Teaching Foreign Languages Using Modern Methods and Educational Technologies to Foster the Development of Critical Thinking
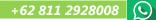
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Annotation: The article describes the use of technology for developing critical thinking in English lessons. It provides examples of how to apply techniques of this technology. The article presents the positive aspects of this technology as well as the difficulties in using it for developing critical thinking.

Keywords: individual culture, systematization of information, collective performance, differentiated approach.

According to Uzbekistan's educational standards, the development of critical thinking is considered one of the most important universal competencies. This indicates that educators have long recognized the significance of fostering critical thinking through years of educational practice. However, when it comes to the specific question of how to develop critical thinking, especially in the context of teaching a foreign language, researchers still have a long way to go. Traditional foreign language teaching is unable to address this issue due to its outdated theories and monotonous methods. It merely focuses on using materials for language learning and rote memorization, rather than prompting students to engage in critical reflection on the materials themselves. Consequently, the development of critical thinking becomes unattainable, and at times, the cognitive thinking activity of students is even hindered.

Chinese scholars believe that the development of pupils' critical thinking can occur when implementing any subject. However, the emphasis on developing critical thinking in teaching foreign languages is made because, firstly, there is a natural connection between language and the ability to think; secondly, learning a foreign language opens a window to different cultures for students, and these cultural differences provide the best material for stimulating critical thinking. After studying foreign theories, scientists, and experts in the development of critical thinking in teaching foreign languages, Wen Qiufang and Sun Min proposed dividing critical thinking into three main skills: analysis, inference, and evaluation. Subsequently, based on empirical research conducted in classes on foreign languages (English, Russian, and German) in some of China's leading schools, they further decomposed these three core skills into a variety of secondary skills for ease of teaching. The secondary skills under "analysis" include interpretation, classification, comparison, and identification; "inference" includes gathering evidence, offering alternatives, drawing conclusions, and providing explanations; and "evaluation" is divided into arguments and self-regulation. [1, p. 9]. Additionally, according to Wen Qiufang, in terms of teaching foreign languages to develop critical thinking, there are two modes: conscious and unconscious. In the conscious mode, the teacher clearly informs the students and explains the pedagogical activity in which they are engaged. Pupils are well aware that they are simultaneously learning the subject matter through thinking. In the unconscious mode, the teacher conceals his or her pedagogical goal, does not introduce the concept of critical thinking to the pupils, and does not directly address relevant knowledge and concepts in the classroom. Instead, the teacher allows pupils to develop critical thinking skills through well-designed tasks and questions, aiming to better integrate critical thinking instruction into foreign language teaching and alleviate the difficulties caused by conceptual abstraction. It can be said that in this mode, pupils do not form a mindset; they simply train to think critically in a foreign language. The choice of mode mainly depends on the age and cognitive level of the pupils. For pupils, the conscious mode is more effective

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because it promotes the development of self-reflection and self-control skills in them. As for the features of pedagogical technologies, these are the principles of using technology. While technology is rapidly updated, principles rarely change. Kulamikhina I.V. and Yesmurzayeva Zh.B. identified four principles that are necessary for teaching technology in foreign languages in order to develop critical thinking:

➢ Meaningful study of a foreign language. Modern researchers emphasize that teaching communication in a foreign language should not only include cognitive aspects, but also draw great attention to them so that pupils can successfully master language and communication skills.[1,30]

➢ personal activity in learning. Generation and understanding of meaning makes pupils more motivated and more active in learning and thinking;

➢ Collaborative learning. The goal of learning together is not so much to master knowledge as it is to learn how to learn with others. Thanks to this, pupils can gain skills socialization, communication and critical thinking skills;

➢ the use of support stimuli in teaching [2, p.230]. According to Vygotsky L.S., the development of thinking is mediated process, that is, for the development of any mental function (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) it is necessary to create a sign or symbol that will become a support or stimulus for the individual to master or development of knowledge, skills, abilities. Support-stimulus can act as a subject of collectively distributed activities of pupils.[3, p 207]

The methodological peculiarity could be the activation of students' independent work in the classroom and afterwards. Independent work stimulates interest in research, and pupils are more willing to take the initiative to learn, so that the motivation to learn becomes higher. With a strong motivation to learn, pupils stop working negligently, and learn the materials more deeply. Having studied the materials, impressions of the materials give them the desire to create and take the initiative. [4, p.207].

Thanks to the rapid development of information technology, pupils can now easily engage in independent work. And it is worth noting that this does not contradict the principle of learning in cooperation when choosing modern pedagogical technologies, because cooperation requires each member to fulfill his part and make his own contribution, regardless of the form in which cooperation is carried out.

The pedagogical feature is that the development of critical thinking in teaching a foreign language should always be closely related to professionalism due to the fact that, ultimately, the priority goal of modern education is to train a qualified and competent worker [5, p.72]. This feature is reflected in the training by the fact that the development of tasks can not be limited to solving problems in everyday life, but also allows pupils to try to solve problems that may arise in future professional life. This will greatly benefit their future career realization.

Another pedagogical feature is the deep integration of critical thinking skills and communicative abilities. Thinking is the understanding and generation of meaning, and communication is the encoding and decoding of meaning. [6, p.40]. From this point of view, thinking and communication have deep connections, which is the basis for the simultaneous development of these two complicities. In the course of training pupils should be given as many opportunities as possible to speak. When they need to speak, they may have problems such as illegible words, confusing words, ambiguity, evasiveness, innuendo, verbosity, digressions, lack of logic, lack of arguments, etc. In this case, the teacher can help students clarify their thoughts through questions. In this process, pupils can understand what their problem is more related to, thinking or expression, and then perform targeted exercises to improve their respective abilities. At the same time, the teacher can invite previous pupils to answer questions in order to simultaneously train their listening and understanding skills. For example, according to the model developed by previous researchers, there are such types of tasks as "know - want to know - learn", "forecasting from photography" and "synchwain" [7,p 19], which require meaningful and

thoughtful expressions from pupils and therefore can be used to combine the development of critical thinking skills and communicative competence.

The technology of critical thinking is used in foreign language lessons and allows you to significantly increase the time of speech practice in the lesson for each student, to achieve the assimilation of the material by all group members, to solve a variety of educational and developmental tasks. The teacher, in turn, becomes the organizer of independent educational, cognitive, communicative, creative activity of pupils, he has opportunities to improve the learning process, develop the communicative competence of students, the holistic development of their personality.

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