



# Interactive teaching approach in the context of the virtualized and non-virtualized educational process

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# **Interactive teaching approach in the context of the virtualized and non-virtualized educational process**

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## **Abstract**

This research note presents preliminary findings on how interactivity affects educational space. It describes the peculiar features of interactivity and its criterion within an educational process. The study investigates the challenges and profits of interactive teaching in the context of distance learning and virtualized education space. The conclusion made about the difference between interaction as an integral part of any virtualized educational process and the phenomenon of interactivity as a peculiar situation emerging within the educational process. It was supposed further that a student involved into interactive educational situation becomes an actor constituting educational process in the context of a particular class or educational process segment. Author observes the phenomenon of interactivity in the situation of a Face-to-Face class in its relation to a "sign" and an "actor" as main research theoretical categories. University students group and polycultural child groups compared in the research. Author considers in the publication that an example of creating a situation of interactivity in the class draws conclusions about interactive pedagogical techniques implementation in a multicultural student environment.

## **Interactivity and the virtualized educational space.**

Interactivity in education is rather often associated with the spread of ICT and new technologies like ChatGPT attached recently to the educational process. Those technologies have gained more popularity and attention since the coronavirus period when only distant education or online education was available for most students during the long periods of self-isolation. Still, I suppose that interactivity shouldn't be directly associated with ICT spread in the educational process only.

On the contrary, online tasks are not necessarily interactive. Quite a huge amount of digital educational material reproduces traditional learning techniques (test tasks, crossword puzzles, dictionary flashcards, etc.). Moreover, to some extent, we can even observe a narrowing of interactivity in some cases:

- (a) interaction is exclusively mediated by ICT ("I'm talking to a stove or an iron wall", not communicating with a person);
- (b) interaction does not involve changing the attitudes of participants or actors, who are supposed to fulfill already set tasks (emphasis on action within the algorithm);
- (c) "pseudo-interaction" — like Google forms with specified response parameters (online testing or interview forms with already prepared answers).

Similarly, interactivity should not stem directly from the very fact of communication or speaking activity in the context of the educational process in a Face-to-Face class. As an example, let's see an interview in the classroom. There is a communication with several students. But this communication doesn't open space for any personal impact:

- 1) the set parameters (standard forms of questions and answers, time limitation, formalized recording, et cetera);
- 2) there is no exchange of opinions and changes in the attitudes of interaction actors (the aim is to reproduce particular grammar and lexis to upgrade speaking skills);
- 3) the moment of communication is limited in time and content. It does not imply the possibility of further discourse or show only limited possibilities for the one.

So a question could occur: what could be considered as an example of interactivity? What can show us at what point it occurs? What could be the parameters providing interactivity in the class? In my opinion, it wouldn't be too much exaggeration to suppose that the first interactive teaching forms occurred at the moment of the appearance of the first lyceum in Athens, where Socrates's students were learning through a discourse. The teaching itself at that period was based on a mutual reasoning that is especially necessary in the modern world. I think so because in this perspective the learning process is not just a process of mastering new knowledge and obtaining new skills. It focuses more on mastering the ability to think or to formulate a problem and to seek its solutions not through denial or violence but through public discourse, the ability to organize such a discourse and express own Self in this discursive space.

Thus, Vasilieva A.V. believes that interactive should include only those technologies of distant and virtual education that allow (1) to create a situation of direct and totally or just partially undefined interaction between actors (Vasilieva, 2020); (2) create an opportunity not only to gain knowledge but also to master practical skills and abilities, including those not directly related to the contents of educational resource (Vasilieva, 2021).

Vanyagina V. R. adds to these considerations another necessary condition for creating interactivity when using digital technologies. That is the "real-time" mode of operation. That means «inclusion» or «the engagement» of a learner in the educational situation at all three levels of communication: emotional, behavioral, and cognitive (Vanyagina, 2021, p.49). It seems to be rather a crucial aspect since it creates for the learner a situation of immersion in live communication when the technology itself acts only as a technical mean to help unite learners within a particular educational space and process though the participants themselves could be geographically distanced from each other. The main point here is that real-time mode becomes a way to start an open dialogue or communication with no foresight result of it. It focuses more on the skills and abilities of actors themselves in organizing open discourse within an educational situation. That is creating interactivity itself.

