

ЯЗЫКИ НАРОДОВ ЗАРУБЕЖНЫХ СТРАН (С УКАЗАНИЕМ КОНКРЕТНОГО ЯЗЫКА ИЛИ ГРУППЫ ЯЗЫКОВ) / LANGUAGES OF PEOPLES OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES (INDICATING A SPECIFIC LANGUAGE OR GROUP OF LANGUAGES)

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FOREIGN EXPERIENCE OF CREATING ARTIFICIAL LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT IN THE CLASSROOM AS A WAY TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LANGUAGE SKILLS (THE LATE XX CENTURY)

Research article

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Abstract

The **aim** of the study is to demonstrate how language environment can be created in the classroom and how students can benefit from it in terms of further development of their language skills, the **scientific novelty** lies in the fact that in this work the specifics natural approach usage and creating artificial language environment are highlighted which have proved to be extremely rewarding for all kinds of learners over the past decades. The article touches upon the methods and ways used by American authors and scholars in their artificially created classrooms which facilitate students' language acquisition. The article also includes the information about the conditions that have to be present in order to achieve this. The **results** obtained show that there are numerous factors that must be taken into consideration when artificial language environment is being introduced in the classroom. The research is conducted on the material of the English language.

Keywords: natural approach, artificial language environment, student-friendly classroom environment, self-esteem.

ИНОСТРАННЫЙ ОПЫТ СОЗДАНИЯ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ СРЕДЫ КАК СРЕДСТВО УЛУЧШЕНИЯ ЯЗЫКОВЫХ НАВЫКОВ СТУДЕНТОВ (ВТОРАЯ ПОЛОВИНА XX ВЕКА)

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Цель данного исследования заключается в том, чтобы продемонстрировать, каким образом искусственная языковая среда может быть создана в языковом классе, с помощью которой студенты смогут улучшить свои языковые навыки. Научная новизна исследования заключается в том, что в работе освещены особенности использования натурального метода освоения языка и создания искусственной языковой среды, которые за последние десятилетия доказали свою целесообразность среди различных категорий учащихся. В статье также описаны методы и способы, используемые американскими авторами и учеными при создании искусственной языковой среды в классе, которые помогают ученикам осваивать иностранный язык. Также статья включает информацию о тех условиях, которые необходимо создать для достижения данной цели. Полученные результаты показали, что существуют многочисленные факторы, которые нужно принять во внимание при создании языковой среды в классе.

Ключевые слова: натуральный подход, искусственная языковая среда, дружелюбная атмосфера в классе, самооценка.

Introduction

Learning a foreign language is an integral part of modern life, it is a highly useful activity which presupposes acquiring numerous new skills such as listening comprehension, oral production, reading and writing. It allows students to participate in multiple social interactions, travel and start their overseas businesses and provides better understanding of other nations. Assuming that almost any person can master at least one foreign language with time, hard work and due commitment, it can be mentioned that some individuals have characteristics that makes their learning more efficient, while other learners are struggling. Natural environment can be of great benefit, however if it is not available, creating an artificial classroom environment for students can be a means of enhancing their language competency.

The relevance of this work lies in the fact that natural approach, which was invented by S.Krashen and T. Terrell in the end of the previous century (70-80s) has been useful over the last years and has been adopted by many English tutors and schools. Since it fosters natural language acquisition in a classroom setting and emphasizes communication, and it decreased the value of conscious grammar drills. Also, it is integral to make the learning environment stress-free to diminish students anxiety. All of these ways can be used in the language classrooms, especially of the closed communities, to help students improve their linguistic competency.

The tasks of this research are:

- 1) to clarify the notions of “natural approach”, “language acquisition”, “artificial language environment”;
- 2) to present the factors that affect successful language acquisition;
- 3) to show the importance of the impact of psychological factors on language learning;

4) to speak of the significant criteria that must be taken into account in creating artificial language environment in the classroom.

The theoretical background is based on the works of Brown, H.D. [1]; Krashen, S.D. [5]; Collier, V. P. [2] which are dedicated to the issue of using natural approach both in the natural surrounding and in the classroom.

The practical value of the research lies in the fact that the obtained results can be used by language teachers and students, most importantly in the areas and communities with limited access to communication with the authentic language.

