

PSYCHOLINGUISTIC FEATURES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

ПСИХОЛІНГВІСТИЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ НАВЧАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

The article considers the relevance of learning a foreign language and the role of psychological features in teaching the foreign languages to technical students of higher educational institutions on the example of the Faculty of Chemical Engineering of the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute". It is well known that the problem of the influence of native language remains at almost all stages of learning and only when a person begins to think in non-native language then the dominant influence of the native language almost disappears but the solution of the issue under investigation remains completely unresolved. It is proved that there are no single methods, techniques and technologies for mastering foreign language and one of the best tool for learning it is to consider the individual characteristics of each student, their skills as well as psychological characteristics of each individual.

Thus, after the completion of survey, the authors concluded that taking into account all the features of teaching methods and tools only after their application in practice, namely: placement tests, work on the relevant Internet platforms, use of exercises that contribute the mastering skills and abilities necessary for further successful implementation of foreign language communicative activities, ensure a proper understanding of lexical units and the choice of grammatical structures and prevent the occurrence of predictable errors in their use.

It is well known that without knowledge of the lexical structure of the language and grammatical rules of sentence construction, the fully-featured communication is almost impossible. It is substantiated that it is a real communicative situation that facilitates grammatical awareness, mastering the lexical units as well as pronunciation and other skills. It is emphasized that grammatical rules should be worked out in communicative situations with the use of all types of speech activity.

The formation of foreign language skills goes through the following main steps: explaining the rules, processing the speech patterns and pronunciation, memorizing new lexical items and language clichés. The authors of the article found that the natural difficulties in learning a foreign language are the coincidence and contradictions of language paradigms in native and foreign languages, accompanied by interference. Also the main types of work are proposed that promote learning and development of foreign language activities, taking into account the psychological characteristics of each student individually and the group as a whole.

Key words: psycholinguistics, interference, foreign language, lexical and grammatical structure of a foreign language, language activity, language consciousness.

У статті розглянуто актуальність вивчення іноземної мови і роль психологічних особливостей під час навчання іноземній мові студентів вищих навчальних закладів технічних спеціальностей на прикладі інженерно-хімічного факультету Національного технічного університету України «Київський політехнічний інститут імені Ігоря Сікорського». Нині проблема впливу рідної мови залишається майже на всіх етапах навчання. Лише коли людина починає мислити на іншій мові, яка є для неї нерідною, тоді доміючий вплив рідної мови майже зникає, але вирішення цього питання вченими залишається повністю нерозв'язаним. Доведено, що єдиних методів, прийомів і технологій для оволодіння іноземною діяльністю не існує, а найкращим моментом при навчанні іншій мові є врахування індивідуальних особливостей студентів, рівня їхньої підготовки та психологічних особливостей кожного індивіда окремо. Після проведення опитування автори дійшли висновку, що, враховуючи усі особливості методів і засобів навчання, тільки після застосування їх на практиці, після проведення тестування для з'ясування рівня володіння студентами іноземною мовою, роботи на інтернет-платформах, використання вправ, які доводять до автоматизму вміння та навички, необхідні для подальшої успішної реалізації іноземною комунікативної діяльності, це забезпечить правильне розуміння лексичних одиниць та вибір граматичних структур і запобіжить виникненню прогнозованих помилок у їх використанні.

Без знання лексичного складу мови і граматичних правил побудови речення повноцінне спілкування практично не можливе. Обґрунтовано, що саме в реальних комунікативних ситуаціях формується граматична обізнаність, засвоюються лексичні одиниці, удосконалюються вимова і мовлення. Наголошено, що граматичні правила необхідно опрацювати у комунікативних ситуаціях із застосуванням усіх видів мовленнєвої діяльності. Формування навичок і вмінь проходить такі основні етапи: пояснення правил, опрацювання мовленнєвих зразків і вимови, запам'ятовування нових лексичних одиниць та мовних кліше.

