

Subjectivity functions in reflexive and intercultural process of linguistic development in teaching and learning

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Abstract

The paper covers the issues of theoretical frameworks that are being developing around subjectivity and the utility of subjective language in future specialists' language learning. This draws from a wide range of philosophical and socio-psychological work on language acquisition and the role of reflexivity as a vehicle for interculturality. The study reflects experimental analysis based on observation, interviewing, testing and pedagogical experiment. Using innovative ways of engaging subjectivity and reflexivity in teaching, learning and research led to designing a model for students' reflective and intercultural potential, which is a challenge in the reflexive and intercultural process of linguistic development in Higher school of foreign languages and translation studies.

Keywords: Linguistics, education, subjectivity, reflexivity, interculturality.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem of the study

In recent years, there has been intensive research to solve the problem of students' readiness to develop their reflective and intercultural potential. The problem analysis shows its multifactor character and diversity. It has become the subject of theoretical and practical research for philosophers, psychologists and educators.

We have identified that a scientific position on the development of a reflective and intercultural potential is to consider it as a socially relevant form of human existence, which is provided by intellectual and moral value, in turn, supported by a strong-willed individual aspiration to optimise his or her identity and subjectivity.

Interpretation of the idea of reflective and intercultural potential of personality as the concept of personal development in different studies allowed us to determine that the main idea of scientists exploring the meaning and purpose of human life is the person primarily in its intended capacity to make the right choice in the process of subjectivity. Despite different approaches, there are also common features, which are always revealed through the development of intellectual, sensual and volitional spheres of the individual.

In this regard, much of the focus of language education in Russia falls on training highly educated language specialists who are able to interact successfully in a multicultural environment. The process is particularly relevant for Russia as a multinational country where multiculturalism is a norm rather than the exception. However, with the impact of accelerated globalisation, this process associates with education mobility of linguistic and intercultural capability and has become even more important. Part of the political response to that process was to establish a number of Research Language Excellence centers throughout the country, the purpose of which are to investigate and advance language education and practice—both theoretical and applied. The Higher School of Foreign Languages and Translation studies in Kazan Federal University is one of them and continues language education tradition with links back to 1804—the year of the foundation of Imperial Kazan University. There are currently more than 1,500 students studying here, 10% of whom are international students. The staff achievements are widely recognised in Russia and it has a growing reputation, internationally.

One of the many issues that are of particular interest and concern is that of subjectivity and utility of subjective language. We are inspired by the thought that learning a foreign language in close association with its cultural context has a significant effect on the subjective mind, ranging from the unsettling to the inspirational. Consequently, for the last number of years, Higher School has been investigating the possibilities of language subjectivity by working systematically with a cohort of language specialists teaching at bachelor's (Linguistics) and master's programmes (Theory of translation, Intercultural communication; Theory and methods of teaching foreign languages and cultures). We are managing to shift our students' learning forming habits that are more complex, values and understandings by designing, realising and documenting series of structured interventions into Kazan Federal University's programme process and course content. These competences connect subjective experiences and feelings. We are also seeking for anchoring linguistic capability in a socio-cultural network of concepts and norms so that they are characterised both by subjectivity and by the sociality of the environment. This has proved challenging but rewarding for the quality of advanced language learning. The process of researching has new challenges, which are related to the fact that the development of reflective and intercultural potential of students should be carried out in a variety of activities and communication (Robles, 2018).

Linguists believe that subjectivity is intrinsic in all kinds of language usage. This integral feature of language is fixed in the language system. All languages in the world express subjectivity. Linguistic elements, structures or usages are subjective. Subjectivity in a language is related to a speaker. During

communication processes, the speaker's voice and self are also reflected in his language. Linguistic signs are provided with an inherent subjectivity potential (Zhengyuan, 2012). Traugott (1992) and Langacker (1991) are two representative scholars in the study of linguistic subjectivity. Traugott's diachronic concept of grammaticalisation highlights the role of subjectivity in the semantic and grammatical development. Student-centred teaching fosters a host of positive outcomes for students (Sanchez-Escobedo, Linley & Morales, 2018).

