

Linguodidactic modelling in teaching foreign languages to bilingual children

Linguo Modelación didáctica en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras a niños bilingües

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Contents

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Literature review
- 3. Methods
- 4. Results
- 5. Components of linguomethodological model
- 6. Conclusions

Bibliographic references

ABSTRACT:

The main goal of the article is to work out a linguodidactic model of teaching foreign languages to bilingual children and identify its main components. For this purpose, various scientific materials were analyzed, including methods for teaching foreign languages, sociology, culturology, psychology, and linguistics. The work included interviews with parents and teachers of bilingual children, direct observations over bilingual children, and a questionnaire survey of teachers. The main characteristics were identified and integrated into the linguodidactic model of bilingual children.

Keywords: linguodidactic model of teaching foreign languages to bilingual children, technologies of teaching foreign languages to bilingual children, components of the model

RESUMEN:

El objetivo principal del artículo es elaborar un modelo lingüístico de enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros a niños bilingües e identificar sus componentes principales. Para este propósito, se analizaron diversos materiales científicos, incluidos métodos para la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, sociología, culturología, psicología y lingüística. El trabajo incluyó entrevistas con padres y maestros de niños bilingües, observaciones directas sobre niños bilingües y una encuesta de cuestionarios a maestros. Las principales características fueron identificadas e integradas en el modelo linguodidáctico de niños bilingues. **Palabras clave:** modelo lingüístico de enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros a niños bilingües, tecnologías de enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros a niños bilingües.

enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros a niños bilingües, componentes del modelo

1. Introduction

For children, their native language is that of their mother's. It is in this language she tells them tales and sing lullabies. It is in this language they learn to pronounce their first words.

However, it is very often nowadays that children since birth are surrounded by more than one language. A child can grow in conditions of natural bilingualism, having a Russian mother and a foreign father, for example, a Canadian speaking his native English. Or a family may have immigrated when their children were very young and they can hear their native speech only at home, whereas outside most people speak a foreign language incomprehensible to them. In this case, communication in a bilingual environment becomes for them a necessity rather than a free choice, and the bilingual communicative competence, which we, following F. Genesee, I.Boivin, and E.Nicoladis, understand as the ability to use each of their languages differentially and appropriately, according to relevant characteristics of their interlocutors and of communicative situations, is the key to success in their further life (Genesee, Boivin, Nicoladis 1995: 428).

Regardless of the reason why children begin to learn two languages at the same time, their thinking and memory are enriched much more as compared to those who, in their early childhood, learn one language. Many researchers note that bilingualism positively affects the ability to understand and analyze different situations, contributing to quick wits, reaction and logical thinking. If bilingual children are properly raised, they generally study well and master noetic sciences, literature and foreign languages better than other children do (Babina 2007).

In a bilingual environment, parents need to consciously and persistently control the development and training of their bilingual children. Spontaneously developing bilingualism in a child may result in confusion of two languages and a large number of errors. In turn, dealing with bilingual children, teachers also should own learning technologies, know their psychological and physiological characteristics and a lot of other things.

Parents and teachers often face many problematic situations when teaching languages to bilingual children. For example, many parents are concerned about what to do in situations when a mother speaks Russian to her children, and they understand everything, but answer only in English, or when a child in one sentence uses Russian and English words in part (e.g., *Mama, rge shoes? (Mum, where are my shoes?*). Or some parents are concerned about a huge gap between the Russian and English vocabularies of their children. For example, a child may know not only colors but also their various shades in Russian and only a few separate colors in English. Some parents note that their children actively reason and draw conclusions in English, whereas, in Russian, they can only explain the reason for this or that event. And young teachers complain that some bilingual teenagers, who study two languages from an early age, refuse to speak Russian at all.

The modern society where bilingual children are brought up is not limited to the above problems. There are many others. In order to minimize them, it is necessary to identify various factors affecting the effectiveness of training bilingual children, their balanced development and bilingual communicative competence.

2. Literature review

The development and formation of the bilingual communicative competence largely depends on which fundamental principle of bilingualism is selected by teachers and parents.

Researchers identify the principles of "one person/parent – one language", "one situation – one language", "one time – one language", and the subject-thematic principle (Balykhina, Chirsheva, Korovushkin, Barnes, Barron-Hauwaert, Döpke).

