РОЗДІЛ 6.

СУЧАСНІ ПІДХОДИ ТА ІННОВАЦІЙНІ ТЕХНОЛОГІЇ ФОРМУВАННЯ ІНШОМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ

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FOSSILIZATION IN ADULT SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The article is devoted to peculiarities of the process of fossilization in adult second language acquisition (ASLA). It determines the relevance of current research due to the lack of consensual opinion on this issue in research community. Within second language acquisition study psycholinguistic comprehension of nature of fossilization deals with investigation of two prominent challenges in SLA: How to achieve a native-like level of proficiency in second language (L2)? Why is complete acquisition in L2 unachievable?

The presented paper accents a danger of unnoticed or/and unconscious phonetic, grammar, lexical, stylistic, discourse errors, that lead to development of approximate system, or, in other words, interlanguage (IL), that is a transitional system within a study of language fossilization, popularized by Selinker in 1972. It reveals the difference between two close phenomena of fossilization and plateau. The first one has a permanent nature, it is much more difficult to be overcome, since making errors without awareness learners establish transitional version of language, that should be L2, but actually is approximate system. In other words, in this chain a donor is L1, a target is L2, but, in fact, a true recipient is IL.

The article gives an overview of fossilization`s nature. Since intermediate level learners tend to estimate their experience as successful, for them it seems they realize how L2 works itself, students hope they comprehend a sense and true «mechanisms» of it. What is important, they are not afraid of making inference. Since this point they start comparing, then combining, and finally transferring in order to produce effective language output of more near-native complexity, they apply principles and rules of their native language to L2. That is how fossilization works. Plateau, in its turn, is a temporary phase, which can be overcome by learners upon condition they are provided with certain pedagogical techniques and effective learning strategies.

Key words: *fossilization, adult second language acquisition (ASLA), first language (L1), second language (L2), interlanguage (IL), error, plateau, utterance.*

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ЯВИЩЕ ФОСИЛІЗАЦІЇ В ОПАНУВАННІ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ ДОРОСЛИМИ МОВЦЯМИ

Пропонована стаття розкриває специфіку явища фосилізації, що виникає в процесі опанування другої мови дорослими мовцями. Актуальність даної розвідки зумовлена відсутністю єдиної концепції щодо цього мовного феномена в сучасній науковій спільноті. Акцентовано на необхідності висвітлення двох ключових питань у рамках дослідження проблем вивчення іноземної комунікації: Як носію іншої мови досягти досконалості в оволодінні другою мовою? Чому повного оволодіння недосяжне?

Автор наголошує на небезпеці непомічених і/або несвідомих фонетичних, граматичних, лексичних, стилістичних, дискурсивних помилок, що призводить до виникнення інтермови – так званої проміжної системи, яку в 1972 році почав досліджувати Селінкер. У зв'язку з цим описано різницю між двома суміжними мовними явищами – фосилізацією і плато. Перша має постійний характер, набагато важче її подолати, оскільки наявність неусвідомлених і/або непомічених помилок викликає появу проміжної мови, яка, за усвідомленням мовця, має бути цільовою мовою, але насправді є перехідною системою. Плато, у свою чергу, – тимчасове явище, яке можна подолати за умови застосування певної методики й ефективних стратегій навчання.

Ключові слова: *фосилізація, опанування другої мови дорослими мовцями (ОДМДМ), перша мова (М1), друга мова (М2), інтермова (ІМ), помилка, плато, висловлення.*

Introduction and relevance of current research. In terms of adult second language acquisition (ASLA) the contemporary field of methodological study provides a variety of approaches and means, consequently giving beneficial background for protagonists and antagonists of notable original concepts. Nevertheless, a certain set of questions to be investigated has remained relevant over the last few decades, and the first one is *How to achieve a native-like level of proficiency in second language (L2)?*

In the era of digital society, when an average learner develops an intention to succeed in foreign language mastery in order to keep up with the times, the priority is given to *quick quality*. This expectancy is «warmed» by accessed through the Internet numerous distant learning programs, countless number of educational platforms, skilled via-Skype or face-to-face tutors and rather low cost of internship in a country of a target language (TL). Digital learners use their devices to educate themselves everywhere, so that it finally embodies principles of constant learning and distant education.