Авторами статті було з'ясовано, що закономірні труднощі у засвоєнні іноземної мови полягають у збігу її протиріччях мовних парадигм у рідній та іноземній мовах, що супроводжується інтерференцією. Було запропоновано основні види роботи, які сприяють навчанню та розвитку іноземною мовленнєвої діяльності з урахуванням психологічних особливостей кожного студента окремо та групи загалом.

Ключові слова: психолінгвістика, інтерференція, іноземна мова, лексико-граматична структура іноземної мови, мовна діяльність, мовна свідомість.

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Problem statement in general. The problem of mastering a foreign language has become very acute since the introduction of Bologna process, when students gained wide prospects for further study and professional knowledge in higher education

institutions abroad. In order to organize the process of high-quality foreign language teaching, educators have to consider certain aspects of psycholinguistics, which examines the processes of generation and perception of linguistic means of speech in general.

Language is a way of communication between people of one nation and people from other cultures. A foreign language is the connecting element that helps to make the communication process more efficient and successful. The research in the field of psycholinguistics is of great importance for understanding the process of speech generating in both native and foreign languages.

Analysis of recent researches and publications.

The authors of the article examine the problem of psycholinguistic features of students' acquisition of a foreign language and approaches to its solution. The above question was explored by such scientists as M.D. Galskova, S.S. Bakshikhanova, R.K. Minyar-Beloruchev and others. B.V. Belyaev, B.A. Benedictov studied the principle of teaching thinking in a foreign language.

There is no consensus in psycholinguistics on a possible direct connection between the level of development of a person's thinking and the process of learning a foreign language. Such scientists as B.V. Belyaev, A.I. Yatsikevikus, B.A. Benedictov suggest the possibility of a direct connection between a non-native language and thinking. B.V. Belyaev defines the main principle, specific to the methodology of teaching a foreign language: "It is necessary to teach not just a foreign language, but also how to think in this language" [1].

The authors examined the speech achievements of those who studied English as a foreign language and focused on speaking anxiety as a psycholinguistic barrier affecting speaking achievement) [7]. One of the leading research approaches in psycholinguistics is the method of comparative analysis and the resulting lists of differences between linguistic phenomena "were used as a basis for predicting the difficulties and errors caused by them, which students make". The need and productivity of such an approach was also considered by R. Lado [8; 9].

After some time, the method of comparative analysis was criticized by scientists and researchers in the field of psycholinguistics for overestimating its importance in learning a foreign language and it was finally completely abandoned. However, later this method of data collection and analysis returned to psycholinguistics, but with a changed function and it began to be considered as one of the components of a comprehensive study. This approach can be traced in methodical works of S.G. Berezhan, A.M. Shakhnarovich and A.S. Mamontov, A.V. Shchepilova, etc.).

Highlighting of previously unresolved parts of a common problem. Despite the significant amount of research aimed at studying the problem of psycholinguistic features of learning foreign language, the authors raise the issue of not defining a single principle and approaches to teaching a foreign language at higher education establishments and

use examples to explore how to reach a common denominator for a successful learning process.

Formulating the goals of the article: 1) to determine the stages of learning a foreign language speech activity at different levels of language proficiency; 2) finding out the factor of influence of the native language during mastering a foreign language; 3) formulation of goals and structuring the groups of exercises for successful mastering of foreign language speech activity.

Presentation of the main material of the study with a full justification of the obtained scientific results. From the point of view of anatomy, neurophysiology and psychology human speech activity is a very complex process of speech generation, which involves both physiological mechanisms and processes of mental activity of the individual. Speech production is possible providing that the person has mastered the structure of a particular language, which he / she considers as native. It is this language used by the individual to produce a qualitatively new context, which includes the formation of speech competence as a person's ability to put into practice the knowledge of language in the communication process.

A natural process at the initial stage of learning a foreign language for each person is to make analogies and comparisons with the native language, because each individual tends to think in the language that is his native one. From the point of view of psycholinguistics, the process of interaction of native and foreign languages during the act of speech could take place until a person begins to think in a foreign language, and this becomes possible with full "immersion in language" and mastering the language in the natural environment.

