

# The Use of the Activity Approach in Teaching Foreign Languages in Higher Education Institutions

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**Abstract:** The article characterizes the essence of the activity approach in the aspect of learning foreign languages. The aim of the study is to substantiate the principle of the activity approach to teaching foreign languages in higher education institutions. The main objectives of the study are the development of independent activities of students; promoting teamwork; activation of thinking and communication skills development. Experimental work was carried out at the German Philology Department of the Donetsk National University of according to the training of specialists under the educational program "German language and translation" to work in different areas of philology, education, including higher education. The control group (CG) included 207 students, the experimental group (EG) - 202 students. During the experimental application of the activity approach, we used exercises in teaching vocabulary, grammar, phonetics and reading foreign texts. The essence of teaching methods is revealed, that is divided into three main phases of a foreign language lesson, based on the activity approach: the initial phase, the implementation phase and the analysis phase. The study confirmed the effectiveness of the activity approach in learning a foreign language, namely in teaching vocabulary, grammar, phonetics, and in reading foreign texts.

Based on the results of the empirical research, a training program that will help to increase the level of knowledge and skills of the respondents of the experimental group was developed, based on educational group and frontal consultation and training for both students and teachers in higher educational institutions.

**Keywords:** *personal-activity approach, foreign language teaching, theoretical knowledge, practice-oriented, educational work, higher educational institutions.*

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## **Introduction**

At the current stage of education development, the activity approach to teaching is one of the leading ways, aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of the educational process. The activity approach directs the educational process, not to the passive acquisition of knowledge, but the application of acquired theoretical knowledge in practical types of educational work, and thus to the formation of such key competencies of modern students as the ability to collaborate or to work as a part of a team, ability to self-education to be flexible, etc. The activity approach involves the student's integration to the modern socio-cultural environment, his adaptation to the modern living conditions. The effectiveness of the activity approach depends, first of all, on the interaction between teacher and student, and the student is regarded as an equal partner, as a person at the centre of the entire activity.

Nowadays, the communicative approach, which involves the ability to use the acquired language material in practice and, thus, brings the activity aspect to the forefront, is regarded as a dominant approach in teaching foreign languages. Effective implementation of the activity approach in the educational process not only has a positive impact on the students' level of achievement but also contributes to the formation of a competitive specialist in the labour market.

The implementation of the activity approach into the process of foreign language teaching is a transition to the latest teaching methods, that involve changes in the paradigm the student - the object of learning, into the student - the subject of learning. The main purpose of the activity approach is to teach students to act and to develop the skills and competencies necessary to perform certain actions. It should be noted that the activity approach is based on the recognition of activity as the basis, means and decisive condition for the development of creative and active personality. It is this particular approach that makes it possible to avoid the gap between theoretical knowledge and its use in practice.

## **2. Analysis of recent research and publications**

In the research aspect of the activity approach in teaching foreign languages in higher education institutions, Yoon (2007) offers to limit the role of teachers in teaching English in higher education institutions. Weber-Fève (2009) reveals the perspectives of language and literature integration in teaching text analysis with the introduction and output of the teacher (by type of "exit-exit" approach). Aristizábal-Jiménez (2020) substantiates the

effectiveness of spoken language contribution in the EFL class through critical analysis of the content of the text. Kessler et al. (2020) reveal the essence of the speech approach based on the introduction of authentic tasks in the context of learning a foreign language. Akyildiz and Çelik (2020) consider thinking beyond the view on the EFL teachers' creativity in teaching language. Zou (2020) demonstrates in his research a gamified inverted EFL class for primary education on the perception of students and teachers. Talan et al. (2020) demonstrate the effectiveness of digital and non-digital educational games: a comparative meta-analysis and metathematic analysis in terms of language learning. Cabrera-Solano et al. (2020) enhance the active learning of EFL students using mobile devices "Formative". Zarbafian et al. (2020) synthesized transformative education with dynamic assessment in the development of EFL students' productive skills. Schaefer and Warhol (2019) state, that there is no doubt in teaching EAL students to recognize variations between varieties and registers of speech concepts, that is crucial for the communicative competence formation. Liu et al. (2019) emphasize the effectiveness of the Student Response System (SRS) in the study of English grammar in inverted English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. Lee and Lin (2019) promote the use of motivational strategies by foreign language teachers outside the established framework. Milliner and Dimoski (2019) disclose visualization strategies in ELF student learning. Abdullah et al. (2019) conduct a study on the impact of the inverted class model on the level of motivation of Omani EFL students in English. In the article by Kuzminskyi et al. (2019) types of information support in postgraduate teacher training are systematized. Arboleda-Arboleda and Castro-Garcés (2019) contribute to the study of language in the EFL university classroom through task-based literature. Ortiz Neira (2019) reveals the impact of information deficiencies on the oral mastery of young EFL students. Yin (2019) offers a production-oriented approach to teaching writing in Korea: English as a foreign language experience before the beginning of the teachers' service of reading for writing. Chang and Lin (2019) influence the approach of mobile-based assessment on improving oral language proficiency. Ozverir et al. (2017) study the impact of authentic activities on foreign language learning. Negueruela-Azarola (2011) argues that belief as a conceptualization of activity is the basis of a dialectical approach to foreign language learning.

