



METHODS OF TEACHING STUDENTS CREATIVE THINKING THROUGH THE DESIGN OF CREATIVE TASKS IN ENGLISH (on the example of non-philological fields of study)

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Abstract

The article examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of teaching students creative thinking through the design and implementation of creative tasks in English in non-philological fields of higher education. The essence of creative thinking is revealed as an important component of the professional and communicative competence of a modern specialist. Particular attention is paid to the potential of the “Foreign Language” discipline in developing students’ ability to independently generate ideas, find alternative ways of solving educational and professionally oriented tasks, substantiate their own viewpoints, and create original spoken and written products. The article considers such methods as problem-based learning, project-based activities, brainstorming, the case method, role-playing and business games, storytelling, the open-ended question method, and digital creative tasks. An algorithm for designing creative tasks is proposed, comprising motivational, problem-search, productive-creative, and reflective-evaluative stages. It is concluded that the systematic use of creative tasks contributes to the simultaneous development of foreign-language communicative competence, learner autonomy, flexibility of thinking, and students’ professional readiness.

Keywords: Creative thinking, English language, creative tasks, non-philological fields of study, professional competence, project-based learning, problem-based learning, communicative competence, critical thinking, digital technologies.



Introduction

The modern system of higher education is focused not only on providing students with a body of professional knowledge but also on developing competencies that enable them to act effectively in a rapidly changing social, technological, and professional environment. One of these competencies is creative thinking—the ability to generate new ideas, consider a problem from different perspectives, propose alternative solutions, and adapt existing knowledge to non-standard situations.

The development of creative thinking is particularly relevant in the education of students in non-philological fields. Future specialists should be able not only to reproduce professional information but also to independently analyze situations, make decisions, engage in professional communication, present ideas, and interact with representatives of various professional and cultural communities.

The study of English has considerable potential for addressing this objective. A foreign language is not only an object of study but also a means of cognitive, communicative, and creative activity. When the learning process is appropriately organized, students have the opportunity to use English to solve problem-based situations, carry out projects, discuss professional issues, and create their own texts and presentations.

The purpose of this article is to identify effective methods for developing students' creative thinking through the design of creative English-language tasks in the context of non-philological higher education.

Creative Thinking as a Component of Students' Professional Competence

Creative thinking can be defined as a person's ability to generate original and practically significant ideas, transform existing knowledge, and find non-standard solutions to emerging problems.

In the educational process, creativity is manifested not only in the creation of an entirely new product. It may also be reflected in a student's ability to propose several solutions to the same problem, independently formulate questions, establish unusual connections between concepts, justify their own opinions, transform information, or apply previously acquired knowledge in a new situation.



The main characteristics of students' creative thinking include:

Fluency of thinking — the ability to generate a significant number of ideas;

Flexibility — the ability to shift from one approach to solving a problem to another;

Originality — the ability to propose unconventional solutions;

Elaboration of ideas — the ability to develop an initial idea and transform it into a complete product;

Independence — the ability to make decisions without constant reliance on a ready-made model;

Reflectivity — the ability to evaluate one's own actions and results;

Communicative creativity — the ability to express ideas originally and appropriately in various communicative situations.

In English language teaching, these characteristics can be developed simultaneously with students' lexical, grammatical, speaking, and professional communicative competencies.

Creative Tasks as a Means of Developing Creative Thinking

A creative task in English language teaching can be understood as an open-ended learning activity that requires students to independently search for both the content and methods of completing the task and allows for several correct or well-justified outcomes.

Unlike reproductive exercises, which require students to reproduce previously learned material according to a prescribed algorithm, a creative task places the student in a situation that requires intellectual choice.

For example, a traditional task may be formulated as follows:

Read the text and answer the questions.

A creatively oriented version of the task requires a higher degree of independence:

Read the text, identify the main problem, and propose three possible solutions. Choose the best solution and explain your choice.

In the second case, students must not only understand the English text but also identify the problem, propose alternatives, evaluate them, and justify their own decisions.



Thus, an effective creative task should be characterized by problem orientation, openness, variability, professional relevance, communicative orientation, and opportunities for independent choice.

