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Psycholinguistic and pedagogical aspects of mastering foreign language speech by adult students

Tat'yana V. Samosenkova

Doctor of Pedagogy, Professor,
Department of Russian Language,
Professional Speech and Intercultural Communication,
Belgorod State University,
308007, 14, Studencheskaya str., Belgorod, Russian Federation
e-mail: samosenkova@bsu.edu.ru

Elena B. Nazarenko

PhD in Pedagogy, Associate Professor,
Belgorod State University,
308007, 14, Studencheskaya str., Belgorod, Russian Federation
e-mail: news@bsu.edu.ru

Abstract

The article deals with the issues of mastering foreign language speech by adult students. The authors are guided by the desire to understand and compare the mechanisms of speech acquisition by children and people of other age categories. The problem of teaching foreign languages is not only a pedagogical and linguistic problem, but also a psychological one. Currently, there is little literature dealing with the issues of education (moreover, adult education, which is still poorly developed) in such a multifaceted approach: integrative linguistic, psychological and pedagogical unity, is practically none. For the same reason, the level of training of foreign language teachers and the quality of work is decreasing. The authors tried to explain the essence of speech as a psychological phenomenon and from the standpoint of linguo-pedagogy to consider speech, including foreign language speech, as an inseparable part of the human psyche. The formation and development of speech ability should be considered as a process of building up a network of neural connections of the brain, which are responsible for the perception, understanding and production of speech. Multiple effects of external stimuli, speech and accompanying signals on the sensory organs, and through them on the analyzer system, help to create such connections. The key point in developing a large number of necessary neural connections is not the frequency of repetition of speech signals, but the variety and richness of stimuli, backed up by emotions and personally significant experiences accompanying a speech utterance.

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Keywords

Psycholinguistics, foreign language speech, language levels, speech ability, psychophysiological apparatus, speech signal, speech perception, speech generation.

Introduction

From the point of view of psycholinguistics, teaching foreign language (including Russian) speech is the development of a person's linguistic and speech abilities, as well as the processes of generating and perceiving speech using certain psycholinguistic methods, which are based not only on communication, but also on mental processes, states and personality properties. In modern psycholinguistics, the concept of language ability is generally accepted. Language and speech are closely interrelated and mutually conditioned in the features of generation and functioning and form a single phenomenon of human language, since speech is the embodiment, the realization of a language that reveals itself only in speech and only through it fulfills its communicative purpose.

Main part

Language, being assimilated in a social way, i.e. in the process of perception from surrounding people, "after assimilation belongs to a person and becomes part of his functioning psyche" [Druzhinin, 1999, p. 266]. The study and research of language in isolation from speech is unjustified and impractical. It is also pointless, from the point of view of the psychology of teaching foreign languages, communicative linguistics and text linguistics, to contrast language and speech, since they coexist, and not oppose. A.A. Potebnya also noted that "language is a means not to express a ready-made thought, but to create it" [Potebnya, 1958]. V.A. Artemov defines speech as "the process of expressing a person's thoughts, feelings, desires through language in order to influence other people in the process of communication in various types of speech activity and social relations" [Artemov, 1969: 186]. A person masters not only language, but also speech, and these two processes proceed in parallel, therefore, it is necessary to distinguish not only language, but also speech ability.

There are various definitions of language ability in the scientific literature. Thus, A.M. Shakhnarovich defines language ability as "a multilevel hierarchically organized functional system formed in the psyche of a native speaker in the process of ontogenetic development" [Shakhnarovich, 1990, 617]. The scientist defines language ability as a speech mechanism, but refers it to the field of language, speaking of "the opposition of language as a system and language as an ability (language as a speech mechanism)" [Arama, Shakhnarovich, 1997, 63]. According to the definition of A.A. Leont'ev, language ability is "a psychophysiological mechanism that ensures the possession and mastery of language" [Leont'ev, 1970]. This definition of language ability is based on L.V. Shcherba's position on "the psychophysiological speech organization of an individual as a system of potential linguistic representations" [Lingvisticheskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar', 1990, 617].

There are two main points of view about the nature of language ability, one of them belongs to Western psycholinguistics and postulates the biological nature of the language ability inherent in a person at birth and developing as a child develops. From the point of view of Russian psycholinguistics, language ability is a social formation that develops in the process of communication. Interest in the development of language and speech abilities has arisen for a long time.

