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Development of second language personality of university students and formation of competence in foreign language learning strategies

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Abstract

The article provides an overview of forming competence in personal foreign language learning strategies as a process which evaluates development of the second language personality in autonomous foreign language learning. The author considers providing proof for formation of language learning strategies' competence to be a factor of a successful development of Russian university students' second language personality as an objective of the research.

The author formulated the following goals to gain the purpose: 1) analyzing studies on language learning strategies, defining principal trends of foreign language learning strategies' formation; 2) developing a design of forming students' competence, and a plan of its implementation under the conditions of university; 3) drawing a conclusion about the results of the research.

Methodology of anthropological and personality approaches is used in the research. Qualitative analytical, projective generalized, interpretative research techniques including monitoring, observation, questionnaire designs, testing, conversations, training, mathematical statistics techniques are used for problem solving. The author presents research focusing on students' foreign language learning strategies used in different language contexts.

Having analyzed the latest research developments and empirical results of the study the author comes to the <u>conclusion</u> that in order to gain the competence students should (1) be well informed about functioning of the second language personality and foreign language learning strategies; (2) take part in strategic training including teachers' consulting and the complex of tasks on the language learning strategies formation according to students' preferences; (3) have experience of strategies' choice and reflect on their speech strategies; (4) forecast their second language personality development defining prospects of using strategies on their own.

Introduction

Foreign language learning strategies became an object for study in the theory of foreign language teaching in the sixties of the last century. At the same time scientists' interest grew to such personal factors as cognitive style, social, gender identity, motivation. These concepts entered modern discourse of the theory of foreign language teaching.

Learning strategies are rated among general vital strategies of a present-day person at the beginning of the 21st century. The presence of strategies as methods of personal realization in different spheres of the humans is an integral characteristic of self-determination of a personality, ability to plan out the future [Ivanchenko, 2005]. The sources of this knowledge can be found in the theory of radical constructivism, cognitive psychology, synergetics, and other scientific theories of the 20th century.

The beginning of forming foreign language learning strategies falls on the school years; the development of the second language personality proceeds a whole life

long, while the process of language learning lasts. Without conscious use of foreign language learning strategies, it is difficult to achieve academic mobility as possibility to form a personal educational trajectory and educational style independently. The theory of development of personal strategies can be viewed as components of the theory of autonomous foreign language learning.

The research objective presents a substantiation of the so called *strategic competence* which is interpreted as a factor of development of students' secondary language personality through forming foreign language learning strategies to facilitate learning efficiency.

To achieve the aim, the following tasks were accomplished: 1) to conduct the analysis of studies concerning personal foreign language learning strategies, to define tendencies of forming strategies as a process with the second language personality in the spotlight as the one with its speech peculiarities, individual language experience, motives; 2) to work out a project of forming students' competence and a plan of its realization by means of university students' participation in the strategic training, use of the author's instruction manuals, executable codes for language disciplines at university, elements of e-learning; 3) to process the obtained data, draw conclusion on the research results. The data of the study will be valuable in the process of university education and autonomous foreign language learning.

In the middle of the last century the problem of mastering strategies as an important aspect of forming skills for autonomous learning came into notice of foreign and domestic researchers such as: A.U. Chamot, L.Dickinson, H.Holec, J.M. O'Malley, R.L. Oxford, K.Percy, U.Rampillon, A.A. Leontyev, E.I. Passov, G.V. Rogova, V.V. Safonova, S.G. Ter-Minasova. Scientists were engaged in research of students' strategies to define how some of them can achieve success in varying degree while autonomous foreign language learning [Griffiths, 2008; O'Malley et al., 1985]. Different interpretations of the concept of "foreign language learning strategy" appeared at that period of time.

Principal trends of foreign language learning strategies' formation

In terms of the study the following interpretation should be recognized as an acceptable one: a foreign language learning strategy is based on the prediction plan

of activities, defining the near-term outlook of development of students' secondary language personality.

Personal strategies are considered to be ways, methods or technologies chosen by students according to peculiarities of their secondary language personality and language experience to progress in mastering a foreign language.

