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On the problem of language mentality in the context of foreign language education

The problems of forming communicative competence in foreign language education are considered in the article. The interdisciplinary construct «language–thinking–ethnos» in close relationship of all its components serves as the subject of scientific cognition in the system of foreign language education. At the current stage, teaching of foreign languages is unthinkable without an immersion into another culture and mentality, which require a certain degree of identification with the particular language community. The communicative behavior allows us to realize fully the fact that the language, consciousness and culture are links in one chain.

Key words: foreign language, education, professional training, language mentality, culture, communicative competence.

International level of socio-economic achievements of independent Kazakhstan, a wide range of international cooperation, the need for a qualitative breakthrough in the professional training of specialists in the context of integration into the global community nominated foreign languages in the educational priorities.

The solution of problems in ensuring the compliance of the quality level of foreign language teaching to modern rates of the country's development naturally necessitates a radical revision of the methodology of foreign language education. Intercultural communicative theory of foreign language teaching, aimed at integrated teaching of language and culture, serves as the leading modern concept of foreign language education.

The subject of scientific cognition in the system of foreign language education is an interdisciplinary construct «language — culture — ethnos» in close relation of its parts. Intercultural communicative theory of foreign language education reflects its focus on integrated teaching of language and culture, providing the disclosure of language as a translator of socio-cultural specificity of national language communities in the communication that facilitates mutual understanding and cooperation in an open world [1].

Nowadays one of the most complicated and controversial aspect in modern science is the study of language mentality and its ethnic and cultural dependence in socialization. Complexity of the problem is characterized by dimensionality, colossal chronological length, formal, structural and functional diversity of the thing that belongs to linguistic consciousness and intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication is the kind of connection and communication between people of different cultures, which involves both the personal contact and mediated forms of communication (such as writing and mass communication). Intercultural communication takes an important place in our modern society, as it facilitates the exchange of experience in various fields of science, economy and trade. It completes our knowledge about the diversity of surrounding world. But in order to make this communication more productive, you need not only knowledge, but also understanding of national-cultural interaction processes and consideration of world conceptualizing, reflected in the verbal forms of language consciousness. The study of various extra- and psycholinguistic processes, which influence language mentality formation, formulates theoretical and applied significance of the given analysis.

Mentality is a term rapidly burst into the lexicon of everyday life for many humanities. This term began to be used to explain the fact that the collective and individual consciousness is determined not only by mind, knowledge and the logic of being, but the norms, values and traditions of culture, historical experience of generations and general spiritual disposition of the ethnos as well.

Each ethnic group is characterized by its own mentality, which is composed throughout the history of its formation. It is the nation's individuality, which distinguishes it from other ethnic entities. But it is not connected with the external attributes, and it is expressed by the essence and deep content of the ethnic group itself. Take, for example, the American people. Immigrants from England, Germany, France, the first inhabited the American open spaces, were the bearers of typical national characteristics, but they were joined by the orientation to implementation of personal, private interests, and that became the basis of individualism as the leading idea of American society.

The definition of linguistic consciousness involves the distinction of the terms consciousness, thought and world picture. Each term denotes different phenomena. The term consciousness is denoted as a reflective mental activity, including perception, processing of the perceived phenomenon and the formation of a coherent picture of the world that contains the knowledge and relationships, objects, and the subject itself with regard to them. The key concept here is the notion of reflection, i.e. relation of the subject to the object: the subject is included in the world picture as an observer, fixing the spatial, temporal, and other characteristics of an object with a certain subjective position, point of view.

As we can see, the world picture is one of the components of consciousness. This holistic and systematic reflection of reality is the basis of orientation and planning of behavior, including communicative one. World picture is heterogeneous.

Thought is associated with consciousness, but it is not equal to it. Thought is one of the higher mental functions, providing the ability to process information in order to solve various problems, connected with the formulation of questions and search for answers to them in the implementation of simple or complex activity. Thought is a necessary condition for the formation of consciousness. According to the cultural and historical concept of L.S. Vygotsky, thought and language ability are considered as conjugate results of socially conditioned activity (Vygotsky, 1934). A word is an instrument of mental activity - thought. Speech along with attention, memory and thought, according to L. Vekker, becomes a through mental process, permeating all aspects of an individual: intellectual (cognitive), a strong-willed, emotional.

One or another ethnic group forms its own image of the world depending on the geographic, ethnic, socio-cultural peculiarities of life. The well-known researcher of the «national images of the world», G.Gachev [1] distinguishes such characterizing one or another ethnos elements, such as Space and Time, Vertical and Horizontal, Why and Who. For example, Time is more significant for the Germans, Space — for Russians.

