

# Postmodern Principles in Integrated Teaching of Foreign Languages and Fine Arts to Primary Learners in the New Ukrainian School

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**Abstract:** The article deals with the issue of integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts to primary learners in the New Ukrainian school that seeks to overcome postcolonial and modernist traditions of education and gradually implements postmodern education principles. In this regard, the article highlights the use of such postmodernist trends as simulation, free interpretation, and establishment of personal associative connections in integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts. Such a need is based on the hypothesis that primary learners are extremely sensitive to the above-mentioned trends and can enrich their vocabulary via consecutive study-visualization of foreign language words and their denotations. Research methods include theoretical analysis of relevant sources, pedagogical modelling of stages, special methods of integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts, prognostic methods. The article presents the step-by-step process of integrated teaching of foreign language and fine arts. It proves that integrative teaching in primary school thematically and methodically coincides with the three-stage process of acquiring the basics of foreign languages and fine arts. Besides, the article contains practical recommendations on the organization of integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts. The international relevance of the article lies in projecting the postmodern education principles on didactic realities of developing countries that need to learn the experience of educational transformation based on Ukraine's example, as well as in implementing these principles in integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts.

**Keywords:** *foreign languages, fine arts, integrated teaching, postmodern education, primary learners, primary school teachers.*

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## Introduction

The issue of developing methodical competence in future primary school teachers is associated with the requirements of the New Ukrainian School and competence-based components of professional training in higher education institutions.

However, the changes in the economy, culture, and technology in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century caused the need for philosophical reflection, putting forward a new axiological paradigm for interpreting the world, including education. The response to these changes has become the ideas of postmodernism, which offer critical and transformative views on modernity. Therefore, it is essential to discover new approaches to education and change the conceptual framework in the philosophy of education.

The world's leading countries have already completed the postmodernist stage and entered the state of "post-culture". At the same time, most post-Soviet countries are only about to undergo postmodernist deconstruction, so Ukrainian education needs to implement the best practices of postmodern education. This is relevant to traditionally discrete and regulated approaches to teaching school subjects.

The postmodern society needs competitive and highly qualified specialists who strive for professional accomplishment and development in today's conditions (Honcharenko, 2011; Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2016). In addition to professional-pedagogical and psychological-facilitative competencies (Frumkina, 2019; Frumkina et al., 2020; Martynova, 2019; Melnyk et al., 2019; Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020; Sheremet et al. 2019), a competence in integrated teaching is an important prerequisite for achieving excellence in further pedagogical activities. Its application in the framework of certain school subjects is the subject of this article.

Also noteworthy is the fact that modernist educational traditions have proved to be rather stable in Ukraine. Modernism is characterized by universality, which manifests itself in the form of a firm belief in some principle or invariant unifying the diversity of the surrounding reality. In other words, modernism focuses on objective universal laws that govern the world, all its processes and systems, including cognition. As a result, the modernist methodological project is normative and requires obligatory empirical confirmation or verification of scientific knowledge. In education and pedagogy, universality and normativeness of modernism lie in creating a

model or project of a citizen that both society and the state need at one or another stage of their development.

It must be noted that specific contradictions stimulating this research in the context of Ukrainian education are congruent with those of other countries with transitional democracies. Consequently, one should pay considerable attention to reforms in primary education in developing countries. One of such areas is the implementation of sustainable development principles. In Tanzania, this concept is implemented by involving the ecological component of education in each subject within primary school. The greatest resistance to such a transformation is that teachers tend to implement the concept of sustainable development in the form of individual subjects or topics rather than in an integrated way. However, the aspect of acquiring ready-made knowledge, unfortunately, remains dominant (Kimaryo, 2011). In developing countries, environmental friendliness in the narrow (nature conservation) and broad (developing competencies in the organization of personal space and the environment) senses encounters the stereotypes of discrete disciplines, the lack of human and time resources and the “top-down” policy.

