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ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO CRITICAL THINKING IN ENGLISH CLASSES FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES AS A COMPONENT OF SOFT SKILLS COMPLEX DEVELOPMENT

The competence in quick navigation of information flows, making informed and responsible decisions, determining own position based on moral and ethical attitudes are becoming essential soft skills for the modern student. Such skills are acquired through constant intellectual development, critical thinking, focus on moral values, and so on. Therefore, obtaining a profession should be accompanied by the formation of personality, which will be marked by the necessary level of soft skills for society, professional growth, and especially developed skills to think critically. Such task becomes relevant in the process of foreign languages teaching, which helps the student to facilitate the process of integration in particular into the market of international vacancies and in general to understand better the trends of the modern world and the place of a person in it. Following the relevance of the study, we have identified the following tasks: based on research by various domestic and foreign scientists to discern how to stimulate learners to think critically; to analyze the basic innovative teaching methods included in the course of English for Specific Purposes. The practical significance of the obtained results is that the analyzed teaching methods of foreign languages for the development of critical thinking can be used in practice in higher education programs. Accordingly, the most substantial task for modern students is to learn to accept new information, control it, question it, combine it, process it, adapt it or discard it. Educators, in turn, must develop the intellectual and creative abilities of learners, their capacity to acquire new knowledge and comprehend it on their own, to process different sources of information.

Key words: *soft skills, critical thinking, English for Specific Purposes, complex development.*

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ЗАХОЧЕННЯ СТУДЕНТІВ ДО КРИТИЧНОГО МИСЛЕННЯ НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ДЛЯ СПЕЦІАЛЬНИХ ЦІЛЕЙ ЯК СКЛАДНИК КОМПЛЕКСНОГО РОЗВИТКУ SOFT SKILLS

Уміння швидко орієнтуватися в інформаційних потоках, приймати усвідомлені та відповідальні рішення, визначати власну позицію на основі морально-етичних установок стають надзвичайно важливими soft skills або гнучкими навичками для сучасного студента. Такі здібності набувають завдяки постійному інтелектуальному розвитку, здатності критично мислити, орієнтації на моральні цінності тощо. Тому отримання професії має супроводжуватися формуванням особистості, яка відзначатиметься необхідним для суспільства та професійного розвитку рівнем soft skills, а особливо розвиненим критичним мисленням. Актуальним таке завдання стає при викладанні іноземних мов, що допомагають студенту полегшити процес інтеграції, зокрема, на ринок міжнародних вакансій і загалом краще розуміти тенденції розвитку сучасного світу й місця людини в ньому. Відповідно до актуальності роботи, нами поставлено такі завдання: на основі досліджень різних вітчизняних і зарубіжних науковців визначити, що саме являє собою критичне мислення і як стимулювати сучасного студента до нього; проаналізувати основні інноваційні методи навчання, що входять до курсу англійської мови для спеціальних цілей. Практичне значення отриманих результатів полягає в тому, що проаналізовані методи викладання іноземних мов для розвитку критичного мислення можуть використовуватися на практиці у ВНЗ. Відповідно до цього, найважливішим завданням для студентів є навчитися сприймати нову інформацію, контролювати її, ставити під сумнів, об'єднувати, переробляти, адаптувати або відкидати. Викладачі, у свою чергу, повинні розвивати інтелектуальні та творчі здібності студентів, їхні вміння самостійно отримувати нові знання й осмислювати їх, працювати з різними джерелами інформації.

Ключові слова: *soft skills, критичне мислення, англійська мова для спеціальних цілей, комплексний розвиток.*

Introduction and literature review. The problem of “thinking” (in various psychological and pedagogical aspects) has always attracted the attention of researchers. The urgency and insufficient elaboration of this problem have caused the need for scientific substantiation and innovative methods for the critical thinking advancement of student youth in classes of English for specific purposes. Such scientists as A. V. Brushlynsky, M. I. Zhaldak, V. I. Evdokimov, S. Curtis, I. F. Prokopenko, D. L. Steele, J. Dewey, F. Drasgow, P. A. Facione, W. Huitt, C. L. Hulin, T. Oleinik, L. Pasquali, H. R. Tavares, R. C. Valle, etc. studied the issue of the improvement of students’ abilities of critical thinking.

Problems of modern pedagogy and current issues of education are reflected in the research of the following scientists: J. Biggs, E. C. Ferreira, C. B. Gross, A. A. Jensen, J. L. Jones, L. Krogh, U. M. Miraca, O. J. Oliveira, P. Ramsden, L. K. Silverman, M. Shandiz, C. Tang, etc.