At the initial stage, it does not happen in full, even being in another country and communicating with native speakers, people think and translate in their head language structures, correlate words and concepts, look for differences and similarities with the native language. Mastering a foreign language, the students learn to form their thoughts with the help of a foreign language system. Therefore, the transition from one language to another is not a simple mechanical gluing of some "labels" in place of others, but is a complex psychological process.

To understand the process of learning a foreign language we should take into account the stating of I.P. Pavlov on the point of the first and second signaling systems, according to which a foreign dynamic stereotype is not initially associated with the concept of an object or phenomenon of reality, but is associated with it through the word in the native language. This explains the fact that at the initial stage the attempt to convey an opinion directly in a foreign language could not be successful, because when the first signal system is violated, the connection with the native language word is closed and then it triggers the foreign language complex.

That is, when a person learns a word in a foreign language, he / she correlates it with the existing in person's mind concept of a particular object or phenomenon of reality; there is no direct connection between the word and the object or phenomenon, this connection is appeared to be indirect and is carried out through the concept. Therefore, the teacher's goal is to establish a connection between the word and the concept in the student's mind, as "the vocabulary of a foreign language conceals a slightly different system of concepts" than in the native language [5].

The problem of interaction of languages (native and non-native) in the study of a foreign language is currently an area of interest for domestic and foreign psycholinguists. For a long time, scientists, educators, psychologists have been trying to reach a consensus on this issue. The principles of learning a foreign language and its interaction with the native language are constantly changing and have provoked discussions among methodological scholars. For example, the method of grammar and translation was partially or completely excluded in direct, audiovisual methods and in their subsequent modifications.

In the 1950s there were two main points of view on the subject: first, considering the peculiarities of the native language is reduced to comparing the phenomena of a foreign language with the facts of the native language directly; secondly, taking into account the peculiarities of the native language in teaching a foreign language is determined by the data obtained during comparative and typological studies that could prevent interference.

Of course, the second interpretation of the principle considers the peculiarities of the native language and turns the latter into an effective tool of learning a foreign language, and the first explanation often leads to the substitution of language activity by theorizing. Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of research that has already been conducted in the field of psycholinguistics and regarding various omissions and shortcomings, linguists continue to look for new ways, methods and techniques of teaching a foreign language to improve learning quality.

It is worth to mention that particular attention is paid to the use of native language in the psychological substantiation of methods of learning the vocabulary of a non-native language, namely in the semanticization of a new word, because the process of learning a "foreign" language always begins with learning words that express certain concepts. Thus, the thinking process of people of different nationalities, despite the fact that they use different languages, is absolutely the same in terms of its formal and dynamic features, namely: the processes of concept formation, relationships between concepts and judgments, processes of analysis, synthesis and generalization.

B.V. Belyaev highlighted the need to distinguish between objective and subjective content of opinions,

focusing on the fact that the objective content of the sentence in different nationalities is the same, the subject of utterance in the case of expressing of the same opinion by means of two different languages is the same, but what "can and should be called subjective content, i.e those concepts, on the basis of the relationship between which the appropriate judgments are created, are actually different" [1].

In this manner, when mastering a foreign language, students gain additional opportunities to receive and transmit information, with the inevitable interaction in the psyche of two (and in some cases even more) languages, but the "native language dominates in mind". Therefore, mastering a foreign language occurs through the prism of the native language. But the need to overcome the interaction of native and non-native languages provides more success in mastering a foreign language as a means of communication. However, "the way of formulating an opinion in a non-native language differs from expressing similar opinions in the native language, so this must be taught".

This is one of the most important psychological issues in the methodology the foreign language teaching in general. The learning process should be organized in such a way that the expression of thought in the process of language activities could help to overcome the existing psychological barrier. Many prominent psychologists devoted their works to difficulties of studying the vocabulary and grammar of a foreign language. Among them are B.V. Belyaeva, L.S. Vygotsky, P.Ya. Halperin, M.M. Gohlener, H.V. Eiger, I.A. Kulak.

