

## **TRANSMEDIA SKILLS AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY PROFESSIONAL: STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract:** *Defining necessary skills of the 21st century professional is an up-to-date issue of discussion in vocational pedagogy. In the research, transmedia skills are proposed as an integral part of a professional that determine abilities to present oneself in media sources and to organize an effective networking. The aim of the research is to define the skills based on transmedia theory and to prove the effectiveness of implementing transmedia skills into the course of the English language. Various methods are used-questionnaires, tests, rubrics and pedagogical observations. The results of the research show that transmedia skills can have positive impact on the efficacy of professional skills and level of English of undergraduate students.*

**Keywords:** transmedia theory, vocational pedagogy, transmedia skills, development of professional skills, online self-presentation, professional culture.

In light of growing concerns over rapid developing of our society, the body of research on higher education and preparation of future specialists (Bachelor and Master programs) must respond to the requirements of the development. Much attention has been focused on the importance of well-educated, comprehensive specialists to the success of future job places and individual careers. They have to work in different situations, solve all professional problems. This research focuses on trying to understand more about professional culture, its components and new improvements that are obliged to be present in educational programs.

Facing the reality, we observe that university graduates lack the skills necessary for working in chosen industry. The situation is lamentable-young people cannot find work, employers cannot find proper workers. According to MGI, medium-sized employers (50 to 500 employees) had 13 unfilled initial positions, large employers - had 27 unfilled initial positions.<sup>1</sup> Almost 40% of employers surveyed the main reason cited the lack of vacancies they need was the skills of the

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<sup>1</sup> G. Milov, "Who is to blame for the fact that college graduates cannot find jobs, and companies - to hire the right people", in *Vedomosti Paper*, December 19, (2012), pp. 5-6.

graduates.<sup>2</sup> This, problem of incompetence in education should be solved by incorporating teaching those skills that will be helpful at every stage of career and progress development.

The idea of lifelong learning<sup>3</sup> has become one of the basic concepts in education sphere. Speaking about Russia, the government has a functional federal program, which sets completely new educational standards and requirements for specialists. It includes well-developed competencies in a lot of fields, especially in professional development. That is why the development of specialists' professional culture is an extremely important field of education. To make lifelong learning paradigm sustainable in Russia educators need to develop those skills that can be applied at every work place. Moreover, these skills should be of universal nature-they are to help future specialists adapt to fast-pace reality and constantly changing world.

One of such skills is self-presentation-a very important part of nowadays successful image of a professional. A lot of studies<sup>4</sup> demonstrated that it is an inevitable part of our modern world. How can we teach students to use the facilities of web space for their professional sake? How can we help students convert their hobby-like activities on the Internet to their would-be professional space for career development? Transmedia skills can be observed as a derivative phenomenon, as a reflection of a world-wide trend-transmedia. A lot of scientists<sup>5</sup> present it as a complex structure with one main principle-represented information is not repeated in each source, but braced up piece by piece through multiple platforms. We observe transmedia skills as a part of professional culture of a future specialist as they can be important in every professional field. Transmedia skills can be studied

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<sup>2</sup> N. Chistyakova, M. Semenova, V. Spitsin, Ph. Paquet, "Problems of educational processes development and labor market needs analysis in Russia", in *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, no. 19, (2015), pp. 309-316.

<sup>3</sup> A. Hasan, D. Asprin, J. Chapman, M. Hatton, Y. Sawano "A monitoring framework and trends in participation", in *Springer International Handbooks of Education*, no. 2, (2001), pp. 19-26.

<sup>4</sup> B. Marcus, F. Machilek, A. Schütz, "Personality in cyberspace: personal web sites as media for personality expressions and impressions", in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, no. 6, (2006), pp. 1014-1031; Y. Amichai-Hamburger, G. Vinitzky "Social network use and personality", in *Computers in Human Behavior*, no. 6, (2010), pp. 1289-1295; K. Moore, J. C. McElroy, "The influence of personality on Facebook usage, wall postings, and regret", in *Computers in Human Behavior*, no. 1, (2012), pp. 267-274.

<sup>5</sup> H. Jenkins, *Convergence culture. Where old and new media collide*, New York, New York University Press, 2008; K. Moloney, "Building Transmedia Journalism", in *Transmedia Journalism*, no. 6, (2014), pp. 59-66.

through several subjects, but in our case, we implement it into the course of the English language. A discussion of the findings and their implications follows.

### **Professional culture: basic concepts and components**

In order to determine the nature of the concept "professional culture" we have considered its definition in the scientific and methodological literature. There are different approaches in defining "professional culture", we agree with the supporters of the activity approach to the study of the concept of "professional culture".<sup>6</sup> In this research, we define professional culture as a system of values and personal qualities, goals, system tools, methods and technologies of professional activities, as well as the organizational component.