In my opinion, the interactivity should be divided here from the interaction that is an inevitable and integral part of any form of distant education or online education. The interactivity itself is a special state or characteristic of an interaction in which the traditional dialogical structure when the teacher is a leader and the student is a follower is disintegrated. The individual student acquires the properties of an actor, and the result of a specific interaction in the context of the educational process obtains a partially unpredictable character. The teacher and the trainees become equally creative actors in the context of the educational process, creating a space of dialogue or discourse. Their interaction allows the creation and mastering of existing knowledge. But it also becomes the basis for creating a new or different vision of an already known subject due to generational, cross-cultural, or other differences. Dialogue arising in the context of the educational space becomes "...a form of semantic communication that provides deep insight into the life world of a person (own existential and intentions) based on a developed reflexive ability" (Alexandrov Evgeniy P., Gritsenko Vasiliy P., 2019, p. 59). The interactivity skill itself is mastered through such communication as the ability to create some innovation or «the other» understanding within already set of certain parameters in the context of interaction within the educational process. It becomes a person's integral element of personal human capital. It gives a person the capability to become a creator rather than a consumer within the educational process.

At the same time, interactivity assumes that the process of creating a «new» thing occurs in the context of a constant challenge when there is a change in one's personal vision or concept due to interaction with other participants.

The very situation of teaching a foreign language with a native speaker teacher is

a manifestation of interactivity. This situation is also reinforced by the possibility of being in a group of foreign students when the educational space of the audience turns into a "crossroads of cultures: behind each one, there is an idea of the world conditioned by national consciousness"(Crystal D., 2003). Then the reading of the contents of video or graphic material used in the lesson turns into a form of polycultural communication, where everyone adds a personal understanding of a particular image, conditioned by individual and cultural differences, creating culturally-filled sign constructs, «...through the comparison of different cultures», when «...a new semantic field is created»(Abakumova Irina V., Mironenkova Natalia N., 2023, p. 187). Communication and interaction about understanding these sign constructs also seem to be one of the potential forms of interactivity within the educational space.

It seems to be even more applicable for a group of students with multiple cultural backgrounds and identities. This is both an external discourse and an internal discourse, awareness of the commonality and points of dialogue between different cultures that form the basis of the core identity within a polycultural educational space.

At the same time, there are also researches where interactivity is directly connected not with the virtualization or digitalization of educational space and process, but with the organization of some form of "an open dialogue" of a polycultural nature in the context of the process of learning a foreign language(Prilukova E.G., et al., 2023). In that context, the foreign language itself creates a possibility for interactive communication. That seems to be so as learning foreign languages involves alongside the study of grammar and vocabulary, the interiorization of a certain cultural context, which acts as a system of signs for the learner. Thus, the concepts of

- an actor as an active participant in the educational process,
  - and the sign, which is considered as knowledge, involving not only study but also "awareness", "introspection" and cultural decoding,
- are of particular importance.

## **Actor**

The actor is one of the most developed and actively used conceptual units in modern sociology and other humanitarian knowledge. The etymology of the word comes from the Latin Actor. In Russian humanitarian knowledge, initially, it was a transliteration of the English-language term Actor, French Acteur, or German Aktor. The original meaning of the concept is "actor" or "one who acts, a doer, an

active participant". It appears in the scientific discourse from Roman and Greek law, where it meant "a person who has performed an action or created a certain state"(Law Encyclopedia, 2015).

Modern sociological theory understands an actor as "a participant in discourse and a person implementing actions"(Habermas J., 1995, p. 21), and "... the main thing in human action ... is to establish a person's relationship to the world, moreover to the objective world, and at the same time to establish distinctions between the action itself and the world (the objective world of nature, social, subjective world)"(Habermas J., 1995, p. 157). A. Touraine draws attention to the actor's ability to (1) self-positioning ("Me" is different from "the Other"), (2) social recognition (as a carrier of a particular role), (3) actual realization as an actor, that is, a doer. In the last point, he pays special attention to the actor's ability to resolve social reality (making own decisions, social action, and changing oneself and the surrounding social reality)(Touraine A., 1998). «The behavior of actors is actively, directly or indirectly aimed at expanding their field of freedom, that is, their ability to act»(Bahmarova V. 2012, p. 86).

