these signs were continued correctly, as the survey showed, they are not relevant in the life of bilinguals, unlike household ones, which, according to the answers, are kept by members of the informant family (for example, *Όταν μπαίνει κάποιος για πρώτη φορά στο σπίτι σου, να μπει με το δεξί, για να σου πάνε όλα καλά! / When you enter the house for the first time, you need to do it with your right leg, then everything will be OK).*

(3) Signs representing semantic equivalents accounted for 22% of the total number of correct answers in Russian and 30% of the total number of correct answers in Greek, with the vast majority of correct predictions being given in cases of household signs. The second part of many natural signs was repeated for the most varied cases of observation, proving our assumption that, without sufficient

ethnocultural knowledge in the field of folk natural-calendar signs, bilinguals will substitute any propositions known to them: *it will rain, it will be hot, it will be cold, θα έχει καλό καιρό (the weather will be fine), θα βρέξει (it will rain).*

(4) Partial equivalent signs accounted for 9% of all correctly continued paremiological units given to bilinguals in Russian, and 15% in Greek. For example, a Russian sign *If the right eyelid is twitching, you will receive good news*, many continued incorrectly, suggesting the Greek version of the sign: *Αν έλλεται το δεξί σου μάτι θα δεις αγαπημένο πρόσωπο (If the right eyelid is twitching, you will meet your love).* Another sign: *If you put a thing inside out – you will be beaten (or you will experience other troubles)* in 50 cases was continued like “no one will give you an evil eye” that is the way Greeks and Cypriots say – *Αν φορέσουμε τα ρούχα μας από την ανάποδη πλευρά σημαίνει ότι δεν πρόκειται να μας πιάσουν κατάρες.*

(5) Among the signs that have no equivalents in the languages under consideration there were only 10 correct answers in Russian and 18 answers in Greek. The largest number of correct answers (89%) in this group was received by the first part of the signs *Το χύσιμο του καφέ θεωρείται καλός οϊωνός (Spilling your coffee is good luck).*

Experiment 3 was aimed at determining the degree of understanding by children aged 11-12 of the metaphorical traditional and modern riddles of the Russian and Greek languages with different principles of metaphorization and conceptualization. The following phenomena and objects of the natural world acted as enigmatists: *rain, snow, wind, thunder, sun, month, stars, day and night, cloud, sea, stream.* The choice of such topics for the experiment is not accidental – reflecting the universal human realities of the world around us, each of the hidden phenomena reveals in the enigmatic texts of different peoples ethnospecific features of the worldview, different ways of dividing the world.

Since each riddle is based on a metaphor an analysis of bilingual guesses allows us to draw certain conclusions about the relationship between the images of Russian and Greek language pictures in the linguistic consciousness of bilinguals. Considering the reactions of bilinguals as a reflection of the degree of systematic images of the world that actually exist in their minds, we can conclude that the folklore picture of the bilingual world 1 combines more traditional images of two cultures, while bilinguals 2 demonstrate signs of the dominance of Russian culture. So, among the frequent responses of bilinguals of the last group to the riddle about the sun A golden cheesecake rolls, no one will get it – neither the king, nor the queen,

nor the red girl we meet such as a magic ball, a barrel with his mother and son from the fairy tale by A.S. Pushkin. Also, among few answers to the Greek riddle about the month *Επάνω από σπίτι μας χαλί στρωμένο με καρύδια και στη μέση μια κούπα μέλι (There is a carpet covered with nuts, and in the middle there is a cup with honey) a piece of wood in the middle of our culture)* were such cases which have a direct reference to the images of Russian traditional culture: *an island in the sea, a tablecloth with refreshments, a carpet-plane.* Despite the fact that the percentage of correctly guessed traditional Russian riddles turned out to be very low, the ability of schoolchildren to independently create metaphorical images, somehow prompted by the text of this genre, deserves special attention. The most illustrative example of the figurative thinking of the children participating in the experiment is, in our opinion, the poetic image of human souls, recorded in 4 answers, which was caused by the riddle about the stars: *Peas are scattered along 70 roads. Nobody collects: neither the king nor the queen, only God alone (about the stars).*

The number of correct answers to traditional Greek riddles averaged 65%, which significantly exceeds the percentage of correctly guessed Russian folk riddles. This fact can be explained by the fact that Greek folk riddles did not undergo such noticeable transformations as the corresponding Russian texts, and are used in pre-school and school education in their original unchanged form, which predetermined the knowledge of answers by schoolchildren to many riddles included in the experiment. So, actualized in Greek riddles about rain, stream, cloud, etc. traditional metaphors are firmly entrenched in the linguistic consciousness of bilingualism, since the language for the most part lacks equivalents that could be generated by modern images.

Experiment No. 4, the purpose of which was to identify the peculiarities of the phraseological fragment of folklore language picture of the world of bilinguals, was carried out on the basis of folk phraseology using subjective definition methodology out of context (stage 1) and in context (stage 2) and classification of the considered phraseological units according to their level of representations in the passive language dictionary of bilinguals. In accordance with the instructions at the first stage of the experiment, the informants were required to give their own explanation of the proposed phraseological units (totaling 80 units) and choose one of the following options: 1) this phraseological unit was encountered by you for the first time; 2) you heard it, but do not know its meaning; 3) this phraseological unit is familiar to you.

