

# PEDAGOGICAL IMPROVISATION IN FORMING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF THE FUTURE TEACHERS-PHILOLOGISTS

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**Abstract.** *The article analyzes the concept of pedagogical improvisation, clarifies its content, functions and types, determinates its role in developing professional competence of students-philologists. During the research we used the following methods: observation, analysis, interviews, mathematical statistics. The aspects of preparation of future teachers-philologists for pedagogical improvisation are highlighted, and their preparedness criteria are defined. The methodological tools of research into the level of students' ability to pedagogical improvisation are selected. The relevance of the topic is confirmed by the results of the survey of the students-philologists who are diagnosed with the level of ability to pedagogical improvisation both in the conditions of the traditional form of education and in the distance learning mode. 205 students of the specialties 035 «Philology» and 014 «Secondary Education» (Ukrainian language and literature) of Vinnitsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University took part in the experiment. By means of experimental activities, the features of the influence of the pedagogical improvisation on the formation of professional competence of future teachers-philologists have been identified. It was found that the level of ability to pedagogical improvisation of students-philologists in the conditions of traditional education is higher than in the conditions of excessive stay in the virtual educational space. A step-by-step algorithm of using improvisation for development of the future teachers-philologists' professional competence in the context of blended learning is developed.*

**Keywords:** *creativity; intuition; pedagogical improvisation; professional competence; teacher education.*

## Introduction

The state innovative development processes are aimed at the formation of the humanitarian elite, improving the quality and competitiveness of national education, its integration into the international scientific and educational space, as well as preservation and dissemination of national, cultural and educational traditions. Fiction literature as a factor of identity and civilizational development

of the nation contributes to meeting human needs in socio-cultural, intellectual, spiritual and creative development. According to this the role of teachers of Ukrainian language and literature is growing. They are deeply aware of their national roots, educate young people by means of artistic literature, able to transform the study of literary works into the process of turning students into creative individuals with clear worldviews, develop their high moral values and intellectual qualities, form the students' wide range of emotional and sensory sphere. Therefore, the requirements to the level of professional competence of the teachers-philologists are getting higher. The integral part of this competence is pedagogical improvisation which contribute to self-actualization and assertion of individual style of work.

Future teachers of Ukrainian language and literature need to develop the ability to respond promptly to unpredictable situations, the ability to "show flexibility in class and, when required, to restructure and adapt quickly to better perform their tasks" (Kutsevol, 2006, p.114). The teacher interacts with the ever-changing world of his/her students and is often forced to make instant decisions (Kutsevol, 2006). Unplanned, unexpected situations for the teacher can arise both in the process of educational activities and in the field of educational interaction and personal communication with students. This requires teacher-philologist to respond and react quickly to new circumstances and relationships.

Multifactorial dynamic circumstances of the education, as well as individual and creative capabilities of the philologist, become determinants of one of the important components of his/her creative methodological activity, namely improvisation, which is fully realized at the stage of conducting the lesson.

The aim of the article is to analyze the concept of pedagogical improvisation, characterize its content, functions and types, determinate its role in developing professional competence of students-philologists, and to diagnose the level of students' ability to pedagogical improvisation.

Research methods include observation, analysis, interviews, mathematical statistics.

### **Literature Review**

The need for improvisation was emphasized by domestic scientists (Bashmanivska, 2016; Lavrinenko, 2009; Semenoh & Bazyl, 2008; Sukhomlynska, 1990; Sukhomlynska, 2002). Many methodists (Buhaiko & Buhaiko, 1963; Holub, 2008; Kutsevol, 2006; Mirosnychenko, 2000; Pasichnyk, 2000; Pentyliuk, 2014; Stepanyshyn, 1995; Voloshyna, 1995) underlined the need for improvisation during Ukrainian language and literature lesson. However, this phenomenon has not yet been the subject of special research by scientists or methodists, and thus it is relevant for scientific research.

V. Kan-Kalyk and V. Kharkin made a certain contribution to the understanding of the problem, considering some aspects of pedagogical improvisation, its stages and varieties (Kan-Kalyk, 1978; Kharkin, 1992).

O. Ben-Horin investigated the problem of theoretical and practical knowledge about strategies and techniques for training teachers for pedagogical improvisation (Ben-Horin, 2016). The author provided insights on how a theoretical model can be developed and how future trainings on improvisation in the classroom might be based on it. O. Ben-Horin summed up the importance of improvisation as an integral part of teacher education and the need of its professionalization (Ben-Horin, 2016).

