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DIDACTIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' 4C SKILLS IN CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

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Abstract. *This article examines the content, principles, and didactic opportunities for developing English language teachers' 4C skills in continuous professional development courses. The study focuses on critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration as key professional competencies required from modern English language teachers. The article analyzes the relationship between contemporary approaches to teacher professional development, CEFR-based communicative language teaching requirements, the concept of twenty-first-century skills, and the methodological needs of English language teachers. It is argued that the development of 4C skills should not be limited to theoretical instruction, but should be organized through practice-oriented tasks, problem-based situations, microteaching, collaborative project work, peer observation, and reflective analysis. The findings show that continuous professional development courses can serve as an effective pedagogical environment for improving teachers' professional reasoning, communicative competence, lesson-design skills, reflective practice, and collaborative learning culture.*

Keywords: *continuous professional development, English language teacher, 4C skills, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, CEFR, didactic opportunities.*

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Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada uzluksiz kasbiy rivojlantirish kurslarida ingliz tili o'qituvchilarining 4K ko'nikmalarini — tanqidiy fikrlash, kreativlik, kommunikatsiya va kollaboratsiyani rivojlantirishning mazmuni, tamoyillari hamda didaktik imkoniyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda zamonaviy kasbiy rivojlanish yondashuvlari, CEFR talablari, XXI asr ko'nikmalari konsepsiyasi va ingliz tili o'qituvchilarining metodik ehtiyojlari o'zaro bog'liqlikda ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqolada 4K ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish faqat nazariy bilim berish orqali emas, balki amaliy-metodik topshiriqlar, muammoli vaziyatlar, mikroo'qitish, hamkorlikdagi loyiha faoliyati va reflektiv tahlil asosida samarali tashkil etilishi asoslanadi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, UKR kurslari ingliz tili o'qituvchilarining kasbiy fikrlashi, kommunikativ faoliyati, darsni loyihalash kompetensiyasi va hamkorlikda o'rganish madaniyatini rivojlantirish uchun muhim pedagogik maydon vazifasini bajaradi.

Kalit so'zlar: uzluksiz kasbiy rivojlantirish, ingliz tili o'qituvchisi, 4K ko'nikmalari, tanqidiy fikrlash, kreativlik, kommunikatsiya, kollaboratsiya, CEFR, didaktik imkoniyat.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются содержание, принципы и дидактические возможности развития 4К-компетенций учителей английского языка в курсах непрерывного профессионального развития. Особое внимание уделяется критическому мышлению, креативности, коммуникации и коллаборации как ключевым профессиональным навыкам современного педагога. В исследовании анализируются современные подходы к профессиональному развитию, требования CEFR, концепция навыков XXI века и методические потребности учителей английского языка. Обосновано, что развитие 4К-компетенций эффективно осуществляется не только через теоретическое обучение, но и посредством практико-ориентированных

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заданий, проблемных ситуаций, микрообучения, совместной проектной деятельности и рефлексивного анализа. Результаты показывают, что курсы непрерывного профессионального развития могут служить важной педагогической средой для формирования профессионального мышления, коммуникативной активности, проектировочной компетентности и культуры сотрудничества учителей английского языка.

Ключевые слова: *непрерывное профессиональное развитие, учитель английского языка, 4К-компетенции, критическое мышление, креативность, коммуникация, коллаборация, CEFR, дидактические возможности.*

Introduction. The dynamic development of contemporary education has significantly changed the professional requirements placed on teachers. Today, an English language teacher is expected not only to transmit knowledge, explain grammar, or present textbook materials, but also to prepare learners for the challenges of the twenty-first century. This requires teachers to create learning environments in which students can think critically, communicate effectively, work collaboratively, solve problems creatively, and use language meaningfully in real-life situations.

In this context, the teacher's own professional competence becomes a decisive factor. A teacher cannot effectively develop learners' critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills without possessing and applying these competencies in his or her own pedagogical practice. Therefore, the integration of 4C skills into continuous professional development courses for English language teachers has become an important issue in modern educational research and practice.

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In international educational literature, 4C skills — critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration — are widely recognized as essential competencies for success in learning, work, and civic life. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning framework identifies these skills as central learning outcomes that help learners adapt to complex social, technological, and professional environments [1]. Although the concept was initially developed mainly for learners, later studies emphasized that teachers also need continuous development in these competencies in order to organize effective twenty-first-century learning.

