

## The Perspectives of Successful Development of Students' Linguistic Giftedness in American Schools

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the problem of development of students' linguistic giftedness in American Schools. It is defined that a model of successful language learning consists of two components: language aptitude, or linguistic intelligence, and motivation. It is determined the main components of linguistics intelligence on the base of H. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and place of motivation in language learning. The author also constructs the learning environments for verbally talented students and the main principles that influence the education process of linguistically gifted.

**Keywords:** *linguistic intelligence (giftedness), development, language aptitude, motivation, American students, verbal talent.*

**Introduction.** Linguistic intelligence consists of sensibility to both spoken and written language. It also involves sensibility to the meaning of words, to the sounds, rhythms, sensibility to the different functions of language, to understanding of grammatical structure.

The problem of linguistic intelligence development has been studied by Ukrainian and foreign scientists dealing with gifted education (D. Liferenko, P. Tadeyev, O. Kultchytska, B. Kerr, N. Rhodes, H. Gardner) and perspectives of teaching linguistically gifted in second language learning (I. Biletska, M. Tadeyeva, R. Ellis, K. King, A. Mackey).

The aim of the article is to define the perspectives of students' linguistic giftedness development in the USA.

The objectives of our problem research are to analyze the structure of linguistic intelligence (giftedness) and to determine the main characteristics of language aptitude and motivation which are the main aspects of linguistic giftedness, to underline the perspectives of linguistic giftedness development of students in American schools.

Methods of investigation: the comparative analyses of scientific literature in the spheres of linguistics, pedagogical psychology (giftedness), generalization and systematization.

**Materials and Results.** The new global society requires European and US citizens who are active learners and speakers of second and third languages. The need for talented and highly trained professionals in spheres of business, law, education, IT-technologies and intelligent person is greater now than ever. Therefore, we are to encourage linguistic talent, beginning in elementary schools and culminating in form of linguistic bilingual and trilingual creativity [2].

Perhaps at no other time in U.S. history has the need for students and grown-ups to learn languages rapidly and get sophisticated understanding of different cultures. It was announced at the Senate Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services, Governmental Affairs Committee on September, 14, 2000 by Ellen Luipson of the National Intelligence Council [1, p. 1177]. The House Permanent Select Committee of Intelligence has stated about the important need for increased intelligence capacity dealing with foreign language-capable intelligent person with increased fluency in specific and multiple languages.

In most developed countries foreign language instruction starts in elementary school. According to the report by the Center for Applied Linguistics (1997) only 31 % of all elementary schools in the US offered foreign language learning opportunities. These elementary schools offer

instruction of the following languages: 79 % offer Spanish, 27 % – French, 5 % – Germany, 3 % – Japanese, 2 % – Hebrew or Italian, 1 % – other 13 languages [8, p. 31].

The important part in language acquisition of students belongs to motivation. The 70 % of elementary children who have no instruction in languages other than English develop other interests and competencies and lose interest in this field of study. Secondary school students and college students often possess only instrumental motivation to learn second or third language, and there is no often motivation to achieve mastery of another language. Perhaps the most important factor in the capacity for second language learning is language aptitude. Among the young people who learn English as native language or as a second one there are talented children who do it extremely rapidly and proficiently. These linguistically gifted children are not only unidentified as potential linguistics talent, but they are often encouraged to forget their home language [6].

High ability learners benefit from language arts curriculum differentiation in the five following areas: literature, writing, language study, oral communication and foreign languages. Literature should provide many experiences for students to read quality texts. Writing program for linguistically gifted learners should emphasize the development of skills in expository and persuasive writing. The language study which includes formal study of grammar and vocabulary might be a component of advanced language study for gifted and talented students. Gifted students can profit from a balanced exposure to oral communication both through listening and speaking. An emphasis on oral interpretation and drama productions provide one of many venues for creative talented learners to develop higher level skills. Major attention should be paid to developing the following skills: evaluative listening; debate, especially for use in formal argument, discussion, particularly question-asking and building on ideas stated, filming or recording, dramatic exercises such as monologue development and performance. Students advanced in verbal ability can benefit greatly from the study of foreign languages which influence their communication skills.

In order to construct a model for successful second language learning we can take into consideration two major factors: language aptitude, or linguistic intelligence, and motivation.

