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ГЛУБОКАЯ ПРАКТИКА И ЕЕ ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ В СФЕРЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ

Статья раскрывает содержание концепции "глубокой практики" ("deep practice"), которая получает все более широкое распространение в преподавании различных дисциплин. В частности, автор акцентирует внимание на особенностях этого метода и возможностях его использования в сфере обучения иностранным языкам. На основе имеющихся научных исследований показывается, что ошибки не только естественны на этапе обучения, но и необходимы для наилучшего усвоения учебного материала, в том числе иностранных языков, при работе по системе "глубокой практики".

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The article covers the concept of deep practice (deliberate practice, error-focused practice) which is increasingly widely used in teaching different disciplines. The author pays particular attention to its main characteristics, rules and the possibilities of its application in the sphere of learning foreign languages. Supported by current research the article shows that errors and difficulties in trying to master a second language are not only unavoidable, but even necessary for further better performance.

Key words and phrases: deep practice; deliberate practice; targeted practice; error-focused practice; sweet spot; learning foreign languages; desirable difficulties.

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DEEP PRACTICE AND ITS APPLICATION IN LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In recent years interest to innovative teaching and learning methods has grown dramatically. Teaching foreign languages is not an exception. This is explained by the growing number of people all over the world who are trying to learn foreign languages – and who often give it up because they are either told or come to a conclusion themselves that they lack natural talent for it. Continuing mistakes make foreign language learners desperate and create a barrier which prevents them from further attempts. For such learners the concept of “*deep practice*” (often also referred to as *deliberate practice, targeted practice, error-focused practice*) may become a revolutionary method of turning mistakes into skills.

The idea of deep practice is not particularly new. However, in our country it has not received much attention so far. It was first formulated and subsequently studied by Daniel Coyle, a contributing editor for *Outside* magazine and the author of several books on achieving success. His book “The Talent Code” [4], later supplemented by “The Little Book of Talent” [3] and recent research by other authors [2], deals with the problem that touches upon everybody, because all people are more or less learners, trying to master a certain technique or acquire a specific skill. All people make mistakes while learning, which sometimes prevents them from going further. Coyle’s main argument gives hope to all the learners and seems to be expressed already in the very beginning. He starts Chapter two “The Sweet Spot” quoting a German proverb: “You will become clever through your mistakes”. This concept is expressed in proverbs of other nationalities as well – compare with the Russian variant “You learn through your mistakes” and with the English one “Practice makes perfect”. The crucial thing here is WHAT practice makes you perfect.

Here Coyle comes with the idea of “deep practice” [4, p. 17], defining it as practice through mistakes, practice which involves making errors and correcting them. Coyle quotes Robert Bjork, PhD, an expert in questions of memory and learning from the University of California [11], introducing the concept which gave name to the chapter, “It’s all about finding the sweet spot. There’s an optimal gap between what you know and what you’re trying to do. Once you find that sweet spot, learning takes off” [4, p. 19]. In this sweet spot the bar tends to be slightly higher than you can reach, and you are forced to operate on the edge of your abilities. This is uncomfortable, time-consuming, this makes you screw up, repeat a certain process over and over again, but exactly this kind of practice is your way to excellence.

Deep practice is a method which can be used in different spheres of learning. Coyle’s own observations in what he calls “talent hotbeds” confirm it. The reader meets Brunio from Brazil trying to master a football manoeuvre and Jennie from Dallas working on her singing technique. They are “purposely operating at the edges of their ability, so they will screw up. And somehow screwing up is making them better” [Ibidem, p. 14]. Let us see how it works in the sphere of learning foreign languages.

