

ГУМАНИТАРНЫЕ НАУКИ



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The Potential of Visual and Expressive Means in Overcoming Psychological Barriers to Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract

The potential of visual and expressive means in overcoming psychological barriers to foreign language learning was analysed. The reasons and factors inducing emergence of psychological barriers were studied, as well as the types and features of visual and expressive means of mass communication. The objective of the study was to analyse the potential of visual and expressive means in overcoming psychological barriers to foreign language learning. The analysis was conducted using the theoretical methods of scientific knowledge (analysis and synthesis of native and foreign scientific literature, generalization and structuring) and empirical methods (testing, qualitative and quantitative data processing). The study was conducted within two scientific domains — psychology and linguistics.

Keywords: visual and expressive means, psychological barriers, foreign language, overcoming psychological barriers

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Потенциал изобразительно-выразительных средств в преодолении психологических барьеров при изучении иностранного языка

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Аннотация

Проанализирован потенциал изобразительно-выразительных средств в преодолении психологических барьеров при изучении иностранного языка. Рассмотрены причины и факторы возникновения этих барьеров, а также виды и особенности изобразительно-выразительных средств массовых коммуникаций. Цель исследования заключается в анализе потенциала изобразительно-выразительных средств для преодоления психологических барьеров при изучении иностранного языка. В ходе подготовки материала использовались теоретические методы научного познания, такие как анализ и синтез отечественной и зарубежной научной литературы, обобщение и структурирование, а также эмпирические методы, включая тестирование и качественные и количественные методы обработки данных. Границы исследования очерчены двумя науками — психологией и лингвистикой.

Ключевые слова: изобразительно-выразительные средства, психологические барьеры, иностранный язык, преодоление психологических барьеров

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Introduction. Learning a foreign language is an indispensable experience for every person, as this process begins as part of the secondary education. However, statistics confirms that the number of Russians who speak foreign languages remains very low compared to the experience of other countries (for example, Russia is ranked 40th among non-English speaking countries in the overall English language proficiency ranking). According to VTsIOM, no more than 5% of the population of the country speaks English fluently, and no more than 30% speaks it at the basic level.

According to the data quoted by the Public Opinion Research Institute “Anketolog”, 90% of Russians consider it important to know at least one foreign language. It is also acknowledged that Russians start learning a foreign language at school, as this subject is a compulsory structural element of the general education program. At the same time, however, statistics shows a low level of success in learning. This is due to the fact that mastering a foreign language is related to a number of difficulties, including the psychological barriers in learning a foreign language, which are the most persistent and difficult to overcome.

It is possible to overcome the psychological barriers to learning a foreign language when knowing their mechanisms, types and causes. The main reasons inducing emergence of the psychological barriers are: the presence of a large number of unfamiliar words in the vocabulary of a foreign language, incomplete understanding and recognition of oral speech, the difference between the speech of a native speaker and a student, the lack of the culturally similar context. These barriers can be overcome by increasing the productivity of listening to foreign speech and getting rid of the fear of speaking. For this purpose, the vocabulary, materials in different formats, games and associative techniques are currently actively used [1–4].

In modern realities much attention is paid to distance education, digital technologies and up-to-date methods of foreign language teaching [5, 6]. However, when speaking about the technologies and tools (applications, websites, programs), we focus on the form of acquiring the information. Whereas, in the frame of the problem of overcoming the psychological barriers in foreign language learning, more attention and importance should be paid not to the form of acquiring the information, but to its contextual and informational content. Therefore, it is reasonable to study the elements of the language, which help to overcome the psychological barriers in the learning process by means of content components. Such elements are visual and expressive means.

Materials and Methods. The aim of the study was to analyse the potential of visual and expressive means in overcoming psychological barriers to foreign language learning. To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives were outlined: to reveal the essence of the concept of “visual and expressive means”, to identify the relationship between psychological barriers and visual and expressive means, to formulate and present recommendations on the nature and features of using the visual and expressive means in overcoming psychological barriers to learning a foreign language.

