

STRATEGIES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE SAKHA REPUBLIC (YAKUTIA)

УЧЕБНЫЕ СТРАТЕГИИ В ИЗУЧЕНИИ И ОБУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННЫМ ЯЗЫКАМ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ САХА (ЯКУТИЯ)

SAHA CUMHURİYETİ'NDE (YAKUTİSTAN) YABANCI DİL ÖĞRETİMİNDE KULLANILAN STRATEJİLER

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ABSTRACT

A foreign language usage becomes a real need for the people to communicate. In the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), teachers of foreign languages look for innovative types of teaching based on the recent achievements of science in order to provide high quality education. On the achievements of psycholinguistic, cognitive science, methodology and pedagogical approaches, our attention is directed to language learning strategies that help to learn and teach foreign languages.

Key Words: Language Learning Strategies, Foreign Language, Learning And Teaching Process

АННОТАЦИЯ

Практическое использование иностранного языка стало реальной необходимостью для общения людей. В республике Саха (Якутия) учителя иностранных языков находятся в поиске инновационных форм обучения, основанных на достижениях науки с целью повышения качества образования. На основе научных результатов психолингвистики, когнитивных исследований, методики и педагогики наше внимание привлекают учебные стратегии в изучении и обучении иностранным языкам.

Ключевые Слова: Учебные Стратегии, Иностранный Язык, Образовательный Процесс.

ÖZET

İnsanların iletişimi için yabancı dilin gerekli olduğu açıktır. Saha Cumhuriyeti'nde (Yakutistan) yabancı dil öğretmenleri eğitim kalitesini yükseltmek üzere bilimsel çalışmalara dayalı eğitim için yeni metotlar araştırmaktadırlar. Psikodilbilim, bilişsel araştırmalar, metodoloji ve pedagojinin bilimsel sonuçlarına dayalı yabancı dil öğretiminde eğitim stratejiler dikkatimizi çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitim Stratejileri, Yabancı Dil, Eğitim Süreci.

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The process of globalization reaches the farthest parts of the world. With the help of mass media, Internet, open borders, economical interactions, cultural diversity, travelling, service and other devices globalization has won the world and people living on the Earth. So a foreign language usage becomes a real need for the people to communicate. Any language plays a great role in human activity and as a result it can be viewed from many angles. Nowadays traditional learning and teaching are no longer needed, peoples require new styles and types of learning and teaching.

In the Sakha republic (Yakutia) teachers of foreign languages seek for innovative types of teaching based on the recent achievements of science in order to provide high quality of education. As it is mentioned by Ana Gimeno "the professional world and labour market require students to possess a good command not only of technical content and knowledge but also of personal and professional skills" (Gimeno, 2009:3170).

Russian scientists as A.A.Leotiev, A.N.Leontiev, P.Y.Galperin, L.S.Vygotsky, N.V.Ufimtseva, A.Z.Zak, I.A.Zimnaya, N.V.Imedadze, E.Y.Protasova, A.A.Raikhshtein, S.L.Rubinshtein, Y.A.Sorokin, E.F.Tarasov, A.M.Shakhnorovich held a lot of researchers in the field of cognitive science, psychology and education. Their works are wide known all over the world. Teaching and learning strategies are developed on the base of their researchers. Teachers, researchers and scientists use and approve various methodological and pedagogical concepts as Brain-based Language Learning, Communicative teaching and active learning methodologies, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the Sakha republic (Yakutia). A great attention is paid to CLIL because this theory integrates process of both learning and teaching. For teachers and learners it is important to achieve a good knowledge and fluent use of a foreign language.

Brain-based Language Learning is developed from the achievements in using new technologies in Cognitive Science, Biology and Physiology. For example, Brent De Chene from Waseda University, Japan focuses his research on the linguistic ability of the individual and gives hypothesis that that ability has a biological basis. He looks first at the acquisition of language by children, considering both the gap between the input and the output of acquisition and the automatic but age-limited nature of the process. Brent De Chene underlines that one of the main lines of argument pointing to the conclusion that there must be a genetic or biological basis for human linguistic capabilities is that the linguistic ability and knowledge of individual far surpass what explicable on the basis of the data she is exposed to in childhood and that forms the basis for language acquisition (De Chene, 2012:6).