Daniel Coyle suggests three rules of deep practice: *chunking, repeating, and learning to feel*. *Chunking* basically means that you divide the learning process into bite-sized pieces. This is of paramount importance: instead of trying to master everything in one sitting, each time you work on a specific skill until you achieve excellence. In ELT this rule is very close to the idea of prioritizing your mistakes suggested by Dr Denise Comer, an expert on English writing from Duke University [8] in her special course “English Composition” via Coursera [9]. For a student it is difficult to notice all his or her mistakes. So, instead of trying to focus on everything, which is of little use, Dr Comer suggests that a student should prioritize one particular problematic sphere: tenses, articles, etc., and work only on it for a considerable period of time until no mistakes are made. Then he or she prioritizes a different sphere and again works on it in a targeted way. The rule about chunking seems to share much with this technique.

Repeating is another major principle which applies to deep practice. Training new skills sporadically doesn’t bring any productive results. Repetition means that you return to foreign language practice again and again, on a day-to-day

basis. It is a misconception to presume that studies two times a week will solve your language problems. Daily repetition is essential for rapid results and increased effectivity.

The third rule *learning to feel*. What you must learn to feel is your particular “sweet spot”, the sphere where you challenge yourself, where your current limits of abilities are. Deep practice demands that you feel it and return to it each time you study or train. Once you feel that you have mastered something that used to be a challenge, you search for a new “sweet spot” and practise there. The way to excellence is hard, but the results are rewarding.

In addition to three basic rules, Coyle points out two strange yet important characteristics of deep practice: firstly, it “forges the blade” of your natural ability [4, p. 19]. What is meant by this is that, deep practice helps to develop your talent turning it into a practical skill. This leads to an important conclusion: having natural talent is not enough to get to the top. Applying it to foreign language learning, even if a person has a kind of memory which allows him to remember words and understand grammar structures relatively easily, he or she will never become a top-notch foreign language speaker without training. Constant practice turns good learners into best ones.

More importantly, deep practice is instrumental in developing learners’ abilities even if they don’t have much natural talent. Life itself provides numerous examples, which are especially vivid exactly in the sphere of learning foreign languages. Those learners who have to overcome many obstacles trying to master a foreign language, who don’t stop on their way discouraged by occasional remarks “this is not for everyone”, eventually become quite confident speakers. Provided, of course, that they are ready to accept the situation that while studying they will make hundreds of mistakes and will correct them hundreds of times to have the successful one hundred and first one.

Thus we come to the second unusual aspect of deep practice relating to mistakes: it “turns them into skills” [Ibidem, p. 20]. Coyle asks himself a provocative question: How do you get good at something when making a mistake has a decent chance of killing you? The answer comes in the form of a story from real life about Edwin Link’s device for pilots’ training. In this story Edwin Link struck by the inefficiency of the existing pilots’ teaching methods invents an “amusement device” which turns out to be an effective way of training pilots to fly in rough weather. This device “permitted pilots to practise more deeply, to stop, struggle, make errors, and learn from them”.

Another less extreme example returns the reader to football and covers Simon Clifford’s discovery of Brazilian football training technique futsal. Coyle calls it the sporting equivalent of a Link trainer as it allows players to practise deeper: touch the ball more often, have more precise handling, sharper passing, better ball control and vision. It places players into the situation of “constantly generating solutions to vivid problems”, which is indeed deep practice. The result of applying this technique is more than successful: Brazil is acknowledged as one of leading football nations, and football stars have appeared in regions and countries that have adopted this training method.

As we see, deep practice can be applied to completely different spheres of learning. Apart from Coyle’s observations, recent examples vary from purely physical activities – crossfit, athletics [5; 6] to highly accurate scientific disciplines, e.g. maths [7]. Therefore, in language studies students must be also encouraged “to stop, struggle, make errors, and learn from them” [4, p. 24]. The “traditional” Russian approach to mistakes, when students are more often punished for them rather than encouraged to learn from them, seems to be a deadlock. Instead of criticising students for “awful tenses”, “poor vocabulary choice”, “bad grammar” and the like, it is much better and more productive to make them chunk, repeat and feel that they are challenging themselves.

