

DIENICHIEVA Olha,
PhD in Education, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor of the Department
of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics
Faculty of Pedagogical Technologies
and Lifelong Learning, Zhytomyr
Polytechnic State University
(Zhytomyr, Ukraine)

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH THE COURSE *MILITARY ENGLISH*

In the educational milieu, the development of foreign language communicative competence is inseparable from the ability to think critically and evaluate information objectively. In the context of ongoing information aggression, characterized by the unprecedented spread of disinformation, manipulation, and emotional persuasion, higher education institutions face the challenge of preparing students who can not only use a foreign language effectively but also identify and resist linguistic and cognitive manipulation.

Integrating critical thinking into foreign language instruction enables students to become reflective language users capable of analyzing messages, verifying sources, and making well-founded judgments [1; 2]. Accordingly, fostering critical thinking in the development of foreign language competence is not merely an educational trend but a pressing pedagogical necessity in today's information environment.

According to M. Byram's model, foreign language competence involves several interrelated components, including linguistic, sociocultural, discourse, and strategic subskills. In the current information environment, however, it is essential to expand this framework to include critical and cognitive competence: the ability to interpret meanings, question assumptions, and evaluate the reliability and intent of communicative acts [1].

The *Military English* course applies principles derived from Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and critical pedagogy. Both frameworks prioritize learner autonomy and encourage students to construct understanding through analytical inquiry, reflection, and reasoned discussion [3]. In this approach, language acquisition becomes a means of fostering advanced cognitive skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information. These skills are essential for meaningful communication in complex professional and intercultural contexts.

From this perspective, critical thinking operates as an integral element of language use rather than an isolated skill. Learners demonstrate critical competence when they interpret authentic texts from multiple perspectives, analyze argument structures and assess the credibility of evidence, compare ideological framings across different sources, and synthesize diverse viewpoints into coherent and balanced conclusions [2].

Using the example of the optional course *Military English*, it is possible to trace the development of critical thinking skills through the performance of practical tasks. The

ESP course in *Military English* is designed for advanced students specializing in defense linguistics, international relations, or security studies. It provides exposure to authentic texts drawn from NATO publications, defense journals, and official communications, thereby offering a realistic linguistic environment for the development of both technical vocabulary and analytical comprehension. The course structure combines lexical training, text analysis, listening comprehension, and interactive simulations. Examples of tasks include:

- **Terminology work**, where students identify and explain specialized vocabulary (e.g., *reconnaissance, stability operations, disarmament*), promoting conceptual clarity and semantic precision.
- **Analytical reading**, which requires learners to summarize and interpret authentic reports, distinguishing between factual data and evaluative commentary.
- **Simulation activities**, such as drafting situation reports or mission briefings, which demand conciseness, logical sequencing, and accuracy under time constraints.
- **Critical discussions and essay writing**, focusing on ethical dilemmas, humanitarian operations, and the role of language in shaping public perception.

These tasks and activities guide students through all levels of cognitive engagement: from comprehension and application to analysis and evaluation, thereby systematically cultivating critical thinking within the process of foreign language acquisition.

Under conditions of information aggression, the ability to question, interpret, and verify information functions as both a communicative and defensive skill [2]. Within *Military English*, students engage with authentic sources that may reflect differing political and ideological perspectives. They are encouraged to identify discursive strategies, detect bias, and assess credibility: skills that directly strengthen their capacity to resist misinformation and disinformation.

For example, when examining military briefings or international statements, learners analyze rhetorical mechanisms such as framing, modality, and euphemistic expressions to understand how linguistic choices can subtly influence perception [3]. This type of metalinguistic analysis develops intellectual vigilance and enhances the learner's ability to distinguish objective reporting from persuasive intent.

Moreover, the course emphasizes the ethical dimension of communication. Through discussions on humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, and cross-cultural cooperation, students learn to evaluate not only the factual accuracy but also the moral implications of language use. In this way, *Military English* supports the formation of ethically responsible and critically aware communicators capable of making informed linguistic and cognitive choices.

The development of critical thinking is therefore a crucial component in the formation of foreign language competence under conditions of information aggression. The *Military English* course demonstrates how authentic, cognitively demanding tasks can foster both linguistic proficiency and intellectual resilience. Through the integration of content, language, and analysis, learners become capable not only of communicating accurately but also of interpreting information responsibly and ethically.

References

1. Byram M. *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence: Revisited*, Multilingual Matters, 2021.
URL: <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.21832/9781800410251-005/html>.
2. Lahodynskyi, O., Schcherbyna, O., Borynskyi, V., Bloschynskyi, I., Zinchenko, A. The ESP teaching and learning at the military academies in Ukraine: Psychological and sociocultural aspects. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 2023. 5(3)
URL: <https://doi.org/10.59400/FLS.v5i3.1956>
3. Siegel, A., Vance, M., Nilsson, D. *Military English language education: A scoping review of 30 years of research*. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*. 2024.
URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17501229.2024.2370986>