

**Emotions in language learning and use - 6th International pedagogical and linguistic conference,
Ulm University, Germany**

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The significance of language and speech in human functioning is enormous. The human society developed speech as a means of communication and, consequently, the relationships based on language. Language also determines a person's social situation, providing an opportunity to take on specific and professional roles. In this case, it serves as a foundation or necessary tool to enter the social network and occupy a specific position within it.

On the other hand, language is an attribute of individual human activity. It plays a crucial role in the creation of human subjectivity. Constructing a subject means giving meaning and internalizing linguistic concepts, as well as discovering one's own personal relationship to these concepts. The subject's experiences in these relationships become a path to self-identification and, consequently, to the acquisition of one's identity (Liwo 2012, 195).

Given the importance of language for human condition the ways of mastering implementing it become an intriguing issue. Does language therefore appear in the human mind imperceptibly as "gifted tool" (Grabias 1994), enabling the understanding of the world and communication within it? Or are there mechanisms of its acquisition and functioning that have been the subject of research for years? Linguistic skills are perceived on one hand as specific competencies achieved based on innate human abilities, emphasized by nativist theories. On the other hand, they are the result of human brain activity, emphasized by neurobiological positions (Grabias 2019). Contemporary trends in research on child language development highlight the importance of mental, motor and sensory activity in this process, reflecting the cognitive position (Porayski-Pomsta 2019, 78-79).

Acquiring and implementing the language is possible thanks to the interaction of multiple biological, psychological and social processes. The biological processes refer to the efficient functioning of the hearing organ, the central nervous system and the musculoskeletal system, responsible for auditory perception of speech, the learning process of language, and its implementation at the respiratory-articulatory level. On the other hand, psychological and social processes involve the activation of language and communication competences synonymous with the ability to master the language system and construct utterances based on grammatical norm, as well as their use in the communication process, considering relevant social, situational and pragmatic rules (Grabias 1994, 190-195). Therefore speech is a function of multiple functions (Tłokiński 1986), which highlights its complex and synergistic profile and emphasizes the importance of each element in effectively mastering and communicating through language.

One of the factors shaping and representing language are emotions. Their significance can be observed already in the early stages of speech development. Preverbal behaviours that emerge in infants are consists of non-verbal emotional content, which the child expresses through various melodic vocalizations, accompanied by non-verbal elements such as facial expressions, gestures, eye contact and touch. During this process, the child imitates the adult environment, which communicates with the infant through emotion „exaggerations”, carried out with contrasting intonation, pace and voice

intensity, excessive emphasis, or elongation of certain sounds, creating a distinct prosodic layer of speech for the child. The emotional factor is also reflected in the diminutives and short forms created by adults, as exemplified by diminutive verbs (Milewski 2011, 30-33). However, it is prosody that constitutes the most emotionally expressive factor of speech. It enables the recognition and communication of emotions, as evidenced by changes in the acoustic characteristics of the voice (Śmiecińska 2020, 316-317). This emotional dimension of prosody is noticeable in the linguistic course of human life.

Expressing and understanding emotions can also be examined from a linguistic, psychological and cultural perspective. The first one refers to the encoding of emotions in the language of a particular community, resulting in specific emotional dictionaries. The psychological aspect relates to an individual's learning of emotions while the cultural aspect emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural differences in the conceptualization of emotions (Stępień-Nycz 2019).

The reflections presented above only outline the extensive area of emotions in human language functioning. This perspective became the main theme of the 6th International Pedagogical and Linguistic Conference (ERL VI), which took place on June 13-14, 2023, at the Institute of Psychology and Education, Ulm University in Germany. Several dozen people from Europe, Asia and the United States participated in the conference. Distinguished specialists, conducting research on various aspects of language learning and use, were invited to give lecture.

Prof. Judith Kroll from the University of California addressed the topic of bilingualism and its significance for a child's cognitive development. As the researcher demonstrated, bilingualism is also a factor that supports optimal cognitive-linguistic condition and prevents neurodegenerative diseases in adults. Prof. Reinhard Perkonig, representing the University of Essex, Australian Catholic University, and the University of Munich, discussed the influence of emotions, particularly anxiety, on the learning process and academic achievements. The importance of emotional content in language learning, directing attention and memory during word processing, was presented by Prof. Johanna Kissler from Bielefeld University. The process of acquiring concrete and abstract concepts by the human brain was presented by Prof. Markus Kiefler from Ulm University.

In addition to the invited lectures, presentations were given by the other participants of the conference. They addressed, among other things, the role of emotions in language learning. Krystanka Bozhinova from the American University in Bulgaria discussed the issue of migrants' attitudes towards acquiring the language of the country they have immigrated to. It can be perceived through both negative emotions (a „hostile” language) or positive emotions (a „friendly” language), which has an impact on its acquisition.

An extremely current topic was addressed in the presentation by Prof. Cornelia Herberich from Ulm University. It focused on the relationship between mental health and verbal self-disclosure in the context of teaching and higher education. The motivation to conduct research on this issue was the increasing prevalence of remote education and communication since the Covid-19 pandemic.

The emotional dimension of a language can also be observed in the realm of language propaganda. In this case, as emphasized by Małgorzata Pilecka from the Ateneum Academy in Gdańsk, the use of thought stereotypes based on the emotional dimension of social roles and tasks in children's literature builds the desired civic and national identity.

An interesting aspect concerning the correlation between emotions and language in poetic texts has been addressed by Korean researchers (Hyelin Lee, Miji Song and Jeonghee Ko). „Reading” poetry requires references to an emotional vocabulary that enables an understanding of its subtle and metaphorical content. Developing this area in young children can be a key to their satisfying interaction with poetry. Poetry can also serve as a foundation for environmental education, as emotionally saturated words depicting the beauty of nature foster pro-environmental attitudes. This relevant issue has been presented through examples of classic Korean poetry by Ensun Jeong, Sujin Lee and Min-kjy-Kang from Seoul National University. Emotions also play a role in motivating children to learn to read, as

emphasized in the presentation by Nektarios Stellakis (University of Patras, Greece). The experience of joy in shared reading and discussing the content, supported by an adult's emotional way of narrating, enhances a child's interest in independent reading.

Both invited lectures and presentations given by conference participants were accompanied by discussions related to the topics discussed. The issues presented during the conference revealed not only the emotional aspect of learning and using a language, but also emphasized the multidimensionality of this subject. The interdisciplinary nature of a language is clearly evident in its sphere. To fully understand it, the knowledge of the biomedical mechanisms of its formation and functioning, linguistic and educational methods of its acquisition, as well as individual and social language behaviour are necessary. Importantly, the emotional phenomenon of a language remains an undiscovered field.

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