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SELF-REGULATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCY: CONSCIOUS WAY TO SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Increased competition in the field of international business, resulting in the complexity of intercultural relations, raises the issue of diversifying management tasks. This does not only involve the production of a variety of options to address, but also their comparison with the verbal behavior, especially under uncertain conditions of multicultural environment. Essential for University graduates is their knowledge of where they are supposed to apply subject knowledge and which of the possible available strategies to use in social and professional interactions. To this end, theoretical and practical research in the field of professional foreign language (FL) teaching should focus on training students to consciously work out learning strategies of metacognitive regulation in problem-and-conflict based situations. In this study, the author adopts a descriptive method of research to establish that the key role in designing a context-rich didactic environment for monitoring, assimilating FL skills and self-improvement is played by the praxeological approach, which stimulates productive and successful FL performance at a University and its further rational organization in the knowledge-intensive branches of industry and business.

Keywords: Praxeological approach; problem-and-conflict based situations; metacognitive strategies; self-regulation of FL competence; didactic environment design.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background information and the meaning of the term "metacognitive strategies"

Nowadays, higher professional education aims to meet challenges of mobilizing intellectual resources of information society. Learning strategies are believed to be part of the resources that students should engage in order to put FL competences into practice.

Peculea, & Bocos (2015) report that learning is strategic when individuals are aware of the learning process and control their efforts in the use of particular skills and strategies. Educational practice provides

compelling evidence that these methods of activity / tactics are not determined by the learners' needs or motivations, but by rather separate actions and conditions under which they are implemented. It should be noted that "Strategy Inventory for Language Learning – SILL" (Oxford, 1990), verified by Petrogiannis & Gavriilidou in Greece (2014), implies two groups of strategies. Direct strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation) cover the experience of operational processing and storing current information. Indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, social) reveal a different psychophysiological nature – a conscious organization of the individual's own intellectual activity.

Early investigations centered around metacognition. According to Flavell (1979), this category includes awareness of the main determinants of the current cognitive process and its regulation with the help of reflection. The aspects of metacognitive strategies were later interpreted by American psychologists (Kluwe, 1982; Derry, 1986; Brown, & Flavell, 1987; Pintrich, & De Groot, 1992; Graham, & Neisser, 2000; Valot, 2002). Being a vehicular tool for existing in the profession, these strategies enable individuals to rise above the current cognitive situation and to compare its results with internal and external standards of specific activities for its control and correction.

Metacognitive strategies can be referred to as personal rather than knowledge-based skills. They are defined as an integrator of decision-making structure in management (Janis, 1972; Hoffman, & Stein, 1983; Nemet, 1986; Hirokawa, & Poole, 1996), which is activated any time FL speakers need to overcome difficulties in new situations, where the consequences of taken decisions are important. For this reason, it is essential that managers should "pick up" their individual way of doing business (Roberts, & Erdos, 1993).

Supplementing the above-mentioned ideas, Karpov, and Skityaeva (2005) classify these unique learning technologies as processes, involving: a) foresight of problem-solution options, b) progress monitoring, c) generalization and focus on a wide range of problems.

Nurturing undergraduates' learning strategies is becoming extremely important in times of economic crises, social or cognitive disturbances. The imperative of reflexive existence in the international business environment is due to bifurcation changes in the world economy, in society at large. It is obvious that management is responsible for the construction of a typology of measures to eliminate the consequences of crises. Examples of extreme industrial situations, which are listed by Hunter, Berry, Goodrich-Hinton & Lincicome (2000) in "Proactive crisis communication in public affairs", demonstrate managers' awareness of the risks involved, predicting adverse effects, forecasting possible losses, planning their own actions and making optimal decisions.

It appears that effective metacognitive strategies ideally express the philosophy of conscious social workers ready to make quick decisions under stress, when faced with natural and social disasters. What becomes really important for a manager is to analyze both their own and other people's errors and maintain high performance, regardless of the conditions of fierce competition.

Thereby, the methodology of constructing intercultural communication in the sphere of administrative activity is dominated by a set of cognitive and psychological factors.

1.2. Brief overview of the origin and philosophy of praxeological knowledge

However, these factors are not sufficient in view of the rulings issued by Federal State Standards of Higher Professional Education (2012) – to shape independent critical thinkers at University. Primarily

this requires designing such didactic FL environment that stimulates compressing information; making responsible decisions in the shortest possible time and taking into account a reasonable risk.