Despite sufficient legislative and methodological support, educational reforms in primary school in South Africa are too dependent on the microcontext. Indeed, the human factor (remnants of colonial consciousness) hinders the sufficient implementation of the postmodern trends in practice. Smith (2001) used interviews, focus group discussions, and open questionnaires among primary school teachers in African republics. He claimed that the implementation of the new educational policy is hampered by several personal factors, such as an affective sphere, emotional reactions and competition, issues related to discipline and control, emphasis on didactic results, issues of values, the role of teachers, and their views on professionalism (Smith, 2001). These data demonstrate the importance of reforming education “from down to top”, with field educational initiatives and teachers’ interest in being involved in global changes.

Another problem is that the ideas of postmodernism are ambiguously perceived by the Ukrainian scientific community. At the same time, one cannot deny their impact on various spheres of public life and, above all, the theory and practice of education. First, the change in the knowledge status has created a new educational paradigm that tends to find out “*who* students are”, rather than “*what* they know”. Prioritizing parts, differences, differentiation, and pluralism, postmodernism does not recognize integrity and universality of knowledge. Thus, it denies the so-

called “knowledge-based” model of education and considers knowledge as subjective construction. It is this approach to knowledge that cultivates the autonomous individual self. Second, postmodernism is critical of all previous pedagogical theories and practices, and ways of justifying pedagogical goals and ideals of education that are focused on the principles of modern humanism. Traditional humanism is overly abstract since it appeals to an individual in general, as a representative of the human race. Postmodern humanism is “individualized” because it aims to assert and elevate the dignity of everyone.

Postmodern ideas on the knowledge and essence of an individual as the subject of education have led to a new approach to education. However, its theoretical principles and pedagogical practice are only being implemented in the Ukrainian educational space. The ideas of humanism and humanitarianization of values are rather popular in Ukraine now, even though they still encounter atavistic approaches to teaching.

These generalizations can be used when modelling the educational process in Ukraine that critically analyzes global achievements of postmodernism.

Thus, the postmodernist trends are partially present in Ukrainian education today. One can observe that they are manifested in the philosophy of education, theoretical pedagogy and, partially, in educational practice.

Despite the results of many scientific studies, the problem of developing future primary school teachers’ competence in integrated teaching remains relevant and requires a detailed study under the needs of the New Ukrainian School.

**Research hypothesis.** Postmodern philosophy creates favourable conditions for an integrative study of heteromorphic disciplines since it eliminates “boundaries, undefined results, conventionality, playing, improvisation, and performance. One can assume that communicative and creative disciplines are optimal for an integrative study via the above-mentioned postmodern patterns. Subsequently, learners can build their own thematic realities based on free associations, insights, free interpretations.

The main hypothesis of this article is that one can use multiassociative visual thinking and an arbitrary combination of elements of the surrounding world during fine arts projects to enrich the vocabulary of primary school children. Therefore, one needs to introduce an integrative combination of foreign languages and fine arts. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that the typical objects and phenomena depicted by primary learners in their nominative form constitute the basic lexicon.

The article **aims** to determine and justify the peculiarities of integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts to primary learners in the New Ukrainian School that gradually implements postmodern education principles.

The objectives of the article are as follows: 1) to analyze postmodern aspects of integrated teaching in primary school; 2) to consider methodical principles in integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts; 3) to model stages and certain ways of conducting integrated lessons in fine arts, taking into account the mentioned theoretical-methodological ideas.

### ***Postmodern Aspects of Integrated Teaching***

Before analyzing postmodern principles in integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts to primary learners in the New Ukrainian School, one should consider general features of such environment and find those factors cultivating integrated teaching and developing appropriate competencies in future primary school teachers.

Postmodern education is personality-centric and “humanized”. However, the expected results of educational activities are uncertain and focused on the cultivation of the need for self-education and lifelong learning (Orenstein & Hunkins, 2018). Besides, postmodern educational models are non-stationary and changeable and, therefore, strongly depend on the personality and pedagogical style of the lowest level of implementation, namely, the administration of the institution, its leader, a particular teacher and even a pupil. The multimodal postmodern educational space prioritizes personal qualities (flexibility, creativity, stress-resistance) and professional-pedagogical competence, which is inseparable from personal qualities. Despite the academic nature of university training, irrational forms of cognition prevail in the postmodern primary school. It causes the need for the personal quasi-professional qualities of the teacher. At the same time, the weakening significance of classical values shows that personal, national, and universal values are equally important for the teacher and the pupil (Boyjigitov et al., 2020). In this regard, personally acquired knowledge, interdisciplinary connections and associations are indeed valuable, even if they are irrational. Thus, visual thinking of primary learners and its free-associative character (even such naive associations as “a cloud like an elephant”, “trees dance in the wind”) can become an internal resource of creative acquisition of both visual and linguistic skills.

