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**SPECIFICS OF THE TASK-BASED APPROACH AS A METHODOLOGICAL  
BASIS IN DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

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**Abstract.** *The article deals with the task-based approach as a methodological basis in developing professionally oriented learning materials for students of higher education institutions. The authors point out the difference between the interpretation of the task-based approach given by the foreign pedagogical community, which considers it exclusively within the framework of foreign language teaching with a focus on its applied application in the ongoing activities (the language "in action"), and its definition with deep theoretical reasoning offered by domestic researchers. The article emphasizes mixing of the concepts "task-based approach" and "problem approach", leading to their confusion; it presents their characteristics, identifies differences and similarities, shows variants of their application in development exercises in educational didactics. Particular attention is paid to the formation of the task-based approach under the influence of different psychological theories - the mechanistic theory of determinism, Gestalt-theory, theory of reflection, theory of activity. These theories define differently the nature of the task itself, the mechanism of its solution and the role of personal characteristics of the solver. That is considered significant in developing the concept of professionally oriented didactics within the task-based approach. It is about the movement from*

*routine tasks performed mechanically according to a given algorithm to practice certain skills to non-routine tasks requiring an individual creative approach from a solver in their solution. It is noted that the identified features of the tasks can determine the content component of the exercises developed within the task-based approach.*

**Keywords:** *task-based approach, problem approach, professionalization of education, methodology, educational and methodological support, learning-teaching materials, textbook, competent specialist.*

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**СПЕЦИФИКА ЗАДАЧНОГО ПОДХОДА КАК МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО  
ОСНОВАНИЯ В РАЗРАБОТКЕ УЧЕБНЫХ ИЗДАНИЙ ДЛЯ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫХ  
ОРГАНИЗАЦИЙ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ**  
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**Аннотация.** *Статья посвящена рассмотрению задачного подхода как методологического основания в разработке профессионально ориентированных учебных материалов для обучающихся образовательных организаций высшего образования. Авторами отмечается*

*разница между интерпретацией задачного подхода зарубежным педагогическим сообществом, которое рассматривает его исключительно в рамках иноязычного обучения с акцентом на прикладное его применение в осуществляемой деятельности (обучить языку «в действии»), и его определением отечественными исследователями, отличающимся глубокими теоретическими обоснованиями. В статье подчеркивается смежность понятий «задачный подход» и «проблемный подход», нередко приводящая к некорректному их смешению; представлены характерные их особенности, выявлены различия и сходства, показаны варианты их применения в разработке заданий в учебной дидактике. Особое внимание уделено становлению задачного подхода под влиянием различных психологических теорий – механистической теории детерминизма, гештальт-теории, теории отражения, теории деятельности. Обозначенные теории по-разному определяют характер задачи, механизм ее решения и роль личностных характеристик самого субъекта деятельности, что видится значимым в разработке концепции профессионально ориентированной дидактики на основе задачного подхода. Речь идет о движении от рутинных задач, выполняемых механически по заданному алгоритму для отработки определенных умений и навыков, до нерутинных задач, требующих от участника учебного процесса индивидуального креативного подхода в их разрешении. Отмечается, что выявленные признаки самих задач, определяют содержательный компонент заданий, разработанных в рамках задачного подхода.*

**Ключевые слова:** *задачный подход, проблемный подход, профессионализация образования, методология, учебно-методическое обеспечение, учебные издания, учебник, компетентный специалист.*

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**Introduction.** State policy in higher education, on the one hand, proclaims the principles of humanization and humanitarization in the formation of a person and disclosure of human potential, and, on the other hand, advocates the principle of professionalization in training students as future competent specialists, experts in their field, able to solve arising professional issues with the least possible losses. Such an idea of "seamless changing" of the educational environment by the professional one invariably challenges the teaching staff of higher education institutions to look for an adequate methodology for the learning-teaching process. In the authors' vision, one of the most effective solutions in achieving this goal is to choose the task-based approach as an educational technology both in organizing contact work between students and teachers and in developing the concept of professionally oriented educational materials (textbooks).

Purpose of the research: to examine the theoretical aspects of the concept of the task-based approach in order to identify its basic characteristics as a methodological basis in developing teaching-learning materials in professionally-oriented education.

