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The Role of Psycholinguistics in Language Learning and Teaching

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ABSTRACT: This article describes the background of the emergence of psycholinguistics – explores the concepts of A. Marty and K. Buehler, assesses their impact on the subsequent development of the science of language; presents the modern ideas of psycholinguists about language, its forms, specifics and methods of language learning, speech activity. The purpose of the work is to analyze the works of A. Marty and K. Buehler, who laid the foundations of psycholinguistics, and to present the modern problems of this science. The research novelty is in fact that the concepts of German scientists for the first time are considered as the most important scientific prerequisite for the emergence of psycholinguistics, and the provisions that distinguish psycholinguistics from other linguistic disciplines are formulated. General-logical methods and techniques of research (analysis, synthesis, abstracting, generalization) have been used, as well as specific methods for the human knowledge are understanding and explanation. It is concluded that modern psycholinguistics, like the concepts of A. Marty and K. Buehler, is based upon the idea of speech as a psychical process.

KEYWORDS: psycholinguistics, origins of psycholinguistics, actual problems of psycholinguistics, A. Marty, K. Buehler.

I. INTRODUCTION

Psycholinguistics is a science that emerged in the United States in the early 50s of the twentieth century, uniting scientists from different countries. Psycholinguistics appeared on the interfaces of two “oldest” sciences – psychology and linguistics, it became one of the main linguistic sciences in a relatively short period of its existence. The emergence of this new science was objectively determined by the needs of social development of human society, in particular, the need for scientific knowledge of the nature of human mental intellectual activity. This science is developed on the basis of modern experimental psychology based on physiology, which studies the higher nervous activity of a person, on objective methods of studying the human psyche. As part of the synchronous study of language in the twentieth century, many original concepts were put forward, based on a psychological understanding of the nature of the object of linguistics. Regardless of how the language developed in its history, it remains a psychological phenomenon, and representatives of modern psycholinguistics believe that it is possible to know its essence, based on how speakers currently use the language in the process of communication.

The theoretical significance of the work is that for the first time it describes in detail the concepts of A. Marty and K. Buehler in terms of influence on the formation of modern psycholinguistics. Thus, an analysis of the development of psycholinguistic thought is made and also a vision of the main problems of modern psycholinguistics associated with the use of language in the processes of speech communication and individual speech-thinking activity is proposed.

The practical significance of the work is determined by the possibility of using the results of the research in the educational process, during the teaching university courses “Introduction to Linguistics”, “History and Theory of Linguistic Teachings”, “Theory of Language”, “Psycholinguistics”, in the preparation of teaching aids.

Review of literature.

The history of psycholinguistics development is dedicated to the works of V. P. Belyanin [2], G. Guillaume [6], V. A. Kovshikov and V. P. Glukhov [11], I. N. Gorelov and K. F. Sedov [5], G. Miller [16] and others. The problem of studying the mechanisms of internal speech was investigated by N. I. Zhinkin [8], the description of language ability (the ability to create languages) is contained in the works of E. F. Arsenteva and Y. S. Arsenteva [1], S. V. Tsynk [26], [27] and others. One of the central problems of psycholinguistics (the problem of constructing the grammatical structure of a sentence in speech perception) is considered in the article by D. A. Chernova, N. A. Slioussar, V. K. Prokopenya, T. Ye. Petrova, T. V. Chernigovskaya [29]. Experimental psycholinguistic methods are used by the authors N. B. Lebedeva [13], Z. I. Rezanova and E. Yu. Ershova [20]. Z. I. Rezanova and A. A. Miklashevsky [21] write about the possibilities of research based on psycholinguistic databases. The works of O. V. Fedorova [24], M. V.



Shcherbakova [30] and others are dedicated to the problems of studying the mechanisms of production, understanding, and perception of speech. A.A. Yakovlev [31] in his article raises the topical problem of interpreting linguistic consciousness as a psycholinguistic concept.

Methods

A number of general logical methods and techniques of research have been used. They are: analysis (mental division of the object (texts of psycholinguists) into its component parts (problems)), synthesis (identification of common features of psycholinguistic research), abstraction (finding out which of the considered properties are essential and which are secondary) and generalization (establishment of common properties and features of various psycholinguistic concepts). We also have used such specific methods as understanding (comprehension of the meaning of the psycholinguistic direction, its place in science, its functions), and explanation (identification of the essence of the studied subject, conditions, sources of its development).

Discussion

Consider the background of psycholinguistics. The emergence of the actual synchronous psychological direction was preceded by the appearance of two interesting conceptions created in the early twentieth century by German linguists Anton Marty and Karl Buhler.