Science that allows optimizing qualitative assessment of management activities and introduces standard specifications of managers' labor is praxeology. In their survey, Devyatlovsky and Ignatova (2012) turn towards Kotarbinski saying that the grammar of praxeological action is a willingness to mobilize intellectual resources in situations of risk – at the expense of a conscious choice of techniques and practices that will enhance creative professionals by encouraging social reflection and reforms.

The concept of "praxeology" was first used in 1897 by Espinas in the book «Les Origines de la Technogi». The basis for the interpretation and construction of rational and purposeful human activity with minimal resource costs lies in the praxeological approach (praxeology comes from the ancient Greek πράξις – activity). It was put forward by the Polish logician and philosopher, Kotarbinski, in "Praxeology – An Introduction to the Science of Efficient Action" (1965). The purpose of the approach is to provide mental spheres of practice with instrumental concepts of technology – methodological knowledge related to work organization, with its categories of success, productivity and performance. In other words, the philosophy of action is "responsible" for the transfer of higher axiological categories to the field of practical experience (Maralova, 2013).

The development of this direction of research was fruitfully contributed by a number of representatives of Russian pedagogy (Kuroda, 2001; Novikov, 2002; Kolesnikova, 2005; Maron, Monakhova & Fedotova, 2012;. Maralova, 2013). Summarizing the value of their views leads us to the assumption that the praxeological approach points to a certain way of transforming FL education – by using new algorithms of self-regulating professional FL communicative competency.

2. Methods

2.1. Self-assessment of competency in terms of the praxeological approach

Monakhova and Fedotova (2014) posit that personal technologies "expand a competence-scale assessment of knowledge, making it possible for students to take timely and appropriate action in order to adjust the accuracy of its formation." A self-declared level of reaching competency urges FL learners to make a reflexive analysis of the results of ranking and accumulating information. Obtaining the highest possible result is achieved through the self-mastery of the methodology of rationalizing actions with the educational material, such as: short forms of record-keeping, optimal organization of time, keeping track of the competence development dynamics, scheduling in order to compare the indicators of organization and self-organization of FL study.

A change in FL learners' attitudes to systematic work tends to appear. Mastering and revising knowledge, developing initiative and analytical thinking induce them to get rid of infantile psychology. That gradually brings them to a conscious choice of ways to achieve their goal – ability to build the most effective models of verbal behavior in the profession.

The ratio of the competence and praxeological approaches allows the teacher-facilitator to reveal and explore reasons for the deviation from the norm; specify actions to improve performance; develop individual educational routes due to the alternative choice of pedagogical tools; promptly provide

feedback to each learner for the diagnosis of academic results and correction of the educational process – by introducing new methods or ruling out inconclusive technologies.

Therefore, the praxeological approach, providing the translation of theoretical knowledge to the dynamics of mastering a particular specialty, serves as a symbiosis of general didactic principles of forming the professional linguistic personality (Bogatyreova, 2015) and is powered by indissoluble ties with the competence-based approach.

3. Results

3.1. Facilitation and competency monitoring

In fact, the facilitator's function is to use new or enriched resource-efficient technologies to increase the learners' intellectual level by translating sociocultural experience, rather than rigidly fixing mental schemes. A language portfolio presented by the learner at the exam allows diagnosing their linguistic knowledge as the final product. However, this is not the case with personal competences, such as critical thinking – it may be only evaluated through a situation (a process), the context of which contributes to the establishment of meanings and encourages students to manifest their moral and world outlooks.

Interestingly enough, but these above-subject competencies are of latent, hidden character and no tool or complex instrument is able to reliably and objectively measure the inner world of individuals, their value orientation. Matviyevskaya (2009) rightly points out that today, the diagnostic tool is still built on formal criteria defined by the traditional scheme of statistical reporting, and in the teacher's practical estimated activity, there is no place for subject-subject interactions. The question arises as how to foster and check ethical, methodological and reflexive abilities of the examinee.

As is known, theoretical knowledge is better assimilated and estimated in a dialogical subject-subject interaction. Researchers (Verbitsky, 2004; Davydova, 2009; Karpov, 2013; Prokhorov, 2009; Safonova, 2016, Tenishcheva, 2008) come to the conclusion that it is a diverse, context-rich environment that is suggestive of uncertainty, causing a game of imagination and professional "constellations" of thinking skills.

Virtually a certain abstract scheme contained in the text is objectified in the discourse with the help of the context of the situation, which is indispensable for the learners to assimilate conceptual and language pictures of the world. So, while designing situations of professional intercultural communication, the facilitator should take into account pragmatic conditions of the discourse: opinions, attitudes, goals and relationships among its participants, extra-linguistic knowledge of the world, etc.