Students are overall aware how to set short-term and long-term goals in SLA. One way or another, all mentioned options of education are welcomed as much as learners keep themselves full of enthusiasm. The only thing to be disappointed with refers to decrease of tutor`s role in current foreign language education process. It does not mean we intend to sound that prude and old-fashioned, but a side effect of it comprises repeating and multiplying language errors, not recognized by learners. That is how fossilization works. Therefore, in efforts to sound like native speakers students, to their surprise, can finally fall through.

This provokes the second question in SLA: *Why is complete acquisition in L2 unachievable?* And this issue is smoothly followed by an enquiry for nature of difficulties. What is more, an accent should be put onto communicative skills, since poor lexical, grammar and writing abilities tend to pass with natural process of persistent training.

From our experience in FLT we confirm, that an easiness of gaining new knowledge for highly-motivated elementary and pre-intermediate students encourages further intentions to improve their skills. It will last till motivation is strong enough to inspire a person to move forward step by step, persistently and scrupulously. Anyway, at some point of their pathway to *naturalness* in L2 they encounter an unexpected obstacle – they make no progress in spite of significant efforts. As a rule, it mostly occurs at the upper-intermediate level of mastery, when learners are in danger of undergoing a plateau effect that lasts for uncertain period of time. Some potential for learning of small superficial aspects of the language might still exist, for instance, vocabulary and grammar training, but conceptual understanding of the material will not develop any further.

Comparing two foreign language learning phenomena – fossilization and plateau – from methodological point of view, we state that the first one is much more difficult to be overcome, since making errors without awareness learners establish transitional version of language, that should be target language, but actually is approximate sysytem. In scientific research field the more appropriate name for this linguistic and psychological phenomenon is interlanguage, popularized by Selinker. Besides, fossilization has a permanent nature, while plateau is a temporary phase, which can be overcome by learners provided that they get subjected to certain pedagogical techniques and effective learning strategies.

Scientific sources and publications review. In theoretical and practical aspects, the mentioned questions are under analysis within current Methodological Study. The main aspects regarding nature and methodology of foreign language acquisition are clarified by C. Faerch, Fan Yi, P. Foster, G. Kasper, P. Lightbown, S. Moras, A. Pawley, M. Saville-Troike, R. Schmidt, P. Skehan, D. Slobin, M. Swain, F. Syder. An issue of fossilization in particular was investigated by Z. Han, J. Richards, C. Nakuma, O. Terence, E. De Prada Creo, L. Selinker, D. Larsen-Freeman, M. H. Long, R. Bley-Vroman, R. Alonso Alonso, U. Lakshmanan, D. Birdsong, E. Tarone. Nevertheless, the nature of fossilization in second language learning requires precise analysis due to the lack of consensual opinion on this issue in research community. Therefore, the purpose of the present article is to clarify psycholinguistic peculiarities of fossilization phenomenon, which are displayed in obstacles learners encounter at their upper-intermediate stage of gaining L2 competence.

Statement of the problem. When it comes to SLA, tutors are typically asked to help with spoken performance, more and more often for professional purposes, such as business trips, negotiations and meetings with international partners, business in the Internet, international virtual teams, dealing with e-commerce, answering business correspondence, since digital society goes global. However, this successful advance to foreign language mastery in professional sphere is provided with intercultural competence in general. In the current field of culture and language investigation the terms referred to intercultural competence are in demand: *cultural intelligence training*, *cultural sensitivity*, *cultural assimilation*.

According to learners` opinion, the competence in listed categories of communicative performance will provide them with ability to produce utterances of more complexity in order to sound/to be read as more advanced language users. For teachers, in their turn, there is always a danger of classroom preparation, supporting learners with tools they do not know *when*, *where* and *how* to use. In terms of Hall`s conception, «people anywhere in the world master hundreds of what we came to call "situational dialects″, none of which is the language taught in the classroom, more important, the classroom is the only place where the classroom form of the language will be found» [4, p. 132].

