

DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BY MEANS OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the problem of developing critical thinking of university students by means of a foreign language. The relevance of the development of critical thinking of students in the context of the heterogeneous information environment of the university allowed the authors to develop several approaches to determining critical thinking: activity, reflexive, practical-oriented, cognitive. Critical thinking is considered as a complex-organized cognitive activity that determines the student's readiness to rethink and transform personal experience in the process of communication. The article defines the basic elements of critical thinking of university students: the ability to work with large information flows; divergent thinking and a high level of motivation to know the new; willingness to participate in written and oral communication; cognitive flexibility; reflexivity and evaluation; Establishment of interdisciplinary linkages.

Based on the disclosure of the pedagogical potential of a foreign language as a means of developing critical thinking, pedagogical conditions for achieving a high level of critical thinking of university students were revealed: initiating cognitive conflict, stimulating a reflexive position, relying on a variety of cultural contexts for one phenomenon. Taking into account the practice of foreign universities, effective interactive technologies and methods for developing critical thinking of university students were analyzed. The procedure for using these technologies and methods, as well as the logic of building the process of teaching a foreign language, is aimed at developing an active subject position of students, achieving a high level of systemic critical thinking. The identified approaches to the definition of critical thinking and the pedagogical conditions for the development of critical thinking of university students allowed the authors to develop practical recommendations for university teachers to improve critical thinking of students.

Keywords: critical thinking; cognitive activity; educational process; foreign language; communication; reflection; Technology "Developing Critical Thinking through Reading and Writing"

INTRODUCTION

In the context of a global-oriented open education, modern Internet and media capabilities significantly optimize the search for diverse information content. In this regard, it is necessary to develop skills and competencies aimed at a comprehensive analysis and assessment of a large amount of information, logical judgments and argumentation, reflection and processing, which implies a high level of critical thinking. The development of critical thinking should be a priority in any area of training. The US International Education Summit (2015) set a goal that requires a significant increase in the proportion of college and university graduates demonstrating the ability to think critically, communicate effectively and successfully solve problems. This requirement is in line not only with social order, but also with the modern scientific paradigm. The relevance of the study is dictated by both its timeliness and insufficient coverage of the issue in the domestic scientific literature, taking into account the means of a foreign language.

METHODOLOGY

The ambiguity of the interpretation of the concept under study has led to the existence of various definitions, classifications and approaches to critical thinking. Some scientific works have summarized and systematized the definitions of critical thinking from the point of view of philosophical (dominance of the theoretical aspect), psychological (emphasis on the motivational component of critical thinking) and pedagogical (use of the methodological system for the development of critical thinking) aspects. Philosophy pays more attention to the nature and quality of critical thinking in this matter, focusing on the analysis of arguments. Psychology and pedagogy are concentrated around components and operations of the cognitive process related to thinking and used to solve academic and practical problems.

The analysis of the literature on this problem made it possible to distinguish the following approaches to the definition of critical thinking: activity, reflexive, practical-oriented, cognitive. Within the framework of the activity approach, critical thinking is considered as a set of activities and actions. Critical thinking here involves the ability to make logically sound, well-considered decisions. This is a way of thinking in which you not only accept all the arguments and arguments that are provided to you, but also subject these arguments to verification - a comprehensive analysis. A reflexive approach to the definition of the concept of critical thinking involves the formation of a reflexive evaluation position of students not only in relation to the cognitive activities of other subjects of the educational process, but

also, first of all, in relation to themselves, to their intellectual resources. It takes into account that the nature of human thinking is flawless, it is necessary to exercise control over it, to be able to put yourself in the place of another person.

RESULTS

Based on a practical-oriented approach, critical thinking is interpreted as a set of logical-semantic structured operations due to the personal characteristics of students. By rational perception, careful weighing and analysis of the situation, the subject makes optimal decisions.

Proponents of the cognitive approach believe that critical thinking is associated with the ability to apply such techniques and methods of persuasion that work to achieve the ultimate desired goal. Competently using various cognitive techniques, it is not difficult to conflict-free assume the role of an authoritative force.

