

Developing Linguistic and Professional Competence: Business Ukrainian On-line

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Abstract

The study focuses on the potential of technology tools in language learning for professional purposes.

The premise is that language learning constitutes a process of learners' socialization into an L2 socio-cultural community with students viewed as participants in this community through their exposure to authentic environments. The analysis unfolds within the discussion of the three As: Attention, Assistance and Awareness in the process of teaching and acquisition of professional socio-cultural competence by students of Business Ukrainian via CALL activities. These activities are designed around various tasks that are linked to a potential increase in students' engagement in the virtual professional space and to students' acquisition of not only language proficiency, but also professional competence. The on-line Business Ukrainian is analyzed as a technologically enhanced authentic simulation, which allows the learners to participate in the virtual environment and enables them to grow into confident participants of the authentic professional community.

Keywords

Business Ukrainian; on-line Ukrainian; professional competence; socio-cultural competence; acquisition of Ukrainian

Introduction

Today's student and language learner lives in a highly mediated world, especially in the technological, social and professional realms. With the ongoing intervention of technology, "students are able to be more engaged in the learning process as active learners, team builders, collaborators, and discoverers", with language instructors functioning as designers, coaches, guides, mentors, and facilitators (Kelm 1996, p. 27). The present study addresses the role of technology in a language classroom and is a contribution to the field of computer-assisted language learning and teaching.

Scholarly attention to the array of potential technological tools for language learning continues to be visible in computer-assisted language learning [CALL] and teaching research. This rapidly growing field is very rich and diversified with studies. This includes, but is not limited to, the role of synchronous (Abrams, 2006; Blake, 2005, 2006; Doughty & Long, 2003; Meskill, 2005; Smith, 2003) and asynchronous communication in an L2 setting (Sotillo, 2000; Cummins & Sayers, 1995), and its resemblance to face-to-face interactions (Wang & Woo, 2007), Computer Mediated Communication [CMC] or telecollaboration (O'Dowd and Ritter, 2006; O'Rourke, 2005; Darhower, 2007), the explorations into intercultural communicative competence, or intercultural pragmatics and negotiation of meaning in L2 development (Doughty and Long, 2003; O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006; Sykes, 2005; Sykes & Cohen, 2008), electronic literacy (Hegelheimer & Fisher, 2006; Hegelheimer, 2006), literacy and identity construction in L2 environment (Darhower, 2007; Meskill, 2006; Warschauer & De Florio-Hansen, 2003; Kramsch, A'Ness, & Lam, 2000; Wildner-Bassett, 2005), distance-learning (Abrioux, 1989; Roblyer & Ekhaml, 2000), as well as teacher training (Kreutzer & Neunzig, 1997).

With respect to Slavic linguistics, CALL studies are very scarce. At the time of this writing, there are only a handful of articles that deal with teaching strategies in a Russian-language classroom with a component of CMC (Meskill & Anthony, 2004, 2005, 2007; Norkeliunas, 1984). With respect to Ukrainian, there is a single descriptive summary in the CALICO Journal (Iskold, 2011) of the Intermediate Ukrainian interactive language learning software developed by Oksana Sachyk in collaboration with the Critical

Languages Program at the University of Arizona, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Security Education Programs and the University of Arizona College of Humanities.

Access to various authentic cultural communities around the world has been noted as one of the major gateways opened by technology, benefiting L2 environments from both pedagogical and learning perspectives. Importantly:

- Researchers have made it clear that any benefits from engaging in CMC are not automatically or deterministically derived from the tools themselves (Zhao, Alvarez-Torres, Smith, & Tan, 2005; Thorne, 2003), but rather from how CMC is used in service of promoting meaningful interactions and real intercultural reflections.
- Breakdowns can be frequent, but they also provide golden opportunities for students and teachers alike to focus attention on the emerging L2 system as well as new ways of conceiving of students' new bilingual identity. This heightens rather than diminishes the teacher's role in designing appropriate tasks and raising the students' cross-cultural awareness (O'Rourke & Schwienhorst, 2003, cited in Blake, 2007, p. 77).

The present study discusses the pedagogical considerations of an on-line Business Ukrainian Textbook, and how the pedagogical objectives of this content-based resource may be achieved by means of on-line teaching and learning tools. The students' development of linguistic and professional socio-cultural competence in Ukrainian is at the center of this discussion.

