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FEATURES OF AUTHENTIC FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING ACTIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This article reveals the cognitive, linguistic, subjective and social features of authentic foreign language learning activity in knowledge building. The primacy of experience is the core of learning. Meaning and knowledge are constructed and grounded in student's experience. Authentic foreign language learning activity is aimed at gaining maximum experience. Authentic learning is a complex system that is characterized by the combination of cognitive, linguistic subjective and social features. The cognitive features of authentic activity include higher-order thinking, a prior knowledge base, depth of knowledge, in-depth direct and subconscious understanding, theoretical thinking, cognitive acts, multiple intelligences, motivation and memorizing. The linguistic features of authentic activity are conceived of as language primary and secondary matter, the sounds of the language, elaborated communication, substantive conversation, substantial dialogue, oral and written work, text, questions based on the text, summary of the text, the clarification of difficulties with the text and making predictions about what will ensue. Subjective and social features of authentic activity include personal meaning, real-life context, passive and active work, academic achievement, social and technology affordances etc.

Keywords: *authentic activity, learning, foreign language, experience, cognitive feature, linguistic feature, subjective feature, social feature.*

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ОСОБЛИВОСТІ АУТЕНТИЧНОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ З ВИВЧЕННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ У ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ

У роботі визначено когнітивні, лінгвістичні, особистісні та суспільні особливості аутентичної діяльності, спрямованої на формування знань при вивченні іноземної мови. Первинність досвіду визначається як основа процесу навчання. Смисл і знання ґрунтуються на досвіді того, хто навчається. Аутентична діяльність з вивчення іноземної мови спрямована на набуття максимального досвіду. Така діяльність розглядається як складна система, що характеризується поєднанням когнітивних, лінгвістичних, особистісних і суспільних складових. Когнітивні особливості аутентичної діяльності віддзеркалюють вищі психічні функції, теоретичне мислення, попередні знання та глибину знань, усвідомлене та неусвідомлене розуміння матеріалу, когнітивні дії, множинний інтелект, мотивацію та пам'ять людини. Під лінгвістичними особливостями аутентичної діяльності розуміються мовний первинний та вторинний матеріал, звуки мови, продумане спілкування, розмова по суті, ґрунтовний діалог, усна та письмова робота, текст, запитання до тексту, стислий виклад тексту, пояснення пов'язаних з текстом труднощів та прогнозування розвитку основної лінії тексту. До особистісних та суспільних особливостей належить особистісний смисл, реальний контекст, пасивна та активна робота, академічні досягнення, соціальні можливості, технологічні засоби та ін.

Ключові слова: *аутентична діяльність, навчання, іноземна мова, досвід, когнітивна особливість, лінгвістична особливість, особистісна особливість, суспільна особливість.*

The aim of this paper is to reveal the cognitive, linguistic, subjective and social features of authentic foreign language learning activity that enhances effective academic environments and cognitive performance in knowledge building. The object of this research is authentic foreign language learning activity. The subject of this research is the cognitive, linguistic, subjective and social features of authentic foreign language learning activity in the domain of higher education.

The research is of topical interest due to the shift in education from the acquisition metaphor to the participation metaphor. Simple participation in learning activity to internalize experience is not a key solution. There are a lot of forms of activity, for example, playing, drawing, communication, when the results of learning are seen as a by-product. The goal of internalizing experience is obviously formulated in formal learning.

The methodology of the research of language learning activity authenticity is based on both the anthropocentric cognitive-discursive and synergistic approaches. The principle of anthropocentrism puts a human being at the core of our research. The term 'cognitive' means that this investigation is performed in the framework of cognitive science. The term 'discursive' reflects the discursive interaction of students and faculty in an educative process. The synergistic approach enables us to investigate the processes of authentic learning activity as a system. Research materials are scientific papers in Linguistics, Psychology and Pedagogy.

