

Ministry of Education and
Science of Ukraine

Міністерство освіти і науки
України

ISSN 2307-633X

**Topical Issues of
Romance and Germanic
Philology and
Applied Linguistics**

**Актуальні проблеми
романо-германської
філології та прикладної
лінгвістики**

Scientific Journal

Науковий журнал

Issue 1(15)

Випуск 1(15)

Published since 2010

Видається з 2010 року

Chernivtsi
Yuriy Fedkovych
National University of
Chernivtsi

Чернівці
Чернівецький національний
університет
імені Юрія Федьковича

2018

Чернівецький національний університет імені Юрія Федьковича
УДК [811.11+811.13](051)
ББК 81.43 +81.47

ISSN 2307-633X

A437 Актуальні проблеми романо-германської філології та прикладної лінгвістики : науковий журнал / редкол. В. І. Кушнерик та ін. – Чернівці : Видавничий дім «РОДОВІД», 2018. – Вип. 1(15). – 378 с.

A437 Topical Issues of Romance and Germanic Philology and Applied Linguistics : Scientific Journal. – Chernivtsi : Publishing House «RODOVID», 2018. – Issue 1(15). – 378 p.

Збірник містить матеріали XI Міжнародної наукової конференції
«Актуальні проблеми перекладознавства та романо-германської філології»
(11–12 травня 2018 р.)

Редколегія випуску:

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Загальнодержавне видання
Збірник входить до переліку видань ВАК України
(Наказ Міністерства освіти і науки України №642 від 26.05.2014)

*Друкується за ухвалою вченої ради
Чернівецького національного університету імені Юрія Федьковича*

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Чернівецький національний університет
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Editorial Board Address:
College of Modern European Languages
Chernivtsi National University
5, Sadova st., Bd. XIX, Room 216
58000, Chernivtsi, Ukraine

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УДК 378-057.87:36

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PROMOTING CRITICAL THINKING IN TEACHING ESP TO FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

The paper deals with the technology of critical thinking development and the impact which the designed tasks for promoting critical thinking have on students' social, psychological and academic adaptation. Different methods and techniques of developing critical thinking in students taking into consideration adaptation problems the students experience in their first year of study at the university are analyzed. The way of critical thinking development in ESP classes designed specifically for providing guidance in specific critical thinking skills is suggested. The evidence of critical thinking efficiency as a tool for fostering student's university adjustment is provided. On the basis of the carried out research it is concluded that all activities proved to be an efficient critical thinking tool. It is also proved that the suggested activities boosted students' socializing skills through group collaboration and reduced their anxiety arising from university demands through critical reading and well-thought out pre-, while- and after-reading tasks. The acquired time management skills appeared to help students allocate their time more efficiently and handle the increased workload.

Key words: *critical thinking, critical thinking skills, ESP classroom, first-year students, university adjustment.*

Досліджено технологію розвитку критичного мислення під час вивчення англійської мови професійного спрямування та вплив завдань на розвиток критичного мислення на соціальну, психологічну та дидактичну адаптацію студентів першого курсу вищих закладів освіти. Проаналізовано різні методи та способи розвитку критичного мислення у студентів. Наведено докази ефективності завдань на розвиток критичного мислення за матеріалами навчального посібника з АМПС "Socialising in Academic and Professional Environments".

Ключові слова: *критичне мислення, навички критичного мислення, заняття з англійської мови професійного спрямування, першокурсники, адаптація до навчання в університеті.*

In recent decades educators worldwide have been focused on developing theoretical background for infusing the 21st Century Skills into education. This movement began in the United States after the recognition of the significance of complementing different subject areas with the "Four Cs": critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation.

Technological advances have drastically changed the way people receive and process flux and glut of information which is frequently irrelevant or outdated. Therefore, to be efficient both in academic environment and the global marketplace, students, especially in their first year of study, must be capable of discerning new challenges and opportunities from infinite stream of information they have instant access to. Teaching critical thinking effectively in the classroom is vital for students. Having acquired critical thinking skills, students will be able to develop other skills, such as a higher level of concentration, deeper analytical abilities, and improved thought processing [5, p. 8].

Accomplishing critical thinking in ESP classroom is a complex issue. In fact, it is a challenge for first-year students, who usually have an insufficient language proficiency level, because language, thinking and learning are intimately related. Moreover, beyond the classroom, university students are exposed to

formidable challenges that they never encountered earlier at comprehensive school, which undoubtedly add to the problem.