Methods for Developing Creative Thinking in English Language Classes

1. Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning involves creating an educational situation in which students need to independently identify possible ways of solving a given problem. In English language classes, the teacher may present students with a professionally oriented problem:

Problem: Your company needs to reduce energy consumption by 20%. Suggest several solutions and present the most effective strategy.

Students analyze the situation, use relevant vocabulary, formulate proposals, compare different options, and justify their decisions.

Thus, the foreign language becomes a tool for solving a meaningful, professionally oriented problem.

2. Brainstorming Method

Brainstorming contributes to the development of fluency and flexibility of thinking. At the initial stage, students are encouraged to generate as many ideas as possible without immediately evaluating them critically.

For example: How can artificial intelligence change your future profession?

Students propose various answers, after which they classify the ideas, discuss their advantages and disadvantages, and select the most promising ones.

An important condition is the separation of the idea-generation and idea-evaluation stages. This helps reduce psychological barriers and stimulates students' verbal activity.

3. Project-Based Method

Project-based learning is particularly effective for students in non-philological fields because it makes it possible to integrate English language learning with the content of their future professional activities.

Students may be offered the following projects: Design a Smart University;



Create an Eco-Friendly Campus; Develop a Tourism Route for International Visitors; Design a Start-up for Your Region; Create a Digital Service for Students; Present an Innovative Product Related to Your Profession.

A project involves searching for information, analyzing a problem, distributing responsibilities within a group, creating a product, and presenting it in English.

As a result, linguistic, professional, research, communicative, and creative competencies are developed simultaneously.

4. Case Study Method

The case study method involves analyzing a specific practical situation that does not have a single predetermined solution.

For example:

A local company wants to enter the international market, but its employees have limited English communication skills. What should the company do?

Students identify the problem, discuss its causes, propose alternative solutions, and defend the strategy they have selected.

The case study method makes it possible to bring foreign-language learning closer to students' future professional activities.

5. Role-Playing and Business Games

Role-playing simulates real-life communication situations and allows students to experiment with different models of behavior.

The following situations can be organized during classes:

job interview; business meeting; scientific conference; start-up presentation; negotiation; customer complaint; environmental debate.

For example, in the Start-up Meeting business game, students assume the roles of project manager, marketing specialist, investor, technical specialist, and client. Each participant must present the position of their character and work together with the group to develop a solution.

6. Storytelling

Creating stories in English develops imagination, the ability to structure ideas logically, and the capacity to establish cause-and-effect relationships.



The teacher may provide the beginning of a story:

In 2040, universities no longer have traditional classrooms...

The students' task is to continue the story, explain the changes that have occurred, and present their own model of education in the future.

For students in non-philological fields, it is advisable to connect the content of the story with professionally oriented topics.

7. Open-Ended Questions Method

Open-ended questions do not imply a single predetermined answer. They stimulate reasoning, prediction, and argumentation.

For example:

What would happen if...?

How could we improve...?

What are three different ways to solve...?

What alternative can you suggest...?

How would you redesign...?

Which solution would you choose and why?

Such questions should be systematically incorporated into reading, speaking, writing, and professional vocabulary activities.

8. Digital Creative Tasks

Digital technologies expand the possibilities for organizing creative activities. Students can create digital presentations, infographics, videos, podcasts, electronic posters, virtual tours, and multimedia projects in English.

At the same time, it is essential that digital tools do not replace independent intellectual activity. The effectiveness of such activities should be determined not by the complexity of the technology used, but by the degree of students' independence in creating the content.

Designing a System of Creative Tasks

The design of creative tasks should be implemented in several successive stages.



Stage 1 — Motivational and Diagnostic Stage

At this stage, students' initial level of language proficiency and creative activity is determined. The teacher identifies learners' professional interests and selects topics corresponding to their field of study.

Associations, mini-discussions, problem-based questions, and short creative tasks are used.

Stage 2 — Problem-Solving and Inquiry Stage

Students are presented with a problem situation and analyze the available information. At this stage, brainstorming, open-ended questions, text analysis, problem-based discussions, and small-group work are used.