Theoretical Background

In this study, language learning is approached from a socio-cultural perspective, in which language learning or language development is viewed as a social process, "socially and culturally situated, shaped by context, and mediated by various tools and technologies" (Thorne & Black, 2007, p. 143). Within such an approach "individuals and environments mutually constitute one

another and persons are not considered to be separable from the environments and interactions through which language development occurs.” Moreover, “knowledge is not owned solely by the learner but is also a property of social settings and the interface between person and social context” (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 403). The main premise of this study is that language learning constitutes a process of the learners’ socialization into an L2 socio-cultural community. Students are viewed as participants in this community through their exposure to authentic environments, mediated by the target language.

Please note that the very concept of authenticity has been a subject of controversy in scholarship since the eighties. I operate with Mishan’s (2004) set of criteria for authenticity, according to whom, “authenticity is a factor of (1) provenance and authorship, (2) the original communicative and social purpose of the text, (3) the original context, (4) the learning activity based on the text, and (5) learners’ perceptions of and attitudes toward the text and the derived learning activity” (Mishan, 2004, cited in Belz, 2007, p. 48).

With respect to the present study, the on-line Business Ukrainian textbook represents a technologically enhanced authentic simulation, which allows the learners to begin participating in the virtual environment and enables them to grow into confident participants of the authentic professional community (some of the above ideas have been inspired by studies in pragmatic competence proposed by Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). An environment created around authentic texts, that demonstrate the target system of language, culture, professional environment and social interaction, fosters maintenance of emotional authenticity among learners and leads to acquisition of professional socio-cultural skills. Real-world communication tools embedded in the learning process help language learners to build upon their linguistic and professional repertoire in a target-like socio-cultural setting.

The Text

The on-line Business Ukrainian textbook has been created by the author of this study at the University of Alberta, Canada. At the time of this writing, the project is near completion, available on a

non-profit basis and may be found at:
<http://www.artsrn.ualberta.ca/ukr/Business/>.

The textbook consists of five chapters: Resume, Employment and Job Interview, Official Correspondence, Finance and Banking, and Insurance. In addition, learners have access to three Appendices, which provide an array of functional expressions for: (A) conducting an interview, writing a summary, conducting a comparison, expressing oneself orally or in writing using connecting devices, and giving of advice; (B) expressing an opinion, agreeing and disagreeing, changing topics, misunderstanding, doubting, expressing indifference and other conversational conventions; and (C) thanking, apologizing, bidding farewell, congratulating, inviting, requesting and several other speech acts that one may encounter in the professional world (and beyond).

All instructional materials are in Ukrainian. These include a selection of authentic texts and documents (such as resumes, cover letters, official documents, letters, etc.), images, and unscripted video files. Various task-based exercises accompany these text collections. Specifically, a variety of interactive exercises and activities are offered, which students could use under an instructor's supervision, in collaboration with their peers, or that individuals could use on their own (details on specific tasks are elaborated in the analysis below).

Analysis

As noted earlier, the primary emphasis of this study is on the pedagogical component of teaching and acquisition of professional socio-cultural competence by students of Business Ukrainian via CALL tools. Addressed specifically is the role of Computer Mediated [CM] tasks for their input and output in promoting linguistic and professional socio-cultural competence. The CM tasks discussed are learner-centered and are based on learner-computer, learner-learner, and self-learner interactions that offer multimodal input in accord with specific pedagogical design.

The present focus is on the three A's, which are embedded into the learning space: Attention, Assistance, and Awareness.

ATTENTION

Current scholarship shows that attention, in fact, plays an important role in Second Language Acquisition [SLA]. According to Schmidt (2001), there is a close link between attention and learning, and that “noticing, which requires learner focus, is an important part of the learning process” (cited in Wang & Castro, 2010, p. 176). To garner learners’ attention in an L2 setting the quality, relevance, and task-orientation of input are paramount. To spark curiosity a learner needs to be exposed to a variety of tasks and interactional contexts, which are simulated via visual input, which is pleasant and familiar; or if unfamiliar, then relevant and authentic. This visual input may be regarded as an “external attention-drawing technique” (Izumi, 2002, p. 543).