In addition to Coyle’s own observations, he tells the readers about various experiments confirming the idea of deep practice scientifically – those with remembering words, names and a life vest demonstration [Ibidem, p. 16-18]. For the purposes of foreign language teaching the experiment with remembering words seems to be of interest. Coyle suggests looking for a few seconds on two list of words, with equal amount of time spent on each one. The first list contains ordinary pairs of English words spelt in a regular way, like this:

ocean / breeze
leaf / tree
sweet / sour
movie / actress
gasoline / engine, etc.

The second list also contains ordinary pairs of words, but with blank spaces, like this:

bread / b _tter
music / l _rics
sh _e / sock
phone / bo _k
chi _s / salsa, etc.

After looking at both lists for some time, you must turn the page and try to remember as many words of the word pairs as you can. The overwhelming majority of people will recall more words from the second list, the ones that contained fragments. In fact, most people are likely to remember three times as many. Given in the form of a test, the score of the second list is three hundred per cent higher. How can it be explained?

Daniel Coyle states: when people encounter the words with blank spaces, they have to stop, stumble briefly and figure it out. This microsecond of struggle, as Coyle puts it, made all the difference. You didn’t practise harder. You practised deeper. Isn’t it a wonderful way to help students learn new vocabulary? And again it proves the statement that though effortless performance is usually seen as desirable, it is a terrible way to learn.

Recent scientific research confirms this fact. In the article “Desirable Difficulties in Vocabulary Learning” [1, p. 241-252] Robert Bjork [11] and Judith F. Kroll [10] prove that initial challenges imposed on the learner then benefit later retention and transfer. Their evidence supports the idea that difficulties in learning and language processing may produce benefits “because they are likely to increase conceptual understanding”. Considering

the consequences of such findings for second language learning they come to the conclusion that certain difficulties are desirable to stimulate the learning process. Thus the idea of productivity of deep practice particularly in the sphere of language studying gains its scientific proof.

Deep practice supporters address all learners whatever their particular fields are. These learners are people of different ages, nationalities, occupations trying to master something new. So the aim is to inspire these millions of learners to go on trying and learn through mistakes, turning them into skills. The concept of deep practice has already received a huge popular response. It gives hope. It shows the way ahead. It proves that a challenge is necessary for self-development. Turning mistakes into skills – the core of deep practice – can become a revolutionary idea for thousands of learners. Learning through mistakes instead of trying your best to avoid them makes learning itself more profound, more efficient, and helps all learners feel more confident, less scared.

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ГЛУБОКАЯ ПРАКТИКА И ЕЕ ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ В СФЕРЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ

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Статья раскрывает содержание концепции «глубокой практики» (“deep practice”), которая получает все более широкое распространение в преподавании различных дисциплин. В частности, автор акцентирует внимание на особенностях этого метода и возможностях его использования в сфере обучения иностранным языкам. На основе имеющихся научных исследований показывается, что ошибки не только естественны на этапе обучения, но и необходимы для наилучшего усвоения учебного материала, в том числе иностранных языков, при работе по системе «глубокой практики».

Ключевые слова и фразы: глубокая практика; настойчивая практика; нацеленная практика; практика, основанная на ошибках; зона наилучшего восприятия; изучение иностранных языков; необходимые трудности.

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В статье рассматривается проблема формирования и развития русскоязычной коммуникативной компетенции в условиях полилингвального образовательного пространства России. Раскрываются и обосновываются различные подходы, обеспечивающие подготовку в высших учебных заведениях специалистов в разных профессиональных сферах и их всестороннее личностное развитие.

Ключевые слова и фразы: русскоязычная коммуникативная компетенция; полилингвальный социум; подход; билингвальная среда; гуманитаризация; высшая школа.

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РУССКОЯЗЫЧНАЯ КОММУНИКАТИВНАЯ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЯ: ОСНОВЫ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ И РАЗВИТИЯ В УСЛОВИЯХ ПОЛИЛИНГВАЛЬНОГО СОЦИУМА

Основная задача, стоящая перед высшими учебными заведениями, – готовить специалистов, достаточно компетентных и готовых к самостоятельной профессиональной деятельности. Немаловажную роль в этом