It must be noted that postmodern education cannot predict pupils’ competencies. Neither pupils’ nor teachers’ competencies are a structure. They are rather multimodal programmes of consciousness aimed at learning,

mastering, and transforming a changing environment. However, rational tools recede into the background, whereas the function of emotions grows. Their actual formation and control act as the main skill of all actors in the educational process. The organization of the ecological environment for an adequate emotional background is the main educational condition on which motivation and academic results depend (Li et al., 2018, p. 220). Given such (relative) academic, cognitive, and creative freedom, the emotional component becomes the main resource of the child to build an inner irrational image of the world, which, despite multimodality, acquires personal integrative features that must be used for didactic purposes.

It would be unscientific to assume that postmodern consciousness, as well as education, is focused only on integrative cognition and has neither shortcomings nor internal obstacles.

The didactic issue of primary school teachers in the postmodern era is the heterogeneity of sciences they teach. Mathematical and natural sciences are a special problem. Universities still provide only the basics of fundamental sciences, and teachers must heuristically demonstrate “activities and reality that work according to natural laws” (Appleton, 2003; Appleton & Kindt, 2002). Teacher students study the laws of the world in theory, and, yet they are to demonstrate these laws in practice in primary school. This issue requires teachers to have appropriate competencies and relevant parties to reorient curricula in developing countries. There must be a turn from theory to practice, from science to nature.

Therefore, a competence in integrated teaching practically depends on the teacher’s ability to convey the truth to the child: the world is indiscrete and holistic; living and inanimate elements, abstract and concrete realities available for transformation and personal internalization are equally important. Given that animism, anthropomorphism, and associativity in the perception of new knowledge are inherent in primary learners, it is important to maintain an integrative illusion: “notes have colours”, “numbers look like objects”, and words are correlated with their personal images.

The study of novice teachers from different countries during teacher training and in the first years of employment have determined other problems and obstacles. The first personal barriers for novice teachers in the rapidly changing postmodern educational environment include the dissonance between academic (university) and educational (school) reality, which causes changes in emotional state, behaviour, and attitude towards the profession. External stressors involve pressure from school management and experienced teachers, differences in the views of teachers of different

generations. They all reduce job satisfaction. The eight problems perceived most acutely are classroom discipline, pupil motivation, consideration of individual differences, assessment of pupils' work, relationships with parents, organization of classroom work, insufficient and/or inadequate teaching materials and problem-solving (Veenman, 1984). This can hinder the development of their own pedagogical styles, which directly involve integrated teaching, spontaneity, and creativity. To avoid such negative effects, Varley (1975) suggests studying pedagogical styles of primary school teachers in two stages: a questionnaire on personal and intra-school educational issues and the subjective compliance of teaching with the curriculum. The results of factor, cluster and discriminatory analysis identify both personal teaching models and "problematic areas" that need external administrative or methodological assistance.

The study of teaching modalities of novice and experienced primary school teachers in Canada, as well as the comparison of their pedagogical styles, shows that practice replaces most other influences, and "local" experience begins to dominate university one (Skamp & Mueller, 2001). This is quite encouraging since teachers gradually create a personal image of the educational process and work through the prism of their personality. In turn, it facilitates the subject-subject interaction with pupils and stimulates integrated cognition through personal experience. Such tendencies fully correspond to the postmodern paradigm of education, in which knowledge is not mechanically acquired but learned through experience and multichannel perception.