The right solution for this challenge is to teach students how to perform the five aspects that are particularly relevant to an effective conversation performance: *opening*, *turn-taking*, *interrupting*, *topic-shift*, *closing*. Prepared for out-of-class dialogues, they will escape discomfort from anxiety not to be understood while responding, even with unplanned communication, since «the essence of cross-cultural communication has more to do with releasing responses than with sending messages. It is more important to release the right response than to send the right message» [4]. It reveals the true learners` expectations – naturally produce statements with a high degree of native-like accuracy.

Willing intermediate level learners tend to estimate their experience as successful. For them, it seems they realize how target language works itself: they comprehend a sense and true «mechanisms» of it, they are given magic clues to unlock any door in cross-cultural communication. What is important, they are not afraid of making inference. Since this point they start *combining* to make effective output of more near-native complexity, and they apply principles and rules of their native language to L2. Consequently, they use a co-called *interlanguage* (or in different interpretations, *a third language (L3)*, *a translanguage*, *an approximate system*, an *interlingual language*, an *idiosyncratic dialect*).

According to Selinker`s concept, a set of utterances, «produced when the learner attempts to say sentences of a target language, < … > for most learners of a second language is not identical to the hypothesized corresponding set of utterances which would have been produced by a native speaker of the target language had he attempted to express the same meaning as the learner». Since observing «that these two sets of utterances are not identical», we talk about «the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner`s attempted production of a target language norm. This linguistic system we will call interlanguage (IL)» [7, p. 214].

This artificial «transitional» means of communication «collects» all the errors made by learners in more or less degree due to grammar, terminological, phraseological or stylistic incompetence. This phenomenon of language fossilization was firstly introduced and investigated by Selinker in 1972. Conditions of those language behavior occurrence can vary and are described by philologists and psychologists, as follows: «Many of these phenomena reappear in IL performance when the learners` attention is focused upon new and difficult intellectual subject matter or when he is in a state of anxiety or other excitement, and strangely enough, sometimes when he is in a state of extreme relaxation» [7, p. 215].

In fact, from time to time teachers are under pressure of students` irritation and even anger, when learners make efforts to analyze one or the other lexical, grammar, stylistic phenomenon or process which do not occur in their native language. Therefore, on this section straight learners` language mind is under the force of *comparison* and *transfer*: a donor is L1, a target is L2, but, in fact, a true recipient is IL, and that is how fossilization works.

At this point it seems relevant to distinguish adult SLA from children`s learning. In adult learning, within communicative performance, natural talent to express themselves in both monologue and dialogue utterances with a same rate of success in first language acquisition (FLA) very often presupposes similar participants` expectancy in SLA. Under power of *comparison* and *transfer* full-grown learners configure no meaning and choose no message other than the ones they want to convey, their language responds accomplishing specified objectives, that is, in fact, a prominent goal of foreign language education.

Children here obviously have an advantage over adults. «This may be because children are in the process of creating new categories all the time as they are learning new information and this option is natural, while adults are more used to consolidating knowledge and seeking overall similarity. The result, in any case, would be for adults to inappropriately extend first language rules (syntax, phonology, etc.) while children would not. The effect is that children would appear to be more successful language learners, as indeed they are, but the reason for the difference is not because of maturational limits on language learning but because of stylistic differences in learning at different times in life» [1, p. 132].

Typology or fossilized mistakes is capacious. The most common errors obviously refer to Phonology. If we compare with the Ukrainian language, our experience in teaching Ukrainian students manifests incorrect pronunciation of English dental (or interdental, that occur in some varieties of English) fricatives /ð/ and /θ/, bilabial consonants /p/, /b/, and /m/, glottal fricative /h/, velar nasal /ŋ/, labio-velar approximant /w/, retroflex approximant /ɻ/, since they are absent in our native language. But it does not limit borders of fossilization, at all.

Stylistic level of errors making is of a higher complexity to be overcome, stylistic incompetence becomes a real problem for participants of educational process. Even trying their best, they, from time to time, sound too bookish or unreasonably formal. At the earlier stage of target language acquisition spoken difficulties refer to incorrect use of prepositions, phrasal verbs, etc. But with gained experience learners want to produce utterances with a high degree of accuracy and naturalness. To overcome those distractive moments, teachers should involve students into a methods of asking and answering open-ended questions. This will prepare them for productive communication, whether professional or small talk. «When the learner has a clear communicative need of using English, he is most likely to learn the language spontaneously and take active part in all learning activities. So the primary aim of the classroom management must be creating positive situations that encourage and involve the learners in communication» [7, p. 29].

