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## **THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY AND CRITICAL THINKING IN THE TRAINING OF FUTURE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Modern education requires future foreign language teachers not only to master the language but also to develop skills that meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Creativity and critical thinking are key competencies that determine teaching effectiveness. The ability to be creative in the learning process, to create non-standard tasks, and to adapt the methodology to different groups of students are essential aspects of a modern teacher's work. At the same time, critical thinking helps future teachers analyze educational processes, make informed decisions, and promote the development of students' independence.

In the context of globalization and constant changes in technology and society, a foreign language teacher should become a carrier of knowledge and a mentor who can inspire and develop their students' creativity and analytical thinking. That is why the training of future teachers should include developing these skills through innovative teaching approaches, integration of interdisciplinary practices, and reflection.

This topic is relevant because creativity and critical thinking contribute to effective teaching and help students adapt to modern educational challenges, developing competencies they can pass on to their future students.

Today's world is full of challenges that affect future specialists' training. These include a constant threat to life, health, and well-being caused by Russia's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine, constant stress and uncertainty, and the need to perform their direct duties under the conditions of a new paradigm of relations between employer and employee, not to mention the numerous economic factors that directly affect the educational process.

Globalization and the processes of Ukraine's integration into the European space have led to the urgent need to train specialists who speak at least one foreign language (most often – English as a language of international and are capable of verbal and written communication with

native speakers of the respective language, including the use of particular vocabulary and grammar (by specialization) without the constant use of external and internal aids (dictionaries, online translators, artificial intelligence, document translation services, etc.)

A thorough linguistic training of a future specialist should also contribute to the development of critical thinking of the student, as he/she should be prepared to solve practical problems in a foreign language or mixed language environment (where both Ukrainian and English are used). Both Ukrainian and English, German, or other languages are used simultaneously) linguistic environment with maximum efficiency and minimum dependence on aids interpersonal interaction. At the same time, a specialist must have the skills to quickly process new information and integrate it into their system of acquired and systematized knowledge to quickly adapt to the analysis and solve unconventional tasks within the relevant profession.

The formation of the above competencies is of great importance in the process of training future specialists since today, any profession requires both interpersonal communication skills (including in a foreign language) and solving practical professional tasks that often require an unconventional approach, improvement of existing knowledge and skills, assimilation of new means and methods of performing professional activities.

### **1. The problem's prerequisites emergence and the problem's formulation. Definition of the terms "creativity" and "critical thinking"**

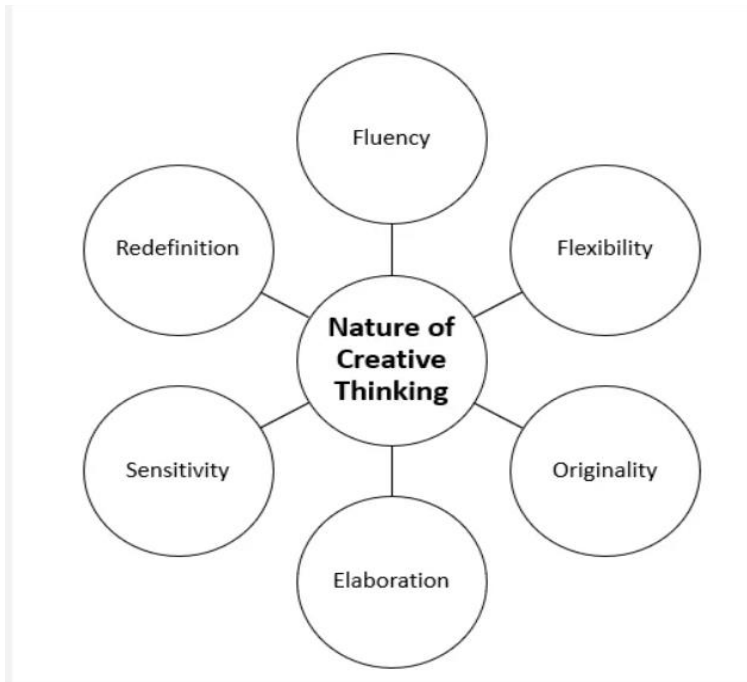
As noted above, speaking foreign languages, thinking critically, and working creatively are key components of the modern teacher of foreign languages. Much attention is paid to the formation and development of critical thinking in psychological and pedagogical research, but the definition of its essence and main features is not sufficiently studied. Scholars such as S. Brookfield, L. Danylchuk, L. Elder, J. McPeak, R. Paul, M. Pochinkova, R. Sternberg, I. Trubavina, D. Halpern, T. Khachumian, and others have studied various aspects of critical thinking and its impact on learning and personal development.