The above descriptions of classifications and approaches are not contradictory, they are rather complementary to each other. According to Professor N.N. Belozeroва, the fields of scientific knowledge are often interconnected, go beyond a narrow special framework, allowing for multifaceted research on the frontiers. With all the diversity of approaches to the problem of studying critical thinking, they are united by the general fact that critical thinking is a cognitive process. A high level of critical thinking can be compared with "revision" and updating one's own experience based on its actualization in new situations. This is a simultaneous process of updating and enriching the student's life experience. It can be argued that the essence of critical thinking lies in its complex, multidimensional nature, manifested in the student's readiness to rethink and transform personal experience in the process of communication. Communication is an integral part of the educational process, and each aspect of it (reading, writing, speaking, listening) involves thinking. Any of the aspects is related to solving certain problems and is permeated with critical thinking. An illustration can be reading a book. When reading the text, the author's ideas are decrypted (what is the purpose of the book, what the author seeks to convey to the reader; what issues or concerns the author raises; what evidence/data is provided; what concepts are used to organize evidence; what the author thinks of peace; whether the author's opinion is justified as the author justifies his opinion; can we take the author's position to assess what he reports). This is a rather complex process, it requires critical thinking throughout reading. The interaction between the logic of the author's thinking and the logic of the reader's thinking goes to a higher, higher-

quality level. The reader, critically thinking, reconstructs the author's logic into the logic of his own thinking and experience.

The basic elements of critical thinking of university students include: the ability to work with large information flows; divergent thinking and a high level of motivation to know the new; willingness to participate in written and oral communication; cognitive flexibility; reflexivity and evaluation; Establishment of interdisciplinary linkages. Critical thinking allows students to leave the comfort zone and consider objects from many sides, noting previously unknown details. As a result, students become more empathic and open to perception and discussion of ideas, they more successfully develop interpersonal communication and interaction with partners. Freedom of critical thinking helps the development of individuality, creativity and other hidden personal reserves. To develop critical thinking requires a lot of time and systematic practice. The student is required to be fully concentrated and involved in the process of mastering critical thinking, his training outside the academic environment. Instructor is required to exercise system with increasing degree of complexity, analysis of work with exercises.

DISCUSSION

A foreign language has great pedagogical potential aimed at developing critical thinking at a university. Scientists at the American Foundation for Critical Thinking (www.criticalthinking.org) argue that it is advisable to combine the study of a foreign language with the teaching of critical thinking. This saves time and provides a synergistic effect: the development of critical thinking contributes to the successful mastery of the language. Our experience also shows that students show higher results in learning English, with active academic interaction with each other. This is especially evident when they are asked to complete a task in which they need to compare their views and ideas, evaluate arguments, carefully study the standards of a clear and accurate presentation of thoughts. Being involved in interactive activities that involve training communicative skills, students, as a result, gain awareness of themselves as having something in common with other people, begin to better understand the limits of their abilities, which later leads them to self-improvement both in the academic environment and in the professional sphere. While developing communication skills in a foreign language, students work simultaneously to improve critical thinking.

The founder of universal grammar N. Chomsky believes that it is language that is a tool of thinking. The famous psychologist L.S. Vygotsky wrote about the

reciprocity of language and thinking, claiming that "thought... is done in the word", that is, it is the word and language that become the trigger for activating human thought. Exploring the relationship between language and thinking, A.A. Potebnya comes to the conclusion about the creative essence of language, because "language is a means not to express ready thought, but to create it".

According to Y.M. Lotman, the stereoscopy of information when translating it from one cultural code (which is the language) to another allows you to get one of the original projections of reality. So, the more diverse the so-called "arsenal of cultural codes" that a student owns, the higher the level of his critical thinking, as a multi-round cognitive process. Language as a mechanism for mediating reality defines a meaning vector.

The essence of the pedagogical potential of a foreign language lies in the mastery and unity of verbal communication languages, symbols and formulas, terms, and art accessible to a modern person. The basis of the discipline "Foreign Language," in our opinion, is communication between representatives of different cultures and subcultures. Moreover, we understand culture both in synchronic (national, elitist, urban, professional...) and in diachronic (ancient culture, renaissance culture...) dimensions. The effectiveness of such communication is assessed by the ability to overcome the cultural barrier due to national, social, professional and personal characteristics. Critical thinking is indispensable in the development of empathy and tolerance, which are necessary for communication in a multicultural context. Developed skills and personal qualities in the process of learning a foreign language, such as cognitive flexibility, cultural and speech selectivity, proficiency in strategies of effective communicative interaction, etc., become an integral condition for the successful development of critical thinking of a university student.

No less important is the consideration of the pedagogical conditions for the development of critical thinking by means of a foreign language. In the process of developing critical thinking by means of a foreign language, there is a clash and analysis of different points of view, arguments and counter-arguments. In this regard, it is necessary to initiate cognitive conflict. It is no coincidence that G. Lindsay, C. S. Hull, R. F. Thompson consider conformism as one of the obstacles to the development of critical thinking as an element of "agreeing," unwillingness to leave the zone of intellectual comfort, "stimulating intellectual and strong-willed efforts.