H. Borko and C. Livingston state that there is a relationship between teachers' knowledge structures and the improvisational characteristics of their interactive teaching, and that it is helpful for understanding the process of learning to teach (Borko & Livingston, 1989). The researchers draw our attention to relating improvisational performances of expert and novice teachers to specific differences in their knowledge structures (Borko & Livingston, 1989). A. Jagiello-Rusilowski provided insights on how improvisation experiences work with particular types of personality and agency of the authors (Jagiello-Rusilowski, 2016) and it can be used in forming professional competence of the future teachers-philologists.

In R. Sawyer opinion, teaching is an improvisational activity (Sawyer, 2011). The researcher proclaims that finding the balance of structure and improvisation are the essence of the art of teaching, so it's the challenge for every teacher and every school and that can optimize student learning (Sawyer, 2011).

S. DeZutter examines the problem of importance of an improvisational view of teaching to the educational needs of the twenty-first century (DeZutter, 2011). The author outlines the strategies that "teacher educators can use to help their students think productively and professionally about the improvisation that teachers do" (DeZutter, 2011, p.28). One more important statement is that teaching should be improvisational because "to teach effectively teachers must improvisationally scaffold evolving students thinking" (DeZutter, 2011, p.28).

R. Beghetto and J. Kaufman outline the problem of how creativity and disciplined improvisation are related, and how a teacher might plan a lesson so that opportunities to improvise naturally arise (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2011).

T. Philip assures that improvisation is inextricably connected to practice and illustrates that the marginalization of improvisation limits opportunities for novice teachers to learn the relational aspects of teaching (Philip, 2019). The author developed the concept of principled improvisation and demonstrated its unique affordances for particular forms of novice teacher learning (Philip, 2019).

K. Holdhus et al. consider the concept of improvisation as a professional skill for teacher educators (Holdhus et al., 2016). Several researchers differentiate four different aspects of improvisation, which appear to be of crucial importance in

any discussion about improvisation as a key concept in education. They are communication and dialogues; structure and design; repertoire; context (Holdhus et al., 2016). K. Mæland and M. Espeland agree with such differentiation of four specific characteristics of improvisation in teaching (Mæland & Espeland, 2017). They attract the attention to the severe problems that appear in teachers' improvisational practices, e.g. with regard to their knowledge base, the accountability agenda and teacher autonomy. The researchers state that improvisation should be part of teacher education (Mæland & Espeland, 2017).

L. Higgins and R. Mantie point out the great role of improvisation in the classroom, especially on music lessons (Higgins & Mantie, 2013). According to the extensive examination of scholarship about improvisational practices, the authors propose such three conceptualizations as ability, culture, experience, that can serve to guide the teaching of improvisation (Higgins & Mantie, 2013).

Thus, according to the analysis of scientific papers, the professionalization of pedagogical improvisation has significant potential in forming professional competence of future teachers-philologists. But despite the interest of scientists in pedagogical improvisation requires further researches. The analysis of scientific publications proves that there is the inefficient use of improvisation in practice; the teachers resort to it sporadically and spontaneously, without taking into account the real need and objective conditions of the educational process, as well as the level of their own training. Unfortunately, the attitude to improvisation as an accidental rather than a natural phenomenon of pedagogical activity is widespread, so it is ignored, deliberately avoided or perceived as a sign of teacher's poor preparation for the lesson, something harmful and unacceptable. Therefore, it is important to study methodologically and pedagogically appropriate ways of effective training of students-philologists with the help of pedagogical improvisation.

## **Methodology**

To summarize the results of the study used analysis, description of the current state of the research problem, generalization of theoretical approaches to understanding the basic terms.

The formation of the readiness of future teachers for pedagogical improvisation was performed during the study of disciplines "Methods of teaching literature", "Methods of teaching Ukrainian language", "Fundamentals of pedagogical skills". Diagnosis of the level of ability of future teachers to pedagogical improvisation both in the conditions of the traditional form of education and in the distance learning mode was carried out during the passage of students of philology pedagogical practice in secondary schools in Vinnytsia and Vinnytsia region. 205 students of the specialties 035 "Philology" and 014 "Secondary Education" (Ukrainian language and literature) of Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University took part in the

experiment. To determine the level of ability to pedagogical improvisation used observation of conducted lessons by students, standardized interviews and surveys of students-philologists and their teachers-curators at schools. The research methods used were aimed at studying the level of components of future philologists' readiness for improvisation (motivational and axiological; professional and pedagogical; individual and creative). Statistical methods of processing the research results were used.