To fully reveal the topic, it is necessary to distinguish the terms "creativity" and "critical thinking" and their interconnection. Creativity and critical thinking are among the key competencies of a modern teacher that determine the quality of the educational process. Creativity creates new, original ideas, approaches, or products that meet specific goals or challenges. According to T. Guilford, "Creativity is characterized by divergent – the ability to see a problem from different perspectives and find non-standard solutions"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Guilford J. P. Creative Talents: Their Nature, Uses, and Development. Buffalo, NY: Bearly Limited. 1986.

T. Guilford, in his work *Creative Talents: Their Nature, Uses, and Development* (1986), identified 6 essential components within divergent thinking that support creativity:



“Fluency – the ability to generate numerous ideas or solutions. For example, listing multiple uses for a paperclip demonstrates fluency.

Flexibility – the capacity to shift between different types of ideas. Flexible thinkers might suggest various categories, such as artistic, practical, or social uses for the same object.

Originality – producing unique and novel ideas. Individuals demonstrating originality might propose uncommon solutions that deviate from standard responses.

Elaboration – the skill of adding detail to ideas, such as describing a paperclip’s potential as a sculpture tool.

Sensitivity – identifying overlooked challenges and potential opportunities.

Redefinition – viewing familiar items or problems in new ways, promoting innovative solutions.

Guilford proposed that creativity could be assessed by measuring the variety of responses an individual can provide to a single test item”<sup>2</sup>. For example, participants listing unique uses for an object reflects their capacity for divergent production and highlights their creativity.

Creativity is also defined as “the creative capabilities of a person that can be manifested in thinking, feelings, communication, and certain types of activity characterize the personality as a whole or its aspects”.

As a whole or its individual aspects. These are the creative abilities of an individual, the ability to generate unusual ideas, deviate from traditional thinking patterns, and quickly solve problematic situations. Creativity is considered the most important and relatively independent factor of giftedness.

When assessing creativity, modern psychologists follow J. Guilford usually takes into account four criteria. Productivity, or speed, is the ability to produce the most significant number of ideas. This indicator is not specific to creativity, but the more ideas you have, the more opportunities you have to choose the most original ones.

David Perkins is a Harvard professor and one of the co-founders of Project Zero in Harvard’s Graduate Degree in Education programs. He is also the author of numerous books on education, schools, thinking, and creativity. D. Perkins proposed a model of creativity’s parameters and characteristics called “the Six-Trait Snowflake Model of Creativity.”

“This psychologist considers the main elements of creativity to be

- the presence of a strong inner motivation, a duty to one’s principles: the creator is prone to complication, reorganization, and asymmetry; he or she enjoys challenging chaos and making his or her way to resolution and synthesis;

- the ability to go beyond the boundaries when solving problems: for example, scientists consider ‘good’ only questions that give interesting, unexpected answers, which allows them to look at the problem from a different angle, get a creative solution, or make a discovery;

- mental mobility, which enables creative individuals to find new perspectives when solving traditional or non-standard problems: such individuals tend to think and reason ‘contrary to the grain’; by thinking metaphorically and by analogy, they eventually come to assumptions that lead to a solution;

- willingness to take risks and make mistakes: creative people can learn from their own mistakes; by ‘working’ at the edge of possibilities, where the risk of error is high, creatively gifted people are more likely to produce new creative results;

