

MULTILINGUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN FRENCH AND GERMAN LANGUAGE TEACHING DEPARTMENTS

Mehmet BAŞTÜRK

Department of Foreign Languages,
Balıkesir University, Balıkesir/Turkey
basturk_100@yahoo.fr

Recep GULMEZ

Department of Foreign Languages
Sorbonne-Nouvelle Paris 3, Paris/France
recep.gulmez@etud.sorbonne-nouvelle.fr

Abstract: The objective of the present paper is to shed light on multilingual learning environment in French and German language teaching departments in Turkish universities. The students in these departments are mostly the ones that take university entrance exam, national baccalaureate, and a test in English. They start to learn French and/or German using Turkish. In our study, we suggest that they can acquire these languages by means of using their first foreign language, English, which has typological (syntactical and lexical) similarities instead of using Turkish, which is not of the same family of languages. It is found that using English to teach French/German, therefore, instead of Turkish as a medium of communication in the class, creates a multilingual learning environment, which facilitates vocabulary learning, maintains input permanence, help think and act in that language due to typological features. As shortcomings, it is indicated that false-friends and teachers' lack of English are obstacles to create a multilingual learning environment.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Third Language, Language Integrated Learning, Language Acquisition

Introduction

The effect of globalization is today deeply felt in many areas from politics to education especially when it comes to linguistic studies for language is one's identity which man exposes and speaks within a limited space. While this globalization is ending the frontiers, multilingualism is becoming more and more common. In education, the focus of the researches on multilingualism is how to develop curriculum in a multilingual teaching environment, how to teach languages in multilingual context and how content and language integrated learning atmosphere can be built. So, competence in one language is no more desirable and being proficient in some of the most widely spoken languages is required to get a well-paid job. The phenomenon, multilingualism, is not novel in the federal or multicultural countries but it is so in nation-states where one language is legally required and respected in education. These countries regard multilingual education as a threat to their constitutional structures while multilingualism is overly considered by most European countries to be a crucial part of the union and therefore to be spread all over Europe.

With the advent of content and language integrated learning model (CLIL), foreign languages other than mother tongue are taught easily and without any waste of time. The aim of this type of learning is to teach a subject, for instance, mathematics in a foreign language and this will make it possible to teach that foreign language together with mathematics, which will gain the teacher a lot of time and energy. In this model, the content, let's say, is mathematics and the language is not the mother tongue assuming it to be French. The goal is to economize the expenses of a teacher and hire a teacher that can teach subjects, French and mathematics in the example above. This way, the student gets immersed in an environment where foreign language integrated into the content is dominant. In this case, teachers are required to be competent in both language and subject he is to teach.

In addition, in the countries like Canada to which there is quite much immigration, there exist a number of students of different origins and backgrounds in a class. Their mother tongues are all

different from each other. They strive to understand and learn the language and culture of the country where they are in. In this case, a CLIL environment is needed. The aim of this paper is to create a learning environment where French is taught by means of English which Turkish students in the department of French and German Language Teaching acquire for several years. Due to the similarities and cross-linguistic influence of French, German and English, we think that French and German can best be taught through English, which we assume to be a medium of instruction.

Multilingualism and Cross-Linguistic Studies

Multilingualism and multilingual acquisition are widespread and not only in officially recognized bilingual and multilingual communities but all over the world. Multilingualism means having a competence of two or more than two languages. Bilingualism is therefore seen as multilingualism. According to double monolingualism hypothesis, Herdina and Jessner (2002) regard bilingualism as the sum of two monolinguals in one person with two separate language competences or in other words, bilinguals being regarded as two monolinguals in one person. Cenoz and Genesee (1998) have the prevailing concept that multilingualism and multilingual acquisition are complex phenomena because they can occur simultaneously or successively, formally (through instruction) or naturally (outside school) and in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood.

