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ETHNOPSYCHOLINGUISTIC FEATURES OF MASTERING
SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND PRAGMATIC COMPONENTS OF
FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

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Abstract

The article deals with ethnic and individual psycholinguistic features of students which should be taken into account when mastering sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of foreign language communicative competence. Multicomponent foreign language communicative competence implies successful intercultural speech interaction and mutual understanding, “the ability to act as a secondary linguistic personality in a variety of social situations”. Attention to sociolinguistic (ability to take into account social and cultural communication norms) and pragmatic (knowledge of linguistic means) components is due to the specific process of mastering these competences which is characterized by intercultural sensitivity, knowledge of linguistic codes for different social situations, consideration of values, psychological and social identities of communication partners. On the basis of the survey of foreign students, conclusions were drawn about sociolinguistic and pragmatic components mastered by representatives of low-context cultures. The paper attempts to describe ethnopsycholinguistic factors which influence the success of acquiring sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of foreign language communicative competence as a basis for successful communicative and behavioral intercultural interaction. The article suggests methodological recommendations and tasks which contribute to formation of these components, allow the learner to think as representative of the culture of the learned language, i.e. to form a secondary language personality

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Keywords: Ethnopsycholinguistic features, pragmatic component, sociolinguistic component, high context culture, low context.



1. Introduction

Modern methodical researches say that teaching of foreign languages should take into account ethno-psychological (national character, ethnic stereotypes, national consciousness and mentality), ethno-linguistic (environment of the learned language, national-cultural component in language semantics) and ethnopedagogical factors (trainees' national educational traditions). Formation of the foreign language communicative competence involves development of linguistic skills and their normative use in different social and cultural situations. In addition to structural presentation of the linguistic material, a modern teacher should form ideas about new social and cultural norms of life which contribute to successful verbal interaction (DeWaard Dykstra, 2011; Krasilnikova, 2009))

2. Problem Statement

The research problem is to consider ethnopsycholinguistic features of students which influence the process of mastering of the foreign language communicative competence and its socio-cultural and pragmatic components.

3. Research Questions

The research subject is challenges of mastering of the Russian language communicative competence by students with various ethnopsycholinguistic features.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to study peculiarities of mastering of the foreign language communicative competence by students with various ethnopsycholinguistic features and to describe methods contributing to successful mastering of individual components of the communicative competence.

5. Research Methods

The following research methods were used: an analytical descriptive method, a pedagogical method (observation of students' activities), a questioning, a comparative method.

6. Findings

«In a modern society, knowledge of foreign language is vital for people intending to do well in the area of their professional activity» (Sumtsova, Azhel, & Buyankina, 2016).

The mastery of the communicative-behavioral sphere and the so-called intercultural sensitivity are at the heart of the foreign language communicative competence which is the main goal of mastering of a foreign language.

To form the foreign language competence, it is necessary to know communication and behavioral aspects and have multicultural sensitivity.

According to A.N. Shchukin, communicative competence is “the ability to speak in accordance with purposes and communication situation using linguistic means”. The communicative competence involves development of oral and written linguistic (phonetic, lexical, grammatical) and social and cultural skills

(Shchukin, 2003). “Ethnopsycholinguistics studies speech activity in the context of national cultural identity, taking into account the national cultural component of discourse, explores ethnopsycholinguistic determinacy of linguistic consciousness and communication” (Krasnykh, 2002). Ethnopsycholinguistics shows that norms and peculiarities of speech behavior have been historically formed in linguistic cultures. They reflect their national and cultural features and values. Any nation has a set of psychological and behavioral stereotypes. However, each set of stereotypes is peculiar to one or several members of the society. Hence, we can identify certain categories of thoughts which are typical of a particular national community.

When learning a foreign language, it is insufficient to master its grammatical structure and vocabulary. It is necessary to master “foreign language communication as a system of informational, regulatory, emotional-evaluative, and etiquette components” (Izmaylova & Piskareva, 2010, p. 1), i.e. the multimodal communicative competence (Cocchetta, 2018). When the communicative competence is developed, the personality goes beyond the limits of linguistic culture. “One path to successful communication is language competence. This is a well-known fact” (Banova, 2017, p. 37). “An important aspect of self-realization is an attitude to cultural values of the learned language” (Nikitenko, Yanchenko, Nikitenko, & Deikina, 2017, p. 15).

According to the “General European Competencies of Foreign Language Proficiency”, the communicative competence consists of three components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic (see Table 01)

Table 01. Components of the communicative competence

Components	Description
Linguistic component	knowledge of vocabulary, phonetics, grammar, syntax
Sociolinguistic component	ability to take into account norms of social communication with regard to age, gender, social status of the communicant, rituals of language communities
Pragmatic component	knowledge of linguistic means for certain functional purposes, realization of communicative functions, production of cohesive coherent speech acts, recognition of irony and parody.

A linguistic component of the communicative competence involves knowledge, skills and abilities in various aspects of language: vocabulary, phonetics, grammar. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the linguistic component can “encourage grammatical competence” (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998, p. 256).

