

## Functions of Facilitative Interaction as a Predictor of Developing Pupils' Soft Skills

### Функції фасилітативної взаємодії як предиктор розвитку м'яких навичок учнів

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### ABSTRACT

**The purpose** of the article is: to show the content of facilitative interaction; to present the functions of facilitative interaction; to describe our experimental research at secondary schools and to describe functions of facilitative interaction as the predictor of developing pupils' soft skills.

**Methods of the research.** The following theoretical methods of the research were used to solve the tasks formulated in the article: a categorical method, structural and functional methods, the methods of the analysis, systematization, modeling, generalization. Also, in our research we used empirical methods, such as statement experiment.

**The results of the research.** According to the results of our research we proposed such functions of facilitation: the function of stimulation; update function; the function of forming the sovereignty of the student's personality; the function of managing the educational process; the function of organizing the process of interaction; the function of providing a creative educational environment.

**Conclusions.** We proved empirically, that functions of facilitative interaction in the pedagogical process at secondary schools are real predictors of developing pupils' soft skills, such as: academic achievements, self-concept, attitude to school, creativity, conformity, curiosity, anxiety, locus of control, cooperation, recognition of value, acceptance, trust, the possibility to create the environment, the ability to participate in creative types of the activities, expressiveness, naturalness, empathetic listening, the ability to make a climate of liberation, stimulating self-initiated personal growth. Also, we proposed three groups of soft skills of such kind of emotive teaching, which can be called facilitative soft skills: empathy, respect, sincerity.

**Key words:** facilitation, facilitative interaction, functions of facilitative interaction, soft skills, empathy, respect, sincerity, creativity, conformity, curiosity, anxiety, locus of control, cooperation, recognition of value, acceptance.

## Introduction

In the contemporary research scientists (Alyami, & Mohsen, 2019) said that the performance of joint cognitive activity greatly contributed to the respondents' successful performance of tasks that required superficial learning. This conclusion confirms our hypothesis, who found that participation in joint activities, which increase the speed of people's reactions in solving rather simple psychomotor tasks (Drigas, & Karyotaki, 2017). And at the end we established that in the presence of other people learning was gone slow down to a great extent.

The question arises whether the presence of others performing similar type of the activity impairs or improves the learning of complex of psychomotor skills. A partial answer to this question was obtained in our research of the cognitive activity of teens (Гончарук, & Онуфрієва, 2018). Respondents were asked to perform a rather difficult, new for them psychomotor task in one of four situations of joint activity (Alahmadi, Shank, & Foltz, 2018). The results showed the formulated hypothesis which increased in the number of participants significantly presented the effectiveness of joint activities in the initial period of training. These data were experimentally confirmed (Ehri, Nunes, Willows, Schuster, Yaghoub-Zadeh, & Shanahan, 2001).

The experimental data confirmed our hypothesis regarding the nature and genesis of *facilitative interaction*: the simple presence of outsiders has a great stimulating effect on a person, thereby increasing the realization of their dominant reaction (Pimperton, & Nation, 2010). Also, we showed that the presence of observers who could not fully assess the respondents' activities (for example, blindfolded observers), and that had not been created an effect of improving the situation (Shiva Ram, Bhardwaj, & Phani Krishna, 2017). A negative or positive effect occurred only in those cases when observers could assess the respondents' activities (Mykhalchuk, & Onufrieva, 2023).

The concept of “facilitative activity process” reveals its meaning and features based on the context of the interaction of other very important categories, such as “a subject”, “a facilitator” and “a result” (Learning Preferences and Strengths, 2023). In turn, the meaning of the concept of “a facilitative process” is revealed thanks to two rather abstract definitions, which are “facilitative methods” and “facilitative means”. The “facilitative methods” are understood as a set of all intermediate states of the facilitator of the activity (Mykhalchuk, & Bihunova, 2019). The first is considered as an abstract category that does not include in its content either the time factor or other factors that are not its own higher-order abstractions derived from the method category itself (Greco, Canal, Bambini, & Moro, 2020).