1. Marty [15] believed that linguistics should be thoroughly psychological even when it comes to statement of individual facts, and he was convinced that on a psychological basis it is possible to create not only a descriptive (non-historical) grammar of a particular language, but also a universal one. The researcher saw the possibility of building a universal grammar in the fact that 1) all languages express the same content; 2) all of them are built on the same principles, since all people, regardless of the language they speak, have a common psychophysical organization. Therefore, the task of linguistics is to discover and describe these general principles of language organization. Thus, A. Marty revived the ideas of universal grammar of the XVII century. However, unlike his predecessors, he was limited to purely descriptive purposes. The linguist, in his opinion, should state the general language means of expression of psychology, and the principles of their use are not under the jurisdiction of linguistics as a science. It is only important to classify these means. A. Marty divided all means of language into autosemantic and synsemantic. Autosemantic means express non-linguistic content, mental functions of a person by themselves, that is, regardless of others. These means are used independently. They do not need the support of others to disclose their content. These are, for example, mostly nouns. On the contrary, synsemantic means are not used independently, their purpose is to supplement and clarify the content of other means – autosemantic. These are, for example, adjectives that are not used without nouns. The so-called “auxiliary parts of speech” are typical synsemantic means, since they do not have their own content and only link other means of expression. The difference between autosemantic and synsemantic means of languages is relative, since it is not formal, but semantic. Thus, nouns as a whole, as a class, belong to autosemantic means, but they can also perform the role of synsemantic means, for example, a noun in a sentence is not only a subject – independent means, but also a complement (object) – dependent, synsemantic means. The nouns “brother”, “father”, “father-in-law” and other kinship terms should be recognized by themselves as synsemantic means, since they express the relationship between objects. So Marty’s idea has a very broad and deep meaning.

2. Buhler [32] in the 30s of the twentieth century created a theory, which partly developed the ideas of Marty. The scientist connected linguistics with the so-called situational psychology that emerged at that time, which investigated the dependence of the human psyche, his psychological behavior on a particular situation in which a person is put. Among the many possible situations, K. Buhler singled out a communicative situation, that is, a situation of communication: the speaker – the listener. He proposed to study the language from the view point of how this situation is reflected, in the language system. For example, he investigated the index “field” of this situation, that is, the system of pronominal words. This system is entirely determined by the language situation. This is obvious when we refer to personal pronouns: ich – speaker, du – listener, er – outsider for the speaker and listener: ich – du – er. But it turns out that other pronominal words reflect the same situation. For example, pronominal adverbs are similarly related: hier (here) – da (here) – dort (there). And since pronominal words replace their equivalent words, their system reflects the system of the language as a whole and, therefore, it is possible to build a situational grammar of the language. Moreover, as the language situation is universal, so this grammar will also be universal at its core (this is the coincidence of views with A. Marty).

3. Buhler, therefore, focuses on the role of a person, the features of his activities and situations of activity in understanding the phenomenon “language”. According to the scientist “each expression can be interpreted as a human act, because each specific statement is associated with other conscious actions of this person” [3, P. 53]. In contrast to



W. von Humboldt and F. de Saussure, K. Buehler distinguishes not two, but four components (“phenomena”) of the speech process, namely:

1) speech action; 2) language behavior; 3) speech act; 4) language structure.

As for speech actions, he writes that there are situations in which speech is used to solve a relevant at the moment vital task, so speech actions are performed. In speech activity, its result always arises, and the language work tends to be independent of the individual’s position in life and the author’s experiences. The speech act is defined by K. Buehler as “subjective sense-making”. Language, according to the researcher, has the ability to adapt to the inexhaustible wealth of facts that are subject to language formulation in each particular case. This is what provides a certain degree of “freedom of sense-making”. The language structure (the language formation) is “intersubjective”. K. Buehler explains this position: “The verb, the article and the accusative refer to linguistic formations in the same way as a “right triangle” refers to “formations” of elementary geometry” [3, P.61]. In accordance with this, the scientist identifies three functions of language: representative, expressive and appellative. When a language sign is correlated with objects, it acts as a symbol. Hence the representative function of the language is taken. Being dependent on the speaker, the sign is a symptom. Hence its expressive function is taken. When appealing to the listener, the sign becomes a signal. Therefore, the language has an appellative function.

The speech situation, according to K. Buehler, is formed by: the speaker, the listener, and the objects of speech. He emphasizes that in creating a speech situation not only the sender but also the recipient has their own positions. They reach for the language of the agreements, which are governed by the interpersonal communication. The “actional field” necessarily includes two synchronous aspects: internal and external situations. All this to a certain extent determines the nature of the actions of the subjects of speech communication, makes it possible to establish what the speaker means.

In our opinion, the conceptions of A. Marty and K. Buehler are very valuable for the development of modern psycholinguistics.

