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The analysis of psycholinguistic peculiarities of a foreign language studying: suggestopedia approach

Аналіз психолінгвістичних особливостей вивчення іноземної мови: сугестопедійний підхід

Summary. *Language competences are at the heart of building the European Education Area. They define personal identities, but are also part of a shared inheritance. For millions of Ukrainians all over the world the knowledge of a foreign language, mainly English is more than a means of communication, but sometimes the only way to be heard. Multilingualism is one of eight key competences needed for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion. For many reasons the goal to improve language teaching at different stages of life-long education is of primary importance. Hence, the article aims at studying psychological and linguistic features at various stages of language learning. The object of the article is the psycholinguistic features of studying a foreign language. The subject of the research is the suggestopedia approach to the language learning. Language mastery includes three close but not identical concepts, mainly acquisition of the native language, secondary awareness of the native language and finally mastering (learning) another non-native language. A speech skill is a speech operation performed according to optimal parameters. Such parameters are unconsciousness, complete automaticity, compliance with the language norm, normal tempo (speed) of execution and stability. Motivation, level of anxiety, level of self-esteem, rigidity (looseness), readiness to take risks, empathy, extroversion have been defined as the most important conditions for mastering a foreign language. The research has defined the following positive achievements of suggestopedia approach, mainly the increasing learning resistance, stimulation the learning readiness, the feeling of relaxation, fostering hope and trust in students' own power, helping the learners to overcome the barriers to learning, facilitation of the learners' change.*

Key words: *psycholinguistic, speech skills, language acquisition, language mastery, suggestology, suggestopedia.*

Анотація. Мовні навички є основою побудови європейського освітнього простору. Вони визначають особисту ідентичність, проте також є частиною спільного спадку. Сьогодні для мільйонів українців у всьому світі знання іноземної мови, переважно англійської, є не просто засобом спілкування, а іноді навіть єдиним способом бути почутими. Багатомовність є однією з восьми ключових компетенцій, необхідних для самореалізації, здорового й сталого способу життя, працевлаштування, активної громадянської позиції та соціальної інтеграції. Таким чином, завдання з покращення викладання іноземної мови на різних етапах безперервної освіти є першочерговим. Отже, стаття має на меті аналіз психологічних і лінгвістичних особливостей вивчення іноземної мови на різних етапах. Об'єктом дослідження є психолінгвістичні особливості вивчення іноземної мови, предметом – сугестопедичний підхід до вивчення мови. Володіння мовою включає три близькі, проте не тотожні поняття: 1) опанування рідної мови; 2) усвідомлення рідної мови; 3) оволодіння (вивчення) іншої нерідної мови. Мовленнєва навичка – це мовленнєва операція, що виконується за оптимальними параметрами. Такими параметрами є підсвідомість, повний автоматизм, відповідність мовній нормі, нормальний темп (швидкість) виконання та стійкість. Найважливішими умовами оволодіння іноземною мовою визначено мотивацію, рівень тривожності, рівень самооцінки, відкритість (розкритість), готовність до ризику, емпатію. Унаслідок дослідження визначено такі позитивні досягнення сугестопедійного підходу: стимулювання готовності до навчання, відчуття розслабленості, почуття надії та довіри до власних сил, допомогу учням у подоланні бар'єру в навчанні.

Ключові слова: психолінгвістика, розмовні навички, засвоєння мови, оволодіння мовою, сугестологія, сугестопедія.

Introduction. Language competences are at the heart of building the European Education Area. They are indispensable for mobility, cooperation and mutual understanding across borders. Nowadays for all Ukrainians at home and abroad the knowledge of a foreign language is not just the means to communicate, but a powerful tool to be heard.

The co-existence of many languages in Europe is a powerful symbol of the European Union's aspiration to be united in diversity, one of the cornerstones of the European project. Languages define personal identities, but are also part of a shared inheritance.