Langacker's synchronic concept of subjectivity is primarily based on his notion of 'construal' (Zhengyuan, 2012). It is generally believed that Benveniste (1971) is the first person to view 'subjectivity' from the language point of view. He regards the 'subjectivity' as a capability of the speaker. He also pointed out that people construct their ego in and through language (Zhengyuan, 2012). Lyons (1982) further elaborated 'subjectivity' as: 'When the speaker says the words, he also comments on his message and his attitude towards the said content is also represented' (Lyons, 1982). Currently, in a linguistic circle, Lyons's concept of subjectivity is commonly used by scholars. Linguistic subjectivity is also the main concern of Lyons, that is, speaker' or writer's self-expression (including the views, positions, attitudes, beliefs, etc.,) through discourse (Zhengyuan, 2012).

In recent years, the increasing attention gained by linguistic subjectivity is due to the revival of humanism in linguistics. The enhancement of quality in teaching and also its maintenance are becoming major issues in higher education in many countries (Xhaferi, 2017).

Social contradictions of modern Russia put each high school graduate before the problem of self-definition and self-realisation in a situation of uncertainty and volatile circumstances of life. At the same time, modern life with ever-greater clarity requires education and development of young people as an initiative and independent entity capable to build their relations creatively and actively in various spheres of reality. The new values are self-development, self-education, self-realisation, which become the basis for the design paradigms of a student-centred education. The development of reflective and intercultural potential of university students is a complex process of disclosure and realisation of their intellectual capacities in a variety of activities and communication. It is important for students to define the process of realisation in the future profession, their own intentions and values of subjectivity. For this process, we need to create a special learning environment to resolve the contradiction between the need for the subjectivity of students and inadequate capacity to meet its traditional approach of teaching in high school, thereby ensuring the dynamics of value orientations on reflective and intercultural potential.

The study aims to cover the issues of theoretical frameworks that are being developing around subjectivity and the utility of subjective language in future specialists' language learning. This draws from a wide range of philosophical and socio-psychological work on language acquisition and the role of reflexivity as a vehicle for interculturality.

2. Methodology

This study intended to cover the issues of theoretical frameworks that are being developing around subjectivity and the utility of subjective language in future specialists' language learning. This draws from a wide range of philosophical and socio-psychological work on language acquisition and the role of reflexivity as a vehicle for interculturality. The experimental methodology was employed with an experimental group that was taught.

3. Population and the sample of the study

Using innovative ways of engaging subjectivity and reflexivity in teaching, learning and research led to designing a model for students' reflective and intercultural potential, which is a challenge in reflexive and intercultural process of linguistic development in Higher school of foreign languages and translation studies. So, sample of the study consists of students studying in the higher school of

foreign languages and translation studies in Kazan Federal University which is one of them and continues language education tradition with links back to 1804—the year of the foundation of Imperial Kazan University. There are currently more than 1,500 students studying here, 10% of whom are international students. The staff achievements are widely recognised in Russia and it has a growing reputation, internationally.

4. Data collection

Data were collected by the following groups of research methods: a comparative analysis, comparison, testing, questionnaires, included observation, modelling method and experimental work.

5. The experimental base of the study

A brief overview of theoretical frameworks is being developed around subjectivity and the utility of subjective language in framing and developing interculturality, values, beliefs and understandings (Khanipova, Sabirova, Titova & Voronina, 2017; Valeev, Latypova & Latypov, 2016). This draws from a wide range of philosophical and socio-psychological work on language acquisition and on seminal work on the role of reflexivity as a vehicle of interculturality by Semyonov (2012). More recent insights from research studies as Clark & Dervin (2014); Sachs & Mockler (2010) are also used to illustrate how our framework addresses innovative teaching and learning within the Higher school of foreign languages and translation studies curricular.

To make the process of development of reflective and intercultural potential of students, the following conditions must be taken into account:

- The creation of the University humanitarian environment that is a factor of humanisation of educational process and development of students' social life norms and culture;
- The cultivation of students' imperative to self-orientation embodied in their instincts and abilities, the formation of their value systems for professional self-realisation within their subjectivity;
- Inclusion of notions and concepts in learning content, targeting on reflection, self-projection, self-development in the field of professionally significant qualities of the person; development of students' reflective and evaluative abilities and skills;
- The use of active methods and forms of teaching that can saturate the educational process with personal meaning for each student and thus 'provoke' his desire for subjectivity;
- Pedagogical support of students in their understanding of the essence of subjectivity and the ways of its implementation in the development of personal qualities, which are part of preparedness for professional and creative self-realisation.

