

Presentation of a research article

Psychology



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The major purpose of the article by Aneta Pavelenko, “Affective Processing in Bilingual Speakers: Disembodied Cognition”, is to analyze the assumption that communication and thinking in a foreign (second) language reduces decision biases due to a greater cognitive and emotional distance provided by a second language in comparison with the mother tongue. Pavelenko attempts to analyze the clinical, introspective, cognitive, psychological and neuroimaging aspects of bilingual speakers’ affective processing.

Among the major points of the article are:

It is easier for bilingual and multilingual individuals to use second language for discussing anxiety-producing topics.

Affective reactivity to the same subject differs depending on the language used – a conversation in the second language is more detached and less emotional.

Using a less emotional language, as perceived by bilinguals and multilinguals, helps to control emotions and avoid guilt or anxiety due to the emancipatory detachment effect of the second language.

Early learner’s second language is perceived by them as more emotional than that of late learners because of learning experiences (order, and age of language acquisition), contexts and attitudes.

Affective processing may be less automatic and slower in the second language due to the advantage effect expressed in delayed lexical access and decreased automaticity of affective processing that may be influenced by affective valence.

Pavelenko’s research can be said to be a rather general study of the previous findings on the topic. The author analyzes a number of variables, such as age, sex, education and language learning experience of bilinguals

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and multilinguals. She also studies the findings of researches conducted with people from different countries, of different nationalities and cultures, and speaking different pairs of languages. Therefore, it is possible to generalize the findings of this study to all of the people who learn or speak a foreign language.

However, in order to be sure that such a generalization has a sound ground, it is necessary to examine different levels of language processing deeper. This will also help to fully understand the causes of second language's emotional detachment.

Also, among the limitations of the research is the fact that the experiments analyzed were conducted in laboratory conditions. This means that results of a similar research, but in natural environment of language use, may differ. In addition, the experiments' design did not take into account that different people may have different personal emotional associations with certain words or phrases.

An any case, there is value in systematical study of the topic, because the findings may help to discover how to increase the ability of a later language learner to link the second language to emotions and, thus, be perceived as an insider in a foreign community and stay within the group. Now, with the development of globalization and more people traveling or working abroad, it is worth to fund such a research, because practical application of the findings may help people to improve communication within foreign communities.

Applied in the sphere of education, the research findings may help to improve the language acquisition methodologies, so that they incorporate the need to eliminate the effects of detachment and disembodies cognition.

The next points of research should include interrelation between affective

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processing with the frequency of language use and its influence on decision-making, differences of languages in speaking and memory retrieval at different processing levels. It is also worth to study what particular variables increase language activation and shifts in language dominance, as well as potentially difference processing of positively and negatively valenced stimuli.

Reference

Pavlenko, A. (2012). Affective processing in bilingual speakers: Disembodied cognition? *International Journal of Psychology*, 47(6), 405-428.