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## The Strategies, Methods and Techniques of the Psychodidactics of Creativity in the Foreign Language Education of Young Learners

Strategie, metody i techniki psychodydaktyki twórczości  
w kształceniu języków obcych dzieci  
w młodszym wieku szkolnym

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### KEYWORDS    ABSTRACT

learning and teaching foreign languages, psychodidactics of creativity, pedagogy of creativity, autonomation, communication, culture, tradition, didactic process, conceptualization of learning foreign languages

The purpose of the article is to demonstrate some useful strategies, methods and techniques of the psychodidactics of creativity that also derive from the pedagogy of creativity, in foreign language education. Firstly, the author of the article shows the connection of the pedagogy of creativity and the didactics, and gives some definitions of creativity. Then, some significant strategies are characterized such as: foreign language education, including the culture and tradition of a country, autonomation of the learner, connecting learning with the individual learning needs, authenticity – especially of didactic situations and devices, and the right to make language mistakes – learning by making mistakes (so called the process of conceptualization). Then some creative methods and techniques of learning foreign languages were shown. The author also shows the profile of the teacher that is the best for the creative teaching of foreign languages. That article has both a theoretical and practical dimension – it means that it helps the reader understand the connection between learning foreign languages and creativity, and it includes some practical guides for foreign language teachers to use in their daily teaching.

## SŁOWA KLUCZE ABSTRAKT

uczenie się i nauczania języków obcych, psychodydaktyka twórczości, psychodydaktyki języków obcych, pedagogika kreatywności, autonomizacja, komunikacja, kultura, tradycja, process dydaktyczny, konceptualizacja uczenia się języków obcych

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ukazanie niektórych przydatnych strategii, metod i technik psychodydaktyki twórczości, które również wywodzą się z pedagogiki twórczości, w zakresie edukacji językowej. Po pierwsze, Autorka tego artykułu ukazuje związek pedagogiki twórczości i dydaktyki oraz niektóre definicje kreatywności. Następnie, zostały scharakteryzowane niektóre znaczące strategie nauczania i uczenia się języka obcego, takie jak edukacja języka obcego połączona z kulturą i tradycją kraju, autonomizacja ucznia, powiązanie nauczania z indywidualnymi potrzebami uczenia się, autentyczność zwłaszcza sytuacji dydaktycznej i środków dydaktycznych lub prawo do popełniania błędów językowych – uczenie się przez popełnianie błędów (tzw. proces konceptualizacji). Następnie ukazano niektóre kreatywne metody i techniki nauki języka obcego. Autorka przedstawia również profil nauczyciela, który najlepiej sprawdza się w twórczym nauczaniu języków obcych. Niniejszy artykuł ma zarówno teoretyczny, jak i praktyczny wymiar – oznacza to, że zawiera on interesujące treści, które pozwolą zrozumieć związek nauki języków obcych i kreatywności, a także praktyczne wskazówki dla nauczycieli języków obcych, z których mogą oni skorzystać w codziennym nauczaniu.

## Introduction

Now, in the postmodern world, when nothing is obvious, predictable and constant, one of the most useful qualities a person may possess is that of creativity. People have access to massive amounts information which is available in the Internet and in many other sources. Most members of the society are well educated and they read many books, handbooks, magazines, and other written texts. The society includes teachers who form a professional and well-informed group. Most Polish teachers have graduated not only from universities and high schools, but they have also completed many postgraduate courses. Does it mean that they are creative? The answer is far from obvious. Many of them feel lost because of the huge amount of information, challenges at work and changing situations. That's why, in the opinion of the author of the article, it is very important for them to become creative. One of the ways to gain knowledge about creativity is studying psychodidactics of creativity and pedagogy of creativity, as well as other fields of science connected with creativity, such as psychology of creativity. It is worth mentioning that the pedagogy of creativity derives from the psychology of creativity. Studying means not only reading books but also rethinking

that knowledge, making it individual and using it in practice. The most important thing for foreign language teachers is to be creative, too. It seems that they need that quality more than other teachers because they work with different language languages, and they refer to culture and tradition. They have to be more open and tolerant than, e. g. teachers of mathematics. To conclude, psychodidactics of creativity and pedagogy of creativity offer some interesting and effective strategies, methods and techniques for the foreign language teacher, and it is worth using them.