Linguistic intelligence is highly correlated with general intelligence. American scientist Howard Gardner has proposed for us his theory of multiple intelligence which opened the way for the study of linguistic intelligence. He

also showed that linguistics aptitude can exist relatively independently of other intelligences but it is also characterized by some logical intelligence and interpersonal intelligences [5].

We support the ideals of R. Ellis [4], that linguistic aptitude includes:

- phonetic ability or the capacity to identify sounds of a foreign language;
- grammatical sensitivity or the capacity to recognize the grammatical functions of words in sentences;
- inductive language learning ability or capacity to identify the relationship between form and meaning;
- verbal memory or capacity to memorize words and phrases accurately and rapidly [1, p. 1181].

The theory and practice of linguistic intelligence in young people is based on the studies of linguistically gifted youth enrolled to Talent Search Programs across the United States.

Linguistic intelligence according to H. Gardner theory, is a part of general characteristics of gifted and talented person. Every gifted child may:

- be a good reader;
- be very articulate or verbally fluent for his (her) age;
- give quick verbal responses;
- have a wide general knowledge;
- learn quickly;
- be interested in topics which are connected with other child;
- communicate well with adults;
- have a wide range of interests;
- show unusual and original responses to problem-solving activities;
- prefer verbal to written activities;
- be logical;
- have a good memory that they can access easily;
- be artistic;
- have strong views and opinions;
- have a lively and original imagination/sense of humor;
  - be sensitive and aware;
  - focus on their own interests rather than on what is being taught;
- be socially adopt;
- show a strong sense of leadership;
- are not necessarily well-behaved or well liked by other [5].

As a rule, child's ability to use a language depends upon his stage of intellectual development. As J. Van Tassel-Baska considers, children of 7-11 years are in concrete operations stage having the characteristics of demonstrating intelligence through logical and systemic manipulation of symbols related to concrete objects, operational thinking including private language or speech. They are competent users of their native language and they are aware of the main rules of syntax in their own language. That this age children can understand abstracts, symbols (words) and they can generalize and systematize [10, p. 179]. Some sort of language awareness and readiness which they bring into the foreign language classroom. Besides they bring with them to classroom an already established set of skills and characteristics helping them to learn another language, for example, children are already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words, already have great skill in using limited language creatively, frequently learn indirectly rather than directly, take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do, have a ready imagination, take a great delight in talking.

In fact, advanced verbal and higher order thinking skills in the learners with a high aptitude for learning suggests a high learning potential for a rapid competence development in foreign languages. J. Van Tassel-Baska emphasizes on the inclusion of foreign languages in the gifted curriculum in order to maximize the linguistic understanding. High ability students use their verbal gifts in native and foreign languages to build and develop their other abilities [11, p. 188].

What are the main features of young people who are linguistically gifted? It is clear that these young people have extraordinary verbal ability. About one-third of the students in talent search programs are involved into the enrichment and acceleration programs, which are proposed by the prominent scientists in the sphere of giftedness. They are capable of advanced work in linguistic field. Their vocabulary and knowledge of written English surpasses that of many college students. They have better memory for words, exceptional speed of reaction on the speakers. They are often early readers. To be more exact they are capable of high development in powerful language arts. Thompson M.C. and Thompson M.B. stress that middle school students participating in accelerated German classes learned the complete grammar of an introductory course in two-thirds the time that it took for college students to learn the same material. Similar success also can be observed with Latin classes [10, p. 181].

Most summer programs for linguistically gifted accelerated instruction of college level language material in small classes. Special attention is paid to the use of different levels' tests which give the opportunity to master skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, comprehension.

The ideal model for training linguistic intelligence is connected with a search for heritage speakers who are rapid English learners and English speakers who have high language aptitude [1].

The second major factor that predicts success in second language education is motivation. It includes the attitudes and emotional states that influence the desire of students to learn another language. The construction of learning environments for verbally talented learners is based on three principles:

- the focus on instruction needs to change from the classroom to individual learner;
- the wide range of assessment methods that include a variety of tools: from traditional psychometric in character and other more performance – based;
- learning must be community centered [1, p. 1183].

The authors of the Project for linguistically gifted students (Arizona State University) B. Kerr, S. Cohn, Kara T. Mc. Alister have implemented the best practices in foreign language instruction, education of gifted youth and motivation for life-long learning of languages and cultures [1].

