

SECTION: PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES.

SEKCJA: NAUK PEDAGOGICZNYCH.

How to cite: Jalilbayli, O. B. (2023). Contextualizing Foreign Language Learning: Strategies, Concepts, and the Path to Universal Development. *Global Innovations and Collaborative Solutions in Contemporary Science* (pp. 362-366). Futurity Research Publishing. https://futurity-publishing.com/international_conference_3

Contextualizing Foreign Language Learning: Strategies, Concepts, and the Path to Universal Development

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Accepted: December 9, 2023 | **Published:** December 15, 2023 | **Language:** English

Abstract: This article reveals the importance of contextualization in the process of learning a foreign language. It is found that contextualization is a process that occurs mainly through the use of semiotic models of knowledge. The main results describe the method of implementing the contextualization technology, which aims at professional foreign training. The methods of synthesis, analysis, information gathering, and generalization were used for the theoretical development of the topic. The goals of the study are to determine the content and means of expression of a foreign language. The conclusions emphasize that students acquire knowledge in context through joint activities in a social environment. This becomes more evident when it is recognized that education is not limited to formal learning but occurs through the socialization and development of individuals in society.

Keywords: professional training, contextual training, strategies and approaches.

Introduction

In the modern system of vocational education, the contextual approach is the basis for the most complete and high-quality training of future specialists to solve real-life situations, taking into account the needs of students, teachers, and employers. An important feature of the contextual approach in the educational process is that it is based on interdisciplinary learning, problem-based learning, and the use of external contexts. The application of a contextual approach to learning in different disciplines helps students develop a realistic perspective: to understand the relevance and necessity of knowledge and to use the acquired competencies.

Study results

In the modern practice of professional development, contextual learning is defined as a learning process in which the learning content is embedded in the context, object, and social context of solving important problems of professional activity. In the process of contextual learning, learning activities are transformed into professional ones, their cognitive needs, motivations, goals, actions, means, subjects, and results are gradually transformed into professional ones. Psychological, pedagogical, and didactic conditions are created for students to set and achieve their own goals, to transfer their activities from learning to work.

Many researchers have studied the contextualisation of foreign language learning, strategies, concepts, and the path to universal development. For example, Dereka and Kwiatkowska (2021) discussed the importance of foreign languages in the education of higher education students and emphasised the need for foreign language proficiency as an important component of modern professional development. Kozhukhar and Matvienko (2020) explained the essence of contextual learning and the importance of using a foreign language to update professional knowledge and competencies.

Baddane & Abdelghanie (2023) consider the possibilities of using contextual learning technologies in the process of learning foreign languages in higher education.

Labiste (2019), emphasising the positive value of errors and their correction in foreign language teaching, presents different views on error correction.

Irwandi, Gusti, & Albert (2018) raise the issue of the basics of adult education in the context of foreign language learning, consider the features of continuing adult education, psychological challenges, and ways to overcome them. Nanyiza & Munsaka (2023) summarise the practical experience of applying a contextual approach to ESP teaching. It is shown that the use of adapted communicative exercises creates the necessary conditions for students to be able to express themselves in English, use their previous experience in situations related to their future professional activities, and demonstrate their willingness to work in a team to achieve a common result.

Maristy (2020) states that digital technologies have become an important element in the language learning process. Electronic communication devices such as computers, laptops, mobile phones, global communication systems, video and audio conferencing, videophones, webcasts, and chat rooms have become an integral part of language learning and are widely used in educational settings. Sendur et. al.

(2021) examines the motivation that non-native language students need to learn a foreign language. Pariscal & Gonzales-Aboy (2022) note that in today's society, where communication in foreign languages and processing large amounts of information is becoming increasingly important, foreign language skills have been identified as a key to success. Wilson (2021) analyses modern methods of teaching foreign languages and determines their suitability for use in technical higher education institutions.

The concept of “contextual education” involves understanding contextual teaching as a process of developing relevant competencies in students, and contextual learning as an activity that helps students acquire relevant competencies. According to the researcher Wilson (2021), contextual learning motivates students, increases learning efficiency, does not require traditional texts, and improves engagement. It is important to apply a contextual approach to teaching adult learners and motivating them, as adult learning is characterised by the following indicators:

1. self-regulation of activity;
2. enrichment of the spectrum of personal experience;
3. readiness to learn;
4. life, goal, and problem orientation;
5. motivation by internal factors.

In addition, students are motivated to learn when they feel that they can influence their own learning and take responsibility for their own learning. In this context, it is important for teachers to set clear goals, provide students with options for action, and always provide meaningful feedback.

An important feature of the contextual approach to learning is that it is based on interdisciplinary connections, problem-based learning, and the use of external contexts for learning.

Students who study topics in relation to interdisciplinary aspects and specific contexts try to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the relevant context.

Contextual learning helps students make connections between internal and external contexts. Learners carry out activities in contexts such as the classroom, home, workplace, and the Internet, drawing on existing knowledge, past experiences, and other everyday lessons and situations. The experience gained in this way leads to a greater awareness that learners can retain competencies over a long period of time and apply them in the future in the right context and at the right time.

The aim of contextual learning is to enable learners to better understand life situations that arise in the workplace, identify and solve problems effectively, make wise decisions, and think creatively. Contextual learning therefore requires a high level of thinking.

Researchers Derek and Kwiatkowska (2021) argue that competent, professional, and effective learning can only take place if the context of professional activity is accurately and continuously reflected. They argue that university education is a scholarly activity based on a wide range of professional skills, practices, and a high academic level and that the context of practice should be analysed as the basis for the quality of professional performance.

In the current context, there are criteria for the effectiveness of teacher education and a number of contextual factors have been identified that should be taken into account in higher teacher education.

These are the professional context (represented by characteristics such as subject matter, class size, student ability, and assessment methods) and the social context, which should be systematically reviewed as these factors are constantly changing. The contextual approach aims to resolve contradictions in vocational education. The main problem is that mastery of professional activities should be achieved within the framework of educational activities that differ qualitatively in terms of goals, content, form, methods, means, processes, and programme outcomes. In other words, it is necessary to learn one thing - to work - and at the same time learn something fundamentally different. Contextual learning solves this problem by organising a dynamic movement of learners' activities from real educational, semi-professional, and educational-professional activities to real professional activities with the corresponding transformation of needs, motives, goals, actions and behaviour, means, objects, and results.

Contextual learning as a way to overcome these challenges is based on the following main pillars:

- 1) the principle of pedagogical support for students' personal involvement in learning activities;
- 2) the principle of consistent modelling of the general content, forms, and conditions of professional activity of a specialist in the student's educational activity;
- 3) the principle of problematic learning content and development process in the educational process;
- 4) the principle of compliance of the organisation of student learning activities with the goals and content of education;

Conclusions

Thus, contextual learning has been used in higher education for a long time and still remains an innovative method. The use of contextual learning in foreign language teaching has a positive impact on the development of skills, problem solving and teamwork.

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