**The hypothesis** of the research is that the use of an active approach in learning a foreign language helps to improve the foreign language communicative competence of students, in particular, thinking, listening and speaking in a foreign language.

**The aim of the study** is to substantiate the principle of the activity approach to teaching foreign languages in higher education institutions.

The main objectives of the study are the development of independent activities of students; promoting teamwork; activation of thinking and communication skills development.

### 3. Research methodology

#### *3.1. Participants in the experiment*

Experimental work was carried out at the German Philology Department of the Donetsk National University according to the training of specialists (specialization 035.043 German languages and literature (translation included) (the first language- German) under the educational program "German language and translation" to work in different areas of philology, education, including higher education. The control group (CG) included 207 students, the experimental group (EG) - 202 students. The age of the participants of the experiment is 17-21 years. The experiment was approved at the meeting of the academic council of the German Philology Department (Protocol №2 from October 17, 2018). All participants were informed about the experimental conditions and gave consent to participate. All students enrolled in 2-4 courses of this educational program were involved in the experiment on the basis of their voluntary informed consent. Thus, in this work, a quasi-experimental study is carried out, because the design does not include randomization. The ethical rights of the participants are respected. The study was conducted under the natural conditions of the educational process, providing general conditions for participation in the experiment: the same amount of time and duration of the training, the same measuring materials to diagnose the level of competence components information of future translators, the same criteria for assessing academic achievement (higher educational institutions rating system).

#### *3.2. Theoretical basis of using the activity approach to learning foreign languages*

The main purpose of the educational experiment is to test the effectiveness of the developed set of exercises for learning and to determine the possible impact of the activity approach on the results of students.

The essence of the activity approach to teaching foreign languages principle is holistic learning, combined with the activity of students, in which students and teachers are in a mutually balanced relationship. The central part of the learning process is the student, who with the help of a teacher-

partner, mentor, assistant finds his way of self-development. The teacher's activity gradually recedes into the background. Thus, the activity approach is a preparation for independent problem solving and trains the future specialist for professional activity. The main task is to teach students to work or perform actions and operations, whereby activities are realized.

The basic concept of the activity approach is the task, i.e. the performance of actions by one or more individuals who in a strategic sequence use their competencies in order to achieve a certain result. The number of completed tasks and determines the language learner's level.

In most cases, *the activity approach to teaching* is not considered separately, but in combination with other components of problem-based learning. Thus, the main approaches include personal-activity, problem-activity, and communicative-activity approaches.

*The personal-activity approach* is realized by the unity of two components - personal and activity. The personal approach lies in the need to into account the characteristics of the student as a personality (age, gender, psychological composition, motivation, etc.), that contributes to the selection of individual tasks to stimulate the activity of each student. Within the activity component, the student acts at the same moment as a subject of two types of activity: educational activity (line of activity development) and foreign language speech activity (line of communicative development).

*The problem-activity approach* is close to the personality-activity approach. The organization of the educational process in this approach is based on the problem principle. The student, as a subject of learning, independently chooses the way to achieve the goal and in the process of solving the problem situation acquires new knowledge.

*The communicative-activity approach* brings communication to the forefront as one of the main student's activities, aimed at acquiring new knowledge. The activity approach to speech processes studies the processes of speech construction, as well as the perception and formation of speech in their correlation to the language system. Learning activities involve primarily the formation of basic activities, i.e. communication, cognitive and educational activities; purposeful formation of basic skills and abilities as mental actions based on step-by-step practice.

If the aim of learning a foreign language are skills, the fixed content and topic become the core components of a foreign language lesson, aimed at developing speech skills and using a foreign language as the main means of communication. Thus, the activity approach in the lesson consists of three levels: psychological, didactic and methodical, and is carried out through modeling and analysis of life situations, use of active and interactive

methods, participation in project activities, mastering research techniques, involving students in-game and project activities.

### ***3.3. Methods of conducting a research***

From the teaching methods standpoint, there are at least three main phases of a foreign language lesson, based on the activity approach: the initial phase, the implementation phase and the analysis phase. In the initial phase, students are acquainted with the task (topic, problem situation), it is determined (together with the teacher), what information (knowledge) students have and what they need to solve the proposed task, goals are formulated and actions are determined (by students themselves). set goal. In the implementation phase, the necessary information is searched, certain actions related to the processing of the necessary material are performed, a presentation of the achieved results is prepared. In the analysis phase, students present the received information. Moreover, in the third phase, there is an analysis of the obtained results, it is determined whether the students achieved the goal set in the first phase, whether they found answers to all questions, whether they were able to justify their research and so on. The lesson, developed on the basis of the activity approach, is primarily aimed at the development of speaking foreign language skills, at teaching students to react spontaneously and express their opinion and position. For conducting the experiment, we selected the control groups and experimental groups with approximately the same composition and initial level of knowledge of the German language.

