



The psychological approach of prof. A. Aleksandrov to the study of children's speech

Revista Publicando, 5 No 16. (1). 2018, 443-449. ISSN 1390-9304

The psychological approach of prof. A. Aleksandrov to the study of children's speech

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Abstract.

This article analyzes the study by the outstanding Russian linguist, a representative of the Kazan Linguistic School, Professor A. I. Aleksandrov (bishop Anastasia) "Children's Speech", published in 1883. This article aims to reveal the role of A. I. Aleksandrov's work "Children's Speech" in the formation of psycholinguistics. The topicality of the article is to popularize the scientific and spiritual heritage of the Kazan Linguistic School and the Kazan Theological Academy, important for the development of psycholinguistic research. The analysis of A. Aleksandrov's article made it possible to come to the following conclusion. Being an adherent of the Kazan linguistic school, A. Aleksandrov viewed the language as a psychosocial entity manifested in speech activity. A. Aleksandrov's language understanding as a combination of physical and mental principles furthered his interest in child speech, in the study of which A. Aleksandrov developed I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay's concept on a phoneme and the theory of alternations of N. V. Krushevsky's sounds, and also revealed specific linguistic means in the children's speech that are significant for studying the development of speech in modern child psychology, mainly for the purpose of teaching the mother tongue and developing speech in case of pathology. The means of language for speech communication noted by A. Aleksandrov are as follows: a greater number (in comparison with the speech of adults) of onomatopoeias and figurative words, the use of irregular forms according to regular patterns, occasional word formation. The study of A. Aleksandrov facilitated also in solving the issue on the main laws of children's speech - the formation of grammatical and semantic generalizations and the rules of their functioning. The examples of ontogeny of a number of the most important semantic categories (temporality, aspectuality, possessiveness, personality) given by A. Aleksandrov resulted in the development of functional grammar ("the grammar of the speaker") allowing scholars to abstract from the level fixation of the linguistic phenomenon and to consider functional semantic fields as the unity of means for performing a certain function.

Keywords: children's speech, ontogeny, onomatopoeia, occasional word formation, analogies, A.I. Aleksandrov.



Introduction

One of the most topical contemporary scientific trends is the ontogeny of speech development, the linguistic study of which, in fact, has begun in psycholinguistics. An important role in the study of children's speech was played by the works of the representative of the Kazan Linguistic School, an outstanding Russian linguist - Bishop Anastasia (Professor A. Aleksandrov), who was the rector of the Kazan and St. Petersburg theological academies, the dean of the historical and philological department of the Imperial Kazan University in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The object of this paper is A. Aleksandrov's work "Children's Speech", which appeared in print in 1883.

The aim of this article is to reveal the role of A.I. Aleksandrov's work "Children's Speech" in the formation of psycholinguistics.

The topicality of the article is in popularization of the scientific and spiritual heritage of the Kazan Linguistic School and the Kazan Theological Academy, being significant for the development of psycholinguistic research.

Materials and Methods

The material of the paper was the work "Children's Speech" by prof. A. Aleksandrov, issued in 1883, that played a significant role in the development of psycholinguistic studies. In this article, we used the descriptive method and its techniques, such as observation, generalization, and classification of the material.

Results

Being a follower of the Kazan Linguistic School, A.I. Aleksandrov in his article supported the ideas of I. A. Boduin de Courtenay, who viewed language as a psychosocial entity in close connection with the speaker. This scholar described the speech of a boy of two years and five months at the end of 1882 and at the beginning of 1883. The child to be tracked was from a Russian family living in Kazan and speaking the Russian language with all-Russian pronunciation. The article by A. Aleksandrov consists of two parts. The first describes an external, sound side of the child's speech, the second - an inner, psychic side. In describing the external, sound side of the child's speech, A. Aleksandrov develops I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay's remarks on the phoneme, as well as the theory of alternations of N.V. Krushevsky's sounds.

Analyzing the reflection of the sounds of adults in the speech of the child, A. Aleksandrov takes into account the position of each of them in a word. So, speaking of vowel sounds, he notes that the stressed vowels are dependent on the features of the following consonants: a) with a hard



consonant in the place of the all-Russian *e*, *e* remains: s'er = хлеб (bread), b) with a soft consonant *e*, it sounds like: n'ad'in'u = надену (I'll put it on). Unstressed vowels depend on the properties of the previous consonant and on the position in the word with respect to the stressed syllable. For example, as A. Aleksandrov notes, in an open non-terminal syllable and in a closed terminal instead of *a* after a hard consonant the vowel *ъ* is heard, and after soft consonants – *ь*: s'at'kva = сладкого (sweet), s'as'va = Сашина (Sasha's). Analyzing the consonants, A. Aleksandrov notes that the labial *p*, *b*, *m* and the predental *t*, *d*, *n*, and also the consonant *j* prevail first in the child's speech, and then the sounds of other organs and modes of formation gradually appear. So, instead of the dentilabial consonants *ф*, *в*, the child first uses *p*, *b*: d'ip = жив (alive), bat'i = волосы (hair), and after a while - *f*, *v*: fas' = хвост (tail), vaj's'k'i = волосы (hair).