Culture and mentality of the ethnic groups differ according to their understanding of the origin of the world and all existing. Whether they are generated by Nature, or produced by Labor? For example, in America the stereotypical image of a man, so-called self-made man dominates. The Americans when meeting ask the question ‘How do you do?’ No wonder that such a stereotypical setting for activity contributed the wide dissemination of pragmatism throughout the Americas.

It is interesting to note that the world perception of the ethnic group is largely determined by which of the major issues is essential to it: What? Why? How? The question of being ‘What is that?’ is typical for the Greeks, ‘Why’ is the most important one for the Germans, because their interest is directed toward the elucidation of things’ causes. For the French, the key question sounds ‘For what’: goal is more important than reason, the essence of all is assumed somewhere ahead, in the future. The result is French theories of progress (Rousseau, Condorcet), evolution (Lamarck, Teilhard de Chardin) and social utopia.

Englishmen and, especially, the Americans set the main question — ‘How?’: ‘how does the thing work?’, ‘how is it done?’ The principle of ‘know-how’ spread around the world, this fact explains a lot of books about ‘How to ...’ — ‘How to succeed?’, ‘How to win friends and influence people?’, ‘How to achieve cooperation?’

The worldview and mindset of any person is inevitably reflected in that what and how he says. Languages of the peoples, cultures of which deny the effective human control over reality, abound in expressions and keywords of fatalistic content. For example, Italian — ‘Che sera sera (what will be, will not pass)’, Russian — «Человек предполагает, а Бог располагает» (man proposes, god disposes), Arabic ‘In sha Allah’ (for all the will of Allah). Speaking about the fate Americans prefer to use aphorisms rejecting the providence: ‘The Lord helps those who help themselves’ or ‘Where there’s a will there’s a way’.

An optimistic attitude to life, life-affirming spirit reigns in almost all spheres of Americans’ activity. The habit of Americans to show a good mood, that is, ‘think positive’ becomes a reflex from childhood. For example, children’ activities of various kinds are frequently accompanied by parents’ regards: ‘Have fun!’, ‘You can do it!’, rather than warnings, such as: Be careful! Do not fall!

As we see the active life position of Americans is evident not only in their lifestyle, culture, but also in the language. American English is full of hundreds of structures in which an active figure is emphatically expressed. «Active» elements of language and culture, reacting to each other, form a peculiar American mindset.

There are people, expressing their emotions, the suppression of which is considered somewhat unnatural. The other category is people, in the nature of which self-control is dominant; over-manifestation of feelings is regarded as something vulgar, anti-social. As for the British people, they belong to the second category.

English morality requires a person's privacy fence off from the outside world. The threshold of his home is the border line. The cult of private property formed an attitude to the house as a fortress. Everyone knows the widespread expression 'An Englishman's house is his castle'. Home for the British is the center of existence and holds a leading position in life. Attachment to their roots, customs and traditions resulted in forming such features as conservatism, the ability to appreciate all that related with the past. Being opponents of any kind of change, they tend to act in accordance with the rules. The analogy between life rules and regulations in sport can be observed on the example of the English expression 'It's not a cricket', that means 'it's not fair, not by the rules'.

Modern Germany is a country of pragmatic nationalism. This is a sharp rejection of its imperial, especially the Nazi past and, on the contrary, the recognition of the principles of democracy, legal state, federalism and social-oriented economy. These new challenges actualized the main components of the German mentality:

1) The Protestant ethic of work as a duty ('Wir sind nicht faul!' — 'We are not lazy!'). The Germans are very hardworking people; their desire for order is well known.

2) Respect to the state. The Germans' home is a 'little homeland' — 'Mein Heimatort', and Germany as a whole for them is 'Fatherland' — 'Mein Heimatland'.

Their reverence for traditional values, as social discipline and order 'Ordnung' is traced at present in the material of modern billboards and ads in Germany. One of the most visible features of German streets' appearance — frequent use of the word 'verboten' (forbidden). For example, 'Parken verboten', 'Plakatieren verboten', 'Rauchen verboten'. The abundance of such public signs once again demonstrates the need of the Germans to comply with the order in all spheres of activity. Thus, we can state with certainty that one of the key German cultural values is 'Ordnung'. Schiller called it «a blessing bestowed upon the heavens», due to which a civilization emerged. Over the last three millennia, this virtue is firmly strengthened in the German mind.

Germans' love to order, purity reflected in the structure of their language. In German grammar there are six tenses of verbs. Each gender has its own definite article. Each article declines on cases, according to certain rules. The Germans are very polite people and in the grammar there is a polite form (die Höflichkeitsform), and the pronoun 'you' (Sie) is capitalized and used in the conversation with the word 'please' — 'Bitte'. Note that all nouns in German are written with a capital letter; perhaps the Germans indicate the respect for surrounding objects, not just for people.