Main results and discussion

While some linguists believe that cognitive processes are interdependent and complex [2]. Soudek and Soudek discussed the indispensable role of nonverbal communication channels in the human communication system and as an essential component in the expertising the intricacies of a second language and culture [11]. The focus for intervention for students who struggle in the language classroom is on cognitive and academic issues, rather than on psychological issues or methods of teaching and approaches applied in the classroom. A number of options is available for helping learners to identify their own styles, preferences, strengths and weaknesses [1].

Any language classroom can become for language learners a new learning and language environment specially created for them to thrive. If the right conditions of creating an artificial linguistic environment are taken into consideration it increases the chances of language learners to achieve success and improve their language skills.

For many centuries the grammar-based methods invaded the world. Oral exercises were reduced to a minimum and a handful of tasks were constructed at random to complement the rules. Since these grammar-based methods and approaches continue to dominate in some countries around the world, we can say for sure that almost every language learner has experienced the influence of grammar-language teaching when they were at school or college. Recently a growing number of language teachers have been opting for more “natural” or “direct” approaches to learning modern languages [6].

Learning languages involves mastering a lot of new skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also affords students opportunities socially, in travel and business and deepens their understanding of another nation and increases effective communication and successful negotiation with foreign partners in economics or politics. It has been commonly assumed that almost anyone can learn a foreign language with enough time, practice and commitment, but some people possess characteristics that make learning languages more successful.

There are also numerous psychological factors that affect the process of learning a language, including lack of self-confidence, motivation, negative stereotypes and beliefs which are deeply seated in students' minds and it makes it hard to separate them as they are engraved in a student's learning style and their style of relating to the world in general.

In some communities natural language exposure is largely hindered by various factors – religious, social, political, etc. Russian schools and universities are no exceptions where language learners do not have native speakers around and their only language environment can be created with the help of the products of British or American pop culture, literary works, videos, webinars, podcasts etc., while the language teacher is the only reliable source of spoken English. Since only a minority of students have access to the natural speaking language environment, so it is integral for language learners to benefit from the artificial language environment which can be created especially for them and tailored to their individual needs and priorities.

All kinds of linguistic exposure are beneficial for language learners, but for some reasons classroom exposure has proven to be more useful in language teaching. Linguistic exposure has been used over the centuries, based mainly on immersing listeners in words, listening practice and graded reading, starting with simple material.

H. Palmer [10], for example, who was pioneer in the field of teaching English as a second language and revolutionized the way languages were taught started his career as a teacher at Berlitz School and published a great many articles on vocabulary acquisition and language teaching. Students were expected to acquire “known units”, that is vocabulary bits and make up sentences with them. These activities helped students assimilate speech patterns which was central to his method. H. Palmer also emphasized the distinction between language acquisition in real life and in the classroom. This distinction was based on the spontaneous ability of the human being to acquire languages naturally as opposed to “studious” capacities of the classroom learner.

Some of H. Palmer's concepts and ideas found an echo in S.Krashen's works [4]. For example, the concept of linguistic input was introduced in S.Krashen's “The input hypothesis theory” [8]. It states that language acquisition is based on “comprehensible input”, which means language used in the classroom is a little ahead of the learner's current stage, that they can assimilate trying to understand people surrounding them. So, the classroom can be learners' “intake” both in informal environment and a formal linguistic environment. This concept of sufficient language intake is a classroom where meaningful and highly communicative activities are presented at the appropriate level [8].

The input can be controlled and modified by the teacher who can help learners develop their language gradually, by relating what they already know to what they come across for the first time, while natural environment provides a lot of information irrelevant to students. Moreover, at some point of language interaction with native speakers it is possible that they can adapt their speech to the ability of the learner, but it is not always the case. In the classroom the teacher is supposed to provide input that is understandable for learners. As it has become obvious from experience of many language learners, some beginners, no matter how motivated, cannot really benefit from natural linguistic environment when they find themselves among fluent native speakers [6].

Comprehensible input is measured by the language teacher and must be comfortable enough for the learners. Teachers can also use visual aids or add extra-linguistic contexts to facilitate language acquisition.

Some psychological factors should be taken into account while creating student-friendly atmosphere in the classroom. These are affective prerequisites to language acquisition which every language teacher and student knows. Every language classroom should foster lowering of the affective filter of the students, that is activities in the classroom should focus at all times on encouraging students to express their opinions, desires, emotions and feelings. Moreover, topics should be relevant and interesting for the students. The best language environment is created by the teacher. The criteria integral to a good

language classroom environment are: low anxiety level, good rapport with the teacher, friendly relationship with other students. Such atmosphere is not a luxury but a necessity.

