COGNITIVE ACTIVITY AS A TOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract. This article explores the crucial role of cognitive activity in enhancing foreign language learning. It argues that traditional methods, while valuable, often fail to engage the full potential of the learner's mind. By actively engaging cognitive processes like memory, attention, and problem-solving, educators can unlock a deeper understanding and more efficient acquisition of the target language. The article provides practical strategies for incorporating cognitive activity into language teaching, including memory-enhancing techniques, attention-grabbing activities, and open-ended tasks that encourage critical thinking and real-world application.

Keywords: cognitive activity, FLE (foreign language education), cognition, interactive technologies, mental activity, methods, mental processes, tools, perception, integration.

Literary Review

Several resources highlight the crucial role of active engagement in enhancing foreign language acquisition. The article "Cognitive Tools for Education" by Helpful Professor (2023) provides concrete examples of mind maps, concept maps, and learning games that promote memory, problem-solving, and deeper understanding. This aligns with the findings of "Cognitive Tools and Mindtools for Collaborative Learning" (2020) by Dillenbourg and Schneider, which emphasizes how these tools foster collaborative knowledge construction and critical thinking.

Understanding how cognitive processes influence learning is crucial for effective pedagogical practices. "Cognitive Activity: Philosophical Analysis, Psychological and Pedagogical Characteristics" (2020) by Khodorkovsky (включен Минюстом РФ в реестр иностранных агентов, прим. ред) et al. delves into various theories that explain the interaction between cognitive activity and learning. Additionally, "Technology for the development of cognitive activity of students" (2022) by Aynur Sultanova specifically explores how cognitive activity can be fostered in foreign language learning contexts.

Introduction:

In the ever-evolving world of education, teaching a foreign language is a rather complicated process, as it is important to develop students comprehensively. A foreign language, as an academic discipline, differs significantly from any other academic subject in various characteristics. Among the main difficulties is that a foreign language acts as a means of forming, formulating, expressing thoughts, that is, a foreign language becomes a means of communication between students, between students and the teacher. Cognitive activity is one of the leading forms of child activity that stimulates educational activity based on cognitive interest. Therefore, the formation of cognitive activity of younger schoolchildren is an integral part of improving teaching methods (teaching and learning). Cognitive activity, on the one hand, is a form of self–organization and self-realization of students, on the other - the result of the efforts of the teacher in organizing educational activities and becoming their subjects of the latter.

The cultivation of cognitive activity in younger students is integral to enhancing teaching methods. This perspective aligns with Rousseau J.J.'s advocacy for activating cognitive activity in education, emphasizing understanding through accessible yet challenging inquiries.

Methods: Since cognitive activity is an activity responsible for several skills of a student, therefore, the methodology of cognitive activity is aimed at the development of these skills.

1. Memory:

Flashcards are a powerful tool for enhancing memory and improving foreign language acquisition. You can implement flashcard by choosing relevant vocabulary and grammar points based on your learning goals and current level. Flashcards help students actively engage with new vocabulary and grammar rules, facilitating information processing and encoding into long-term memory. The process of writing and reviewing flashcards forces you to focus on the information, leading to deeper understanding and more lasting retention. Flashcards allow learners to implement spaced repetition techniques, effectively strengthening memory over time. Revisiting spaced intervals ensures information doesn't fade and reinforces neural pathways for better recall.

2. Problem-solving:

Engaging in debates and discussions is a powerful way to cultivate critical analysis, argumentation, and problem-solving skills in students. Clinton, B. (n.d.), emphasizes that debates are the engine of democracy, testing ideas and fostering a deep understanding of what works. In line with this, these activities prompt participants to critically analyze information, evaluate diverse perspectives, and provide relevant evidence, thereby enhancing critical thinking skills and enabling systematic problem-solving.

3. Critical thinking:

Comprehension questions push beyond basic recall, urging students to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and draw conclusions. These questions, valuable for educators and those enhancing critical thinking, prompt analysis, evidence evaluation, and independent conclusions. Additionally, creative writing in the target language fosters individual expression, perspective analysis, and argumentation skill development.

4. Metacognition:

Peer feedback and evaluation incorporate activities to encourage students to critically assess their own work and provide constructive feedback to others. The aspect of competition and peer evaluation are good stimulus for the learners try to do the best. Class should also have both types of peer evaluation, which are in-group and inter-group evaluation (see figure 2).

Student's name	Self-evaluation	In-group evaluation	Other group's evaluation	Fin
Preparation part			X	

Presentation part	X			
Extra evaluation (questions, etc.)				

Figure 1. Example of evaluation list for the group work

Peer feedback enhances learners' metacognition, the ability to reflect on and regulate thinking processes. Providing and receiving peer feedback exposes students to diverse perspectives, prompting reflection on their own work and consideration of alternative approaches. This process allows students to identify both strengths and weaknesses in their peers' work.