A theory of education highlights four aspects. First, "an insistence on an activity approach to the process of education." Second, "an examination of educational activity in terms of a unity of all its components", namely, an educational task, educational acts as well as the acts of control and evaluation. Third, "special attention to new formations of educational activity": theoretical thinking in intellectual development and motivation in moral development. Fourth, "an endeavor to bridge the activity aspect and the personal aspect of child development" (Davydov & Markova, 1982).

The principles of Linguistic Pedagogy, according to Palmer, are the fourfold aim of student (understanding, speaking and writing of spoken and written language as natives do it); segregation of the phonetic, orthographic, etymological, semantic and ergonic aspects of language during the initial period of conscious study; active work versus passive work; subconscious comprehension;

semanticizing; learning by heart (memorizing); gradation and the microcosm (the vocabulary should include the commonest linguistic units) (Palmer, 1937, p. 12–14). The basis of true language-study is correct auditory perception and correct oral production. Students should develop their capacities of understanding fluent speech and demonstrate their powers and faculties of subconscious comprehension (Palmer, 1937, p. 131). In the course of conscious study the student applies conscious efforts and manifests direct comprehension while subconscious study takes place without any conscious efforts on the part of the student. During the subconscious process the student listens, watches, uses movements and gestures but applies no translation to acquire words. The four essential conditions of subconscious work are gestures, interest, semantic order and uninterrupted passivity. The object of teaching "is not to provide material for conscious assimilation, not to furnish a vocabulary which the pupils will be expected to retain either as a whole or in its individual units, but to give the pupils an ideal series of opportunities for exercising and developing those powers of direct and subconscious understanding without mental analysis or calculation. It is designed to appeal to intuition and not to intelligence" (Palmer, 1937, p. 132–137). It is stated that the key factors of an instructional process are a learning community, affordances, active and passive activity. The teacher serves "to explicate the thinking underlying the teacher's actions" to model behavior for students in such a way that the student can engage in the behavior without the support of the teacher (Sasha A. Barab & Dodge, 2008, p. 101).

The active use of language means speaking and writing, whereas the passive use of language is listening and reading. The use of a language "implies the faculty of transforming thoughts into speech (both oral and graphic) [active work], and also that of transforming oral and graphic speech into thoughts [passive work]" (Palmer, 1937, p. 65). The essential principle of learning is "never to encourage nor expect the active production of any linguistic material until the pupil has had many opportunities of cognizing it passively" (Palmer, 1937, p. 66, 77). Passive receptivity and passive thinking precede the active production of speech. Active oral work must precede any written activity. Palmer makes it manifest that "no active work is profitable until the pupil has mastered the sounds of the language, and can produce them with fluency and accuracy" (Palmer, 1937, p. 159–160).

The concept 'activity' is itself contingent. In Psychology, activity is an active interaction with environment when a living entity, i. e. a subject, has a purposeful impact on an object to meet the subject's needs (БПС, 2005, с. 135). In the broad sense, the term 'activity' is used in the context of the principle of the unity of the mind and activity which is applied in the psychological theory of activity by A. N. Leontiev. The theory of developmental education views activity as the gaining of theoretical knowledge and the skills which are linked to them by means of dialogues and discussions in such domains of public consciousness as science, arts, morality, law and religion (БПС, 2005, с. 564).

Educational activity is aimed at gaining social experience. It comprises the understanding of educational tasks, the performance of education acts and acts of control and evaluation, "reflection, analysis, and an internal plan of action" (Davydov & Markova, 1982). Educational activity initiates mental development, cultivates theoretical thinking, involves learners in investigation, becomes a means of vocational training, enables learners to take cognizance of generalized methods of action in the domain of scientific concepts as well as master "methods of independent educational activity, self-education, and a transition from the assimilation of socially elaborated experience of educational activity fixed in textbooks" to creative, investigatory, cognitive activity (Davydov & Markova, 1982).