G.N. Chirsheva and Barnes believe that the selected principle and strict adherence to it allow for a more precise differentiation of language systems (Chirsheva 2010, Barnes 2006). Depending on the principle, differentiation can be realized in different ways. Thus, when using the principle of "one person/parent – one language", each parent communicates with his/her child only in one language. Languages must not be alternated (Balykhina 2011: 14, Romaine 1995; Chirsheva 2000: 28–44; 2012:77–101, Döpke 1992). For example, if the mother of a child is Russian and the father is Canadian, it is advisable that the mother should speak Russian and the father should use his native language (English or French). In the case of emigration, if both parents are Russian, they can speak Russian to their children, who will learn English or French at preschool or school. In this case, it is possible to use *the principle of "one situation – one language"*, dividing the two languages according to the

places of their application (Chirsheva 2012: 91). This principle is important and allows a family to retain the Russian language after their having emigrated abroad. *The principle of* "one time – one language" implies alternating the communication time language during a certain period (e.g., one day, half a day) (Barron-Hauwaert 2014; Chirsheva 2012). *The* subject-thematic principle assumes that a child is spoken to on different topics in different languages (Korovushkin 2014:63).

As experience of working with bilingual children shows, it is possible to combine these principles to achieve the set goals.

The effectiveness of training bilingual children also depends on the age at which they begin to learn two or more languages.

P.V. Korovushkin argues that the age of children and the order of their learning languages are interrelated. Thus, we can speak about simultaneous learning of languages if a second language is introduced before the child's first words. The later the second language is introduced, the less developed it will be in a child (Korovushkin 2014: 49). Researchers attribute this to the fact that the communicative and cognitive activities of a child will develop in parallel in each language almost from birth, which will contribute to the balanced development of both languages. However, as practice shows, bilingualism can also develop up to 5–8 years. In this case, it is impossible to speak about a completely balanced language proficiency. Teachers and parents should pay more attention and make every effort to educate bilingual children.

An important issue related to the age characteristics implies identifying the developmental stages of bilingual children. In general, they coincide with the developmental stages of monolingual children. But nevertheless, a bilingual child may have additional features related to the interaction of two languages (Korovushkin 2014: 51).

According to researchers, it is impossible to teach one language to bilingual children, without taking into account the cultural characteristics of both languages, since the children's linguistic worldview is based on a special way of conceptualizing reality, and the learning of languages goes in parallel with the learning of cultures (Balykhina 2011:21, Bernhardt 2009: 133, Tran, Arredondo, Yoshida 2014).

Some researchers also point out that in training bilinguals, it is necessary to take into account the linguistic properties of both languages, which are quite actively investigated by them. These include various grammatical aspects related to the formation of early bilingualism in pairs "German–Russian" (Dieser 2004), "Norwegian–Russian" (Chernigov, Tkachenko 2005), "English–Russian" (Chirsheva 2011), etc.

T.M. Balykhina rightly notes that proficiency in two or more languages should be balanced, i.e., a child must have equal knowledge of each of the languages. Due to lack of access to the non-native language, a child may experience crises in acquiring speech skills (Balykhina 2011:14).

The balance of bilingualism is significantly influenced by strategies chosen by parents to communicate with their children in different languages: this plays an important role in the formation of early bilingualism. The bilingual communicative competence will not be formed spontaneously unless parents develop their children using certain linguodidactical technologies.

S. Döpke notes that parental strategies (styles) of communication with children can be more oriented towards communication or control.

In the case of communication, parents keep up the conversation with their children in the form of a dialogue: asking various questions, they verify their children's competence. They can also complicate the semantic and syntactic structures in order to demonstrate their discursive role manifested in the fact that they listen, understand and support their children and everything they say.

In the case of speech control, parents also ask questions. However, in this case, it is not a conversation, since the questions asked by parents are aimed at correcting mistakes in their children's speech. Adult messages often lack a semantic connection with what a child said

(Döpke 1992). In our opinion, the communication strategy will undoubtedly be the most effective, since in this case children will actively communicate with their parents and will not be afraid to make a mistake, the correction of which can knock them off their topic or violate the logic of their statements.

