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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN A VIRTUAL REALITY ENVIRONMENT

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virtual reality, English language teaching, pedagogical mechanisms, psychological mechanisms, immersive learning, learning motivation, communicative competence.

ANNOTATION

This article provides a theoretical examination of the pedagogical and psychological mechanisms involved in teaching English through virtual reality technologies. The didactic potential of virtual learning environments and their role in enhancing learners’ cognitive engagement, intrinsic motivation, and communicative competence are analyzed. Particular emphasis is placed on the psychological impact of VR-based instruction, including the effectiveness of immersion, emotional involvement, and interactive learning mechanisms. The findings of the study contribute to the development of methodological recommendations for integrating innovative technologies into English language teaching practice. This article presents a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the psychological and pedagogical foundations of teaching English in a virtual reality (VR) environment. The study explores the didactic possibilities of immersive technologies and examines how VR-based instruction transforms traditional language learning into an interactive, experience-oriented process. Particular attention is given to the integration of activity-based learning, interactivity, visualization, and learner-centered approaches within virtual educational spaces. The paper analyzes the cognitive, affective, and motivational dimensions of VR-supported English language teaching. It highlights how immersion, emotional engagement, and simulated real-life communicative situations contribute to the development of learners’ intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and communicative competence. The role of social interaction, observation, and collaborative learning in virtual contexts is also examined from the perspective of contemporary psychological theories. Furthermore, the article substantiates that the effectiveness of VR-based English instruction depends on the coordinated implementation of pedagogical objectives and psychological mechanisms. The findings emphasize that immersive virtual environments not only enhance learners’ speech activity and language retention but also reduce psychological barriers and increase confidence in communication. The study provides methodological insights for integrating virtual reality technologies into modern English language teaching practice and outlines перспективные directions for further innovation in digital pedagogy.

Introduction. In recent years, the rapid development of digital technologies in education has led to the emergence of new approaches to organizing and managing the learning process. In particular, the integration of virtual reality (VR) technologies into educational practice has become a significant factor in improving the content, forms, and methods of instruction. Learning environments created through virtual reality provide learners with opportunities to actively participate in artificially simulated situations that approximate real-life contexts, which in turn supports conscious and stable knowledge acquisition.

In foreign language education, including English language teaching, limiting instruction to traditional reproductive methods does not ensure sufficient effectiveness in developing learners’ speech activity and communicative competence. Therefore, there is a growing need to employ interactive, learner-centered, and immersion-based educational technologies. Virtual reality technologies serve as an effective tool to meet this demand by engaging learners in authentic communicative situations in English and thereby activating their productive language use.

Moreover, VR-based learning can strengthen learners’ intrinsic motivation to study a language, enrich cognitive processes emotionally, and contribute to perceiving the target language as a practical means of communication. In such settings, learners are more likely to feel confident within the language environment, communicate without fear of making mistakes, and independently expand their communicative experience[1].

At the same time, teaching English through virtual reality requires the integration of pedagogical and psychological mechanisms. The effectiveness of instruction depends not only on the availability of technological tools, but also on their alignment with pedagogical objectives and their implementation with due consideration of learners’ psychological characteristics. For this reason, providing a scientific and theoretical justification for the pedagogical and psychological mechanisms of teaching English in a virtual reality environment is one of the pressing tasks facing contemporary pedagogy and foreign language teaching methodology.

Literature review. In recent years, research examining the impact of virtual reality technologies on educational processes has become one of the prominent directions in pedagogy and educational psychology. In particular, studies aimed at substantiating the pedagogical and psychological mechanisms of using VR technologies in foreign language teaching contribute to revealing both the theoretical and practical significance of this approach.

Mel Slater emphasizes the concepts of immersion and the sense of participation in examining the phenomenon of virtual reality. According to his view, a high level of immersion turns the learner into a full participant in the virtual environment and generates psychological states close to those experienced in real life. This creates opportunities to model natural communicative situations in foreign language learning and facilitates the functional use of language units. Slater’s research provides evidence that the psychological realism of VR environments has a direct influence on instructional effectiveness[2].