Learning an additional language after mother tongue is very easy for those who already know a second language than for monolinguals. In other words, there is positive transfer from second language learning to learning additional languages especially when the relevant languages are cognate and when there are similarities between these languages. In the case of English, French and German, three Indo-European languages, we see a lot of lexical and syntactical similarities which result in positive cross-linguistic transfers. Möhle (1989) and Singleton (1987) confirm that there is evidence for cross-linguistic transfer in multilingual acquisition when the languages involved are similar with respect to phonetic structure, vocabulary and syntax. For example, learners of French and English who have already acquired a non-Indo-European first language (in our case, Turkish is the first language of those studying in the department of French and German Language Teaching) tend to transfer vocabulary and structures from other Indo-European languages they know rather than from their first language (Ahukanna et al., 1981; Ringbom, 1987; Singh & Carroll, 1979). On the other hand, positive cross-linguistic influences have been found in the study of Hammarberg and Williams (1993) conducting a longitudinal study of the acquisition of Swedish as a third language by a native speaker of English who was also proficient in German and could speak some French. They observed cross-linguistic influence from English, German, and French when acquiring Swedish without formal instruction.

As clearly seen above, cognate languages are learned easily notably when the similarities and positive transfers from one language to another are considered to be influential and contributive factors in the acquisition of a new foreign language. In French and German Language Teaching departments, the students try to acquire these languages after passing the national baccalaureate exam generally in English. They get a year of preparation for learning the basic of these languages. The more they are involved in the novel language, the more lexical, syntactical similarities they recognize between English they have already acquired and French/German they are to learn in order to become teachers. After their bachelor degree studies, they strive to become multilingual and this multilingualism is formed very hard because of the lack of methodology and teacher's insufficient competence in the other foreign language. This language is generally English. In multilingualism whereby the students of French and German are third language learners, Ringbom (2001) and De Angelis and Selinker (2001) state that L2 status plays a crucial role in the third language acquisition like the role the first language plays in second language. It is widely known that under specific conditions being bilingual can have tremendous advantages, not only in terms of linguistic competence but also in terms of cognitive and social development (Jessner, 2006). The languages already acquired can have roles in the acquisition of a third language (Williams & Hammarberg 1998; Hammarberg 2001). Bilinguals learn a third language better than the monolinguals as the former

already know how to learn a language while the latter encounter problems during the acquisition of a third language. A monolingual is not experienced with learning a language other than his first language while a bilingual has been subject to all kinds of difficulties during his second language acquisition. In multilingualism, Jessner (2006) states, proficiency in third language depends mostly on a dynamic model, which is made possible through a cumulative learning of languages ($L1+L2+Ln+CLIN+M=MP$ where L1 is mother tongue; L2 is second language; Ln is n number of languages; CLIN is cross linguistic interaction; M is multilingualism factor and MP is multilingual proficiency). As seen clearly above, it is important to recognize the similarities between the target language and already-learned language when it comes to learning a new language.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in French and German Language Teaching Departments

Due to temporal and economic reasons, a subject other than foreign language is taught in the intended foreign language rather than in mother tongue in the classroom environment. This kind of learning is realized based on the content but the instruction is made through a medium of foreign language. The students learn easily the subject and the language at the same time by means of this type of instruction. The general term of this learning is called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which refers to educational settings where a language other than the students' mother tongue is used as medium of instruction (C.D. Puffer, 2007). A whole gamut of terms is in use internationally and nationally (e.g. Content-Based-Instruction (CBI), Bilingual Teaching, Dual Language Programs, English Across the Curriculum). This type of teaching has been going on for several decades in most parts of Europe except in Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Scandinavian countries. With the unification of European countries, Europe is becoming more and more multilingual and linguistic diversity in European countries is respected therefore it become preponderant to create at least bilingual teaching environments. In Europe, while this teaching environment is found mostly on high school or primary school level, it is very hard to observe a multilingual teaching atmosphere at universities.