In turn, preschool or school teachers also have certain strategies for teaching bilingual children. According to T.M. Balykhina, classes for bilingual children should be organized in accordance with the logic and consistency corresponding to their age characteristics, gradual acquisition of the subject matter. Russian lessons should be conducted as a game that will allow teachers to create a special communicative situation, work out the necessary language material, create grammatical abilities and skills, correct pronunciation, etc. (Balykhina 2011:59).

Thus, the development of bilingual children and the formation of their communicative competence, according to various researchers, are influenced by the following factors: the principle of bilingualism, age characteristics, specifics of the stages of language development in bilingual children, cultural characteristics of each of the languages studied, features of language pairs, and strategies selected by teachers and parents to communicate with children.

So that the process of teaching bilingual children would not be spontaneous, it is necessary to construct a certain model of a bilingual child taking into account these factors. This will make the teaching process purposeful and systematic.

3. Methods

Scientists have developed and substantiated a linguomethodological profile of labor migrants, which made it possible to identify and describe methodically significant characteristics in the form of an integral system – *linguomethodological profile or model* – which is a pedagogical model of a student's personality, consisting of characteristics important for learning foreign languages. Accounting for the components of the linguomethodological profile, when teaching Russian as a foreign language, made it possible to identify competences necessary for labor migrants (Dolzhikova et al. 2016).

In order to develop an effective linguodidactic model of bilingual children, which will later help efficiently teach them, taking into account the characteristics identified in the training process, the authors had interviews with parents of bilingual children and their teachers that live in Canada, Germany, Malta, France and Russia. These observations were recorded and analyzed when creating the linguodidactic profile of bilingual children. The authors' archives contain observations diaries and results of analyzed scientific papers.

The components of the linguodidactic profile were selected based on the analyzed scientific literature and observations over bilingual children. In addition, a questionnaire survey was conducted among educators and teachers working with bilingual children. This method studies the sample of individuals from a population with a view towards making statistical inference about the population using the sample (Groves et al. 2009). When the participants are asked what they know or think, a researcher can take the information that describes his perception of a certain phenomenon and group characteristics or groups holding such views.

3.1. Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire consisted of several questions on the problematic topics described by the researchers on the topic that is connected with the teaching of bilingual children.

3.2. Participants

The survey involved 63 parents and teachers who answered the questions asked. The teachers were from Ottawa (Canada), Frankfurt (Germany), Marsascala (Malta), Paris (France) and Moscow (Russia).

They were selected on the purposeful sampling basis from among the teachers that work

with children of different ages and work and live in different cities in the world and the parents of the bilingual children in order to obtain the most reliable results of the study. In the table the amount of parents and teachers is given.

country	parents	teachers
Canada	5	7
Germany	4	5
Malta	6	8
France	4	7
Russia	9	8

Table 1The amount of parents and teachers

3.3. Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through the interviews with the participants (63 interviews) conducted for an average of 20 minutes.

Data analysis was done simultaneously with data collection. The interviewer (one of the authors of this research) filled in the form, while talking to a participant, to be able to conduct qualitative and quantitative research afterwards. The interviews were voice-recorded. After that, the responses were counted, the percentage was output, a qualitative analysis was made, and the conclusions were drawn.

Questionnaire

1. Is the further success in learning two languages dependent on the age of bilingual children?

A: Yes. The earlier such children start, the more likely it is that they will competently learn the system of a foreign language.

B: No. No matter at what age to start working with bilingual children. The main thing is the joint work of teachers and parents.

C: No. The main thing is to study the culture, and the age does not matter.

2. Is it necessary to take into account the specifics of language development in bilingual children of different ages?

A: Yes.

B: No.

3. What culture should be in the focus of attention when teaching bilingual children?

A. The culture of both parents or one of the parents.

B: The culture of the country where the children live.

C: Both cultures to maintain their balance.

4. Is it necessary to compare the cultures of languages studied by bilingual children?

A: Yes.

B: Maybe.

C: No.

5. Should teachers cooperate with parents of bilingual children?

A: Yes, they should.

B: They may.

C: No, they need not cooperate: teachers can manage on their own.

6. Is it necessary to adhere to the basic principles of bilingualism in teaching (one person – one language, one situation – one language, one time – one language)?