As early as the early 1990s, research on professional intentions was conducted by discussing and interviewing first-year students at Victoria College. It found that at the initial stage of training, future primary school teachers needed to increase confidence in teaching and be encouraged to develop professional competencies. Vulnerable areas turned out to be a weak vision of future teaching strategies, insufficient self-control of one's educational trajectory and lack of motivation in metacognition (Jane et al., 1991). The latter in the context of the postmodern era should exceed curriculum competencies since professional readiness implies the ability to deal with unpredictable pedagogical and non-pedagogical situations. The establishment of interdisciplinary links between heteromorphic objects of study forms the basis for competencies in integrated teaching in primary school teachers. Thus, integration, as a requirement for unifying certain parts or elements, is considered a necessary didactic tool that helps one create a holistic picture of the world.

***Aspects in Integrated Teaching of Foreign Languages and Fine Arts  
in Ukrainian Scientific Discourse***

It is quite impossible to offer a fundamentally new “style” of integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts in a single theoretical-methodological study, even including such favourable postmodern factors as playing, interpretability, performance. Therefore, this article relies on the traditional positions of Ukrainian scholars and focuses on expedient aspects and adjustments towards the approach mentioned above.

Also, it is essential to briefly consider methodological principles of teaching foreign languages and fine arts and highlight some relevant views. Bihych (2018) interprets a methodical competence of foreign language teachers as “a set of methodical knowledge, skills and abilities, subjective and personal qualities, which acts as the ability to design, adapt, organize, motivate, and monitor instructional, cognitive, moral, and developmental aspects of foreign language education for primary learners during both classroom and extracurricular hours in a foreign language through and during communication with pupils” (Bihych, 2018, pp. 12–13). At the same time, the most valid categories for the still immature consciousness of pupils living in a postmodern information-saturated world are such categories as “to design” and “to adjust” (to one’s worldview). Objectifying integrative relations, the categories of “associations” and “connections” correlate with free interpretation, playing, and establishment of “childish patterns” of reality.

Ukrainian researchers (Bihych, 2018; Martynova, 2019) believe that the principle of awareness should be implemented from the first foreign language lessons. In this case, this principle is transformed from intuitive-linguistic learning to conscious-linguistic activity, which involves the gradual complication of connections. This article suggests combining the principle of awareness with that of lexical meaning interpretation towards individual views on denotations of lexemes, which can be presented graphically in integrated lessons.

Noteworthy is the fact that the main characteristic of motivated foreign language learning lies in understanding the meaning of each lexical unit, ways to combine it with others to create phrases; comprehending grammatical rules of combining words in different types of sentences in their gradually complicated grammatical forms.

Regarding the principles of teaching fine arts in primary school, the contour-visual stage of learning is complicated by the three-dimensional image of individual objects (surrounding objects, furniture, wildlife), as well



as the image of such objects in their typical places (leaves on a tree, a bird on a branch, a flower in a vase). At the same time, drawing and painting activities at *the second stage* should be based on copying. According to the prevailing type of its activities, such a stage can be called *thematic-figurative*. Regarding its integrated definition, it is a *thematic-figurative* stage based on motivated foreign-language one. Thus, the complexity of foreign language material increases the level of awareness and complexity of connections, which will hypothetically affect both linguistic and fine arts competencies.

Creative activity is the main type of thematic activities under the requirements for fine arts teaching in primary school. It determines a correlative essence of foreign language activities at the third and last stage of learning, which is also creative. Any creative activity is based on creative thinking since the product of creativity first originates in the human mind and, subsequently, materializes in a real object and real-linguistic way of describing it. The very concept of creative thinking has been defined by many researchers.

Primary school age plays an important role in the development of creative thinking since it is when children shape their perception of reality. For the first time in life, children realize their social role, recognize the peculiarities of relationships between people and start to evaluate their educational actions. Guilford (1969) and Torrance (1988) associated creative thinking with the creation or discovery of something new. In their work, they used the term “creativity” to emphasize that creative thinking generates some previously unknown actions.

In primary school, special creativity manifests itself in music, handicraft, and art lessons. In the latter case, children invent fantastic plots (a cat in a hat, a dog at the desk, a ladybug in the sun with an umbrella), which means that their creative thinking is realized in fine arts activities. The prerequisite for creative activity is the lability of thinking, critical thinking, ability to combine concepts, integrated perception of a non-traditional combination of elements (Frumkina, 2019). Both visualization and designation of such connections between surrounding objects in a foreign language should motivate the child to master both subjects.

