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**FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION:  
A COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

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*У статті окреслюється процес оволодіння іноземною мовою (ІМ) в аспекті комунікативно-когнітивного підходу. Кінцевою метою вивчення ІМ визначено формування іншомовної комунікативно-когнітивної компетенції студентів. Запропоновані базові принципи оволодіння ІМ, що мають допомогти суб'єктам пізнання досягти визначеної мети. Ключовим аспектом, який досліджується у статті, є спіральний шлях пізнання.*

*Ключові слова: оволодіння іноземною мовою, іншомовна комунікативно-когнітивна компетенція, принципи оволодіння ІМ, спіральний шлях пізнання*

*В статье описывается процесс овладения иностранным языком (ИЯ) в рамках коммуникативно-когнитивного подхода. Конечной целью изучения ИЯ определено формирование иноязычной коммуникативно-когнитивной компетенции студентов. Предлагаются базовые принципы овладения ИЯ, которые помогут субъектам познания достичь определённой цели. Ключевым аспектом, исследуемым в статье, является спиральный путь познания.*

*Ключевые слова: овладение иностранным языком, иноязычная коммуникативно-когнитивная компетенция, принципы овладения ИЯ, спиральный путь познания*

*This paper outlines the process of a foreign language (FL) acquisition within the framework of the communicative and cognitive approach. With this in mind, developing learners' communicative and cognitive competence is identified as a current target of learning a FL. To achieve the set target the basic principles of teaching a FL are elicited and clarified. The key aspect that is also explored in the study is a spiral way of cognition.*

*Key words: FL acquisition, alien communicative and cognitive competence, principles of FL acquisition, spiral way of cognition*

This article propounds a new conceptual framework of learning a foreign language (FL) by University students. The study arises out of a need to introduce cognizing subjects to a reasonable approach to teaching English as a FL (EFL) that can become an invaluable tool in acquiring sought-for expertise. Specifically, the study encompasses a number of issues which question the conventional wisdom that teaching a FL should be done primarily on the communicative ground. Respectively, the maintained idea is at variance with the existing assumption that a FL acquisition is aimed mainly at developing communicative competence of students. At this rate the cognitive aspect of learning that incorporates interrelation of speech and intellection remains either ignored or deficient in support. With this in mind, it seems relevant to identify a current target of learning EFL, to elicit the basic principles of its teaching, and to devise an appropriate model which will facilitate achieving a set target.

Admittedly, modern methodology of teaching a FL is determined by both communicative and cognitive paradigms, each solving its specific problems. The indications are therefore that their combination might turn out conducive for cognition in a language course. So, it stands to reason that developing communicative and cognitive competence as an acquired ability to successfully perform speech and mental activity while solving real and ideational problems via a target language has to be chosen as a goal of teaching EFL [1, p. 292].

Giving pre-eminence to communicative and cognitive competence as a final goal of a FL acquisition entrained elaborating the principles on which the learning process may be based. These principles posit the significance of stimulating students' mental and speech performance, employing their epistemological styles in the process of cognition, fostering their development as linguistic personalities and framing their worldview, developing their

knowledge space, multiple intelligences and the ability to conceptualize incoming information [1, p. 64]. The aforementioned requires cursory specification.

The first principle accentuates the importance of *acquiring a FL via communicative and cognitive activity* which is viewed as a complex, purposeful, determined by language and stipulated by sociocultural and psychological factors individual process of perceiving reality [1, p. 88]. In its turn, in the artificial language setting the development of communicative and cognitive activity needs to be purportedly stimulated. It can be done by way of creating (or rather modeling) problem situations which enclasp both speech and intellectual difficulties. While overcoming these difficulties students solve set tasks, i.e. they process the information under study by reproducing, substituting, modifying and transforming it, performing at that cognitive operations of analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, induction, deduction, inference, etc., and subsequently produce their own speech output.

The second principle highlights the indication *to employ in the educational process learners' epistemological styles* – the ways through which they cognize the world and acquire knowledge [4, p. 137]. These styles (specifically, empirical, rational and sensual) manifest themselves in various approaches students take to learning a FL.