A number of scientists, both Ukrainian and foreign, have been studying the nature of critical thinking and have offered some techniques and methods to boost it in students; among them are D. Halpbern, P. Facione, R. Paul, S. Rubinshtain, V. Ruggiero, S. Terno, O. Tiahlo, L. Tkachenko, T. Voropai and others. Some researchers tackle the methods and techniques of developing critical thinking in schoolchildren; others deal with adolescents and young adulthood in general. Therefore, the issue of building critical thinking in ESP classroom needs looking into, taking into consideration adaptation problems students experience in their first year of study at university.

The aim of the paper is to suggest the way critical thinking can be developed explicitly, with ESP classes designed specifically to provide guidance in specific critical thinking skills, and provide evidence of their efficiency as a tool for fostering students' university adjustment.

The concept of critical thinking is multidimensional by nature. According to Dr. D. Halpbern, it is "the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome" [1, p. 6], i.e. it can be an efficacious way to enhance students' reflection, sensitivity to the context, analytical and synthetic thinking. V. Ruggiero defines critical thinking as "the process by which we test claims and arguments and determine which have merit and which do not. In other words, critical thinking is a search for answers, a quest" [6, p. 19]. In O. Tiahlo's opinion, critical thinking is a higher-order thinking which relies on information, a conscious perception of the own intellectual activity and the activity of others [8, p. 35]. Accordingly, development of critical thinking skills involves improving students' ability to analyze academic and job-related information from both logical and their own point of view, so that they could apply the obtained results to both standard and non-standard situations and problems, find arguments and make independent decisions.

The content for developing critical thinking skills should vary depending on the year of study and the competencies that are to be developed in ESP classroom. Thus, first-year students, being taken out of their comfort zone, may lack efficient academic activity competency at university due to poor adaptation. The adjustment of learners' individual and group behavior to conform to the prevailing system of norms and values of a higher educational institution refers to social adaptation, which is characterized by: a) difficulties in managing everyday life; b) stress caused by university demands; c) heavy academic load and lack of time management skills; d) financial, housing and health problems etc.

Psychological adaptation comprises students' adjustment to the new mutual relations with teachers and co-students. At the beginning of their studies at university a first-year student may experience: a) homesickness; b) lack of psychological self-regulation; c) difficulty in adjusting mutual relations with co-students; d) difficulty in socializing with teachers and others [2, p. 89].

Problems with academic adaptation involve: a) lack of autonomous learning skills; b) lack of critical thinking skills; c) lack of ability to critically read and process information from different sources etc.

An assumption can be made that the first step to developing critical thinking in ESP classroom can be a well-thought out competency-based syllabus for first-year students, with a sharp focus on content that is closely related to students' everyday life. For this purpose, a focus group of Ukrainian academics designed the ESP syllabus for first-year students for the British Council English for Universities project. The syllabus consists of 4 Modules:

1. Socialising in Academic and Professional Environments;
2. Searching for and Processing Information;
3. Presenting Information;
4. Application Procedure.

Due to the absence in the market of a comprehensive international textbooks, produced in either the UK or the USA, which would foster the development of students' competencies in the above mentioned realms, there was a pressing need for ESP teachers of Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University to design one to be used in ESP classroom. However, the content of such a coursebook would not fill particular needs of all students' because there is a demand for 'narrow' ESP. Moreover, the process of material selection and task construction is time-consuming and university teachers have heavy teaching loads, so a decision was made to develop coursebooks for every specialism.

In 2017 produced was a "Socialising in Academic and Professional Environments" ESP coursebook for first-year university economics students. The coursebook covers the essential components of Module 1 within the ESP syllabus mentioned above. The principal aim of the coursebook is to develop students' language knowledge and skills necessary to behave adequately in common study-related and professional situations, to develop professional communicative competence by integrating the four language skills with an emphasis on

listening, speaking and writing. “Socialising in Academic and Professional Environments” is divided into 6 units: “Building a Relationship” (Unit 1), “Education” (Unit 2), “Daily Routine” (Unit 3), “Learning a Language” (Unit 4), “Telephoning” (Unit 5), “Networking” (Unit 6). These units give a new twist to familiar study-related and professional topics that reflect students’ needs and interests. Activities were designed to be as realistic as possible so that students can see how the language they are learning can be applied outside the classroom, and how the information they receive can help them cope with adaptation problems.

