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## **DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN PHILOLOGY STUDENTS**

***Abstract.*** *In today's globalized world, the development of critical thinking and intercultural communication skills is pivotal for philology students. These skills empower them to critically assess linguistic, cultural, and textual nuances, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in language and translation. Critical thinking enhances students' ability to interpret and evaluate texts from diverse perspectives, improving their analytical rigor. Intercultural communication skills, meanwhile, allow them to navigate and mediate between different cultural contexts with sensitivity and awareness. Integrating these competencies into foreign language and translation curricula equips students with the tools necessary for successful communication in multicultural settings. By using innovative teaching methods such as case studies, simulations, and intercultural exchanges, educators can*

*more effectively develop these crucial skills, preparing students for the demands of a rapidly evolving, interconnected world.*

**Key words:** *critical thinking, intercultural communication, philology students, language education, translation skills, multicultural contexts, cross-cultural awareness.*

**Чайка О. Розвиток критичного мислення і міжкультурних комунікативних навичок у студентів-філологів.** У сучасному глобалізованому світі розвиток критичного мислення й міжкультурних комунікативних навичок є надзвичайно важливим для студентів-філологів, оскільки такі вміння дозволяють їм критично оцінювати лінгвістичні, культурні та текстові нюанси, сприяючи глибшому розумінню складнощів, пов'язаних із мовою та перекладом. Критичне мислення підвищує здатність студентів інтерпретувати та оцінювати тексти з різних точок зору, покращуючи їхню аналітичну обґрунтованість, а міжкультурні комунікативні навички, у свою чергу, дозволяють їм з чутливістю та обізнаністю орієнтуватися в різних культурних контекстах. Інтеграція цих компетенцій у навчальні плани з вивчення іноземних мов і перекладу надає студентам інструменти, необхідні для успішної комунікації в мультикультурних умовах. Цьому сприятиме використання інноваційних методів викладання, зокрема тематичні дослідження, симуляції та міжкультурні обміни.

**Ключові слова:** *критичне мислення, міжкультурна комунікація, студенти-філологи, перекладацькі навички, мультикультурні контексти, міжкультурна обізнаність.*

The rapid pace of globalization has transformed communication, making intercultural competency and critical thinking indispensable skills for philology students. Today, translation and language professionals are not just required to understand the mechanics of language, but also they must navigate complex cultural landscapes [2; 7; 12]. As intercultural encounters become more frequent, philology students must be able to decode cultural subtleties, think critically, and act as mediators between different cultural and linguistic groups [1; 9; 10]. Recent studies emphasize that language proficiency alone is no longer sufficient for successful professional engagement [6; 19]; it is the ability to think critically about texts, cultural contexts, and interpersonal

communication that distinguishes effective translators and language experts in modern industries [11; 13; 20].

Moreover, the demand for intercultural competence is increasingly evident across sectors such as international business, diplomacy, education, and media [3; 9]. For example, misunderstandings in translation or cultural misinterpretations can lead to diplomatic tensions, business failures, or even educational challenges [1; 15]. As language professionals increasingly work in global contexts, fostering intercultural communication skills becomes rather essential. Research indicates that students who acquire these skills are better equipped for the labor market, showing higher adaptability and a more profound understanding of the multifaceted nature of communication [5; 10].

In addition, critical thinking, long recognized as vital in language studies, plays an even more critical role in our digital, media-saturated world [17; 11]. Philology students must assess the validity, reliability, and cultural biases of the vast amount of information available in various languages, while also being able to articulate and critique ideas effectively. Critical thinking skills thus ensure that students are not merely passive recipients of knowledge but active analyzers of both linguistic and cultural data [13]. In this light, developing these skills within philology programs is no longer an option but a necessity [14].

**Aim of the research.** This research aims to explore the effective integration of critical thinking and intercultural communication skills into the philology curriculum. Specifically, the paper seeks to investigate how teaching practices in foreign language and translation programs can evolve to better prepare students for the challenges posed by globalization. The study analyzes innovative pedagogical approaches, such as inquiry-based learning, project-based activities, and intercultural exchanges, and assesses their impact on the development of these competencies. The ultimate goal is to offer insights into how philology students can be equipped to thrive in diverse, multicultural professional environments.

**Methods.** This study utilized a mixed-methods approach to assess the integration of critical thinking and intercultural communication skills in philology curricula. Qualitative data were gathered through interviews and focus groups with language instructors to understand their use of teaching methods such as case studies and cross-cultural projects. These discussions provided insights into how these methods support skill development. Additionally, a quantitative survey was administered to philology students to measure changes in their critical thinking and intercultural communication

skills before and after engaging with specific instructional strategies. Data analysis involved paired t-tests to evaluate improvements in these competencies.