One of the scholars who has conducted a systematic analysis of VR-based education is Jelena Radianti. While exploring the didactic potential of VR technologies, she notes that such environments foster learners’ active engagement, independent decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Radianti’s conclusions suggest that instruction organized in a virtual environment enhances learners’ cognitive activity

[1] Merchant Z., Goetz E. T., Cifuentes L., Keeney-Kennicutt W., Davis T. J. Effectiveness of virtual reality-based instruction on students’ learning outcomes // Computers & Education. – 2014. – Vol. 70. – P. 29–40.

[2] Slater M. Immersion and the illusion of presence in virtual reality environments // British Journal of Psychology. – 2009. – Vol. 100, No. 2. – P. 345–362.

and transforms the target language into a tool for real communicative action[3].

Research conducted by Guido Makransky focuses on an in-depth analysis of the cognitive and affective effects of virtual reality technologies. He observes that learners' emotional involvement and attentional focus tend to increase in VR-based learning. In his view, emotionally enriched learning environments have a positive effect on retaining knowledge in long-term memory. This supports more robust acquisition of lexical and communicative units in English language learning[4].

Chris Dede, who investigated the integration of virtual reality and education from a pedagogical perspective, conceptualizes VR technologies as a transformative learning environment. He argues that such environments enable learners to gain experiences that are difficult to achieve through traditional instruction. According to Dede, VR-based learning develops reflective thinking and creative approaches, thereby elevating learners' communicative activity to a new level[5].

In explaining psychological mechanisms in learning, Albert Bandura's social-cognitive theory serves as an important methodological foundation. Bandura substantiated the significance of observation, imitation, and self-efficacy in educational processes. In a VR environment, learners can acquire communicative behavior by observing virtual characters and modeled situations, which enhances their confidence in communicating in English[6].

Furthermore, Lev Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach is particularly relevant for understanding the role of social interaction in foreign language teaching. His concept of the zone of proximal development remains applicable in VR contexts as well. Collaboration-based scenarios organized within VR environments stimulate learners' interaction with one another and enrich language learning through socially mediated experience[7].

Overall, the analysis of these scholarly perspectives indicates that teaching English in a virtual reality environment relies on the complex integration of pedagogical and psychological mechanisms. The studies reviewed not only substantiate the educational potential of VR technologies but also confirm the need for their effective integration into foreign language instruction.

Results. Teaching English in a virtual reality environment is organized on the basis of a specific system of pedagogical mechanisms. These mechanisms ensure the practical orientation of instructional content, strengthen learners' active participation, and align the language learning process with authentic communicative experience. First, an activity-based approach functions as a leading pedagogical principle in this context. Learners participate actively in communicative situations that approximate real life within a VR environment, gaining opportunities to apply English lexical, grammatical, and discourse units in meaningful contexts. As a result, language learning moves from an abstract set of knowledge toward practical communicative activity.

In addition, VR technologies significantly enhance the mechanisms of interactivity and visualization in the learning process. Interaction with objects, characters, and communicative situations in a three-dimensional virtual environment activates learners' cognitive processes and supports deeper comprehension of the target language material. Information delivered through visual and auditory channels is more strongly consolidated in memory, which positively affects long-term learning outcomes.

Furthermore, VR-based instruction enables the formation of individual learning trajectories. Learners complete activities according to their proficiency levels, interests, and learning pace. This creates favorable conditions for implementing differentiated and learner-centered education, making it possible to account for each learner's individual needs.

VR-based learning also has a direct impact on learners' psychological states and attitudes toward learning. One of the key psychological mechanisms is immersion. An immersive environment fully engages the learner in the virtual space and reduces the psychological distance between real and simulated contexts. As a result, learners begin to perceive English not as an artificial exercise tool but as a natural means of communication, which supports the organic development of communicative behavior.

VR technologies also function as a significant psychological factor that contributes to increasing learning motivation. Game-based elements, interactive tasks, and the modeling of real-life situations strengthen learners' interest in learning English. By actively participating in the learning process and independently testing their knowledge and skills, learners develop intrinsic motivation.

