



Language Reflection as A Means of Developing Critical Thinking When Studying German After English

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Abstract

This article explores the idea of using language reflection as a means of the developing critical thinking when studying German after English at a secondary general educational school. The optimization of the learning and the teaching process are considered.

Key words: Critical thinking; language reflection; second foreign language, cognitive principles.

The purpose of this article is to consider the phenomenon of language reflection as a means of developing critical thinking when studying German as a second foreign language after English. On the one hand, the relevance of the topic depends on the introduction of studying of the second foreign language to the secondary schools in light of the lack of class lessons. On the other hand, it depends on teachers' insufficiency of knowledge and skills to organize the educational process in an optimal way by subordinate trilingualism.

According to the Educational standard, the main task is developing scientific thinking, knowledge of scientific terminology, key concepts, methods and approaches. Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by [6]. Critical thinking is the basis of scientific thinking.

As L. S. Vygotsky emphasized, the real act of thinking cannot be achieved through ordinary repetition. The thought of a child has to come from the internal development at the highest level in order for the concept to appear in consciousness. This development of concepts or word meanings demands developing a number of functions such as active attention, logical memory, abstraction, comparison and distinction. All these most difficult psychological processes cannot be memorized, cannot be learned or acquired [2, p. 165-166]. Analyzing the concept of thinking and speech in L. S. Vygotsky's work, it is necessary to note that focusing on the development of thinking the conditions for development of thinking and speech as two parts of one process have to be created within the educational practice. The plain fact is that the developing potential of a foreign language as a school subject has indisputable value for developing critical thinking. The scientist emphasizes that language is fundamentally related to thinking and can be a means of logical thinking development through a properly organized learning process. We also support his idea of that it is not enough to acquire language intuitively; while learning foreign languages the unconscious has to be combined with the conscious. Thus, to begin learning a foreign language consciously is the right way, in which the process of its use gradually becomes subconscious. However, it does not lose the ability to get to consciousness again.

The process of teaching schoolchildren several foreign languages has a significant potential for personal development, including intellectual, emotional, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The findings of Swiss and German researchers confirm even structural changes in brain regions known to serve language functions during foreign-language acquisition. Results revealed increases in hippocampus volume and in thickness of the gyrus [8]. Therefore, introduction of the second foreign language to the secondary school curriculum has become a real step on the way to develop logical/critical thinking skills, to create a cognitive basis of learning, and to acquire skills to work with information.

Considering the principles of learning and teaching the second foreign language [1, p. 23-34], it is necessary to identify, in our opinion, ***the principle of cognitive - intellectual learning*** of a second foreign language (L2), which allows the teacher to access the full educational potential of students. This principle has some similarity to regularities of problem learning which is extensive researched in pedagogy. Thinking always begins with a problem or a question, with surprise or bewilderment. Involvement in the thought process is defined by this situational problem. We also identify ***the principle of a rational combination consciousness and unconsciousness*** in learning of L2, which is counter to the L.S. Vygotsky's statement above. If, at the beginning of getting of the first foreign language (L1) at the age of students of

10-12 years and in early learning of L1 at the age of 7-9 years is reasonable to learn mostly intuitively, when studying L2 the intuitive ways of education are insufficient. Work of the consciousness, as well as strong-willed efforts is here required. Methodically appropriate support on ***the principle of taking into account an artificial subordinate trilingualism*** allows us to use effectively similar language phenomena in L1 and L2, comparison and analysis. Linguistic and educational experience of students is an essential factor when teaching L2. This factor involves the peculiarities of mental functions of students at language acquisition and the organization of their cognitive activity that corresponds to natural cognitive and social behavior of the person. First, it is connected with that the developing linguistic concept is a similar to developing cognitive one. Learning of foreign language develops the person linguistically and vice versa, it is possible to increase efficiency of process of learning a foreign language and even to promote development of the abilities of students, improving their cognitive abilities. As A.V. Shchepilova emphasizes, some part of persons' abilities remains invariable, other abilities including foreign-language can be developed. Such abilities include: verbal intelligence, language reflection, analytical cognitive style, level of language competence in a native language, ability to inter-language switching, logical thinking etc. [4]. We consider that it is necessary to pay attention to such phenomenon as ***a language reflection***. The concept "reflection" appeared in philosophy and meant process of person's reflection about all events in his own consciousness. In national psychology phenomenon reflection is investigated by B. G. Ananyev, L. S. Vygotsky, S. L. Rubenstein. Scientists consider a reflection as the explanatory principle of development of consciousness and mentality in general. In methodology, the reflection is considered as an integral part of process of learning and teaching which optimizes and intensifies studying foreign and native languages (Balandina T. M. 2003, Krylova S. O. 2008, Muratova L.V. 2002, Razdorskaya O. V. 2009, Solovova O. M. 2004, H. Khamis 2005, Shchepilova A.V. 2003, etc.). At L2-lessons, reflexive activity promotes conscious acquisition of foreign-language skills and abilities. Following A. V. Shchepilova we consider ***the language reflection*** as understanding by the person his verbal actions, realizing schemes and rules according to which he acts, clarification of the bases of his knowledge, how this or that knowledge was gained [1, 25-26].