Another scientist, who visited our republic, Kee-Ho Kim from Korea University, Korea connects foreign language learning with the work of brain. He informs that "modern technologies such as fMRI and PET are providing new insights into the functioning of the brain". It was traditionally thought that each of the hemispheres of the brain is specialized for certain behaviours and cognitive functions. But Kee-Ho Kim proves that "fMRI images are now showing that the notion of a clear dichotomy between the roles of the hemispheres is an oversimplification. The corpus callosum, the nerve fibers connecting the hemispheres, allows each side of the brain to exchange data relatively freely. as a result, even though the left and right hemispheres may be respectively associated with math and music, it is now known that while beginners at math use the left brain more, high level mathematicians and chess champions actually use more of the right brain. Similarly, notice musicians use their

right brain more, but trained musicians can be seen to access the left. In other words, those accomplished in their field, regardless of their expertise, make extensive use of both sides of their brains" (Kim, 2012:24).

In the Sakha republic (Yakutia) there are investigations on ethnolinguistic mentality of the Northern peoples. Scientists have held researches of associations of the Northern peoples and compare with other peoples' associations. So their results are taken into consideration for teaching and learning foreign languages. Brain-based Language Learning concept is not so spread in the Republic, but some attempts are made for its existence.

Communicative teaching and active learning methodologies are widely used in the Sakha republic (Yakutia) due to the development of this theory in the works of Russian scientists as E.I.Passov, V.S.Korostylov, I.L.Bim, M.Z.Biboletova, E.M.Vereshagin, V.G.Kostomarov, N.D.Galskova, Z.N.Nikitenko. Communicative teaching and active learning methodologies is fully regarded by Ana Gimeno and et. They underline that "active learner roles can only be attained through active teaching and learning that imply a radical shift away from traditional learning attitudes where the teacher or instructor played the main role in the process and the student was regarded as a mere receiver of static knowledge. A collection of diverse teaching and learning methods and philosophies advocate a more active role of the language learner, some of which are included in the following list:

a. Communicative Language Teaching: language is ideally (or even only) taught, learnt and practiced through the continuous and active use and communicative interaction, rather than by formal instruction, since the latter would only lead to a situation of *language as usage*, as opposed to *language as use*.

b. Learning by doing: it involves a type of learning which is basically experiential, whereby learners, instead of facing theoretical knowledge, follow a more practical approach and carry out specific and authentic tasks and projects that help them acquire certain skills.

c. Collaborative and cooperative learning: collaboration is a type of interaction among learners in order to

achieve a common goal or deal with a common task or problem. Therefore, this sort of learning has a lot to do, on the one hand, with communicative interaction – key to language development – and, on the other hand, with teamwork, which is one of the personal skills that are most demanded by the professional world and the labour market.

d. Cultural exchange: language is culture, so when learning a language, learners should be, by some means, encouraged to get in contact with the corresponding L2 language" (Gimeno, 2009:3172).

Scientists from the Sakha republic (Yakutia) (M.M.Fomin, E.D.Nelunova, L. S. Zamorshikova, V. V. Grigoreva, L. M. Nevorotova, S. F. Gabysheva, N. V. Belotserkovskaya, et.) are interested in Content and Language Integrated Learning. As it is mentioned by Ana Gimeno, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) "refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language" (Marsh 1994). According to this researcher, as it said by Ana Gimeno, CLIL has also a very strong motivational component, since learners feel they can successfully *do* things – and acquire real content knowledge – with language (Marsh 2000).

In fact, with CLIL, students are playing an active role and taking part in two totally different learning tasks, with different goals, content and methods: learning a language and a different subject simultaneously. In this respect, it has a lot in common with the learning of a Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), where students learn a target language *in the context of* a specific subject matter, rather than *through* the first-hand acquisition of that subject matter (content knowledge). Therefore, CLIL could be seen as a step ahead of traditional LSP, since it activates both professional and personal skills, which are traditionally dealt with separately (Gimeno, 2009: 3172).