The all mentioned conditions are included in the tasks and content of intercultural education in the context of subjectivity functions in the linguistic processes of becoming reflexive and intercultural. Educational reform is a common strategic task, the implementation of which is at the initial stage in Russia. Nowadays, scientists and educators distinguish the following possible solutions for promoting this process.

- 1) Implementing of democratic values within a particular subject of the humanitarian cycle;
- 2) Studying world culture, taking into account the place of national cultures;
- 3) Studying languages in close relationship with History, Geography for creating a better understanding of nationalities;
- 4) Learning languages with the implementation of language skills in different situations of intercultural nature.

The content of development of reflective and intercultural potential must have an interdisciplinary approach, which allows us to consider the problem of intercultural education as a part of academic humanities, natural sciences and foreign languages.

Based on this fact, we have identified the following components that determine the self-organising personality of a student in terms of developing his reflective and intercultural potential:

- a) Integrity of the individual is an organic unity, the core of which is the active principle, aimed at both the transformation of the world and himself;
- b) Openness of individual, interacting with the environment, desiring for a higher degree of subjectivity;
- c) Prediction of one's own creative potential and universal capacity to more productive abilities of self-actualisation;
- d) Formation of such a psychic personality structure that is not only able to absorb social forms of behaviour but also capable of self-correcting activities.

According to these components, we have adopted the following criteria of the capacity of integrative measure for the development of reflective and intercultural potential:

- Motivational and creative direction (the desire to self-actualising of one's educational potential);
- Reflexivity (the ability of creative reflection, critical self-assessment of one's own activities and results);
- Value attitudes to subjectivity (realisation of the meaning of one's own life, the personal importance of the experience, focus on the success of improving one's communicative competence);
- Social activity (realisation of purposeful interaction of the individual and society, characterised by pronounced positive side).

The criteria have made it possible to design a model for the development of students' reflective and intercultural potential, which includes the following components: **value-motivational component** (it provides personal meaning and forthcoming transformations); **informative component** (it determines the orientation of the purpose and means of self-development activities); **the operational component** (it defines methods and a range of self-development activities) and **controlling volitional component** (affecting the intensity and effectiveness of future activities of self-realisation).

In accordance with the understanding of the development of reflective and intercultural potential of students in its structure, we include such personality substructure and quality as stable professional motivation, focus on self-realisation in professional activities, the responsibility for further development, learning professional skills, self-discipline, etc. It should be noted that subjectivity of the future linguist is closely related to his professional self-realisation. Hence, it is such an important aspect: the willingness to form a professional creative self-realisation of young people—is not just to teach them to work creatively, but also to generate more desire to work professionally.

We are repelled by the idea that the problem of implementation of the functions of subjectivity in the linguistic learning process in order to become reflexive and intercultural personality, it must be considered from the perspective of humanisation of higher education activities. To ensure teaching of this process, we have proved and revealed the following main principles for the development of reflective and intercultural potential of students:

- The principle of humanisation of the educational process (definition of the main task of the university personal development of young people rather than the training of young professionals);
- Axiological principle (support to the existential value of the individual);
- The principle of the development of norms of social life and culture of the student (development of students' needs in the use of culture as a tool in the process of communication and activity);

- The principle of creative thinking (intensification of creativity in the personality of each student in the educational process)
- The principle of pedagogical support (incentives to the subjectivity of students and assistance in this process) (Plotnikova & Kondrateva, 2018; Valeev, Latypova & Latypov, 2016).

It should be noted that many of the above-mentioned principles are of general orientation but each of them carries a number of specific features, which suggests that they may be regarded as a set of the methodological basis for the implementation of the task of students' development of reflective and intercultural potential.