In the broadest sense, the word “facilitative means” denote “all the material conditions, which are rather necessary in general for the process to be carried out” (Heidari, 2019). In education, facilitative means can be a book, a film, a computer, means of communication, means of information, the teacher himself/herself, etc. (Rezaei, & Mousanezhad Jeddi, 2020). It is important to emphasize that the optimal choice of the facilitative subject and facilitative method, corresponding to the goals of the facilitative activity, may not be supported by the use of adequate facilitative teaching aids (Ivashkevych Er., 2023). Then the results of the performed facilitative activity will be quite low (Phani Krishna, Arulmozi, Shiva Ram, & Mishra, 2020). Scientists note that there are also situations where effective means of facilitative activity do not give the expected result (Engle, 2002).

According to actuality of the problem of our research, **the purpose** of the article is: to show the content of facilitative interaction; to present the functions of facilitative interaction; to describe our experimental research at secondary schools and to describe functions of facilitative interaction as the predictor of developing pupils’ soft skills.

## Methods of the research

The following theoretical methods of the research were used to solve the tasks formulated in the article: a categorical method, structural and functional methods, the methods of the analysis, systematization, modeling, generalization. Also, in our research we used empirical methods, such as statement experiment.

## Results and their discussion

Modern studies show us that the form of evaluation significantly affects the effectiveness of facilitation. In our research teenagers mastered a complex psychomotor skills under the conditions of taking into account: direct assessment of the person's activity, the assessment of the results of the activity (we mean indirect assessment), peculiarities of the performance of the activity without any assessment. The results confirmed the assumption of scientists (Івашкевич Ер., & Комарніцька, 2020) regarding facilitation as the result of an acquired reaction in the situation of evaluation. Our study also showed that direct evaluation (under the conditions of observation of the activity process) had a greater impact on the individual than indirect evaluation, under the conditions of which the participants of the joint activity could evaluate only final results, and not the activity itself.

These conclusions can be confirmed by some examples from everyday life. For example, a pupil always feels anxious if the teacher constantly monitors how the student performs the task, but feels much calmer when doing the activity alone and then handing it in to the teacher in the form of independent work or an essay. Empirical studies have also confirmed the fact that social arousal contributes to the actualization of a dominant response, regardless of whether it is adequate or not. Also, we found out that teenagers in the presence of other people need much less time to learn a fairly simple maze and more time to learn a complex one.

Modern researches (Alahmadi, & Foltz, 2020; Falé, Costa, & Luegi, 2016) and other scientists (Connors, 2009; Hecht, Torge-

sen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 2001) on the trends of self-actualization in the life and professional activities of so-called facilitators have shown that “ideal” forms of personal development and functioning can be studied as some very real cases. In this sense, in American Humanistic Psychology, literally from the moment of its emergence, another general strategy was implemented, which can be called a strategy “from life to the ideal”. This strategy is based on the following *psychological principles*:

- finding specific features or individual personal characteristics that contain essential qualities of a humanistic ideal; they are the person’s specific incarnations;

- in a life itself can be identified and on this basis be studied, explored the conditions that contribute to the formation of harmonious personalities and their inherent personal qualities (feelings, actions, forms of communication and reflection);

- only within this paradigm “from the life to the ideal person”, which allows you to analyze ideal ideas in a real space. You can formulate real-life theoretical ideas about a particular ideal, and simulate non-directive psychological and pedagogical practice of reproducing this ideal through human development reality (de la Garza, & Harris, 2017).

We believe that Behavioral Psychology has the aim primarily at controlling human behavior, consciousness and personality. In such a way the individual becomes the object of the research and manipulation, and his/her free personal choice is not taken into account. Hence the traditional system of teaching based on a hierarchical structure: teacher guidance – pupil subordination (Arrington, Kulesz, Francis, Fletcher, & Barnes, 2014).

According to Rogers, the reform of education should be based on the restructuring of certain personal attitudes of the teacher, which become explicit in the process of his/her interpersonal interactions with students. Thus, scientists (Astle, & Scerif, 2011) identify three main guidelines of the teacher-facilitator. The first of them is described by the terms “truth” and “openness”, and involves the teacher’s openness to their own thoughts and

experiences, the ability to sincerely express and broadcast them in the process of interpersonal communication with pupils. This attitude is seen as an alternative to the typical, traditional attitude of the teacher to the implementation of a facilitator of a role behavior (Gathercole, Pickering, Ambridge, & Wearing, 2004).