Educational activities are viewed as authentic or not. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines 'authentic' as true, accurate and genuine. Researchers use the word "authentic" in various word combinations: authentic activity and authentic learning task (Younghee Woo, Jan Herrington, Shirley Agostinho & Thomas C. Reeves, 2007), authentic instruction and authentic achievement (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993), authentic pedagogy (Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996), authentic learning and authentic environment (Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2014), authentic materials (Mildred Candelario, 2022) etc. The word 'authentic' refers to educational activities as being genuine rather than idle, illusive or misleading. The word "authentic" in "authentic materials" means that the text, video or audio material has not been created with English language teaching in mind. To be authentic the learning content has to come from a genuine source like a news outlet, podcast or video platform (Mildred Candelario, 2022). Without authentic materials in teaching there is no authentic activity in learning. The teacher has to develop activities around the authentic material, graded to the level of their students. There are different kinds of authenticity: factual, procedural, process, task, participatory and simulatory authenticity (Sasha A. Barab & Dodge, 2008, p. 100–101).

There are five standards of authentic instruction: higher-order thinking, depth of knowledge, connectedness to the world beyond the classroom, substantive conversation and social support for student achievement (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Indicators of higher-order thinking are as follows: making distinctions, applying ideas, forming generalizations and raising questions. If a student addresses a real-world problem, it is not a sign of authentic activity. The problem must be connected to the student's personal experiences in contemporary public situations to contribute to the creation of personal meaning.

Authentic activities, according to Thomas Reeves et al., can be distinguished by ten characteristics:

1) to have real-world relevance;

2) to be ill-defined. Learners must identify their own unique tasks and sub-tasks in order to complete the major task. Activities are open to multiple interpretations rather than easily solved;

3) to comprise complex tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time. Activities are completed in days, weeks and months rather than in minutes or hours, involving significant investment of time and intellectual resources;

4) to provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources;

5) to provide the opportunity to collaborate rather than to be achievable by an individual learner;

6) to provide the opportunity for learners to reflect on their learning both individually and socially;

7) to be integrated and applied across different subject areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes. Activities enable diverse roles and expertise rather than a single well-defined field or domain;

8) to be seamlessly integrated with assessment that reflects real-world assessment;

9) to create products valuable in their own right rather than as preparation for something else. They culminate in the creation of a whole product rather than an exercise;

10) to allow competing solutions and diversity of outcome rather than a single correct response (Reeves, Herrington, & Oliver, 2002, p. 563–564).

We research authentic activities in terms of knowledge building. From an ecological perspective, "knowledge refers to an activity (not a thing), is always contextualized (not abstract), is reciprocally constructed as part of the individual–environment interaction

(not objectively defined or subjectively created), and involves whole persons (not disembodied minds)" (Sasha A. Barab & Dodge, 2008, p. 98). In the 1980's the notion of knowledge building was defined as "activity focused on the generation of new knowledge and the continual improvement of ideas" (Scardamalia, 2004). According to the constructivism philosophical paradigm, knowledge is constructed rather than reproduced. "Authentic construction of knowledge involves application, manipulation, interpretation, or analysis of prior knowledge to solve a problem that cannot be solved simply by routine retrieval or reproduction" (Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996, p. 286). Students construct meaning grounded in their own experience rather than simply reproducing knowledge transmitted from instructional materials (Newmann et al., 1996, p. 280–282). For knowledge building, quality group interaction is emphasized (Stahl, 2004). Research can link collaborative tasks to student engagement in knowledge construction (Brett, 2004; Resta & Laferrière, 2007; Stahl, 2004). Coming to know something is not simply a cognitive act that takes place in the confines of an isolated mind. It has something in common with "bodily roots of our thinking" (Sfard, 1998, p. 10). Maximilian Berlitz states that the "expressions of the foreign language are taught in direct association with perception" (Berlitz, 1909, p. 3).