A: Yes, it is.

B: No, it is not.

C: I am not familiar with these principles.

7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: For the effective training of bilingual children, it is necessary to take into account their age features, the cultural characteristics of both languages; to compare the cultures of the languages studied; to be in contact with parents; and to follow the principles of bilingualism.

A: I agree.

B: I disagree.

4. Results

The results of the survey of the educators and teachers working with bilingual children are presented below.

The majority of the respondents gave a positive answer to the first question and explained that the earlier the education begins, the more likely it is that a bilingual child will competently learn the system of a foreign language.

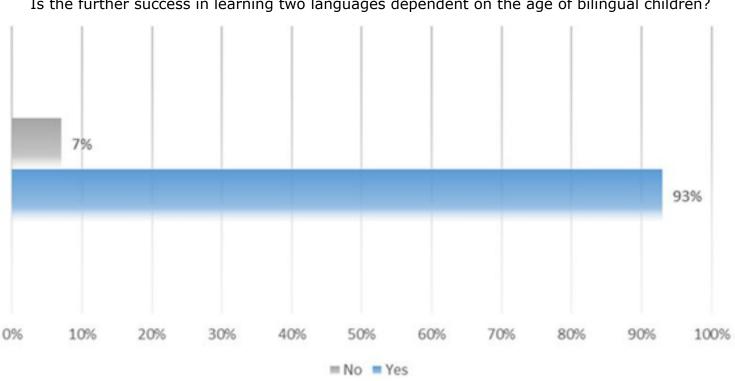
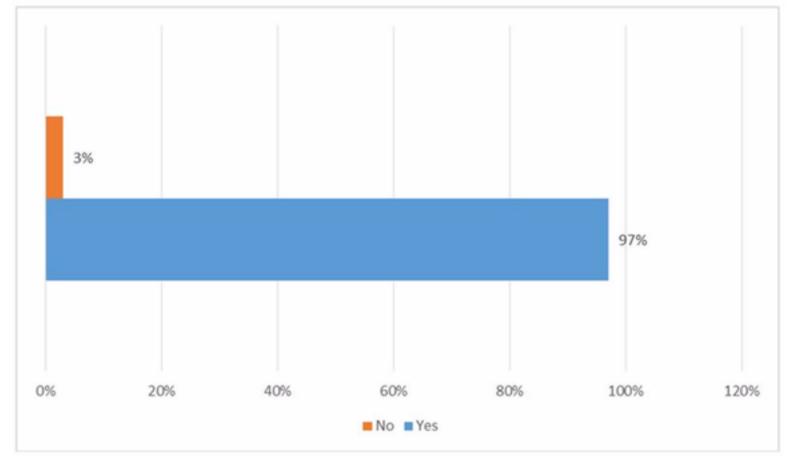
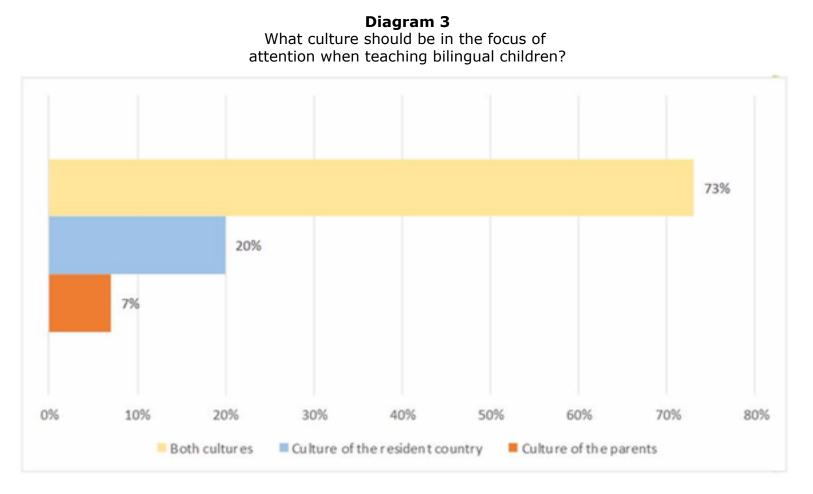


Diagram 1 Is the further success in learning two languages dependent on the age of bilingual children?