To test the effectiveness of the activity approach in teaching foreign languages experimentally, a group of 2nd and 3rd-year students, who study German as a second foreign language was identified. Students have a basic level of knowledge of German B1.1. For the experiment, the aspect "Home Reading" aspect was chosen. The duration of the experiment was one module.

The first stage involves the activation of students' background knowledge and their involvement in foreign language speech activities. At this stage, students were offered two techniques: the method of "Introduction to the text", i.e. students read the first sentence of the next section of the book and try to guess what will be written in this section; the method "Continuing the sentence" - students read the first sentences of each paragraph and continued them, trying to guess the events depicted in this passage. These techniques helped to increase the motivation of students for further work with textual material in class and the development of their imagination and creativity.

In the second stage, students worked directly with the text. The first offered task was a keyword search task, which activates students' memory and helps them to learn new vocabulary. The next step was to form sentences with certain keywords. This task made it possible to practice not only vocabulary but also grammatical constructions, pronunciation, and intonation. At the next stage, students were divided into micro-groups, each of the groups worked with its passage. The task was to translate the passage in one sentence, using keywords. This task intensified such basic competence as teamwork.

*The third final stage* was based exclusively on the activity approach. For a limited time, students visualized the events of the chapter on a poster and presented it, either depicting scenes from the passage, getting into character, or retelling the plot of section one by one, focusing on the illustrations to it. This enabled us to focus students on the development of figurative thinking, creative approach to completing the task, and imagination.

In particular, during the experimental application of the activity approach, we used exercises in teaching vocabulary, grammar, phonetics and reading foreign texts.

*The use of activity approach in teaching vocabulary.* Learning any foreign language is impossible without the formation of lexical skills. The main stages of mastering lexical material during foreign language lesson include: pronouncing a new word - creating its sound image; multiple repetitions of new knowledge; awareness of the meaning of the word; reproductive use in substitution exercises and word recognition exercises; use of a new lexeme in oral speech in a foreign language class, productive use of the word; independent activity.

According to the activity approach, any new information should be learnt through active actions, i.e. students should actively work with language material. Thus, during the lesson, focused on vocabulary, such exercises can be offered: "Recognition by touch", students are asked to close their eyes to recognize the object by touch and describe it, which is used to arouse students' interest and certain actions with objects before semanticization of words and "Description of the word with gestures, movements, etc.", that activates the interest of students and develops their imagination through actions, in the proposed case - gestures or movements, students visualize the flow of their thoughts and others.

The use of the activity approach also has its advantages in teaching grammar, since the practical application for communicative purposes is the main task of grammar is its.

The stages of studying grammar material in a foreign language lesson include: understanding the grammatical phenomenon and its multiple reproductions in exercises under the teacher's guidance; use of the phenomenon in communication, exercises in communication, with teachers and classmates.

*The use of the activity approach in teaching grammar.* Consider the activity methods of teaching foreign language grammar:

- *"Picture description" technique.* In performing this task, students work in pairs. One of them receives a picture, and the other - a blank sheet of paper. The task is as follows: the first student is asked to describe the image in the picture, using the given grammatical constructions, so that his partner can draw the identical on the blank sheet of paper. When varying the task, the room can be described either by the teacher, or one of the students and all the other should draw the pictures. Besides, this task can be performed this type one by one. The peculiarity of the task is that when performing it, students not only practice a separate grammatical topic but also involve their full range of knowledge, both from previous grammatical and lexical topics. These types of tasks require some flexibility and creativity in their implementation

- *"Brainstorming" technique.* The task is that to form as many definite grammatical constructions as possible for a given period, according to the topic being studied, and thus to train them. The task can be performed both individually and in groups. Such multiple repetitions of the same grammatical constructions bring communicative skills to automatism, etc.

These types of exercises not only contribute to mastering the grammar topic but also train memory.

*The use of an activity approach in teaching phonetics.* The main condition for teaching phonetic material is the active use of motor memory, i.e. full study of phonetic material is impossible without multiple repetition and imitation.

Mastering phonetic skills usually occur in the following sequence: intuitive learning of phonetic phenomena based on reproductive use and listening; multiple repetitions of the phonetic phenomenon in the classroom by the teacher; conscious assimilation of sounds and their use. Conscious assimilation of sounds is built through the analysis of their formation and their perception by ear.

Let's consider different methods of studying the phonetics of a foreign language based on the activity approach:

- *"Perception by ear" technique.* The teacher reads the text (it can be a fragment from a famous work or a poem), and the students' task is to count how many times a certain sound, certain stressed and unstressed words or

long and short sounds were found in the text. Depending on the complexity of the task, the text can be read several times.

- *"Imitation after the teacher" technique*. Students repeat the text after the teacher, clearly imitating his voice, pronunciation, intonation. For better mastering, students first repeat in the chorus, and then one by one.