For English language teachers, the 4C framework has special methodological importance. Foreign language teaching is inherently communicative, interactive, and socially oriented. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, language learning is not limited to the acquisition of grammatical knowledge; rather, it involves communicative activities, interaction, mediation, and the ability to use language in authentic social situations [2]. Therefore, English language teachers should be able to organize lessons that involve meaningful communication, problem solving, negotiation of meaning, and collaborative learning. Continuous professional development courses provide an important institutional mechanism for meeting these professional needs. Richards and Farrell argue that professional development for language teachers should not be understood as a one-time training event, but as an ongoing process of reflection, learning, collaboration, and professional growth [3]. From this perspective, CPD courses should be designed according to teachers' real classroom needs, methodological challenges, and professional development priorities. The purpose of this article is to analyze the content, principles, and didactic opportunities for developing English language teachers' 4C skills in continuous professional development courses.

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Methods. This study is based on theoretical analysis, comparative-pedagogical analysis, and methodological modeling. At the first stage, scientific literature related to twenty-first-century skills, teacher professional development, CEFR-based communicative language teaching, adult learning, and reflective practice was analyzed. At the second stage, the content of existing continuous professional development modules for English language teachers was examined in terms of their potential to develop 4C skills. At the third stage, the main didactic conditions, methodological tools, and learning activities that can support the development of English language teachers' 4C competencies were systematized.

The analysis was conducted according to the following criteria: practical orientation of course content; connection with real classroom problems; opportunities for collaborative learning; presence of communicative tasks; integration of reflective analysis and self-assessment; and alignment with CEFR-based communicative activities.

The theoretical basis of the study is supported by the research of Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner, who identified several key features of effective teacher professional development, including content focus, active learning, collaboration, expert support, reflection, sustained duration, and coherence with practice [4]. These characteristics are especially relevant for the development of 4C skills, because such competencies cannot be formed through lecture-based instruction alone.

Guskey's model of professional development and teacher change was also used as a methodological foundation. According to Guskey, sustainable change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes often occurs after they observe positive changes in student learning outcomes as a result of applying new practices [5]. Therefore, CPD courses aimed at developing 4C skills should provide teachers

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with opportunities to design, test, analyze, and improve new teaching strategies in relation to their own classroom contexts.

Results. The analysis shows that the development of English language teachers' 4C skills in continuous professional development courses should be organized through four interconnected directions: theoretical-methodological preparation, practical-methodological activity, collaborative learning, and reflective analysis.

The first direction is theoretical-methodological preparation. At this stage, teachers acquire knowledge about the meaning of 4C skills, their role in English language education, CEFR requirements, communicative language teaching, problem-based learning, project-based learning, and modern approaches to lesson design. However, 4C skills should not be presented as general abstract concepts. They should be interpreted as concrete professional competencies related to lesson planning, task design, classroom interaction, assessment, and feedback.

The second direction is practical-methodological activity. English language teachers develop their 4C skills by creating critical thinking questions, communicative tasks, group-work activities, debates, role plays, problem-based cases, and project assignments. In this process, the teacher is not a passive receiver of theoretical knowledge, but an active designer of pedagogical products. For example, teachers may develop a lesson plan, technological map, presentation, assessment rubric, or set of handouts based on the principles of 4C-oriented teaching.

The third direction is collaborative learning. Teacher collaboration is widely recognized as an important factor in improving professional practice. OECD TALIS findings emphasize that professional collaboration among teachers contributes to professional growth, exchange of experience, and improvement of teaching quality [6]. Therefore, CPD courses should include

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small-group work, peer observation, lesson study, collaborative lesson planning, and peer feedback. These activities help teachers develop not only methodological knowledge, but also the ability to listen, negotiate, justify ideas, and make collective decisions.

The fourth direction is reflective analysis. Reflection allows teachers to understand their pedagogical decisions, analyze strengths and weaknesses in their lessons, and identify future professional development needs. Reflective journals, video analysis, post-microteaching discussions, self-assessment checklists, and peer feedback forms may be used as effective tools for this purpose.

The main didactic opportunities for developing 4C skills in CPD courses can be summarized as follows:



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The findings indicate that 4C skills should not be treated as a separate additional topic at the end of a CPD course. Instead, they should be integrated into all modules of professional development. For instance, modules such as lesson planning, development of language skills, assessment strategies, media literacy, CLIL, and teaching young learners all provide valuable opportunities for developing teachers' 4C competencies.