Learners develop a variety of skills when they are engaged in cognitive activities. Next skills can be categorized into several key areas (see figure 2):
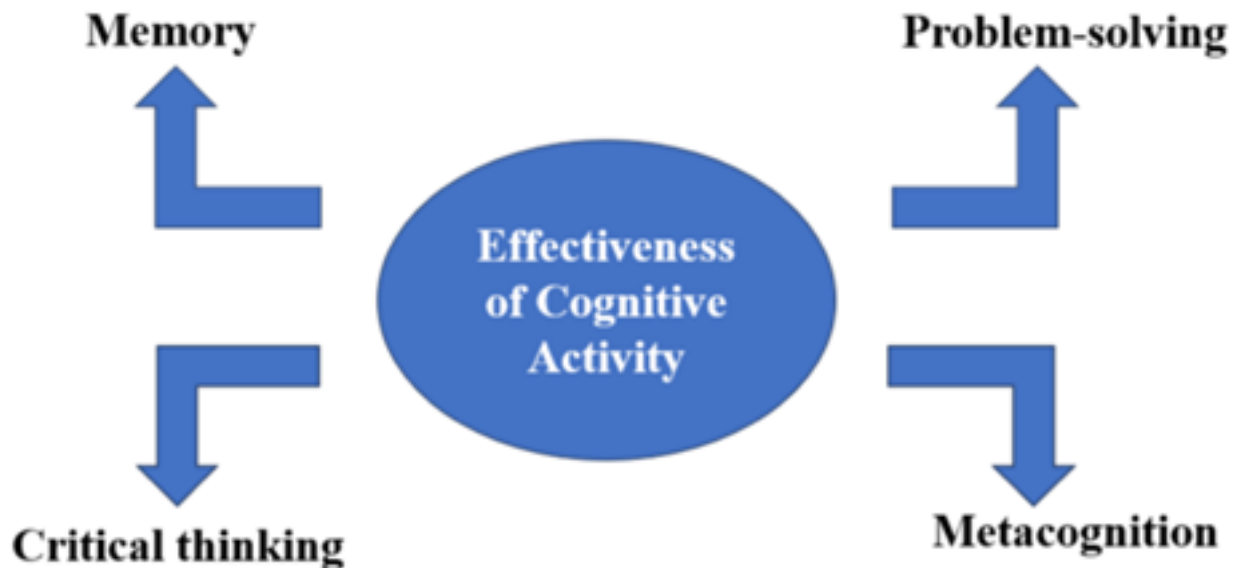
Figure 2. Effectiveness of cognitive activity

1. Memory:

- Encoding: The ability to process and store new information in memory.
- Consolidation: The process of strengthening and solidifying memories over time.
- Retrieval: The ability to access and recall stored information when needed.

2. Problem-solving:

- Analysis: The ability to break down complex problems into smaller, more manageable parts.
- Evaluation: The ability to critically assess information and identify the best solution.
- Planning: The ability to develop a strategy for achieving a desired outcome.

3. Critical thinking:

- Questioning: The ability to ask relevant questions and challenge assumptions.
- Analyzing: The ability to examine information carefully and consider different perspectives.
- Reasoning: The ability to draw logical conclusions based on evidence.

4. Metacognition:

- Awareness: The ability to understand one's own thinking processes.
- Evaluation: The ability to assess the effectiveness of one's own learning strategies.
- Adaptation: The ability to modify one's approach to learning based on the situation.

Results: According to the results of the survey which were conducted to the 10 students, the results show that: 6 out of 10 students, prefer to learn new words with the help of the flashcards. 3 out of 10 students prefer to learn by heart from the dictionary, and 1 student prefer to learn by writing words several times.

In another survey on the use of debate as a catalyst for critical thinking, 6 out of 10 students replied that they often participate in various debates. 3 out of 10 sometimes participate and 1 student very rarely. To the question, 7 answered that they agree, 2 doubt, 1 disagree. 9 out of 10 students observed improvements in their analytical skills as a result of engaging in debates. And only one hasn't noticed it.

Discussion:

Surveying 10 students revealed diverse preferences in vocabulary learning methods, with 6 favoring flashcards. This underscores the popularity and effectiveness of flashcards, offering a visual and interactive approach. In summary, flashcards engage multiple cognitive processes, enhancing learning and retention.

Regarding debates, results show a positive link between participation and critical thinking development among the 10 students surveyed. A majority acknowledged debates' impact, with 60% reporting frequent engagement, indicating notable exposure to this format.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the article delves into the multifaceted realm of foreign language education, emphasizing the pivotal role of cognitive activity in enhancing various skills among students. The exploration of cognitive tools and methodologies aligns with contemporary research and educational philosophies that advocate for active engagement, critical thinking, and metacognition. The article emphasizes the significance of not only embracing active learning strategies but also understanding the underlying theories that inform effective pedagogy. Furthermore, the article recognizes the relevance of exploring Cognitive Load Theory, Active Learning, and Constructivism. These theoretical perspectives provide deeper insights into information processing, student interaction, and knowledge construction, enriching the overall understanding of how cognitive activity influences learning.

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