

The Importance of Improving Critical Thinking in Learners of Foreign Languages

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Abstract:

This article analyses the crucial role of critical thinking skills in teaching English as a foreign language and training future specialist teachers. For undergraduate students, critical thinking is not only a key academic skill necessary to achieve the goals of the university programme, but also an individual's ability to think independently and make sound decisions in real-life situations. Consequently, preparing students to use the widest range of academic language skills through analysis, synthesis and problem solving contributes to their highest professional success and future continuous development.

Key words: tutoring, pedagogical thinking, contextual knowledge, critical thinking, L2- foreign language, professional knowledge

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Initial teacher training is designed to initiate, support and ensure the development of a wide range of knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for teaching. In the context of initial teacher training, reflective analysis suggests, among other things, that learners should ask questions about their failures, difficulties, successes and strengths, so that their practices and beliefs develop and change. However, as research shows, university education criticized for ineffectiveness in identifying specific professional difficulties, which is explained by the excessively theoretical nature of the discussions. As a result, "the knowledge gained at the university" often turns out to be unsuitable for everyday work in the classroom [1,43]. The expansion of research on the effectiveness of training activities has provided more knowledge about the nature and methods of professional development, as well as about the factors affecting the development of knowledge and skills in the training process. One of the accompanying research projects also shows that it is the experimentation with new ways of working that forces teachers to change their practices. Studies also confirm that learners studying under the work-study program better understand and apply the theory and concepts studied [4, 86]. In addition, these students are more likely to support and guide their students in the learning process. Following the analysis, other experiences will also contribute to a change in practice. For example, the use of authentic materials and products to work on certain concepts, the analysis of student work, teacher plans, videos of teacher and student work would also contribute to understanding and networking on the part of future teachers. Others are interested in tutoring as a potential learning tool. However,

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despite the considerable amount of work that has been done over the past two decades to develop expertise in early training, some issues remain largely unexplored, including, for example, the types of learning experiences that are effective. These days, everyone – teachers, textbook publishers – seems to agree that teaching a modern language is learning to communicate. - Everyone seems to agree that teaching a modern language means teaching people to communicate. Following a communicative approach to teaching, teaching second languages (L2) assumes that the target language, English, is taught in English. From the point of view of oral communication, this situation may seem more or less critical if the student is introduced to the English language outside the classroom. Therefore, teaching "English in English", accustoming students to communicate with each other in English and forming motivation to learn the language quickly seem to be as important as difficult tasks for a future teacher who will have to work in a non-linguistic region. Given this specific context, the overall goal of this study is to examine the impact of distance learning on the professional development of students enrolled in the Bachelor's program in ESL Teaching. In this regard, the question arises about professional knowledge and skills formed in the process of learning.

Knowledge of pedagogical content is the second type of professional knowledge of a teacher. It is understood as understanding "how" certain topics or issues are presented, organized and adapted to the different interests and abilities of the learner for teaching. This definition emphasizes the pedagogical nature of subject knowledge; it also includes didactic knowledge and skills. More specifically, it includes knowledge of teaching strategies, knowledge and understanding of the difficulties or factors that contribute to learning in a given subject, and knowledge of the characteristics of students. This knowledge also includes: "the most regularly studied topics in their subject area, the most useful forms of presenting these ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations." Therefore, it is the knowledge that allows the teacher to translate and transform the knowledge that needs to be taught into the knowledge that is taught. For an L2 teacher, the PACs combine some specific characteristics or knowledge related to L2 teaching. Based on Shulman's work, four categories relating to L2 teaching are proposed [3,65]:

- (a) theories of teaching,
- (b) pedagogical skills,
- (c) pedagogical thinking
- (d) contextual knowledge.

The category of "teaching theory" implies that the future L2 teacher develops his or her own system of understanding teaching and the rules, theories and principles that govern it. This implies that the person reflects on his or her own practice in order to arrive at hypotheses, principles and generalizations that can explain the reality he or she encounters. For the future teacher, this means "combining theory and practice". necessary for the organization and management of the teaching and learning process. Teaching skills refer to the skills needed to ensure a smooth course from start to finish, as well as the necessary transition stages. They also refer to the skills needed to guide students through the learning process, i.e., to explain, check, and correct. Finally, pedagogical thinking skills are related to decision-making. These skills allow educators to analyze and identify learning

objectives, content, materials, and resources. In addition, these skills allow you to anticipate problems and ways to solve them. Learner information and the development of contacts with it, as well as the ability to explain, popularize and adapt one's L2 level of proficiency stand out as the knowledge and skills most frequently mentioned in terms of intended learning after participating in distance tutoring. These skills can be divided into two aspects, which we will refer to as technical and relational. The collected opinions did not allow us to single out the skills of "pedagogical thinking". This can be explained by the fact that tutors did not have to plan the content and determine the strategies of teaching and learning. In this situation, it is necessary to develop problem-solving skills, the ability to work in a group, to critically reflect on some problems, questions or statements. Some arguments emphasize the role of critical thinking in the professional development of students learning English. think creatively to achieve curriculum goals, and then apply their critical thinking skills in real-life situations to make decisions and effectively solve problems that arise, even while studying at university [2,147]. In language teaching and learning, the learning environment is an important component that directly affects the quality of curricula. In the language classroom, teachers play the most important role in creating an environment conducive to learning and achieving results. Teachers who are engaged in the development of research activities and critical thinking should be prepared to ensure that students have these skills. A well-developed critical thinker is someone who poses vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and clearly, and effectively interacts with others in finding solutions to complex problems. To be successful, students need to work in pairs and groups, describing the content of the discussion, identifying questions, discussing problems and alternative solutions, and finally evaluating the entire process. In addition, critical thinkers can pose questions and find appropriate answers based on the most appropriate and reliable evidence and the foundations of critical thinking. In the process of teaching English as a foreign language, teachers can use methods such as the case method, questions and answers, project work, group discussions, experiment and observation, field trips, brainstorming and various forms of dramatization to promote the holistic development of students and the formation of their multifaceted thinking skills.

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