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Resource Factors of Intellectual Development in Younger Bilingual Students

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Abstract

Our study aims to analyze the intellectual development of younger schoolchildren and identify the structure of intelligence in bilinguals and monolinguals. In order to define features of intelligence WISC, Toulouse-Pieroni test and Bender test were used. Also educational achievements were estimated. It is shown that under the same academic achievements bilinguals and monolinguals have differences in intellectual development. It was found that bilingual and monolingual schoolchildren have different structure of intelligence. The results of the factor analysis revealed insufficient differentiation of mental functions, "chaos" in the organization of mental experience in younger bilingual and monolingual schoolchildren.

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1. Introduction

Integration of cultures is a global factor of modern world and spread all over the world. Migratory movements inevitably lead to the integration of languages that result in appearance several problems, one of which is bilingual education. Native language is the only natural means of communication for the child in linguistically homogeneous (monolingual) society, but immigrant children, whose number is large in the modern society in all developed countries, are constantly faced with the problem of choice of language for the current situation of communication, as well as the necessity of imperative assimilation and improvement of a new language (Glozman, 2009).

Native language is not "innate" language neither language of parents, especially if his/her family is mixed. Native language in general words is the language in which a child uttered his/her first words. Non-native language learned

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by a child may be in turn of two types. If it is the language spoken in the community in which children develop we usually call it as a second language. If there are no or virtually no speakers of that language in the language environment of child - it is foreign language (Leont'ev, 1999). It should be distinguished from the dominant language – it is a language, most closely associated with the development of personality and mental processes (especially thinking) in a child in this age period and general mental development. These languages may not coincide.

There are two kinds of nonnative language learned by a child. The Second language is the one that is used in that community in which child develops. Foreign language- when there is no native speakers of this language in the language environment (Leontiev, 1999).

L.S. Vygotsky (1999) believed that knowledge of foreign languages is useful not only in itself but also because it helps to understand semantics of native language. He also points out that foreign languages should be mastered by child parallel to native language or (in later ontogeny) with some time shift. If there is an ability to adequately express the idea in their native language, bilingualism will be mastered more easily. L.S. Vygotsky (1999) notes that the process of becoming bilingual depends on the variety, depth and accuracy of speech knowledge that a child receives from communication with adults in early childhood.

Children's multilingualism become possibly as a result of some plastic reconstructions of brain under the influence of needs to communicate in two or more languages. However, all scenarios of mastering two languages in early childhood show a strong tendency towards to monolingualism. Some authors (Porsche, Pallier & Jampert, 2002) believe that immersion in a new language environment of the child, already speaking the same language, this trend is reflected in the decrease or complete loss of the first language. The simultaneous development of two languages shows the same trend: if intensity of communication in one language is reduced for some reason this language will be quickly forgotten (Montanari, Kielhofer & Jonekeit). Only coexistence of two language environments (naturally or artificially created for child for a long time) leads to full bilingualism and allows saving it. It seems that brain plasticity is aimed, on the one hand, to address the critical needs of communication, and on the other hand, tends to the economical use of its resources and return to the original (monolingual) program.

If when during monolingual's training, we have seen consistent improvement of language in the child, but during bilingual education there are two opposing trends - improving language and its simplification.

Earlier there was an idea that bilingualism has a negative impact on child's development (the origins of this representation are related to the fact that immigrant children were tested in a second language). But now it is proven that bilingualism promotes more flexible thinking, helps to approach the problem from different angles and different perspectives, and expands cognition. The positive impact effects of assimilation of two language systems (the ability to read in two languages) on formation of cognitive functions in children is were demonstrated (Schwartz, Leikin, Share, 2005).

Studying foreign language, the student must learn new names for objects and phenomena, to redistribute the volume values, to highlight new concepts, different structure picture of the world. This new knowledge affects the ability of expression of personality. Therefore, learning a non-native language as well as learning by means of foreign language leads to a new sense of self, a new identity. It is mastering of other spaces of communication (Wiesel & Konstantinov, 2014).

The number of children applying for admission to the school (including pupils bilingual), is characterized by considerable heterogeneity in terms of their intellectual development. Schooling imposes the same requirements for all children, however, among students-bilingual which are at the same level of intelligence, some of them experiencing significant learning difficulties, and others successfully cope with them. Thus the question is: what are those resource-factors of intellectual development that characterize successful bilingual students?

In our study, to determine the level of intellectual development of Junior schoolchildren used Wechsler test (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, full version). For estimation of educational achievements were taken into account three indicators of academic success (the average score in language and mathematics; the average score for all subjects; reading). In addition, we applied methods of diagnosis of vision-motor coordination, speed of information processing and attention.

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