Innovative approaches to teaching are considered in the works of A. Agger, C. Bovill, A. Cook-Sather, R. M. Cruz, D. S. de Andrade, J. Dell’Olio, T. Donk, P. Felten, M. Ilić, S. Inayatullah, A. M. Iversen, A. A. Jensen, R. Kirby, L. Krogh, Malinovic-N. T. Jovanovic, S. Milijevic, A. S. Pedersen, N. Petrovic, J. Radford, S. Safanelli, J. Schmitt, A. Tortzen, V. S. Zdravkovic, etc.

The **aim** of our study is a scientific and theoretical analysis and justification of methods of teaching foreign languages in higher education (hereinafter universities) for the improvement of the critical thinking of student youth. The **object** of our research is the process of critical thinking skills forming among university students in classes of English for specific purposes. The **subject** of research is theoretical and practical innovative methods of teaching English for Specific Purposes for the development of critical thinking skills of students.

The tremendous changes taking place in society around the world today are challenging those whose job it is to prepare students for successful careers. Educators, from curriculum developers to ordinary teachers, are faced with the question of how best to realize students’ potential for a productive life in the future, which is difficult to predict. The emergence of this problem has been facilitated by such phenomena of modern reality as the transition to a market economy and a democratic society, as well as information and technological progress in the field of information supply.

Pedagogical and educational competence programs, being educational services, are part of the economic sector. In this area, the emphasis is on recognizing and understanding the expectations and

perceptions of consumers who receive these services (Jones, 2015: 48–69), and in the case of curricula, this role is performed by teachers (Oliveira, 2009). Thus, we can consider students as “customers” who go through some experience in obtaining services from the curricula provided by the state educational institution. By researching their expectations and perceptions, one can assess the quality of educational services provided.

All this requires such an update of teaching methods, in which the center of the modern learning process is an independent cognitive activity of the student. Learning, self-acquisition, and application of knowledge have become a need of modern man to improve skills of critical thinking throughout his conscious life in an information society.

Theoretical research. Although experts in different branches of psychology have proposed their definitions of critical thinking, the context is quite the same. Critical thinking can be described with the help of the system of cognitive strategies the aim of which is to achieve the result. Videlicet, critical thinking is something that exists under control, with certain reason and purpose; such type of thinking appears when it is necessary to solve some issue, produce the judgment, evaluate something or reach a resolution.

The word “critical” in its definition implies an evaluative component. Sometimes this word is used to convey a negative attitude towards something. But evaluation can and should be a constructive statement of both positive and negative attitudes. To think critically means to evaluate the results of our mental processes – how well we have made a decision or how well we have coped with the task (Andrade, 2000: 37).

All the processes concerning the mind are an integral part of critical thinking – the course of reasoning that led to certain conclusions, the factors that are considered when a decision should be made. Critical thinking is sometimes called directional thinking because it aims to achieve the desired result. Dreams, visions, and other mental activities, which do not pursue a specific goal, do not belong to the category of critical thinking. Nor is the critical thinking behind our daily habits.

Although the thinking process has been studied by psychologists for more than a century as an academic discipline, cognitive psychology that studies the nature of thinking and knowledge has played a truly dominant role in scientific psychology for the past 20 years. The task of researching the problem-solving methods, argumentation, and decision-making has always been the priority for cognitive psychologists. They are also interested in how these abilities depend on intelligence.

One of the main tasks of cognitive psychology is to understand the ways of application of the accumulated knowledge about the processes and mechanisms of thinking to help people improve their mental abilities. For example, having studied the right and wrong actions in different situations, psychologists have found that the spontaneous and intuitive approach of many people to solve problems is often wrong.

Moreover, scientists can often predict when the wrong decision will be made due to the nature of the assignment, and when due to a misunderstanding of the problem. Different practical issues have been considered with the data gained in this field – from obtaining the skills of map reading by military students to the computer programs' development with a convenient and clear interface (Table, 2001: 68).

However, critical thinking is a problem not only of cognitive psychology but also modern pedagogy. Therefore, one of the tasks of a teacher of any educational institution, and in our case a university, is to work out and use innovative methods to make critical thinking progress by stimulating students to logical conclusions drawing, create consistent logical models and make informed decisions regarding whether to reject an opinion, agree with it or temporarily postpone its consideration. In other words, the problem of activation of mental activity which will be directed on the decision of a concrete cognitive task becomes important.