Scholarship in SLA has shown that input alone is not sufficient in fostering second language acquisition. According to Swain’s (1985) Output Hypothesis, “language output may trigger the learner to pay attention to the target linguistic form in order to express their intended meaning. The noticing function of the Output Hypothesis posits that learners may notice the gap in the IL [Interlanguage] knowledge in an attempt to produce the target language to prompt them to solve their linguistic deficiency in ways that are appropriate in a given context” (cited in Wang & Castro, 2010, p. 175). Therefore, “the output is an internal attention-drawing device” (Izumi, 2002, p. 543). The learner needs to be given opportunities to produce output and be able to “*do* things with language – in production as well as reception --- that he or she could not have done without a nudge of assistance” (Ohta, 2001, cited in Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 41), leading to the discussion of the second A: Assistance.

ASSISTANCE

Computer-assisted second language learning tasks require learners “to work on the target language interactively with a computer program or with other people through the medium of the computer” (Chapelle, 2001, p. 132). Assistance in a CM environment, discussed in the present study, is similar to assistance in a regular language classroom; specifically one that avoids “communication breakdown, it does not threaten face, and can draw a learner’s attention to features of the L2 morphosyntax, phonology and pragmatics as readily as to

lexis” (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 415), but also directing learners’ attention to L2’s socio-cultural, or in the present case, professional business knowledge.

First and foremost, authentic texts themselves (verbal and visual input) act as assistants in simulating native-like environments of the target languaculture, capturing the attention of the learner. Tasks developed around these authentic texts are grouped into the following categories: *co-construction*, *self-construction*, and *self-correction with other-assistance*.

The co-construction category is understood as consisting of joint production tasks that involve pairs or groups of learners (and not exclusively in CMC environments), as well as tasks that involve an individual learner and a computer as a partner¹. In the online textbook discussed, the co-construction tasks begin each unit with a set of discussion questions to get learners into the mindset of a particular topic, as in Figure 1:

¹ Foster & Ohta (2005: 419-421), in their study of negotiation of meaning in a language classroom, discuss the categories of: co-construction, other-correction, self-correction and continuers tasks in a face-to-face classroom environment.

Throughout the textbook discussed, in certain exercises and also in Discussion activities, students are presented with meta-linguistic and socio-cultural commentaries on specific cultural environments and certain conventions that are at play. A text on how to write a resume, presented in Figure 2, illustrates socio-cultural information incorporated into an activity:

Отже, структура резюме така:

Контактна інформація

- Ім'я й прізвище (по батькові можна опустити)
- Адреса (повністю, включаючи індекс)
- Телефон (домашній, контактний, робочий телефон)
- Адреса електронної пошти

Мета (коротко, 2-3 рядки): на одержання якої посади й чому Ви претендуєте.

Кваліфікація. Коротко вказується найбільш важлива для потенційного роботодавця інформація про ваші професійні навички, сильні сторони й досягнення.

Досвід роботи подається у зворотному хронологічному порядку (спочатку вказується останнє місце роботи) за наступною схемою:

- назва компанії;
- напрямок діяльності компанії;
- строки роботи;
- посада;
- посадові обов'язки;
- професійні навички й досягнення.

При описі Ваших досягнень використовуйте дієслова дії, такі як розвивав, зводив, збільшив або скоротив.

Освіта. Тут можна повідомити про нагороди, підкреслити ті вивчені дисципліни, які відповідають вашій меті. Також варто згадати про додаткову освіту: курси, семінари, тренінги, стажування тощо.

Додаткова інформація: володіння іноземними мовами й комп'ютером, наявність прав водія, членство в професійних організаціях тощо (хоббі варто згадувати тільки в тому випадку, якщо воно тісно пов'язане з бажаною роботою).

Рекомендації. Якщо є можливість, вкажіть на можливість надання рекомендацій.

Про що НЕ треба писати в резюме:

Не треба вказувати або включати в резюме:

- всю вашу трудову біографію (насправді вашого потенційного роботодавця цікавлять тільки останні 3-5 місць роботи й період не більше 10 років);
- ваші фізичні дані й опис здоров'я;
- ваші слабкі сторони;
- причини, з яких ви пішли з роботи;



Figure 2: [Ch 1, Ex. 3]

Figure 2 presents instructions for a successful resume, specifically, the facts and information which should and should not be included in this type of a document. Figure 2 illustrates an explicit socio-cultural input as a part of an activity.

Empirical studies in the field of SLA, and CALL in particular, have shown that various types of co-construction tasks promote students' engagement in a learning environment and increase students' participation in the learning process through negotiation of meaning, fostering L2 acquisition (Hampel and Pleines 2013, Hampel 2006, Foster & Ohta, 2005).