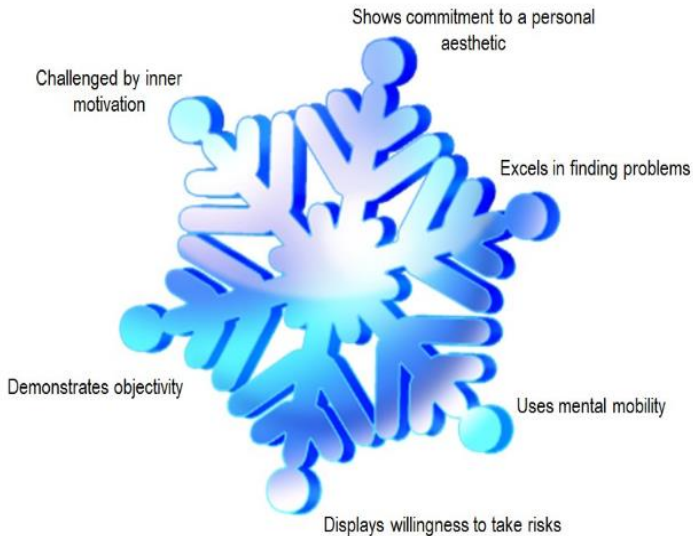
- acceptance of third-party points of view: Creative people tend not only to critically examine and analyze their ideas or proposals but also adequately perceive other people’s opinions or criticism; they are objective,

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<sup>2</sup> Guilford J. P. The Nature of Human Intelligence. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1967.

which means going beyond their ‘I,’ seeking and taking into account the advice of competent colleagues, and testing their ideas;

– intrinsic motivation: Creators are immersed in their own free will, not for the sake of external material incentives; their work is catalyzed by pleasure, satisfaction, and benefit from work”<sup>3</sup>.



Critical thinking, in turn, is defined as “the ability to analyze, evaluate information, and justify conclusions. It is based on a logical approach to problem-solving but also requires a creative component to find new approaches”<sup>4</sup>. Thus, creativity and critical thinking are complementary: the former aims to generate new ideas, while the latter aims to evaluate, improve, and implement them.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of these skills for teaching. Future foreign language teachers should develop their students' creativity and critical thinking and actively use these competencies in their own work: creating interesting lessons, adapting materials to students' different levels and needs, analyzing educational trends, etc.

A teacher's creativity determines how engaging and effective their lesson will be. A creative approach to teaching allows you to create conditions for engaging students in active learning through role-playing games, interactive tasks, projects, and non-standard materials (podcasts,

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<sup>3</sup> D. Perkins. *Making Learning Whole: How Seven Principles of Teaching Can Transform Education*. Jossey-Bass. 2010. P. 119-120.

<sup>4</sup> Kaufman J. C., Baer, J. *Creativity across Domains: Faces of the Muse*. Psychology Press. 2004.

films, songs, etc.). Such methods ensure not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the development of speech skills and increase student motivation. According to I. M. Dychkivska, a teacher's creativity manifests in his or her ability to create "conditions for realizing the potential of each student"<sup>5</sup>.

Critical thinking helps the teacher approach the teaching process rationally and choose effective methods and tools. It contributes to analyzing and adapting curricula and materials according to goals and objectives. In particular, when working with a foreign language, a teacher should be able to assess the authenticity of texts and their relevance to the student's level, recognize hidden messages, and teach this to their students.

Critical thinking is crucial in the modern digital environment, where teachers must work with a lot of information. D. Halpern emphasizes the importance of this skill, considering it the basis for "rational choice and decision-making in the face of information overload"<sup>6</sup>.

## **2. The analysis of existing methods for solving the problem and formulating a task for the optimal technique development**

### ***Developing critical thinking in future foreign language teachers***

Critical thinking is analyzing information, arguing opinions, assessing sources' reliability, and drawing reasonable conclusions. This is a key skill for future foreign language teachers, as they are the ones who develop not only language competence but also independent thinking skills in their students. Several effective strategies for developing critical thinking can be used in teacher training in modern education.

One of the basic strategies for developing critical thinking is teaching students to analyze texts, which involves:

1. Identifying key information. This skill helps future teachers find the main ideas in a text, distinguish between facts and opinions, and analyze the logic of the arguments presented. For example, students are given a text of an article in English, and the task is to identify the main message, the author's arguments, and their relevance to the topic.

2. Drawing reasoned conclusions. Future teachers are taught to express their position, substantiating it with convincing arguments based on the analysis of sources. According to V. Ryzhko, "teaching text analysis is the basis for forming a teacher's cognitive competencies, as it develops his or her ability to reflect and critically comprehend information"<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Practical methods for teaching text analysis:***

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<sup>5</sup> Дичківська І. М. Інноваційні педагогічні технології. Навчальний посібник. Київ. Академвидав. 2004. 179 с.

