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## Subjectivity as a Psychological and Pedagogical Category

**Ekaterina S. Murasheva\***

*Moscow City Teachers' Training University,  
5B Malyi Kazennyi per., Moscow, 129226 Russia*

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*The article attempts to analyze the phenomenon of "subjectivity", its nuclear and peripheral characteristics in psychology, pedagogy and methodology. Primarily, it puts forward the idea that these sciences have general and special characteristics of subjectivity from the points of view of different approaches. In addition to it, activity becomes a uniting characteristic of subjectivity for the disciplines mentioned above. Moreover, they investigate subjectivity as an integral and acquired quality of a person. Besides, the article singles out the fundamental characteristics of subjectivity necessary for a successful studying of foreign languages.*

*Keywords: subjectivity, nuclear and peripheral characteristics, activity, reflexion, ability, attitude, self-realization, teaching foreign languages*

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### Introduction

There is some evidence that in modern teaching practice the subject-subject model of relations of pedagogical process participants (a student and a teacher) is generally accepted. Due to this model the student is a subject of the educational activity and learns to get knowledge on his/her own, constantly being in choice situations.

It is noteworthy that the volume of problems, connected with subjectivity studying, is growing together with deepening its cognition. Moreover, new directions are being formed and new areas of its research are being opened. Nowadays subjectivity is investigated within the framework of three main scientific fields. For example, there are scientists' works in the fields of psychology, pedagogy, and methodology of teaching different

subjects, including foreign languages. These scientific directions with various objects of their research have considerably different points of view on subjectivity.

### Points of views on subjectivity

Psychologists, investigating aspects of subjectivity, rely on various approaches (subject, subject-active, learner-centered, akmeology, humanitarian). The analysis of the extensive body of literature demonstrates the existence of various approaches to studying subjectivity. This is the evidence of scientists' interest to this issue. As a result, there is much information about subjectivity in psychology.

The analysis of psychological literature on the subjectivity characteristics enabled us to point out three main tendencies. According to the first

of them, subjectivity is widely and universally interpreted and connected with a definite level of person's development (A.V. Brushlinsky, E.A. Sergienko). In other cases subjectivity is narrowly considered and presented as an individual's quality which can be: acquired and formed (A.K. Osnitsky); developing itself and the subject (A.A. Derkach, E.V. Sayko); can emerge from an ongoing conflict between relational experiences in which we are treated as objects and subjects (L. Layton).

The second group of psychologists defines this phenomenon as a characteristic: constituting and showing in different activities (V.A. Petrovsky); regulating individual's behaviour regardless of his/her will (L.I. Antsiferova). Another point of view on subjectivity is put forward by the third group of scientists. They characterize this phenomenon as an ability: to be surpassed and self-determined (K.A. Abulhanova-Slavskaya); to have creative attitude to reality and to its transformation (A.A. Derkach, E.V. Sayko); to be the reason of oneself (N.Y. Bolshunova); to be the subject (A.L. Zhuravliev); to be aware of oneself as an individual, a social being and a unique creature (V.I. Stepanskiy).

In pedagogically-oriented works subjectivity appears to be one of the most important and demanded categories for studying. Scientists, investigating aspects of subjectivity, keep to different approaches (learner-centred, personal-activity, humanitarian-personal, axiological). Such great variety of opinions is connected with a choice of different methodological platforms (paradigms) in researching the subjectivity. These bases set various formats for studying this phenomenon in pedagogy.

The analysis of the material, having been provided on the issue of conditions under which subjectivity can be developed at different age groups, demonstrates the presence of three main conceptual positions. According to the

first of them (fitting into the context of learner-centered and humanitarian-personal approaches), subjectivity deals with certain qualities of an individual and is regarded as:

- a quality, determining a person's freedom, humanity, spirituality and creativity (E.V. Bondarevskaya 1999);
- a quality which can be acquired and developed (I.S. Yakimanskaya 1994);
- a quality, revealing the essence of human's being which consists of a conscious and active attitude to the world and to oneself (E.N. Volkova 1998);
- the unity of individual and personal qualities (N.M. Borytko 2002);
- a procedural quality of a person (T.N. Bashkova 2009).

