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INTEGRATION OF METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND INTENSIVE METHODS IN THE DESIGN OF VR MODULES FOR LEARNING RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ПРИНЦИПОВ ЭКСПЕРИМЕНТАЛЬНОГО ОБУЧЕНИЯ И ИНТЕНСИВНЫХ МЕТОДОВ В ПРОЕКТИРОВАНИЕ VR-МОДУЛЕЙ ДЛЯ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ РКИ

Abstract:

The article explores the potential of integrating the principles of experiential learning and G. A. Kitaigorodskaya's method of activating the potential of the individual and the collective into the design of VR/AR modules for teaching Russian as a second or foreign language. The study examines approaches to creating meaningful and effective educational experiences based on a communicative and activity-oriented approach and the possibilities offered by modern technologies.

Keywords: virtual reality, VR technologies, intensive methods of teaching Russian as a foreign language, Kitaigorodskaya's method, activation of personal and collective potential, experiential learning, Kolb's cycle

Introduction

The integration of virtual reality [VR] and augmented reality [AR] into the educational process provides educators with unique opportunities to simulate language environments that closely resemble real-life contexts. Modern technologies enable the creation of interactive scenarios where students not only study the language but also actively engage with the

cultural context through immersion in virtual spaces. Despite the evident potential of [VR] and [AR], there remains a need to substantiate their application in teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL) with sound methodological frameworks.

This article examines the integration of two approaches: David Kolb's theory of experiential learning (1984) and G. A. Kitaigorodskaya's method of activating the potential of the individual and the collective (1986). The former emphasizes a learning cycle involving experience, reflection, and active experimentation, while the latter focuses on intensive immersion in the language environment through emotionally rich and communicative tasks. By offering a safe experimental space, [VR] can serve as an ideal platform for synthesizing these methods to create a more meaningful and effective learning process.

Kolb's Principles of Experiential Learning

David Kolb's experiential learning model is built on the following foundational stages:

1. **Concrete Experience:** Immersion in practical activities.
2. **Reflective Observation:** Discussion and analysis of the experience.
3. **Abstract conceptualization:** Deriving conclusions and understanding underlying principles.
4. **Active Experimentation:** Applying newly acquired knowledge in novel situations. [2]

This cycle accentuates how experiences and the surrounding environment shape the learning process. In the context of [VR] and [AR], these technologies influence each stage of the learning cycle, providing new experiences and fostering more effective RFL education.

Viljo Kohonen, a proponent of Kolb's experiential learning and author of *Experiential Learning in Foreign Language Education*, highlights the connection between emotional involvement, context, and active participation in language acquisition. These elements are attainable through VR technologies. [3]

Kitaigorodskaya's Method of "Activating the Potential of the Individual and the Collective" in VR

Developed in the 1970s, G. A. Kitaigorodskaya's method belongs to the intensive methods of language teaching. It is based on a communicative and activity-oriented approach, aiming to activate students' learning through role-playing, games, and communicative tasks. The method's emphasis on solving real-world problems and creating an emotionally rich language environment makes it highly relevant to RFL education, especially in conjunction with [VR].

Key principles of Kitaigorodskaya's method include:

1. **Person-Oriented Communication:** Rooted in A. N. Leontiev's "Activity Theory" and L. S. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), this principle highlights the importance of interaction in the learning process and the creation of favorable conditions that foster natural skill development. The focus is on the individual, with the learning process centered on interaction between students, rather than solely with the material.
2. **Role-Based Learning:** The educational process integrates trust-based communication and play activities, enabling students to develop communicative competence through repeated practice and self-expression within a "protective mask."
3. **Group Interaction:** Collaborative work is grounded in cooperation, mutual assistance, and co-creation. Communication is viewed as both a group activity and a role-playing exercise, where participants rehearse various communicative situations, enhancing interpersonal skills.
4. **Concentrated Learning Process:** Educational materials are organized to ensure meaningful and communicative coherence both during lessons and in teaching aids.