<sup>6</sup> Halpern D. Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum: A Brief Edition. Routledge. 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Рижко В. Г. Формування критичного мислення у студентів педагогічних спеціальностей // Освіта ХХІ століття. №3. 2020. С. 45-52.

- The SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) method for structuring text analysis.
- Use authentic texts from different sources (news, academic articles, blogs) to teach the definition of objectivity and bias.
- Creating mind maps to structure the main ideas.

*Using debates, discussions, and problem-based learning*

Debates and discussions are effective tools for developing critical thinking. They encourage students to express their own opinions, argue them, analyze the positions of other participants, and find logical contradictions in their opponents' arguments.

The method of debates helps develop analytical and communication skills. During a debate, students discuss topical issues, such as ‘Should foreign language learning be compulsory in higher education?’ The teacher organizes the debate according to its structure: preparation of arguments, speeches, and reflection.

Discussions. They are more flexible than debates and allow students to discuss a topic freely, evaluate different points of view, and formulate reasonable conclusions. For example, discussions on the topic: ‘What are the most effective teaching strategies for developing critical thinking in students?’

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a method in which students “work to solve real or simulated problems. This approach stimulates critical analysis of situations, search for solutions, and group collaboration. For example, students are encouraged to develop a curriculum that integrates critical thinking using real-world educational challenges. PBL increases student engagement in the learning process and promotes the development of practical skills, which is confirmed by the research of H. Barrows, one of the founders of this method”<sup>8</sup>.

*Assessing the reliability of sources and working with information in the digital age*

In today's era of information overload, the ability to assess the reliability of sources is becoming critically important for future teachers. They need to be able to choose high-quality teaching materials and teach their students how to do so.

Basic principles of assessing the reliability of sources:

1. Analysis of authorship: Who is the author? Is he or she an expert in the field?
2. Evaluation of the source: Is the source scholarly, or is it a popular article? Is it published in a recognized journal?
3. Fact checking: Are the facts cited supported by other reliable sources?
4. Analysis of objectivity: Does the material have an ulterior motive or bias?

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<sup>8</sup> Barrows H. Problem-Based Learning: An Approach to Medical Education. Springer. 1986. P.17.

*Working with digital resources:*

1. Use specialized search engines for scientific literature (Google Scholar, ResearchGate).

2. Learning to use fact-checking tools (e.g., Snopes, FactCheck).

3. Developing media literacy to analyze materials from social media, blogs, and other platforms.

According to D. Halpern, “critical thinking is the ability to distinguish between genuine and fake information, especially in the context of the spread of disinformation in digital media”<sup>9</sup>.

Practical exercises:

1. Analyse an article or video to ensure the accuracy of the information.

2. Comparing two sources with different views on the same topic.

3. Group work to develop criteria for assessing the reliability of resources.

### ***Developing creative thinking in future foreign language teachers***

Creative thinking is one of the key competencies of future foreign language teachers. The basis for successful teaching is the ability to generate new ideas, use non-standard approaches, and adapt teaching methods to the needs of different learners. This section will discuss the essence of creative thinking, its importance for a foreign language teacher, and methods of developing it in students of pedagogical specialties.

For a foreign language teacher, creativity is of particular importance because:

– It helps to create engaging and practical lessons.

– Motivates students to learn the language through non-standard materials (podcasts, videos, interactive platforms).

– Promotes adaptation to different levels of language proficiency of students.

– It develops the ability to solve educational problems in real-time.

According to A. P. Torrance, “creativity is a universal skill that allows not only to create innovations but also to apply them effectively in professional activities”<sup>10</sup>.

The formation of creativity in students of pedagogical specialties occurs through unique methods and tools that promote the development of a creative approach to learning.

One of the most effective ways to develop creative thinking is to use creative tasks, encouraging students to look for non-standard solutions. Examples of such tasks are:

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<sup>9</sup> Halpern D. Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum: A Brief Edition. Routledge. 2006. P.154.

<sup>10</sup> Torrance E. P. The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. Scholastic Testing Service. 1974. P.113.



1. *Storytelling*: creating stories in English using words, phrases, or plot elements. This method helps to develop language competence and imagination.

2. *Projects*: for example, developing a lesson plan using interactive technologies or preparing a video lesson on an unusual topic.

