

SECTION 13.

PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

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DIDACTIC IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUBJECT-ACTIVITY APPROACH IN DEVELOPING STUDENT AGENCY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING OF ECONOMICS STUDENTS

Abstract. *The article examines the didactic implementation of the subject-activity approach as a means of developing student agency in foreign language training of economics students. It substantiates the theoretical foundations of student agency and its correlation with learner autonomy and self-regulation. The study reveals the pedagogical potential of the subject-activity approach for transforming the role of students from passive recipients to active subjects of learning. Particular attention is given to the analysis of didactic mechanisms, including choice, goal-setting, collaboration, problem-solving, and reflection, which ensure the development of agency within professionally oriented foreign language education. The article outlines the key directions for integrating these mechanisms into the learning process and emphasizes their role in enhancing both linguistic proficiency and professional competences.*

Keywords: *student agency, subject-activity approach, foreign language training, economics students, didactic implementation, learner autonomy, self-regulation, soft skills, higher education.*

The contemporary landscape of higher education is undergoing profound transformation under the influence of globalization, technological advancement, and the evolving demands of the labor market. In this context, the ability of graduates to act independently, make informed decisions, and adapt to dynamic professional environments is no longer optional but constitutes a core requirement of their professional readiness. These shifts foreground the increasing relevance of student agency as a key educational outcome, particularly in professionally oriented training. In the domain of foreign language education for economics students, this issue acquires particular significance, as language learning is directly intertwined with the development of communicative, analytical, and intercultural competences essential for participation in global economic processes. As noted, “in the context of foreign language learning for economics majors, the concept of student agency is of paramount importance” [8, p. 211].

At the same time, foreign language training in higher education demonstrates considerable didactic potential in fostering not only linguistic proficiency but also a range of transferable skills. The integration of language learning with professional content creates conditions for developing critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and decision-making skills, which are indispensable in future professional contexts. In this regard, student agency functions as both a prerequisite and a result of effective language learning. It enables students to take responsibility for their learning trajectories, actively engage with educational content, and construct knowledge in meaningful ways. As emphasized in recent research, “this proactive role not only cultivates a deeper understanding of economic concepts in a foreign language but also fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills essential for future professional contexts” [8, p. 213]. Moreover, English as a university discipline possesses significant didactic potential in this respect, as “it has great didactic potential in shaping and developing students’ soft skills” [3, p. 192].

However, despite the declarative emphasis on competence-based education and learner-centered approaches in contemporary higher education, a noticeable discrepancy persists between these principles and actual teaching practices. In many cases, foreign language instruction remains predominantly reproduction-oriented, focusing on the transmission of knowledge rather than on the organization of meaningful student activity. Such an approach limits students’ opportunities to act as active participants in the learning process and constrains the development of their agency. Consequently, there is a need to reconsider the methodological foundations of foreign language teaching and to identify pedagogical approaches that can effectively support the transformation of students from objects of instruction into subjects of learning.

Within this context, the subject-activity approach appears to offer a productive methodological framework for addressing this challenge. Rooted in the understanding of learning as an active, purposeful, and socially mediated process, this approach emphasizes the central role of the learner as a subject of activity, capable of setting goals, making decisions, and reflecting on the outcomes of their actions. Its didactic reinterpretation in the context of foreign language education opens new possibilities for structuring the learning process in ways that foster student agency through meaningful engagement, interaction, and reflection.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to substantiate and characterize the didactic implementation of the subject-activity approach as a means of developing student agency in the process of foreign language training of economics students. The study seeks to clarify the theoretical foundations of student agency, to examine the pedagogical potential of the subject-activity approach, and to identify the key

didactic mechanisms through which this approach can be effectively realized in professionally oriented foreign language education.

The growing emphasis on student agency in contemporary pedagogy reflects a broader shift from knowledge transmission toward the development of learners as active participants in the educational process. Within this paradigm, agency is no longer perceived as an auxiliary characteristic of learning but rather as a central didactic outcome that determines the effectiveness and sustainability of educational results. In the context of foreign language training, particularly for students of economic specialties, agency acquires additional significance, as it directly influences learners' ability to operate in complex communicative and professional environments.