## Definitions of creativity

Krzysztof J. Szmidt claims that creativity is the ability to generate new products (ideas, methods and actions) as often as possible.<sup>1</sup> Natalia Wiszniakowa, who is also interested in creativity, says that creativity is a manifestation of the personal riches of human knowledge and of socially-established stereotypes of behavior, as well as the willingness to change the existing systems and mechanisms of social behavior in order to create something new, original and unexpected.<sup>2</sup> According to Pan Kamylylis, creativity is the ability characteristic of human beings whose creative potential can be fulfilled or inhibited through education and schooling. Therefore, all students should be provided with the appropriate opportunities and means to develop their creative potential to the maximum degree.<sup>3</sup>

To sum up, creativity is the ability to do something that is useful, desirable, wanted and valuable for a single person and/or for a group/community/society. It is reflected in something physical or in an idea. However, creativity can also be a state of mind or a feeling, e.g. when a person experiences an inspiration for doing something that he/she loves. It can also be an attitude of somebody who is able to solve some problems easily or create some new ideas that other people can not even think about.

## The connection between psychodidactics and pedagogy of creativity

There are some common qualities of psychodidactics of foreign languages and pedagogy of creativity. First of all, these are interdisciplinary fields of knowledge that integrate some content from different theoretical and practical disciplines: psychology,

<sup>1</sup> K.J. Szmidt, *Pedagogika twórczości*, Gdańsk 2007, p.123.

<sup>2</sup> N. Wiszniakowa, *Akmeologia kreatywna*, Łódź 2003, p.48.

<sup>3</sup> P. Kamylylis, "Fostering Creative Thinking: The Role of Primary Teachers", *Studies in Computing* 2010, vol.115, p. 35.

pedagogy and the theory of communication. Both are praxeological disciplines in which practice plays a significant role. Cooperation, solving problems and communication are key concepts in them.<sup>4</sup> According to Krzysztof J. Szmidt, creativity is better to learn in action.<sup>5</sup> The fact is that a person can learn how to communicate in a foreign language in action, i.e. during interaction with others. In such situations the person becomes creative. Moreover, both pedagogy of creativity and the didactic of foreign languages have the same educational goals: stimulation of the personal development of the person, preparing him/her to live in a variable world, autonomation, teaching communication with other people and being creative in everyday situations. Teaching foreign languages is holistic because it is connected with all dimensions of the human personality (cognitive, emotional and practical), and the same is true for teaching creativity.<sup>6</sup>

## Useful strategies of connecting teaching foreign languages with the pedagogy of creativity

There are some important strategies that are used in foreign languages didactics and psychodidactics of teaching foreign languages, and in teaching creativity. Some of them are: education with the elements of the country's culture and tradition, autonomation of the learner, adjusting their process of learning to specific learning needs, authenticity – especially of didactic situations and devices, and the right to make language mistakes.

First of all, K.J. Szmidt views teaching foreign languages in the context of tradition and culture, both of the learner's country and the country of the foreign language. It facilitates multidimensional communication between learners, teachers and local community.<sup>7</sup> It is also essential to arouse interest and motivation of young learners in learning foreign languages, and to make them glad to do it. Moreover, Teresa Siek-Piskozub ascribes huge meaning to foreign language tasks connected with culture and tradition. She believes that important features of such tasks include organizational, motivational, didactical, cognitive and educational aspects.<sup>8</sup>

The second strategy is focusing on a learner (not on the content of teaching as it was few years ago) with the important task of his/her autonomation, improving the

<sup>4</sup> E. Jastrzębska, *Strategie psychodidaktyki twórczości w kształceniu językowym*, Kraków 2011, p.73.

<sup>5</sup> K.J. Szmidt, *Pedagogika twórczości*, Gdańsk 2007, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> E. Jastrzębska, *Strategie psychodidaktyki twórczości w kształceniu językowym*, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> K.J. Szmidt, *Koncepcja rozwijania zdolności twórczych uczniów klas III do programu kształcenia zintegrowanego "Przygoda z klasą"*, Warszawa 2003, p. 102.

<sup>8</sup> T. Siek-Piskozub, *Gry i zabawy w nauczaniu języków obcych*, Warszawa 1994, p. 20-23.

range of his/her communication competences, and teaching him/her to manage their time of self-studying.<sup>9</sup> One can say that learning how to learn is necessary for life long learning of foreign languages and creativity as well.