The analysis of research papers allows us to identify the concept of "professional culture" of a specialist as the sum of the following components: values and motivation; knowledge; communication; information and methodology and reflective component.

Values and motivation are the most vital components in the make-up of a future professional. A lot of scientists<sup>7</sup> came to the conclusion that motivation arouses, energizes, directs, and sustains behaviour and performance; the process of stimulating people to action and to achieve a desired task. One way of stimulating people is to employ effective motivation, which makes workers more satisfied with and committed to their jobs.<sup>8</sup>

Values and motivation component includes values part which reflects specialist's readiness to carry out professional activities in accordance with the system of values and the surrounding situation and motivation part which includes set of conditions determining the content, direction and nature of an activity.

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<sup>6</sup> I. M. Model, "Professional culture: (general sociological aspect)" Author Diss, Cand. sociol. Sciences, Sverdlovsk, (1983), 18 p.; A. N. Lyman, *Vocational culture pedagogical higher schools: sociological analysis*, Thesis abstract, A. M. Gorky Ural State University, Ekaterinburg, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> F. Luthans, *Organisational Behaviour*, Boston, Irwin McGraw Press, 1998; J. B. Miner, B. Ebrahimi, J. M. Wachtel, "How deficiency in management contributes to the United States' competitiveness problem and what can be done about it?", in *Human Resource Management*, no. 12, (1995), pp. 363-369.

<sup>8</sup> T. Adeyinka, C. O. Ayeni, S. O. Popoola, *Work motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment of library personnel in academic and research libraries in Oyo State, Nigeria*, retrieved from: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>.

Knowledge component reflects the degree of formation of the theoretical, technological and methodological knowledge, and the necessary awareness of the importance and value of knowledge, not only for himself but also for his professional activity, as well as for professional development.

Communication component includes well-developed communicative skills ensure that the specialist will be able to interact with society, also its ability to present oneself within domestic and international professional communities.

Information and methodology component includes well-developed informational and methodical skills ensure that the specialist will be able to design professional processes, to recognize, formulate and creatively solve professional problems, to use modern technologies and methods in professional activity.

Reflective component includes developed ability to self-analyze and self-correction.

We would like to point out the communication component which contains: the basis of verbal culture, ability to communicate, organizational skills, readiness for team work, self-presentation.

One of the weakest point is self-presentation, as it is not presented in the curricula at all. This skill belongs to soft skills that are desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude. We decided to research this problem - how could this skill be developed in future specialists? And we come up with the idea that transmedia skills can play this role and become an integral part of the 21st-century professional.

### **Background on transmedia**

Term “transmedia” originally came from journalism as a mean of media communication where it denotes a specific form of narration that unfolds through different forms of languages (verbal, iconic, etc.) and means of media (videos, photos and pictures, etc). The main feature of it is that the story is not repeated in all forms of narration, but contributes to the construction of it.

Henry Jenkins, the author of this term, produced the core concepts of transmedia storytelling that are:

- World-building stands for participatory culture-the changing of roles of consumers who interact with the producers. Now consumers

prefer to seek out new information and absorb it in their own way, which is possible today due to the interlinked nature of the Internet.

- Senility means that the creator of the story should always search for new media platforms and new development of the information given.

- Subjectivity focuses on consumers experiencing different perspective blends.

- Performance inspires readers to produce and perform their own storytelling that can invigorate scenario innovation of the story.

- With the use of spreadability and drillability the creator can report stories faster to the larger public.

- Continuity and multiplicity help to unfold the story in separate lines and across the diversified media.

- Immersion and extractability provide the reader's dipping into the story (Jenkins, 2008).

In other words, in a more classic strategy, one usually has a product and builds around it a narrative, which is replicated in multiple channels (film, official site, a mobile App, social profiles or even offline channels), all used accordingly to their natures but always presenting the same story. In transmedia, instead, one creates a "Bible" around a topic, and develops subjective and distinctive visions of that topic depending of the channels that are decided to be used. The conventional example is Lego. Audience get used to it as a toy for children. But in reality, it is a huge world that is made of films, social nets, games, theme parks, and mobile apps. Lego Story is created through all these platforms and it is a pleasure for the fans to find and collect all the pieces of the whole Lego world. To sum up, traditional media means that there are different parts of media, but they are not connected with each other. Transmedia is aimed at the main principle-whole is more satisfying than the sum of the parts: euphoria of collecting pieces.