Object of the research: the task-based approach as an educational technology in designing learning-teaching didactics.

Subject of the research: peculiarities of the implementation of the task-based approach in the pedagogical development of learning-teaching materials in conditions of professionalization of higher education.

The research methodology: scientific papers devoted to identifying the task-based approach

as an educational technology, revealing the difference between the related concepts of the task-based and problem approaches, analyzing the influence of psychological theories on the implementation of the task-based approach in developing educational didactics.

The research methods: analysis of foreign and domestic literature, pedagogical observation, generalization of pedagogical experience.

**Presentation of the main part of the article.** A review of special literature on the subject under consideration has revealed that the task-based approach is understood and described in foreign methodology and domestic scientific papers in absolutely different ways. Foreign resources state the task-based approach only within the framework of foreign language teaching, whereby it predominantly sounds in the stable abbreviation TBLT - task-based language teaching [1-11]. Contemporary researchers highlight the main feature of it: the idea of 'doing' something with the language rather than 'knowing about' it [5, p.10]. In fact, foreign methodologists suggest using knowledge in action, in practice, rather than being satisfied with just pure theory. It is important to point out that the idea of an activity canvas for the task-based approach is also reflected in Russian specialized literature. However, domestic pedagogical community considers the task-based approach beyond a specific discipline, and studies it as an educational technology in general, as a methodological basis for organizing the educational process and developing didactics [12-17].

It should be noted that domestic research works on the methodological development of modern textbook concepts for higher education institutions often gives the task-based approach as a synonym for the problem approach: researchers incorrectly confuse correlating terms "task", "problem", and "problem situation" considering them, as a rule, as identical notions [12; 14; 15, p.46; 16]. This phenomenon reveals the debatable nature of the presented subject under question, as different publication authors refer to their practical experience, common ordinary unification of the "problem"- "task" ideas, rather than to a firm foundation of in-deep scientific research and categorical apparatus, detailed in the primary resources. The authors of this article base their analysis on the scientific research of A. V. Brushlinsky [14], a student of S. L. Rubinstein, Doctor of Psychology, whose research interests include developmental psychology, educational psychology, artificial intelligence, psychology of the subject, personality and thinking [17].

To begin with, a strict distinction must be made between the task-based and problem approaches, as a clear understanding of the difference will highlight the unique characteristics of each approach under consideration and to take them into account when creating learning materials.

So, a problem (which creates a problem situation) means a particular "slice" of reality, where a person in the course of his activity (life, learning, professional activity) is suddenly faced with some kind of failure of organic uninterrupted functioning, often something incomprehensible, yet unknown. Awareness of the causes of the problem and possible actions to resolve it becomes a meaningful task with certain prescribed or creative steps to take. In other words, a problem situation is "a rather vague, not yet very clear and little-conscious impression, as if signaling that something is wrong, something is not right" [14, p.53]. Thinking is included in the analysis of the problem, which results in the formulation of the task in the proper sense of the word. A vivid and clear comparison is made by A.V. Brushlinsky: a pilot is flying an aircraft and suddenly notices some extraneous noise in the engine (this is a problem situation, as the pilot is still at the initial stage of detecting some failure, without realizing what exactly is happening, in which engine part, why, and what should be done to avoid a possible risk of a crash); the pilot's thinking processes are activated – he quickly analyzes possible causes and actions required of him in this situation (awareness of the problem makes it a task, because it already formulates a certain algorithm of actions to bring the given situation to the required state). In other words, a problem becomes a task when it is possible to separate the given (what is given as the problem condition) from the unknown (the desired as the final requirement) [14, pp.53-54]. In this reasoning, we sum up that a

problem emerges from a task, is closely related to it, but differs from it by the subject's awareness of the source of the problem in the situation, his clear understanding the difference between the existing and required conditions and, consequently, building an algorithm for his/her own actions to resolve the situation. Description of the categorical difference between the problem situation and the task reveals, however, similar points of reference in the corresponding approaches, which are seen as significant in choosing them as educational technologies in developing learning didactics: 1) both the problem and the task are inextricably linked with practical activities of a person; 2) thinking is actively involved in solving a problem situation or a task derived from it. The findings can be applied in substantiating the relevance of the problem and task-based approaches in the developing learning materials.

