

SOME COMMON MISTAKES OF RUSSIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

We have analyzed the coursework of 20 students, aged from 17 to 19, whose levels of English language proficiency are pre-intermediate and intermediate. All of them started learning English at the age from 8 to 10. According to the students, the most difficult aspects for them to master are English Grammar and Listening Comprehension.

The results of the learning style test have demonstrated that most of the students are a mixture type of students, but some of them are more similar to a relaxed one. It means that they try not to learn language but to acquire it.

Written language

The students selected at random make a lot of mistakes in writing, and we will try to comment on the most pronounced and typical ones.

Some students do not use the verb “to be” in such sentences as “Vladimir Klichko (is) a Ukraine boxer”. It can be explained by the fact that in Russian sentences can be formed without any verbs, and we can call it a “direct translation”.

Another common mistake is the article usage. Russian learners of English either ignore the articles or use them incorrectly. It may be explained by the interference of their native language as Russian has no articles at all.

In such sentences as “When he was 15 years...” some students do not use the word “old”, and it is also a “direct translation” because in Russian this word is not used when indicating the age.

One more challenge is the spelling and word-formation, but it is unlikely that their first language is really responsible for that. It is common knowledge that in learning the correct spelling of words it is critical to use dictionaries, and to make up words of a target language it is important to know the affixation norms. Russian has also a lot of words whose spelling is rather difficult, and it is necessary to check up on them. In Russian, it is also possible to make up words with the help of prefixes, suffixes, and endings. So, language interference per se should not be an issue.

As for the ending -s for the third person singular in Present Simple, it is a very common mistake of Russian learners of English. In such cases, language interference is not responsible for this typical mistake either. It is well known that in Russian all

verbs have different endings in different tenses, numbers, and genders. The problem is that learners just do not pay enough attention to this ending.

Another serious problem of Russian students is the usage of the tenses. It is a common mistake because in Russian there are only three tenses: Past, Present and Future. That is why the learners knowing the form and the translation of the verbs in different tenses use them indiscriminately. For example, "My friends have been in the Madison Square Garden in 2008". The translation of "have been" and "was" into Russian is similar, and not knowing the rule and the meaning the students may use "have been".

Spoken language

As for the spoken language, Russian students also make a lot of mistakes in it. They try to speak fluent English which is kind of sloppy. Usually the problems are the following:

The first problem is the absence of the ending –s for plural nouns (e.g. road, street) and usage of the ending –s for uncountable nouns (e.g. natures). It can be explained by the fact that while talking the students pay attention to the words they use but not to the rules of using them. It is also not the problem of 'interlanguage' because in Russian the endings of nouns also change according to their number.

Another mistake is the wrong word order. It is the problem of interference of their native language as the word order in Russian is not fixed. The third problem is the article usage which is possible to explain by the absence of the articles in Russian.

In general, these mistakes are quite common for Russian learners of English of such levels, and many of them can be explained by the interference of the students' native language (Russian).

To avoid such mistakes a student should be encouraged to spend more time learning English, not just acquiring it.

References

Spratt, M., Pulverness, A., Williams M. The TKT Course. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Students' test materials

www.languages.ac.nz