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LEARNERS' IDENTITY: FOCUS ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The article is aimed at considering second language learners' identity within the sphere of foreign language acquisition.

Identity is viewed as a social construct by means of symbolic performances depending on individual choice of practices in various social and situational contexts, but not as single linear trajectories, more like a "nexus of multimembership".

Living in a specific language community and performing some communicative and cognitive activity there, a language identity acquires an individual worldview as well as a "reference" potential of linguistic and cognitive "natural" standard. In this interpretation, the result of foreign language teaching suggests formation in a student's mind of the worldview inherent in another language speaker as a representative of a particular culture and society.

This suggests that "the object of influence" in teaching foreign languages should not only be a student's communicative competence, but also their secondary language awareness (verbal and semantic levels of a language identity) as well as secondary cognitive awareness (cognitive level). This idea extends the object and result of foreign language learning by including other people's world knowledge "in the form of conscious images", i.e. "a set of a person's perceptual and conceptual knowledge of real-world objects for the sake of their mental existence". Thus, secondary language identity is defined as an identity with the ability and desire to participate in social interaction with representatives of other cultures, putting it otherwise, capable of adequate social interaction in intercultural situations.

It is speculated that second language learners' identity is affected by various factors of sociocultural nature, for instance: background knowledge of cultural peculiarities of both native and target languages. Foreign language teaching is supposed to focus on developing second language learners' identity as a cornerstone of acquiring intercultural competence.

Key words: *identity, language identity, second language acquisition, intercultural competence.*

Modern requirements for professional training within language education are closely connected with the problems of nowadays, including the most acute issue – intercultural communication and its role and impact on teaching foreign languages.

This study intends to analyze and clarify the concept and structure of secondary language identity in connection with social and linguistic processes taking place in the world.

The topical value of the research results from global trends of altering academic syllabi by introducing updated socio-, linguistic and cultural references from related spheres of knowledge.

The problem of "linguocultural training" (i.e. acquisition of language together with culture) in language education has been discussed by a number of researchers [2; 8; 9], as it could significantly increase the level and quality of training future teachers and interpreters. This emphasizes the need for shifting the focus in class from mastering speech acts to speaking and communication which has to be as similar as possible to natural communication in native speakers' own social environment, in everyday life and culture [1; 2].

The claim that learning a foreign language should include extra-linguistic aspects seems doubtless, but we need to specify what exactly should be integrated into the learning process. The sociocultural components of communicative competence, considered in previous studies [4; 6], might need revision in view of the anthropocentric approach to training and the concept of "secondary language identity".

Following W. von Humboldt's idea [3] that to master a language one needs to know its inner spirit and culture, we emphasize that linguocultural training cannot happen without learning cultural background, thus enabling students to master any language, both native and foreign. Requirements for foreign language teaching have undergone significant changes, so now we have to update the objectives and content of teaching the subject and adjust them to the social reality of a target language community [8].

The current anthropocentric approach to the content of learning process means that students, as subjects of intercultural communication, should be aware of their being in two different socio-cultural communities [9, p. 58]. In this situation students need to master not only the communicative competence (in oral and written communication), but also subject-cognitive and socio-affective competencies. The former means acquisition of the elements of a foreign culture, its specifics compared with the home one, while the latter is a system of values formed on the basis of a foreign culture and the home cultural space (tolerance, openness, development of personal qualities and social responsibility, etc.) [2, p. 48].

Thus, the use of anthropocentric principle may promote a student's ability to effectively participate in intercultural communication involved in a new social reality.

Modeling the learning process as an active "dialog of cultures" seems particularly relevant here, as it is designed to provide natural integration of cultural and ideological values of global civilization and those of the target culture, as well as a particular society, represented by a student.

Nowadays the concept of dialogue has turned into a new principle of coexistence and interaction between different communities. Within the framework of globalization, the importance of dialogue among cultures increases, thus establishing a more favorable basis for developing international relations in order to achieve mutual understanding among people. Dialogue among cultures could act as a peacekeeping factor to prevent conflicts and wars, help solve problems and avoid tension in today's world.

Language can easily ensure this kind of dialogue, but while using a language for effective intercultural communication, apart from speaking skills, one has to consider the sociocultural environment of native speakers. This would require developing individual cognitive and communicative abilities, enhancing cross-cultural literacy, which implies knowledge of the national and cultural background of a foreign country, the rules of verbal and non-verbal behavior of native speakers, as well as the ability to behave accordingly.

Therefore, we believe that nowadays teaching foreign languages should be viewed as the process of creating suitable conditions to build skills of effective interaction with representatives of other cultures, namely: awareness of differences in home and target cultures, tolerance towards representatives of other nations, reducing ethnocentrism, willingness to adapt to changes and to be flexible.

Language education today is no longer merely concerned with students' accomplishments, emphasizing teachers' needs not only to upgrade their own professional techniques and be engaged in self-development, but also to follow the latest approaches to teaching. It mostly regards the linguistic and sociocultural aspects of foreign language teaching that support learners' ability to partake in intercultural dialogue. That is why both students and teachers have to be cross-culturally conscious when dealing with target language acquisition, as it is the cultural element of foreign language teaching that enables students to achieve intercultural competence, which is the ultimate aim of language education. Teachers cannot simply provide the necessary information, but should initiate cross-cultural interaction advocating the significance of intercultural dialogue in every single class.