The third feature is the authenticity of the teacher, learners, didactic situations and didactic devices. To learn a foreign language in authentic situations is the most desirable because it gives the young learner the opportunity to learn via his/her own experience, as a result of which he/she can easily remember new words/phrases, express his/her opinion and prepare for real situations in which he/she shall use the language material. That's why the best way to learn is to be and cooperate in multicultural – at least bicultural company, not necessary in the foreign country. However, preparation of real situations of learning a foreign languages needs some effort. The teacher has to arrange it before: analyse it, prepare some devices, invite some native speakers and so on. It is definitely worth doing if he/she wants to have good results.

The fourth strategy is the right to make language mistakes. The learner constructs his/her foreign language knowledge by discovering the functioning of the foreign language. He/she does it by observation, studying, creating some hypotheses and verifying them, and mostly by making mistakes. It is a dynamic and spiral process (connected with the learner's improving knowledge). The process is called conceptualization. It is connected to the pedagogy of creativity.<sup>10</sup> That's why learning the foreign languages via conceptualization is understood as the research process of solving problems, deductions, induction, analysing and synthesis. There is grammar conceptualization that consists of: observation of the sentences by learners, their awareness of the lack of their knowledge or language mistakes, perception of the foreign language problems, checking their own conclusions with the knowledge of the teacher, checking the function of the foreign language in typical communication situations and checking the function of the foreign language in speech and in writing.<sup>11</sup> It seems to be quite complicated and long-lasting process but it can go easily and naturally when the teacher of the foreign language allows young learners to make language mistakes and learn by these mistakes; when the teacher understands that making language mistakes is not only normal but also it – in a way – useful because it is connected with the learner's activity, creativity and autonomy. If the students are not afraid of making mistakes, they gain self-awareness, self-reliance and satisfaction with learning a foreign language.

Another type of conceptualization is the methodical one. It is a manifestation of the teacher's activity and creativity in foreign language teaching. Its cornerstone is continuous analysis of the didactic process and its adjustment to the needs of learners.

<sup>9</sup> E. Jastrzębska, *Strategie psychodydaktyki twórczości w kształceniu językowym*, op. cit., p.73.

<sup>10</sup> G. Alvarez, *Concepts Linguistiques en Didactiques des Langues*, Quebec 1989, p.60.

<sup>11</sup> E. Jastrzębska, *Strategie psychodydaktyki twórczości w kształceniu językowym*, op. cit., p. 79.

The teacher is analysing his/her work and he/she creates his/her own inimitable theory of teaching foreign languages. Another strategy is using eclecticism that, e.g. in France has transformed from the negative phase (the lack of cohesion) – i. e. the travelling methodology, to the “methodology of creation” that is an open and dynamic system for the teachers interested in both theory and practice. According to it, the teachers should create new, open and integrated learning environment.<sup>12</sup> It seems that nowadays there is no need to have and share one brilliant theory that would be right for each single didactical situation. Moreover, each young learner, each group needs different strategies, methods, techniques and so on.

## Alternative and creative methods of teaching foreign languages

There are a lot of creative methods of teaching foreign languages. However, in the article, the author has decided to depict only two of them: linguistic psychodramaturgy of Bernard Dufeu (born in 1977) and the relational dramaturgy of Daniel Feldhendler (born in 1997). Both of them are modern authors. The common thing for these methods is that they are based on humanistic and relational concept of a human being. There are some rules related to this approach: learning via experience; the compliance of three personal dimensions – cognitive, affective and practical; the integration of language goals (communication and expression) with the formative goals (the development of creativity, spontaneity, autonomy and intercultural education); the lack of already prepared programmes or books, and using verbal and non-verbal techniques of dramaturgy to develop listening and expression.<sup>13</sup> These methods are useful because especially young learners are active learners and thinkers who construct knowledge based on active interactions with people and physical environment. They love individual actions and exploration. They are also good at drama exercises in learning a foreign language.<sup>14</sup>

The linguistic psychodramaturgy can be used as a coherent and alternative method of initiation and sensibilisation of young learners of a foreign language. It may also enrich and diversify the lessons of the foreign language. According to this method, learning a foreign language is more effective when it is personal. It means that the teacher pays attention to learners’ emotions, attitudes, needs and behaviour. That method offers some exercises that sensitise learners to melody, rhythm and intonation

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p.,102.