3.2. The meaning of the praxeological situation

It is found that gradual transformation of FL practice to actual production activity is provided by a "praxeological situation", as long as it recreates its object-economic, socio-cultural and psychological contexts. The facilitator's task is to set new contexts with the help of the totality of problem-based conditions, which involve undergraduates in dealing with true–to-life options and, thereby, contribute to their self-assertion. The idea of reflexive existence in a praxeological situation lies in a combination of individual claims with diverse types of collective quasi-professional activities. Joint activity increases manifold consistency in the choice of strategies to address communication problems; provides

productivity; guides students towards quality and productive performance by overcoming all sorts of difficulties.

4. Discussion

4.1. Activating strategies of metacognitive regulation in the didactic environment

Although few studies in language pedagogy have focused on the problem, in our wording, we will rest upon the precepts both of praxeological science and of cognitive pragmatics. It turns out that a praxeological situation:

– defines a future success of professional work;

– includes a plurality of preset pragmatic conditions in the educational process;

– reflects actual conditions of cognitive dissonance and produces a state of internal conflict;

– encourages reflexive transformation of the stereotypes of verbal behavior and expands a discursive repertoire;

– acts as a tool for forming a self-organizing biopsychosocial system of a future specialist;

– develops the individuals' ability to manage ongoing changes and cope with their psychological/internal state.

Thus, a praxeological situation is modeled as a problem-and-conflict based situation to reflect on the rationalization of methods and implementation of personal values in the category of work experience – by a gradual transition from a quasi-professional to an actual production activity. With this definition in mind, it is crucial to form a clear idea of activating metacognitive strategies at different levels of cognition.

In so far as the basic fabric of a FL course should comply with the requirements of a decision-making process in international business, strategies of metacognitive regulation of internalized knowledge in praxeological situations are assumed to activate at the following levels:

1) prediction of verbal behavior according to the obtained level of FL competency;

2) reconstruction of the updated language image of the situation with respect to a changing discursive context, followed by a mutually critical evaluation of final results;

3) flexibility in switching over to new speech models and strategic behavior in conflict-like or unpredictable situations of international business.

The findings obtained testify to the fact that metacognitive strategies are well in line with the praxeological methodology for working out a conscious way to successful management activity "as an instrument of additional opportunities for the professional's self-realization" (Druzhinina, 2009). In our opinion, the overall picture of projecting and modeling a context-rich didactic environment for graduates to communicate internationally, using their strategic experience, suggests:

– rectifying the general characteristics of work situations from the point of view of the industry, qualification frameworks that serve as a bridge between the labour market and higher education and require that graduates choose a new model of behavior;

–   introducing conflicting information that does not correspond to reality or reflects opposing views or minority opinions so as to motivate reflection, immediate reaction, demonstrating ways of unexpected solutions that comprise optimal intellectual strategy;

–   guiding students towards the prediction of missing pieces of information, constructing the discursive process in view of the changing conditions of its realization;

–   using situations not previously enshrined in professional didactics, which analysis and interpretation exercise an emotional impact on its participants, rather than an intellectual effect, calling forth ambiguous associations, feelings, which are likely to bring students to the need of making a moral choice and justifying it.

In general, designing praxeological situation contexts is aimed at revealing the level of professional FL learning: ability to figure out the gist of the matter and retain openness to new cognitive strategies, their rational use and sustainable results.

5. Conclusion

Despite the growth of researchers' interest in how to optimize ways of teaching University graduates to dispose their creative FL potential, or resource, in methodical science, the problem of applying the praxeological approach to training graduates for effective FL activities in the international arena is still to be solved, although it is extremely urgent now, under conditions of acute competition, when it is extremely important for the professional linguistic personality to cope with the emerging challenges in the sphere of management.

The overview of pedagogical research brings about a comprehensive insight into projecting and modeling praxeological situations to activate metacognitive strategies for:

–   «inducing fields of semantic stress", which contributes to a further transformation of verbal behavior stereotypes, creative self-realization of the personality;

–   equipping future managers with the tools of intensive accumulation of socio-cultural, subject-laden and psychological experience, reducing nervous energy costs, improving mental processing speed;

–   carrying out an axiological assessment of the labor of others, mutual analysis of mistakes;

–   developing motivation to look for new ideas and generate tangible creative products, regardless of unforeseen production circumstances.

The prospect for research in this area is seen in the development of a praxeological system for monitoring dynamics of metacognitive strategies formation, involving a creative solution of professional problems and fostering successful international management, world economy development in general.

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