The next, the second attitude of the teacher-facilitator is characterized by the terms "acceptance", "trust", the inner, personal confidence of the teacher in the capabilities and abilities of each pupil. In many aspects, this attitude coincides with what in the psychological and pedagogical science is called "pedagogical optimism", taking into account the positive qualities of pupils.

So, in 2023 we organized our empirical research with teenagers of the 8<sup>th</sup> form (58 people), Rivne school No 15. We proved, that in situations which required a small amount of knowledge, skills and abilities, the ability of people to endure an electric shock were alone and in the presence of another person who was also receiving an electric shock had been investigated. It turned out that people are better able to withstand an electric shock when they are in a group. Our research suggests that observing the impact of stress on another person in a great degree increases stress tolerance of the person. In a special series of researches we also studied the relationships between the facilitative abilities of 57 teachers of Rivne (Ukraine) and the level of their general physical development. The level of physical health of teachers was generally quite low. But in the process of psychological and psycho-physiological research it was found that it is the most important condition for humanistic interpersonal communication, as facilitative learning requires a high level of mental and psycho-physiological functioning of the teacher.

According to the results of our research we emphasize that we're against teaching pupils a certain content. We believe that the pupil should learn on his/her own, because the acquisition of knowledge is not a process of simple acquisition of knowledge, but a change in the internal empathic and cognitive experience of the pupil, related to his/her personality as a whole. This ex-

perience is impossible to pass on, because it is quite different for all pupils. The pupil can master certain information only by learning, and only in this case it is the importance of the learning process as a whole.

The knowledge, skills and abilities having been acquired into the process of self-learning are the strongest, they are preserved for a long time, because the feelings, relationships, thoughts and actions of pupils are updated. With such training, the pupil becomes responsible, creative, he/she begins to understand that he/she must rely only on himself/herself, for him/her the main thing is self-criticism and self-esteem, and the evaluation of others is quite a secondary category. If personally significant experience for a long period of time remains unchanged for pupils, and mechanically acquired cognitive knowledge cannot be applied into practice, such knowledge is quickly forgotten without playing any important role in the life of the pupil, and the person does not develop his/her individuality. The teacher should provide pupils with all possible means of self-learning. The teacher himself/herself must understand that he/she is also a kind of “tool” of educational activities, as pupils can consult with him/her and argue with him/her.

Thus, the teacher understands and accepts the inner world of his pupils without any assessments, behaves quite naturally, in accordance with their inner experiences, and, finally, he/she is friendly to pupils, thus creating the necessary conditions for facilitating their meaningful process learning and personal development in general. If, on the contrary, a teacher does not understand and accept the inner world of his/her pupils, if he/she behaves insincerely, if he/she shows disrespect or coldness towards pupils, then such a teacher, of course, has a very negative impact on their personal development.

These ideas were the basis of so called “open lessons”, where each pupil seeks to learn and move forward according to his/her abilities, and the teacher is only a consultant. The experience of teachers working in the paradigm of ideas of Humanistic



Psychology, provides independence and responsible freedom of pupils in drawing up the curriculum, in the case of formulating educational goals, in evaluating the results of educational activity. At the same time, the teacher is not a leader, but a facilitator of learning, a person, who creates the most favorable conditions for independent and meaningful learning, which, in turn, activates and stimulates curiosity and cognitive motives of pupils, organizes their group learning. The latter largely supports the cooperative trends in the team, provides pupils with excellent opportunities to access a variety of educational material.

So, we'll identify the principles that should guide the teacher, who seeks to humanize interpersonal relationships with pupils:

1. From the very beginning and during the whole learning process the teacher needs to show the children his/her trust in them, in their personality.

2. Pupils should be assisted in formulating and clarifying the goals and objectives that are formulated both for microgroups and for each pupil individually.