In the second part A. Aleksandrov covers the gradual development of the child's speech and the formation of new forms and words, as well as the question of analogies. He concludes that the child borrows words and forms for the most part from adults, then reconciles them with his phonetic characteristics. And then, when he begins to build new words and forms, he adapts them for his own forms and sound combinations.

In both parts A. Aleksandrov outlines the features of linguistic means of children's speech and the main regularity of its development. First of all, this can be traced in the scholar's description of onomatopoeias and occasionalisms. He emphasizes that the child makes up words based on the impression that objects create upon him. So, A. Aleksandrov highlights such examples in the speech of the baby: d'aban' d'u = самовар шипит (the samovar hisses); m'it'a t'at'at'a; kujt'ak = петушок (a cockerel). According to A. Aleksandrov, the words d'aban' and d'u were produced in an onomatopoeic way, being made up after the sharp noise and buzz of the samovar, which the child may have heard for the first time. The buzz of the samovar made such a strong impression upon him that when he called the object and the action, he brought out its conspicuous feature - buzzing. As a result, d'aban' d'u was formed. In the same way, the scholar notes, other onomatopoeic words resulted in the speech of the child. Seeing and hearing people play the piano, he himself wanted to play and therefore said: m'it'a t'at'at'a, that is, Митя хочет играть (Mitya wants to play). The child formed the word kujt'ak after the scream of a rooster. It is supposed that this is a vivid example of onomatopoeic occasional word formation.

A. Aleksandrov pays attention to the pragmatic factor of children's speech. He stresses that the pronunciation of onomatopoeias has not been retained for a long time in the child's speech, because it is not supported by others, and it disappears soon and is replaced by the words borrowed from the speech of adults which are easy to pronounce and combine. In the phrase d'aban' d'u the



word d'u is substituted by the child for the word s'yp'it, which is adapted in his own way = t'ip'it'. And the word t'at'at'a in the phrase m'it'a t'at'at'a is replaced by the word jigrat = ikat'. The word d'aban' being retained in the child's speech, according to A. Aleksandrov can be explained by a number of syllables and sounds which is sufficient for the child. Aleksandrov observes similar word formation in other cases: mat'k'i (башмачки / shoes), bajars'a (обжогся / burned).

Ontogenesis of important semantic categories is also traced in A. Aleksandrov's work: aspectuality and temporality, personality and possessiveness. The onomatopoeias studied by A. Aleksandrov lead to the conclusion that they play an important role in the development of the verb as a part of speech and in the acquisition of the grammatical field of aspectuality. As N.V. Gagarina points out, it is onomatopoeias that appear to be one of the first at the beginning of speech activity of small children who use them at an early stage to identify amorphous situations that are not divided into parts: как-кап (dripping water), фyu (to inflate a ball), бай (to sleep), ам (to eat) [Semantic Categories in Children's Speech, 38]. Compare the examples given above by A. Aleksandrov: m'it'a t'at'at'a, d'aban' d'u.

The aspect-temporal relationships of the forms of verbs demand for attention when studying the external, sound, and inner, psychic aspect of the child's speech. In most examples, the verbs of the present tense are imperfect, and the verbs of the past tense have perfective aspect: on the one hand, t'ip'it' (шипит/ one hisses), ikaj't' (играет / one plays), on the other - v'ir'p' (выпил / one has drunk), d'aj (дал /gave). Modern scholars also emphasize this regularity. N.V. Gagarina notes that at first the verbs in the child's speech are simple (morphemically uncharacterized) basics that denote limited and unlimited actions and have the formative affixes of the present and past tense. At the same time, a tendency is traced: the perfective aspect is used in the past tense, and the imperfective one in the form of the present tense [Semantic Categories in Children's Speech, 40, 42].

A. Aleksandrov's observation on reflection on the semantics of personality in children's speech which refers to the semantic category that characterizes the participants in the indicated situation in relation to the participants in the speech situation proves to be important. Considering the question of the development of forms and words in the speech of the child, A. Aleksandrov notes that the child kept under observation does not know personal pronouns and constantly says: d'at' m'it'i (дать Мите / to give Mitya), jas'ka m'it'va (чашка Митина / Mitya's cup). The presence of such forms in children's speech is confirmed by modern studies of children's speech, where this issue has been further developed. Thus, G.R. Dobrova explains the presence of such forms of the type in speech by the fact that at the earliest stages the child is not able to see himself



as others see him, that is, to set himself apart from wider public and find himself as an individual, therefore, uses his personal name only to denote his own image [Semantic Categories in Children's Speech, 185].