Practical Results and Discussion. One of the key prerequisites for creating an English for specific purpose curriculum for critical thinking advancement lies in differentiating it via various points of view. For example, let's consider from different angles (according to Gross, 2015) the syllabus of the discipline "Foreign language for professional purposes" for 4th-year students at the Faculty of Management and Marketing of the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute":

- Content (ideas and information) of what should be presented to learners. (Gross, 2015: 13). The content has been modified to provide more comprehensiveness, variety, and a higher degree of abstraction to make it more appropriate to the learning features and needs of the critical thinker. For example, relevant topics in business English were added, such as "Presentation", "Motivation", "Academic mobility programs" and others to improve linguistic and socio-cultural competence to develop the level of considering of social and cultural norms of communication in a particular field.

- Process (a methodology that is aimed at presenting content to students) (Gross, 2015: 13). Teachers have changed the way of the new information presentation:

for example, they have made the pace faster, increased the level of abstraction, and started to avoid unnecessary repetitions. Each lesson is a separate topic but always related to the previous one. If the topic of the lesson is "Academic Mobility Programs" and it is about how a student prepares for the studying abroad experience, then in the next lesson the teacher offers to develop writing skills by composing a letter to an imaginary family that will host the student during his stay in another country.

- Product (response expected by the student) (Gross, 2015: 14). Tasks given to students to reveal critical thinking should be designed to encourage answers that unfold at the highest level of analysis and synthesis, thus demonstrating the complexity of the issues addressed. To achieve this goal, the program is built to make the student extract the necessary professional information and interpret it according to the given problem. The creativity in classes becomes an important component to make students work in various ways with information connected to the specialty, create new ideas, find solutions and predict their consequences.

- Educational environment (Gross, 2015: 14). The optimal educational environment is "in which they are free to be themselves and where it is safe to be smart" (Clark, 2013). This requires that the teaching and administrative staff of the institution not have a dispute over the condition that each student should be allowed, encouraged, and promoted to develop their full potential. In this case, the form of learning will not matter: distance learning or learning in the classroom does not limit teachers in their creative approach to organizing classes; similarly, there are no obstacles to the manifestation of students' creativity for the critical thinking advancement in classes of English for specific purposes.

However, implementing such changes in an educational institution is not always an easy task, especially when it involves changing the role of the teacher. According to a report describing the definitions and main terms of joint activities and creativity on the example of Danish society, research shows that professionals within a certain field may be the group with the greatest difficulty in changing their roles, as this challenges their traditional professional culture and understanding of their professional responsibility (Agger, 2015).

If teachers find that their professional culture and habitual approach to pedagogical planning and teaching are questioned or denied, their reaction may be resistance or skepticism. Another, more pragmatic aspect, which will be negatively accepted, is that for some teachers the idea of reviewing and rethinking

the process of education (e.g., course, lecture series) can in itself be a huge burden. However, progress cannot stand still, especially when it comes to educating a critical thinker who is able to analyze and draw logical conclusions. That is why curricula in any discipline should be improved from year to year, helping to enhance the mental activity of student youth in their future profession and personal life.

Conclusions. It is possible to teach students to think critically if to organize classes according to innovative methods that aim to develop such thinking. It is necessary to strive to ensure that the teaching of different methods of critical thinking is given attention in each lesson and that students learn to apply the acquired skills in all conditions. To get the expected effect, it is necessary to make systematic efforts and use innovative methods to improve thinking. For students to be able to fully and consciously focus on improving their mental abilities and expanding the scope of the acquired skills, teaching critical thinking should include a large number of practical examples from different areas of professional life.

In our study, we analyzed different points of view on the concept of “critical thinking”, which should be understood as the process of considering ideas from different angles, according to their semantic connections and comparing them with other ideas. Critical thinking is the antithesis of dogmatic. It develops a person to the level of a human who cannot be manipulated, who is not afraid to think, evaluate,

compare. Therefore, the development of critical thinking is needed not only by humans themselves but must be an indisputable condition for social progress.

A modern educational institution should aim to educate each student in the habit of actively participating in addressing important issues of team life, the ability to form, express, and defend their opinions, respect the opinion of other people. To do this, it is necessary to develop awareness in each student, because to prepare them for professional life in modern conditions is impossible by thoughtless assimilation of established truths and misunderstanding of the consequences of their decisions.

Thus, it can be concluded that although the advantages of using innovative methods to develop critical thinking are that students’ progress through new pedagogical approaches, the disadvantage is that rethinking the curriculum and implementing aspects of collaborative creativity in education may include negative aspects for involved teachers who are forced to reconsider their role in the learning scenario. On the other hand, developing foreign language curricula that emphasize collaborative creative work and individualizing each student's learning can facilitate and diversify the teacher's work by developing the creative side of his or her approach to designing interesting interactive skills-oriented activities aimed at critical thinking development in classes of English for specific purposes.

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