In modern educational research, student agency is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing learners' capacity for self-directed action, decision-making, and reflective engagement in the learning process. In this regard, Moses et al. (2020) define student agency as "students' capacity to act in ways that exhibit their own choices in their learning, informed by their beliefs and careful consideration, self-regulation, and self-reflection about their ability to control and take ownership of their own learning" [4, p. 215]. This definition emphasizes not only behavioral activity but also the cognitive and metacognitive dimensions of agency, particularly self-regulation and reflection, which are essential for meaningful learning.

A similar perspective is reflected in the work of Brown (2014), who interprets agency as "an individual capacity for self-awareness and self-determination: decision-making, ability to enact or resist change, and take responsibility for actions" [2, p. 102]. Such an understanding highlights the volitional and intentional nature of agency, positioning the learner as an autonomous actor capable of influencing both the process and outcomes of learning. Furthermore, Brown (2014) characterizes personal agency in learning as "a process wherein learning objectives are achieved through volitional direction and tacit involvement in learning" [2, p. 101], thereby underscoring its processual character and its dependence on active engagement.

Within the domain of foreign language education, agency manifests itself through learners' readiness to assume responsibility for their learning trajectories, make informed choices regarding learning strategies, and actively engage in communicative practices. As noted, "student agency empowers learners to assume responsibility for their learning process, enabling them to set goals, make decisions, and engage actively in their language acquisition journey" [8, p. 213]. This interpretation aligns with the understanding of language learning as an inherently

active and socially mediated process, in which the learner's initiative plays a decisive role.

At the same time, it is important to note that Ukrainian pedagogical scholarship employs the term *суб'єктність* (rendered in English as “agency” throughout this article) with a broader, value-oriented meaning that encompasses not only the capacity for self-directed action but also a transformative attitude toward oneself, one's activity, other people, and the surrounding world. In this tradition, agency is defined as “a complex integrative characteristic of personality that reflects its selective activity, responsibility for independent initiative, and transformative attitude toward oneself, activity, other people, and the surrounding world” [6, p. 407].

Building on this, Aristova and Vyshnevskaya (2024) conceptualize agency as “an integrative systemic quality of personality that manifests itself in the formation of a strong belief in one's readiness and ability to actively, independently, creatively, and autonomously organize and carry out various types of transformative activities” [1, p. 273]. Importantly, this interpretation emphasizes not only the ability to act but also the internal conviction of one's capability to do so, which brings the concept closer to self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Moreover, agency in this sense is associated with “the readiness... to make creative decisions in non-standard situations” [1, p. 273], thereby highlighting its relevance in conditions of uncertainty and complexity characteristic of modern professional environments.

The correlation between agency, learner autonomy, and self-regulation is thus evident. Agency may be regarded as a higher-order construct that integrates these components, ensuring that learning is not externally driven but internally regulated and purposefully directed. In foreign language training, this implies a shift from viewing students as recipients of linguistic knowledge to recognizing them as subjects of communicative and cognitive activity who actively construct meaning and apply language in context.

Consequently, student agency in foreign language training of economics students should be understood as a didactic outcome that reflects the learner's capacity to independently organize, regulate, and evaluate their learning activity in alignment with both linguistic and professional goals. Such an understanding provides a necessary conceptual foundation for further consideration of the pedagogical approaches and didactic mechanisms that enable the development of agency within the educational process.

The need to develop student agency as a key didactic outcome necessitates a corresponding rethinking of the methodological foundations of the educational process. In this regard, the subject-activity approach provides a coherent

pedagogical framework that enables the transformation of learning from a predominantly reproductive process into an active, purposeful, and personally meaningful activity. Its relevance lies in its capacity to align the organization of the educational process with the goal of developing students as autonomous and responsible subjects of learning.