Difficulties are caused by the nature of the native and learned languages rather than by characteristics of the behavioral culture (phonetic interference – underdifferentiation, overdifferentiation, non-interpretation, phoneme substitution; graphical interference, lexical semantic errors – wrong words, modification of the lexical meaning; morphological and syntactic errors - grammatical errors and violation of word order. E. Hirsch defined the linguistic level of foreign language competence development as a level required for survival (i.e., language proficiency allowing social interaction) (Hirsch, 1987).

Based on the linguistic component which is a tool for entering a new culture, the sociolinguistic component is mastered. The latter allows for selection and use of language forms with regard to social norms (communication norms with regard to age, gender, social status, knowledge of cultural rituals). In this case, knowledge of rules for using different pronouns and different social behavioral patterns is not sufficient. Teachers have to model various situations of social interaction.

A pragmatic component of the communicative competence involves the ability to use utterances in accordance with communicative intentions of the speaker and situational context (selection of language means with regard to the functional style and communication purpose, recognition of irony, parody, and paralingual and extra-linguistic features of non-verbal communication).

Mastering of sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of the communicative competence enables Russian learners to comprehend the ethnic and cultural characteristics of the country, grasp the idea of a learned language and use it for international communication. Sociocultural literacy can be improved using information technology (Lin & Wang, 2018, Pisarenko, 2017).

A sociolinguistic component is responsible for effective and successful intercultural communication with regard to values, psychological and social identity of foreign language communicants. “Applied linguists do vouch for focused reflection on the effects of sociopragmatic choices in instructional contexts, and for explicit intervention in this area in the form of awareness-raising input”.

According to the adaptation theory suggested by J. Kim, the following conditions are necessary for successful and dynamic adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment (stress-adapted growth dynamics which follows the principle of “two steps forward and a step back”):

- communication with new people (frequency of contacts, positive attitude),
- knowledge of foreign language,
- positive motivation,
- participation in various events,
- access to the media (Kim, 2000).

In order to study the process of mastering of components of the Russian language communicative competence by representatives of different cultures, we conducted a survey of foreign students of Russian universities (RUNF, TSU n.a. G.R. Derzhavin). Students were given situational tasks. Their answers allowed us to identify a communicative competence development level. For example, a development level for linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic components was evaluated using the following questions:

- Do you want to share your impressions of your vacation with your boss / teacher? In your opinion, what is the most accurate way of expressing your positive emotions:
 - A) I enjoyed all this month.
 - B) I had a great time.
 - B) your option.
- You were invited to visit Russian people for a family holiday. During the feast there was a dispute on a political issue. You
 - A) argue your point of view.
 - B) agree with the views of the host.
 - B) your option.
- You need to invite a Russian teacher to a conference in your home country. Which version of the letter would you prefer?
 - A) Hello, dear Semyon Ivanovich! I am very pleased to invite you to the conference, which

will be held in Amman on November 15.

B) Hello, dear Semyon Ivanovich! How are you? I have not seen you for two years. I really miss you. I hope I will see you soon, since the conference will be held in Amman on November 15. I am happy to invite you to the conference.

B) Your option.

According to the survey of more than 100 foreign students, some answers demonstrating developed Russian language communicative competence were determined by individual psychological characteristics. For example, when doing tasks which involved choosing options of, greeting, thanking, patterns of behavior in small talks with strangers, forms of presenting information about yourself in different social settings, students of the same nationality did not choose the most common answers. While doing tasks which involved understanding of information accompanying a social event, understanding of non-verbal signs (looking at the clock; ironic expressions, etc.), interesting patterns were identified: representatives of low-context cultures made more mistakes than representatives of high-context cultures. Thus, the study allowed for conclusion that cultural characteristics of students should be taken into account when teaching a foreign language. Mastering of the linguistic component is independent on the type of culture students belong to. The type of culture can influence scrupulosity of students learning foreign languages.

Let us define the concepts of high-context and low-context cultures. The classification is based on the attitude of the context as information accompanying the event, to the event itself, to linguistic means used for communication within this context.

The Russian language is considered to belong to high-context cultures, i.e. informative messages can be transmitted by a small number of words. The non-linguistic context, social status of participants in a communicative act are of great significance. Much is expressed implicitly. Hints, hidden meaning are used. These features influence the choice of speech tools. In contrast to high-context cultures, in low-context cultures, information is included in the communication context rather than in words. Communicants are more direct; speech intention is always explicit. The perlocutive effect is achieved through an open dialogue. When teaching representatives of low-context cultures, it is advisable to pay attention to the specifics of mastering of sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of the foreign language communicative competence.

For successful development of communicative competence, it is necessary to make students visualize communicative situations, experience the need to communicate with imaginary people in unfamiliar surroundings; "play" various roles (a seller, a police officer, a doctor, a patient, a tourist, etc.); choose appropriate models of speech behavior. Knowledge of etiquette, social stereotypes, and cultural features are of great importance. Skillful use of this knowledge ensures successful solution of communicative tasks.

Let us give some examples of tasks aimed to form sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of the foreign language communicative competence.