The self-construction category focuses on assistance in self-centered activities, or an 'individualized' performance. Allowing the learner to practice and experiment with language at their own pace has been shown to reduce anxiety (Brantmeier, 2005). Learners, navigating through the learning process in a self-paced manner, direct their attention to linguistic forms and their functions in various socio-cultural contexts without any fear of losing face. The category of self-construction tasks consists of the following activities: *self-discovery*, *reflection*, and *problem solving*.

Self-discovery

Examples of self-discovery tasks are the pre-reading and pre-viewing, as well as reading and viewing tasks, which begin with brainstorming on the topic (as in Figure 1 above), directing the learner's attention to new or crucial for understanding vocabulary items. An actual reading of a text or viewing of a video, as illustrated in Figure 3, from Chapter 4 on Banking, follows these tasks:

2. Перегляньте підкреслені у тексті слова і обговоріть їхнє значення.

Під час читання:

 3. Прочитайте статтю.

ВАТ «Державний експортно-імпорتنний банк України»
Інформаційний центр: +380 44 247-89-48

Адреса сторінки: <http://www.eximb.com/individual/card/projects/lady/index.html>

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ВАТ «Державний експортно-імпорتنний банк України» та міжнародна платіжна система VISA Int. спеціально для Вас, дорогі жінки, презентують програму Lady's Club, яка поєднує у собі зручності використання банківських платіжних карток та додаткові унікальні можливості!

Приєднайтеся до програми Lady's Club і Ви зможете:

- Отримати неповторну міжнародну платіжну картку Lady's Club VISA Classic Smart, розроблену спеціально для Вас.
- Отримати поліс медичного страхування для виїзду за кордон із максимальним переліком ризиків та значними страховими сумами!
- Розраховуватися картою у понад 24 млн. торговельних підприємств та отримувати готівкові кошти у місцевій валюті більш ніж у 1 млн. банкоматів по всьому світі.
- Сформувати додаткові картки TeenCard для своїх дітей та встановити ліміти використання цих карток за кількістю операцій та розмірами їх сум – чудовий засіб контролю використання «кишенькових» грошей.
- З метою запобігання шахрайським діям із Вашою картою – отримувати на свій мобільний телефон SMS-повідомлення про спроби проведення та проведені операції по картці.
- Розраховувати на ті кошти, які Ви внесли на рахунок, – розмір незнижуваного залишку складає лише 250 грн. Мінімум заморожених грошей!

Отримати гарантовану щодобову підтримку всюди, де б Ви не перебували, завдяки нашому власному процесінговому центру. Навіть якщо загубите картку. Захистіть свої гроші!

А крім того...

Ви зможете отримати знижки при розрахунках своєю картою Lady's Club VISA всюди, де бачите таку наліпку:



Figure 3: [Chapter 4, page 4]

It's worth pointing out that Figure 3 illustrates a culturally peculiar topic of a credit card, “Lady’s Club” specifically designed for women, determined to spark curiosity and hence discussion on cultural differences. In this authentic text presented in Exercise 3 in Figure 3, and similar other tasks of self-discovery in the textbook, learners, after

reading or viewing, retrieve genuine language used in the written texts or by the native speakers in video segments. The learners then browse for attested words and expressions, shown as underlined in the text of Exercise 3, Figure 3, and in the Glossary (which occurs in the top right corner of each page in the textbook; visible in Figure 1 above). Learners are thus presented with opportunities to discover for themselves a repertoire of forms and functions attested in authentic contexts, while learning culturally specific information.

Reflection

Various post-reading or post-viewing activities throughout the textbook are regarded as examples of reflection tasks. An example is an activity following the “Lady’s Club” text discussed above (Figure 3), presented in Figure 4:

Figure 4: [Chapter 4, Exercise 4]

Після прочитання:

 4. а) Які Ваші враження про програму «Lady's Club»? Як на Вас, чи повинні існувати пільгові програми для чоловіків? Обговоріть свої думки.

б) В групах або парах підготуйте 3-4 питання про програму «Lady's Club» для дискусії (намагайтеся використовувати нові слова, підкреслені у тексті вище).

в) Проведіть дискусію, використовуючи свої питання.

[Текст: Програма «Lady's Club» »](#)

Exercise 4 in Figure 4 asks learners to reflect on the text they have read above, prepare questions and discuss their thoughts in groups, using the vocabulary items underlined in the actual text (Figure 3). In such reflection activities, learners are presented with an opportunity to reinforce their linguistic knowledge, as well as cultural information; in this particular case, on the banking system in Ukraine.

