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Problems of modern English

Учебно-методическое пособие для вузов

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Тексты для дискуссий и дебатов
Problems of the modern English Language

1. Read the text and discuss the problems. What is your opinion on the situation? Do social media influence the language and in what way? Are there more advantages or disadvantages?

How social media is changing language

Since so much of the written language we see is now on the screens of our computers, tablets, and smartphones, language now evolves partly through our interaction with technology. And because the language we use to communicate with each other tends to be more malleable than formal writing, the combination of informal, personal communication and the mass audience afforded by social media is a recipe for rapid change.

An alphabet soup of acronyms, abbreviations, and neologisms has grown up around technologically mediated communication to help us be understood. I'm old enough to have learned the acronyms we now think of as text speak on the online forums and 'internet relay chat' (IRC) that pre-dated text messaging. On IRC, acronyms help speed up a real-time typed conversation. On mobile phones they minimize the inconvenience of typing with tiny keys. And on Twitter they help you make the most of your 140 characters.

Emoticons such as ;-) and acronyms such as *LOL* ('laughing out loud' – which has just celebrated its 25th birthday) add useful elements of non-verbal communication – or annoy people with their overuse.

An important element of Twitter syntax is the hashtag – a clickable keyword used to categorize tweets. Hashtags have also spread to other social media platforms – and they've even reached everyday speech, but hopefully spoofs such as Jimmy Fallon and Justin Timberlake's sketch on *The Tonight Show* will dissuade us from using them too frequently. But you will find hashtags all over popular culture, from greetings cards and t-shirts to the dialogue of sitcom characters.

Social media is making it easier than ever to contribute to the evolution of language. You no longer have to be published through traditional avenues to bring word trends to the attention of the masses. With forums, Twitter, Facebook, and other social media channels offering instant interaction with wide audiences, it's never been easier to help a word gain traction from your armchair.

40 minutes a day, 5 days a week for 6 weeks. Language and auditory processing were tested before and immediately after treatment, as well as 3 months and 6 months after treatment was completed. It was found that students in all four groups benefited from the treatment they received. Students in the Fast ForWord group did not show a greater improvement than students in the other groups.

4. Read the text and discuss the problems. What is the importance of letters? Does our country have the same attitude? Why?

The Importance of Letters

Letter writing may be a dying art as communication is increasingly done through emails, Tweets, and Facebook postings. But I love going to the clinic and finding a letter on my desk, perhaps written by a grateful patient. While not all letters indicate good news, I find the written word so much more personal than getting an email.

I save letters (the good ones). I have a drawer full of feel-good letters and cards that I have collected. I save important emails, too, but they are unlikely to bear the test of time. Recently, I moved my office from one area of the clinic to another, so I found my collection.

I have written letters to patients. One letter in particular was written to a sedentary man who was 150 pounds overweight, diabetic, hypertensive, and having periodic chest pains. As much as I harped at him to make lifestyle changes before it was too late, I didn't seem to be making an impact. I wrote him a letter telling him how worried I was about his health. His reaction? He stopped coming to see me as a patient. About six months later, I got a call. He was in intensive care after having a heart attack. He called to tell me that my letter made a difference. As soon as he was discharged, he was now ready to make some changes.

Letters can make an impact. After my recent surgery, the anesthesiologist accidentally scratched both of my corneas, resulting in several days of unnecessary pain. It took him a week or so, but he sent me a letter of apology. It really made a difference and diffused much of my anger. Since medical providers make mistakes all of the time, it is really appropriate to acknowledge them and apologize. Some attorneys may question this as an admission of guilt, but it is the human thing to do.

It really doesn't take very much time to send a handwritten letter. Don't just send a card on a birthday, include a letter. For the price of a stamp (still a bargain), you have the potential to make an important impact on someone's life. A hundred years from now, someone may pick up that letter and read it. We have all learned to pay it forward, but perhaps we need to remember to write it forward, too.

5. Read the text and discuss the problems. What language problems do immigrants face in a new country? Why is it so difficult to organize a proper service in a multilingual society (like in the USA)? Do such countries get more profit from newcomers or are there only negative consequences?

How Language Fits Into the Immigration Issue

BY RYAN HOLEYWELL | JANAURY 2012

When Palermo Galindo immigrated to the United States as a 15-year-old, he knew almost no English. What he did know were the challenges that came with being a stranger to his new community, country and language. Thirty years later, Galindo is helping others overcome those struggles by serving the city government of Fort Wayne, Ind., as liaison to the Hispanic and immigrant communities. Among his tasks are promoting health services and English language classes that are available to immigrants. "I'm the result of a lot of people investing in [me]," Galindo says. In his new role, he's helping the city make a similar investment.

Not long ago, there was no need for a job like Galindo's. But from 2000 to 2010, the number of people living in the U.S. who speak English "less than very well" increased by 3.9 million.

While immigration is a federal issue, integrating immigrants and bringing them into the fold of American civic life is a local challenge. It's no longer confined to California, New York or Texas -- places that absorbed diverse populations.

In some of places, the influx of newcomers has caused controversy, with one of the flash points being language. For immigrants, learning English can give them the keys to the kingdom, opening the doors to educational and economic opportunity. Nonspeakers of the country's common language can find themselves isolated in their new communities -- and resented by their neighbors. Some localities are actively working to help newcomers learn the language while temporarily providing them with services in their native tongue. But others take "English-only" policies in an effort to save money and drive away a population viewed as burdensome.

If the language barrier falls, newcomers become integrated into a community. Communities that have embraced their non-English speaking newcomers are finding that these immigrants become taxpaying contributors to their new home.