The third principle postulates the premise that the process of a FL acquisition fosters *developing students' as linguistic personalities*. The idea is maintained that via language an individual becomes part of social consciousness due to which his individual consciousness is developed. Since language is a medium of collective consciousness it is possible to speak of a personality only as part of social consciousness that is exhibited in speech behavior and thus becomes a linguistic personality – a combination of capacities and characteristics that stipulate a person's speech production. The model of a linguistic personality development comprises semantic, cognitive and pragmatic levels [2, p. 3]. It is also hypothesized that within various situations "a linguistic personality" may be exposed as a speech, communicative and cognitive personality in accordance with a set task [1, p. 93].

The fourth principle emphasizes the assumption that *learning a FL conduces and facilitates shaping learners' worldview*. Here the assertion is underscored that the processes of a FL learning and worldview formation are interrelated and overlapping. Simultaneously, shaping students' worldview presumes constructing in their minds a model of acculturation – an abstract schema aiming at an individual's successful adaptation to an alien culture. This model surmises two manifestations of cultural interaction: 1) the ethnocentric attitude based on prioritizing one's own culture and rejecting other cultures; 2) the ethnorelative attitude grounded on recognizing the equality of both native and alien cultures. The premise is highlighted that in the process of a FL acquisition students are expected to focus on ethnorelative interaction with an alien culture [5, p. 114].

The next principle *accentuates the relevance of widening learners' knowledge space*. The issue raised here basically relates to a cognitive performance in the course of which an individual learns to process, categorize, conceptualize and generalize information, make inferences and express the results of this activity via language. It is presumed that such an activity induces the appearing of general notions, concepts and mental constructs in the mind of a person. Being integrated together they create a knowledge space – a corpus of structured units of knowledge (specifically, frames, schemas, scripts, nets, models etc.) which are interconnected to support the functioning of the cognitive system of learners. The units of knowledge are thought to be concepts of different levels of abstraction and complexity. Within the framework of a cognitive paradigm a concept is viewed as an operative meaningful unit of the mind, a quantum of structured knowledge. Moreover, concepts are looked upon as the results of cognition. It means that by synthesizing, analyzing, comparing and integrating various concepts in the process of cognition a person forms new concepts [3, p. 3]. With this in mind, concepts may be considered "constructive mental blocks" of the knowledge space of an individual.

Another principle maintains the idea that *in the process of a FL acquisition students' multiple intelligences are developed and employed*. The notion of multiple intelligences, which H. Gardner defines as "modalities of learning" and "a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems", incorporates linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, musical,

interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily-kinesthetic and naturalist intelligences [6, p. 33–34]. It is deemed that in the process of learning a FL the role of the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences is prioritized as dominant though other types of intelligences are nonetheless involved in a speech and mental activity.

One more principle stresses the importance of *developing learners' ability to conceptualize the input*. Working over the information under study is done by activating mental structures which retain already acquired knowledge in various forms. This process results in unrolling in the mind of a person a mental space in which mental representation of new information is built, and the retaining of this information is done due to imagery turning this representation into a concept [4, p. 135]. Mental representation may be viewed both as a fixed form of structured knowledge and as a procedure implying a mental process for processing information. The indications are therefore that mental representation is a construction, the creation of which depends on a new situation and on the activation of concepts of acquired knowledge in definite conditions for specific purposes. The form of mental representation is considered as a conceptual model or "a model of concepts" – a representation of a certain entity constituted by a composition of concepts which are used to help learners perceive the subject matter that these concepts represent.

The term "conceptual model" may be used to refer to models which are represented by concepts that are formed after a conceptualization process in the mind of an individual. Conceptualization and conceptual modeling are the means that human beings employ for cognition, processing information and solving problems. Conceptual modeling is the activity of formally describing information for specific purposes like understanding and communication. Such an activity results in conceptual models. They range in type from the most concrete to the most general and abstract. They also range in terms of the scope of the subject matter they represent. They may represent a single thing, the whole classes of things and even the vast domains of subject matter. Thus, the variety and scope of conceptual models differ due to the variety of purposes they are used for. Among conceptual models employed in the process of a FL acquisition the most typical are schemas, frames and semantic nets. They may be defined as a system of mental constructs that facilitate learners' receiving, processing, and retrieving the information under study, and utilizing it in speech output of their own via a target language.