Considering a student as a participant in the educational process and as an actor, we see a significant difference. Becoming an actor in the educational process, the student acquires the possibility and ability to restructure the educational space, giving it new parameters and changing the educational situation through interaction with other participants within the educational process. If we recall the essential features of interactivity, then we can pay attention to the similarity and interrelation of both concepts. The student as an actor still positions himself as a "student" and seeks to gain social recognition from the teacher and other participants in the educational process. On the other hand, the student strives to gain new knowledge and master new skills. Student's participation is not passive, as an actor the student makes decisions and carries out actions to change the social reality surrounding through the learning process (cognition, naming, establishing links between phenomena, et cetera).

The peculiarity of a polycultural educational environment, when a group consists of students with different cultural identities, or the students who are themselves the bearers of two or more cultural backgrounds at once, consists primarily in the ability of the student to "translate" "symbols" or "signs" from one socio-cultural system to another and to create a special, new form of "sign", which, for example, Vygotsky L. considered as an impossible one. He even mentioned the need to study a foreign language only after fully mastering the native language. The reason is the inability of the child to realize, and "internalize" the system of signs of both

languages at the same time.

The experience of multicultural education in the modern world, especially when it comes to children's education and the situation of a multicultural child who is a carrier of several cultural backgrounds, to some extent refutes this thesis. In the course of a student's training, such an actor of the educational process does not only simultaneously undergo the process of interiorization of "symbols" or "signs" of various cultural systems. He turns out to be capable of creating a "sign" of a different type.

Interpreting Vygotsky's idea of language learning through understanding, a polycultural student "reads" and "internalizes" each of his languages through the culture to which this language belongs. Culture itself is understood by the student as a system of signs correlated with "analogous" signs in another culture.

However, there is a very significant difference: such a student exists in a situation where the same sign often existing in the form of a word is perceived by a person as a true reality in the context of a particular culture, depending on the interlocutor. At the same time, this sign may not exist, or it may have a different reading within another cultural basis.

In the case of a polycultural group, such a mismatch of signs can become the basis for the emergence of cross-cultural discourse in the context of the educational process. In the case of a polycultural student, this discourse is simultaneously internalized and projected into the external environment through interaction with coevals. The "sign" turns into a problem that needs to be recognized, discussed, and adjusted in the context of various cultural codes that form the basis of the identity of a polycultural student.

This poses the problem of interpreting the term "sign" in a somewhat new way.

## **Sign**

In the context of the educational process, the student does not encounter a system of "signs" that need to be "translated" into the language of another culture, which he does not master once in a time, but "lives" within this discourse throughout the entire period of study. Thus, the "sign" is on one hand a mechanism for the formation of polyculturalism, an object of learning, and on the other hand a symbolic unit. In the latter meaning, "sign" is considered a visualized language unit (word, image, et cetera). Each sign becomes an integral element of educational content that bears a peculiar meaning and acts as an associative factor in teaching the second and further languages and cultures.

The concept of a sign is not a new one within humanitarian studies. It has gained

much attention, particularly in sociological and psychological studies. First, let's see how Vygotsky L. explains this notion in the context of child and teenager educational processes. The "symbol" or "sign" is analyzed at the moment of its internalization or interiorization by the actor. But if within the framework of a separate educational system, we are talking only about the process of interiorization, then in the situation of a polycultural student, any «symbol» or «sign» goes through the stage of "secondary interiorization" when it correlates with a similar «symbol» or «sign» from another cultural basis, the bearer of which is also a same student. In the situation of a lack of a direct analog between the "got-to-know sign" from other cultural backgrounds, the student "translates" the corresponding "symbols" into the language of terms understandable within an own personal cultural system. Thus, the student intimately, but consciously creates a system of cross-cultural "bridges and channels" that allows one to connect in mind heterogeneous mentalities, the carrier of which a particular student is.