Visual and expressive means are the ways and methods of reproducing reality in a work of fiction [7]. This is a direct interpretation of the definition of “visual and expressive means of language”. However, in modern conditions there exists a variety of approaches and contexts to the definition of this concept. Thus, in the conditions of development and popularization of mass communication, visual and expressive means go beyond the tropes, stylistic figures and speech patterns and take the form of a tool of manipulation and influence.

In mass communication, visual and expressive means are used to personalise the meanings and ideas, to indicate completeness of interaction, to increase the degree of expressiveness of statements, to create vivid images and emotional and visual forms. It can be stated that visual and expressive means in the context of mass communication are both stylistic and graphic techniques, and mechanisms and algorithms of impact on the audience through the synthesis of these techniques and means. The following specific visual and expressive means of mass communication can be distinguished: Internet memes, short videos, trending texts (set trending phrases for which content is created), informational videos and infographics.

All these visual and expressive means are understandable and accessible for a modern person. People encounter them on their way to work (banners, outdoor advertising), while reading the news feed, while viewing content on social networks, and in interpersonal communication. Things encountered on a daily basis create a zone of comfort and familiar circumstances for a person. That is why, it is important to develop and include into the process of learning the foreign languages the potential of visual and expressive means in overcoming the psychological barriers.

A study was conducted to determine the feasibility of using visual and expressive means of mass communication to overcome psychological barriers when learning a foreign language.

The study was conducted in the form of a survey (using a Google form). The study involved 82 students of the Faculty of Psychology, DSTU. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 56 years old. The first part of the survey was conducted according to the method of Test-Questionnaire “Diagnosis of barriers in learning a foreign language” [8].

The second part of the survey consisted of the questions designated to determine students’ interest for including visual and expressive means of mass communication into the content of modules of the foreign language curriculum (“Do you want to understand humor in a foreign language? Are you interested in memes and trending videos in a foreign language? Are you motivated to understand contextual environment in a foreign language?”)

Results. As a result of the research, it was found that for more than 65% of the respondents, humor, memes and contextual materials from the media space (clips from shows, journalism items) are an interesting way of integration into the culture and context of the target language. It was also found that more than 80% of the respondents had faced psychological barriers of various kinds.

Among the respondents identified as having the psychological barriers, the following distribution proportion by type of barriers was defined:

- socio-adaptive barrier (low priority of language learning, lack of support, lack of successful examples, etc.) — 20%;
- psycho-physiological barrier (weak phonemic hearing, poor memory, low ability of intuitive-immediate operation of foreign language tools, etc.) — 5%;
- competence barrier (low competence of a student in using strategies of working with texts, lack of experience in learning a foreign language, low multicultural competence of a student) — 15%;
- psycho-emotional barrier (fear of mistakes, low motivation, shyness in front of a teacher, fear of public judgment, low self-esteem) — 60%.

As follows from the above, most of the psychological barriers faced by the foreign language learners are related to psycho-emotional factors. At the same time, it is psycho-emotional factors that can be overcome by enhancing the comfort level of learning process through inclusion of the understandable context, efficient influence techniques, and relevant and understandable content. These objectives can be achieved through the use of visual and expressive means of mass communication. Accordingly, it can be concluded that in the context of overcoming psychological barriers to learning a foreign language, visual and expressive means of mass communication have large and rich potential.

Conclusion. It is proposed to use modern visual and expressive means of mass communication as a basis for creating contextual materials, dialogues and vocabularies. This will, on the one hand, ensure the update of meaningful information in the frame of foreign language learning and, on the other hand, reduce the level of anxiety, fear and uncertainty of a person learning a foreign language due to implementation of comfortable, familiar and relevant information. Visual and expressive means can be used in a dosed manner and be the basis for the whole thematic units and modules. The present study can be supplemented and enriched in the following ways: by extending the groups of respondents and increasing their number for more representative and reliable results; by creating specific teaching materials, which integrate the visual and expressive means, and implementing these materials into the process of respondents' learning the foreign language.

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