In Turkey, as most students get into French and German Language Teaching departments with the score from their English test, we think that it is possible to teach them one of these foreign languages with the help of English instead of Turkish, which has no commonality with any of these Indo-European languages. In this case, CLIL methodology plays a key role in teaching foreign languages to those already bilingual. CLIL is widely applied in Canada, a bilingual country especially for those who have just arrived in the country and have been trying to integrate into a bilingual community. We can consider our students in these departments bilingual like those in Canada.

Demographic developments, which have transformed European societies into communities that receive immigrants rather than dispatch emigrants, have begun to undermine the understanding of CLIL, as has the political aim of European integration, embodied in the institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe. The term CLIL covers a wide range of educational practices and settings whose common denominator is that a non-L1 is used in classes (e.g. Snow 1998). In CLIL education, most reasonable thing to do is to find a reservoir of concepts, topics and meaning which can become the object of 'real communication' where natural use of the target language is possible. In this respect, CLIL is the ultimate dream of Communicative Language Teaching (e.g. Brumfit and Johnson 1979) and Task-Based Learning (e.g. Willis 1996) rolled into one: there is no need to design individual tasks in order to foster goal-directed linguistic activity with a focus on meaning above form, since CLIL itself is one huge task which ensures the use of the foreign language for 'authentic communication'. In European context at least, CLIL classrooms are widely seen as a kind of language bath which encourages naturalistic language learning and enhances the development of communicative competence. In other words, CLIL classrooms are seen as environments which

provide opportunities for becoming multilingual and for learning through acquisition rather than through explicit teaching. As CLIL is not based on grammar and vocabulary teaching, it brings an end to the traditional teaching and brings about a way of teaching based on communication.

All in all, we can take into consideration CLIL as today's one of the best way of teaching methods as it is mostly based on practice and communication. CLIL can therefore be applied in language classes, where students already know a language which is close to the target language. In Turkey, notably French and German are taught through Turkish, mother tongue and by means of a method based mostly on grammar and vocabulary. The students are not deeply immersed in the target language. As a result, when they graduate, they rarely express themselves in that language and find jobs easily. With Life Long Learning programs supported by European Council, the students are encouraged to apply CLIL in the classes. This is especially obvious in Comenius program, a program for students of educational sciences, who have a score of 60 in national foreign language exams such as KPDS or UDS. When they get this score, they can teach their own field of study in that language in a school in Europe for 3-6 months. So, it is possible to teach French and German in the departments of French and German Language Teaching with CLIL at the university.

As for the shortcomings of this method applied in French and German Teaching departments, the teachers must have double features. First, they should have linguistic, pedagogical, methodological competence and second, they should have non-linguistic knowledge in teaching. In our case, teachers are good at education and methodology but they lack of English to find similarities and teach French/German comparatively. Proponents of CLIL actually confess to a hidden agenda in this respect: they want to stimulate language awareness as such via teaching in the foreign language. In addition, the learners can be culturally integrated with both languages and have the opportunity to compare and learn better foreign culture and their own cultures alike as long as the sources of languages involved are bilingual and the teacher is capable of teaching both. In French and German Language Teaching Departments, due to the similarities of the languages concerned, the students are easily motivated, learn quicker and better, practice more and interact with other students.

Multilingual Education and Teacher Competencies

Multilingualism is defined as the ability to use and impose knowledge of more than one language. Multilingual education, on the other hand, is made either in a class composing of students whose first languages are all different from each other or in a class where several languages are employed. Today, in the departments of foreign languages, bilingual education is done and the languages consist of the mother tongue of the learners and the target language. For the last two decades, multilingual education has been given an important role in developing language competencies.