<sup>14</sup> A. Kamińska, “Teaching English Elementary Pupils – Problems and Solutions”, *Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education* 2012, vol. 2, No 2, p.108-109.

of the foreign language and it involves listening and repeating some sentences. It is a kind of active assimilation of the language in some situations of real communication which generates real emotions of the learner. The teacher creates some conditions for the learner to encourage him/her to express his/her sentences, expressions and so on, in order to make him/her even more active.<sup>15</sup> This is a natural way of teaching – first the teacher generates some impressions of the learners and then he or she inspires them to express their feelings, to be active, spontaneous and creative. It is learning by experiencing some emotions. First, it is arranged only by the teacher – the animator, and then with other learners. The learners are the most important, and the content of teaching is not prepared before, but it is adjusted to the learners' current needs. This method makes learning and teaching a foreign language more individual for a single group and even for a single learner. It involves not only voice but also facial expressions, movement, feelings. One can say that it is not only learning through brain, but also through one's heart. The whole person is engaged in the process and that's why he/she can memorize some words or sentences, and he/she takes part in communication. He/ she is prepared for real, future conversations. There is also a psychological aspect of that method: the learner becomes more and more courageous to express himself/herself.

Relative dramaturgy is based on the principle of the development of a person in a group, on empathy, active listening, proper perception of himself/herself and others, stimulation of imagination, playfulness and spontaneous expression. The animator – teacher proposes some activities that stimulate some communicative and expressive needs of the learners. These activities are connected to the reality and the imagination of the learners. The role of the animator is complex. He/she is the source of the knowledge of the foreign language, a person that speaks that foreign language, and the animator of the situation. The animator/teacher provides some content that is useful and needed in single and real situations. D. Feldhendler claims that this method is so effective because it prepares the learners to be in some relations with others, communicate with them and also understand the context of their culture.<sup>16</sup>

## Creative techniques of teaching foreign languages

The techniques of the dramaturgy expression make it possible for the learner to learn a foreign language in action and in relationships with others. The didactics of the foreign language becomes the didactic of action and interaction, a teacher becomes an animator and a guide of communication. These techniques enable learning

<sup>15</sup> E. Jastrzębska, *Strategie psychodydaktyki twórczości w kształceniu językowym*, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p.105.

with the involvement of the whole personality (intellectual, behavioral and emotional sphere), having influence on developing of a person. These techniques also integrate all language skills, they join verbal and nonverbal communication (gestures, facial expression, movement, intonation, proxemics). They develop the qualities of an authentic communication, such as authenticity, spontaneity, involvement, that are also very important attributes of creativity. Some techniques of the dramaturgy expression advance creative thinking (fluency, flexibility and authenticity), internal motivation and suitable relationships. Moreover, the steps of creative drama are similar to the steps of creative process, such as: encouraging the motivation of learners, the proposition of the subject of drama, the discussion in the groups of learners (to prepare an action, events and so on), some improvisation in the groups, choice of the subject, evaluation of the choice of the subject. Additionally, the techniques of the dramaturgy expression shape the intercultural competences. They help to discover the learners' individual personality and social affiliation. They also shape the ability to see the learners' culture from the distance and how it is perceived by the members of other cultures.<sup>17</sup>

## The role of the teacher in teaching foreign languages within the pedagogy of creativity

Teachers are among the “important others” who play a key role in the fulfilment – or non-fulfilment of the students' potential. Teachers need appropriate education and training as well as support in practical and theoretical issues, to carry out their important role of fostering the students' creative thinking. The teachers' concepts and implicit theories of creativity influence, to a great extent, their everyday classroom practices, and determine whether, to what extend, and how they attempt to foster the students' creative thinking.<sup>18</sup>

According to humanistic psychology, education is not copying, but it should be inspiration for self-education and creative activities.<sup>19</sup> Representatives of pedeutology of the 21st century emphasize that teachers should be prepared for continuous development, new challenges, constant looking for the answers to important questions, solving pedagogical problems, using new strategies, methods and didactic devices.<sup>20</sup> The role of the teacher in teaching foreign languages is slightly different. The teacher has to become an animator, a facilitator, a guide and mediator of the language and

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 90-91.

<sup>18</sup> P. Kamyliś, *Fostering Creative Thinking, The Role of Primary Teachers*, op.cit., p.35.