A quantitative analysis of the results showed that the

sum of the points measuring the degree of students' acquaintance with the phraseological units of the Greek language significantly exceeds the number of points in relation to Russian phraseological units, while the opposite situation is observed in the group of mono-ethnic bilinguals. At the second stage of experiment No. 4, bilinguals were offered to explain the meaning of 40 phraseological units of the Russian and Greek languages in the context γ .

In the course of a qualitative analysis of the obtained experimental material, we established a number of semantic and structural features of the presented subjective definitions depending on the type of early bilingualism, which can be summarized as follows:

(1) Features of the semantic content of phraseological units reflected in the linguistic representation of the definitions of the subjects indicate different levels of understanding of these linguistic units by mono-ethnic and bi-ethnic bilinguals: the meaning of Russian phraseological units was explained in most cases correctly by bilinguals 2, and the meaning of Greek by bilinguals 1, regardless of the context

(2) For bilinguals 2, phraseology definitions are more characteristic (defining one phraseologism by means of another, synonymous with the first) when explaining the phraseological units of the Russian language, the reason for which we see in a higher level of proficiency in units of the Russian phraseological fund with mono-ethnic bilinguals: to brew porridge – to break wood; to fool around – to beat the buck, etc.

(3) Bilinguals 2 actively use slang which is explained by a higher level of communication skills of bilinguals of this type in Russian language and the presence of appropriate speech experience

(4) Bilinguals of both groups often resort to a translation strategy when defining phraseological units, which, obviously, is aimed at saving speech efforts and language means

(5) The reactions of bilinguals 1 are distinguished by more detailed definitions, numerous refinements, and personal examples.

(6) Representatives of bio-ethnic and mono-ethnic bilingualism demonstrate a different level of proficiency in phraseological and paremiological units of the Greek and Russian languages, therefore the content and means of explication of the folklore language picture of the world of the bi-ethnic and mono-ethnic bilingual possess unique characteristics along with the general ones. The main difference is the asymmetry of the verbalized cultural-national images and stereotypes of Russian and Greek linguistic cultures represented in the linguistic consciousness of bilinguals. Thus, bilinguals, whose bilingualism was formed

according to the “one parent – one language” model, are more influenced by Greek and Cypriot cultures in comparison with bilinguals who receive language experience in the family exclusively in Russian (non-dominant), which facilitates the formation of the paremiological and phraseological competence of representatives of the first group in Greek and determines the stimulating and interfering role of Greek linguistic culture in the structure of folklore language picture of the world. Representatives of bilingualism, formed according to the model “family language – the language of society”, are characterized by the opposite situation with the dominance of characteristics of Russian linguistic culture in the folklore language picture of the world

4. Conclusion

Knowledge of two languages does not always mean the same knowledge of the cultural and, in particular, folklore code of these languages. So, in our case, natural Russian-Greek bilinguals born in interethnic families found a significantly lower percentage of knowledge of Russian folklore concepts compared to Greek ones, i.e. the “one parent – one language” tactics chosen by the family is not necessarily a guarantee of a symmetrically formed folklore picture of the world, in which the functional balance of the folklore language units of both bilingual languages would be respected. The limited speech experience of a bilingual child in a language that is not dominant in a particular language group deprives him of the ability to fully absorb the linguistic material necessary for active speech generation in all its diversity. At the same time, empirical material showed that in the folklore picture of the world of children from monolingual Russian-speaking families, stereotypical images typical of the Russian language picture predominate, which again indicates an imbalance in the components of the bilingual folklore picture of the world. This conclusion indicates that the basis of the folklore language picture of the bilingual world, which presupposes the knowledge of two languages and necessarily contains ethnospecific components of both linguistic cultures, is formed primarily in the family as a result of the strategy of cultural and linguistic behaviour chosen by the parents. Parental linguistic input in each of the acquired bilingual languages determines the appropriate level of proficiency in this language by the child, forming the language picture of the world; the involvement of culturally-specific components of each of the linguistic cultures to a relatively equal extent, among which the decisive role belongs to the folklore genres, contributes to the establishment of a balanced folklore language picture of the world, which is further influenced by additional factors.

References

- [1] Bialystok E.. *Bilingualism in Development: Language, Literacy, and Cognition*[M]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- [2] Bloomfield L.. *Language*[M]. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933.
- [3] Cantone K.F., Kupisch T., Müller N., Schmitz K.. Rethinking language dominance in bilingual children[J]. *Linguistische Berichte*, 2008, 215: PP. 307-343.
- [4] Gathercole V.C. Kennedy I., & Thomas E. M.. Socioeconomic level and bilinguals' performance on language and cognitive measures[J]. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*. 2016, 1: 1-22.
- [5] Grosjean F.. Another view of bilingualism[J]. *Cognitive Processing in Bilinguals*. 1992, 83: 51–62.
- [6] Hornby P.. *Bilingualism. Psychological, Social, and Educational Implications*[M]. New York: Academic Press, 1977.
- [7] Kim A., Park A. & Lust B.. Simultaneous vs. successive bilingualism among preschool-aged children: a study of four-year-old Korean–English bilinguals in the USA[J]. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 2016. URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/>
- [8] Pinker S.. *The Language Instinct*[M]. New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 1994.
- [9] Romaine S.. *Bilingualism*[M]. UK: Blackwell, 1995.
- [10] Skutnabb-Kangas T.. *Bilingualism or not: the education of minorities*[M]. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1981.