When asked whether it is necessary to take into account the specifics of language development in bilingual children of different ages, the teachers unanimously answered 'yes'. They explained that each child's age is characterized by certain developmental specifics.

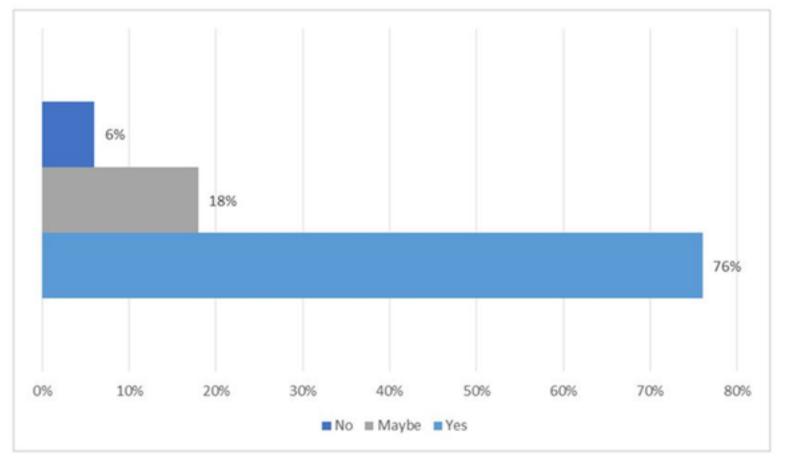


As for the third question of which culture should be in the focus of attention when training a bilingual child most of the teachers believe that it is necessary to take into account both cultures and in no case to speak negatively about any of them.



In addition, the major opinion was that it is necessary not only to take into account both cultures, but also to compare them to achieve the highest results in teaching foreign languages.

Diagram 4 Is it necessary to compare the cultures of languages studied by bilingual children?



Also, according to most of the teachers, the key success factor in teaching different languages to bilingual children is synergy between parents and teachers. Only their bilateral cooperation will make the learning process the most effective.

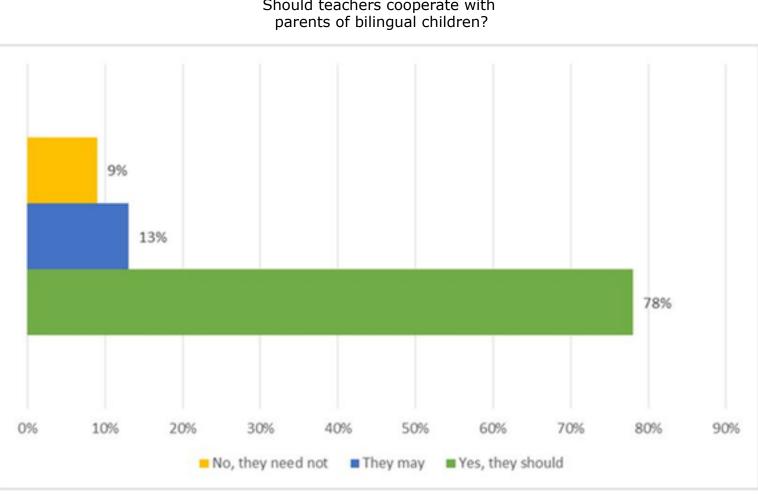
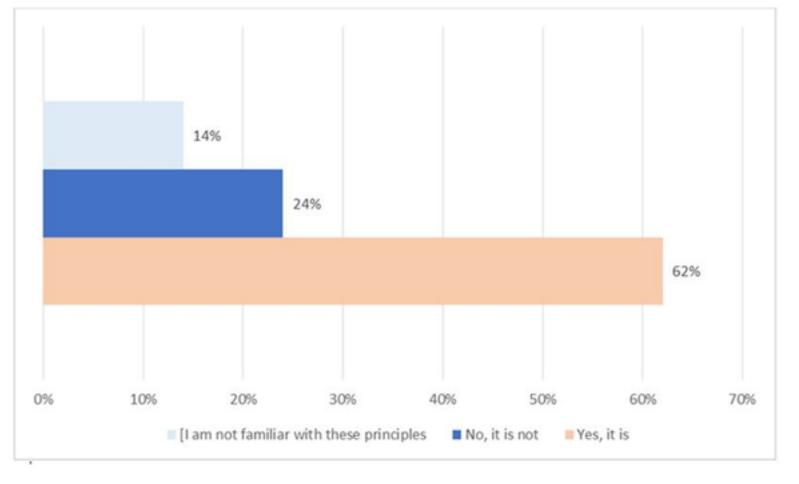