Vygotsky L. also speaks of the "sign" as a dynamic element of the educational process. In his view, this element gradually becomes saturated with meaning. This process of saturation changes sign internal structure making it more complicated. As Vygotsky L. notes, "...a lump of rags or a piece of wood becomes a baby inside the game situation. It happens because they allow the same gestures that depict carrying a small child in his arms or feeding the baby. The child's movement is what gives the sign function to the corresponding object, which gives it meaning."(Vygotsky L., 1994, p. 121).

This game does not arise in one moment but is trained by a child in a process with rules and gestures gradually becoming more and more sophisticated. Such rising complication indicates that the semantic meaning of the sign is being filled with new aspects. The sign is no longer just a separate gesture. A sign is a complex image of a certain model of social behavior.

Vygotsky L. in his understanding of the sign moves from the awareness of the child in the learning process. His "sign" is primarily individual, and only after that can be socially and culturally conditioned. Vygotsky L. believes that the child's direct process of mastering signs via new knowledge is extremely complicated since it is not yet based on understanding, but only on mechanical reproduction. He believes that the process of assimilation of new knowledge can be represented in the form of the following formula — an indirect connection between "A" and "B" through associations via the element "X".

This confirms the nonverbal behavior of the child:

"The child, when looking at the pencil, immediately looks at the paper and only



then reacts with his right hand"(Vygotsky L., 2005, p. 317-318).

«A» acts as an initial stimulus, and «B» is the desired result, which the child cannot achieve directly, since this knowledge is not yet available to him. «X» is an associative factor that sometimes can not be foreseen or predicted even by the Actor himself. But the most interesting point here is that the child is aware of its meaning and sees it as a sign explaining «B» and showing connections between «A» and «B». The adult or teacher doesn't know for sure or can predict what is going to be that factor «X» either. Thus the situation of uncertainty is created when more explanation is needed from the child and that leads us to the creativity of the educational process.

Therefore this process resorts to creating stable associative connections, where operating with knowledge already known or understandable, the child learns something new, for example, learns primary reading skills and letters. Vygotsky adds that "... what is new is the direction of a certain process of closing the connection using the sign ..."(Vygotsky L., 2005, p. 319).

In the situation of a multicultural student, this process no longer looks planar, but multidimensional. We can say so because the student doesn't only learn the signs of one particular Culture but moves within this scheme. At the same time, the polycultural student must correlate these signs with the signs of another cultural system, the knowledge of which is available to him, thus multiplying factor "X" and creating echoes or replicas of "A" and "B" found in other personal cultural backgrounds. Vygotsky's theory shows how the «sign» can help foster creativity in the educational process, but it doesn't reveal fully the phenomenon of interactivity and its implications on the sign's nature.

Let's try to correlate the psychological and pedagogical concept of sign in Vygotsky's theory and modern sociocultural theories.

Lotman's sign and discourse theory seems to be the most promising one in this context. That corresponds to other recent studies of the notion of "sign" in Russian Humanities.

Thus, Borisova T.V. emphasizes the thesis of Lotman Y.M., where an accent made upon the fact that the "sign" initially contains many layers of the information:

"The most familiar idea of a sign is associated with the idea of some content, which, in turn, serves as a plan of expression for another, usually culturally more valuable content"(Borisova T., 2019, p. 146).

This is especially relevant in the context of the fact that any educational contents is a product of a certain culture(Starygina A., 2014). It has already been mentioned above that when talking about the creativity of the educational process, we should

not forget about the cultural conditionality of educational content as the internal content of this structure, thus becoming a base for discourse and a root for the creative actions within the educational process. It is that particular aspect of interactivity that gains special significance within polycultural student groups or when a teacher is dealing with polycultural students.

Mamardashvili draws attention to the fact that a sign is primarily a product of our consciousness, and the language in which the "sign" is fixed as a semantic unit is secondary: "When a person moves to an established structure of linguistic thinking, the very fact that he remains in this state of linguistic thinking indicates that he's out of consciousness."(Mamardashvili M., Pyatigorsky A., 1997, p. 40).