The EU has promoted language learning across Europe for a long time. For individuals, learning languages creates personal and professional opportunities, especially citizenship of an EU Member State guarantees freedom of movement, for society, it fosters cultural awareness, mutual understanding and social cohesion, for companies, workers with language and intercultural competences are a vital resource, helping businesses to succeed and grow in global markets.

Multilingualism is one of eight key competences needed for personal fulfillment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active

citizenship and social inclusion according to the Council recommendation on Key Competences for lifelong learning.

Yet, too many young Europeans still leave school without a working knowledge of a second language. The 2011–2012 EU survey on language skills (held in 14 EU countries) showed that:

- 42% of 15 year-old pupils tested had attained “independent user” level (B1/B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) in their first foreign language;
- 25% had reached this level in a second foreign language;
- 14% of pupils lacked even a basic knowledge of one [7].

For all these reasons, the EU has set objective of improving language teaching and learning at an early age as a key priority.

The need to update and improve approaches to learning a foreign language, in particular English, determined the relevance of this study. The aim of the article is to study psychological and linguistic features at various stages of language learning.

The object of the article is the psycholinguistic features of studying a foreign language, in particular English. The subject of the research is the suggestopedia approach to the language learning.

To reach the aim the following tasks are to be solved:

- to differentiate between the notions of language learning, language acquisition and language mastery;
- to suggest the psycholinguistic background of foreign language studying;
- to analyze important conditions for mastering a foreign language;
- to define the notions of “suggestology” and “suggestopedia”;
- to provide the achievements of suggestopedia approach to foreign language learning.

Methods of investigation. Recently, more and more attention has been paid to the study of the psychological concept of foreign language learning, which mainly consists in the development of abilities with the help of various types of educational activities. Psychological and methodical studies (I. Pavlov, O. Starkov, R. Ranier, S. O’Meilly, G. Lozanov and others) found that success in learning a foreign language depends not only on cognitive processes, but also on affective aspect (emotional and expressive) and personal factors.

Before penetration into the question of foreign language learning let us consider the notion of language acquisition. In fact, the scope of the concept of “language mastery” includes three different, close, but not identical concepts. This is acquisition of the native language (Language acquisition, mother tongue acquisition). This is a secondary awareness of the native language, which is usually associated with learning at school. And

finally, this is mastering (learning) one or another non-native language. The latter can be spontaneous, for example, in a bilingual family and generally in a bilingual or multilingual environment. An example can be the phenomenon of the so-called “Tbilisi yard”: in the old Tbilisi children, playing in the yard with their peers of different nationalities, to one degree or another mastered Georgian, Armenian, Russian, Kurdish, and Assyrian languages; but it can also be specially planned, controlled and managed, for example, mastering a foreign language at school. It is in this case that one speaks of “language learning” or “language teaching” [2, p. 5].

A native language is not an “innate” language. Actually, there cannot be such, since there are many cases where children of one nationality were brought up in families of another nationality and from the very beginning began to speak the language of the family. And this may not be the language of the parents, especially if the family is mixed. Mother tongue is generally the language in which the child uttered his or her first words. The non-native language a child acquires can be, in turn, of two types. If it is the language used in the community in which the child is growing up, it is usually called a second language: it can be the language of a national-linguistic minority, the state or official language (for those for whom it is not a native language), the language of interethnic communication. If there are very few or practically no speakers of a given language in a specific language environment, then it is a foreign language.

Presentation of the main research material. Any activity, including speech (regardless of language), is psychologically arranged in the same way. How does speaking in a foreign language differ from speaking in your native language? First, with its so-called indicative link. In order to construct a linguistic expression, speakers of different languages must work out different analyzes of situations, goals, communication conditions, etc. For example, in order to construct an utterance, a Japanese compared to a European must take into account much more information about the age, social status and other characteristics of the interlocutor. Secondly, the operational composition of this utterance (speech act) is those speech operations that the speaker must perform in order to construct an utterance with the same meaning and the same direction [2, p. 13].