Diagram 5 Should teachers cooperate with

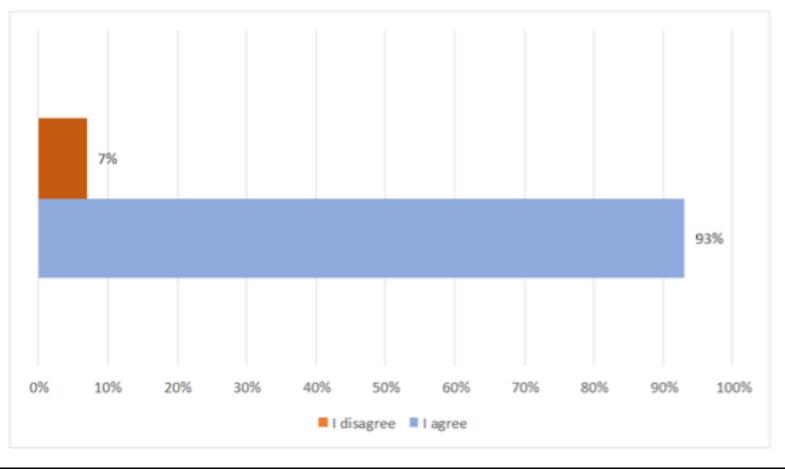
The most experienced teachers, who have been working with bilingual children for a number of years, when asked whether it is necessary to adhere to the basic principles of bilingualism in teaching, answered positively. However, the young specialists who are not experienced in working with bilingual children or have not been specially trained for teaching foreign languages do not think it necessary to consider these principles. Moreover, some of the teachers were completely unfamiliar with these terms.

> **Diagram 6** Is it necessary to adhere to the basic principles of bilingualism in teaching?



The last question contained the statement to be agreed or disagreed with. This statement was formulated in order to understand whether it is necessary to take into account the whole set of characteristics that can influence the effective training of bilingual children. Most of the teachers agreed with this statement.

Diagram 7 Is it necessary for the effective training of bilingual children to take into account their age features, the cultural characteristics of both languages; to compare the cultures of the languages studied; to be in contact with parents; and to follow the principles of bilingualism?



5. Components of linguomethodological model

Based on the survey findings, conversations with parents of bilingual children, and analyzed literature sources, we can identify the following components of the linguomethodological profile of bilingual children:

5.1. Age

As the analysis of studies shows, the age of a child is an important characteristic: the earlier children begin to learn a second language, the more balanced will be their proficiency in two languages.

Teachers note that, if children begin to learn languages at an early age, a process of spontaneous imitation takes place, allowing them to adopt the pronunciation of native speakers. Also, as observations over bilingual children show, children are more sociable and liberated at an early age. In their communication, they do not pay attention to errors.

This factor is very important when developing training courses for bilingual children, because the technologies for teaching bilingual children change depending on their age.

5.2. Specifics of language development

Multilingualism of a child, as noted above, is laid at an early age. As observations over bilingual children and conversations with their parents show, children aged under one year react differently to different languages. Then, at an older age, they begin to understand the simplest statements in each of the languages, pronounce such words as "mammy" and "daddy", react to their own names, perform simple tasks, and name things.

Later on, children begin to talk in a mixed language, for example, very often bilinguals choose from the languages they know words and expressions that are the easiest to pronounce and put them into speech. Or, answering a question in a dialogue, they can insert a word in any language, regardless of the language in which the question was asked.

At an older age (about 4–5 years), bilingual children finally get accustomed to the fact that, communicating with them, Mummy uses one language and Daddy uses another one. Or if a family speak one language at home, their children speak a different language at a nursery school. Moreover, such children may require that each parent should speak his/her own native language. At this age, children no longer answer questions in the language they communicate.

At the age of 6–7 years, bilinguals clearly distinguish between the so-called "home language" and the "outside world language". It is obvious that bilingual children will choose the former for solving their personal problems and the latter for communicating with their peers.