Overall, with a variety of topics present in the chapters, there are numerous opportunities for learners to express their opinions or beliefs, and voice their agreement or disagreement, as well as compare one’s own answers with suggested or simulated answers provided in various exercises.

Creating complete sentences, relevant to the texts studied, may also be regarded as reflection activities on the form and content of the topic studied. This is illustrated in Figure 6:

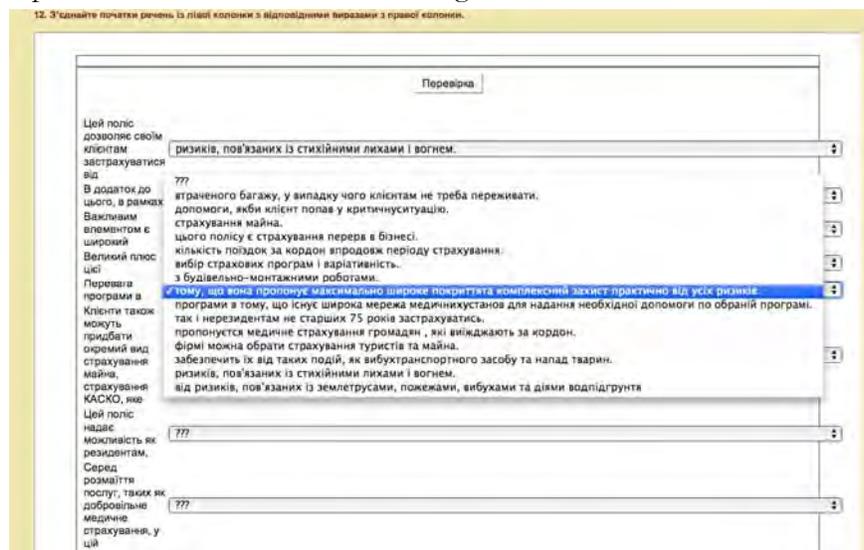


Figure 6: [Chapter 5, Exercise 12]

As Figure 6 illustrates, in Exercise 12, learners are asked to finish sentences by choosing an appropriate phrase from the list provided on the right. This list of possible answers consists of phrases used in and related to content of authentic texts introduced in the chapter, playing therefore, the reinforcement role. In addition, such reflection activities assist learners in noticing not only linguistic forms, but also culturally specific concepts discussed in chapters.

Problem solving

Problem solving tasks have been discussed in scholarship as mediating consciousness raising with relation to L2 linguistic and pragmatic competence (Belz, 2007, p. 50). The importance of problem-solving tasks may also be extended to the level of professional competence. For instance, writing a resume, which is a type of a jigsaw puzzle task, focuses on understanding aspects of professional competence. Knowledge of how to structure a resume in Ukrainian business culture goes beyond attention only to specific linguistic forms appropriate for the context. Empirical evidence from studies in CMC

(Blake, 2000, p. 133) confirms that the jigsaw tasks in CMC heighten learners' metalinguistic awareness of where they are in their L2 and where they still need to go in order to gain more target-like proficiency. In addition to structuring a resume, an activity that combines questions and appropriate answers during a job interview may also be regarded as a problem solving task, as illustrated in Figure 7:

10. Обговоріть питання, які можливі на співбесіді. Чи такі питання, на Вашу думку, відповідні на співбесіді? Які Ви були наймачем, які питання Ви б поставили і чому? Підготуйте 2-3 своїх питання.

11.

Перевірка	
Які у Вас були невдачі чи промахи на попередній роботі?	Я себе вважаю людиною толерантною до точки зору інших, і тому намагаюся співпрацювати з колегами, оминаючи конфлікти.
Де і ким Ви себе бачите за п'ять років?	Галузь книгодрукування, а особливо на міжнародному ринку мене завжди цікавили і Ваша компанія тепер надає нагоду працювати у цій сфері.
Чому Ви бажаєте працювати у нашій фірмі?	За фахом я політолог. Шість років тому я закінчила факультет історії і політології із спеціальністю міжнародних відносин. Після закінчення університету працювала консультантом у міжнародній торгівельній фірмі «Експрес», яка займається імпортом та експортом різних товарів домашнього вжитку.

Figure 7: [Chapter 2, Exercise 11]

Figure 7 demonstrates an activity in which students are asked to click and drag answers, which may be posed during a job interview, from the right to their appropriate job interview questions on the left. In this activity (partially represented above in Exercise 11, Figure 7), along

with attention to linguistic forms and meanings, learners also focus attention on the appropriateness of answers to particular questions in a professional environment.