## **Discussion and Results**

A. Jagiello-Rusilowski referred to the results in Keith Johnstone works on improvisation and gave its definition as "suspended disbelief" spontaneous actions and dialogues (Jagiello-Rusilowski, 2016). V. Kharkin characterizes improvisation as "an act in the course of which the performance coincides or immediately follows the creation of an objectively or subjectively new thing, being one of the elements of the teacher's activity and at the same time a peculiar mechanism of transformation of pedagogical knowledge, skills, and techniques in pedagogical creative action" (Kharkin, 1992, p.4). In our opinion, V. Kan-Kalyk's concept is quite exhaustive: "Improvisation is the teacher's ability to assess the situation and actions of students quickly and correctly, to make decisions immediately, sometimes without prior logical reflection, based on experience, pedagogical and social knowledge, erudition and intuitive search, and to embody it in communication with children organically, sensitively reacting and correcting his/her actions" (Kan-Kalyk, 1978, p.242).

Pedagogical improvisation is defined as "the activity of a teacher or educator carried out during pedagogical communication without prior comprehension or reflection", its essence is to respond quickly and flexibly to the emergence of pedagogical tasks (Kutsevol, 2006, p.277).

Thus, the analysis of theoretical studies and pedagogical experience gives grounds to claim that pedagogical improvisation is an integral part of methodical activity, which is impossible without the ability to organically implement the lesson project and quickly adjust the implementation of planned learning situations depending on the circumstances and teachers' creative mood.

The improvisation fundamental is a creative dominant containing the emotional excitability and sensitivity, developed intuition, inspiration, attention, imagination, empathy, observation, as well as the ability to generate original solutions. We define intuition as the basis of the improvisation mechanism, the process of direct acquisition of knowledge through a holistic comprehension of a problem situation without discursive inference and proof.

Several researchers (Aadland, Espeland, & Arnesen, 2017) describe the concept of improvisation as a professional teaching skill. In their article they categorized a tentative typology, of what professional improvisation in teaching and teacher education might be. The researchers state that a tentative typology of

professional improvisation should include sequential, dialogic and exemplary improvisation, and that a description and introduction of such a typology could be a first step towards making improvisational skills accessible to the future teachers (Aadland, Espeland, & Arnesen, 2017).

Scientists (Kan-Kalyk, 1978; Kharkin, 1992; Lavrinenko, 2009) highlight the following types of improvisation:

- a) by the form of embodiment – verbally (remarks, monologue, dialogue, conversation), physical (gesture, facial expressions, dance, look), verbal-physical (game, staging);
- b) by preparation structure – natural (unprepared), artificial (based on preliminary preparation), mixed;
- c) by source: external – caused by external factors (unexpected class reaction, atypical learning situation); internal – the result of an unexpected association, analogy, memory related to the teacher’s personal and professional experience; identification of the dependencies and connections in the logic of the material presentation that were not updated and taken into account in the course of preparation of the draft lesson; motivated by self-analysis, which occurs in parallel with the learning process and necessitates its adjustment; the result of an intuitive search for the best solution to the learning situation;
- d) by the degree of novelty – standard (in the implementation of which involves the methods and actions from the generally accepted educational paradigm), creative (containing innovative methods and techniques of educational activities or a non-standard combination of already known methods);
- e) by connection with the main components of the educational process, aimed at adjusting the methodological structure of the lesson; at the transformation of its content; at adjusting the purpose of the lesson.

Embodying and adjusting the lesson project, pedagogical improvisation performs the following functions (Holub, 2008; Kan-Kalyk, 1978; Kharkin, 1992):

- 1) communicative-organizational, thanks to which the teacher establishes contact with students, organizes, directs and controls the educational process;
- 2) motivational and cognitive, which is reflected in the enrichment of the lesson project content, increases and maintains students' interest in the subject by assimilating additional information that deepens their knowledge;
- 3) professional and activity, which allows the teacher to overcome confusion, awkwardness in complex, multifactorial situations of pedagogical communication, helps to master and direct them, promotes

the formation of individual style of the teacher's activity, his/her professional skills and culture.