3. We must always assume that pupils have an intrinsic motivation for the learning process.

4. The teacher should be a source of personal experience for pupils, which can always "be turned to" for the help of other people, be faced with difficulties in solving a problem.

5. It is important that this role is performed by the teacher in relations to each pupil.

6. The teacher should strive to develop the ability to feel the emotional mood of the micro-group and understand it.

7. We should strive to achieve empathic relationships that allow us to understand the feelings and the experiences of everyone.

8. The micro-group should actively demonstrate their feelings.

9. It is necessary to be an active participant in group facilitative interaction.

Being of particular interest there are the data which are characterizing the effectiveness of humanistically oriented learning compared to traditional one. Using our empirical researches and obtained data, we argue that for all nine indicators having been diagnosed by us (*academic achievements, self-concept, attitude to school, creativity, conformity, curiosity, anxiety, locus of control, cooperation*), in more empirical researches Humanistic Learning has been more successful and effective than traditional one.

As a result of comparative studies, which in total surveyed 57 teachers and 92 pupils, scientists compared different performance indicators of teachers who have the ability to facilitate learning at different levels. The analysis of the behavior of pupils in the classes of teachers-facilitators showed that (compared to the behavior in traditional classes) pupils are more proactive in the process of communication, they ask a lot of questions. Pupils spend more time solving learning tasks and problems, show higher levels of cognitive functioning (for example, a lot of time is spent on various mental actions and less time – on mnemonic operations). Pupils are also less likely to miss classes, demonstrate higher academic achievements in all disciplines, steadily increase their IQ and creativity throughout the school year. It is established that the explication of all these differences is directly proportional to the duration of the teacher-facilitator's activity with pupils.

The analysis of teachers' activity allowed us to say that the higher are pupils' abilities to facilitate learning, the more individualized, differentiated and creative is the approach to pupils, the more they pay attention to pupils' experiences, more often enter into dialogues with them, more often cooperate with them and use appropriate suggestions and recommendations when planning the educational process.

The research has also found that teachers' abilities to develop facilitative learning skills is generally mediocre. But when using training programs, it was found that the most number of teachers can improve their facilitative skills. The most impor-

tant conditions for the effectiveness of the training are the openness of the teacher's personality, a high level of facilitative abilities of the teacher, as well as special classes that significantly increase the level of general physical development and health of teachers. The teacher's transition from the traditional education system to such a new style of behavior and activity should be gradual, as it is associated with deepness and, therefore, rather slow personal changes of both teachers and pupils. At the same time, the leading factors are not so much the change of the content and methods of teaching subjects, as the formation and strengthening of basic personal attitudes, the constant personal growth of the teacher-facilitator. The main tool of the teacher is his/her own "Self conception". That is why a new approach to teacher training is, above all, to be active with his/her own "Self conception".

Pedagogical facilitation is a process of increasing the productivity of education (teaching, upbringing) and the development of the subjects of the professional pedagogical process due to their special style of communication and personality of the teacher. In the process of pedagogical facilitation we invite teachers and pupils to do everything together. We also propose to distinguish between a teacher (who educates his/her pupils, "pulling" them to a certain level) and a teacher (who helps pupils in their own learning activities). We argue that one should be a teacher, the other person wouldn't be. This actualizes insufficiently important role of the Teacher in a real process of schooling, that requires great self-esteem, remarkable personal potential, impeccable skills of constructive interaction. The teacher as a professional specialist is characterized by special empathy: he/she sees and hears all the troubles, mistakes and failures, is able to help, but only when his/her help is really necessary. A real teacher never shows initiative on his/her own, he/she doesn't even always attract attention, but he/she knows how to do everything in such a way that the pupils themselves are active. We speak about this when we criticize "the traditional school" ap-

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proach to learning by the type of simple transfer of information. We emphasize that the learning process should be done through personal growth. Under this approach, the teacher should be more of a facilitator (a person who greatly facilitates the initiative and personal interaction of pupils with each other) than the actual initiator of personal development; pupils should be supported more than evaluated.