- *"Study of sounds through external actions" technique*. The essence of this technique is that a certain sound is assigned its action (raising hands, clapping, clicking, stomping, etc.). The student's task is to perform this action after hearing the sound. Thus, in the form of the game students not only recognize sound images but also form stable ideas about them based on associations. This exercise is also relevant in learning a foreign language alphabet. Each letter is assigned its object and the action associated with it, for example, B - ballerina. The student, hearing the word that begins with this letter, must stand in the position of a ballerina and say the word heard.

*The use of the activity approach in reading foreign texts*. The main task of reading foreign texts is not only the development of the ability to read correctly but also to understand the information contained in authentic texts, to analyze and apply it in practice, as well as to recognize the hidden content. In addition, reading contributes to the improvement of communicative competence (expanding student's vocabulary and grammatical structures), the development of figurative thinking and improving the ability to express their thoughts. When using the activity approach, students are asked to predict the topic of the text based on its title, illustrations, or keywords. In addition, students analyze the main idea of the work, the author's opinion, purpose and try to predict the course of events. Thus students independently choose ways of realization of the set task. The task can be performed both individually and in a group. The teacher can offer a project based on the results of the task, in particular the visualization of their thoughts and ideas with the subsequent presentation. Thus, the creativity and independence of students are further developed, their motivation and interest in reading increases.

Exercises, offered within the activity approach in reading classes can be divided into the following groups: pre-text, text and post-text.

*Pre-text exercises can be represented by the following techniques:*

- *"Associative assumptions" technique*. Students are divided into groups, each of them works with certain hints to the text (illustrations, title, the cover of the book, keywords, etc.). The task is to express their views on events in the text, making predictions about the plot based on the suggested clues. Alternatively, students can be asked to work with annotations and text reviews.

- "*Acquaintance with the text*" technique. Students read only the first or last sentence of the text and also try to guess what it is about;

- "*Keywords*" technique. Students are divided into teams and, working with annotations and / or reviews of the text, select keywords that in their opinion, specific to the offered text. When the time is up, the results are compared and discussed, with each team providing arguments in support of the selected keywords. Thus, students develop new vocabulary, develop thinking, learn to argue their thoughts;

- "*Continuing the sentence*" technique. This technique belongs to the next group of pre-text exercises. Once the topic of the text has been clarified and defined, students are asked to continue the first sentences of the text. Students in turn read the sentence and complete it at their discretion. Thus, students' are more interested and motivated in further reading of the text and work with it.

*Text exercises are represented by the following techniques:*

- "*Transfer of content in one sentence*" technique. After reading the whole text, students are asked to convey the content of the text in one sentence. The exercise trains students' imaginative thinking, creativity, independence and flexibility. A variant of this exercise is the "*Transmission of content by keywords*" technique;

- "*Search of thought*" technique. The task of this exercise is to read the text selectively. For a given time, students must find in the text/passage from the text/paragraph a sentence that indicates its main idea or idea and justifies their opinion.

*Post-text exercises:*

- "*Broken phone*" technique. The teacher chooses a student who leaves the classroom for a few minutes and will not hear the text. The teacher reads the text once and invites the student to return to class. Students who have listened to the text should retell their content in as much detail as possible. Each student can supplement the sentence of another by adding new information or correcting it;

- "*Content visualization*" technique. Students are divided into groups; each receives a certain passage from the text. After reading this passage, students schematically depict the plot of their passage on a poster and present the poster. Students from other groups try to reproduce the events described in the text with the help of pictures. After all the passages are presented, the students all together try to arrange them in the correct order and reproduce the whole text.

### ***3.4. The research instruments***

At the ascertaining stage of the research implemented the study of the students' thinking formation in the conditions of mastering the German language, using such psychodiagnostic tools as the method of determining the activity of verbal and visual thinking; methods "Comparison of concepts" (2015) to assess conceptual thinking; methodology of the free-associative test to determine the complexity of thinking in a foreign (German) language "Activity of verbal and visual thinking" (2017); method "Erudite" by Rezapkina (2005) to diagnose the level of students' mental operations development; methodology of written and oral testing "Free associative test" (Kozlyakovskiy, 2005: 30), which allows determining the level of formation of students in four types of speech activity in the process of learning German. The questionnaire offered by Gerbachevsky (2019) was used to determine the level of success in teaching language learning and to compare the control section of the respondents' results.

The complexity of students' thinking, namely: logical and grammatical reactions, was tested by us using a free-associative test. To do this, at the first stage of the experiment, a group of words-stimulus on various topics in the amount of 20 Ukrainian-language units belonging to different parts of speech - nouns, verbs, adjectives. In the second stage, which was held after several classes, 20 words-stimulus were selected in German.

After conducting an associative experiment in Ukrainian, we consistently compared the stimulus-response pairs in two categories: logical (central and peripheral) and grammatical (syntagmatic and paradigmatic) reactions. If there was a logical connection between the word-stimulus and the association (for example operation - surgery, book - read, etc.), then we made a note in the column "central logical reaction". There are 600 such associations, which is 68.2% of the total number. If the connection between the stimulus and the reaction was not found (for example run - pen, salty - coffee, etc.), the pair belonged to the column "peripheral reaction". There are 280 such units, which is 31.8%.