In this regard, he echoes the concept of Vygotsky, who also speaks of the sign as something that a child should understand, and realize. And language is only a way of manifesting this awareness. It can be assumed that it is a typical situation when the child understands the language more than he is already able to speak.

It seems that the term "understanding" used by Vygotsky means more than just knowledge. It means even an awareness of the content of an abstract sign, some kind of connection of sounds, letters, words, and images that can be combined as complicated signs as a result of sign-creating process.

First of all, it is the "consciousness and experience" of some external object concerning the learner(Rosiychuk T., 2016, p. 20), which allows the new knowledge to "live" and be internalized as a part of the internal personal code. That is, to become aware of oneself through naming the surrounding reality, which appears as a complex system of signs that require decoding. The word itself is also considered to be a "sign". That is the object that the learner first realizes, the object that lives itself within a particular situation; an object or a phenomenon. the student "experiences" it and gives it a certain meaning and only then correlates it with this or that word or other phenomenon already known, thus the learner "... with the help of the word learns to understand oneself"(Vygotsky L., 1984, p. 66). So, the sign-creating process is interactive and personally orientated at the same time. The emerging signs become interiorized and change into an integral part of the polycultural student identity. Such interiorization is primarily a process of understanding or awareness of the meaning of signs and their acceptance. The task of the student is not only to "understand" and to develop a sociocultural sign. The task is also to decipher its meaning, to reveal its cultural code. A polycultural student is forced to carry out this process simultaneously in two or more sociocultural backgrounds.

For example, as a response to the question in the course of the lesson, if it

is possible to bring out examples of literary images in Japanese and Russian children's literature that would have a similar meaning<sup>i</sup>, L. (15 years, Kobe, the Russian Language School attached to the Center «Rodina») offers to compare the images of Dyadya Styopa (Uncle Styopa)<sup>ii</sup> and the hero of the Japanese anime, a policeman named Kankichi Ryotsu (両津勘吉, Ryo-san)<sup>iii</sup>.

There is no possibility of a direct comparison of the images here since the visual series of Russian literary character corresponds in Japanese culture to the image of the totalitarian USSR of the 30s-50s. While anime character personality reflects the Japanese anime culture of the 1980s.

Therefore L. rather translates the image of "Uncle Styopa" into the language of Japanese mentality than looks for some corresponding images. The student finds both images similar to personal perception by picking out certain associative features of both characters ("kind, protects children, funny, gets into ridiculous situations, smart but stupid, children call him «uncle», policeman"). Externally, both "signs" are different (different historical periods, almost opposite appearance, different behaviors), but with a process of cultural signs decoding made by the student, the inner structure of both signs is cleared up showing some common points. The associative features are built precisely on the principle of searching for a cultural meaning, "understanding" the essence of these signs (culturally conditioned values expressed by these "symbols" within a particular cultural background) and only than compared.

But such a "sign" example seems to be distinctive from the one L.S. Vygotsky is talking about. It is closer to the interpretation of Lotman Y.M. In Vygotsky's understanding, the "sign" is a reflection of the definition of a cultural system, it carries an "easy-to-understand" meaning that helps the child to realize oneself as an integral unity of a particular society.

The "translation" process shown in the previous example and generated by a polycultural student leads to the appearance of a different type of sign — a polycultural one. The uniqueness of this process is that the sign does not lose its cultural basis or collapse, but its structure becomes more complex and multi-layered when one sign of a particular culture is interconnected and joined with a similar sign of another culture.

Still, both signs do not vanish but combine a new form of the sign that embodies the symbolic foundations of both cultures. These basics do not mix but are separated by the child. On the other hand, they exist for the child as a single unity, combined via a system of associations, and cultural similarities, creating a kind of cross-cultural bridges connecting the original signs. Thus, such cross-cultural

bridges could form new ways of inter-cultural in-class communication aimed at overcoming cross-cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings.

This understanding of the "sign" is also close to the logic of Cassirer E. He speaks of a modern civilization as about a "universe of signs." But these signs are not well-established. They do not only carry a historical and cultural meaning. These signs are "discursive"(Cassirer E., 1998, p. 469, Focht. B.A., p. 762), discussed and changed by society and social actors.