As for the researchers of Yakutia this theory is understood as teaching and learning a foreign language through content. Educators and scientists of Yakutia (M.M.Fomin, E.D.Nelunova, L.S.Zamorshikova, V.V.Grigoreva, L.M.Nevorotova, S.F.Gabysheva, N.V.Belotserkovskaya, et.) are sure that the information which is included into the content of texts or conversations are important for learners. They learn a foreign language and at the same time learn about their subject. So they learn language with the help of their subject and learn their subject with the help of a target language.

Such position help to develop language learning strategies which have crucial values for a foreign language learners because nowadays we speak about communicative competences. Russian school of psycholinguistics (A.A.Leotiev, A.N.Leontiev, P. Y. Galperin, L. S. Vygotsky, N. V. Ufimtseva, I. A. Zimnaya, N. V. Imedadze, S. L. Rubinshtein, Y. A. Sorokin, E. F. Tarasov, A. M. Shakhnorovich et) view of language in two angles: the inner, conceptual language and the outer, formal language, which is used in communication. The results of psycholinguists gave an impact for changed language research way of thinking about language learning strategies, conceptions about the teaching – learning process changed in many ways due to the switch from behaviour learning theories to cognitive learning theories. The cognitive learning theories recognize that learners more passive recipients who only receive information given by the teacher. But according to psycholinguistics now learners are regarded as active language learners due to the concept of individualization of education. Learners are involved into active and creative process based on mental processing of information and thoughts.

Recent investigations of Masoud Gholamali Lavasani and Fereshteh Faryadres show that foreign language learners use less language learning strategies than second language learners. Their investigations have been influenced by cognitive psychology. In their article they made evolution and classification of language learning strategies based on different perspectives and explanations six types of language learning strategies according to Oxford categorization (1990) are mentioned. To our mind, Oxford categorization and their andragogy theory and a suggested model is interesting for teachers of foreign languages in our republic.

Masoud Gholamali Lavasani and Fereshteh Faryadres are completely right when they say that "second or foreign language learning are one of the most important education matters in most of school in throughout the world. There has been a prominent shift within the field of language education over the last twenty years with greater emphasis being put on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching" (Lavasani & Faryadres, 2011:191). These scientists highlight that "extensive investigation has shown the importance of language learning strategies in making language learning more efficient and in producing a positive effect on learners language use. Foreign or second language (LS)

learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques students use often consciously to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the L2 (Oxford, 1994). Research indicates that language learners at all level use strategies but that some or most learners are not fully aware of the strategies they use or the strategies that might be most beneficial to employ (Oxford, 1989). Rubin (1975) who along with Stern (1975) was one of the first to undertake research in this area, describes language learning strategies as skills utilized by a learner to attain knowledge (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007). The term LLS is used more generally for all strategies are that L2/FL learners use in learning the target language, and communication strategies are therefore just one type LLS. For all L2 teachers who aim to help develop their students communicative competence and language learning, then, an understanding of LLS is critical. LLS are important because research suggests that training students to use LLS can help them become better language learners (Clouston, 1997)" (Lavasani & Faryadres, 2011:191-192).

As it is noticed by Masoud Gholamali Lavasani and Fereshteh Faryadres " Language learning strategies have been classified by many scholars (Rubin 1987, O'Malley and Chamot 1990 and Oxford 1990). According to Rubin, there are three types of Strategies used by learners that contribute directly or indirectly to language learning (Hismanoglu, 2009). According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), teaching

strategies can be classified into three generic categories: metcognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social /affective strategies (Chang, 2009)" (Lavasani & Faryadres, 2011:192).

In the article of Lavasani and Faryadres there is Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies. According to Oxford's (1990) definition, Language learning strategies which directly involve the target language are called direct strategies. These strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. All of these direct strategies involve mental processing of language. On the other hand, indirect strategies are metacognitive, affective, and social strategies and they provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy, and other means (Oxford,1990:151).

According to Oxford (1990), direct strategies are memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies:

1. Memory strategies are employed for storing and retrieving new information. The principle of memory strategies is meaning. All the steps that the learner adopts relating to memory strategies have to be personally meaningful to the learner in order to make the strategies work. An example of memory strategy is "I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them" (Oxford, 1990:294). Under this category, there are for subsets of strategies: creating mental linkages, applying images and sound, reviewing well, and employing action. Each subset has different approaches/specific strategies which helps the language learners to learn better. The use of memory strategies are most frequently applied in the beginning process of language learning.