Both in the first, and the second case, in response to the suggested word-stimulus, students must write in their notebooks any first word that comes to their minds. The teacher reads the words in such a way that after each word 5-6 seconds needed to record the reaction were left. After performing the associative experiment, the teacher consistently compares the recorded students' reactions by categories of logic, that in turn are divided into central and peripheral reactions, and grammar, that is divided

into syntagmatic and paradigmatic subgroups. The percentage of reactions-associations obtained in the native language is calculated by adding the proportion:

$$a_n * 100\% / n = x\%, \text{ where:}$$

$a_n$  – the sum of the reactions of each series;

$n = 880$  – total number of answers;

$x\%$  – the average value we get as a result.

Assessing the level of students' foreign vocabulary and grammar mastering by using the first three test methods, involves the implementation of four relevant tasks (using an activity approach in teaching vocabulary, grammar, phonetics and reading foreign texts) for 45 minutes each. The total number of points for each correctly completed task is 12. These methods will help to determine the level of general skills and abilities of German language students (low, medium, high) to apply a differentiated approach in their learning, as well as to identify difficulties in mastering the language and timely measures to overcome weak sides.

To diagnose the level of the students' mental operations development, we chose offered by *Rezapkina (2005) method "Erudite"*. It consists of four tasks, each of them reveals the level of development of basic mental operations (analogies, classification, generalization, search for patterns) on the material of the German language. The fourth task is aimed at studying the ability to analyze and synthesize symbolic information. The "Erudite" method can be used to assess the success of different groups of students and the effectiveness of different programs and teaching methods. Working on the test takes one lesson. Each student was given answer sheets and worksheets. The maximum number of points for all completed tasks - 40. According to the indexation of results: 35-40 points - a high level of knowledge; 27-34 points - sufficient, 19-26 points - medium, 11-18 points - low.

In order to determine the level of *free and translated bilingualism* of the tested students, we consider it necessary to calculate the coincidence coefficient of reactions to stimulus words in the native (Ukrainian) language to further compare it with the coefficient of coincidence of reactions to stimulus words in foreign (German) language. To do this, use the following formula:

$$K_{\text{capacity}} = n_{\text{capacity}} / N_r * 100\%, \text{ Ae}$$

$K_{\text{capacity}}$  – the coefficient of matching reactions;

$n_{\text{capacity}}$  – the number of Ukrainian-language reactions that coincided is equal to 332;

$N_r$  – the total number of reactions is equal to 880.

Thus:

$$K_{\text{capacity}} = 332/880 * 100\% = 37.7\%.$$

After four classes, the second stage of the free-associative test with the use of reaction words in a foreign (German) language was conducted for students.

*Gerbachevsky (2019) questionnaire* is designed to identify the levels of claims of the subject by diagnosing the components of the motivational structure of personality. Time to complete tasks is not limited. Depending on the specific situation, the task can be performed intermittently, which will certify the truth of the statements.

*The demand level* is a social position, occupied by the individual and consolidated through his individual choice. In our study, we used the Gerbachevsky (2019) questionnaire in terms of determining the real actions and motives to assess the activity approach of students in teaching German. The discrepancy between the human demands and the real capabilities, that leads to the fact that he begins to misjudge himself, his behavior becomes inadequate, emotional breakdowns occur, anxiety increases. It follows that the demand level is closely related to self-esteem and motivation to succeed in various activities.

According to this methodology, the level of demand: the norm, a realistic level of claims, characterizes the result from 60 to 89 points. The most optimal - a relatively high level - from 75 to 89 points, which confirms the optimal idea of their capabilities, which is an important factor in personal development. A score of 90 to 100 usually indicates a low, uncritical attitude of children to their capabilities. A score of fewer than 60 points indicates a low level of claims, it is an indicator of adverse personality development.

#### **4. Results**

During the experiment, students positively responded to the offered types of activities and noted their effectiveness.

The study provides an empirical model of the students' interdependence of thinking and speaking in the foreign language study on the interpretation of results according to the indicators of the abovementioned methods. Its four-factor structure was determined using factor analysis procedures (SPSS-22: 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' according to version 22) (Table 1).

The essence of factor analysis is to design a matrix of values of  $n$ -dimensional space in  $k$ -dimensional, and  $k < n$ , i.e. space, the matrix of where the values are projected, has a smaller dimension than the one in which the

matrix itself is located. The basis of this factor analysis interpretation is the presentation of the survey results of the matrix values of  $A (n * N)$ , in which  $n$  is the number of variables, and  $N$  is the number of respondents. Therefore, the survey results are presented as a combination of  $N$  points in  $n$ -dimensional space. Each factor is a group of interrelated features that determine the meaningful interpretation of this factor. In this case, one factor combines closely correlated with each other features (values approaching 1). Features of various factors are characterized by a weak correlation. A negative correlation indicates the lack of similarity of the studied features.