As mentioned above, fossilization errors could be way over irritating for learners. Unfortunately, wider use of authentic materials (texts, listening activities, video resources) also causes a by-effect on learners. Students perceive, memorize and then adapt gained mechanisms with the use of their native language principles, multiplying particular errors again and again. That is what scientists call permanent fossilization. This affects learners in a very bad way, especially when they start noticing their constant faults. Learners tend to escape communication with native speakers and feel more comfortable making a conversation with non-native interlocutors.

Selinker emphasizes five processes that become apparent in SLA in terms of fossilization: 1. *Language transfer*, when it is experimentally demonstrated, that fossilizable issues are «derived» from the native language. 2. *Transfer of training*, if those fossilizable issues are a result of identifiable items in training practice. 3. *Strategies of second language learning*, if errors are «a result of an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned». 4. *Strategies of second-language communication*, if mistakes depend on learner`s identifiable approach to communication with native speakers of TL. 5. *Overgeneralization of TL linguistic material*, if errors are produced as a result of a overgeneralization of Tl rules and features [7, p. 216 – 217].

Ipso facto, it should be noticed that in spite of argumentation, given in variety of scientific articles, there is still no consensus in science community regarding to the existence of fossilization phenomenon. A number of researchers are skeptical about the existence of it. First of all, it seems to be difficult to identify true motives of certain errors in general, for the reason that phenomena of interlanguage and fossilization belong to the field of cognitive interdisciplinary scientific study, that is why they require integral approach to methodology to be investigated. Secondly, a chance to count all presumable ILs and describe each of them comprehensively and scrupulously goes beyond the power of modern science, since an approximate system can be derived from all existing languages. Thirdly, it is unclear for methodologists what features are key ones to classify errors as those which occur as a result of language fossilization.

All the same, philologists and psychologists are unanimous on the point that «the linguistic structure of our first language sets important boundaries around subsequent linguistic structures that we attempt to learn. This means that first language acquisition is fundamental and guides and influences second language acquisition» [1, p. 130], and this opinion is approved by current psycholinguistic study.

In order to demonstrate an effect of fossilization, S. Polskaya underpins the existence of fossilized errors on a base of data, obtained through two-year experiment on L2 adult learners with B2 – C1 levels of the English language mastery. This experiment also clarifies a very important question: *What language structures/units/categories, aside from pronunciation (accent), do fossilization processes typically spread at?*

Participants were asked to complete written tests every term, that allowed to estimate errors frequency as much as their correlation with various structures of language. For this task researcher selected the following language manifestations: articles (A), verb tenses (T), third person singular forms (3P), discourse (D), lexical errors (L) and word order (WO). Consequently, after final test she received almost unchanged indexes in all categories. For instance, 28% as compared with previous 29% in category A, 33% as

opposed to 34% in category T, 7% and 8% accordingly in D-category. We share S. Polskaya `s assumption, made as a result or an experiment, about the most influential reasons of fossilization: those are *transfer of knowledge from L1*, *the lack of information about the L2*, *overgeneralization of lexical units and expressions in L2* [9, p. 168].

Conclusion. To summarize all the mentioned aspects of fossilization, we resume, that this psycholinguistic process affects students at their intermediate or higher level of L2 competence. Errors referred to perception of language input do not occur within fossilization, while performance, related to native-like, natural, competent language output, requires special tutors` attention. Majority of errors appear in learners` utterances when their attention is focused upon new and difficult task or when they get nervous. Within learning for professional purposes, aimed at a high level of accuracy and naturalness, adult learners configure no meaning and choose no message other than the ones they want to convey, their language responds accomplishing specified objectives. That is why rather easily passing vocabulary and grammar obstacles at earlier stages of education, they make errors in conceptual thinking, concerning foreign culture and language.

For that reason, both students and teachers should be aware of a danger of fossilization that comes together with increasing competence. In this case, an effective approach for teaching should presuppose development of capacity to monitor errors in communicative manifestations of other students as much as in their own language. A methods of developing those learners` abilities outlines a **perspective** for our further research.

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