

Cognitive Processes In Learning French As A Second Foreign Language

Abdullayeva Nilufar Nasulloyevna

Teacher of the Department of French Philology, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Bukhara State University, Uzbekistan

Zokirova Ruxshona Rustam qizi

4th year student of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Philology and Language Teaching (French), Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article analyzes the main cognitive processes involved in learning French as a second foreign language. In particular, the role of perception, memory, attention, thinking, and metacognitive strategies in language acquisition is examined from a theoretical and scientific perspective. The study highlights the psycholinguistic and neurocognitive foundations of second foreign language learning, as well as the influence of the mother tongue and the first foreign language on the acquisition of French. Special attention is paid to cross-linguistic transfer, cognitive load, and learner autonomy. The research findings emphasize the importance of applying cognitive and learner-centered approaches in the effective teaching of French. The article concludes with methodological recommendations for foreign language teaching practice.

Keywords: Cognitive processes, second foreign language, French language, perception, memory, attention, metacognition, language acquisition, multilingualism.

Introduction: In the context of globalization and increasing international mobility, multilingualism has become an essential component of modern education systems. The ability to communicate in several foreign languages is no longer considered an advantage, but rather a necessity. Among world languages, French occupies an important place in international diplomacy, education, science, tourism, and culture. It is one of the official working languages of international organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, and the European Union.

In the Uzbek education system, French is often taught as a second foreign language after English. This educational sequence creates a unique linguistic and cognitive situation in which learners already possess experience in acquiring a foreign language. As a result, learning French does not occur in a cognitive vacuum but is influenced by previously formed linguistic knowledge, strategies, and mental representations.

Unlike first language acquisition, which is largely subconscious and natural, second and third language learning is a conscious and cognitively demanding process. Learning French as a second foreign language requires the activation of complex cognitive mechanisms, including perception, attention, memory, analytical thinking, and metacognitive regulation. These processes interact dynamically and determine the success or difficulty of language acquisition.

The aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive scientific analysis of the cognitive processes involved in learning French as a second foreign language and to demonstrate their importance for effective language teaching methodology.

METHODOLOGY

This research is theoretical and analytical in nature. It is based on the systematic analysis of scientific sources from the fields of cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, and foreign

language pedagogy. The following methods were employed:

- analysis and comparison of classical and modern scientific literature;
- examination of models of cognitive processes in language learning;
- synthesis of theories related to second and third language acquisition;
- interpretation of empirical findings reported in previous studies;
- evaluation of the practical significance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in French language learning.

In addition, particular attention was paid to individual learner differences, such as cognitive style, motivation, language aptitude, and prior linguistic experience.

RESULTS

The analysis reveals that several fundamental cognitive processes play a crucial role in learning French as a second foreign language.

The Role of Perception

Perception is the initial stage of language acquisition and involves the recognition and interpretation of auditory and visual stimuli. In learning French, phonetic perception is especially significant due to the presence of nasal vowels, liaison, elision, and intonation patterns that differ considerably from Uzbek and English. Learners must develop the ability to distinguish subtle phonological contrasts and adapt their perceptual system to new acoustic features.

Research in psycholinguistics indicates that prior experience with English phonetics may facilitate the perception of certain French sounds, while at the same time causing interference in others. Thus, perceptual restructuring is necessary for successful French acquisition.

Memory Processes in Language Learning

Memory is a core cognitive component in foreign language learning. Learning French as a second foreign language relies heavily on working memory, long-term memory, and semantic memory. Working memory allows learners to process grammatical structures and sentence patterns in real time, while long-term memory ensures the storage and retrieval of

vocabulary and rules.

Studies show that learners often use associative strategies, linking new French words to equivalents in their native language or first foreign language. While this strategy can accelerate vocabulary acquisition, it may also lead to semantic inaccuracies if not properly guided by instruction.

Attention and Cognitive Control

Attention plays a vital role in managing the cognitive load associated with learning multiple languages. French grammar, with its gender system, verb conjugations, and agreement rules, requires focused and sustained attention. Learners must selectively attend to relevant linguistic features while inhibiting interference from previously learned languages.

Cognitive control mechanisms enable learners to switch between languages and regulate their attentional resources. This ability is particularly important in multilingual contexts and has been associated with enhanced executive functioning.

Thinking, Analysis, and Metacognition

Thinking processes such as analysis, comparison, abstraction, and generalization are actively involved in learning French. Learners analyze grammatical patterns, compare linguistic structures across languages, and formulate hypotheses about language rules.

Metacognitive processes represent a higher level of cognitive regulation. They include planning learning activities, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating learning outcomes. Research consistently demonstrates that learners who employ metacognitive strategies—such as self-assessment, goal setting, and reflection—achieve higher levels of proficiency in French.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm the close interdependence of cognitive processes in learning French as a second foreign language. The cognitive and strategic skills developed during the acquisition of a first foreign language provide a strong foundation for further language learning. Positive transfer can facilitate comprehension and production, while negative transfer may result in grammatical or lexical errors.

Interference phenomena are particularly evident in

areas such as word order, tense usage, and pronunciation. Therefore, awareness-raising activities and contrastive analysis can help learners consciously differentiate between languages.

From a pedagogical perspective, French instruction should be organized according to cognitive principles. Teaching methods should aim to develop learners' perceptual sensitivity, memory capacity, attention control, and metacognitive awareness. Task-based learning, reflective activities, and strategy training are effective tools in this regard.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, learning French as a second foreign language is a cognitively complex and dynamic process. Perception, memory, attention, thinking, and metacognition constitute the core mechanisms that determine the success of language acquisition. Understanding these processes allows educators to design more effective, learner-centered teaching methodologies.

The results of this study highlight the necessity of integrating cognitive approaches into foreign language teaching practice. By fostering cognitive and metacognitive skills, teachers can significantly enhance learners' autonomy, motivation, and overall proficiency in French. Future research may focus on empirical studies examining the effectiveness of specific cognitive strategies in multilingual educational contexts.

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