2. Cognitive strategies have a unified common function: manipulating or transforming the target language. There are various approaches under this category, however, the common function is manipulating or transforming the target language by the learner. An example of cognitive strategies is "I try to talk like native English speakers"

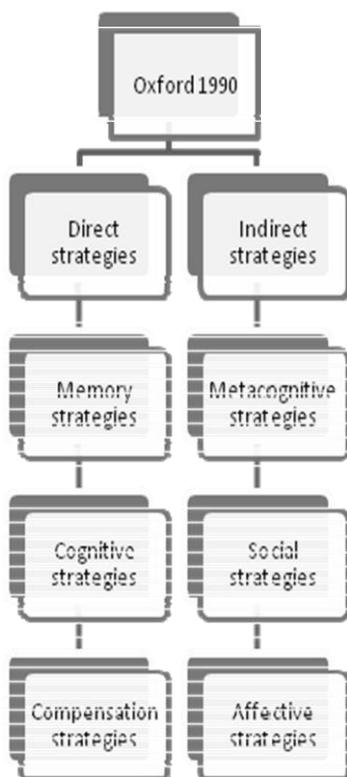
(Oxford,1990:295).There are four subsets of cognitive strategies: practicing, receiving and sending message, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output. Each set has different approaches/specific strategies. The adult's learners commonly use analyzing and reasoning strategies. These are used to understand the meaning and expression of the target language.

3. Compensation strategies are used to help learners use the new language for comprehension and production regardless of the limited knowledge learners have with the new language. Making up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar, and especially vocabulary, is the purpose of compensation strategies. An example of compensation strategy is "to understand unfamiliar English word, I make guesses" (Oxford,1990:295) . Guessing intelligently in listening and reading, and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing are the two subsets of compensation strategies. Within the two subsets, there are ten approaches/specific strategies.

The Oxford (1990) views indirect strategies are metacognitive, affective, social strategies.

1. Metacognitive strategies are "actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices, and which provides a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process" (Oxford, 1990:137). An example of metacognitive strategies is "I pay attention when someone is speaking English". There are three subsets of strategies within metacognitive strategies: accumulating learning is to give a focus to the learner so that the attention could be directed toward certain language activities or skills, arranging and planning ones learning helps learners to organize so they may get maximum benefit from their energy and effort, and evaluating learning helps learners with problems like monitoring errors and evaluation of progress.

2. Affective strategies refer to learners emotional, attitudes, motivation and values. Suggested that through affective strategies language learners can gain control over the above factors. She also suggested that good language learners are often the ones who know how to control their emotions and attitudes towards learning. An example of an affective strategy is "I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making mistake" (Oxford,1990:296). The subsets include lowering ones anxiety, encourage oneself, and taking ones emotional temperature.