We also believe that mastering the skills of emotional teaching is quite important for a teacher who creates the most positive conditions for the personal growth of his/her pupils and himself/herself. In addition to the actual teaching of his/her subject, the teacher should actualize emotional manifestations (his/her own and the pupils') as containing a special meaning. A teacher who is indifferent to the feelings and experiences of pupils always faces difficulties in the process of teaching academic subjects. The more experienced the teacher is, the more attention he/she pays in the class to the emotional mood in the class as a whole and to each student in particular.

We think that *there are three groups of soft skills of such kind of emotive teaching, which can be called pedagogical facilitation techniques (empathy, respect, sincerity)*:

– teachers ignore the emotional manifestations of their students, thereby causing their aggression. In such a way teachers' statements, as a rule, do not correspond to the person's feelings, they are not sincere, except of some individual cases when they condemn and blame schoolchildren;

– the teacher doesn't react to the real feelings of each student, but to those people whom he/she himself/herself suggests to him/her, in his/her own statements he/she is only sometimes sincere, but he/she tries not to show positive emotions;

– the teacher reacts only to the superficial feelings of the pupil, but does it quite precisely and often he/she is not afraid to express both positive and negative feelings, but does not confirm it out loud, expresses his/her feelings in a non-verbal way;

- the teacher reacts to the hidden, deep feelings of each pupil, thereby helping students to realize why the person feels what he/she feels, gives a sincere reaction both at the verbal and non-verbal level, both positive and negative evaluation, while a negative assessment in no way degrades the pupil's sense of self-worth.

So, we'd like to know that facilitation is a change in the pupils' performance during a contact with the teacher or other pupils. Even the passive presence of the teacher in the classroom greatly activates the pupils, directs their activity in the right direction, stabilizes it outside of purposeful actions on the part of the teacher. However, the phenomenon of facilitation has considerable influence only if the teacher is authoritative, referential, recognized. Then, as a result of pedagogical interaction, various psychological new formations of a personal and interpersonal nature are arisen, which are usually called "changes" or "phenomena".

One of the determinants of facilitative interaction is mutual understanding, which is defined as a certain established system of feelings and relationships, which allows to achieve the goal of joint activity or communication in a largely coordinated manner, and maximally contributes to the observance of trust and interests, providing great opportunities for self-disclosure of the abilities of each participant of this process of interaction. Facilitative mutual understanding in this way ensures such a level of community when there is no authoritarian dominance, emotional tension, mistrust and lack of interest in everything that happens in the process between the participants of the pedagogical process.

According to the results of our research we proposed such **functions of facilitation:**

- the function of stimulation;
- update function;
- the function of forming the sovereignty of the student's personality;
- the function of managing the educational process;

- the function of organizing the process of interaction;
- the function of providing a creative educational environment.

We proved, that pupils who are used to facilitative relationships are sufficiently courageous, they do not simply modify the educational environment, but fundamentally transform it. Thus, the environment itself becomes the condition of their success situation. Interpersonal relationships of recognition of value, acceptance, trust, created in the environment, are an incentive for students to participate in creative types of the activities. These relationships, we believe, are highly effective in facilitating learning. First of all, expressiveness and naturalness, not artificiality of the facilitator himself/herself, readiness to be a person, to be and to live with the feelings and thoughts of a certain moment. When this authenticity includes a valuable attitude, care, trust and respect for the pupil, a positive climate for the effective learning process can be considered as created ones. All this context includes sensual and empathetic listening, then there really it is a climate of liberation, stimulating self-initiated personal growth.

The subject's activities are motivated, first of all, by the pupils' needs. Such types of the activities are the internal stimulus of the individual. A person's motivations depend, first of all, on his/her needs. The specificity of the teacher's activity is in the fact that the person has to realize not so subjective requests of the learner, but his/her objective needs, actualizing, at the same time, the corresponding needs that will be relevant in the future.

The goal of cognitive activity is considered by us as an ideal prediction in the mind of the result to which the individual's actions are directed. Determination, awareness and correction of the goal of schoolchildren are the most important attributes of the joint activity of pupils, they are further determined, as a rule, by the choice of methods of performance of their different activities by the teacher and schoolchildren. Thus, the requirements for the "subject of the activity" are formed and its assess-

ment is carried out. In addition, all these components of cognitive activity largely resolve the issue of criteria and methods of evaluating the final result of the activity.