Thus, the continuity and constant establishment of connections (initially irrational, “childish”) can become the principles of integrated teaching of foreign languages and fine arts.

***Modelling Integrated Foreign-Language Educational Activities of Primary School Pupils in Fine Arts Lessons***

The process of teaching fine arts in a foreign language consists of three stages. At the same time, one should appeal to psycho-pedagogical research on the planning of pedagogical activities to name them and identify their characteristics. As noted by Babanskiy (1982), a stage of research means consistent implementation of certain research activities, which allow one to create a holistic picture of the object under study (Babanskiy, 1982, p. 145). In psychology, a stage is a consistent movement from one mental operation to another (Platonov & Golubev, 1977). Stages of cognition can be arranged as follows: the reflected phenomena – the emerging feelings – the perception of reality – the emerging ideas – the generated concepts – the process of ongoing thinking – the reflection of the essence that emerges in human consciousness. All this shapes psychomotor activity (Platonov & Golubev, 1977).

Galperin's theory (1966) on the gradual formation of mental actions is based on the fundamental commonality of internal and external human activity. Consequently, intellectual development, as well as the acquisition of knowledge and skills, occurs due to interiorization, namely, gradual transition of external activity (material) on the internal intellectual plane. The educational process is based on psychological patterns. Indeed, it is organized through certain stages of mastering material: preliminary acquaintance with an action – receiving information in the form of various material objects – verbalizing the action, or a stage of external speech – verbalizing the action being performed to oneself, or a stage of internal speech – verbalizing the performed action, or a stage of automatic action (Galperin, 1966).

However, the consideration of the basic principles of teaching foreign languages and fine arts and the use of the step-by-step approach will allow one to model the integrated educational activities of primary school pupils on the example of fine arts lessons in a foreign language.

It is also vital to model the development of a methodical competence in future primary school teachers in art lessons. One should pay attention to the fact that modelling begins with determining the stages in the organization of teaching. As noted by Martynova (2019), it is necessary to introduce the organizational block into the process and correlate it with the stages of learning, determined by the prevailing type of learning activity. When determining the stages of learning activity, one should consider pupils' age, their previous learning experience, the content of the mastered material

in parts of its logical sequence and links. This will make it possible to define learning goals. These goals should be based on Galperin's (1966) theory, as well as psychophysiological principles in the sequence of mastering any material (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2016).

Practice shows that the educational process should rely on certain didactic units (learning topic, lessons). Each unit has its own goals and objectives and involves updating learning content. These goals can be achieved via an optimal choice of methods, tools, and forms of learning. Based on this, the organization of the educational process can be considered step-by-step (Melnyk et al., 2019).

The process of teaching foreign languages also consists of certain stages. Since it should begin with mastering the apparatus of articulation, Martynova (2019) views the study of rules on the pronunciation of letters, letter combinations, as well as words consisting of them, as *the phonetic stage*. The stage's name is also associated with the selection of lexical, grammatical and, accordingly, linguistic material that depends on the phonetics under study. At this stage, children are offered to depict foreign letters graphically (by copying) and their phonetic implementation associatively.

At the *thematic stage*, there are no problems with reading or writing. Any word is read either by the rules or by signs of phonetic transcription and is also written either by rules or by spelling (Kmit, 2016). This allows pupils to focus on the literary form of language presentation, introduce various stylistic phenomena into the language, such as synonyms, antonyms, metaphors, hyperboles, comparisons, and, consequently, upgrade correlational pictures-associations. Expanding their vocabulary, pupils improve and enrich their speech culture with various topics, along with their visualization of the picture being also upgraded. It is when the thematic stage of learning is transformed into an integrated one.

At the *integrated stage*, pupils' speaking in a foreign language expands so that they can visualize statements or short stories in a foreign language in a series of pictures.

These three stages move from the awareness of a linguistic structure of speaking in a foreign language to the expansion of opportunities for pupils' foreign-language potential. Therefore, the only possible way for them to learn to speak is to listen to the teacher's language and imitate it. The semantization of their linguistic actions is possible only with the help of extralinguistic means, which appear in the series of pictures.