Sh.P. Buton analyzed the main approaches to the study of the nature of language and speech development, and, accordingly, language and speech abilities. According to his conclusions, the first

systematic observations date back to the end of the 18th century, when the German scientist D. Tiedemann published a review of his son's speech development (Tiedemann 1787). In his opinion, ontogenesis repeats phylogenesis. In the works of A. Gregoire (Gregoire 1937, 1947), language acquisition is considered as a gradual approach to mastering the rules that allow producing correct statements. Such an approximation is possible only due to the influence of the environment. Consequently, the process of language acquisition, the development of language and speech abilities is understood as a social phenomenon. Mourer (1952) developed his theory of phonological development, which many psychologists and phonetists still consider the most reliable. He also emphasizes the phenotypic aspect of speech development, considering the processes of speech assimilation as determined by the environment, which are the result of its influence. The first, and for a long time the only one who held a different point of view, was J. Piaget. Numerous studies have led the scientist to a new scientific approach to the study of man: genetic epistemology. From the point of view of J. Piaget, long before the appearance of the first signs of verbal behavior, all that the child has mastered in the sensorimotor and cognitive plans, prepares and facilitates the emergence of speech. Thus, it is obvious that verbal development is not an isolated process, but one of the aspects of general human development that strongly depends on general development. Each stage of this development determines the progress that favorably affects speech, and without which it would be impossible to form it. According to J. Piaget, the effect of phenotypic factors in the course of speech development is subordinated to genotypic factors.

The approach of linguists to the study of the processes of speech formation, language and speech abilities, was formed, as A.A. Zalevskaya writes, regardless of the approach of psychologists. The first theoretical hypothesis in this area belongs to R. Jakobson (Jakobson 1985), who believed that the order of mastering the elements of the phonological system is strictly defined and universally significant. Researchers of various nationalities have already noted this striking monotony. According to their observations, the child, gradually, in the process of speech development, builds his own language system, which then begins to correspond to the adult language model. B. Moskowitz (Moskowitz 1971) develops the ideas of Jakobson and considers phonological development as the assimilation of units and rules that determine their combination. Olmsted did not support these views and believed that the order of mastering phonemes depends on the frequency of their production and on the ease of perception (Olmsted 1971). In fact, this is a return to the position of the theory of the environment with some behavioral changes. Waterson's works represent the newest theoretical direction. According to his theory, the infant initially has a sensitivity to regular melodic forms bearing articulate segments, the subtle nuances of which the child does not perceive. In an utterance perceived as a single sound whole, the child first distinguishes some phonemic features, without necessarily being aware of the sequence in which they are pronounced. Thus, the child seeks to identify a certain type of scheme consisting of a special set of properties found in a sufficiently large number of forms used by an adult.

As for the mastery of grammar by a person, the problems of its formation, which are fundamental both for understanding the development of children's speech and for teaching foreign language speech to adult students, psychologists and linguists also consider this issue primarily from the standpoint of the formation of children's speech in their native language. It is recognized that the child has a certain level of his own grammatical competence. It seems that the child's speech develops on the basis of genetically inherited capital, while the development leads to the gradual discovery of special rules that allow the transformation of innate deep structures into the surface structures of a specific language, the language of the environment that surrounds the child from birth.

Thus, scientists have come to the assumption that there is some innate mechanism of speech

recorded in the genotype, on the basis of which, as a result of the influence of the environment at the level of phenotypic factors, a special competence for each specific language should be developed. The child is recognized as biologically prepared for speech activity. If we take the risk and assume that this preparedness does not disappear as a person grows, but is simply not used unnecessarily, we get excellent prerequisites for the development of foreign language speech of adult students, relying on their innate abilities to master speech in any language.

With this interpretation, the deep structures of speech, considered as innate and postulated as universal, constitute the basis on which a child (and, in our opinion, an adult) under the influence of the environment forms his speech ability in the field of using a certain language. Language acquisition by a child is reduced to mastering the rules of transformations specific at each level: phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic. Transformations make it possible to translate relationships existing at the level of deep structures into statements at the surface level.

Thus, we see that there is no need to downplay the importance of social and biological principles both in the development of speech, language and speech abilities in a person, and in the person himself. Language ability is laid biologically and genetically, and is formed and developed socially.