Comprehension of the vocabulary of a foreign language means, first of all, comprehending the meaning of the word. Analyzing the psychological nature of the word, L.S. Vygotsky notes that "... a word always refers not to a single subject, but to the whole group or to the whole class of subjects. From a psychological point of view, the meaning of a word is an extraordinary verbal act of thought, a kind of generalized reflection of reality. Because of this, we can conclude that the meaning of the word, its generalization is an act of thinking in the proper sense of the word. But at the same time, the meaning is an integral part of the word as such", and, accordingly, has a double synthetic nature: on the one hand, the word is a linguistic phenomenon, on the other hand, the word always is a part of thinking [3].

Thus, the process of comprehending a foreign word is a whole set of meanings of this word, some of which may completely or partially coincide with the lexical and semantic variants of the meaning of the native word, or have no analogues in the native language. It is worth mention, that the possibility of relying on the native language in the field of vocabulary in the process of learning a second language can be considered as the presence of a coincidence of

the semantic structure of word equivalents in two languages while matching the links between words in native and foreign languages. At the same time, there could be inconsistencies in the sets of semantic components of word comparison, due to which these words belong to different paradigmatic series and enter into different syntagmatic relations.

Grammar by its nature is constructive, so a person learning a foreign language should, above all, master the “rules of transition from language structures in the native language to similar or different structures in a foreign language”. A comparative study of grammatical models of different languages helps the students to notice the similarities and differences in the construction of language expressions.

The well-known major difference between mother tongue acquisition and foreign language acquisition is that native language acquisition occurs “from the bottom up” (i.e. a human from his childhood learns grammar of the native language, and these skills are spontaneous, intuitive, not conscious), whereas the foreign language acquisition language occurs “from top to bottom” (i.e. a person learning a foreign language, goes from understanding the language system through communicatively oriented exercises to fluency in language). In the other case, the principle of consciousness plays a decisive role, which, in turn, justifies the rational use of comparative analysis, both at the lexical level and at the level of semantic and grammatical peculiarities of language units and features of modeling and construction of grammatically correct constructions in speech.

As we can see, comparative analysis not only states the similarities and differences of linguistic phenomena, it organically “fits” into the psycholinguistic concept, built on the interaction of native and foreign languages. Such interaction is twofold: on the one hand, it can cause deviations from the norm - interference, on the other it facilitates creating favorable conditions for learning a foreign language - transposition.

The subject matter of interference is that “in the mind of the speaker a so-called third system is formed, which combines the differential features of native and foreign languages, i.e. the students establish correspondences between units of language”. Transposition is a mechanism of opposite action, which represents a “positive influence” of the native language system on the foreign language system, in other words, the transfer of identical features of the native language into the system being studied.

The teacher should feel when it is reasonably to isolate the influence of lexical and grammatical categories of the native language in order to prevent interference, and when, conversely, to firmly establish in students' minds that language associations, i.e. to use the positive influence of the native language, or transposition. J. Krizhinauskas draws two important

conclusions for the methodology of teaching a foreign language:

- elements and structures of foreign and native languages must be comprehended and perceived. If it is accomplished, a foreign language learner rarely needs to go back to them and the influence of their native language makes it easier to remember and use these elements;

- elements and structures of foreign and native languages must be comprehended in contrast to the native language, as the influence of the native language complicates the understanding of elements and structures, especially their use in speech, so they have to be repeated often, as only in this way one can overcome language interference.

Understanding the similarities and differences between lexical and grammatical semantics, the teacher can predict the typology of possible interference errors in students' speaking. Mistakes are a kind of source of information about the process of mastering a foreign language. Analysis of errors allows, firstly, to explain their occurrence, secondly, to trace the dynamics of erroneous action and thirdly, helps to determine the degree of formation of skills in applying language phenomena in target language.