Both the problem and task-based approaches are of activity-oriented nature; therefore their use seems to be particularly effective at the level of higher education as a part of professionalization of the learning process. It is obvious that their implementation in creating knowledge control exercises is appropriate in the block of practice-oriented tasks following the presentation of theoretical thematic material and aimed at realizing students' knowledge in the proposed, simulated, quasi-professional situations. In essence, the approaches under consideration organically fit into the competence approach, officially fixed at the level of federal state educational standards for different specialties and training areas. Hypothetical examples of specific tasks are determined by the specific approach taken as a basis.

For example, in the problem approach, the target audience may be offered "clippings" from their future professional activity (interviews, video clips describing the work process, some statistical data, etc.), calling for a careful "reading" of the situation, identifying some problem, inconsistency, failure, etc. Learners are encouraged to be active, to give feedback, to formulate hypotheses, to work as a team and to express their personal attitude, their own vision of the problem. In the task-based approach, the so-called stage "what's wrong?" is already identified and presented in terms of a specific problem (a task, when learners realize it) and some steps to resolve it are requested. Tasks, in turn, have a complex branched classification proposed by G.A. Ball [13], the author of the theory of learning tasks, and may vary from routine (with a clearly specified algorithm of actions - "write out", "choose a definition", "fill in the table", "find by the formula", etc.) to non-routine ones (requiring the solver to be creative and find non-standard solutions - "what do you think...?", "suggest your option for...", "give some arguments to support your choice", etc.).

Thinking is actively involved in solving both problems and tasks: both are obstacles of various kinds and complexity which need to be overcome in order to create conditions for further consonant activity (academic, quasi-professional). Working with the tasks developed in learning materials on the basis of the approaches under consideration activates cognition, analysis and, finally, development of an individual who, "when thinking, independently makes discoveries of something new, unknown, even if not yet for the whole mankind, even if only for himself" [14, p.50], but, thereby, hypothetically, he/she develops functional literacy, leading to deep insights.

To sum up, we note that both problem and task-based approaches are necessarily focused on the learner, on the internal, specific conditions of his activity, which extremely also should be considered as additional conditions of problem or task situations. In other words, problem situations and open tasks potentially encourage the subject to search for unique, personally meaningful solutions and, thus, productively adapt it to future professional activity.

Creating educational professionally-oriented didactics with the task-based approach requires a special detailed study. In developing teaching and learning support, the task is considered as the main structural element of learning activities. Different definitions of the term "task" have been proposed in scientific works, which a priori excludes the unified description of the task-based approach itself. However, researchers agree that the term "task" came to pedagogy

from psychology as the focus of attention is always on the person himself, the root causes of his activity, mechanisms of his thinking, factors in his decision-making, etc. Different interpretations of the task-based approach are largely due to the development of psychology and the development of different psychological theories: the mechanistic theory of determinism, the Gestalt theory, the theory of reflection, the theory of activity. In this paper we consider the category “task” and the mechanisms of movement towards its resolution within the framework of the mentioned psychological theories in order to understand the different nuances of the task-based approach in its indirect pedagogical implementation in developing teaching-learning support.

1. The theory of determinism is based on philosophical reflections on the predetermination of events. In the mechanistic theory of determinism, all elements of events are considered in statics in order to simplify the search for a solution to a task, which makes it possible to clearly predetermine the consequences from given conditions. The basic formula in the algorithm for finding solutions is 'stimulus-reaction', which means that an external cause in the form of an environmental stimulus independently and directly determines the reaction (behavior) of the organism, regardless of any internal mediation (there is no discussion about conscious activity, only about actions as reactions to an external stimulus). Thus, within the framework of this theory, task solving in teaching-learning process can be seen as a mechanistic movement of the subject in the direction from stimulus (task definition) through reaction (performing the task according to a given algorithm) to its solution (achieving an externally set goal with no regard to internal conditions). In this case, there is a simplified view of a task – only as an external stimulus – as an externally set goal requiring some kind of operations to achieve it (e.g. training in performing similar tasks, certain kinds of tasks, drilling which does not usually demand deep internal reflection from the target audience). In the authors' opinion, such a simplified understanding of the task-based approach in the educational process, some programming of actions according to given patterns, predetermination of the outcome from the learner's correct actions (e.g. opening brackets according to a table of irregular verbs, calculating by a formula, etc.) asks the target audience for some analysis of their actions for correct handling of the pattern. However, the template a priori creates conditions for limited, insufficient functional literacy, as a clear algorithm excludes the need to search for new solutions, to involve independent cognitive activity, to implement a creative approach.

