

Written fixation of signs in Russian Sign Language classes

В статье поднимается вопрос о нахождении оптимального способа фиксации жеста на письме. Рассматриваются разные точки зрения на структуру жеста, его составляющие. Приводятся возможные примеры письменной фиксации жеста, которые могут быть применены на занятиях по русскому жестовому языку.

Ключевые слова: русский жестовый язык, письменная фиксация, структура жеста

The article raises the question of finding the optimal way to put a sign in a written form. Different points of view on the structure of the sign and its components are considered. Possible examples of written fixation of a sign are given, which can be applied in Russian Sign Language classes.

Keywords: Russian Sign Language, written fixation, sign structure

The author was prompted to write this article by one of the chapters in the book by G. L. Zaitseva «Sign speech. Dactylology» [1]. It considered the structure of a sign, which, as you know, consists of several components. The American scientist William Stokey was the first, who broke the sign into separate structural elements. He singled out three main components of which the sign consists: configuration, spatial position and movement [4]. As a result, the scientist gave a description of each component in American Sign Language, that is, all possible configurations, locations and movements of the gesturing hand/ hands. Also the structure of the sign was revealed in other sign languages (English, French, German, etc.). Before the work of W. Stokey sign was considered as an indivisible unit.

For better understanding of the above mentioned, let's look at a few examples. Consider two signs «лето» and «папа».

These signs are performed with the right hand in the form of an open palm. In the dactyl alphabet this configuration of the hand corresponds to the Russian dactylema «В». For brevity it is written or said as B-configuration. The location of the sign is near the face, namely the forehead and chin. When performing the sign «лето», the hand first touches the chin and then the forehead (movement from the bottom upwards). When demonstrating the sign «папа», the hand goes vice versa from the forehead to the chin (movement from upwards to the bottom). Thus, two components: configuration and location remain the same, while the third component (movement) will be different.

The next example is the signs «работать» and «учиться». Signs are also performed with the right hand in a configuration corresponding to the Russian dactylema «Ч» (the thumb is closed with the index and middle finger, the remaining fingers are clenched into a fist). The sign «работать» is shown on the left side of the chest and

the sign «учиться» is shown on the right side of the forehead. The nature of the movement in both cases is the repeated tilting of the hand up and down. In this example, we see the same configuration and hand movements, but at the same time completely different localization (location).

Thus, a change in one of the components in the structure of a sign entails a change in its meaning.

Having familiarized ourselves with the structure of the sign, we smoothly move on to the issue of developing a system for recording of a sign in a written form.

It is worth noting that writing a sign in a notebook is one of the main problems that many students face in RSL classes. Everyone solves it in their own way. Someone tries to draw, sketch the sign, others can present it in verbal form, in the form of an association with some action, phenomenon.

G. L. Zaitseva, on the basis of the characteristics of the sign components, gives the following possible variant of the written fixation of the sign [1, p. 41]:

(*n* – right hand; *л* – left hand)

1) рассказывать P H • > R

2) обязанность *n* 1 H ↓

л B H N

In these examples, signs are written with the use of various alphabetic, numeric and graphic symbols that reflect its structure. To decipher such a record, you must first familiarize yourself with the meanings of a particular symbol.

Thus, in the sign «рассказывать» the capital Russian letter P means the configuration of the hand, which assumes the same position of the fingers as when showing the «P» dactylem (closing the thumb and middle finger). The following are the characteristics of the movement. H stands for neutral space, • > for click-like movement, R for repeated movement.

For the two-handed sign «обязанность», the components for both hands are given. A letter mark is first made for the right hand (*n*) and left (*л*). The right hand is in configuration 1 (fist with index finger extended or as when showing the number 1), located in neutral space, which is indicated by a capital H, and moves down (↓). Left hand in configuration B, i.e. the open palm, also in neutral space (H), remains motionless (N).

This is a very interesting way of notation that saves a lot of time and effort. However, for use in RSL classes it may not be very convenient. Students, in addition to memorizing the signs themselves, will first need to memorize the symbols that characterize certain components of the sign.

The author proposes to slightly simplify this notation system by removing some symbols and replacing them with a description. So the sign can be written like this:

(1) человек – «Э»/ neutral / ↓, smooth

(2) мужчина – «B»/ at the edge of the forehead / –

(3) вчера – «БП»/ at the cheek / back, smooth

(4) начало – *n* «I»/ neutral / ↑, smooth

л «B»/ neutral / –

When putting a sign in a written form, we will definitely take into account its following components: configuration, localization, direction and quality of movement. The author is close to the position of W. Stokey, who considered localization as a separate component, and not a characteristic of movement. G. L. Zaitseva in her book distinguishes only two components of a sign – configuration and movement [1].

In the examples each of the components is separated by a slash. The sign configuration is suggested to be enclosed in quotation marks.

As a rule, students get acquainted with the sign configuration quite quickly, having studied the dactyl alphabet (configuration «A», «B», etc.), as well as the designation of numerals in sign language (configuration «5», «200», etc.). There are additional configurations, which are abbreviated by the name of the finger. For example, the «БП» configuration – the fingers are clenched into a fist, the thumb is pointing up. In many RSL dictionaries readers are introduced to these configurations on the first pages of the book [3], [2].

We express the localization of the sign with a verbal description, trying to specifically indicate the location. The direction of movement is indicated by an arrow or a word and briefly describes the quality of movement separated by a comma. The last component (movement) may be missing, so we just put a dash (example 2, 4). In two-handed signs, we designate the right (*n*) and left (*л*) hand and also designate the components for both hands (example 4).

The proposed version of the notation is only an approximate scheme for the written fixation of a sign. With such a recording it is not always possible to accurately reflect the performance. To describe some signs, you may need to specify more parameters. Refinement of the notation system will provide an opportunity for better studying and understanding of the signs structure, identification of their common and distinctive features and also will simplify the process of mastering the sign language.

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