Within the Ukrainian pedagogical tradition, the subject-activity approach is interpreted as a specific manifestation of a broader activity-based paradigm, emphasizing the formation of learners' agency in the process of engaging with meaningful tasks. In particular, it is defined as an approach "the essence of which lies in the formation of subject experience of future specialists in solving professional and pedagogical problems" [6, p. 408]. This definition highlights a critical shift from the transmission of knowledge to the organization of activity through which learners acquire not only knowledge and skills but also the capacity to act as subjects within professional contexts.

A key feature of the subject-activity approach is its orientation toward subject-subject interaction within the educational process. Unlike traditional models that position the teacher as the primary source of knowledge and the student as its passive recipient, this approach assumes a fundamentally different configuration of roles. As noted, it allows "to organize effective interaction and mutual understanding between teachers and students... reflecting the principle of subject-subject relations" [6, p. 406]. Such interaction is not merely communicative but dialogical in nature, involving the co-construction of knowledge and shared responsibility for learning outcomes.

This reconfiguration of roles is also emphasized in contemporary international research. In particular, Moses et al. (2020) argue that within agency-oriented learning environments, "teacher and learner roles are restructured so students are valued as partners and co-constructors of knowledge" [4, p. 215]. Furthermore, "this restructuring of roles between teachers and students allows for power sharing in the learning process" [4, p. 215], thereby creating conditions in which students can exercise choice, voice, and responsibility. Such a shift is essential for the development of agency, as it enables learners to move beyond compliance with external requirements toward active participation in shaping their own learning trajectories.

From a didactic perspective, the subject-activity approach implies a fundamental transformation of the design of the educational process. Learning is conceptualized not as the assimilation of ready-made knowledge but as an active process of meaning-making, in which students engage with tasks that require analysis, decision-making, and reflection. This, in turn, necessitates the creation of

learning environments that support initiative, encourage exploration, and provide opportunities for independent and collaborative activity.

In the context of foreign language training for economics students, the subject-activity approach acquires particular relevance due to the inherently communicative and practice-oriented nature of language learning. Language is not simply a system of rules to be mastered but a tool for interaction and professional activity. Therefore, its acquisition must be embedded in contexts that simulate or approximate real-life communicative situations, particularly those related to future professional practice. The subject-activity approach provides the methodological basis for such contextualization, as it emphasizes the integration of learning content with meaningful activity.

Thus, the subject-activity approach serves as a foundation for didactic design that is oriented toward the development of student agency. By restructuring the roles of participants in the educational process, emphasizing meaningful activity, and fostering subject-subject interaction, it creates the necessary conditions for transforming students into active agents of their own learning. This, in turn, opens up possibilities for its didactic implementation in foreign language training, which will be examined in the following section.

The transition from the theoretical substantiation of the subject-activity approach to its practical realization requires a clear understanding of how its principles can be operationalized within the didactic structure of foreign language training. In this regard, the concept of agency formation becomes central, as it reflects not only the activation of students' participation in learning but also the formation of those personal and professional qualities that constitute the basis of their agency. As noted, this process "involves not only students' active engagement in acquiring professionally significant knowledge, skills, and abilities, but also the formation of such a set of personal and professional qualities that constitutes the foundation of their agency" [1, p. 273].

From a didactic perspective, the implementation of the subject-activity approach entails a qualitative transformation of the key components of the educational process: content, tasks, forms of interaction, and means of instruction. First, the transformation of content implies the integration of professionally oriented material into foreign language learning. For students of economic specialties, this means that language acquisition is embedded in the analysis of economic phenomena, business communication, and problem-solving situations relevant to their future professional activity. Such contextualization ensures that language is not learned in isolation but functions as a tool for cognitive and professional engagement.

Second, the transformation of learning tasks constitutes a critical dimension of didactic implementation. Tasks must shift from reproductive exercises aimed at memorization and controlled practice toward analytical, problem-based, and decision-oriented activities. Within this framework, students are expected to engage in tasks that require interpretation of information, formulation of arguments, evaluation of alternatives, and justification of decisions. This aligns with the requirement that students should be able to “formulate their own educational goals, select optimal ways to achieve them, and critically evaluate the obtained results” [1, p. 273]. Thus, the task design becomes a key mechanism through which students’ agency is both activated and developed.