An ideal teacher for the twenty-first century is expected to have knowledge of the discipline, the capability to employ a variety of pedagogical methods, communicative effectiveness in the classroom, the ability to develop materials, the ability to design and implement instruments for assessment and evaluation, aptitude for community relations and use of educational technology and motivation while a language teacher of multilingual teacher preparation even in computer-assisted instruction should have language proficiency in both the target language (languages) as well as the learner's language, knowledge of linguistics and multilingualism, an appreciation of the learner's culture and the ability to respond positively to the diversity of behavior in cross-cultural (multicultural) circumstances, competence in a range of instructional methods including appropriate collaborative work, the ability to utilize and adapt curriculum and develop materials, the ability to design assessment procedures for both self and learners, skills in the effective handling of school community relations, demonstration competencies in supervised classroom experience (D. Nunan, A. Lam, 1998). Among the competencies of language teacher mentioned above comes the language proficiency in the first place. To be able to implement an effective multilingual teaching, teacher is to be competent in both languages (learner's first language and second language(s)).

Findings and Discussion

Education in multilingual environment is becoming more and more tenable especially in Europe and Canada. As is widely known, Canada is a bilingual country where multilingual education is commonly done in classes of different ethnicities. Europe and Canada are two of the countries where there is a diversity of immigrants for whom multilingual learning environment is created. An increasing number of multilingual teachers are needed to teach courses in a language spoken and understood by each learner. Today, CLIL model is generally used in European classrooms to teach the target language and the content. CLIL is also the model where language assistants in Comenius program are supposed to use during their traineeship in schools.

It is clear that similarities and positive transfers help create a multilingual learning environment where French and German are taught through a medium of instruction in English, our learners' first foreign language. The fact that teachers of these languages lack of knowledge of the latter and that the sources used to teach these languages are not bilingual, that the students are not subject to multilingual atmosphere where they could practice these languages are some of the deficiencies that could be mentioned. On the other hand, teacher's insufficiency to make comparison of the target language with the source language, to motivate learners by showing the easy aspect of learning a new language, his inability to respond positively to the diversity of behavior in cross-cultural circumstances, his insufficient knowledge of the other cultures can be regarded as in some way the shortcomings of this learning model.

Consequently, in this paper, we suggest that in French and German Language Teaching departments, content and language integrated learning model can be applied; as a source language, instead of Turkish, English, which has a lot of commonalities with the target languages, French and German, should be used by a teacher aware of the similarities to make a comparative teaching. In addition, sources should be prepared in both English and the target language. If these conditions are implemented, a better teaching of these target languages is possible. Moreover, false friends should be taken into consideration and explained to the learners during teaching these languages.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Today, there exist many different languages taught at schools and it is quite easy for a European citizen to learn English, French or German, which are three most important and widely spoken languages at schools just as the Turkish learn easily Uzbek, Azeri or Kazakh. The languages of the same family are easily learned just because these languages have common words and syntactical structures.

In Turkey, as most students in French and German departments learn English as the first foreign language at school, they become already familiar with the former which are cognate with English. Therefore, they do not waste any time with understanding the common structures of these languages and learn easily as long as they receive the right instruction and method. On the contrary, the students who already master English start to learn French/German as if they became knowledgeable about a language of Indo-European family of languages. Seeing the differences and similarities between their first and second foreign languages is an advantage while not receiving the right method to access to their new languages is an obstacle. To be able to improve and save time for learning new languages, they need to get the best instructions as much as possible.

For a better and easy learning of new languages that are cognate, learners should find and understand commonalities and differences of these languages while they are instructed comparing these cognate languages in the class. Content and language integrated learning method must be used in the classes instead of traditional grammar and translation method. They should be able to reach the

sources in English and French/German instead of Turkish, their mother tongue. After graduation, they should be able to find opportunities to practice and deeply understand the culture of the languages they learn either by themselves or by participating in the Comenius projects funded by European Commission, which is a lifelong learning program for foreign language learners who are supposed to become foreign language teachers at school.

Finally, foreign language learners should be exposed to the languages they are learning not only in terms of grammatical structures but also in terms of cultural entities and country features of those languages while teachers of these languages should be able to express themselves in English when they are teaching French or German. They make use of sources in both languages and make a comparative instruction, which is more retentive than rote-learning style. On the other hand, classrooms should be designed in two languages where there should be documents, posters, papers or photos that have signs in two languages. Only in this case can we create a multilingual learning environment for the students of French and German.

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