Of interest are A. Aleksandrov's remarks on the possessive constructions in the speech of the child. Possessiveness is a collection of categories, at the very core of which there is the relationship of possession proper. In the strict sense of the category of possessiveness (which will be demonstrated on the examples given by A. Aleksandrov), only situations are considered as possessive, when a subject-possessor is animate objects, and an object of possessiveness is an object that is the property of the subject-possessor. A. Aleksandrov, describing the cases of analogy in children's speech (see below), except normative (n'ik'i s'as'va = книги Сашины / the books of Sasha, jas'ka m'it'ьva = ложка Митина / the spoon of Mitya), gives the examples of occasional combinations. In these examples, the adjectives that determine belonging to smb have the ending ь/ьва: ајьва (Олина / Olya's), s'as'va (Сашина / Sasha's).

A. Aleksandrov's psychological approach to the study of children's speech led to the solution of the problem of the main regularity in the development of speech such as the formation of morphological generalizations in the process of communication. The scholar deals with this problem, describing morphological analogies in the formation of imperative mood, Nom. pl of nouns, possessive adjectives, word forms with the consonant *t'* instead of *ш* and *n* instead of *д*, by analogy with related or associative formations. These analogies are evidence of the important features of children's speech such as the formation of irregular forms according to regular models.

Analyzing the forms of the imperative (d'aj, t'it'aj) in the speech of the child, A. Aleksandrov lays emphasis on the following important features of the child's speech activity: 1) the child acquires these forms together with the ending of the imperative mood *aj*; 2) when repeating them the child realizes that the forms with the ending *aj* have the same meaning, 3) the small child disconnects this ending, associates the meaning of the imperative mood with it and attaches it to other words, as the result of which are the forms p'is'aj = пиши / write (п'ишы / p'ishy), k'an'aj = гони / hurry up (ган'и / gan'i). When analyzing Nom. pl in the speech of the child, the scholar notes that the baby associates Nom. pl with the words like t'as'i, juki, mat'k'i and, based on this model, forms the Nom. pl nouns, with normative ending *a*: kas'i (глаза / eyes).

The morphological generalization described by A. Aleksandrov also takes place when the child forms the possessive adjectives (see above): n'ik'i s'as'va = книги Сашины / the books of Sasha, jas'ka m'it'ьva = ложка Митина / the spoon of Mitya, jas'ka ајьва = чашка Олина / the cup of Olya. A. Aleksandrov believes that the child forms the adjectives with the formant ь/ьва



by analogy with the orthoepic pronunciation of adjectives in the genitive case, etc., for example, such as чају слаткѣва = t'aju s'at'kѣva. However, one can assume that the child derives the forms of the type like s'at'kѣva type according to the model of possessive adjectives with the suffix *-ва* (отцов, царев, слесарев/ father's, tsar's, locksmith's) that are available in the Russian language.

Other generalizations, illustrated by A. Aleksandrov, are of interest as well: the formation of the word ut'a = ухо / ear and n'at'i = дайте / give me. A. Aleksandrov thinks that in the word ut'a t instead of x appeared by analogy with the related word ut'i (уши/ ears); and the sound n appeared in the word n'at'i on the analogy of the particle n'a = возьми / take.

Discussion

Many Russian and foreign scholars of different schools [Grozdev; Vygotsky; Shakhnarovich, Yuriyeva; Bar-Shalom; Sobel, Lillard; Tomasello; Weist; Lieven, Pine, Baldwin] specialize on children's speech as a relatively independent activity, the most important of which are psycholinguistic studies. Among them is the collective monograph "Semantic Research in Children's Speech" (St. Petersburg, 2007), which offers the coverage of the ontogeny of semantic categories: temporality, aspectuality, possessiveness, qualitiveness, modality, quantitiveness, personality, locality. A number of these categories can also be observed in A. Aleksandrov's work, although his role in the development of psycholinguistics is practically ignored by scholars.

Conclusion

The work of A. Aleksandrov is a vivid example of the representative of the Kazan Linguistic School, which understood the language as a psychosocial entity manifested in speech activity. Studying the children's speech, A. Aleksandrov develops the ideas by I.A. Baudouin de Courtenay on the phoneme and the theory of interchange (alternations) of N. V. Krushevsky's sounds, and also reveals specific linguistic means in the speech of the child. This scholar considers the language means for communication of children, such as a greater number (in comparison with the speech of adults) of onomatopoeias and figurative words, the use of irregular forms on the basis of regular models, occasional word formation. The study of A. Aleksandrov helped to solve the problem of the main regularities of children's speech - the formation of grammatical and semantic generalizations and the rules of their functioning. The examples of ontogeny of a number of the most important semantic categories (temporality, aspectuality, possessiveness, personality) resulted in the development of functional grammar ("the speaker's grammar") and allowed the scholars of abstracting from the level fixation of the linguistic phenomenon and considering functional semantic fields as the unity of means for performing a certain function.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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