**Table 1.** The interdependence of thinking and speaking in the students' study of a foreign language

The content of thinking and speaking	The factor load of the structure			
	Activity approach in teaching vocabulary	Activity approach in teaching vocabulary	Activity approach in teaching phonetics	Activity approach in reading foreign texts
Activity of verbal and figurative thinking. Verbal speed	0.644	0.133	0.464	0.232
Activity of verbal and figurative thinking. Figurative speed	0.234	0.911	0.134	0.109
Activity of verbal and figurative thinking. Verbal flexibility	0.964	0.111	0.328	0.317
Activity of verbal and figurative thinking. Figurative flexibility	-0.160	0.819	-0.062	-0.008
Comparison operation	0.777	0.324	0.049	0.112
Analysis operation	-0.058	0.210	0.834	0.721

Synthesis operation	0.340	0.719	0.366	0.290
Classification	0.630	-0.017	0.254	0.173
Generalization	-0.185	0.587	0.214	0.270
Patterns search	-0.311	-0.150	0.672	0.420
Central associative logical reaction (foreign language)	0.729	-0.243	-0.442	-0.135
Peripheral associative logical reaction (foreign language)	-0.035	0.705	0.167	0.123
Syntagmatic associative logical reaction (foreign language)	-0.608	0.284	0.313	0.227
Paradigmatic associative logical reaction (foreign language)	0.066	0.252	0.709	0.304
Central associative grammatical reaction (native language)	0.708	0.065	0.044	0.033
Peripheral associative grammatical reaction (native language)	0.472	0.712	0.095	0.041
Grammatical associative reaction of syntax (native language)	0.677	0.324	0.191	0.093
Paradigmatic associative grammatical reaction (native language)	0.271	0.34	0.777	0.23

As indicated in Table 1, the content of the first factor of the model "Activity approach in teaching vocabulary" is represented by the following load: the activity of verbal and figurative thinking and verbal flexibility (0.964); comparison operation (0.777); associative logical reaction - central (foreign language): 0.729; associative logical reaction - central (native language): 0.738; associative grammatical reaction - syntagmatic (native language): 0.677.

The content of the second factor "Activity approach in teaching vocabulary" has the following load: the activity of verbal and figurative thinking - figurative speed (0.911); the activity of verbal and figurative thinking - figurative flexibility (0,819); establishing analogies (0.719); generalizations (0.587); associative logical reaction - peripheral (foreign language): 0.705; associative logical reaction - peripheral (native language): 0.712.

Regarding the third factor "Activity approach in teaching phonetics" the following content is defined: separation operation (0,834); patterns search (0.672); associative logical reaction - paradigmatic (foreign language): 0.709; associative logical reaction - paradigmatic (native language): 0.777.

According to the fourth factor "Activity approach in reading foreign texts" the following complexity of features is distinguished: analysis operation (0.721); patterns search (0.420); associative logical reaction - paradigmatic (foreign language): 0.304.

Thus, at the level of factor links, the main interdependence models of thinking, language and foreign speech are identified, which can be taken into account by teachers in the educational process. Given the applied significance of the studied phenomena, we will focus on the analysis of indicators of thinking activity based on speed and flexibility according to three test methods (Table 2).

**Table 2.** The level of CG students' academic achievement in German according to the three test methods at the constant stage (N = 207 students)

Beginner level			Intermediate level				Sufficient level				High level				
Points		%	Points		%		Points		%		Points		%		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	10	11	12	
0	0	18	9.1	39	25	25	43.2	10	11	6	22.7	22	27	2	25.0

According to Table 2, the largest number of students - 43.2% - have an intermediate level of knowledge of the German language. However, if we pay attention to the average score, which is equal to 7, we can state that

students speak German at a sufficient level. 25% of respondents have a high level of knowledge, and 9.1% - primary. Students often make stylistic, spelling mistakes, grammatical mistakes in the use of tenses, in verb conjugation to express person, in the use of articles, prepositions, etc. The obtained data allow us to conclude that it is necessary to work diligently on improving the students' communicative skills in the German language, especially paying attention to the replenishment of foreign vocabulary and the development of grammatical competence. In the future, this will help improve the quality and level of students' education. We can state the following results of this educational experiment: increasing the motivation of students to learn a foreign language; social speech skills development at the basic level; improving self-organization and self-learning; use of the received knowledge in practice. In EG we predominantly observe high indicators of the effectiveness of these measurements (high level - 92.4% (187 people)), that does not require more detailed coverage.

The reasoning of the effectiveness using assessing the performance using three test methods does not fully reveal the picture of students' knowledge of German, so we consider it necessary to make a more detailed diagnosis of foreign language speaking skills of students.

The obtained results indicate the knowledge level of the two groups of respondents in Table 3. According to the data of mathematical processing, we highlight significant results that confirm our assumptions. The level of knowledge in CG is lower both in general and in such criteria as the use of the activity approach in teaching vocabulary, grammar, phonetics and reading foreign texts than in EG. Statistical analysis and arithmetic mean calculations with standard deviation were performed using the statistical software package SPSS-22.

Differences in the CG in the forms of manifestation of the activity approach in the teaching of vocabulary, phonetics and grammar were statistically significant, with exceeding the standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) at all progress levels.