Third, the organization of learning activities must reflect the principles of interaction, collaboration, and communicative engagement. The subject-activity approach presupposes that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and joint activity. Therefore, the learning process should incorporate pair and group work, discussions, simulations, and other forms of collaborative learning that enable students to articulate their ideas, negotiate meaning, and co-construct knowledge. Such forms of organization not only enhance language proficiency but also create conditions for the development of responsibility and initiative.

In addition, the use of digital tools as mediators of student activity significantly expands the possibilities for implementing the subject-activity approach. Digital environments provide access to authentic materials, facilitate interaction beyond the classroom, and support individualized learning trajectories. Their integration into foreign language training allows for the diversification of learning activities and enhances students’ capacity to independently manage their learning process.

An essential component of didactic implementation is the incorporation of reflection and self-assessment into the learning process. Reflection enables students to analyze their learning strategies, evaluate their progress, and adjust their actions accordingly. In this sense, it serves as a bridge between activity and self-regulation, reinforcing the development of agency. The importance of such instructional strategies is emphasized in research, which states that “implementing instructional strategies that prioritize student agency not only enhances language proficiency but also equips [students] with the competencies necessary to thrive in the globalized economy” [8, p. 213]. Furthermore, the effectiveness of foreign language training can be significantly increased when it incorporates elements aimed at the development of soft skills, as “the best results can be achieved by integrating required soft skills into the curriculum through incorporating specially designed activities and assignments” [3, p. 184].

Thus, the didactic implementation of the subject-activity approach in foreign

language training is realized through the systematic transformation of content, tasks, interaction, and instructional tools. This transformation ensures that the learning process becomes not only a means of acquiring linguistic knowledge but also a space for developing students' agency, enabling them to act as active, responsible, and reflective subjects of their own educational and professional development.

While the subject-activity approach provides a conceptual and methodological foundation for organizing the educational process, its effectiveness in developing student agency ultimately depends on the specific didactic mechanisms through which it is implemented. These mechanisms function as operational tools that translate abstract pedagogical principles into concrete learning practices. Their significance lies in the fact that agency is not formed through declarative statements or isolated activities, but through systematically organized conditions that require students to act, decide, reflect, and assume responsibility for their learning.

One of the central mechanisms in this process is the provision of *choice* within the learning environment. The opportunity to select tasks, methods, or modes of engagement allows students to exercise control over their learning and to align it with their individual goals and preferences. As emphasized in the literature, "allowing for flexibility and choice in learning activities aids in supporting student agency" [4, p. 219]. From a didactic perspective, this mechanism shifts the locus of control from the teacher to the learner, thereby fostering autonomy and increasing motivation.

Closely related to choice is the mechanism of *goal-setting*, which enables students to define their own learning objectives and plan the steps necessary to achieve them. This process transforms learning from a reactive response to external requirements into a proactive and intentional activity. In this context, students are expected not only to follow prescribed instructions but also to formulate personal learning trajectories, which reinforces their role as subjects of the educational process.

Another essential mechanism is *collaboration*, which creates conditions for joint activity and the co-construction of knowledge. Through interaction with peers, students engage in discussion, argumentation, and collective problem-solving, which enhances both their communicative competence and their capacity for reflective thinking. As noted, "providing students with opportunities for collaboration allows for engagement in thinking, discussing, theorizing, and synthesizing with peers" [4, p. 217]. Importantly, collaboration within the subject-activity framework is not limited to the exchange of information but involves shared responsibility for the outcomes of learning.

The mechanism of *problem-solving* plays a particularly important role in

activating students' cognitive and decision-making capacities. Tasks that require the analysis of complex situations, the evaluation of alternatives, and the justification of choices create a context in which students must act independently and take responsibility for their decisions. In this regard, "the inclusion of spaces to afford students problem-solving opportunities... allows students to exercise more independence" [4, p. 218]. Such tasks are especially relevant in foreign language training for economics students, where they can be embedded in professional contexts, such as case analysis or business simulations.