However, some parents note that, when communicating with peers at preschool or school, their children, following other children, may have serious speech errors that need to be corrected so that they are not rooted in their speech. Nevertheless, the "home language" should be spoken at home.

5.3. Worldview duality

The developmental stages of bilingual and monolingual children are similar in many respects. Differences consist in the fact that bilinguals perceive at least two national worldviews, which are equivalent to them. Teachers and parents should take into account this duality and, as far as possible, counterbalance its components. It is necessary, at least, to abandon ignoring or artificially lowering (or overstating) a particular culture. One should not speak of any of the languages as "foreign". This can disrupt the integrity of the worldview of a growing person.

5.4. Cultural characteristics

Perceiving two or more worldviews and establishing a kind of "bridge" between them, bilingual children must be trained in the context of the corresponding culture. They should be made to understand that a language is not only a means of cognition and communication, but it also creates and preserves the national worldview.

To this end, when using various exercises or games, it is necessary to focus children's

attention on this aspect. It is also possible to celebrate national holidays and birthdays in two languages, watch cartoons, etc. It is important to train children in comparing two cultures and reflecting them in a language while playing.

If children are taught from an early age without taking into account the cultural characteristics of each language, then, as practice shows, at an age close to adolescence, when children begin to realize their ethnicity, they may "get lost" in the bilingual world and have the problem of associating their individual "selves" with a particular culture or country.

5.5. Interaction between parents and teachers

It is our opinion that close interaction between preschool or school teachers with parents is an important characteristic that must be taken into account when organizing educational activities for bilingual children.

Conversations with teachers show that it often happens that parents provoke their bilingual children to be behind their monolingual peers. They believe that this is not because their children are bilingual. This is due to some social factors and the attitude to the Russian language in the family. For example, parents may be unsuccessful in the new society or unprepared to learn another language or insufficiently educated to be able to carry out a balanced cross-cultural communication.

Parents who wish to attend classes should be welcomed. In turn, teachers also can visit families to provide necessary consultations. These can be individual consultations on children's "problem areas" and "successful areas" given by psychologists and methodologists. It is also possible to give master classes, seminars on specific topics related to the development of bilingual children.

Such psychological and pedagogical support will help successfully socialize and adapt children to the specifics of the educational process, integrate parents into the educational space, thereby contributing to the harmonious development of bilinguals.

5.6. Pedagogical skills

It should be remembered that the communicative competence of children depends on the professional and cultural level of teachers, their aspiration and readiness to increase their own professional competence, and to find ways to dialogue with bilingual children's parents. Only in this way teachers will be able to provide support and real help to children and parents and their interaction will be productive and successful.

5.7. Selecting the principles of bilingualism

Which principle of bilingualism to choose depends on why a particular child begins to learn two languages. Thus, in the case of natural bilingualism, when each of the parents speaks to the child in his/her native language, and the language of the society is native to one of the parents, the most effective will be the principle of "one person/parent – one language". However, this principle may be useful even for monoethnic families where all members speak the same language to their children, and the children use the language of the society to communicate with their educators and teachers. Bilingual persons associate their communicants with the language they use for communication.

The principle of "one situation – one language" has some limitations. It is better to use it in monoethnic families living in Canada, where Russian is spoken at home.

The principle of "one time – one language", in our opinion, will not be effective when working with small children, who find it difficult to understand, for example, whether it is the English or Russian part of the day coming. They will not be able to feel the alteration of time intervals. This can lead children to confusion. If a bilingual child already realizes the time, then this principle, in combination with others, can bring positive results.

In our opinion, the subject-thematic principle can be considered less effective in teaching young bilingual children, since it is almost impossible to agree with a young child on how to

separate different topics between the two languages. This principle can be applicable to schoolchildren who have already mastered the languages on the basis of other principles applied.

Choosing among the principles in a family is connected with the willingness of all its members to constantly follow this principle, which is the key to success in teaching their bilingual children.

5.8. Main difficulties in teaching bilinguals

Conversations with parents and teachers show that very often parents face the problem of confusing languages in the process of communication: they begin to speak "pidgin". In this case, there appears interference of two language systems, which leads to speech errors.