5. **Multifunctionality:** This principle involves dual-purpose goals, where instructors guide students indirectly toward their achievement. The spiral model of instruction—from whole to part and back to whole—reflects a dynamic approach to presenting material, progressing from complex to simple: synthesis 1 – analysis – synthesis 2. [1] Kitaigorodskaya’s method demonstrates significant potential for integration with VR technologies, facilitating active learning through emotionally rich dialogues, holistic language blocks, and interactive tasks—critical for RFL instruction outside the language environment.

Combining Approaches in VR

Virtual reality is ideally suited for implementing Kolb’s experiential learning and Kitaigorodskaya’s activation method. It creates a safe and realistic space for experimentation, allowing students to immerse themselves in new language environments, reflect on their experiences, and consolidate material.

Advantages of Integrating Methods in [VR]

- **Emotional Engagement:** Cultural immersion through VR enhances language retention. One of the key aspects of Kitaigorodskaya’s method is creating an emotionally rich environment through real-life scenarios where learners feel motivated and engaged. [VR] amplifies this effect with visual and auditory stimuli. For instance, participants might feel as though they are on a bustling Moscow street, in a café/restaurant, or in nature, making the process more captivating.
- **Depth of Learning:** Kolb's experiential learning cycle helps process and solidify knowledge, transforming it into long-term skills.
- **Technological Advantage:** [VR] creates interactive, safe, and controlled environments for experimentation.
- **Safe Environment:** [VR] enables practice and mistakes without fear or judgment, fostering a secure atmosphere. Virtual reality offers avatar options ranging from neutral formats to virtual twins resembling one's real appearance, allowing experimentation with looks. [4]
- **Process Dynamics:** [VR], as an inherently interactive and dynamic technology, aligns perfectly with the principles of experiential learning.

Example Scenario for [VR]:

- **Concrete Experience (Kolb) + Immersion through Dialogue (Kitaigorodskaya):** A learner is placed in a virtual environment, such as at a Trans-Siberian Railway station. They interact with characters using pre-provided phrases and new vocabulary, e.g., buying a ticket or asking for directions.
- **Reflection:** After completing the task, the learner returns to a virtual “classroom” to discuss their actions with the teacher and group. Dialogue recordings can be used for error analysis.
- **Conceptualization:** Learners identify grammatical and lexical structures they used and discuss how to apply them in other contexts, e.g., asking questions at a train station or in a café.
- **Active Application:** The VR environment presents a new scenario, such as explaining to a foreign tourist how to buy a ticket. This task is aimed at consolidating the acquired knowledge.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the widespread adoption of VR/AR in many schools and universities worldwide, there are certain technical and pedagogical challenges, mainly related to institutional budgets, availability of VR equipment, and teacher training. However, virtual

reality offers boundless possibilities for creating interdisciplinary frameworks that combine linguistic education, cultural studies, and immersion technologies.

Conclusion: The Future of Experiential Learning through Virtual Reality

Kitaigorodskaya's method, aimed at activating the potential of individuals and groups, is a powerful tool for teaching Russian as a foreign language. Its principles, such as learner-centered communication, role-based organization of learning, and group interaction, integrate seamlessly with innovative educational technologies. Combining this method with virtual reality opens up new opportunities for creating an interactive, emotionally rich, and cognitively significant educational environment.

The integration of David Kolb's principles of experiential learning into the design of VR modules is particularly significant. His learning cycle, which includes stages of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation, becomes the ideal foundation for developing interactive VR solutions. These solutions go beyond "beautiful visuals" to transform the learning process into dynamic interaction with linguistic and cultural environments.

The synergy of Kitaigorodskaya's methodology and Kolb's approach in VR ensures a systematic approach to learning, where students not only immerse themselves in a virtual language environment but also meaningfully experience and analyze their progress. For instance, modeling dialogues or role-playing situations in VR contributes to both emotional engagement and deeper retention of language skills through the cyclical process of material acquisition.

Thus, the future of teaching Russian as a foreign language lies in the synthesis of innovative technologies and time-tested methodological approaches. Integrating Kitaigorodskaya's intensive method and Kolb's experiential learning with the capabilities of virtual reality creates unique conditions for developing linguistic competence that meets the demands of the modern globalized world.

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