The features of knowledge building are direct engagement with problems of understanding, work with emergent rather than fixed goals, evolution of goals toward higher-level formulations of problems, self-organization around promising directions rather than mandated work on other-directed and scripted activities, work at the edge of competence, self-monitoring, self-correction without undue dependence on external evaluation, engagement with knowledge intensive processes, productive use of idea diversity, risk taking, responsibility for high level socio-cognitive activities such as setting and refining goals, providing resources, and identifying different perspectives (Scardamalia, 2004). The emphasis is very much on cognitive activity.

The term 'cognition' is the central concept that has the multifarious definitions in cognitive science. According to Noam Chomsky, "cognition is an overall term that includes every system of belief, knowledge, understanding, interpretation, perception, and so on" (Chomsky, 1983). Cognition can also be defined as all the processes that transform sensory data as information signals for their further processing in the central nervous system into different mental representations (images, propositions, frames, scripts, scenarios etc.) that are stored in human memory in order to be retrieved and used repeatedly (КСКТ, 1997, p. 81).

Cognitive activity takes place in a certain cultural context (КСКТ, 1997, p. 52) and depends "on the social context where they occur, regardless of whether these processes involve social or non-social objects" (Huguet, Monteil, & Dumas, 2004). The intentions of the learner and context-based affordances "transform a formalism from a disembodied fact to an embedded or even embodied one" (Sasha A. Barab & Dodge, 2008, p. 99–100). The Situativity theory reads that "the context in which one learns influences one's coming to know the content to be learned" (Sasha A. Barab & Dodge, 2008, p. 107). For example, participants are faster at identifying the letter colour cues of incongruent colour words when they work "in presence of relatively unpredictable (i.e., attentive or invisible) audiences" than when they work "alone or in presence of a predictable (inattentive) audience" (Huguet, Monteil, & Dumas, 2004, p. 4). If content is used in an authentic context, the meaning of the content can change. The authenticity of a lesson increases if "there is a connection to the larger social context within which students live" (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Contextuality of knowledge, according to Sfard, is inherent (Sfard, 1998, p. 10). To ensure variety and interest, the lesson has to consist of two or three parts (Palmer, 1937, p. 170). Authentic practice makes a context valuable and legitimizes "the worth and meaning of the content being practiced" (Sasha A. Barab & Dodge, 2008, p. 100).

The learning situation is usually opposed to a real-world situation. Simulation models are built upon the assumption that "classroom activity should be made to resemble as much as possible the activities in which real-world practitioners engage" (Sasha A. Barab & Dodge, 2008, p. 100). The teacher can establish the learning environment though "it is the student motivation, direction, and achievement that characterize the learning process" (Sasha A. Barab & Dodge, 2008, p. 103).

Instructional materials are usually presented in the context of a topic or anchor. Faculty members "need to eschew materials that are simply didactic and, instead, search for those that are interactive, problem oriented, relevant to real-world issues, and that evoke student motivation" (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996). Educational materials should be presented "in a certain order and apply the criteria of frequency, ergonic combination, concreteness, proportion and general expediency" (Palmer, 1937, p. 240). The choice of instructional materials depends on the theoretical principles the teacher uses.

Cognition should be multiintelligent rather than single-intelligent. If the focus of teaching is on the linguistic domain only, the students who are strong in the area will get excellent results (Kashina, 2006, p. 48–49). If the teacher uses exercises like making pictures, technical drawing, listening to music, singing songs, playing games, solving mathematical problems etc., the students who are strong in these areas will get interested in a foreign language. Involving a variety of intelligences will trigger thought processes and enable students to participate more efficiently than purely linguistic exercises. When students realize that they can approach language from their strength areas, they will feel better in the language class and may begin to develop areas that are not their own.