On balance, in the process of a FL acquisition both the communicative and the cognitive paradigms are equally manifested. Their combination has induced appearing the communicative and cognitive approach to teaching a FL. This approach has been grounded on basic principles which accentuate the necessity to develop learners' communicative and cognitive skills and capacities.

**RESULTS.** The aforementioned gives a rationale for emphasizing another key aspect of this study – a spiral way of cognition which may be provided by a pertinent model. It signifies that in the course of learning students move from perception of the material under study to speech production through such stages as reproduction, apperception, knowledge incubation, and creative reproduction each solving its specific purposes [1, p. 293–313]. The idea is justified that passing through these stages students acquire congruous knowledge, habits and skills that constitute communicative and cognitive competence.

The singled out stages are on a par with J. Piaget's theory of intelligence [7], according to which any information perceived by an individual goes through such levels as: sensori-motor (sense perception of information), symbolic (mental representation of sensory information into internal mental symbols such as images), logical (discursive-logical conceptualization of information), linguistic (mental accommodation of information via images and verbal codes). The convergence of Piaget's levels of intellectual development of an individual with the stages of learning in pedagogy has resulted in elaborating a communicative and cognitive methodology of a FL acquisition. Overall, this methodology not only encompasses the levels and processes mentioned above but also contributes to them by singling out new stages which enhance adequate understanding of perceived information and foster its further processing, which includes adaptation, modification, interpretation and ultimately, production of new information.

Specifically, at stage one (perception of new information) students are introduced into the global context of communication, reflected in the basic text, which they perceive simultaneously through the visual and auditory sensory channels. Complementary to these, the kinesthetic and logical channels may also be involved. Hence, multisensory perception is conducive to creating holistic mental images, or percepts of the new subject matter. Furthermore, it is at this stage, that in students' endophasia alien speech habits begin their development.

Equally important is stage two (initial reproduction of new information) at which students reproduce speech patterns from the material under study on the superficial level in single-type invariant situations. Consequently, speech habits keep on being formed at this stage.

Logically, the first two stages trigger off singularizing the next stage (apperception of new information) at which students conduct a many-faceted analysis of perceived material, create on its basis conceptual models, thus actualizing the schemata of their mental spaces and inferring new knowledge. It is plausible to assume that this stage may result in the intellectual construction of knowledge by cognizing subjects. From a cognitive view students master a sign-gestalt (E. Tolman) that means cognitive processes which occupy an intermediate position between a stimulus (perceived information) and a response (speech re/production). Due to this, stage three is beneficial for developing cognitive habits of students.

The methodology of developing students' communicative and cognitive competence also takes into consideration such a transitional stage of learning as incubation of acquired knowledge, which provides converting external knowledge units into internal forms or turning explicit information into implicit. Therefore, this stage facilitates further processing the material under study and consequently, mental and communicative performance of students.

Unquestionably essential is stage four (creative speech reproduction of new information) at which students reproduce new material on the creative level in variant situational settings. Presumably, by this time speech and cognitive habits have completed their development and are being refined, and at the same time communicative skills are being formed. Logical thinking of trainees unifies with intuition giving rise to insight or heuristic cognition as the highest level of intellection. As might be expected, this stage is advantageous for the last one.

Finally, at stage five (independent speech production) students utilize learned material in their own meaningful speech output. It is obvious that this stage is similarly creative and is characterized by diversified communicative settings. Accordingly, the wider proposed spectrum of settings, the better communicative and cognitive reconstruction of perceived information one might expect.

In conclusion, it has been shown that students' communicative and cognitive competence is acquired through five stages of learning each of which is distinguished by certain discriminative features and targets. The suggested methodology promotes a spiral way of cognition since every final stage of learning may simultaneously be considered an initial stage of a new curricular cycle.

To sum up, this paper though far from being conclusive nonetheless offers several insights into understanding how the manyfaceted process of a FL acquisition may be effectively conducted. The study has been undertaken to bring to the forefront the cognitive and communicative aspects of an educational process. The suggested conceptual framework of teaching EFL requires a coherent and comprehensive system of communicative and cognitive exercises which outlines a perspective for further research in this domain.

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