At an early stage of developing bilingualism, children may not even understand that they are spoken to in different languages and so they may inappropriately respond in a language that is easier for them to use.

The reasons for the interference may be different. First, children may not have enough lexical means to express their thoughts in one of the languages. Searching for an equivalent, they choose a word, the meaning of which they remember. To solve this problem, teachers and parents should use a balanced vocabulary to replenish the lexical stock of children.

In case children deliberately use words of one language in grammatical forms peculiar to another language, this may be due to their reluctance to search for equivalents. The reason for this may be the fact that their parents themselves use pidgin. And children, being amendable, take this as the norm and use it in their own speech.

In this case, it is our opinion that parents, first of all, should be particular in their speech so that their children can not copy it.

Teachers also note that often bilingual children refuse to speak their native language at all. This is typical of teenagers. They feel like "bad language" speakers, social misfits.

This is due to the attitude towards the nation, to which bilinguals originally belong, in the country where they and their families live. For example, attitudes toward Russians in Europe for certain reasons are often far from being very favorable, and Russian children feel it when communicating with their local peers. Refusing to communicate in Russian, they thereby try to hide their belonging to the Russian nation and adapt to the norms of the European national identity.

Such an attitude towards themselves and their own nation may lead to big problems, which, however, can be prevented. Parents and teachers should maintain bilingualism from the very beginning (in adolescence it is too late) and prepare their children to identify themselves as belonging to several cultures. In this case, they will feel like full members of the society with which they will associate themselves.

If parents or teachers are insufficiently attentive to this problem regarding a child growing up in a multilingual environment, this can lead to mental degradation of a child's personality who will become incapable of self-expression.

5.9. Methods and technologies of teaching Russian to bilingual children:

Researchers unanimously note that technologies for teaching the Russian language should be selected depending on the age of bilingual children (Balykhina, 2011, Savchenko et al. 2018).

As practice shows, the use of strategies and techniques of the communicative activityoriented method gives good results when teaching Russian language to bilingual children.

It should be noted that the goal of each Russian lesson, when teaching bilinguals, is to form the communicative competence of students. Therefore, it is quite obvious that emphasis is placed on speech activities. It is necessary to create for children communicative situations that are adequate to the conditions of their real communicative activity.

Since the main psychological activity of children is a game, it is advisable to use various gaming technologies when teaching bilingual children. Games, due to their unobtrusiveness and simplicity, arouse students' interest in learning Russian, give a sense of success, and also allow all children to take an active part in classwork, regardless of the level and individual characteristics of each child, thereby realizing a communicative and action-oriented approach.

Games can be different, e.g., lexical, grammatical, aimed at developing students' speech, etc.

For children to feel their belonging to Russian culture, it is possible to show video fragments from Russian cartoons or select Russian poems, songs and riddles.

Also, it will be useful to involve various information technologies for teaching bilinguals. They will be pleased to play Russian computer games from early childhood, which will revitalize their work in class.

6. Conclusions

Teaching the Russian language to bilingual children is one of the important tasks of some countries' policy in view of the fact that nowadays the proportion of migrants is quite substantial in any part of the world. Identification and consideration of the main social, cognitive, ethno-cultural and other significant characteristics of bilingual children affect their language proficiency.

It is considered methodologically inexpedient to use individual properties and qualities of students. The most significant characteristics of students should be systematized into a single tool, i.e., the linguodidactic profile of bilingual children.

The structure of a typical linguodidactic profile of bilingual children is formed by the following characteristics: age of bilingual children; specifics of language development of bilingual children; worldview duality; cultural characteristics; interaction between parents and teachers; pedagogical skills of teachers; selected principles of bilingualism; methods and technologies for teaching Russian to bilingual children.

These components were obtained on the basis of an analysis of existing literature, questionnaire survey of teachers, and interviews with parents of bilingual children.

The table shows the final results of the survey that were obtained. The results present the number of participants who answered "yes" and their percentage quantity.

questions	participants	
question 1	59/93%	
question 2	61/97%	
question 3	46/73%	
question 4	48/76%	
question 5	49/78%	
question 6	39/62%	
question 7	59/93%	

Table 2The results of the survey

The results of this analysis can be used for pedagogical models of a bilingual child's personality and training courses for bilingual children.

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