Students who lack confidence are afraid to make mistakes, which are an essential part of learning. Foreign language can be considered more "personal" because language is linked to some vital aspects of our identity. In general, students with high self-esteem concentrate more on their linguistic growth compared to students with lower self-esteem, who mainly focus on avoiding mistakes and situations when these mistakes are likely to occur since it can make interaction hard and awkward. S. Krashen [5] implies that self-sufficient and secure students will be more capable of encouraging linguistic intake and have a lower affective filter. Personality traits connected with adequate self-confidence and absence of anxiety; an easygoing personality are more likely to assure better language acquisition.

The answer to classroom anxiety can be the instructor's encouragement, sympathy, empathy and positive feedback. In order to make shy and timid learners feel less threatened teachers can get them involved in tasks and creative projects which might help them overcome psychological pressure.

Sense of belonging also helps to create friendly classroom atmosphere but shy students might need more teacher's time and attention than other, more self-confident students. Motivation of students is also a significant prerequisite of language learning. High level of motivation and authentic materials are interdependent.

Using authentic materials brings enthusiasm, means of learning and the purpose of studying together. It engages students into authentic cultural experiences and increases motivation.

Enhancing students' cultural awareness is an integral part of motivation. Authentic materials give example of certain language functions at play through their day to day cultural interaction.

Student-friendly classroom environment plays a great role in successful language learning; the teacher should be capable of developing a mutual relationship with students. As soon as this contact is established the language classroom turns into a comfortable place for students to learn positively from the teacher and peers. For timid students with low self-esteem it is vital, since they stop progressing if placed in an uncomfortable learning environment. In some cases, if it is possible, the group size can be reduced in order to help shy students overcome their anxiety. Team work, creative and communicative tasks take the pressure off them and enhances their desire to speak. Obviously, the teacher's personality and encouragement of other students have a great influence on the students' overall performance. There are some criteria, which help create the language classroom.

1. Making the classroom more rewarding can be accomplished through a wide range of methods and materials, engaging students in affective activities which involve students' feelings, opinions, reactions, ideas and experiences [6].

2. Arranging students' work and self-study so that they have maximum exposure to the target language, using authentic materials, cultural artefacts such as radio, TV, Internet, etc.

3. Choosing the right pace. No matter how enthusiastic students are, there's a limit to the information they are able to take in without getting frustrated and demotivated. Choosing the right amount of exposure is the key to students' second language proficiency.

4. Teacher's proficiency and development are especially vital in the communities, where students lack interaction with native speakers and the teacher is the only available source of living language for students. Teacher's ability to imply all sources can help create an effective language environment.

5. Maintaining a high level of motivation and using authentic materials is integral for successful language acquisition. The level of exposure the individual has to the language he or she is learning is directly related to the language proficiency in that language. Using authentic materials brings the means of learning and the purpose of learning close together and this establishes once again a direct link with the world outside the classroom. Using authentic videos is also very beneficial. Learners need extensive experience of watching feature films, TV shows, sitcoms and videos on youtube, webinars and podcasts. Exposure to authentic materials is vital. If the exposure to the target language is diverse, it pays off, especially using all kinds of materials helps create "English atmosphere" in the classroom where students and teacher avoid using their native language and "bombard" students with vocabulary so that their vocabulary acquisition can be facilitated and diverse.

6. Teaching culture. Cultural exposure increases students' linguistic success. Culture-based activities is the best way to increase students' cultural awareness.

7. Practicing extensive reading and extensive listening is extremely beneficial. Reading provides more opportunities for language learning than spoken discourse. Incidental vocabulary acquisition also occurs due to the recurrent vocabulary, especially in graded readers. Starting with Intermediate level it is important to use materials on the same topics – practice narrow reading. Reading and listening extensively helps students practice reading and listening skills and is important in teaching English and other languages [7].

Conclusion

To conclude, language acquisition is a complex phenomenon, and it is integral to study all the conditions of creating artificial language environment that can become a beneficial and rewarding source for language students. Teachers can help their students improve their language proficiency by creating an artificial language classroom environment, which can be quite beneficial for both of them – the teacher and the learner. In the communities where natural exposure is not available for various reasons, artificial language environment can become learner's only chance to enhance their language skills and cultural awareness. Further research perspectives include conducting research among 2 groups (English and French) of third year language students in terms of vocabulary acquisition in a specially created language environment.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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