A Crossword puzzle, a leisure type of problem-solving activity, is illustrated in Figure 8:

Figure 8: [Chapter 4, page 5]



The crossword presented in Figure 8 is structured around content of the Banking and Finances chapter and is one of the last activities of the unit. Crosswords are fun, they provide a thrill, and at the same time direct learners' attention to new vocabulary items; thus are beneficial to the learning process.

Problem solving tasks, such as applying for a job, participating in a job interview, opening a bank account, or applying for a mortgage without the actual threat of failure which exists in the real world, assist learners by promoting their direct engagement in the learning process as well as their self-confidence.

Self-correction with Other-assistance

The opportunities presented to learners to navigate through the self-construction tasks discussed above, allow learners to notice forms

and functions present in given texts. By noticing these various forms and their functions in various contexts, students engage in self-construction.

The Business Ukrainian textbook features assistance in a form of self-correction, in which a self-correction is defined as self-initiated or self-produced based on some prompts from the other party, that is, with ‘other-assistance’². Figure 9, an example of a self-correction activity, presents a task of creating an official autobiography, which is an important document in Ukrainian business dealings:

Складіть вирази автобіографії, які подаються нижче, у правильному порядку.	
Перевірка	
1	Батько – Петренко Тарас Михайлович, 1954 року народження, інженер.
2	Я, Петренко Андрій Львович, народився 11 травня, 1981 року в м. Черкаси в родині інженерів.
3	Сестра – Петренко Юлія Ігорівна, 1985 року народження, студентка третього курсу торгово-фінансової академії у м. Полтаві.
4	У 1987 році був зарахований до першого класу середньої загальноосвітньої школи № 37 з поглибленим навчанням французької мови.
5	Мати – Петренко Марія Павлівна, 1958 року народження, інженер-електрик.
6	Склад сім’ї:
7	У 1998 році вступив до Київського Національного Університету ім. Тараса Шевченка на факультет банківської форми навчання.
8	15 листопада 2011 року
9	Підпис:
10	З 2003 року працюю на посаді менеджера у відділі міжнародної торгівлі концерну «УКРАВТО».

Figure 9: [Chapter 3, Exercise 12]

² My definition of self-correction diverges from one offered by Foster and Ohta (2005), according to whom, self-correction is understood “as self-initiated, self-repair, and occurs when a learner corrects his or her own utterance without being prompted to do so by another person” (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 420).

In Figure 9, the learners' task is to create an autobiography from a collection of sentences, given on the right, which would normally be used in such a document, presented initially in no particular order. Learners are asked to place these sentences in an appropriate chronological as well as logical order by matching sentences from the right to their numerical place in the document, marked on the left. After finishing this activity (and similar others), learners have an opportunity to check for appropriateness of their answers by clicking on the top middle tab *Перевірка* 'Check'. Although there is the 'other' that indicates when the answer is correct or incorrect, the learner nevertheless needs to find a correct answer on his/her own in order to complete the task.

In addition, there are activities that provide learner-directed feedback via pop-up windows containing suggested answers, or those providing instant feedback on correctness, as in Figure 10:

6. Виберіть відповідне слово чи вираз і додайте його у текст нижче.

Перевірка

Великий _____ цієї програми в тому, що існує цілодобовий процесінговий центр, який надає постійну і надійну підтримку клієнтам. Учасники цієї програми мають змогу залобігти _____ через систему повідомлень на мобільний телефон.

Ця програма _____ своїм клієнтам отримувати знижки при розрахунках картою.

Крім того, клієнти можуть _____ до будь-якого відділення чи філії банку.

В додаток до цього, в рамках цієї програми можна _____ поліс медичного страхування.

Перевага програми «Lady's Club» в тому, що можна розрахуватися _____ у понад 24 мільйонах торговельних підприємств.

Ця програма надає можливість отримувати _____ у місцевій валюті в більшості банкоматах.

Також, великою перевагою є те, що гарантується цілодобова _____ всюди, де б Ви не перебували.

Клієнти також _____ піднести цю картку у подарунок своїм близьким.

Для клієнтів надаються такі _____: користування банкоматом, поліс медичного страхування та цілодобова підтримка.

_____ надається можливість відкрити рахунок у будь-якому відділенні банку.

Важливим елементом є можливість отримання _____ у місцевій валюті будь-де у світі.