6. Findings

There were revealed differences in the value orientations of students with different levels of ability to self-realisation in the first phase of the experiment. During the experimental work, we wanted to implement the most effective conversion. To evaluate the effectiveness of innovations, we used diagnostic procedures. In this regard, we were quite actively resorted to the so-called rapid diagnostics—surveys, interviews, questionnaires of students. However, self-determination of the individual in these or those values is quite a long process. Therefore, to fix it in its entirety, it requires longitudinal diagnosis.

As diagnostic techniques, we used a questionnaire adapted from personal orientation inventory by Shostrom (2008) that allowed, thanks to the factor structure, to reveal the dynamics of self-determination and self-realisation, which is available for use in teaching practice.

Thus, in the course of the experiment, there was a special significance diagnostic phase aimed at identifying students' value systems for their subjectivity. We proceeded from the fact that, ideally, a student graduating from the university is a man with a professional orientation, sustainable relationship for a future profession, with an active lifestyle and a high moral level of cognitive motivation. At the same time, the development of capacity for subjectivity evident in social activity (the pursuit of personal and professional self-improvement, the implementation of their development of personal skills in reachable living space, building the experience of participation in activities beneficial to society and social maturity).

We believe that the achievement of a young man, his state of 'ideal' development of his personality comes with a clear focus on the self-diagnosis of vital needs, motives of life and values. That is why the first stage of experimental work was the value-installation, where students defined their humanistic attitudes and values, in particular, the value of subjectivity in professional activities with the knowledge of a foreign language. At this stage, there was the formation of professionally significant qualities of a person: reflective-evaluative abilities and skills.

Due to the basis of diagnosis, there have been accepted techniques that reveal the value orientations of students, their creative focus and dynamics (method 'Q-sorting', the students' identification of their social activity, the definition of a hierarchy of values in life and dominant attitudes of students, methods for analysis after Lakein (1996) of attitudes and values, self-motivation and creative orientation of the person, and technique after S.R. Panteleev and V.V. Stolin for the diagnosis of personality self-attitude) (Glukhanyuk, 2005).

The procedure for pedagogical diagnostics capacity for development of reflective and intercultural potential included the following steps:

- Define the criteria of reflective and intercultural potential development;
- Determine the characteristics of the levels of reflective and intercultural potential development;
- Use of appropriate methodologies and questionnaires to collect empirical information;
- Process and compilation of empirical research results.

Dynamics of professionally significant personal qualities that make up the main components of reflective and intercultural potential also showed that the majority of students (84.5%) increased the dynamics of subjectivity. This is mainly manifested in the interested attitude to master a foreign language for future professional activities; in the predominant orientation of success; a high level of goal-setting, personal and cognitive reflection; in improving language proficiency. The number of students with low levels of capacity for self-realisation was decreased (from 31.6% to 18%) and the number of students from middle and high increased (from 45.8% to 51% and 22.6% to 31%, respectively).

All of the above suggests that the study has confirmed the basic provisions of the hypothesis but they do not exhaust all the issues related to the study of psycho-pedagogical conditions of the educational process in higher school to develop students' reflective and intercultural potential. Special research is required for the development of reflective and intercultural potential of non-language students, the problem of pedagogical support of students' subjectivity needs further studying, opportunities of extracurricular activities of students to develop their capacity of self-improvement is also under our attention.

7. Conclusion

Therefore, the study led to the following conclusions: subjectivity of students in university conditions is a real process in cooperation of two figures in the self-development process of a person—teacher and student. We came to the conclusion that the development of reflective and intercultural potential in the university can take place, if goal-setting personal development of a young man is implemented in the pedagogical process so that not only the future but today, now, he can be given the opportunity to lead productive livelihoods. Secondly, if the individual's desire for subjectivity is consistent with the education and self-education that leads to the active manifestation of his personality. Thirdly, the process of the development of students' reflective and intercultural potential can get their real value under the condition when teachers cultivate student's understanding of the true meaning of education, gravitating to universal values of the individual. Thus, only in humanisation, productive help for young people to confirm spiritual and intellectual consistency and development of their reflective and intercultural potential can be possible This is a widely spread issue in the practice of education in Russia which is following the path of intercultural education values.

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