### **Usage of transmedia**

As we see, transmedia can serve in two ways:

1. As a self-presenting tool transmedia can help to present a would-be professional in one's professional media sphere. For instance, the professionals in Russia are very closed. Most of Russian people do not present their achievements on the Web, most of them have no website or a place where they can display goals. This leads to complete obscurity of Russian professionals. Simply, no one knows that Russia has a lot of talented people. Transmedia can help to solve this problem.

2. As a teaching tool, transmedia involves the usage of one or more channels to develop a coherent story involving a specific content or topic, allowing students both to research and comprehend it, and to conceptualize it in such a way that they can adapt it to the different formats. Additionally, this method allows students to get deeply involved in the process of creating content, teaching them how to write, film, edit video, animate, code, or whatever task is needed to complete each project.

First of all, transmedia can serve as a handy tool in self-presentation. Self-presentation is a type of behavior that attempts to convey some information about oneself or some image of oneself to other people. Self-presentation is the process by which individuals are concerned with the impression they make on others in social situations.<sup>9</sup> Nowadays, the social situation is established through an online professional setting. There the audience consists of any individuals who are able to access one's profile. These are possible employers, head-hunters, colleagues.

Online professional networks offer the opportunity to facilitate social relations in business contexts. Online networking is becoming part of our daily life-whether for private or for business reasons. In sum, professional networks offer a modern way of collecting business cards. They support users in finding jobs, people, and other opportunities. Furthermore, users can become part of groups and demonstrate their professional knowledge in online discussions. Employers can list jobs, and screen potential candidates. It also can be used for scientific reasons to perform one's scientific achievements and to find like-minded people for future researches.

### **Transmedia competency**

We figured out transmedia competency as an integral part of a professional that determine abilities to present oneself in media sources and to organize an effective networking. Transmedia as self-presentation means that a person creates a web space where he / she can present everything that is connected with his/her personality. Transmedia competency contains the following knowledge and skills:

1. know the principles of transmedia;

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<sup>9</sup> J. Reid, F. Gilardi, "Transmedia teaching framework: from group projects to curriculum development" *Innovative language teaching and learning*, (2016), [www.reference.research-publishing.net](http://www.reference.research-publishing.net).

2. know the importance of using them;
3. ability to find necessary information in different sources;
4. ability to find the main idea;
5. ability to generalize;
6. ability to produce comprehensive product;
7. ability to modify information into the product;
8. ability to reflect the product;
9. ability to critically estimate one's work.

Also, we figured out the principles that are based on reflection of transmedia principles and on theory of networking, which are inevitable for self-presentation.

**Table 1: Self-presenting principles (based on concepts of transmedia by H. Jenkins)<sup>10</sup>**

World - building	Interactivity
Seriality	Using different resources to promote
Subjectivity	Readiness to collaborate
Performance	Creating scenario
Spreadability and Drillability	Openness to the public
Continuity and Multiplicity	Using of the Web

As world-building stands for participatory culture, we correspond it with interactivity that means that professional needs to cooperate with other participants of the professional community for the sake of new contacts and readiness to collaborate. Searching for new platforms that means seriality in transmedia theory, can be an impulse for a professional to use different sources to promote. In transmedia, subjectivity that focuses on experience of consumers' different perspective blends in self-presenting can be useful as a principle of collaboration-a professional should learn how to cooperate with other people from the sphere. Performance is widely known as an act of presenting something that in transmedia theory means that each individual can invigorate scenario

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<sup>10</sup> H. Jenkins, *Convergence culture. Where old and new media collide*, New York, New York University Press, 2008.

innovation. In self-presenting principles that can be used as a tool to create a digital world (web-site, social nets, etc.) that can illustrate all strong points of a professional. Spreadability and Drillability mean that without openness to the public one cannot display his/her achievements or be open to the new contact for future collaboration. Last transmedia principles-continuity and multiplicity stand for wide usage of the Web tools.

As we have covered transmedia skills, we would like to speak about how we can develop the skills in our future specialists. Speaking about transmedia as a teaching tool, some educators propose that transmedia storytelling can be used by school and university students. For example, Laura Flemming says that transmedia learning is the application of storytelling techniques combined with the use of multiple platforms to create an immersive learning landscape which enables multivarious entry and exit points for learning and teaching. Transmedia pedagogy uses technology in an integrated way that allows learners and content to flow seamlessly across media platforms. Education across multiple media allows for great continuity in learning. Every piece of the puzzle works to engage the learner. Transmedia techniques, when responsibly and effectively applied in an educational context, immerse students in their own learning and, as a happy corollary, advance media literacy education for all.

In a world where we are growing accustomed to being in constant contact with multiple screens, where digital content is becoming more and more preeminent, and where younger generations are absolute digital natives used to the interaction with technology, recurring to new media can be of great use not just to engage students, but also to provide them with such soft skills (skills that are not taught on purpose, but they are necessary nowadays) as the tools to research topics and subjects on their own across different platforms, to develop the skills to find and select the proper information, and to acquire self-education habits, that will prove vital throughout the rest of their lives.