In the process of learning a foreign language, it is also necessary to stimulate the reflexive position of the student. According to G.I. Bogin, during reflexive activity, the subject experience of the student changes by crossing images of a new

situation from the text with familiar situations. V.P. Belyanin gives the following definition of language: "language is not only a phenomenon affecting the mental process, it is a means of communication, interaction within a given environment. Here we speak about the native language, and the foreign language gives us the chance to learn itself and the world surrounding us". Learning a foreign language contributes to the development of the student's reflexive qualities. Thus, the student's readiness for reflexive practice as an important component of critical thinking makes it necessary for the student to form an open cognitive position, openness to an unfamiliar, "alien," constructive distance from a monocultural position.

In the process of learning a foreign language, students design new knowledge, learn to accept cultural and linguistic differences and perceive them not as deviations from the norm of their native language and culture, but as a completely natural way of verbal communication, which is characterized by a different cultural dominant. To do this, it is necessary to take into account the diversity of cultural contexts for one phenomenon in different languages. By practicing critical thinking when learning English, students identify similarities and differences in how the same reality is recruited in the native and learned languages. This makes the educational process more fascinating and culturally enriched, even at the very initial level.

There is another important aspect that makes it necessary to teach critical thinking when mastering a foreign language. This is an actively developing trend of student academic mobility and the use of English as a language in which educational programs are implemented at universities around the world. Studying foreign-language culture, the student has to act in conditions of constant choice, flexible response to the "otherness" of someone else's culture, thereby showing a high level of critical thinking. The responsibility of the teacher is to help the student in this complex process.

Some teachers perceive the student as an empty vessel that needs to be filled with knowledge. Ignoring the student's individuality, the teacher assumes that the student has no prior knowledge or experience on any issue. As S. Smith and a number of Western European scholars note, communication between a student and a teacher should be bilaterally directed, based on mutual respect and cooperation in the educational process. What is even more important is that not only should students study with the teacher, but also the teacher - with the students.

In the process of studying a foreign language at a university, the development of critical thinking of students, the activation of their cognitive capabilities, as well as

the formation of a subject position are carried out on the basis of the use of new interactive technologies, including various pedagogical methods and techniques.

In the practice of foreign universities, the technology "Development of critical thinking through reading and writing" (hereinafter referred to as DOCTTRAW) (Charles Temple, Jeannie Steele, Kurt Meredith) is very popular. In Russia, this direction is developing within the framework of an international consortium (S.I. Zaire-Bek). The conceptual basis of this technology is the realization of the student's personal potential, reflection, independence. The DOCTTRAW technology involves three stages: challenge, understanding and reflection.

The main goal of the first stage of the "Challenge" is to develop the student's motivation for the problem under study, to update life experience, and to attract a multifaceted context. At this stage, methods and techniques such as "I Know/I Want to Know/Learned" are used. The technique "I Know/I Want to Know/I Know" involves the activation and management of the understanding mechanism based on the compilation of questions about the known (I know), unknown (I want to know) and the results of the cognition process (I learned). Thus, the motivation and independence of students is stimulated. The method "Forecasting" includes putting forward hypotheses, arguments and counterarguments, expressing consent/disagreement about the main provisions of the text.

The purpose of the second stage of "Understanding" is to project new knowledge on personal experience, the development of new associative ties. The INSERT technique is aimed at developing metacognitive skills and involves actively working with text in the process of reading it using markups and signs. The method of commentary is the willingness of students to participate in discussing and commenting on information from the text in the process of reading it based on compiling questions to each other, forecasting and commenting. This method is aimed at involving students in dialogue as a subject-subject interaction. The development of the dialogue position is also facilitated by the method of poly-role interaction, which involves reading the text on the basis of "playing" students of different roles.

Within the framework of the third stage of "Reflection," the studied situation is analyzed, experience is enriched. One of the effective techniques that develops critical thinking is the "argument map." The core of the map is the central thesis. Arguments or evidence, accompanying theses, counter-arguments, counter-arguments/counter-evidence are built around it. In the lesson, students can be given a similar card and asked to fill it out. Analyzing the arguments, students learn to

evaluate evidence, counterargument. They learn to question the validity of arguments and offer their arguments and evidence. Then they can create their own maps, taking as a basis any text (lecture) and use them in debates, discussions, presentations and other forms of communication. At this stage, the technology of compiling a portfolio, the synquein method, and the writing of an argumentative essay have also proved themselves.

CONCLUSION

The procedure for using these technologies and methods, as well as the logic of building the process of teaching a foreign language, is aimed at developing an active subject position of students, achieving a high level of systemic critical thinking.

So, the study made it possible to develop practical recommendations for university teachers on the development of critical thinking of students. Tasks for students should be problem-oriented, research in nature, initiating independence, curiosity, semantic search activities to find answers to their own questions. Creative, open-mindedness initiatives should also be encouraged. No less important is the building of dialogic parity relations with the text as a source of meaning.

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