Перевірка

плюс

???

???

???

✓ ???

- готівкові кошти
- підтримка
- шахрайським діям
- можуть
- клієнтам
- отримати
- послуги як
- карткою
- звертатися
- дозволяє
- коштів
- плюс

???

Figure 10: [Chapter 4, Exercise 6]

Figure 10 illustrates an activity, in which learners are asked to choose appropriate vocabulary items from a list given to the right for each sentence. This is an example of learners' self-practice on comprehension of linguistic forms and contents on Banking and Financing. This activity also incorporates instant feedback on appropriateness of choices on the part of a learner (Перевірка 'Check' tab at the bottom center).

Learning tasks of co-construction, self-construction, self-correction with other-assistance, discussed in the foregoing, are all examples of assistance. These types of assistance entail learners

directing their attention to target language forms, functions and socio-cultural information. These tasks create a supportive, non-threatening environment that ultimately leads to an increase in L2 production and eventually proficiency. The discussion above reinforces the point made by Foster and Ohta that “what the learner can be assisted in doing is soon to be something that the learner will be able to do without help” (2005, p. 413).

AWARENESS

Input, which is an external technique of triggering Attention, as well as Assistance in output, which is an internal attention-drawing technique, both contribute to raising *Awareness* in linguistic, cultural and professional competence in the act of producing language. Awareness-raising tasks in the textbook discussed are those that direct learners’ attention to professional and culturally appropriate aspects of language use, as well as awareness of culturally appropriate conduct. In particular, these tasks are designed to make learners consciously aware of similarities and differences between their own and the target culture’s situational language use and conduct. Some examples of the awareness-raising output tasks that have already been discussed above (writing a resume or an autobiography, as well as problem-solving activities). With respect to an autobiography, for instance, students are asked to discuss similarities and differences between an autobiography and a resume. Additional illustrations of awareness-raising activities are tasks of learning how to write various types of official letters, demonstrated in Figure 11:

13. відновити, запевняємо, колеги, нагадати, ознайомитися, побажаннями, повідомленням
подальші, присмно, прийнята, спіпраці, товари, увагу, умови

Вельмишановні !

Дозвольте Вам повідомити, що ми отримали Вашого листа від 16 вересня, 2012 року з про Ваше заікавлення у нашому .

Щиро вдячні Вам за , надану нашим колегам під час виставкової презентації товару. Нам особливо , що Вас зацікавила лінія «Силач», яку ми плануємо виробляти з наступного року. У цілому, Ваша пропозиція про ціну , проте потрібно обговорити деталі. Нас не цілком влаштовують запропоновані Вами дистрибуції. Доречно буде також, що Вам необхідно контракт з нашою фірмою для нашої подальшої . Після відновлення контракту, ми , що Ви цілковито можете розраховувати на нашу підтримку. Просимо Вас уважно з нашими умовами дистрибуції та повідомити нас про Ваші рішення.

З повагою та найкращими ,

П. Терещенко С.М., Президент «БАЮМ»

Figure 12: [Chapter 3, Exercise 13]

In Figure 12, learners are asked to type appropriate vocabulary items into the empty boxes in the text by choosing from a list provided in the instructions. Exercise 13 in Figure 12 is an example of learners' self-practice that incorporates culturally specific input on business correspondence, raising learners' awareness of linguistic and cultural intricacies of dealings in this professional domain³.

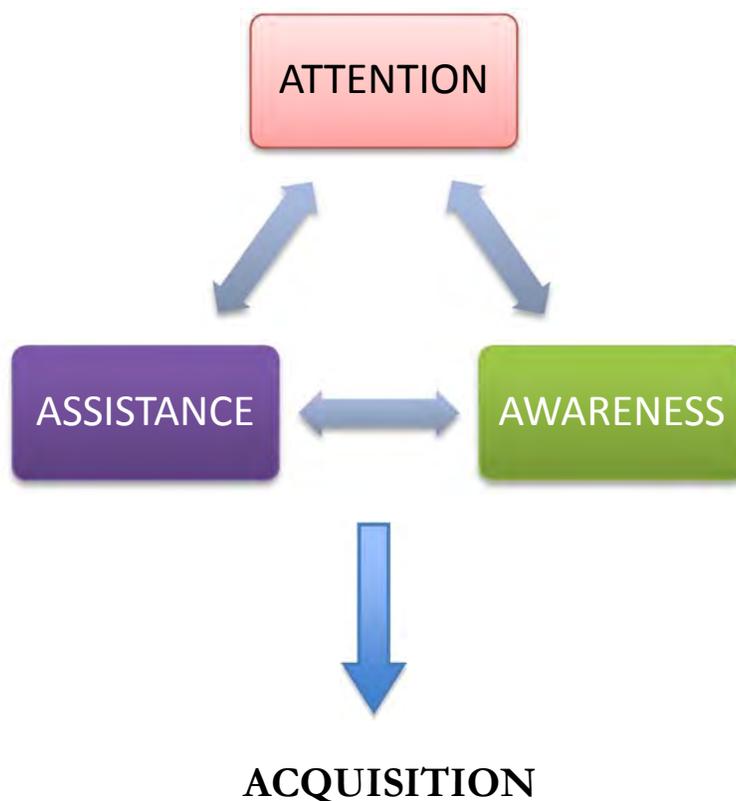
Awareness-raising input with respect to professional conduct in a target culture constitutes an important element in the learning of