According to the second tendency, soundly based on the postulates of personal-activity approach, subjectivity is interpreted in particular ways. At this point it is defined as a demonstrative form of active attitudes to oneself being the subject of the activity (S.A. Nelyubov 2001).

According to the third tendency, fitted into the context of axiological approach, subjectivity is particularly studied and associated with a level characteristic of a person as subject qualities can be revealed only at a certain level of development (O.V. Manikovskaya 2010, T.A. Olkhovaya 2007).

On the bases of the preliminary results, it is possible to conclude what exactly in characteristics of subjectivity unites the scientists: pedagogues and psychologists; and what makes the object of each science special, concerning the given category. First of all, it is necessary to highlight the fact that psychological researches are a platform for understanding the subjectivity in pedagogy. As they were the first who have tackled and drawn their attention to this problem and started to work out the theory of subjectivity.

But at the same time, it is impossible to assert that subjectivity in pedagogy is the absolute analogue of this phenomenon in psychology. In the science of teaching and educating subjectivity starts to be understood more than just a specific characteristic of a person. It is described as a process of changing person's qualities.

Summing up, the given scientific disciplines, having different objects of their research, turn to the ways of developing the subjectivity and have different points of view on this problem.

### Characteristics of subjectivity

The comparative analysis of the literature on the issue of subjectivity contents in psychological and pedagogical knowledge allows us to set out the general nuclear characteristics of the given phenomenon:

- **activity**, considered as a specific quality of the subject, his/her formation, realization and modification;
- **different kinds of abilities**, characterized as individually expressed possibilities including separate knowledge, skills, abilities and readiness to learning new ways and techniques of teaching, also leading to successful realization of this or that activity;
- **independence**, represented as a generalized characteristic of a person, showing itself in the initiative, criticality, adequate self-assessment and the feeling of individual's responsibility for the activity;
- **self-regulation**, interpreted as a process of person's regulation of his/her psychological and physiological states and actions;

The given characteristics are the basis of children's psychological development and the background of their educational activity.

In addition, the differences in defining the specific subjectivity characteristics from the points of view of psychology and pedagogy can be revealed simultaneously with the demonstration of general nuclear subjectivity characteristics. The presence of the differences accounts for the fact that these sciences have different objects of their research. For example, in pedagogy the attention is drawn to such characteristics as versatility of abilities, self-assessment and targeting. And psychologists pinpoint – consistency, autonomy and creativity of an individual.

Comparing **the peripheral characteristics** of subjectivity in both sciences, it is possible to single out common components:

- **active attitude**, explained as the subjective side of the reflected reality, the result of person's interaction with the environment;
- **initiative**, representing itself as an ability and readiness to independent active actions, to taking deliberate decisions and their creative realization;
- **self-reflexion**, defined as a form of mental activity and shown up in the constant analysis of thoughts and actions;
- **self-realization**, described as the realization of own potential.

Along with common features there are some significant distinctions in the field of peripheral characteristics. In psychology, for example, the first place is given to desires, feelings, socio-cultural background and cognitive processes. In pedagogy subject experience, value orientations, satisfaction by learning and procession of methods of cognitive activity are pointed up.

All the above-mentioned characteristics of subjectivity are not opposed to each other. They closely co-operate and, taken together, demonstrate a complex, multilevel and multi-component formation.

### **Subjectivity in methodology of teaching foreign languages**

According to the requirements of the new educational standards (2009) and the programme of foreign languages (2009), the development of young learners' subjectivity is an obvious target. As stated in the standard, the integrative goal of teaching foreign languages in primary school is to form an elementary communicative competence, providing "the ability and readiness of young learners to carry out interpersonal and intercultural communication with native speakers in oral and written forms but in a limited sphere of situations, available for young students" (Exemplary programmes on academic subjects, 2011, p. 127).

To achieve this goal, the programme provides instructive lines in the sphere of:

- a) communicative skills in the basic forms of speech activity;
  - b) linguistic means and skills to use them;
  - c) socio-cultural awareness;
  - d) general and special educational skills
- (Exemplary programmes on academic subjects. p. 131-132).