Representatives of modern psycholinguistics C. Osgood [35], G. Miller [16], J. Carroll [33], N. Chomsky [34], I. A. Zimnaya [9], R. M. Frumkina [25], A. E. Suprun [23] and others also proceed from the definition of language as an activity given by Wilhelm von Humboldt [7]. Therefore, the focus of their attention is the speaker. For them, the subject of research is not a grammatical and lexical system of language usage, a product, an abstract result of the activity of society, but the speech activity of speakers. But psycholinguists do not dissolve language in the speech activity of each speaker. They consider that language is a deeply social phenomenon, even when it expresses itself in an individual speech act, which is especially emphasized by Russian psycholinguists (A. A. Leontiev [14], L. V. Sakharny [22] and others).

In psycholinguistics not only certain language forms are of interest, but the mechanisms of using these forms by speakers, the mental mechanism of their perception and awareness by listeners. This means that researchers cannot limit themselves to describing the observed ready-made texts, fixing text units, and generalizing them. It is important to recreate the process of formation of texts and language units. This implies the reference to the description of not only the external, but also the internal speech of the speakers. In psycholinguists’ opinion, for example, N. I. Zhinkin’s one [8], modern psychology provides the necessary means to penetrate the internal mechanism of language.

This way of research makes it possible to differentiate the language itself. Since mother-tongue speakers do not equally assimilate ready-made language forms, and use known rules differently, psycholinguists conclude that the global concept of language must be strictly differentiated. The language of the speaker is not identical with the language of the listener, since in the first case speech is made, and in the second case it is recognized. The mechanism of speech making and the mechanism of recognition are different concepts. Therefore, it’s necessary to create two grammars: one for speakers and one for listeners. The concept of “language” must be differentiated in many other ways: the language of children is not the same as the language of adults; the language of books and science is not the same as the language of casual conversation.

The merit of psycholinguists before linguistics is that they have developed an objective method of studying the “speaking person” – a psycholinguistic experiment that allows making reasonable conclusions about not only this individual, but also a wide range of mother-tongue speakers. The application features of experimental methods of psycholinguistic analysis are described, for example, in the articles of A.A. Golub, M.Yu. Ivanov [4], E.Yu. Kabanovskaya [10], S.I. Popov [19].

An outstanding achievement of psycholinguists is that they managed to build a reliable experimental base under the usage of neogrammarians (H. Osthoff, K. Brugman [17], H. Paul [18], and others), obtained by intuitive averaging of individual languages. If only phonetics was experimentally studied before psycholinguists (sounds can be recorded



with devices), then psycholinguists experimentally study the semantics of language. The essence of their experiments is that they turn to a certain mass of mother-tongue speakers in order to find out the assessment of certain language phenomena by each speaker. The obtained results are mathematically (statistically) treated and serve as objective material for linguistic generalizations.

In recent years, as S. V. Tsynk, M. K. Kuzmina note, "interest in the personal aspect of language learning has significantly increased" [28, P.7], [12, P.54]. The relationship "personality – language and speech" is also actively studied in modern psycholinguistics. The language abilities of the individual are being studied, for example, the ability to create language, which is clearly manifested in many poets and writers .

RESULTS

1. Marty's and K. Buehler's concepts contributed to the emergence of the psycholinguistic study. They are characterized by the idea of speech as a psychical process; Modern psycholinguistics is based on them. The main provisions of modern psycholinguistics are as follows:
2. Language is not an abstract system, but it is the activity of the speakers, that is fundamentally social and psychological.
3. Language is studied from the view point of language communication conditions.
4. Two processes are distinguished fundamentally: speaking and listening (the speaker's code and the listener's code).
5. Language expresses itself in two forms: external and internal speech. Hence, there is an interest in the mechanisms of formation and functioning of language units.
6. Psycholinguistics is a science that is entirely experimental in terms of research methodology.
7. In recent years, psycholinguistics has been actively considering an actual problem – the study of the relationship «personality – language and speech».

We have identified the scientific background and the main trends in the development of modern psycholinguistics, its methods, its current problems and achievements – a description of the mechanisms of speech, language personality, etc., showed the methodological foundations and historical continuity of the teachings of linguists, elucidated the works of A. Marty and K. Buehler from the view point of the significance of their views for today's understanding of the same scientific problems.

Conclusion

Thus, psycholinguistics is an interdisciplinary field of science about the laws of formation in ontogenesis and formed processes of speech activity in the system of various types of human activity. Psycholinguistics studies the following aspects of speech: its processes, motives of speech, its subject and addressee, speech intention, internal processes of speech, code transitions, recognition of speech by the listener. It explores the development of a person's speech ability throughout life, non-native languages acquisition, speech influence. Modern psycholinguistics is largely based on the provisions that were put forward in the 30s of the twentieth century by A. Marty and K. Buehler.

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