**Table 3.** The results of indicators on the students' progress level in learning foreign languages in CG and EG

Form of the activity approach	Group	Low		Medium		High	
		person	%	person	%	person	%
The use of the activity approach in teaching vocabulary	CG	57	27.3	94	45.4	56	27.0
	EG	0	0	95	47.3	107	52.7

The use of activity approach in teaching grammar	CG	70	34.1	131	63.6	6	2.3
	EG	0	0	72	35.6	130	64.4
The use of activity approach in teaching phonetics	CG	122	59.1	61	29.5	24	11.4
	EG	0	0	85	42.3	117	57.7
The use of the activity approach in reading foreign texts	CG	127	61.4	72	34.4	8	4.5
	EG	0	0	129	64.2	73	35.8

According to Table 2, the obtained experimental data on the method of determining the verbal and visual thinking activity demonstrates, that the sample of EG students is quite exemplary indicators of thinking activity in the application of activity approach in teaching vocabulary, that is considered as an exemplary variant of imitation in foreign languages. Less indicative concerning the thinking activity is the progress level of the respondents in CG in teaching phonetics of foreign words. In general, taking into account the obtained average values, the low level of activity in this group in terms of indicators in teaching phonetics and reading foreign texts prevails, which indicates a significant lack of knowledge of German among students of this group.

When identifying similarities, students gave more definitions based on generic features and purpose of the analyzed object or concept or indicated their visual features only. The answers were concise, there was no vagueness of opinion and no tendency of tangentially. In general, students' thinking is characterized by standards, intellectual sufficiency, but sometimes there is infantilism in comparisons and a tendency to concretize concepts.

The obtained indicators show that the central logical reactions prevail in the students' thinking process. This indicates the development of mental processes, the cognitive sphere, and the level of thinking development of the vast majority of respondents. However, a significant proportion is also answers related to peripheral logical reactions, which indicates the probable rigidity of speech-thinking processes.

The coefficient of coincidence (KSPR) of reactions allows us to conclude that the more often students give the same associative reactions, the more reasons we have to talk about the socio-psychological phenomenon of "cohesion". If we compare the coefficients of coincidence of associative reactions to Ukrainian and German words-stimuli, - accordingly, 37.7% and 32.6%, we can state that in this case the bilingualism

of students is based on translation and is insufficient for free communication, and the level of thinking in a foreign language is lower than average, with a predominance of peripheral logic and syntagmatic grammar.

Thus, the study demonstrated that the level of the knowledge acquisition of the German language in CG is lower than of the respondents of EG. This applies not only to the general assessment of CG respondents but also to individual components of their knowledge acquisition: such characteristics as the use of activity approach in teaching vocabulary, grammar, phonetics and reading foreign texts - they rate themselves lower than their peers in EG.

After determining the general provisions of academic performance in the research groups and their interrelation with the levels of knowledge acquisition using the method of Gerbachevsky (2019), the main indicators of the students' demand level were identified. According to these data, the demand level of the CG is quite low, given that 35% of them have a medium level, and 48% - a low level. However, almost 17% of students, that participated in the study have high levels of aspirations, which indicates their sufficient motivation to achieve and lack of desire to excel. As noted in the literature, namely the low demand levels can be attributed to the failure of the individual in the activity. Thus, among EG students 13% have a low level, 46% - average, and 41% - a high level of claims. Thus, if we compare the results of students of both groups, it can be noted that in the control group the demand level is slightly lower as compared to students of EG and this difference is quite significant.

As for the low indicators of the knowledge acquisition level and the demand level, and their connection with good performance in educational activities, the opposite result in both study groups is found. We found that students with low levels of knowledge acquisition and level of aspirations were also overwhelmingly unsuccessful in their studies and, consequently, in their leading activities.

Thus, the experiment also revealed factors that inhibited the process of implementing the activity approach to the learning process in CG. These include limited time, insufficient level of students' basic knowledge and their unwillingness to fully student-centered classes, during which the student is given complete independence in choosing the way to achieve the goal effectively, and the teacher acts only as a guiding partner, provides advice on the way to the goal. Numerical indicators for these measurements are not significant enough and therefore do not deserve a more detailed description. Subsequently, a formative experiment was conducted with the CG of individuals to increase the success of students in learning.

Based on the results of the empirical study, a training program was developed, that, in our opinion, will help increase the level of knowledge and skills of CG respondents, based on educational group and frontal consultations and training for students and teachers of higher educational institutions the disclosure of which will serve as a prospect for our further research.

In evaluating the results of the study of student performance based on three test methods to determine the level of mastery of foreign language vocabulary and grammar at the formative stage, the following data was obtained (Table 4).

