

The Magic of Language - Productivity in Linguistics and Language Teaching

The theme of the Fifth Saarbrücken Conference on Foreign Language Teaching is productivity in linguistics and language teaching, the productive use of language often being marked by an undeniable magic. This magic does not only consist in the fact that people are capable of understanding each other if they master the same code. It is also true when people talk about things they have never talked about and when new ideas occur to them or when they use notions and words that have not existed before, i.e. when they employ language productively and construct their own world. The relationship between the productivity and the magic of language works on various levels:

Pragmatics – whenever people produce sentences and utterances, they are productive. The linguistic means that they have at their disposal allow them to create language structures and language patterns, which aim at communicating information, arousing emotions and, eventually, eliciting reactions in their interlocutors.

Languages for specific purposes – any newly discovered phenomenon of the extralinguistic world needs to be named and classified. Neologisms, which provide a linguistic form for the corresponding notions, function at the word level and are often of a specific nature. These languages for specific purposes, then, are productive sublanguages par excellence.

Language methodology – whenever teachers instruct their pupils and students to communicate orally or in writing, they boost the latter's productivity. Teachers enable students to overcome boundaries in a language other than their mother tongue and to enter a terra incognita, which may give them a feeling for their own intellectual potential and a certain awareness of their chances to get in contact with people they would not be able to communicate with if they did not master the target language.

The magic of language also refers to the **interpersonal and intercultural mechanisms** that are characteristic of any communication situation. In critical situations, for example, boundaries, which generally exist between individuals and between people of different cultural imprints and socialisations, can be overcome. The processes involved will then lead to a redefinition of such relationships and, thus, be productive.

Differences in the processes in the brains of **bilingual and multilingual people** vs. those in the brains of monolingual people – the brains of bilingual and multilingual people develop into structures that are different from the ones of monolingual people. Consequently,

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productivity has a direct influence on the mental and intellectual development of people and their personalities.

Emotional factors - we all may find that we are “different” in situations when speaking a foreign language as compared to those situations when using our mother tongue. Acting multilingually, we seem to have different personalities – one for each language we speak. When giving it a thought, we notice that it is much easier to make emotional utterances in a foreign language than in our mother tongue – as in the foreign language, our emotions are redefined and we feel more free in terms of behaviour and use of language.

Language in general and the teaching or learning of foreign languages in particular provide us with new insights. This is true for various areas of linguistics, for our daily and professional lives and, last but not least, for language methodology. The magic of language, which is closely intertwined with the productivity of language, may seem less accessible, less "handy", than other potential themes, but it allows creativity to happen and may generate multiple stimuli for the professional practice of teachers and researchers.

Conference Chairman: Professor Thomas Tinnefeld, Saarland University of Applied Sciences

Webpage: <http://5saarbrueckerfremdsprachentagung.blogspot.com/>

Registration is open from now on until 31 August 2019 (presenters) and 30 September 2019 (mere participation), respectively.

Please send an e-mail to

fremdsprachentagung@googlemail.com

Walk-ins can also register on arrival on 31 October 2019.

Admission fee: 60,-- € (Students (who are not presenters): 30,-- €) (inclusive of VAT). For our foreign participants' convenience, the conference fee can be paid in cash (euros) on arrival at the conference office.