The work that language learners complete at university results in intellectual achievements and competences. There are three criteria to define authentic academic achievement: "construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry and the value beyond school" (Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996, p. 282). Knowledge is reciprocally constructed as part of the individual-environment interaction that involves the whole person. Authentic construction of knowledge includes the acts of application, manipulation, interpretation and analysis of prior knowledge. Disciplined inquiry is characterized as using a prior knowledge base, striving for in-depth understanding and expressing conclusions through elaborated communication, which includes nuances, qualifications, details, analogues etc. Connectedness to the world beyond the classroom implies advocating solutions to problems, assistance to people, creating products with utilitarian or aesthetic value and receiving social support for learning.

There seems to be 'primary matter' and 'secondary matter' in language learning, according to Palmer. Primary matter consists of all simple and underived monologs and a vast number of compound and derived monologs, a vast number of polylogs and an indefinite number of sentences (Palmer, 1937, p. 117). Secondary matter is all units built up from primary matter. It is the duty of the language-teacher to determine primary matter for students. Primary matter should be learnt by heart integrally, i.e. as one lexical unit or phrase. There are three distinct advantages in assimilating integral units rather than in deriving secondary matter by inference: exclusion of any possibility of error, relief from the burden of abstract calculation and immediate utility of matter so learnt (Palmer, 1937, p. 112, 114).

The integral memorizing of models is the best means of language learning. Memorizing means thinking about what the student can hear or read and understanding it rather than repeating it without understanding. Memorizing consists of catenizing (to memorize

the succession of sounds) and semanticizing (to memorize the correct association of the unit with its meaning). The faculty of memorizing contributes to the acquisition of the power of language use. A phrase in its entirety is better memorized than when the student memorizes its separate links one by one. However, few language learners "will give themselves the trouble of memorizing sentences until they are convinced that is the most direct road to the end they wish to attain" (Palmer, 1937, p. 55).

Basic factors in the use of technology for knowledge advancements are student engagement, teacher scaffolding for the development of an explanation-orientation in the students' discourse, pedagogical strategies to transform a traditional classroom into a knowledge building community, peer scaffolding, group composition, community ethos, teacher-student and student-student online interaction, task structuring, group leadership, meaning-making, collaborative knowledge building and time requirements (Resta & Laferrière, 2007, p. 71–74).

Thus, the primacy of experience and learning by heart are the core of learning. Meaning and knowledge are constructed and grounded in student's experience. Authentic activity is aimed at gaining maximum experience rather than the best possible result with minimal efforts. If a problem is authentic, a classroom activity to solve the problem is not necessarily authentic. Authentic foreign language learning activity is a complex system that is characterized by the combination of cognitive, linguistic, subjective and social features that determine the progress of learning.

The cognitive features of authentic activity include higher-order thinking, a prior knowledge base, depth of knowledge, in-depth direct and subconscious understanding, theoretical thinking, cognitive acts, multiple intelligences, motivation and memorizing. To motivate language learners, assignments should be fully authentic or contain an element of authenticity.

The linguistic features of authentic activity are conceived of as language primary and secondary matter, the sounds of the language, elaborated communication, substantive conversation, substantial dialogue between teacher and student or students with one another, oral and written work, text, questions based on the text, summary of the text, the clarification of difficulties with the text and making predictions about what will ensue. Oral work precedes written work.

Social and subjective features of authentic activity include personal meaning, real-life context, passive-active work, academic achievement, social and technology affordances etc. A problem should create personal meaning by means of involving student's personal experience in a contemporary public situation.

Authentic activity takes a long period of time to investigate a problem, uses a variety of resources, different subject areas, collaboration, reflection and assessment. Criteria to define authentic academic achievement are construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry and the value beyond school. Activity and the personal needs of a language learner are to be bridged. The prerequisites to authenticity are passive work before active work, cultural context and a community of learners. Transforming oral and graphic speech into thoughts precedes transforming thoughts into oral or graphic speech. Authentic activity emphasizes the social nature of cognition and reflects the socio-cognitive dynamics of knowledge building. The correct sequence of actions contributes to a natural process of language acquisition.

Perspectives for further study of authentic educational activity are focused on the semanticizing of a word and the methods of language study.

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