The phenomenon of error, as a kind of research approach, attracted attention of psychologists, linguists and educators long before the formation of error analysis. The issue of language errors was explored and analyzed in the works of V. Wundt, I.A. Baudouin de Courtenay, D.N. Bogoyavlennyi, L.B. Scherby etc. Since the 1970s, it has been common in psycholinguistics to distinguish between interlingual (errors caused by the influence of the native language) and intralingual errors (not related to the influence of the native language, but those, reflecting the process of mastering a foreign language).

Scientists are searching the ways to explain the psycholinguistic mechanisms of mistakes in order to increase the effectiveness of foreign language learning based on students' mistakes in English, to establish the peculiarities of language interaction in foreign language learning. According to B.A. Benedictov, the interference of the native language is determined by the following factors: first, age peculiarities; secondly, the degree of foreign language competence; thirdly, by the degree of admission of special exercises in bilingual activities [2].

Commenting on the first factor, one should note that adults have a highly developed conscious component in language learning; thus, transposition at the level of language knowledge, skills and abilities for this age group will be more common than in children.

The second factor is also crucial. A.V. Shchepilova formulated a thesis about the importance of the degree of foreign language competence: “The better a person speaks a foreign language, the less

interference and the greater is the share of positive transference" [6]. However, it is not so much the level of proficiency in a foreign language that is important, but the level of proficiency of correlative phenomenon. Let us agree with the opinion of A.V. Shchepilov about what "affects the possibility of positive transference and the way of developing the correlative skill in a foreign language: the probability of its occurrence is higher if it is the result of actual awareness, rather than just acting by analogy".

The third factor implies the presence of a strictly verified and methodologically rationalized system of exercises based on the rational use of comparative analysis data and justified by the specifics of the material studied. The list of the above mentioned factors can be supplemented by the level of language development in the native language, as the conscious possession of it increases the share of transposition and the amount of time that separates the study of the second foreign language from the study of the first foreign language. The latter factor is certainly the least studied at present.

One should realize that interference is a dynamic phenomenon, as are the dynamic processes of language acquisition, so limiting and more or less significantly eliminating interference from the process of using both languages is a difficult task and comparative analysis provides ample opportunities to overcome it. At different stages of learning, depending on the level of foreign language proficiency, the degree of interference of the native language is different.

Thus, with a low level of foreign language proficiency, students apply the most relevant models of connections between words. At a higher level there is a "generalization" of the most typical models of connections between words of the target language. And only intensive, appropriately purposeful language practice allows students to differentiate typical models of connections between words for each language. Given the above, it would be logical to assume that the degree of applying comparative analysis could vary depending on the stage of foreign language learning process.

At the initial stage of learning, the influence of the native language is considerable. This is due to the fact that at first the issue of apperception, i.e., active and conscious perception of educational material is of great importance. The task of the teacher at this stage is to train students to perform conscious operations, focused primarily on the perception of educational material. Here it is advisable to use comparative tables and other visual aids that demonstrate the similarities and differences of certain language factors. At this step, the teacher should, in our opinion, use the influence of the native language as often as possible, contributing by comparing the equivalent phenomena of the native and studied languages.

In the second stage, the degree of interference is less important, but still significant. Comparative analysis yet plays its role in stimulating the analytical activity of foreign language factors besides, this stage is characterized by a certain awareness of grammatical features. In the third stage, which is characterized by the almost complete mastery of the material, comparative analysis is practically not applied as interference is minimized. Exceptions are only the cases of special difficulties that occur and cases of intentional use of comparative analysis in order to deepen knowledge in the field of semantic structure of words and their grammatical specificity at the advanced level.

Thus, the comparison of the two language systems and the psychological features of language acquisition could serve as a prerequisite for compiling an appropriate system of language exercises. As we can see, at the initial stage of learning a foreign language, comparative analysis can be used quite often both from the standpoint of a teacher as well as from the standpoint of a student.