The definition of the competence in personal foreign language learning strategies as "development linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in a person's own self" is closely related to the content of the research [Cohen, 2002, www; Faerch, Kasper, 2000, www; Wenden, Rubin, 1987]. The meaning of the adjective "personal" in research is correlated with the meaning of the noun "personality" in the word-combination "the secondary language personality".

"The algorithm of foreign language learning activities, which has been set with the textbook or by the teacher, limits mastering foreign languages, but the procedural aspect of students' individual work remains unconscious at that" [Ovchinnikova, 2006, 103].

Forming secondary language personality as a factor of foreign language training is considered to have been in Russian discourse for more than 20 years. The concept "language personality", introduced into scientific practice by V.V. Vinogradov, was developed in works by Yu.N. Karaulov. The latter distinguishes three levels in a structural model of the language personality: a verbal-semantic level, which unites separate words; a linguistic-cognitive level which unites notions or concepts developing in a worldview; a motivational level whose components are proved themselves through communicative and activity needs of the personality [Karaulov, 2011, www].

According to I.I. Khaleeva, the description of the model of the secondary language personality is carried out taking into account processes which happen while mastering foreign languages [Khaleeva, 2001, 8]. Understanding a foreign-language text means correlating it with their own knowledge and finding its place corresponding to its contents in a worldview, i. e. developing abilities to distinguish motives of a person belonging to foreign community.

Originalities of secondary language personality are reflected in students' personal strategies of foreign language learning which correspond to three levels of the

model of the language personality [Cohen, 2002, www]. Limits of personal strategies are mobile; correction in the course of learning is possible.

The set of factors, e. g., "a level of development of linguistic abilities, verbal activity, and psycho-typological characteristics of the person", influences on formation of language learning strategies' competence [Kabardov, Artsishevskaya, 1996, 39]. But the main circumstance, in our opinion, is students' awareness of their speech abilities and opportunities of their secondary language personality, willingness to use language learning strategies, cultivated independently by means of choice, borrowing or speech and cognitive experience. This difficult process of rational exploitation of language learning aptitudes is just students' conscious generating language learning strategies' competence.

Developing a design of forming competence in students' strategies

Groups of strategies are united in a table and are made according to levels of language proficiency, parts of speech activities in the research [Ovchinnikova, Uchimsya rabotat'…, 2013, 10; Ovchinnikova, We study English, 2013, 96]. The stage of comprehension of the concept "personal strategy of learning of foreign language" provides students' acquisition of knowledge about strategies explicitly presented to them by means of teachers' training, the author's instruction manuals, e-learning.

The next stage of the formation of strategy is a stage of students' research and experimental work within, so to say, their secondary language personality. The stage supposes students' awareness of their psychological features, level of language proficiency, opportunities to autonomous foreign language learning. Students master methods of observation, questionnaire designs, training, experiments, statistics techniques and reflect the results in their portfolio.

A strategy of studying a language is some sequence of skills for achievement of the purpose of studying a language. Independent strategies' formation assumes the ability to make a plan of action in the speech situation, to select necessary skills, to build their sequence and to modify the plan if it is required [Oxford, 1999, www].

The purpose of this stage consists in training students to form their language learning trajectory which they can build choosing strategies from the table, analyz-

ing and correcting them with check experiments. Then students can choose technologies or techniques in accordance with their secondary language personality.

For the sake of formation of future bachelors' foreign language learning strategies strategic training was put into practice through undergraduate course while studies in the lecture-room. Instructors advised a wide use of strategies, and tasks providing students' freedom of choice of strategies according to their preferences and experience exchange among students as well.

The training was methodically provided with the author's instruction manuals "We study English" and "Learning English in a team", executable codes for foreign language disciplines at university, and elements of e-learning.