It is a five year model project for the group of middle school students with the aim of crystallization of their linguistic aptitude. The objectives of their project are:

- to elaborate joint activities on linguistic giftedness and second language learning;
- to develop special program for linguistically talented students at all levels of education: program for identification of linguistically gifted; strategies of instruction of bilingual; summer accelerated language instruction in second and third language (reading, writing, linguistics); a career development

and guidance program for linguistically talented students; a mentorship program for verbally gifted adolescents;  
– to create a teacher-training program for professionals that work with verbally gifted youth;  
– to create a national institute for linguistic talent development modeled on the Defense Language Institute with regional sites at Arizona State University [3].

The American scientists of the sphere of gifted education have defined the following characteristics of students who are gifted in language arts (D. A. Sousa):

- heightened awareness of language;
- understanding the nature of language;
- having a particular interest in rhyme, accent, and intonation or grammar;
- interest in other languages and aware of the “relationship between the sounds and words” in these languages;
- strong communication skills;
- strong leadership;
- exceptional talent in reasoning and arguing (justify their opinions, use questioning to challenge others) [9, p. 114].

H. Gardner in his work [5, p. 77] describing the main elements of his theory of Multiple Intelligences points out on the component of linguistic intelligence. It consists of sensitivity to both spoken and written language. H. Gardner explains that linguistic intelligence involves also sensitivity to the meaning of words, to the order of words, to the sounds, rhythms, inflections and sensitivity to the different functions of language: such as ability to convince, stimulate, convey information, etc. He also proves that we use linguistic intelligence every day to convince others of a particular course of action or to convey information, to implement rules, to provide directions, instructions and procedures. We use it in explanation and teaching and for expression through literature and written word. It is clear that poets, lawyers, politicians, speakers are examples of those who have high linguistic intelligence poets have a keen sensitivity to the subtle meanings of words, lawyers, politicians and speakers have a keen sensitivity to the rhetorical aspect of language and its ability to convince others of a particular course of action [5].

H. Lowe proposes the list of characteristics of students who are gifted in the domain of foreign languages [7]. These characteristics are:

- interest in “difference”, openness and empathy to foreign cultures;
- curiosity about how language works and interest in form for its own sake;
- recognition of grammatical patterns and the function of words in sentences;
- use of technical vocabulary to discuss language;
- use of linguistic and non-linguistic clues to infer meaning;
- ability to identify and memorize new sounds; good listening discrimination skills;
- ability to reproduce the sounds of the language;
- flexible thinking;
- good memory;
- ability to extrapolate general rules from samples;
- ability to apply principles from known languages to the learning of new ones;
- effective communication strategies;
- ability to make connections between items, between what is known and what is new, to make jumps in understanding;
- curiosity about meaning and the “why” factor;
- attention to detail;
- independence, concentration, perseverance, risk taking;
- awareness and use of a range of strategies to learn;
- mastery of language 1 (or native) [7, p. 143].

**Conclusion.** Thus, the requirements for successful development of linguistic giftedness of American students in different levels of education (due to the project at Arizona State University) can be closely connected with the choice of the best learning environment for the development of second languages and can be achieved in and out of the classroom. The identification of linguistically talented students should be carried out with the help of modern tests and IT methods. The use of Web-based instruction, provision of academic and career guidance make this process effective. It is also very important for the teachers of verbally talented students to focus attention on their motivation to be or not to be bilinguals or trilinguals.

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#### Перспективы успешного развития лингвистической одаренности учеников в американских школах

**И. Голубева**

**Аннотация.** В статье исследуется проблема развития лингвистической одаренности у учащихся американских школ. Определено, что модель успешного языкового образования состоит из двух компонентов: языковой способности или лингвистического интеллекта и мотивация. Также выявлены основные составляющие лингвистической одаренности на основе теории множественного интеллекта Г. Гарднера и роль мотивации в иноязычном образовании. Автор проектирует учебную среду для лингвистически одаренных учащихся и формирует основные принципы, которые положительно влияют на процесс обучения лингвистически одаренных.

**Ключевые слова:** лингвистический интеллект (одаренность), развитие, языковые способности, мотивация, американские ученики, словесный талант.