When realizing these lines, individual characteristics of young students' should be taken into account. Young learners' success of further foreign language studying depends on the level of subjectivity development. Consequently, teaching foreign languages should be directed at the development of children's subjectivity.

The phenomenon of subjectivity poses a challenge to the researches in methodology. In the field of methodological aspects of subjectivity studying there appears to be only a starting point to the given problem. In the absence of the evidence to the contrary, we can assume that the works on subjectivity while learning a foreign language are dated not later than 2006. It can be noted that the phenomenon of subjectivity status and its peculiarities of revealing while studying a

foreign language is investigated not so intensively as in pedagogy and psychology. It is caused by the fact that the category of subjectivity is new for linguodidactics. Among the approaches to subjectivity studying while learning foreign languages, two researches can be put forward. In particular, E.G. Denisenko describes the methodology of self-monitoring organization for the purpose of activation of reflexive processes and on this basis the development of person's subjectivity as a determinant while mastering a foreign language (Denisenko, 2006). Nevertheless, A.V. Gvozdeva in her research grounds the aim, the status, and the functions of integrative-differentiated approach in subjectivity development; the system correlation of psychological and pedagogical conditions providing the realization of this approach to subjectivity development (Gvozdeva, 2009).

The review of the literature demonstrates that nowadays the interest to subjectivity in methodology of teaching foreign languages has considerably increased. Under the circumstances of a new educational situation and modernization of the educational system the problem of development of pupils' subjectivity has gained the status of the main goal of education, including teaching foreign languages.

The first thing, pointed out from the analysis of methodological literature, is connected with the understanding of this term. In the field of methodology the scientists base their points of view on the background of psychological researches. It can be easily explained that the term subjectivity is part of the categorial apparatus of psychology and the methodology of teaching foreign languages hasn't included the given phenomenon yet. At the same time subjectivity of learning foreign languages is investigated in the light of the gained achievements in pedagogy. Summarizing the main points, there is some evidence to advance

the interdisciplinary feature as the major approach to studying subjectivity in methodology of teaching foreign languages.

Analyzing the existing researches in linguodidactics on the topic “subjectivity of a person while studying a foreign language”, three leading tendencies can be proposed. According to the first of them, subjectivity is described as **the integral characteristic of a person, mastering a foreign language**. This point of view is typical of those authors, who rely on the postulates of the learner-centered approach (Bogdanova, 2010), also the evaluating, the activity and the personal approaches (Titova, 2007). It is necessary to indicate that the given point of view is linked up with the opinion of psychologists.

Due to the second tendency, based on the subject approach, subjectivity is understood as **an ability of a purposeful converting activity and a conscious choice** in the process of teaching foreign languages (Guseva, 2006, p. 35). Such interpretation of subjectivity is dictated by the influence of pedagogical conceptions about subjectivity development.

According to the third tendency, similar with the ideas of the integrative-differentiated approach, subjectivity is defined as a special quality of the person, causing **the unity and the integrity of an individual**, studying a foreign language (Gvozdeva, 2009, p. 5). In this case this phenomenon is investigated as **a determinant of mastering a foreign language and as a measure of activation of personal resources**, ensuring success in studying languages as a means of communication. This tendency differs from two previous ones because it is dictated, to some extent, by the peculiarities of teaching foreign communication. So, it is more connected with the linguodidactic content.

While concretizing the elements of subjectivity, the most demanded ones in methodology are characteristics:

- activity (E.V. Bogdanova, A.V. Gvozdeva),
- skills (I.A. Guseva, T.N. Titova),
- attitude (E.V. Bogdanova, I.A. Guseva).
- consciousness (I.A. Guseva, T.N. Titova),
- reflexivity (E.G. Denisenko A.V. Gvozdeva, L. Layton).

