Актуальные проблемы развития образования в России и за рубежом

Сборник материалов
международной научной конференции
Россия, г. Москва, 29-30 апреля 2015 г.

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Indeterminacy issues within scope of educational second language acquisition communicative quest building

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Abstract. The article defines Communicative Quest as a flexible, complex and multifaceted methodological tool design in response to the the inter-linguistic and intercultural challenge through innovative modern languages education.

Communicative Quest as a learner-centred teaching technology is based on student's initiative, dealing with indeterminacy in speech step choice-making and communicative strategy building. Indeterminacy in communication construction is regarded as a key incentive for student's communicative, cognitive and meta-cognitive activity.

A typology of major indeterminacy challenges in Communicative Quest building is proposed in the article.

Keywords: Indeterminacy in communication, Communicative Quest building, quest as a complex instructional information processing model

The *quest genre* may be regarded, in a most general approach, as a model for an implicit model finding or rather a model building or as a sort of creative reconstruction of new semiotic world. It may also be viewed as an algorithm of finding the right algorithm or a scenario for writing a scenario. It is about discovering information in the circumstances of scarcity of direct information access. All this might seem a sort of a sheer entertainment game for kids, but there are real life issues like learning second / foreign language and culture, when an attempt of direct exposure in one language is often too vague and too misleading (distorting information) to elicit the real state of things in another. It is the case, when one ought to learn new language to talk about new

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phenomena. The latter statement is closely connected to that one, pinpointed by Claire Kramsch, stressing 'the fact that language not only expresses but also creates new and unexpected realities' (Kramsch, 2000, p. 322). And the task of second language acquisition is sometimes very much the same as changing a standpoint in the world of meaning construction (the latter idea was expressed by Wilhelm von Humboldt in the 19th century). In this connection we distinguish a Communicative Quest technology as a complex innovative methodological means to answer the inter-linguistic and intercultural challenge through education (Tikhomirova, 2013).

There is little doubt that General linguistics has done a good job in explaining the main principles of information exchange in language since Ferdinand de Saussure age. Yet even the most infallible maxims by H. Paul Grice (Grice, 1975) sometimes need adopting some special rules for certain linguistic cultures (or say 'language as discourse' peculiarities). The only obstacle is those special rules are to be discovered by outsiders of target linguistic culture. And here is where the ghost of uncertainty and fear of making a mistake interferes in SLA – second language acquisition process. Now the communicative quest seems to be the right answer in this case. And it does deal with the three major targets and three intersecting aspects of informatics – computational, cognitive and social (Fourman, 2002, p.1). It needs computation for the mathematical assessment the level of complexity and attainability of the task, it needs information logistics for effective quest building, it needs media environment, it needs knowledge data, it needs definite social targets, and 'yes' – it also needs a good deal of understanding students' scope of understanding the game of learning.

The honour of pioneer elaborating and introducing into pedagogy the concept of Web-quest as an innovative informational and pedagogical technology belongs to university San-Diego professor Bernie Dodge (2002 etc.). Nowadays this technology is most popular with teachers of different academic subjects all the world round. As a matter of fact, *communication* as an information sharing, exchange and processing form and a special learning tool plays a significant role in Web-quest technology, based both in computer or face-to-face communication. Within Webquest technology the targeted information elicitation is based on research, analysis, interpersonal exchange (within and

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between different research groups) of pieces of relevant information, as well as on synthesis, sorting out, discussion and decision-making (cf. Dodge, 2008; March, 2003). Taking communication skills / communicative competence as a core authentic constructivist task and task-solving tool makes it possible to claim such term as Communicative Quest (Tikhomirova, 2013). As for the web component, it may be regarded as an optional one, since we consider business networking no less important in vocational training than working on the Internet. The key matter in quests is not just enjoying ready-made information or recipe, but rearranging or altering it (cf. March, 2003, p. 42; Montalto-Rook, 2003, p. 2).

The quest is rich in measurable variables, bonus scores, distinct and clear points of advancement and proficiency levels. These have a lot to do with Gabe Zicherman's idea of gamification (e.g. Zichermann and Linder, 2013) and the feedback-based pedagogy (cf. Giannetto, Chao, Fontana, 2013, pp. 205-206). The motivating power and the students' involvement value make web-quest and its derivative quest type learning activities appealing to modern students. Quest should also be viewed as a fruitful learning tool in vocational blended learning, dealing with a set of practice oriented goals and tasks (Bogatyrev, Tikhomirova, 2013, p. 46 etc.).