As the content of the coursebook shows, the choice of the topics to be covered is based on first-year students’ needs and, accompanied with appropriately designed tasks, can explicitly promote their critical thinking as well as nurture their adaptability and resilience. Before moving to the tasks suggested, let us have a brief look at the technology of critical thinking development in terms of social, psychological and academic adaptation, which consists of three basic stages:

I. Challenge. Teacher arouses students’ interest to the relevant information, making students use their background experience. At this stage students realize the fact that there is a gap between their prior knowledge of adaptation techniques and new real-life situations they have to manage.

II. Information comprehension (information retrieval). Teacher provides either textual or audio-visual information emphasizing the key points to be focused on. Students recognize the need in developing new, more efficient behavioral patterns through doing critical thinking tasks.

III. Reflection (new knowledge development). Teacher sets tasks requiring thorough scrutinizing of the possible solutions to the problem of adjustment to the new university environment. Students acquire independent critical thinking skills developing their own good habits of thought.

Building positive students’ peer relationship is vital in the first year of study because it may affect student success and retention. According to Rachel E. Maunder, “students who reported difficulties in their relationships with other students had lower levels of peer attachment and university adjustment” [3]. So, while covering Unit 1, Building a Relationship, teacher should focus on developing students’ critical thinking through ice-breaking activities (e.g. mingling and finding people who share your interests), through critical reading texts containing tips on how to avoid feeling lonely at the new environment. Brainstorming tasks may include giving answers to the following sample open-ended questions:

1. *Is it easy to find new friends at university? Why / Why not?*
2. *Should you change your behaviour to make friends in a new academic environment?*

Within Unit 2, “Education”, it would be useful to raise students’ awareness of the system of higher education in Ukraine and abroad and, after providing students with functional language and some gap-filling tasks, ask them to compare higher education in Ukraine to that in other countries.

Sample task. *Tell your classmates about HE in Ukraine in comparison with other countries.*

1. Universities in Ukraine and Russia are similar in that ____.
2. Both Ukraine and UK _____.
3. An English student goes to his tutor’s room once a week. In contrast, _____.

Another efficient technique for critical thinking development is mind mapping, which uses a non-linear approach to learning that forces the learner to think and explore concepts using visuospatial relationships flowing from a central theme to peripheral branches which can be interrelated. The branches and sub-branches may contain pictures to aid in recalling the information. The example of a mind mapping task constructed to promote a deeper understanding of studying at university is given below. To do this task, students can use MindMeister (the most popular web-based mind-mapping software).

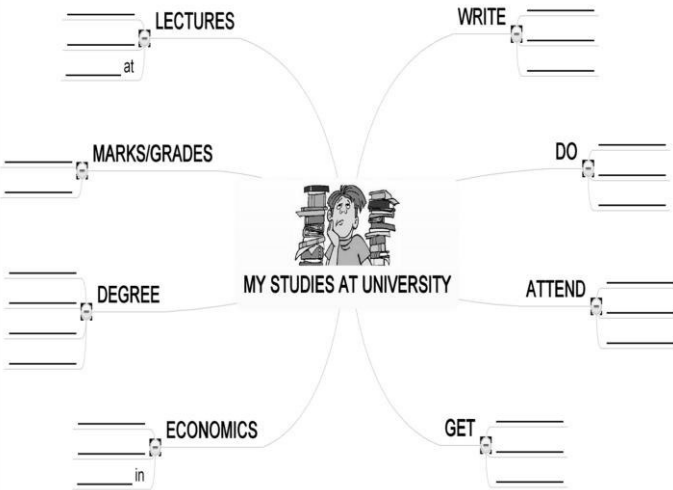


Fig. 1. Sample mind-mapping task for developing critical thinking skills [7, p. 37]

The third Unit of the coursebook provides students with excellent opportunities to become aware of the main objectives of learning ESP and to reassess their ESL learning habits and strategies through critical reading texts on ESP learning techniques and methods. Instilling good ESP learning habits with a strong focus on autonomous learning is crucial for undergraduates because without this foundation little progress in building students' ESP competency can be expected. Pre-reading critical thinking tasks may include discussion of the following sample statements:

- *To learn ESP you need to be motivated.*
- *To learn ESP you need to have a teacher.*
- *To learn ESP you need to see and hear the language in use.*
- *To learn ESP you need to practice speaking, learning, reading and writing.*
- *To use ESP you need to know something about the people you are communicating with.*

Assessment of students' critical thinking skills in terms of comprehension of ESP learning strategies and techniques can be carried out in the form of letter writing.

