

THE BILINGUAL METHOD

Introduction

In previous sections we have reviewed the different teaching methods that, throughout the years, have been developed in order to teach a target language. All the approaches show the attempts of researchers and teachers to help students acquire target-like proficiency in a language different from their mother tongue. In a sense, their aim would be to help students become bilingual, even if their success has been doubtful. On the other hand, bilingual programs cater for different needs: they attempt to teach students who are in contact with two languages, because of their family, country of origin, etc. Before commenting on these educational programs and the change of teaching perspective they show, we need to define bilingualism.

According to Lam (2001:93), bilingualism “refers to the phenomenon of competence and communication in two languages”. However, it is difficult to determine what constitutes competence in two or more languages. One argument that must be considered is the relationship between meaning and its symbolic representation. Does the bilingual learn one set of meanings to which he/she attaches two linguistic representations or does he/she learn two complete languages, as if he/she was the sum of two monolinguals? There is no clear answer, although translation arguments and imperfect projection phenomena such as ambiguity and synonyms constitute some of the criteria claimed against or in favour of considering the bilingual as an expert in two complete sets of systems and meanings. What seems clear nowadays is that the task of learning two linguistic systems gives them a neurological advantage in verbal aspects.

Dr.C.J.Dadson developed the Bilingual method. This method needs L1 and L2. The approach begins from Bilingual and becomes monolingual at the end. The teacher uses both mother tongue (L1) and the target language (L2) in the classroom. This may be considered as a combination of the Direct Method and the Grammar Translation Method.

Objectives of the method are as follows

- to make the learners of a second/foreign language fluent and accurate in the spoken word
- to make the learners accurate in the written word.
- to prepare the learners in such a manner that he may be able to achieve through bilingualism.

The Principles of the bilingual Method

When a child learns the mother tongue, he forms the concept and grasps the situation and learns the meaning of words simultaneously. The advocates of the Bilingual Method believe that it is a waste of time to recreate the situation while teaching a foreign language. Their argument is that teaching-learning process is facilitated if only the mother tongue equivalents are given to the learner without duplicating the situation. The Bilingual Method, therefore, makes use of the mother tongue in this restricted manner. It differs from the Grammar Translation Method in two ways:

- In the Bilingual Method it is the teacher who always makes use of the mother tongue to explain meanings and not the students
- The learner is sufficiently subjected to sentence pattern drills, which are not provided in the Grammar Translation Method. Moreover, in the Bilingual Method reading and writing are introduced early in the course of language teaching and there is an integration of the speaking and writing skills.
- Any Foreign Language or Second language can be learned with the help of L1
- Mother tongue is not used as Translation
- Teacher only uses L1 in the class room
- Students are not allowed to use their mother tongue.
- Sentence is the unit of teaching.
- L1 is used by the teacher to achieve his communication or explanation.
- Teacher gives meanings in L1 for meaningful parts or sentences.
- When the students achieve sufficient communicative proficiency, L1 is withdrawn by the teacher.

Procedure / Steps in Teaching

- First the teacher reads out a dialogue to the class. The students listen to the teacher with their books closed.
- The students repeat the lines with the teacher with their books opened in the second reading.
- The teacher gives sentence wise or meaningful parts wise L1 equivalents (meanings)
- The teacher says each sentence of the dialogue twice with L1 version (meanings)

Advantages of the Bilingual Method:

Some of the advantages claimed for the Bilingual Method are the following:

- The teacher is saved the botheration of maneuvering situations in order to convey the meanings in English only instead he gives the meaning in the mother tongue of the student.
- The time thus saved is utilized in giving pattern practice to the learner
- Even an average teacher of English can teach through this method without any elaborate preparation.

- The Bilingual Method promotes both fluency and accuracy. It promotes fluency as it lays emphasis on speech and pattern practice. It promotes accuracy as the meanings of new words are given in the mother tongue of the learner.
- It does not require any teaching aids and is suited to all kinds of school-rural and urban.
- Unlike the Direct Method, which ignores the linguistic habits already acquired by the learner in the process of learning the first language, the Bilingual Method makes use of them.

Disadvantages of the Bilingual Method:

- The focus is on the grammatical structures not on the day-to-day conversation
- The teacher must be proficient (fluent) in L1 and L2
- It does not follow any set theory
- Students become dependent on their mother tongue
- The methods and procedures are not different
- A possible disadvantage of the method is that if the teacher is not imaginative enough, this method may degenerate into the Grammar Translation Method with all the attendant drawbacks.
- Secondly, whereas, the Bilingual Method is useful at the secondary stage, the Direct Method is more useful than the Bilingual Method at the primary stage.