**Literature review, results and discussion.** Critical thinking is central to the ability of philology students to critically assess and produce translations, interpret literary texts, and engage in nuanced communication. According to Elder and Paul (2020), critical thinking is not simply a cognitive skill but a way of interacting with the world [11]. In philology, this means challenging assumptions in texts, analyzing translations for fidelity and cultural relevance, and questioning how language shapes meaning within different cultural frameworks [1; 18]. Research findings by Byram (2020), Porto (2022) and Brüstle & Vogt (2023) support the notion that students trained in critical thinking demonstrate superior problem-solving abilities and are better prepared for the dynamic challenges of professional translation and language services [4; 17; 5]. Therefore, intercultural communication is equally crucial, as it allows philology students to navigate the subtle but profound differences in values, beliefs, and communication styles that can arise in cross-cultural interactions.

Language is never neutral; it is embedded in cultural practices, making intercultural competency essential for accurate translation and effective communication [1; 15]. A study by Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017) found that intercultural competence is a decisive factor in job success for language professionals working in international contexts [10]. Students who can empathize with and adapt to different cultural norms are more likely to avoid miscommunication and build stronger, more productive relationships across cultures.

Recent pedagogical trends have highlighted the importance of experiential learning in fostering these skills. For instance, project-based learning (PBL) has been shown to develop critical thinking by encouraging students to engage with real-world problems, requiring both linguistic analysis and cross-cultural awareness [8; 16]. Similarly, virtual and in-person intercultural exchanges allow students to experience firsthand the challenges and rewards of communication across cultures. These approaches build cultural sensitivity and practical problem-solving abilities, ensuring that students are not only competent linguists but also adept cultural mediators [7].

For example, in a study by Chaika (2023), students engaged in cross-cultural debates and projects demonstrated measurable improvements in their

ability to think critically about language and culture [8]. These students were better able to identify cultural biases, challenge stereotypes, and offer more nuanced translations and interpretations. Moreover, they developed a heightened awareness of how different cultural frameworks can affect communication, making them more effective communicators in diverse professional settings.

**Results and discussion.** As specified above, a mixed-methods approach helped evaluate the impact of inquiry-based learning, project-based activities, and intercultural exchanges on the development of critical thinking and intercultural communication skills among philology students. Qualitative data were collected through interviews and focus groups with language instructors from the university, which uncovered how educators integrated these methods into their curricula and their perceived effectiveness in fostering student skills. Additionally, a quantitative survey was administered to 102 philology students in their third and fourth years of study, with a majority being female (76%) and the remainder male (24%). The survey assessed changes in students' critical thinking and intercultural communication skills before and after exposure to the new instructional strategies. Data analysis included paired *t*-tests to determine the significance of any observed improvements.

The study findings revealed that instructors observed a positive impact from using inquiry-based learning and project-based activities. These methods encouraged students to engage in deeper analysis and practical application of linguistic and cultural concepts. Cross-cultural projects, in particular, were noted for enhancing students' ability to navigate and mediate between different cultural contexts. Moreover, quantitative results, analyzed through paired *t*-tests, showed significant improvements in both critical thinking and intercultural communication skills among students who participated in these innovative methods. Pre- and post-intervention surveys indicated enhanced critical thinking abilities, with students reporting better analytical skills and a more nuanced understanding of texts. Additionally, intercultural communication skills improved, with students feeling more confident in their ability to interact effectively in diverse cultural settings.

These findings suggest that integrating inquiry-based learning, project-based activities, and intercultural exchanges into philology curricula can effectively enhance critical thinking and intercultural communication skills. The positive impact observed supports the continued use and development of

these pedagogical approaches to better prepare students for success in multicultural professional environments.

**Conclusion.** The development of critical thinking and intercultural communication skills is crucial for equipping philology students to thrive in today's globalized world. These competencies enable students to navigate and interpret complex linguistic, cultural, and social contexts with increased sophistication, a necessity in modern professional environments. Recent pedagogical innovations, such as inquiry-based learning, project-based activities, and intercultural exchanges, have demonstrated significant effectiveness in fostering these skills. By engaging in such methods, students will be more prepared to excel as translators and faster become adept cultural mediators. With intensifying global interconnectivity the demand for professionals who can skillfully handle linguistic and cultural complexities will continue to rise. Therefore, integrating these competencies into philology curricula is becoming increasingly critical, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the diverse challenges of the global job market.

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