Students filled in the table of strategies once a semester. Take, for example, the group "Strategies of listening and understanding foreign language speech":

– I use the strategy of search for familiar words, structures while listening. I "slip" through unknown words, avoid fixing on outside actions, noise;

– I isolate facts, I define logic of events, temporary relations, cause-effect relations (e. g., in dates, names, toponyms); I try to guess meaning of difficult structures; I keep in mind details of conversation while listening;

– I show speech activity (asking again, specification), I signal about my understanding/misunderstanding with mime and gestures; I take information from intonation, pauses, logical stress [Ovchinnikova, We study English, 2013, 100].

The purpose of strategic training is mastering tools for diagnostics, experimenting, transferring "successful" strategies to new learning contents. The task of the teacher was to inform students about the most effective strategies. The teacher used heuristic methods, problem situations while training. Students acted as teachers in micro-groups, analyzing the classmates' use of strategies.

The students kept the diary (portfolio) for monitoring and reflection, fixing progress in development of language strategies for a certain period, introduced amendments in their trajectory of studies. There was also a section called "Failures" in the portfolio, including students' own reflection and the plan of mastering this or that strategy.

One of the extenders of the range of strategies meeting students' expectation is organization of the process on the basis of the free software e-learning platform

Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment). The purpose of the system is forming friendly electronic environment of training enabling students' autonomous work, and the organization of interaction among students and teachers [Mikhailova, 2011, 52].

Moodle was used as a stimulating factor for comprehension and development of personal foreign language learning strategies. The table of strategies and questions for discussion were placed in sections of the course. The students' possibilities for consultation and discussion extended in Course Elements: LAMS, Wiki, forum, chat, feedback, and questionnaire.

The author studied also strategies of students of different gender types or gender determined strategies, i. e. caused by a gender factor. The gender factor was shown in preferences to certain types of speech activities, reflected in quantitative and qualitative characteristics of strategies [Griffiths, 2008]. The results have demonstrated that gender features of students of the masculine type are shown in the strategies directed to autonomy in foreign language learning, in preferences for e-learning (78%) [Ovchinnikova, 2006, 123].

Conclusion

Formation of the strategical competence finds expression in qualitative and quantitative strategical development, reflecting changes in characteristics of students' secondary language personality. Students' qualitative strategical analysis was being carried out. New results were received. The so-called "beginners" among first-year students (the basic level of mastering a foreign language) used more strategies connected with translating (8.5% vs. 6%), more strategies concerning imagination (10.4% vs. 7.4%), but fewer strategies concerning language guesswork or compensatory strategies than students of the average level of mastering a foreign language (2% vs. 4.5%).

The beginners were ahead of the figures of strategies used by the advanced students, i. e. the quantitative aspect of beginners' strategies prevails over the qualitative aspect of their strategies by their number. Thus beginners used more labor-consuming strategies, avoiding more difficult but effective ones.

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The results of the research received on the basis of the final tests' data (2012–2013), questionnaire design, students' observation have showed that there is reason to believe that the formed competence in students' personal foreign language learning strategies facilitated their learning efficiency, promoting a successful development of Russian university students' second language personality. 75% of the students obtained the strategical competence sufficiently so that it can be recognized as a factor of a successful development of their second language personality. So the tasks of the study were accomplished, the objective of the research was gained.

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Развитие вторичной языковой личности студентов университета и формирование компетенции в области стратегий изучения иностранного языка

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Аннотация

В статье исследуется развитие стратегий изучения иностранного языка студентов университета в самостоятельной работе как процесс, в центре которого вторичная языковая личность со своими особенностями и предпочтениями. Целью исследования является формирование компетенции в области личностных стратегий изучения иностранного языка и обоснование значимости данного процесса для формирования вторичной языковой личности в самостоятельной работе студентов. Для достижения цели автором были сформулированы задачи исследования: 1) провести анализ научных работ по вопросу личностных стратегий изучения иностранного языка; 2) выявить тенденции формирования стратегий, разработать технологию формирования компетентности студентов в области стратегий изучения иностранного языка; 3) сделать выводы по результатам исследования. На основе полученных результатов был сделан вывод о том, что овладение указанной компетентностью является фактором успешного формирования вторичной языковой личности студентов.

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Ключевые слова

Компетенция, изучение иностранного языка, самостоятельное обучение, вторичная языковая личность, стратегия.

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