2. Gestalt theory (as opposed to the mechanistic theory of determinism) asserts that human behavior and activity are not the result of a mechanistic combination of elementary reactions to external stimuli. What is important is the involvement of consciousness, perception of a person, the tendency to close the integrity of structures (gestalts), the manifestation of the Zeigarnik effect (the increased importance of unfinished matters in human consciousness), and the tendency of the psyche to sum up accumulated experience. Gestalt psychology introduces the terms "insight" (an unexpected discovery), "problem situation" (a situation that has not "closed", that has not gained its integrity because of unresolved issues), and "figure-background" (the focus of perception and the background field). The task-based approach relies on the discoveries made by Gestalt psychology. Any task is an unclosed gestalt, but as long as it is meaningful to the subject of the action. Consequently, the task should be introduced into the field of internal motivation of learners in order to improve the results. In this case the Zeigarnik effect will also work (for example, interrupting the solution of a task at some stage in order to excite the psyche of a person, to continuously return to the solution, to work through it internally). Within the framework of the task-based approach as an educational technology, training-type tasks are important for accumulating experience of actions that prepare a person, eventually, for so called insights (unexpected discoveries, looking at the situation from a different point of view, a breakthrough in the "torturous" search for a solution). It should be realized that such insights are only apparently unexpected; in fact, they are preceded by deep thought activity, internal (often unconscious)

reflection on alternative solutions based on accumulated experience - hence, a creative, extraordinary approach to tasks solving is only possible on a well-established conceptual base.

3. The theory of reflection postulates the priority of internal subjectivity over external circumstances. In other words, external causes (in our case, the given conditions of a task) act through internal conditions (depending on the personal perception of the task by a solver [13], his experience, the degree of formation of cognitive activity, the ability to see non-routine solutions, etc.) [14]. The theory of reflection explains the importance of the nature of a person himself in his reflection of the objective world in his consciousness. Therefore, the efficiency of a task solving depends not so much on the complexity and the nature of the task itself, as on its internal reflection by the learner (his functional literacy, degree of reflection capability, awareness, meaningfulness, etc. through his/her formed up to day cognitive and emotional experience). Within the task-based approach as an educational technology, the possibility of using open-ended tasks, which are solved in an individual mode, rather than by strictly following a given algorithm of actions, should be taken into account in developing learning and methodological support.

4. The theory of activity is the universally recognized basis of the task-based approach, since solving any task requires the activation of a person's thinking activity. S. L. Rubinstein gives the classical definition of a task: a task is the aim of activity given under certain conditions and requiring for its achievement the use of means adequate to these conditions [17]. The task, as a matter of fact, originates in a problem situation when a person realizes its components - present conditions, required conditions and, as a consequence, their discrepancies. The transformation of the present condition into the required one (according to a given algorithm or within an individual creative approach) is the solution of the task [14; 15].

In conclusion, we note that a task in the educational process is no longer a goal, a situation or its description, but a means to achieve deeper and more distant learning and pedagogical purposes. This is the essence of the task-based approach. Understanding the psychological origins of the task-based approach in pedagogy and the variability of its interpretations provides a diverse toolkit for developing learning tasks in creating teaching materials for any discipline and at any level of education.

**Conclusions.** To sum up, the task-based approach is organically interwoven into the profession-oriented educational environment of higher education, as it aims at developing students' abilities and skills in solving questions related to their future professional activity. The main methodological principle "from simple to complex" is effectively implemented in the concept of tasks in developing exercises in educational didactics: from simple routine tasks, the solution of which is practiced according to a given algorithm, to non-routine tasks requiring a creative approach in solution with a display of a solver subjectivity, his/her individual position, own vision of the issue. The spiral development, complication of professional tasks in exercises actively involves goal-setting, intrinsic motivation, cognitive sphere, critical thinking, creating a solid basis not only for the formation of a competent future specialist, but also for the personal growth of a student, disclosure of his/her potential.

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