Situational task "Acquaintance". Students are invited to make acquaintance dialogues in pairs / groups. Doing this, they choose partners and use proposed phrases, transforming them, if necessary.

Subject - object: teacher - student; student - student; colleague - colleague; director - subordinate.

Phrases: Hello! Hello! Long time no see! Hi! I'm glad to see you! Speak of the angel! Greetings! Good day! What is your name? What's your name? Let me introduce myself?

Goodbye! Goodbye! See you! Good luck!

Situational task "Congratulations." The representative of each team chooses one card with a task. After discussion, the teams offer their options. Task: 1) to congratulate a friend on his wedding day; 2) to extend felicitations on the birth of a child; 3) to congratulate the teacher / director on the New Year.

The task can be done orally or in writing.

Situational task "Request". Transform the following requests depending on the communication situation: Close the door → Could you be so kind to close the door (teacher-student); Take my things → Please, take my things (colleagues).

Versions of the commands: "Open the window", "Turn on the light", "Give the book", "Pass the exercise book", "Give me my bag", "Bring me a cup of tea".

Subject - object: teacher - students, friend - friend, colleague - colleague, director - subordinate.

Situational task "Tips". Transform the tasks using the phrases which are appropriate in this context.

Tasks: 1. An acquaintance whose Russian is poor seeks advice. What can you advise him? 2. An elderly man in the bus asked your opinion about a gift for his son. What can you advise him? 3. Your friend does not know what to give the girl for her birthday. He seeks advice. What can you advise him? 4. Your colleague does not know how to use a new computer program. He seeks advice. What can you advise him?

Phrases: I advise (you) - I do not advise (you); I recommend (you) - I do not recommend you); You should - You should not; You need - you do not need; Try

Situational task "Roles". Make dialogues. Situations: 1) In a hotel: a) you want to change the number; b) you need to specify the breakfast time.

Subject - object: administrator-tourist

2) In a bank: a) your card is blocked; b) you need to add additional services; c) you have lost your card.

Subject - object: manager – client

3) In the hospital: a) you need to do a fluorography; b) you need to get help; c) you are sick.

Subject - object: doctor, nurse – patient

4) In the police: a) theft of the wallet on the bus; b) car theft; c) phone theft.

Subject - object: police officer – victim

3) In hospital: a) you need an X-ray photo of your chest; b) you need a medical certificate ; c) you are sick.

Subject - object: doctor, nurse – patient

4) In a police station: a) a wallet theft; b) a car theft; c) a phone theft.

Subject - object: police officer – victim

Situational task "compliments". Students need to use appropriate phrases.

Situations: 1. You have met a school teacher you have not seen for a long time. She looks great. 2. You have met a girlfriend who had a sea holiday. She is tanned and looks great. 3. Your sister is upset. Make a compliment to cheer her up. 4. A colleague proposed a promising project. Make a compliment.

Phrases: You look great! A good idea! You did a great job! What a beautiful dress! You look fresh!

Situational task “*Agree or disagree?*”. The teacher offers a statement, the students are divided into two groups: “agree” and “disagree”. The groups discuss their opinions and advance their arguments. They have to choose appropriate speech patterns.

Variants of statements: it is impossible to live without Internet. The dog is the smartest animal. Fast food is healthy food. Everyone should be able to drive a car. The rich and famous are always happy. French cuisine is the best in the world. A healthy lifestyle is fashionable. English is the easiest language in the world.

Phrases: I think that ..., In my opinion ..., It seems to me that ..., Frankly speaking ..., I would like to emphasize that ..., You are wrong..., I don't think.

The tasks aiming to obtain and share information include problem solutions, discussions, role-playing games, case study. These are methods of verbal interaction which make students express their thoughts, argue their viewpoints, listen to each other and actualize knowledge of speech skills, sociolinguistic and sociocultural norms.

When performing such tasks, the linguistic component is not emphasized, however, without appropriate knowledge of vocabulary, phonetics, grammar, and syntax, it is difficult to deal with social tasks. When doing tasks, students choose and adjust speech models depending on the context, norms of social behavior, and ethno-cultural values of the country.

Any communicative act involves several participants (subject - object). Consequently, one of the key moments is to take into account the social portrait of participants (social status, age, social and situational roles), which influence the choice of speech means.

For successful mastering of the communicative competence, it is necessary to make students visualize communication situations; experience the need to communicate with imaginary people in unfamiliar surroundings; “play” various roles (a seller, a police officer, a doctor, a patient, a tourist, etc.); choose appropriate speech behavior patterns...

7. Conclusion

Thus, the study allowed for the following conclusions:

- adequate choice of speech means for intercultural interaction depends on the degree of formation of sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of the foreign language communicative competence;
- it is necessary to take into account cultural peculiarities of students when presenting education material;
- when working with representatives of low-context cultures, it is advisable to pay attention to formation of sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of the foreign language communicative competence.

To conclude, mastering of sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of the communicative competence depends on the types of cultures, ethnopsycholinguistic characteristics of students. Successful intercultural communication requires identification and elimination of Russian language learning difficulties.

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