Moreover, emotional engagement and the creation of a positive psychological climate are important components of VR-based education. Learners communicate more freely without fear of making mistakes, which increases their communicative confidence. A psychologically supportive environment enhances communicative activity in English and reduces psychological barriers that often hinder language learning.

The theoretical analysis conducted indicates that teaching English in a virtual reality environment achieves high effectiveness through the integrated operation of pedagogical and psychological mechanisms. While pedagogical mechanisms ensure goal orientation, systematic organization, and enriched content, psychological mechanisms strengthen learners' internal activity, motivation, and emotional involvement. As a result of this synergy, learners' communicative competence in English develops consistently, and the effectiveness of speech activity increases substantially.

Discussion. The rapid expansion of virtual reality technologies in language education also requires consideration of ethical, organizational, and technological dimensions that extend beyond purely pedagogical and psychological mechanisms. One important aspect is the issue of digital ethics and data security. VR platforms often collect behavioral data, voice recordings, and interaction patterns, which can be used to personalize learning experiences. However, the protection of learners' personal information and the responsible use of analytics must be ensured to maintain trust and psychological comfort within the learning environment[8].

Another significant dimension concerns the development of digital identity in virtual spaces. When learners interact through avatars, they may experiment with alternative communicative roles and social behaviors. This phenomenon can positively influence language acquisition by reducing anxiety and encouraging risk-taking in communication. At the same time, it requires pedagogical guidance to ensure that virtual role-play remains aligned with educational objectives and constructive social interaction.

The integration of artificial intelligence within VR environments further enhances adaptive learning opportunities. Intelligent systems embedded in virtual platforms can analyze learners' speech patterns, pronunciation accuracy, lexical diversity, and response time, providing immediate personalized feedback. Such real-time scaffolding supports continuous improvement of speaking skills and allows for differentiated instruction without interrupting communicative flow.

The sustainability and accessibility of VR-based English instruction also represent important considerations. While immersive technologies offer substantial didactic potential, their implementation depends on institutional infrastructure, technical support, and financial investment. Ensuring equal access to VR tools is essential to prevent digital inequality and to guarantee that innovative language learning opportunities are available to diverse groups of learners[9].

Attention should also be given to teacher–student interaction within virtual environments. The role of the teacher evolves from knowledge transmitter to facilitator, moderator, and designer of immersive experiences. Effective VR-based instruction depends on the teacher's ability to orchestrate collaborative scenarios, guide reflection, and maintain pedagogical presence in a digitally mediated space. Establishing clear communication norms and maintaining emotional support remain critical even when interaction occurs through virtual avatars.

Long-term language retention and transfer of skills to real-life communication contexts constitute another area of importance. While VR environments simulate authentic situations, empirical evaluation of how effectively these experiences translate into spontaneous communication outside the virtual setting is necessary. Integrating post-immersion reflection activities and real-world practice tasks may

[3] Radianti J., Majchrzak T. A., Fromm J., Wohlgenannt I. A systematic review of immersive virtual reality applications for higher education: Design elements, lessons learned, and research agenda // Computers & Education. – 2020. – Vol. 147. – P. 103778–103795.
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strengthen the transfer effect and ensure sustainable communicative competence development.

Interdisciplinary collaboration between linguists, psychologists, instructional designers, and software developers is essential for the continuous improvement of VR-based English language teaching. The design of immersive scenarios should be grounded not only in technological innovation but also in linguistic theory, cognitive science, and pedagogical methodology. Such collaboration ensures that virtual reality functions not merely as an attractive digital tool, but as a scientifically grounded educational environment capable of transforming foreign language instruction.

Conclusion. Teaching English in a virtual reality environment is one of the most promising and effective directions of contemporary education. The coordinated application of pedagogical and psychological mechanisms in such environments contributes to increasing learners' motivation to learn, developing their communicative activity, and enabling them to acquire English as a practical means of communication. The results of the study may serve as a scientific and methodological basis for implementing virtual reality technologies in English language teaching.

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