3. *Creative exercises*, such as writing poetry and creating advertising posters or slogans in English.

The use of creative tasks allows future teachers to develop the ability to adapt materials to students' different needs and find original ways of presenting them.

The involvement of artistic elements (music, cinema, literature) contributes to the development of creativity; as such tasks allow students to go beyond the standard learning process. For example:

1. *Analyzing songs in English*: studying the lyrics, creating your versions of songs, and writing dialogues based on their plot.

2. *Working with film or TV series excerpts*: creating alternative endings or discussing characters.

3. *Staging literary works*: students are asked to interpret a work as a short skit or monologue.

According to J. Rogers, “integrating the arts into learning stimulates creativity, opens up new horizons for understanding language and culture, and promotes emotional intelligence”<sup>11</sup>.

Modern technologies are an integral part of learning. They provide a wide range of tools for creative work:

1. *Interactive platforms*: Kahoot, Canva, and Padlet – allow you to create original tasks, such as quizzes or presentations.

2. *Mobile applications*: Duolingo and Memrise – motivate students to learn through gamification.

3. *Artificial intelligence*: ChatGPT and Grammarly – help to create new ideas, check language structures, and edit texts.

Digital tools stimulate creative thinking development, allowing future teachers to experiment with teaching formats and create unique teaching materials.

Students' creativity formation largely depends on the teacher, who should be a source of knowledge and a mentor. The main pedagogical strategies:

- Feedback: supporting and encouraging students to be creative, regardless of the result.

- Modelling by example: the teacher demonstrates creativity in his or her approach to teaching, use of materials, and methods.

- Creating a favorable environment: The learning environment should be conducive to freely expressing ideas without fear of criticism.

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<sup>11</sup> Rogers J. *Arts and Creativity in Education: Modern Approaches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2018. P.116.

As K. Robinson notes, “A successful teacher creates an environment where creativity becomes an integral part of the learning process.”<sup>12</sup>

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Developing critical thinking in future foreign language teachers is a multifaceted process that requires various strategies, from teaching text analysis and argumentation to using debates and evaluating sources. These approaches develop students' cognitive abilities and contribute to the formation of professional skills necessary to prepare modern students for the challenges of the information society.

Creative thinking is one of the most important competencies for future foreign language teachers. It contributes to creating an effective and interesting learning process and provides the ability to adapt and implement innovations. The development of creativity in students of pedagogical specialties requires the use of creative tasks, the integration of art and culture, and modern technologies. The role of the teacher in this process is crucial: the teacher should inspire, support, and demonstrate creativity in his/her work.

## **SUMMARY**

Integrating creativity and critical thinking into the training of future foreign language teachers is essential for preparing them to meet the demands of modern education. In a globalized and dynamic world, where the teaching of foreign languages extends beyond linguistic skills to encompass cultural awareness, problem-solving, and adaptability, these competencies play a pivotal role in shaping effective educators.

Creativity enables teachers to design engaging, innovative lessons that inspire students and make language acquisition enjoyable and meaningful. Through creative approaches, future educators learn to personalize their teaching methods, adapt to diverse classroom contexts, and address the unique needs of their learners. This capacity for originality and flexibility is essential in an ever-changing educational landscape.

Critical thinking, on the other hand, equips teachers with the ability to analyze, evaluate, and apply information effectively. It fosters a reflective approach to teaching, allowing educators to assess their practices critically, adapt to new methodologies, and guide their students in developing independent and analytical learning habits. Furthermore, critical thinking is crucial for navigating the overwhelming amount of information available in the digital age, enabling teachers and students to discern reliable sources and make informed decisions.

Creativity and critical thinking form a synergistic foundation that empowers foreign language teachers to cultivate their students' communicative competence and higher-order thinking skills. By embedding

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<sup>12</sup> Robinson K. *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*. Oxford: Capstone. 2011. P.175.

these competencies into teacher training programs through innovative pedagogical strategies, interactive tasks, and digital tools, educational institutions can ensure that future educators are well-equipped to foster a dynamic, inclusive, and forward-thinking learning culture.

Ultimately, the emphasis on creativity and critical thinking in teacher training enhances the professional development of future foreign language teachers and prepares them to inspire the same skills in their students, contributing to the development of thoughtful, adaptable, and open-minded global citizens.

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