In addition to these mechanisms, the use of *activity-based methods* constitutes an important dimension of didactic implementation. Interactive forms of learning, including case studies, project work, role-playing, and simulation modeling, create a dynamic environment in which students actively engage with content and apply their knowledge in practice. As highlighted in comparative research on professional training, "interactive game forms and methods... case training, project method, role-playing... simulation modelling... [contribute to] developing creative thinking" [10, p. 144]. These methods not only enhance engagement but also support the development of initiative, creativity, and adaptability, which are integral components of agency.

An equally significant mechanism is *reflection*, which ensures the transition from external activity to internal regulation. Through reflective practices, students analyze their actions, evaluate their effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement. Reflection thus serves as a connecting link between experience and self-regulation, enabling learners to develop a conscious and strategic approach to their learning.

Taken together, these mechanisms form an internally coherent system, the logic of which can be represented as follows: activity initiates engagement, choice and goal-setting provide direction, collaboration and problem-solving enrich the learning process, and reflection ensures the consolidation and internalization of experience. This sequence leads to the development of self-regulation, which, in turn, constitutes the foundation of student agency.

Therefore, the didactic mechanisms outlined above do not function in isolation but operate as interconnected elements of a unified pedagogical system. Their consistent and purposeful implementation within foreign language training creates the necessary conditions for transforming students into active, autonomous, and reflective subjects of learning, capable of effectively navigating both educational and professional contexts.

Conclusion. The analysis conducted in this study confirms that the development of student agency should be regarded as a key didactic outcome of

foreign language training in higher education, particularly within the context of preparing students of economic specialties for professional activity in a globalized environment. Agency is not limited to learners' behavioral activity but encompasses their capacity for self-regulation, conscious decision-making, responsibility, and reflective engagement in the learning process. Its formation requires a purposeful reorganization of the educational process in accordance with approaches that position the student as an active subject of learning.

In this regard, the subject-activity approach provides a theoretically grounded and pedagogically productive framework for designing such an educational process. Its core principles - activity, subject-subject interaction, goal orientation, and reflection - create the necessary conditions for transforming students from passive recipients of knowledge into active participants and co-constructors of learning. The didactic interpretation of this approach allows it to be effectively integrated into foreign language training, where language functions not only as an object of study but also as a tool for professional communication and cognitive activity.

The study has demonstrated that the didactic implementation of the subject-activity approach involves a systematic transformation of the main components of the educational process. This includes the integration of professionally oriented content, the redesign of learning tasks toward analytical and problem-based formats, the organization of collaborative and communicative activities, the use of digital tools as mediators of learning, and the incorporation of reflection and self-assessment. Such transformations ensure that the learning process becomes meaningful, contextually relevant, and oriented toward the development of students' independence and responsibility.

Particular attention has been paid to the identification of key didactic mechanisms that facilitate the development of student agency. Among them, choice, goal-setting, collaboration, problem-solving, activity-based methods, and reflection play a central role. These mechanisms operate as interconnected elements of a unified pedagogical system, the internal logic of which leads from engagement in meaningful activity to the development of self-regulation and, ultimately, agency. Their consistent implementation creates an educational environment in which students are able to exercise initiative, make informed decisions, and take responsibility for their learning outcomes.

Thus, the didactic implementation of the subject-activity approach in foreign language training represents an effective means of developing student agency, aligning educational practices with contemporary requirements of higher education and the labor market. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in clarifying the relationship between the subject-activity approach and agency as a didactic

outcome, while its practical significance is associated with the identification of concrete mechanisms that can be applied in the design of foreign language courses for economics students.

Further research may be directed toward the empirical verification of the proposed didactic solutions, the refinement of models for developing student agency in different educational contexts, and the exploration of the relationship between agency and specific components of professional competence in foreign language education.

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