The frequency of using comparative analysis directly depends on the degree of interference: as smaller the degree of interference is, the less often the comparative analysis is used, respectively, as higher the degree of interference (which is more inherent for the initial stage), the more actively the comparative analysis is applied. In order to prevent interference and the active use of transposition, the teacher should purposefully and consistently use data of comparative analysis.

The role of comparative analysis in the study of a foreign language from a psychological point of view is difficult to overestimate. It can be assumed as an integral part of the mechanism of transition from the lexical and grammatical systems of the native language to the lexical and grammatical systems of a foreign language. Currently, there is a kind of "strong" version of comparative analysis (the main idea of which is to predict errors based on preliminary error analysis in comparative study of native and target languages) distinction is made and "weak" version of comparative analysis which explains the causes of errors. Our study presents an attempt to use comparative analysis to predict possible interference and the rational use of its positive impact - transposition.

For more successful investigation of definite features of the foreign language learning process in which students of science and technology are involved and to study the influence of certain external factors, which were mentioned above, on the positive results of students' mastery of the foreign language, the authors conducted a survey, based on knowledge of psycholinguistics, among students of National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute". The survey involved 75 students who were asked to give answers on 4 questions.

The first question was intended to show students to what extent do the students apprehend the fact that the moment of speech is closely related to the communicative intention, which is considered to be the driving force for the realization of the communicative goal of the participants of the speech situation. The question was: "Do you notice a close relationship between the process of generating an utterance (speech act) and the communicative function of speech activity?" The answer options proposed were:

1. "Yes", there is an obvious relation.
2. "No", I can't see any relation.

From the obtained data we can conclude that the majority, namely, 75% of respondents realize that to generate an utterance in a foreign language a communicative motive or motivation is really necessary. What is more, it makes the communication possible, effective and arouses cognitive interest in speakers to widen their interests and acquire new knowledge. Both internal and external motivations are essential for involving students in the process of speech and the development of speech activity in a foreign language.

The purpose of the next question was to investigate how close a connection of students to their native language when they learn a foreign language. The students were asked: "How often do you rely on your native language when formulating a statement in a foreign language?" Answer options were the following:

1. Always.
2. From time to time.
3. Rarely.

The information gained confirms the researches of other scholars in the field of psycholinguistics that the study of a foreign language, especially at the initial stage, is impossible without reliance on the native language, which is the foundation for the formation of semantic relationships between native and foreign words. As we can see, 62% of students often turn to their mother tongue to relate the concepts, images, codes of their native language and the target one.

The answers to the following question of the survey were aimed to help us to find out what is more complicated for students in mastering a foreign language: its lexical and phonetic features or the grammatical structures. The question was the following: "What is more difficult for you to inquire while learning a foreign language?" and students had to choose between:

1. Lexical and phonetic aspects of a foreign language.
2. Grammar structures of a foreign language.

It turned out that the lexical and phonetic aspects of the language are more difficult to master (57%) and this is natural, because the speech material of a foreign language is learned through concepts, images and so-called language codes, and all this is layered by comprehension of grammatical structures