6. Read the text and discuss the problems. What results could be now regarding the current political situation? This problem in the Baltic States has a long history, in your opinion, will it ever be resolved and how? Give your suggestions.

Language Referendum in Latvia

Feb 20, 2012 by Asya Pereltsvaig

On February 18, 2012 Latvia held a referendum on the issue of Russian as a second official language. A turnout of more than 70 percent underscored the results were overwhelmingly against this proposition.

The referendum results were greeted with some pretty harsh nationalistic rhetoric. The Latvian president Andris Berzins said in a statement after the vote: “The vote on a second state language endangered the state language. I would also like to thank everyone who, despite the emotions and impassioned atmosphere maintained a cool head and tolerance.”

In fact, bitterness and frustration characterizes both sides of the language divide. Many in the Russian-speaking minority came to Latvia during the Soviet times because of jobs that were assigned to them through the “distribution of personnel” system. Graduates of higher education institutions were assigned to their first job and typically had little, if any, in the matter of where it would be. But after the fall of the Soviet Union, a linguistic policy was instituted whose goal was to eliminate non-Latvians from managing posts. Many Russians who moved to Latvia for their jobs lost those jobs as a result of the new policy. Today, Russians who do not speak Latvian – and it should be noted that some do – are limited in their employment to the private sector.

On the other hand, ethnic Latvians, most of whom do not speak Russian, tend to work in the public and state-run sectors. Moreover, they run the risk of not being understood in a store or a hair salon, where clerks and hairdressers are often Russian-speaking.

In my opinion, refusing to make Russian a second official language serves only to perpetuate the divide. Latvia’s Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis, who actively opposed the referendum, seems to agree.

Thus, the language issue is far from being resolved in Latvia. It remains to be seen what further steps will be taken by Latvian government, business organizations, and the education policy makers.

7. Read the text and discuss the problems. What challenges do the ESL teachers face? How do they try to cope with difficulties? Do we have the same situation in our country? Will the advice from this text be useful in our educational institutions? What do you think of the situation with children of immigrants? Do they have future in a new country?

The ESL Teacher’s Role in Heritage Language Maintenance

The Challenge

In public education in Texas, as elsewhere in the United States, elementary grade children can be enrolled in bilingual classes if they are not proficient in English. These bilingual programs vary greatly, but are generally geared to move children from their heritage language to English as the school language.

Communication with Parents of Heritage Language Children

There are three primary areas in which the ESL teacher is key to supporting the heritage language.

Considering the first area, which is communicating effectively with parents of heritage language children, we realize that all parental needs cannot be met by the classroom teacher. Yet, understanding these parents is vital. Many ESL teachers are from a cultural environment where the school is quite basic to life, as in the U.S., where the school was often a community center. However, many cultures around the world do not associate school with community but often with oppression and governmental authority; ESL teachers must be aware of this. It may be very difficult to encourage some parents to attend functions at the school even when language barriers are not a factor. Teachers' suggestions--hold an early event, such as a picnic for the students and families at a local park not associated with the school. Parents of previous ESL students can be invited so that non-English-speaking parents will have others to interact with than just the teacher and their own child or children.

Suggestion two – visit in homes of students. We realize that this requires extra, non-school time, a constraint for many ESL teachers. However, the results can lead to heritage language support and successful parental programs.

Next – invite parents to the classroom to observe their children. Many parents are fearful of interfering in their children's education or do not come to school because they are afraid that they will appear strange to the peers of their children. A system of rotating visits from all students' available family can help to overcome this fear. When the parents are specifically and individually issued an invitation to the class, and know that this is a part of the education for all the children, they will usually make efforts to attend. When children see that their peers and teachers value their parents' presence at the school, even though their parents may appear "different" or not speak English, they will realize that their parents are respected individuals and will continue to give respect to them as well outside the classroom.

Concluding Thoughts

There are numerous tasks which all ESL teachers must complete to simply "do the job." One of the most important may not be related to the teaching of English at all. As Kouritzin so eloquently states: "The difficulties...are not intellectual; they are personal and emotional....".

by Pamela L. Anderson-Mejías

II. Тексты для реферирования

1. Read the text and do the exercises below:

Graphology - handwriting analysis

Graphology - the study of handwriting and handwriting analysis - is now an accepted and increasingly used technique for assessment of people in organizations. Handwriting analysis is an effective and reliable indicator of personality and behaviour, and so is a useful tool for many organizational processes, for example: recruitment, interviewing and selection, team-building, counseling, and career-planning.

Elaine Quigley, a leading expert graphologist, and chair of the British Institute of Graphologists, describes graphology as 'brainwriting' - the handwriting comes directly from the writer in a uniquely personal and individual way, irrespective of how the person has been taught to write. Also largely irrelevant to the actual analysis is the content of the written text.

The science of graphology uses at least 300 different handwriting features in its investigative approach.

Graphology: theory and history

A person's handwriting - the script - and its placing on the page express the unique impulses of the individual: logically, the brain sends signals along the muscles to the writing implement they control. By examining a handwriting sample, an expert graphologist is able to identify relevant features of the handwritten script, and the way the features interact. The features, and interaction between them, provide the information for the analysis. (No single handwriting sample will exhibit all 300 different features of course - a typical analysis will involve far less).

It is the combination of features, and the interaction between them that enable a full and clear interpretation.

Graphology is actually a very old and respected science - the study of handwriting and its analysis was first developed by the Chinese 3,000 years ago. The Romans used graphology, and through the centuries since then various civilisations and cultures have analysed handwriting to identify the essence of the person who produced it.

The modern approach to handwriting analysis was established by a group of French clerics, led by Abbe Michon, who defined key aspects of the science in the 1870s, after 30 years of study. This work formed the basis of modern graphology, although the science is still being researched and expanded today.