The ideal result of learning foreign languages should be the formation of secondary language identity, equal to the level of a native speaker and fully participating in intercultural communication.

Identity here is a social construct by means of symbolic performances depending on individual choice of practices in various social and situational contexts [10]. The ability to move across cultural boundaries is an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Identities are not viewed as single linear trajectories, more like a "nexus of multimembership" [12, p. 159], they are not clothes we can easily put on or take off whenever we feel like to. An identity approach views learners as historically and socially situated agents, and learning as not just acquisition of linguistic forms but as growing participation in a community of practice [11, p. 87].

Language has long been known to be the place where the speaker creates his or her identity in relation to social world, but this identity needs to be guided and controlled in the target community. Thus, language learners should not just obtain foreign language skills, but also present and reconsider themselves by using the language in the social world.

From a linguistic point of view, a language identity is a multi-layer and multi-component set of language skills, readiness to produce speech acts of various complexity, which embrace, on the one hand, the four types of speaking activity (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), and, on the other, – all levels of language (phonetic, grammatical, and lexical) [7, p. 29]. The basis of modern approach to mastering the mother tongue, which considers language not as an abstraction, but as a part of an individual, is formed by the concept of language identity [2; 11], and in respect of teaching foreign languages – secondary language identity [14] which should be formed as a result of linguocultural training.

If language identity is understood to be the identity, expressed in language (text) and through language [7] (which is far from the notion of identity in general), the concept of secondary language identity gives a new insight into the patterns of learning and speaking a foreign language, not from the perspective of one science, such as psychology, linguistics or psycholinguistics, but on an interdisciplinary level. Focus on this concept allows to specify the purpose and content of foreign language teaching in the "two-dimensional unity": the original identity being in the foreground; and secondary language identity (which is formed in the process of learning foreign languages and should be the result of this process) – in the background.

Primary language identity develops and operates in a specific language community, each having its own different conceptual system – "worldview", corresponding to the orientation and existential (physical, spiritual, technological, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) needs. This worldview varies from one culture to another, so there are no same ethnic cultures, in fact – no two same mental images, reflecting similar or even the same cultural object [1, p. 19].

It is clear that it is next to impossible to achieve the ideal result in the development of secondary language identity in the cognitive level out of the natural language environment. However, it is advisable to approach this goal, as the result of linguocultural training is evaluated in terms of the quality characteristics of employing a language as a means of communication. To master a foreign language means to be able to speak and take listening, reading, writing in that language, with the main criterion being not only linguistic correctness, but also understanding of the interlocutors [9].

Knowing a foreign language like a native speaker is a multidimensional concept including a person's awareness of objective communication parameters (including general / subject knowledge in various communicative situations) as well as knowledge of social interrelations and conditions required to achieve individual communicative goals [2].

Thus, knowledge of a language is based on an individual's willingness and ability to analyze and evaluate communicative situations, to take adequate decisions as to verbal behavior and also monitor one's behavior and interlocutors'. One should be aware of alternatives in verbal behavior in order to analyze the communicative situation and all its aspects.

Studying a language, one must acquire a set of extralinguistic, sociocultural knowledge, skills characteristic of members of a certain language community. Mastering this complex is of particular importance for adequate understanding and generating foreign discourse. It should be noted that in recent years this aspect of teaching and learning foreign languages has been the subject of active interest.

Further work in this area may involve a more detailed analysis of contemporary social phenomena (such as terrorism, war, poverty, marginalization of certain social groups), which can be an important component in the formation of secondary language identity to be included into appropriate teaching materials.

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МОВНА ОСОБИСТІСТЬ СТУДЕНТІВ У СВІТЛІ НАВЧАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ

Стаття присвячена розгляду вторинної мовної особистості у процесі вивчення іноземної мови. Приділяється увага аналізу понять "особистість" та "мовна особистість" не тільки з психологічної, але й із лінгвістичної та соціокультурної точок зору. Уточнюються компоненти комунікативної компетентності та зміст навчання іноземних мов з позиції антропоцентричного підходу. Наголошується важливість концепту діалогу культур як в іншомовній освіті, так і у формуванні міжкультурної компетентності.

Ключові слова: особистість, мовна особистість, іншомовна освіта, міжкультурна компетентність.

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ЯЗЫКОВАЯ ЛИЧНОСТЬ СТУДЕНТОВ В СВЕТЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ

Статья посвящена рассмотрению вторичной языковой личности в процессе изучения иностранного языка. Уделяется внимание анализу понятий "личность" и "языковая личность" не только с психологической, но и с лингвистической и социокультурной точек зрения. Уточняются компоненты коммуникативной компетентности и содержание обучения иностранным языкам с позиции антропоцентрического подхода. Подчеркивается важность концепта диалога культур как в иноязычном образовании, так и в формировании межкультурной компетентности.

Ключевые слова: личность, языковая личность, иноязычное образование, межкультурная компетентность.