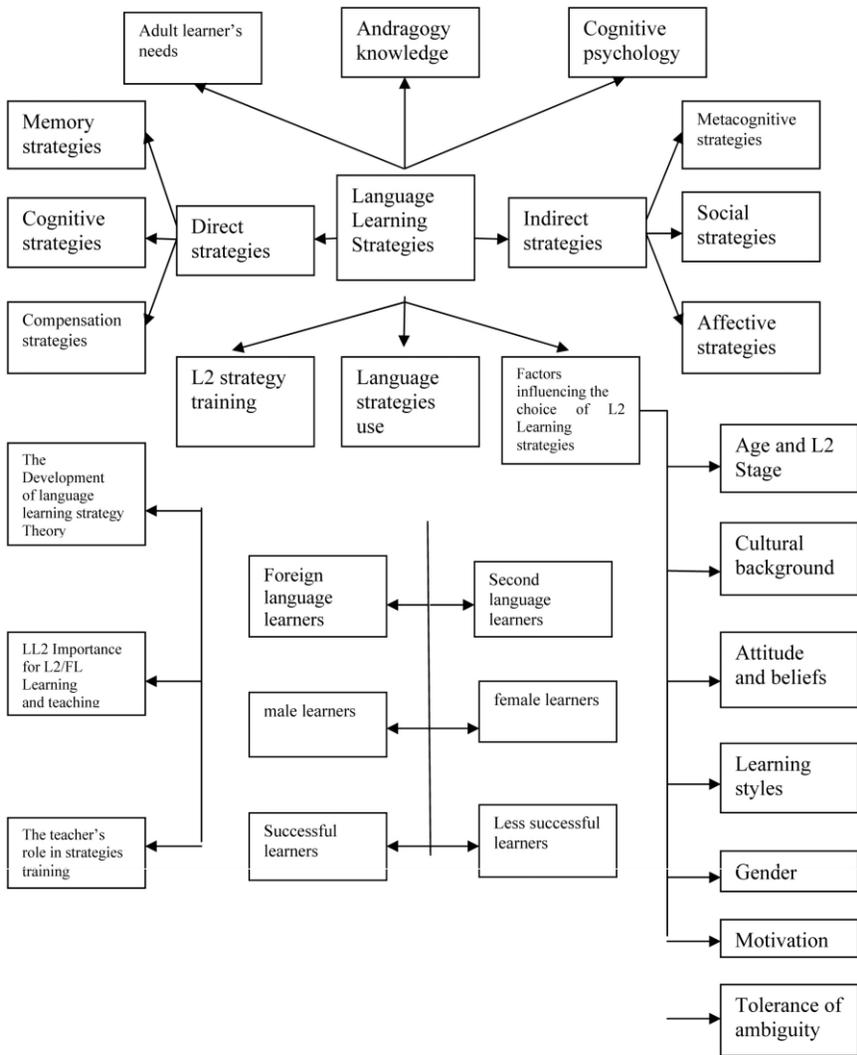


Pic.1. Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies

3. Social strategies refer to learner's communication with people who use the target language. An example of a social strategy is "I try to learn about the cultures of English speakers" (Oxford, 1990:296). There are three subsets of social strategies and each subset consists of two specific strategies. The three subsets strategies are as following: asking question, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. Among the three, asking question is the most helpful and comes closest to understanding the meaning. It also helps in conversation by generating response from the partner and shows interest and involvement. Cooperating with others eliminates competition and in its place brings group spirit. Empathy means to put oneself in someone else's situation to understand that person's point of view. Learners can use social strategies to develop cultural understanding and become aware of thoughts and feeling of others.

According to our research in the republic Sakha (Yakutia) foreign language learners mainly use memory, cognitive, social and compensation strategies. Metacognitive and affective strategies are used less frequently by learners. But foreign language teachers use all strategies in teaching but by intuition. So this work should be continued.

Lavasani and Faryadres working with adults have suggested a model in processes of learning language which is shown in Picture 2.



Picture 2. Suggested Model in Adults Processes of Learning Language by Lavasani and Faryadres

Now let's have a look which strategies are frequently used by learners and which strategies usually are used by teachers in foreign language learning and teaching process in the Sakha republic (Yakutia). According to our questionnaire more language learners at schools use direct strategies then indirect. They try to memorize words and word combinations, create mental linkages, apply images and sound, review, and use English in reading, writing, listening and speaking. This strategy is widely use at kindergarten and school level.

Schoolchildren in Yakutia feel some difficulties in practicing, receiving and sending message, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output when they learn a foreign language. But some of them are quite good at cognitive strategies because of bilingual nature of their existence.

Compensation strategies are helpful for foreign language learners of Yakutia and most of schoolchildren use them without hesitation. They often use gestures, body language and sounds. Guessing intelligently in listening and reading, and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing are the main methods in teaching foreign languages as well as affective strategies.

But learners are not very good at encouraging oneself and very shy from their nature. So while teachers use affective strategies in teaching learners are not so enthusiastic in this strategy. Social strategies are used by both teachers and learners. For teachers these strategies are very helpful for creating dialogues, conversations, situations, et. But for learners there are some difficulties for asking question, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others.

Teachers activities are aimed to accumulate learning process in such a way that helps to give a focus to the learner to practice certain language activities or skills which is one of subsets of metacognitive strategies. Learners now try to arrange and plan their learning. They organize it so they may get maximum benefit from their energy and effort. The most difficult is evaluation learning which helps learners with problems like monitoring errors and evaluation of progress .

So, the problem of developing language learning strategies in teaching foreign languages is only at the beginning of our research and we are planning to continue it.

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