A speech skill is a speech operation performed according to optimal parameters. Such parameters are unconsciousness, complete automaticity, compliance with the language norm, normal tempo (speed) of execution and stability. Forming a speaking skill means ensuring that the student correctly constructs and implements an expression.

At the same time, for full-fledged communication, it is necessary for the speaker, first of all, to be able to use speech skills to independently express his or her thoughts, intentions, and feelings. In the opposite case, speech activity turns out to be formed only partially.

Secondly, it is necessary for the speaker to be able to arbitrarily and consciously vary the choice and combination of speech operations (skills) depending on the purpose, in which situation, with which interlocutor the communication takes place. If a person can do all this, we say that he has the appropriate speech or communicative skills.

It is characteristic that the transition from the native language to a foreign one from a psycholinguistic point of view is a change in the rules of the transition from the program of expression to its implementation. This change cannot, of course, be carried out immediately, as switching from the old rules to new ones. A person cannot immediately speak a new language, he must go through the stage of indirect mastery of a foreign language. The link that mediates this process is the “native” system of program implementation rules. In the future, this system of rules is increasingly reduced. The final link of this process of reduction (and at the same time automation of “new” rules) is the establishment of a direct connection between the program and the system of rules of a foreign language, which corresponds to a relatively fluent command of a foreign language, or as the psychologist B. Belyaev called “thinking in a foreign language”.

The founder of humanistic psychology, K. Rogers, highlighted the principles of human behavior, according to which a person is, first of all, an emotional being. A truly harmonious personality lives in harmony with his feelings and emotions, he is able to fully realize his inner potential. Such a person does not need to protect himself from the surrounding world by using defensive strategies; such a person is a creator of himself, who improves himself with every step he takes, in every decision he makes.

The humanistic concept of K. Rogers was reflected in the writings of Ch. Karrin, in which he singles out the following components as the most important conditions for mastering a foreign language: motivation, level of anxiety, level of self-esteem, rigidity (looseness), readiness to take risks, empathy, extroversion.

Based on the above conditions, Ch. Karrin created a communicative technique, according to which he considered the audience not as students or listeners, but as a group of people who need psychological counseling and therapy. The main goal of the teacher-therapist is to establish psychological contact with the group, create a favorable microclimate that contributes to increasing self-esteem, openness, empathy, etc., which ultimately helps students to overcome the “language barrier” and better learn language material [1].

As we can from the studies above learning of a foreign language is not only based on material, but is closely connected with other branches of humanitarian sciences, especially with psychology. There are many

interrelated issues between language and psychology. We have stated that elaborating advanced approaches to the language studying of primary need, in this respect the notion of suggestopedia is to be highlighted.

Due to modern psychological research based on suggestology (revelation of hidden human capabilities), a number of intensive methods of learning a foreign language have been developed, which are based on the work of the subconscious mind: “25th frame method”, “sleep learning method”, “immersion method”, etc.

Mainly, suggestopedia is a language teaching method originated in the 1970s by Bulgarian psychologist Georgi Lozanov. The name combines the terms “suggestion” and “pedagogy”, the main idea being that accelerated learning can take place when accompanied by de-suggestion of psychological barriers and positive suggestion. It makes use of dialogs, situations, and translation to present and practice language, and in particular, makes use of music, visual images, and relaxation exercises to make learning more comfortable and effective. It is a method of teaching a foreign language in which students learn quickly by being made to feel relaxed, interested and positive [5]. From these two definitions, it is clear that suggestopedia uses techniques to make the students feel relaxed, comfortable, interested in order to learn more quickly. Georgi Lozanov in the late 1970s proposed an argument that students naturally face psychological barriers to learning. The psychological barriers here refer to a variety of internal distractions (worry, fatigue, boredom, fear, etc.). There are “negative belief systems”, such as a conviction that learning is hard or that school is a bore, etc. These barriers will make them unable to perform their best and will reduce their ability to learn. These systems must be changed into “positive belief systems”, such as “learning is interesting and fun” and “I can accomplish much more than I ever thought I could”, in turn permit the activation of unconscious mental processes that result in unexpectedly powerful effects. The procedure of suggestopedic instruction is as follows: presentation, active concert, passive concert, practice.