The concept of a Method of Performing Cognitive Activity acquires a clearly defined functional purpose: the latter provides a reflection in the mind of the subject of the actual process of cognitive activity with a sufficient degree of its details, provides for a critical analysis by the teacher of his/her own skills and abilities, which ensure the performance of the activity process in the most expedient manner or productive way.

### Conclusions

*The Subject of the Facilitative Activity* is intended, first of all, to answer the question: "From what can (should) be (or already exist) the actually obtained results (products) of predicting its result (the aim of cognitive activity)?" The "Subject" of the activity clearly correlates with the questions: "From what context can (should) the result be obtained?" Since the teacher deals with students as Subjects of the Facilitative Activity, it is in this question that the replacement of the pronoun should be actualized: "From what exactly, from what context can (should) the pedagogical result be obtained?" Learning as a cognitive activity actualizes the understanding of the subject of the activity in the initial state of the formation of knowledge, abilities, skills, soft skills, motives, needs, etc., which, in fact, are inherent to the student who is studying. It is important that teachers of academic subjects are clearly aware that schoolchildren simultaneously play the role of both *The Subject of Learning* and *The Subject of the Facilitative Activity* simultaneously. In order to actualize Subjectivity in the educational process, special methods should be used that ensure the study of students' needs. We will also develop such methods in the empirical part of our further researches.

We proved empirically, that functions of facilitative interaction in the pedagogical process at secondary schools are real

predictors of developing pupils' *soft skills*, such as: academic achievements, self-concept, attitude to school, creativity, conformity, curiosity, anxiety, locus of control, cooperation, recognition of value, acceptance, trust, the possibility to create the environment, the ability to participate in creative types of activities, expressiveness, naturalness, empathetic listening, the ability to make a climate of liberation, stimulating self-initiated personal growth. Also, we proposed three groups of soft skills of such kind of emotive teaching, which can be called facilitative soft skills: empathy, respect, sincerity.

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**Хупавцева Наталія, Сімко Руслан. Функції фасилітативної взаємодії як предиктор розвитку м'яких навичок учнів.**

**Метою** нашого дослідження є показати зміст фасилітативної взаємодії; представити функції фасилітативної взаємодії; описати авторські експериментальні дослідження, проведені в закладах середньої освіти України, і описати функції фасилітативної взаємодії як предиктора розвитку м'яких навичок учнів.

**Методи дослідження.** Для розв'язання поставлених завдань використовувалися такі теоретичні методи дослідження: категоріальний, структурно-функціональний, аналіз, систематизація, моделювання, узагальнення. Також у дослідженні використано емпіричні методи, такі як пілотне дослідження.

**Результати дослідження.** Виходячи з результатів емпіричного дослідження, до основних функцій фасилітації відносимо такі: функцію стимулювання; функцію актуалізації; функцію формування суверенності особистості школяра; функцію управління освітнім процесом; функцію інтерактивної взаємодії; функцію створення творчого освітнього середовища.

**Висновки.** Емпірично доведено, що функції фасилітативної взаємодії в педагогічному процесі сучасних закладів середньої освіти є реальними предикторами розвитку в учнів м'яких навичок, таких як: навчальні досягнення, Я-концепція, ставлення до школи, креативність, конформність, допитливість, тривожність, локус контролю, співпраця,

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*визнання цінності, прийняття, довіра, можливість створювати середовище, здатність брати участь у творчих видах діяльності, експресивність, природність, емпатійне слухання, здатність створювати вільну атмосферу, самоініціатива, особистісне зростання. Також нами запропоновано три групи м'яких навичок для актуалізації емоційного компоненту навчання, які ми назвали фасилітативними м'якими навичками: емпатія, повага, щирість.*

**Ключові слова:** *функції фасилітативної взаємодії, м'які навички, емпатія, повага, щирість, креативність, конформність, цікавість, тривожність, локус контролю, співпраця, визнання цінності, прийняття, довіра.*

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