We are convinced that the future teachers-philologists need to prepare for improvisation. A pedagogical improvisation consists of the following components:

- 1) motivational and axiological – needs and motives;
- 2) professional and pedagogical – professional and pedagogical knowledge, erudition, skills and abilities, general cultural thesaurus;
- 3) individual and creative – mental processes and personal qualities, ability to creativity.

Analysis and comparison of empirical data on the level of preparedness of future teachers-philologists to pedagogical improvisation was carried out on the basis of pedagogical practice both in the conditions of the traditional form of education (1st semester of 2021-2022 academic year) and in the distance learning mode (2nd semester of 2020-2021 academic year).

Based on the identified components of readiness for pedagogical improvisation, we have identified the criteria, indicators (Table 1) and levels of the future teachers of Ukrainian language and literature preparedness for pedagogical improvisation.

*Table 1 Criteria and indicators of students-philologists' preparedness for pedagogical improvisation (created by the authors)*

	Criteria	Indicators
1.	Motivational and axiological	- the desire to evoke students' interest in literature, to develop their skills of a qualified reader, capable of adequate perception of the author's position and a subtle sense of the beauty of the poetic word; - the desire to improve the content and methodological structure of the lesson; - organization of work with students on the terms of co-creation, not just the transfer of off-the-shelf knowledge.
2.	Professional and pedagogical	- intellectual readiness (knowledge of history, theory of language and literature, literary criticism and comparative studies, pedagogy and psychology) and the ability to operate with this knowledge during the lesson; - fluency in innovative teaching methods and technologies; - the ability to manage the future teacher-philologist's own emotional well-being and the feelings of his / her students; - the ability to evaluate the results of improvisation correctly and to make appropriate adjustments to his / her pedagogical activities.
3.	Individual and creative	- focus on creative performance of professional activity; - a certain level of personal qualities (ingenuity, balance, emotionality, self-criticism, tact, tolerance, sensitivity, sense of humour, ability to overcome stiffness, tension, fear, lack of time). - the ability to assess the situation on the lesson quickly and adequately, and willingness to make decisions to solve the learning problem on the basis of experience, knowledge, erudition and intuition.

Each of the above criteria has the following levels: low; medium; high.

The following Table 2 shows a variant of verification of the obtained data on the level of preparedness of future teachers to pedagogical improvisation in the conditions of the traditional form of education (1st semester of 2021-2022 academic year). The percentage score for each of the criteria and its levels was calculated as the arithmetic mean of the scores obtained for each above-mentioned diagnostic (determined level of each student according to the criteria based on observation of lessons, counted results of interviews and surveys of students-philologists and their teachers-curators in secondary schools). Thus, the percentage in Table 2 is obtained.

The analysis of the research results made it possible to derive the average indicators of the levels in table 2. Thus, the level of preparation of future teachers-philologists for pedagogical improvisation in two analyzed learning mode was different. The obtained results indicate that according to the traditional form of education, future teachers-philologists have sufficiently developed levels of preparation for pedagogical improvisation.

*Table 2 Verification of the Obtained Data on the level of students-philologists preparedness to pedagogical improvisation, in % (created by the authors)*

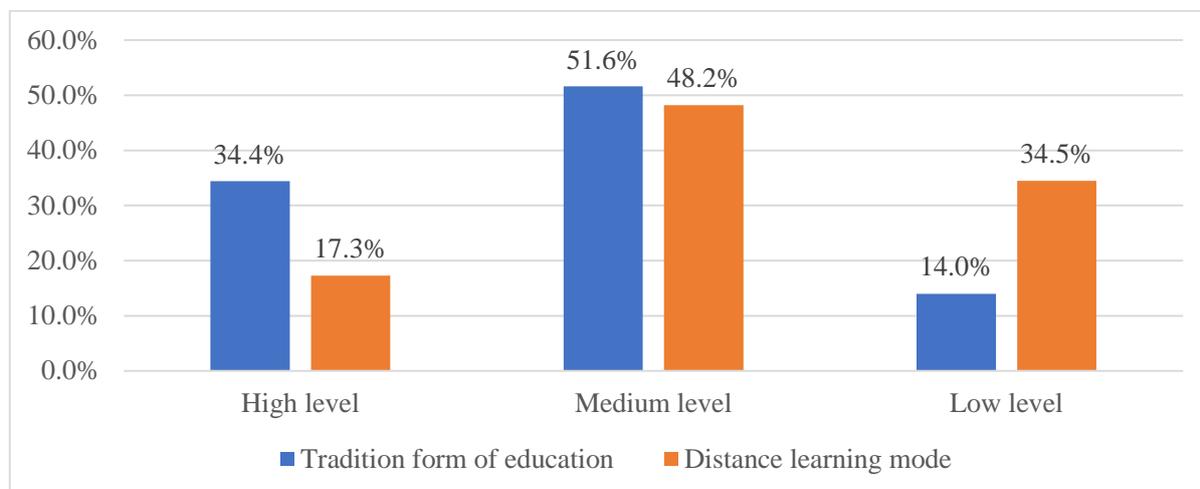
Conditions / Levels	Traditional form of education (1st semester of 2021-2022)			Distance learning mode (2nd semester of 2020-2021)		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Motivational and axiological	55,1	36,2	8,7	23,1	50,3	26,6
Professional and pedagogical	19,4	59,3	21,3	14,5	45,8	39,7
Individual and creative	28,8	59,4	11,8	14,2	48,6	37,2
<b>Average indicator</b>	<b>34,4</b>	<b>51,6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17,3</b>	<b>48,2</b>	<b>34,5</b>