Educational quest is a complex technology of a controversial or rather plural (genre) prototype. It is a combination of different game genres and learning styles, such as learning by doing, role-taking, puzzle-solving, researching, interacting, case study and data analysing, reflecting, brainstorming, unlocking, information sharing, monitoring, constructing the algorithm, assembling the relevant model etc. This makes it a multi-faceted learning tool. It also implies creation of a fictional character to fulfil one's mission, student's self-identification with the character, personal involvement, competition, excitement and achievement or failure to accomplish the mission. A good deal of success in any quest is based on personal experience, observation, ingenuity, reflective abilities and critical thinking skills. Yet the main achievement of the student as player consists in letting them grow as well as making the most of them to learn about a virtual or rather a real world practices.

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As Michael Fourman states, informatics includes the study of communication as a process, aimed at linking people together, affecting the behavior of individuals and organizations (Fourman, 2002, p. 2). So it includes management and processing of data, information and knowledge in second language acquisition process for better intercultural cooperation. The improvement of communicative skills is based on a 'second sighted' information processing, pre-conditioned by admitted failures (communicative misfire) and problem-solving reflection on informational / conversational / interactional flow barriers

The big methodological SLA *idea of authenticity* seems to have run into trouble of the ever revolving vicious circle, marking the swing of the pendulum to and fro, linking the unachievable for an outsider introverted and impenetrable authentic *text-production event* to unobtainable for outsiders the authentic insider's text-reception event. Then the problem follows – no guarantee is provided by simple transplantation of the text into another cultural milieu (as mechanically detached from its own social and cultural environment, or say – semiosphere [term coined by Yuri Lotman to denote the world of interconnected texts and symbols]). As a new answer to that challenge, the discovery of authentic language within inauthentic language shifts from external experience to one's own personal experience in quest solving advancement. So now it is Mohammed's turn to approach the mountain. It is the student's turn to make out the principles and the practices of another language as discourse. It is no more the right job for a teacher to tell students the right things – the right job for a teacher now is to govern a pupil as delicately as possible to uncover the new world for oneself. The Communicative Quest structure includes communicative initiative choice options as well as some minor tips (NB! No ready answers!) to facilitate the picking up the trail in the foreign language discourse.

Interpretation of semantic and pragmatic aspects of the utterance is preconditioned by its use in the context of communication. According to the Vladimir Gak's assessment model concerning the conditions of successful understanding in intercultural communication and adequate translation from one language to another, the so named term '*form*' of utterance is contrasted to the notion of '*pragmeme /pragmema*', interpreted as certain social / symbolic function of the act of speech, perceived in certain cultures (Gak, 1998, pp. 570-

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571). Marked with the seal of implicit, symbolic, non-literal meaning *pragmeme* in the context of intercultural communication may function as a *lacuna* – a hidden semantic source of asymmetric semantic or pragmatic interpretation and misunderstanding, an unexpected and incomprehensible for the outsiders unidentified /unrecognized element of foreign language (and communicative culture) discourse (ibidem; Markovina, Sorokin, 2010, p.4 etc.).

So the communicative quest exploits SL lacunae as valuable sources for task-building and coerced students' meta-cognition as well as meta-communicative reflection (Tikhomirova, Bogatyrev, 2015, p.85 etc.). The communicative quest building is viewed as based on indeterminacy factors as challenging sources for virtual experience based *learning by doing* solutions and *reflective analysis* of intercultural differences and intra-cultural rules. These two opposites need to be in good balance to make the progress steady and long-lasting.

Here below we offer both an intercultural communication practice based as well as video-game based typology of indeterminacy for instructional communicative quest building. Some of them seem be to make reversible opposites. Those are marked by 'versus' preposition.

Typology of indeterminacy in communicative quest building

1. Indeterminacy of task *versus* indeterminacy of tools (this one is widely used both ways in PC video games).
2. Indeterminacy of hierarchy of tasks *versus* indeterminacy of tasks accomplishment scenario (3). The latter means indeterminacy of speech move sequence choice, indeterminacy of authentic foreign scripts for successful interpersonal interaction (e.g. in another business culture). That makes a difference, since in some business communication cultures subordinates may instantly contact and tell the boss about a problem, while in other business communication cultures subordinates should address only the closest superior (e.g. Tomalin, 2007, p. 233).
3. Indeterminacy of communicative situation solution *versus* indeterminacy of elements of communicative situation (5).

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4. Indeterminacy of efficient communicative strategy building choice. E.g. speech self-representation, another's image elaboration included (cf. Tikhomirova, Bogatyrev, Bogatyreva, 2014, pp. 92-95).

5. Indeterminacy of interlocutors' predispositions and interpretative sets.

6. Indeterminacy of effective speech move choice at local level as well as at script and scenario level (cf. Bogatyrev, Komina, Krestinskiy, Tikhomirova, 2012, pp. 34-35).

7. Indeterminacy of optimal (lexical/grammatical) substituent in interpreter's practice / translation. E.g. German 'klein' versus English 'little' (Ware, Kramsch, 2005, 196).

PS. The Minor kinds of indeterminacy such as the one of one's turn-taking in conversation and so on are viewed as variants within one of major categories mentioned.

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