Thus, *the first stage of teaching foreign languages* should be imitative-linguistic, which will become the basis for teaching fine arts. It must be noted that fine arts teaching begins with the depiction of simple coloured

lines and their transformation into geometric shapes (the actions of the 1<sup>st</sup> complexity level). It is followed by the illustration of geometric figures and their colouring with pencils and paints (the actions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> complexity level). Next, it is necessary to upgrade the illustration of objects which include the elements of geometric shapes, colours, plants and colour them with pencils and paints (the actions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> complexity level). The whole process ends with the contour-based illustration of animals and their subsequent colouring (the actions of the 4<sup>th</sup> complexity level). As one can see, the basis of this activity is the contour-based illustration, which fully corresponds to the programme of teaching fine arts in primary school. Thus, the first stage can be called the contour-visual stage. In the context of its integrated definition, it is *the contour-visual stage based on a foreign-language imitative-linguistic one*.

Importantly, the first stage enables pupils to master a significant amount of language units develop their listening skills, as well as receptive and productive ones, which leads to an inflected language. Concerning pupils' native language, this is manifested in the first independent combination of vocabulary following the rules of the case ending; verbs – their declension; adjectives – their comparative and superlative degrees (Rubinshtein, 2010, p. 402). One can assume that visual reflection of such knowledge will not be difficult, given that associative thinking of primary learners is extremely developed.

As shown by the study of primary learners' creative activity and, especially, by the results of research on fine arts, creativity in the development of primary learners' fine arts skills is manifested in the following: 1) by depicting surrounding objects, furniture, or wildlife with unusual creative elements (*a table with curved legs and ornaments, butterflies of an unusual colour*); 2) by creating a series of pictures based on a certain story (*children running under a canopy due to a thunderstorm*); 3) by depicting non-traditional relationships between different subjects (*fairy-tale characters in various fantastic situations: a squirrel and a bunny dancing together; a piglet building a house*).

As can be seen from these examples, their realization requires non-standard thinking and, consequently, non-standard creative actions, which encourage pupils to produce atypical verbal communication. It can manifest itself in the following: 1) the need to introduce additional, previously unexplored vocabulary, such as: *"twisted legs", "ornament", "unusual colours"*; 2) the need to introduce previously unexplored expressions, such as *"a heavy thunderstorm", "it is raining cats and dogs"*; 3) the need to create unusual

monologues or dialogues. Each of these stages is followed by the depiction of individual objects, connections between objects, narratives (for example, *the wolf attacked the bunny's house, the bunny gave the wolf carrots and ran away; the wolf attacked the squirrel's house, the squirrel gave the wolf nuts and ran away; the wolf attacked the cat's house, the cat gave the wolf milk and ran away. They all played around and escaped*).

This allows one to conclude that *the third and last stage* can be called creative-visual. According to the prevailing type of foreign-language speech activity, this stage should be called creative-linguistic. Concerning its integrated definition, it is *the creative-visual stage based on a creative-linguistic one*.

## Conclusions

Thus, unfortunately, the methodological project of modernism is still implemented in education and pedagogy in Ukraine today. However, the impact of postmodernism on the philosophy of education, theoretical and practical educational activities is becoming more and more noticeable. This fact is especially relevant for integrated teaching of school subjects in primary school, given children's sensitivity to performance, playing, imitation, establishment of free associations between abstract realities of languages and their specific visual interpretation.

Below are the main stages in the development of a methodical competence in future primary school teachers so that they can teach fine arts in a foreign language: the contour-visual stage based on a foreign-language imitative-linguistic one; the thematic-visual stage based on a foreign-language motivated-linguistic one; the creative-visual stage based on a creative-linguistic one. It must be noted that each stage includes such parts of the educational process as learning goals, elements of learning topics, components of their content, methods and means of their acquisition, as well as monitoring of the acquired skills at a certain stage.

The research hypothesis has been partially confirmed at the modelling stage. Still, the limitations of the research lie in the fact that the mentioned recommendations require one to develop specific methodological programmes, implement them in the educational process and verify their effectiveness, which should be considered as prospects for further research.

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