Discussion. The development of English language teachers' 4C skills requires a reconsideration of the content and methodology of continuous professional development courses. In many traditional professional development formats, teachers participate mainly as passive listeners who receive ready-made information. Such an approach may provide short-term theoretical knowledge, but it rarely leads to sustainable methodological change in classroom practice. For this reason, CPD courses should be organized according to the principles of adult learning. Knowles' theory of andragogy emphasizes that adult learners rely on their prior experience, expect immediate practical relevance, prefer self-directed learning, and are motivated when learning is connected with real-life tasks [7]. These principles are highly applicable to English language teachers' professional development. A CPD course becomes effective when its content is directly connected with teachers' classroom realities, methodological difficulties, and professional needs.

Critical thinking can be developed through case studies, problem-based analysis, reflective questions, and the PRES-formula. Facione's Delphi Report describes critical thinking as a set of cognitive processes including interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation [8]. For English language teachers, critical thinking means the ability to evaluate teaching materials, identify learners' difficulties, analyze classroom interaction, select appropriate methods, and justify pedagogical decisions with evidence.

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Creativity is another important component of teachers' professional competence. In English language teaching, creativity is not simply the ability to produce unusual ideas. It is the ability to adapt teaching materials, design motivating tasks, transform grammatical or lexical content into meaningful communicative situations, and create learning activities that encourage students to use language actively. For example, a grammar topic may be transformed into a role play, a debate, a problem-solving task, or a mini-project. Such activities help students move beyond mechanical practice and use language for real communicative purposes.

Communication is central to the professional identity of an English language teacher. Teachers should be able to give clear instructions, ask purposeful questions, manage classroom discourse, provide constructive feedback, and model effective English language use. The CEFR views language users as social agents who perform communicative actions in specific social contexts [2]. This means that the teacher should organize the lesson not as a one-way explanation, but as a process of interaction, mediation, negotiation of meaning, and communication.

Collaboration is also a key dimension of professional development. It appears at two levels. The first is collaboration between the teacher and learners in the classroom. The second is collaboration among teachers within professional learning communities. In CPD courses, teachers can work in pairs or small groups to design lesson plans, technological maps, presentations, assessment tools, and teaching materials. During this process, they exchange ideas, discuss alternatives, justify decisions, and learn from one another.

Microteaching is one of the most effective didactic tools for developing 4C skills in CPD courses. During microteaching, a teacher demonstrates a selected stage of a lesson, while other participants observe, analyze, and provide feedback. This process integrates critical thinking, communication,

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collaboration, and reflection. In English language teaching, microteaching can be used to improve such skills as giving instructions, organizing pair and group work, correcting errors, managing speaking tasks, and providing feedback.

Another important didactic opportunity is peer observation. When teachers observe one another's lesson fragments or microteaching performances, they learn to analyze classroom practice more objectively. Peer observation develops professional dialogue, reflective thinking, and collaborative problem solving. It also helps teachers compare different methodological approaches and adapt successful strategies to their own teaching context.

The discussion suggests that 4C skills should become a methodological principle of the whole CPD course rather than an isolated topic. Each module should include at least one problem-based task, one collaborative activity, one communicative performance, and one reflective assessment element. In this way, CPD courses can move from information transmission toward practice-based professional transformation.

Conclusion. The development of English language teachers' 4C skills in continuous professional development courses is an important scientific and methodological issue in modern education. The results of the study show that 4C skills are not merely general personal qualities. They are professional competencies directly related to lesson design, communicative task creation, methodological problem solving, collaborative work, feedback, and reflective analysis.

The development of 4C skills in CPD courses can be effective under the following conditions: the course content is connected with real classroom practice; teachers' professional needs are taken into account; problem-based and communicative tasks are used; collaborative learning activities are systematically organized; reflection and self-assessment mechanisms are

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introduced; and CEFR-based communicative activities are integrated into the course content. Thus, CPD courses for English language teachers should be transformed from theory-oriented training formats into systematic pedagogical environments that develop teachers' critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Such an approach can improve the quality of English language teaching, strengthen teachers' methodological competence, and help learners develop communicative and twenty-first-century skills.

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