Mentality is not transmitted from one nation to another. Kipling's saying: 'West is West, East is East. And they will never come together' has its basis. Despite the active exchange of different values in various fields of science, technology and culture, the western way of life can not fit into the eastern mentality.

As we see, ethnic mentality is a combination of special features and characters that contain the complexity of spiritual, economic, ethnic and historical development of the people. And the only way that can help to penetrate the hidden sphere of mentality is the language. Language as a major ethnic differentiator records and reflects the system of values, attitudes, evaluations of people's culture. The study of types of mentalities through the prism of language allows, in its turn, to realize how modes of thought, behavior close up with the stereotypes existing in language consciousness of people relatively the full range of features typical for a particular ethnic group, which constitutes the basis of its mentality.

Language phenomenon is considered in the context of a person's activity — the bearer of a definite culture, a representative of a particular ethnic group that possesses specific ethnic consciousness and mentality, interacting with representatives of other linguo-cultural communities. Not only a characteristic of the people in general, but also the arguments about the nature of man, his world view and thinking, about being and the conditions surrounding it are included in an anthropological context of language consideration. The study and description of the interaction of language and culture in a range of contemporary cultural and national identity and its symbolic presentation are in the center of cultural linguistics' interests. Its main purpose is to develop linguistic-cultural competence, which is defined as a set of historical, ethnic, socio-cultural and semiotic background knowledge accumulated in the national language, and necessary for the successful progress of intercultural communication.

Problems of international contacts and cross-cultural communication rose most sharply in recent years, in view of various reforms that have changed the whole social life in the shortest period. Linguists were the first who felt the changed in the world situation, considering an inseparable link between language and culture as obvious and indisputable. On the one hand, the language is the system that allows collecting, preserving and passing on from generation to generation information accumulated by the collective consciousness.

But on the other hand, the culture representing the set of non-genetically acquired information performs a similar function of storage and transmission of collective knowledge. So that, taking into account the generality of functions, language and culture are constantly interacting.

Linguists take great interest in those points where cultural competence overlaps with language one. Today, when the inevitability of the coexistence of different cultures, societies with various trends and national traditions in the field of communication is clearly realized in the world, the study and consideration of these features should be a priority.

As many linguists assume, the dialogue between cultures often comes to grief not because of purely linguistic factors, but the lack of knowledge of the cultural background, which is a component of pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence presupposes the possession of all the complex of communicative behavior as a set of norms and traditions of people's discourse in this or that linguocultural community. The communicative behavior helps to be fully aware of the fact that language, consciousness, culture and mentality are all the links of one and the same chain.

In any language, it is the pragmatic level that reveals the relationship between a linguistic sign (an utterance), a speaker and a context/situation, including a listener. It is significant that this level most easily produces those stereotypes of conduct, ritual forms of communication, which, if performed, stay unnoticed and become so sharply conspicuous when violated.

The basis of forming stereotypes is real cultural differences, which can easily be perceived at the level of behavior in situations of cross-cultural interaction. For linguists, it is especially important that this set of behavioral stereotypes, adopted in the course of historical development by the definite linguistic community, is embodied in specific language forms.

Invasion of stereotypes in the language often gets the most unexpected forms, leading to misunderstandings in communication between representatives of different linguo-cultural societies. Really, to speak a foreign language, not knowing the culture behind it, norms of behavior, correlated with certain stereotypes, means to condemn himself to endless mistakes. Thinking of ethnic groups as well as the language is formed primarily in the native habitat. Therefore, the same lexical items in each language, which are formed in the depths of the history of their culture, can express different concepts. Language is a powerful force that unites and rallies people of one ethnic group, as it stores all of its long history and culture.

The language of ethnic groups plays an important in the formation of each ethnic culture. Common language supports cohesion of an ethnic group; understanding and sympathy automatically arise between people speaking the same language. Language as a cultural element is involved in the process of acquisition of practical experience by persons, especially by members of the same ethnic group. Mainly due to the languages, the contemporary world view is characterized by diversity and variety.

Each language contains so-called «key words» that lose their meaning when translated literally into a foreign culture. For example, it is difficult to translate the keyword «тоска» in Russian culture. Compare: 'I miss my home town'. Lack of knowledge about the traditions, way of life and style of thinking often leads to a false, distorted understanding of some concepts. The fact is that members of a particular ethnic group in the process of communication try to find direct equivalents of mother tongue in a foreign language, losing sight of the thing that exactly comprises the essence and the specific culture. So, in the Russian language, this refers to the concepts of «тоска», «душа», in English — 'privacy' or 'committed'. For a U.S. citizen, they are associated with the tradition of individualism, and in Russia — the Orthodox worldview.