Sample writing task. *A friend of yours is going to do an ESP course but doesn't know what to start with. Write a letter of advice in which you*

- *write at least 3 benefits of learning ESP;*
- *mention some useful techniques and strategies of acquiring ESP skills;*
- *share your own experience of acquiring ESP skills.*

You should write between 120–180 words. You must use grammatically correct sentences with accurate spelling and punctuation in an appropriate style. Do not write any addresses.

It has never been easy to balance work/studies and leisure, especially if students live away from home. Personal time management can be a challenge for students and they may fall behind with their studies or fail to plan their revision period before exams. Getting all their homework done and doing all the extracurricular activities eats up a lot of students' time, so the issue of acquiring time management skills is thoroughly examined within Unit 4 of the coursebook. To make students think critically of whether they use their time efficiently teacher may offer students to work in small groups and generate questions on time that begin with:

WHAT?

WHY?

HOW?

The suggested questions are: WHAT is time management? WHY should students be able to manage their time? HOW to manage time efficiently?

Having elicited from students these questions, teacher may then ask them to brainstorm the answers to these questions. This task may be followed by making a list of DO's and DON'Ts about time management with its further presentation to the whole class followed by discussion.

The insert method can be used while covering Unit 5, "Telephoning". While reading the text on telephone etiquette, students can be asked to mark the information as follows:

- ✓ – if the information is not new to students;
- x – if the information runs counter to students' views;
- + – if the information is not new to students;
- ? – if the information is obscure and students' seek for clarification.

After reading students are to fill in the grid below:

✓	x	+	?

The last unit of the coursebook, "Networking", enables students to get proficient in evaluating the reliability of facts on different websites, thus developing information competency. Students can be given an assignment to look at a website on their choice and evaluate it by the following factors: [4]

1. The date it was published, whether or not it has been updated, and how current the information is.
2. What the author's qualifications are. For instance, an article on economics should be written by an economist.
3. If there is supporting evidence to back up what the writer says. Sources should always have information to back them up, especially when the source is something your students find on the internet.

The writing task suggested in the coursebook is to ask students to write their own comments on Anzhelika Yuzkova's (one of the undergraduates at Vasyl' Stus DonNU) blog on students' challenges. Students are expected to express their agreement or disagreement with the author and tell about their experience of taking exams, giving arguments [7, p. 112].

All these activities proved to be an efficient critical thinking tool and, based on our observations, boosted students' socializing skills through group collaboration and reduced their anxiety arising from university demands through critical reading and well-thought out pre-, while- and after-reading tasks. The acquired time management skills appeared to help students allocate their time more efficiently and handle the increased workload. Further research is needed into the impact of the suggested critical thinking methods and techniques on students' motivation and academic performance.

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УДК 811.111'322

О. Дуброва
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ЛІНГВОКОГНІТИВНЕ МОДЕЛЮВАННЯ ЯК МЕТОД НАУКОВО-ПРАКТИЧНОГО ПІЗНАННЯ МОВНОЇ ЗДІБНОСТІ ЛЮДИНИ

Схарактеризовано процес моделювання як метод науково-практичного пізнання навколишньої дійсності. Описано етапи процесу моделювання. Здійснено аналіз підходів до визначення поняття моделі. Висвітлено основні властивості моделі як засобу пізнання. Конкретизовано особливості лінгвокогнітивного моделювання як методу дослідження мовної здібності людини, що являє собою когнітивну структуру мовця.

Ключові слова: моделювання, модель, когнітивна обробка, когнітивна модель, лінгвокогнітивне моделювання.

During the life course human being receives and processes information from the surrounding world while discourse, reading, linguistic text perception as well as perceiving, understanding and producing speech. Information processing is called cognitive processing the result of which is linguistic structures meaning (conceptualization). Linguistic structures represent the surrounding world in human beings memory and are known as mental (cognitive) models to research which the method of cognitive linguistic modeling of knowledge is used.

Modeling as the category of cognitive theory is indirect study of surrounding reality phenomena and processes and consists of both creating a model and studying it. So the model itself is a means of cognition and artificially created material reproduction of an object of any nature (physical objects or mental images). A model presenting known facts about the researched object is considered to be a source of information about it. Simplicity is a feature of a model as it has got only some certain features of the researched object. Thus it can be concluded that to research the object thoroughly building and studying of several models are necessary.

Cognitive linguistic modeling of knowledge is the research method used for cognitive models of speech which are defined as conceptual structures that capture and put into perspective what we know about the world. This method lies in building cognitive models of speech and finding their content through linguistic analysis; studying interdependence of semantic and grammar structures of models and analyzing their structure. As a result of applying the mentioned method we have got meaning of linguistic structures that are used to describe objective