Considering the biological and genetic side of language ability, we are talking about a special human device that allows him, in principle, to master language and speech. This device is a necessary base and an integral component of internal speech mechanisms that provide the human psyche with the ability to perceive and process external language codes, transforming them into internal codes. It is only on this basis that the language ability as a mental and psychophysiological function can work. Of course, individual differences are inevitable in language ability, also due to genetics (heredity), that is, the path and principles of language ability development are the same, but different people master a foreign language (including Russian) language at different rates and with varying degrees of ease/difficulty. Speaking about the social side of language ability, we note that it is formed in the process of communication and learning, which confirms its undoubted social essence. Thus, language ability is a phenomenon inherent in a person in principle and amenable to development throughout life, and in relation to both the native language and native speech, and to a foreign language and, accordingly, foreign speech.

The speech ability of a person is closely related to his nervous activity, therefore, the processes of speech perception and speech generation can be considered from the point of view of psychophysiology, since the processes of perception, understanding and reproduction of speech are subject to the action of similar mechanisms and have the same patterns.

Speaking about the mastery of Russian-language speech by adult foreign students, it is interesting to compare this process with the course of mastering native speech by a child. The brain of a newborn baby is still practically clean and free of information, but biologically and genetically it is already ready and able to work. Gradually, in the process of subject activity, communication and education of the child, when receiving more and more information from the environment, his psychophysiological apparatus develops an increasing number of internal neural connections, the so-called speech codes responsible for language acquisition. That is, the speech ability is formed, developed and improved under the influence of society. It is well known that a child is able to master two or even more languages at the same time, without having theoretical knowledge about the language and how it functions in speech.

When mastering the native language, logical paths are not used, since they appear as a result of training, and the use of only sensory, motor connections and imitation techniques is a necessity, not an advantage. It is true that a person mastering a second language has already connected the subject with

the sign of his native language, which means that he correlates the signs of the language being studied with the objects indirectly, through the language system of his native language based on associative and logical connections. The student's use of logical paths when learning a foreign (Russian) language is a necessity, since he systematizes, generalizes, compares the facts of the language. If mastering the native language and cognition of the world occurs simultaneously, then for a person who has learned the world, language acquisition and cognition of the new world are mediated by the native language.

Conclusion

When an adult learns foreign language speech, the psychophysiological apparatus is "reconfigured" in such a way that, having expanded his speech ability, he develops new neural connections, i.e. speech codes, in order to make speech activity in a foreign language very close to natural.

Thus, the formation and development of speech ability should be considered as a process of building up a network of neural connections of the brain, which are responsible for the perception, understanding and production of speech. Multiple effects of external stimuli, speech and accompanying signals on the sensory organs, and through them on the analyzer system, help to create such connections. Also, the formation of connections occurs as a result of repeated reproduction of speech signals, that is, the generation of speech. The key point in developing a large number of necessary neural connections is not the frequency of repetition of speech signals, but the variety and richness of stimuli, backed up by emotions and personally significant experiences accompanying a speech utterance.

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Психолингвистические и педагогические аспекты овладения иноязычной речью взрослыми учащимися

Самосенкова Татьяна Владимировна

Доктор педагогических наук, профессор,
профессор кафедры русского языка, профессионально-речевой
и межкультурной коммуникации,
Белгородский государственный
национальный исследовательский университет,
308007, Российская Федерация, Белгород, ул. Студенческая, 14;
e-mail: samosenkova@bsu.edu.ru

Назаренко Елена Борисовна

Кандидат педагогических наук, доцент,
Белгородский государственный
национальный исследовательский университет,
308007, Российская Федерация, Белгород, ул. Студенческая, 14;
e-mail: news@bsu.edu.ru

Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются вопросы овладения взрослыми учащимися иноязычной речью. Авторами руководит стремление понять и сравнить механизмы обретения речи детьми и людьми другой возрастной категории. Проблема обучения иностранным языкам – проблема не только педагогическая и лингвистическая, но и психологическая. В настоящее время мало литературы, рассматривающей вопросы обучения (а тем более, обучение взрослых, которое еще слабо разработано) в таком многогранном подходе: интегративном лингво-психолого-педагогическом единстве, практически нет. По этой же причине страдает и подготовка преподавателей иностранных языков, и качество работы. Авторы исследования попытались разъяснить суть речи как психологического явления и с позиций лингвопедагогики рассмотреть речь, в том числе иноязычную, как нераздельную часть человеческой психики.

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Ключевые слова

Психолингвистика, иноязычная речь, уровни языка, речевая способность, психофизиологический аппарат, речевой сигнал, речевосприятие, речепорождение.

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