Russian word «душа» for Americans is difficult and not very clear for understanding, so they often substitute it by the word 'heart'. For example: 'with all my heart', 'to wear one`s heart on one`s sleeve', 'to touch someone to the heart'.

As we can see, a good understanding of the cultural situation of interaction determines the adequacy of language means' choice: we should seek to be understood in order not to act without causing opposition and rejection.

All those, who in one way or another are related to the cross-cultural communication, have a need to find something that would allow the bearer of certain culture to look at the world from another «point of view». In the process of communication, sooner or later, the participants come across a limit of understanding. The same words, formulas denote different concepts in various cultures — and the main problem is that this fact is frequently not suspected. To bring an imaginary understanding closer to reality, it is necessary to make allowance for the national historical system of concepts and values, i.e. consider that other peoples can see the world differently. As G.Gachev [2: 44, 45] points out, for clarifying this issue it is necessary to determine some «factor»,

«coefficient» that would facilitate contacts between peoples and cultures. Such factor is the national mindset, the national stereotype of consciousness, captured in the lexical system of the language.

Many foreign and local scientists investigated problems of intercultural communication and language and culture interaction. They are: E. Sapir, B. Whorf, Wilhelm von Humboldt, A. Potebnia, I.A. Baudouin de Courtenay and many others.

G. Guillaume in «Principles of Theoretical Linguistics» sets out that in the study of national mental-lingual complex it is necessary to consider the concept «linguistic consciousness» as «language materializes the mental condition» [3]. According to V. Karasik, language is the social phenomenon and the social fact is that it collectively and individually exists in the linguistic consciousness. The carrier of linguistic consciousness is linguistic identity, i.e. a person that exists in language space – discourse, patterns of fixed in the language behavior, semantics of language units and texts. Availability of language consciousness is one of the distinctive features of an individual. Personality is formed in the society in socialization process. Consequently, the mind cannot bear the distinctive features of the society where personality forms; it always bears the national press [4].

Linguistic consciousness is inseparable from human consciousness; these concepts cannot be separated, as they are interrelated and interdependent. The mind is a reflection of reality, refracted through the prism of linguistic meanings and concepts. The man bringing up in a society assigns features of native culture, set of opinions and attitudes inherent in the society. As the basis for understanding the world and the world view of each nation is its own system of substantive values, social stereotypes, cognitive schemes, etc., the human mind is always ethnically determined. Ethnic and sociocultural factor influences the forming methods and formulating thoughts.

Every natural language reflects a certain way of conceptualizing (perception and organization) of the world. The expressed in language values form a single system of view, as a kind of collective philosophy that has obligatory imposed to all holders of language. The world view is always characterized by cultural identity, established against the universal unity of world perception due to historical, geographical and ethno-psychological peculiarities of the people.

Thus, a complete mastery of a foreign language as a medium of communication includes not only the study of a certain amount of vocabulary and grammar, but also involves knowledge of the linguistic-cultural plan. At the present stage language teaching is impossible without some immersion in another culture, requiring some degree of identification with the certain language community.

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Г.И.Исина

Шет тілді білім беру аясындағы тілдік менталитет мәселесі

Мақалада коммуникативтік құзыреттіліктің шет тілді білім беру үдерісінде қалыптасу мәселелері қарастырылды. Шет тілді білім беру жүйесінде ғылыми танымның пәні — құрамдас бөліктерінің тығыз байланысын қамтитын «тіл–ойлау–этнос» пәнаралық құрылым. Қазіргі таңда шетел тілдерін оқыту белгілі бір тілдік қоғамның өкілдерімен біраз идентификациялауды талап ететін, басқа мәдениет пен менталитетке ену әрекетінсіз мүмкін емес. Коммуникативтік мінез-құлық тіл, сана, мәдениет — бір тізбектің буындары жайлы фактіні толығымен ұғынуға мүмкіндік береді.

Г.И.Исина

**К проблеме языковой ментальности
в контексте иноязычного образования**

В статье рассмотрены проблемы формирования коммуникативной компетенции в процессе иноязычного образования. Предметом научного познания в этой системе выступает междисциплинарный конструкт «язык–мышление–этнос» в тесной взаимосвязи всех его составляющих. На современном этапе обучение иностранным языкам, отмечено автором, немислимо без некоторого погружения в другую культуру, ментальность, что требует некоторой степени идентификации с представителями определенного языкового сообщества. Именно коммуникативное поведение, отмечено в статье, позволяет в полной мере осознать тот факт, что язык, сознание, культура — все это звенья одной цепи.

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