That's what a polycultural student does within the learning process. The difference in this discourse lies in its internal nature. The student seems to be conducting a dialogue within himself, building complex polycultural signs.

At the same time, this understanding of the sign is close to the sociological interpretation by P. Bourdieu, who understands the sign as a bearer of «symbolic power» when the ability of an Actor to «express» or give meaning to a particular sign is seen by P. Bourdieu as an act of "nomination power" (Bourdieu P., 2007, pp. 27-30). That is, by naming social reality, actors attach a crucial importance to it, as they build a system of dispositions between "Me" and "The surrounding reality". Culturally-colored signs help a multicultural student to build his own special, multidimensional system of dispositions that defines his "Me"-image in the surrounding social reality combining for him two or more cultural backgrounds.

### **Interactive methods in class implementation**

Let's analyze as an example a usage of one of the interactive teaching methods that can be applied to face-to-face classes. This teaching method is based upon free and open communication between the students — an association method or «Joining the common group». There could be two variants possible for this method implementation.

- (1) This variant is better for bigger groups (15 students and more). A student group gets a set of cards with some vocabulary written. Each student gets from 1 to 3 cards. They can exchange cards and discuss them. The task is to find students with the cards that could be assembled into 1 team based on the same common meaning or association. After forming a team students can add some more vocabulary based on the same meaning or association. It was used for the bigger university students groups.
- (2) This variant can be used for smaller groups (less than 15 students). The same card set is spread on the table and the students are asked to re-assemble the cards into groups based on the same common meaning or associations. After assembling cards into groups they can add some more

vocabulary based on the same meaning or association as in the previous scenario. This variant was used for bilingual kids groups and smaller university student groups.

Both variants suppose an open and prolonged communication between the students within an educational process. It was also supposed that the card combinations could be different depending on several factors, including language levels, student age, learning motivation, et cetera. It can be proposed either that the cross-cultural context, differences in mentalities, and different cultural backgrounds could also influence the card assembling process.

It should be added also that students are free to assemble the cards in any way and to create or use them for any story until they can explain their choice and a base for card combination. As well as they can also re-assemble the cards if they find the result of the first card combination disappointing to them.

The same set of cards was used for a Saturday school bilingual children group (a group of polycultural students) and for university student groups ( groups of students presenting mostly same cultural background, studying Russian as a foreign language, 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, level A2 of the Russian language; 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, level A2-B1 of the Russian language,)<sup>iv</sup>.

Table 1. Teaching method usage result

<b>Cards set and and topics used to make cards</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> year of study</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> year of study</b>
Topic: belongings (вещи, которые беру с собой Words: bag, pen, pencil, book (сумка, ручка, карандаш, книга)	Topic: in winter in the city for the weekend Words: coffee, winter, metro, bus, stop. Additionally: wife, cafe, frost (Тема: зимой в городе на выходные Слова: кофе, зима, метро, автобус, остановка. Дополнительно: жена, кафе, мороз)	Topic: Winter day. Words: winter, cafe, breakfast, coffee, bus, skiing Additionally: No (Тема: зимний день. Слова: зима, кафе, завтрак, кофе, автобус, лыжи Дополнительно: нет)
Topic: daily life (повседневная жизнь) Words: news, phone, job, rest (новости, телефон, работа, отдых)	Topic: Autumn day Words: autumn, square, book, mushrooms, work	

Topic: transport, vehicles  
(транспорт )

Words: ski, bike, subway,  
bus, bus stop, station,  
train (лыжи, велосипед,  
метро, автобус,  
остановка, станция)

Topic: city (город)

Words: theatre, cafe,  
square, house, park  
(театр, кафе, площадь,  
дом, парк)

Topic: nature (природа)

Words: cat, mushrooms,  
birds, flowers (кот,  
грибы, птицы, цветы)

Topic: food & drinks (еда)

Words: coffee, soup,  
bread, breakfast, lunch  
(кофе, суп, хлеб,  
завтрак, обед)

Topic: seasons (времена  
года)

Words: winter, spring,  
autumn, summer (зима,  
весна, осень, лето)

Topic: weather (погода)