In our opinion, ***use of a language reflection*** is especially appropriate when studying L2 particularly German after English. The language reflection contributes to formation of skills and development of abilities to compare the language phenomena in the first, second and native languages, respectively, thereby develops criticality of thinking. The developing of the critical thinking (CT) has been investigated by the American and European scientists for a long time. CT has been deeply studied by R. Ennis, R. Paul, E. Glaser, P. Facione, S. Nords, M. Lipman, D. Halpern, J. McPeck, H. Siegel, L. Elder, etc. Aspects of development of critical thinking when studying different subjects in system of the higher and school education (E.I. Fedotovskaya, E.A. Stolbnikova, N. V. Chicherina, D. M. Shakirova, G. V. Sorina, I.A), and development of critical thinking through reading and the writing (I.O. Zagashev, S. I, Zaire Beck, I.V. Mushtavinskaya, etc.) was the subject matter also in our country. The use of a language reflection for development of CT when studying German after English is not studied properly.

Many national and foreign scientists investigated within a study on learning L2 an interference and positive transfer from L1 in L2 (Bim I.L., Lapidus B. L., Lopareva T.A., Molchanova L.V., Noyner G., Reutov M. I., Savchuk O. O., Tikhonov A.L., Hufeisen B., Chicherina N. M., Shchepilova A.V.) . Having carefully analyzed works of above-mentioned

scientists, we take the following into account: 1) to strengthen a positive transfer from L1 and to avoid an interference from native language on the grammatical and lexical level it is necessary to direct attention of students to finding of coincidence and divergences in three languages; 2) practically all spelling mistakes are caused by an interfering influence of L1, also by level of L1 in similar stuff; 3) work on the prevention and overcoming of a grammatical interference has to carry out on the basis of analytical actions, i.e. students have to understand differences in the foreign language grammatical phenomena and their corresponding correlates in the native language.

As a part of my research “Method of project in teaching written communication in German after English at secondary general educational school”, we conducted the experiment. The hypothesis of the experiment was formulated as follows: the use of system of exercises for teaching writing, which also includes contrastive exercises, will allow school students to achieve a higher level of skills in written communication. According to the type of experiment, variable and invariable experimental elements were determined. The constant elements of the experiment were as follows:

- 1) Number of students in the group
- 2) Amount of educational material provided for learning
- 3) Number of hours of classes
- 4) Content of pre-experimental and post-experimental assessment
- 5) Experimenter and assistant.

The variable element of the experiment was teacher-directed language reflection to avoid the interfering influence of L1 by providing students with relevant explanations. The main difference between the two methods was the completeness and quality of the instructions for the exercise, which encouraged students to analyze, to compare, that is, to reflect.

Let us consider some examples of exercises. Instructions number 2 are more detailed in the wording the task, and the language reflection is used.

Example 1. The purpose of the exercise is to form and develop spelling skills based on comparison (contrast) with the first foreign language.

Instruction 1.

Du möchtest deinem Freund einen Brief über deine Freizeit schreiben. Du brauchst die gegebenen Wörter. Lies die Wörter im Deutschen und im Englischen. Setze die fehlenden Buchstaben in diese Wörter ein. Die englischen Wörter helfen dir die Aufgabe machen. Beachte die fettgedruckten Wörter

Instruction 2.

Lies die Wörter im Deutschen und im Englischen. Setze die fehlenden Buchstaben in diese Wörter ein. Die englischen Wörter helfen dir die Aufgabe machen. Beachte die fettgedruckten Wörter. Bei vielen Wörtern sind deutsche und englische Rechtschreibung nur leicht unterschiedlich. Zum Beispiel, der englische Buchstabe "with" entspricht oft dem deutschen "k", der englische Buchstabe "k" entspricht oft dem deutschen "ch", die deutsche Buchstabenverbindung "sch" - der englischen "sh"

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>to send - _enden</i> | <i>to must - _üssen</i> | <i>to can - _önnen</i> |
| <i>to wish - _ünschen</i> | <i>to live - _eben</i> | <i>to make - ma__en</i> |
| <i>to sleep - _chlafen</i> | <i>to wi __ - wün __ en</i> | <i>to begin - _eginnen</i> |

Example 2. The purpose of the exercise is to form and develop the lexical skills with the support of the skills and abilities in the first foreign language.

Instruction 1. *Lies die Wörter im Deutschen und im Englischen. Beachte die Ähnlichkeit in der Rechtschreibung der Wörter. Ergänze die Tabelle.*

Instruction 2. *Lies die Wörter im Deutschen und im Englischen. Vergleiche die Rechtschreibung der deutschen und englischen Wörter. Analysiere, wodurch sich die Rechtschreibung unterscheidet. Ergänze die Tabelle.*

| deutsches Substantiv | englisches Substantiv | Übersetzung (native language) |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Volleyball | volleyball | |
| Tennis | tennis | |
| Gymnastik | gymnastics | |
| Eishockey | hockey | |
| Fußball | football | |
| Tischtennis | table tennis | |
| Handball | handball | |
| Karate | karate | |
| Basketball | basketball | |
| Skateboard | skateboard | |
| Ski | ski | |
| Rollschuhe | roller skates | |
| Schwimmbad | swimming pool | |
| Sport | sport | |

Thus, when developing skills and abilities in L2 to overcome interference and facilitate positive transfer from L1, and therefore to optimize the educational process, it is appropriate to use a language reflection which promotes development of critical thinking through understanding and verbalization of the language and speech processes.

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