But during the distance learning mode the level of preparation of students-philologists for pedagogical improvisation has decreased and has become insufficient to solve current problems on lessons. The obtained data can be clearly seen with the help of Figure 1.

In the distance learning mode, the future teacher-philologist is deprived of live communication and is not able to fully realize the individual's need for emotional contact. This is one of the main reasons that the level of ability to pedagogical improvisation of students in the conditions of the traditional form of education is higher than in the conditions of excessive stay in the virtual educational space.

It is worth to say that today the virtual educational space is not something ephemeral, but increasingly become a reality and encourages educational institutions to find new solutions. One of such solutions may be blended learning, which is the integration of real and virtual educational environments and can

create the conditions for effective formation of future teachers' professional competence during Covid-19.



*Figure 1 Changes in levels of future philologists' preparedness to pedagogical improvisation under different learning mode (in %) (created by the authors)*

Considering the above, a step-by-step algorithm of using pedagogical improvisation for the development of future teachers-philologists' professional competence in the context of blended learning may be as follows:

- 1) profound comprehension of theoretical knowledge about the phenomenon of pedagogical improvisation, its structure and stages;
- 2) analysis of the lessons conducted by teachers or students with the use of improvisation;
- 3) self-diagnosis of the level of students' own improvisational skills and psychophysical preparedness to improvise;
- 4) retrospective analysis of own lessons (conducted during pedagogical practice or during the study the above-mentioned disciplines) on the expediency of improvisation;
- 5) training of creative qualities required for the improvisation and ability to methodical creativity of the future teacher-philologist.

Given the aphorism that the best impromptu is prepared one, future teachers are advised to develop improvisational skills, starting with the preparation of artificial, and then mixed improvisation, which can later grow into a fluent natural improvisation.

## Conclusions

Thus, pedagogical improvisation is not an accidental impromptu. No matter how instantaneous the reaction to a new situation is, it rises on the basis of accumulated data and a conscious search for a solution to the problem like the hidden tip of an iceberg. Creative teachers, in whose arsenal improvisation is a

frequently used technique, recognize the dialectical combination of prior logical training and intuitive enlightenment in it. Pedagogical improvisation not only does not contradict the project of the lesson, but is its integral component, form and means of embodiment, a prerequisite for accurate hitting the target.

Thus, the study of the content, functions, and types of pedagogical improvisation naturally leads to the conclusion that pedagogical improvisation as a creative component of the teacher's work exists only in conjunction with established, standard, normative elements of the educational process.

The experimental results clearly indicate the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning mode, and the main reasons for changes in levels of students-philologists' ability to pedagogical improvisation. A step-by-step algorithm of using pedagogical improvisation for development the future teachers-philologists' professional competence in the context of blended learning are proposed.

Thus, a significant role on the formation of professional competence of future teachers-philologists plays his/her improvisational skills. It is worth to say that effective pedagogical improvisation is based on a strong scientific and theoretical basis, teacher's fluency in literature, good psychological, pedagogical and methodological training, knowledge of the current programs, textbooks, manuals, and the best pedagogical practices. So, fluent pedagogical improvisation is possible only in the activities of a highly qualified future teacher who has a thorough knowledge of Ukrainian and foreign literature, provides factual richness and variability of the lesson content, drawing parallels, examples from the works of domestic and world literature.

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