<sup>19</sup> K.J. Schmidt, *Pedagogika twórczości*, op. cit., p.150.

<sup>20</sup> H. Kwiatkowska, *Pedeutologia*, Warszawa 2008, p.13.



culture. He/she also has to be authentic – it is a very important task. Moreover, some American research carried out in the 70s of the 20th century showed a strong correlation between high achievements of young learners and such qualities of the teachers as empathy, acceptance, and most of all – authenticity.<sup>21</sup>

A modern effective and successful foreign language teacher concentrates on the learner and the process of learning; formulates some goals of teaching – not only on the basis of curriculum, but also on the basis of the real needs of the learners; makes the learners involved into the organisation and evaluation of the didactic process; encourages the learners to ask questions and look for the answers (developing cognitive curiosity); teaches them how to learn; asks the learners for the feedback about the didactic process; encourages them to take responsibility for their learning; helps them find suitable sources of information; pays attention to the creative process of solving problems; encourages them to effective cooperation with others; develops communication without fear and violence in the classroom; and develops the atmosphere of friendship, openness and interest in other people.<sup>22</sup>

Edward Nęcka claims that there is such a thing as a creative personality which is understood by the author as a permanent organization of human psychic traits related to creative behaviors. Creativity can be described according to the scheme: abilities (related to associating, finding analogy, understanding metaphors, transformation and abstract thinking), motives (instrumental, playful, professional, managerial, and communicative ones) and skills (field of knowledge in the area of creativity, generalization of ideas and the ability to avoid obstacles). The most important condition of creative activity is the so-called immanent motivation (internal motivation), which is fulfilled through interest, pleasure and personal satisfaction, and not through external pressures, penalties or rewards. Moreover, the development of one aspect by the teacher does not guarantee the appearance of creative attitudes.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

To sum up, modern foreign language teaching of young learners needs to be creative, open, dynamic and adjusted to local (connected to the culture/tradition and regional conditions) group and individual needs. Foreign language learning should be organized in a friendly environment because only when a person can be autonomous, independent and feel accepted, he/she can be as creative as possible. It also should be

<sup>21</sup> C.R. Rogers, *Terapia nastawiona na klienta, Grupy spotkaniowe*, Wrocław 1991, p.39.

<sup>22</sup> E. Jastrzębska, *Strategie psychodydaktyki twórczości w kształceniu językowym*, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>23</sup> D. Czelakowska, *Inteligencja i zdolności twórcze dzieci w początkowym okresie edukacji, Rozpoznawanie i kształcenia*, Kraków 2007, p.104-105.

set up in multicultural and multilingual groups (there are such groups in Polish classes of early education because many immigrants live in our country) in which each culture and language is respected. Teachers and parents ought to remember that although such groups are difficult to teach, they are also interesting, diverse, and abundant in situations that can be used as an opportunity to learn new and interesting things. Such challenge is can be fulfilled when the teachers are open to be creative and act in non-standard ways.

The role of the foreign language teacher is very important. It is now a *cliché* that she/he must be open and creative, but it is also true. The society, the community, the headmaster and politicians dealing with education want the teacher to be gifted, innovative, ingenious, open-minded, and so on. Also, the reality of modern life requires from the teacher to be like that. One may say that a non-creative teacher cannot work in the modern school. There are many challenges now at schools, and the teachers must be flexible. Most of all, foreign language teachers, who deal with other cultures, traditions and languages, should be tolerant, observant, and able to use all the challenges to develop himself/herself and his/her learners, especially young ones.

Active methods that are characterized in that article, such as linguistic psychodramaturgy and relational dramaturgy, which are quite new and modern, need more commitment from the teacher and the learners. Both the teacher and the learners are lively, creative, spontaneous and real people in real situations; they have some emotions and express them in the foreign language. One can say that such learning is difficult and offers a lot of challenges. The teacher has to be well-prepared for using such methods. Also, he/she has to be a skillful psychologist and pedagogue who knows the nature of human beings, especially young learners, in order to guide them in a positive way. He/she has to be considerate and empathetic not to create difficult situations. Emotions can sometimes be difficult for the learners, especially so-called bad emotions, such as anger. To conclude, these methods are interesting and very useful, but the teacher of the foreign language/languages should also use other methods when he/she teaches young learners. The same situation is with the techniques – a teacher of a foreign language should use many different methods to fulfill the educational goals and differentiate the learning process.

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