³ Instant feedback on appropriateness of choices is incorporated into this activity (Перевірка 'Check' tab at the bottom center/left). Prompts are given also upon learners' request (Підказка 'Hint' tab at the bottom center/right).

language for professional purposes. In the textbook discussed, such input is delivered via authentic video segments about how to prepare for a job interview, how to behave during an interview, or even how to dress for a successful job interview (cf. Chapter 1, video segment “Resume”). Overall, the awareness raising tasks aid students in figuring out not only socio-cultural meanings encountered in the learning environment of the target language and culture, but also those outside the classroom, or even outside the CM texts.

The three A’s discussed above work in close interconnection with each other: all benefit from each other and all strengthen one another. With respect to CM tasks in the present case, these three A’s ultimately lead to the forth A, the *Acquisition* of linguistic and professional socio-cultural competence of learners of Business Ukrainian.

Figure 13: The 3A’s



Needless to say, the level of acquisition will vary from learner to learner. As Yule (1996) noted, the “way in which we express and interpret meaning is centrally tied to our assumptions, goals, and backgrounds” (cited in Sykes, 2008, p. 38) and the progress in the learning process will depend on the individual learner. Some learners will demonstrate improvement in their attention to and production of form, the others will show their amelioration in sociocultural knowledge. Nevertheless, it is argued above that the amalgamation of the AAAs constitutes the pillars of the acquisition.

Conclusion

“[T]he march of technology throughout all aspects of the lives of language learners is expanding whether it be through formal education or in their everyday lives” (Chapelle, 2007b, p. 108).

Computer Mediation expands the variety of discourse options to which learners have access, creating an array of opportunities for exposure and performance of L2 language and professional sociocultural competence in meaningful interactions. CMC also allows for a more agentive participation in the language performance activities, in which learners become social actors who attend to real-world tasks.

As shown with the example of the Business Ukrainian textbook, learners are presented with opportunities to participate in simulated near-authentic environments, and practice various types of interactions prior to engaging in real-world scenarios. In addition, the authenticity of content contributes to learners’ development of navigational strategies necessary in an authentic space. Kramersch and McConnell-Ginet (1992, p. 5) astutely point out that “[s]ociocultural contexts cannot be reduced to an inventory to be “mastered”...they are not only too rich and various but also in constant flux as people reshape them through speaking and other forms of social interaction. Yet students can come to understand the centrality of context to linguistic communication and can develop some ethnographic skills to help them better understand the relevant contexts for their own uses of the target language” (cited in Stykes, 2008, p. 38). The present study supports this point of view and stresses that the tasks created around authentic texts allow for the maintenance of emotional authenticity

among learners. Therefore, if learners gain the socio-cultural and professional competence in the practice immersive CM space, they prepare themselves for real or target-cultural professional interactions⁴.

In the matrix of the AAAs, the learners are placed in roles of engaged language observers and receivers, active language performers and participants, as well as professionally aware language users.

The discussion above focused on one example of a professional socio-cultural learning space, in which students can explore the Ukrainian business culture along with the acquisition of linguistic forms. As language educators and teaching resource designers, we continue to have a vested interest in creating new and exciting opportunities for our students and in assisting them in navigating the modern and diverse languacultural world.

⁴ Sykes focuses on pragmatic competence and states: “if learners gain the pragmatic skills necessary in the practice space, they will be more prepared for authentic interaction” (Sykes, 2008, p. 56).

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