**Table 4.** The level of students' academic achievement in the German language according to three test methods (N = 207 students)

Beginner level			Intermediate level				Sufficient level			High level					
Points			Points				Points			Points					
%			%				%			%					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12				
0	0	0	0	12	9	31	25.0	25	34	21	38.6	35	25	15	36.4

According to Table 2, 25% of students have an intermediate level of knowledge of the German language. We observe that at the formative stage of the study after the implementation of the experimental development program, this indicator decreased by 18.2% compared to the figure of 43.2%, which we received at the statement stage. The average score, which was equal to 7, increased to 8.3. This allows us to state that students speak German at a sufficient level with a positive tendency to high because it was found that 36.4% of respondents have a high level of knowledge. The high-level indicator increased by 11.4% as compared to the statement stage. Such changes in the mental and intellectual activities of students indicate the effectiveness of our experimental program.

Thus, the result of future translator's self-realization is the product of his independent activity: own value and semantic interpretation of educational material, the introduction of different scale authorial modifications in the recommended pedagogical technique; co-working to create new experiences in collaboration with colleagues; the transition to a higher level of foreign language proficiency, which is naturally necessary for the development of an innovative educational environment as a goal of professional education of future translators.

## 5. Discussion of results

The ascertaining stage of the research was carried out, during which the levels of students' thinking and speech formation in conditions of mastering a foreign language were empirically studied by applying various psychodiagnostic methods. Due to the method of determining the verbal and visual thinking activity, it was found that these features are developed in students at a low level. The comparative method has demonstrated that students' thinking is standard, intellectually sufficient, but it sometimes shows signs of infantilism and a tendency to concretize concepts. Using a free-associative test based on Ukrainian and German lexical items, the complexity of students' thinking and the level of their bilingualism was checked. This test revealed that the ability of respondents to identify similar objects and features in their native language indicates complex thinking, but there is a lack of analytical operations and some infantilism of thinking. During the testing of students in a foreign language, it was investigated that the available knowledge causes delayed reactions and delayed responses, which indicates a violation of the dynamics of mental processes and inertia of thinking.

The reactions coefficient indicates "cohesion" due to the same orientation of consciousness, the same age, being in the same communicative environment, as well as the fact that students' bilingualism is translational and insufficient for free communication and is below average. The application of Rezapkina's (2005) method "Erudite" also showed that students have lower than average levels of thinking, indicated by difficulties in solving problems in a foreign language.

Psychodiagnostics of foreign language speech using the test methods enabled us to conclude that students master foreign language material at an average level with a quality index of 47.7%. The level of their education is 90.9%. The reason for such low points is gaps in the lexical and grammatical competence of students. Comprehensive (written and oral) testing demonstrated that knowledge of a foreign language does not correspond to the norms of the German language, since according to the obtained indicators, 75% of students have an average and sufficient level of knowledge.

The results of the ascertaining stage of thinking psychodiagnostic, speech, and the demand level indicate a low level of thinking ability or practical inability of students to use communication skills in foreign language learning activities and the imperfection of the existing system of work on foreign language material. All these problems motivate us to develop a better

program for the development of foreign language thinking and the ability to communicate to eliminate gaps in students' knowledge and thought processes in the conditions of mastering a foreign language. The results of this study are directly relevant in the international cooperation established in the study of the German language and the implementation of a program of cultural exchange, which is carried out in the development of education and culture between countries.

Thus, the activity approach requires special efforts aimed at selecting and organizing the activities of the individual, activating and transferring it to the position of the subject of knowledge, work and communication, which, in turn, involves developing skills to choose a goal, plan activities, organize, perform, regulate, control it, analyze and evaluate its results. Thus, the main provision of the activity approach is to create the necessary conditions to stimulate the positive potential of learners, continuous improvement, openness to new experiences, new knowledge, continuous development, and most importantly - to enjoy their self-improvement and work, the development of professional personalities. traits and abilities, professional knowledge, and skills. The activity approach underlies any activity, including speech.

The results of the study confirmed the effectiveness of the approaches of scientists Kessler et al. (2020) to the learning a foreign language. The importance of authentic language activity in the study of a foreign language, considered by Ozverir et al. (2017), is confirmed.

The study confirmed the effectiveness of the activity approach in learning a foreign language, namely in teaching vocabulary, grammar, phonetics, and in reading foreign texts.

The significance of this study lies in the implementation of innovative teaching ideas that will contribute to the closer acquisition of non-native languages at the international level.

## **Conclusions**

The carried out experiment enabled us to test the effectiveness of the activity approach in practice, to determine the positive and negative factors that affect its effectiveness and learning activities of students when using this approach in foreign language classes. The study also found that to increase the effectiveness and overcome the negative factors influencing the activity approach to students' learning activities, it is necessary to combine this approach with other approaches, methods and techniques of teaching. In this way, you can avoid monotony in foreign language classes and thus

increase students' interest in the subject and their motivation to be active in foreign language classes. The study confirmed the effectiveness of the activity approach in learning a foreign language, namely in teaching vocabulary, grammar, phonetics, and in reading foreign texts.

However, despite a low number of noted negative factors, we should note the positive impact of the activity approach on students' speech competence and their results.

Thus, the experiment enables us to state, that the use of the activity approach in foreign language classes is a very effective means of enhancing students' communication activities and a motivational stimulus to raise their interest in learning foreign languages.

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