Words: wind, sun, snow,  
rain (ветер, солнце, снег,  
дождь)

Topic: Summer  
holidays

Words: sun, pencil,  
book, pen, flowers,  
summer  
Additionally: student,  
rest, mood

(Тема: летние  
каникулы  
Слова: солнце,  
карандаш, книга,  
ручка, цветы, лето  
Дополнительно:  
студентка, отдых,  
настроение)

Topic: Cheerful rest

Words: theater,  
mushrooms, park,  
square, station, rest  
Additionally: village,  
ballet, train, time  
(Тема: Весёлый отдых  
Слова: театр, грибы,  
парк, площадь,  
станция, отдых  
Дополнительно:  
деревня, балет, поезд,  
время)

Additionally: No

(Тема: осенний день  
Слова: осень, площадь,  
книга, грибы, работа  
Дополнительно: нет)

Topic: Summer holidays

Words: summer, house, rain,  
cat, birds  
Additionally: No  
(Тема: каникулы летом  
Слова: лето, дом, дождь,  
кот, птицы  
Дополнительно: нет)

Topic: Walk

Words: spring, sun, park,  
flowers, rest  
Additionally: No  
(Тема: прогулка  
Слова: весна, солнце,  
парк, цветы, отдых  
Дополнительно: нет)

Topic: meeting

Words: wind, snow, news,  
phone, pen, pencil, bag  
Additionally: No  
(Тема: встреча  
Слова: ветер, снег,  
новости, телефон, ручка,  
карандаш, сумка  
Дополнительно: нет)

*Note: Some cards haven't been chosen or assembled into any group.*

The common points that we can see analyzing the results of method implementation in university student group classes are the following:

- most topics are describing everyday life activities in this or that way;
- some typical associations are repeating. They are connected mostly with the seasons, like the following examples: winter - coffee, cafe; autumn mushrooms, square (I asked the students about "Cheerful rest", and they told me that it is the middle of October when it's warm, but not hot);
- there are some direct associations connected with the usage of the thing, like assembling in the same groups the words pen-book-pencil; sun-flowers.

But these comments are just preliminary observations that do not create a base to make any conclusions. There is a necessity to prolong this comparison and method implementation to get more sociologically valuable results.

An example of using this method in a Saturday Russian Language school (Kobe, Школа русского языка при российско-японском культурном центре «Родина») showed more complicated results that need some more explanation. I used the cards in an A2-B1 class (7- 9 years old children, 9 participants). The students of this class are already able to read and speak Russian at an Intermediate level and are partially acquainted with the basics of Russian culture. On the first attempt, the students assembled the cards the same way as the topics were supposed. However unsatisfied with the result, they asked for a chance to re-assemble the cards. They re-assembled them three more times each time creating new groups and new associations to assemble the cards. The last attempt even included a reproduction of two Russian children's literature stories they knew well:

- Words used: «pencil, house, birds, flowers, cat(masc.) (карандаш, дом, птицы, цветы, кот, masc). The last word was changed to cat, female noun (кошка). Additional words: dog, yard, ducks (собака, двор, утки). Story: Suteev «Fanciful cat» (Сутеев «Капризная кошка»);
- Words used: «square, house, cat (masc., added word forms cat(fem.), kittens), job, bus (mistaken usage, confused with a tram) (площадь, дом, кот (добавили формы слова «кошка» и «котят»), работа, автобус (перепутали с трамваем)). Additional words: window, mummy, teacher (fem.) (окно, мама, учительница). Story: S. Mikhalkov «What have you got?» (поем) (С. Михалков «А что у вас?»)

The last result was not expected or predicted before the class and could to some extent prove that the usage of interactive methods in a polycultural class helps also to show cultural backgrounds and to clear up cultural differences. On one side, both stories are incorporated into the basic cultural code that small children

in Russia get known at early ages ( 4 - 7 years). On the other hand, the idea of combining cards and the stories they knew, not only those created by themselves, but also could show these children's capability to create associations between their cultural backgrounds and the vocabulary used in this particular class (few children have at least 2 cultural backgrounds — Russian and Japanese, but most children have more difficult cultural backgrounds set, including plus 1 or 2 more cultures to their identities, like Ukrainian, Kazakh, Tatar et cetera, depending on the cultural backgrounds of their parents and close connections within foreign communities in Japan). I asked the children further if they could combine the cards so that their associations would be based on some Japanese stories and the kids proposed assembling cards based on Momo-taro, Sazae-san, and some other popular Japanese anime, but we didn't have enough time through the class to complete this task. Still, the children didn't see that challenge as an impossible one.