The main objective is to generate several possible solutions.

Stage 3 — Productive and Creative Stage

Students create their own educational product: a project, presentation, dialogue, video, essay, poster, professional proposal, or model for solving a problem.

The teacher primarily performs the functions of a consultant and facilitator of learning activities.

Stage 4 — Presentation and Communication Stage

The created product is presented to the audience. Students explain their ideas, answer questions, justify their decisions, and participate in discussions of the results presented by other groups.

Stage 5 — Reflective and Assessment Stage

At the final stage, self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment are carried out.

Students may be asked the following questions:

What was the most original idea?

What was difficult?

What would you change?

Which solution was the most effective and why?

What did you learn from other students?



Thus, the learning cycle can be represented as follows:

Problem → Idea Generation → Selection of a Solution → Product Creation →
Presentation → Reflection → New Creative Task

Criteria for Assessing Creative Tasks

The assessment of students' creative work should take into account not only linguistic accuracy but also the quality of their intellectual activity.

The following criteria may be used:

Originality — the presence of independent and unconventional ideas.

Flexibility of thinking — the use of different approaches to solving a problem.

Elaboration — the degree of detail and logical completeness of an idea.

Argumentation — the ability to justify the proposed solution.

Professional relevance — the relationship between the content and the student's future profession.

Communication — the clarity and logical organization of the presentation of results.

Language competence — the appropriate use of English vocabulary, grammar, and professional terminology.

Independence — the degree to which the student completes the task independently.

Such an assessment system helps avoid situations in which creative work is evaluated exclusively on the basis of the number of grammatical or lexical errors.

Pedagogical Conditions for Effectiveness

The effective development of students' creative thinking through English language learning requires a number of pedagogical conditions.

First, tasks should correspond to students' level of language proficiency. Excessively complex language material restricts creative activity because students' main intellectual resources are directed toward overcoming linguistic difficulties.

Second, it is necessary to create a psychologically safe learning environment in which students are not afraid to propose unconventional ideas or make language mistakes.



Third, tasks should have professionally oriented content. For students in non-philological fields, English acquires greater motivational value when it is used to discuss real issues related to their future profession.

Fourth, individual, pair, and group activities should be combined.

Fifth, the level of student autonomy should be gradually increased: from completing tasks according to a partially prescribed algorithm to independently defining a problem, designing ways to solve it, and creating the final product.

A Practical Model of a Creative Task

The following activity can serve as an example for students in non-philological fields.

Topic: University of the Future

Problem:

Traditional universities need to adapt to rapid technological changes.

Task:

Design a university of the future for the year 2040.

Students are required to determine: what students will study; what technologies will be used; what classrooms will look like; what role teachers will have; how students will be assessed; what problems the proposed model may create; how these problems can be solved.

Final product: a group presentation in English.

Creative component: each group develops its own model of a university and provides arguments for its advantages.

Language component: the use of topic-specific vocabulary, future tense constructions, modal verbs, comparative structures, and expressions for argumentation.

Reflection: after the presentations, students select the most promising model and explain their choice. Such task makes it possible to integrate language learning, creative thinking, communicative activities, project work, and presentation skills.

Conclusion

The development of students' creative thinking is one of the current priorities in improving professional training in higher education. Teaching English to students



in non-philological fields of study provides particularly valuable opportunities for addressing this objective.

The design of creative tasks makes it possible to move from a reproductive model of foreign-language learning to productive activity in which students independently analyze information, formulate problems, generate ideas, compare alternative solutions, create their own products, and present them to an audience. The most effective methods include problem-based learning, project-based learning, brainstorming, the case method, role-playing and business games, storytelling, open-ended questions, and digital creative projects.

At the same time, the effectiveness of the methodology is determined by the systematic use of creative tasks, their professional orientation, their correspondence to students' language proficiency levels, the availability of opportunities for independent choice, and mandatory reflection on the results.

Thus, English language teaching based on creative tasks should be regarded not only as a means of developing foreign-language communicative competence, but also as a pedagogical mechanism for developing independent, flexible, and creative thinking in future professionals.

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