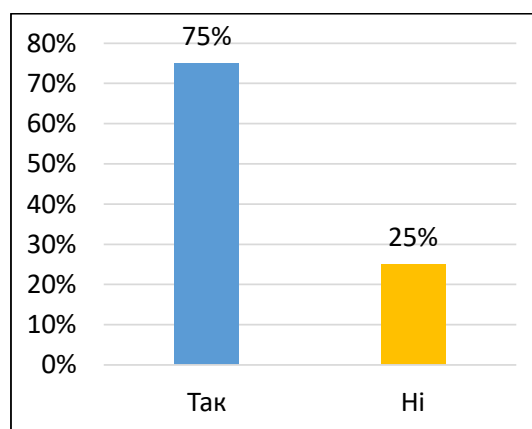


Fig. 1. Question 1

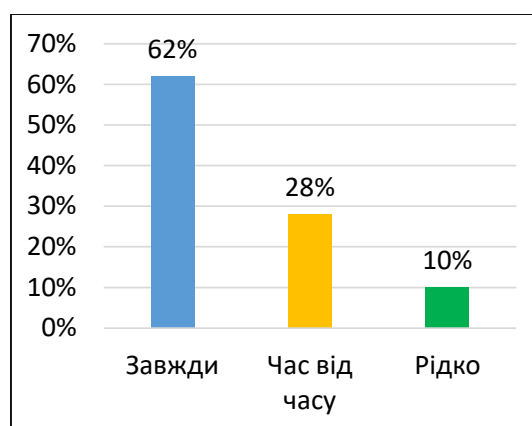


Fig. 2. Question 2

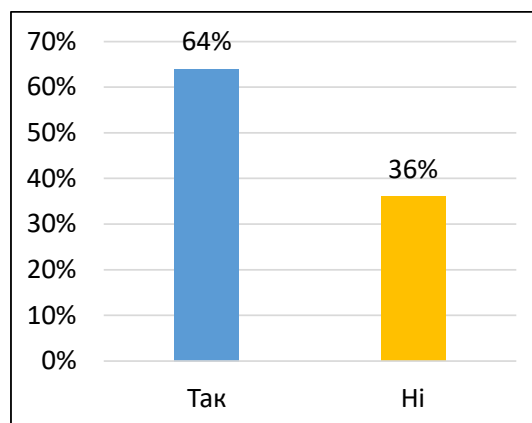


Fig. 3. Question 3

and units of another language. This is meaningful knowledge that needs to be taken into account when selecting methods and techniques of teaching a foreign language, and which serve the base of most of these methods.

Regarding the importance of consideration of psychological factors that directly affect the process of foreign language learning, the authors of the article

proposed students to answer the fourth question of the questionnaire which was the following: "Whether methods of your teacher and his / her professional and personal characteristics as well as socio-psychological environment affect the successfulness of your foreign language mastery?" with variants to answer:

1. Yes, indeed.
2. No, definitely not.

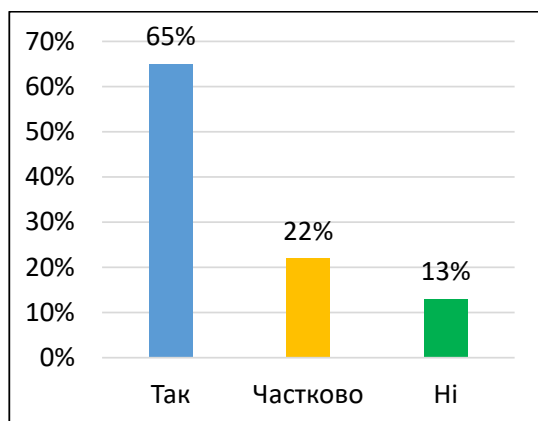


Fig. 4. Question 4

The majority of respondents, who accounted for 79%, noticed that a really significant role in their language study plays the way the learning process is organized by the teacher, what methods he uses, as well as his psychological portrait. The learning environment should promote a positive attitude of students to master the subject, especially in the discipline of "Foreign Language", where they are constantly proposed to communicate with each other, because it is one of the crucial factors for effective development of communicative competencies in students.

Conclusions. Linguistic activity, which covers the processes of production, understanding and interpretation of language signs, is a complex phenomenon through which the individual interacts with other people and the world around him. Without this type of activity a person cannot exist adequately among other people. Investigations carried out by linguistics and psycholinguistics give us the

opportunity to understand the peculiarities of the formation of language as a psychological tool and reveal the main provisions underlying the formation of students' mechanisms of generation and perception of speech in a non-native language.

This article examines the factors that may influence the formation of these mechanisms, namely the influence of the native language and proves the need to take into account this aspect of language consciousness when mastering a foreign language. These studies are very crucial because they are relevant for the methodology of effective teaching a foreign language. Foreign language comprehension is now vital for future specialists as it is one of the ways of communication in the professional sphere. That is why this aspect of psycholinguistics is supposed by the authors to be very important and which needs further research.

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