So, compared to Japanese student groups studying Russian as a foreign language, who created stories mostly based on everyday life activities, polycultural children group students tried to create more culturally diversified stories based on the same set of cards. Of course, the differences in youth and child psychology, language level, studies' motivation, and others, also influenced the result of usage of this method.

Still, it seems to be possible to assume that usage of this particular teaching method in a polycultural group, consisting of students with different cultural backgrounds and mentalities can help in revealing their cultural codes and possibly could help in creating a space and a situation for an open cross-cultural dialogue within an educational space when students could introduce stories from their cultures to the group, thus helping others to understand better their cultural backgrounds and creating new topics for the communication inside the group.

On the other way, despite differences in language level and study motivation (第二外国語 at one university and Russian language as basic at the other university) between student groups in Japanese universities, the stories created and cards assembling looked alike that could also be explained to some extent by the students' common cultural background.

## **Conclusions:**

1) The article briefly considered the problem of interactivity in the context of the educational process. The characteristic features of interactivity in the context of the educational process were identified, such as the non-predetermination of the communication process, and opportunities for open dialogue and discourse within



the educational process.

2) It was concluded that there is an indirect relationship between the virtualization of education and the interactivity of the educational process. On the contrary, it was suggested that interactivity is not directly related to the virtualization of the educational process but is a specific form of communication in the context of student-teacher and student-student interaction and communication within a group based on an open dialogue and discursive practices.

3) Special opportunities for the development of interactivity arise in the context of a polycultural group (when the group consists of students with different cultural backgrounds or a group that includes students with mixed cultural backgrounds bearing the foundations of several cultural systems). In this situation, the learning process itself becomes a form of cross-cultural discourse that allows a participant to better recognize other cultures and master the skills of cross-cultural dialogue.

4) The example of using interactive pedagogical methods considered in the article also showed that the result of the task depends not only on the level of the language, and motivation but also on the level of proficiency in the cultural context of the language studied and, thus, allows us to talk about the process of teaching a second foreign language as a mixed process of linguistic and cross-cultural learning.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup>That is, in fact, they would reflect one iconic symbol or «sign», expressed differently in both cultures.

<sup>ii</sup>A picture from the soviet animation (1964) based on a poem written by S. Mikhalkov «Uncle Styopa» and first published in 1935. URL: [https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fkino.mail.ru%2Fnews%2F52507\\_spokoinoi\\_nochi\\_malishi\\_predstavit\\_serial\\_po\\_dyade\\_stepe\\_%2F&psig=AOvVaw0YZXeUNc1FSuail0IZe9SG&ust=1696399025948000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBEQjRxqFwoTCODC0-Gh2YEDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fkino.mail.ru%2Fnews%2F52507_spokoinoi_nochi_malishi_predstavit_serial_po_dyade_stepe_%2F&psig=AOvVaw0YZXeUNc1FSuail0IZe9SG&ust=1696399025948000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBEQjRxqFwoTCODC0-Gh2YEDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE) ,



2023.09.19

<sup>iii</sup>秋本治の漫画『こちら葛飾区亀有公園前派出所』の主人公 , since 1952, URL: <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%B8%A1%E6%B4%A5%E5%8B%98%E5%90%89> , 2023.09.30

<sup>iv</sup> I used the results of my work in classes done at Kobe Saturday Russian School (Russian-Japanese cultural center «Rodina»), Kobe City University of Foreign Studies, Osaka Metropolitan University in 2022-2023. In particular, the Saturday School, where I used interactive methods regularly in classes presenting here one of the examples where I used the same method as for university students. In other situations, interactive methods used in classes of university student groups and Saturday school bilingual children groups had some peculiar differences.