G. Lozanov believes that learners may have been using only 5 to 10 percent of their mental capacity, and that the brain could process and retain much more material if given optimal conditions for learning. Based on psychological research, G. Lozanov proved that unconscious mental activity can be brought into play. Physical and mental relaxation exercises make it possible for the students to regulate the contents of their consciousness in order to receive lesson material in a manner uninterrupted by any of a variety of internal distractions (worry, fatigue, boredom, etc.) [6].

One of the most unique features of this method was the use of soft classical music during the learning process. According to the founder of the method this creates a level of relaxed concentration that facilitates

the intake and retention of huge quantities of material. Another aspect that differs from other methods is the use of soft comfortable chairs and dim lighting in the classroom (other factors believed to create a more relaxed state of mind). By using this method, G. Lozanov's foreign language classes have demonstrated rates of learning three times faster than those achieved in the best intensive programs in the United States.

A number of authors have investigated various aspects of suggestopedia as applied to university-level foreign language learning. Bordon and Schuster have applied the principles of suggestion to Spanish instruction over one academic quarter and report that students learned up to three times faster than students taught by the conventional audiolingual method [4].

The learning process of suggestopedia instruction is the so-called "learner-centered". The learning climate is described as free from anxiety while being supportive cooperation. The consciously designed learning environment, consisting, for example, of a bright, cheerfully decorated room, flowers, and a seating order which allows eye-contact among learners as well as maximum freedom of mobility is designed to increase the joy of learning and to create a positive learning environment.

One more important difference is the nature of student-teacher interaction, which by the is described as parent-children relations; students are encouraged to be as "childlike" as possible, yielding all authority to the teacher. Students thus become "suggestible" [3]. A great deal attention is given to students' feelings. One of the fundamental principles of the method is enhancing the students' feelings of relax and confidence.

The achievement of the suggestopedia approach lies in the life-long learning motivation. Thus, the experience of enjoyment (intrinsic motivation) and competence in learning is the decisive factor in the development of long-term learning motivation. The playful design of many exercises in suggestopedic instruction is likely to produce such kind of experience, e. g. a joy of learning and curiosity. Therefore, by using this approach one might expect an increase of intrinsic motivation during the course of suggestopedic instruction.

Moreover, as suggestopedic instruction offers frequent opportunities to select the activities according to personal interests or intent to apply the learning, learners should quite often experience the feeling of autonomy and self determination. The manner in which different forms of practice are embedded in rich situational contexts helps the learner understand rather complex remarks even with a limited vocabulary. Experiences of success such as those are likely to frequently let learners experience a feeling of competence. Thus, overall, suggestopedic instruction can be expected to have positive motivational effects.

Conclusions. As the results of the research have shown the positive achievements of the suggestopedia approach are the following: learner-centered learning, the lack of anxiety and on the contrary the student's feeling of comfort, positive suggestion and negative "de-suggestion" by teacher, the grows of personal confidence of the students.

Eventually, suggestopedic instruction provides learners with learning environments which are comfortable. This is to increase learning resistance, to stimulate learning readiness, to make the learners feel relaxed, to foster hope and trust in their own power, to help the learners overcome the barriers to learning, to facilitate the learners to change input into intake. The students are exposed to situational exercises as well as to the complex, authentic system of the target language. It can be expected that this exposure has an especially positive effect on the development of listening comprehension and the ability to communicate in a foreign language in everyday situations.

The prospects of our further research we foresee in analyzing the practical application of suggestopedia approach to the study of English.

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