There is some evidence to suggest that the peripheral characteristics of subjectivity in psychology and pedagogy have become the nuclear ones in methodology. The opposite tendency can be also noticed. For example, some nuclear characteristics of subjectivity in psychology and pedagogy take the position of the peripheral ones in methodology. Such disposition isn't accidental. The methodological point of view on subjectivity as a category leads to searching for its tangible features which can be developed and formed. Moreover, they can be assessed, controlled and interpreted by the pupil himself/herself. In this connection, it is interesting to highlight that in methodological works much attention is drawn to such characteristic of subjectivity as “skills”. This way the methodological approaches support the pedagogical nature of subjectivity, where a special role is given to “versatility of skills”. In the sciences, the main subject of which is the influence on a person with the aim of his/her development, the accentuation of skills is fundamental.

It is necessary to notice that in researches of linguodidactic content the characteristic of “skills” has been investigated in detail. So, scientists describe different kinds of skills as components of person's subjectivity while studying a foreign language: a skill to define the ways of achieving different goals (I.A. Guseva); a skill to present the achievements (T.N. Titova). Besides, the scientists put forward different kinds of attitudes: an evaluating and semantic attitude (E.V. Bogdanova), an attitude to the activity (T.N. Titova). The authors also point out different kinds of consciousness of:

values and traditions (T.N. Titova); a choice (I.A. Guseva).

Unfortunately, in the revealed diversification of skills, attitudes and kinds of consciousness the specificity, defined by the subject of “Foreign language” isn’t observed. The positions worked out by the authors have a generally didactic character. It follows logically from what has been said that this conclusion applies both to the nuclear and the peripheral characteristics of subjectivity. In particular, among the latter it is noteworthy to emphasize involvement, motivation, organization, self-control, confidence in one’s own forces, variability that is peculiar to subjectivity when studying any subject. Language is an important instrument in the production of subjectivity (Desmond Painter). The final point to stress is that subjectivity, referring to teaching foreign languages, demands a special approach and the revealing those of its aspects and characteristics, caused by the subject “Foreign language”.

### Conclusion

At all width of interpretation and some diffusiveness of outlines of subjectivity (due to abundance and ambiguity of interpretation of its characteristics), nevertheless, it doesn’t go beyond the limits of a certain logic-semantic area in psychology, pedagogy and methodology.

Three scientific disciplines unite the fact that they investigate subjectivity as an integral and acquired quality of a person where the central and universal nuclear characteristic is **activity**. Successful formation and development of other subject qualities of a person depends on this criterion in psychology, pedagogy and methodology. Other nuclear characteristics are special for each scientific discipline. For instance, in psychology subjectivity is defined as a certain level of development, as a specific property of a person. The following nuclear characteristics are stressed: autonomy, responsibility, self-assessment, self-regulation, self-control, independence, ability, creativity and integrity. In pedagogy subjectivity is described as a process of changing a person’s qualities and as a form of revealing an active attitude to oneself. Such characteristics are emphasized as versatility of skills, self-assessment, self-regulation, self-control, independence, abilities and targeting. In methodology the attention shifts to the study of providing subjectivity development as a measure of activating personal resources of an individual. The methodologists underline such characteristics as consciousness, attitudes, reflexivity and skills.

Thus, it seems essential to emphasize that it is possible to single out the general and the special in psychology, pedagogy and methodology.

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## **Субъектность как психолого-педагогическая категория**

**Е.С. Мурашева**

*Московский городской педагогический университет  
Россия 129226, Москва, Малый Казенный переулок, 5Б*

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*В данной статье предпринимается попытка проанализировать понятие «субъектность», её ядерные и периферийные характеристики в психологии, педагогике и методике. В первую очередь выдвигается идея о существовании универсальных и особенных характеристик субъектности для каждой из этих научных дисциплин с точки зрения разных научных подходов. В дополнении к этому делается вывод о том, что активность становится центральной характеристикой для трёх научных дисциплин. Они рассматривают субъектность как неотъемлемое и приобретаемое свойство личности. Также выделяются базисные характеристики субъектности, необходимые для успешного овладения иностранными языками.*

*Ключевые слова: субъектность, ядерные и периферийные характеристики, активность, рефлексия, способность, отношение к учебной деятельности, самореализация, обучение иностранным языкам.*

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