Another great advantage of this teaching method, is that it allows students to learn at their own individual pace, focusing on the content that results more appealing, and processing it with the tools that work better according to their interests, abilities, and even type of intelligence, effectively transforming the classroom into a personalized learning environment, without sacrificing all the advantages of traditional schooling. And this is true at every level, as this method works both on young primary school students, who can be engaged through simple games and content creation, and for high school, university, and even



corporate training students, who can take advantage of more advanced and complex tools and channels for storytelling.

Speaking about the exercises and activities that are aimed at developing the following skills, the main type of exercises should be those, which are of integrative nature. For example, exercises aimed at integrating text into video, audio and vice versa, making materials for different information-bearer channels (web-site, blogs, social nets), making short stories or even essays that can be developed further to complete the story. Another effective method to teach how-to use transmedia storytelling is to create a project or an essay with the help of the Internet and different media platforms such as Google, YouTube, Infogram, Instagram and other social nets.

### **Transmedia project “Samara for International Guests”**

The whole educative process of the following skills can be implied into a project. In the micro context of Samara University, the students of different majors (History and Journalism) are currently working on a transmedia project called “Samara for International Guests”. Samara is a large city where a lot of international projects and forums are held. The upcoming World Cup-2018, active affluence of foreign students and specialists from abroad mean that Samara becomes attractive for foreigners. These conditions impose occurrence of a well-developed, informational-communicative space with the educative and entertaining aims. The transmedia project «Samara for International Guests» can contribute to the development of such space. The main objective is to tell the story of Samara Region in an interactive form so that the target audience will not only learn a lot of new, but also will participate in the conversation. The students develop their foreign language competence preparing the materials in English. Moreover, they learn how to develop the story through multiple platforms using their logic and abstract thinking. Writing literacy (both academic and colloquial) is also a very important part in making out this project.

### **Web-resources of implementing transmedia skills into the course of the English language**

To measure and prove the effectiveness of implementing transmedia skills into the course of the English language, we have conducted an experiment. We implement the program in the academic

course of general English which consists of tasks that of integrated nature. Moreover, we used Web-resources that are as follows:

- 1) Pow Toon<sup>11</sup>an online presentation software tool that allows to create free animated videos.
- 2) Glogster<sup>12</sup>an online application where one can create Glogs - multimedia posters with text, images, video or audio files.
- 3) Timetoast<sup>13</sup>an online application where you one create timelines to share the past, or even the future. This application will help if a student wants to describe a historical period. One can add description of each event, photo and links.
- 4) Stampsy<sup>14</sup>is a tool for creating visual stories.
- 5) Smore<sup>15</sup>is a tool for creating beautiful and effective online flyers and newsletters.
- 6) Voki<sup>16</sup> (voki.com)-online tool for creating talking avatar.

Speaking about self-presenting tools, here we can highlight the following resources that are aimed at creating your own web-space. All of them can be used within classes:

-Tilda helps you to create a portfolio, blog, landing pages of different designs. All it-stuff is already done by professional designers, all you should do-is to play with them like in Lego. (tilda.cc)

-Readymag-web-site that is used for creating interactive stories, magazines, articles, portfolio. the benefit is that it is of transmedia nature-you can add there different links to other sources (readymag.com).

## **Methodology**

### ***Sample.***

The sample consisted of 84 undergraduate students of Samara University. The students were enrolled into the survey. All of the students completed the survey. Students were split into two groups – control group (where students were not given additional tasks, aimed to form transmedia skills) and experimental group (where those tasks were actively used.) Transmedia skills evaluation was made before and after the experiment. In the course of the experiment, in the experimental

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<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from [www.powtoon.com](http://www.powtoon.com)

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from [www.edu.glogster.com](http://www.edu.glogster.com)

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved from [www.timetoast.com](http://www.timetoast.com)

<sup>14</sup> Retrieved from [www.stampsy.com](http://www.stampsy.com)

<sup>15</sup> Retrieved from [www.smores.com](http://www.smores.com)

<sup>16</sup> Retrieved from [www.voki.com](http://www.voki.com)

group, the work with integrated activities in foreign language was focused on forming transmedia skills as integral part of the XXI century professional. The control group was taking a standard unchanged course.

***Procedure.***

A variety of methods were used for researching levels of transmedia skills- observation, questioning, testing, professional evaluation.

In the process of evaluation of transmedia skills, their levels were defined in cognitive-conative, analytical, creative-technological and reflective components. Levels of evaluation have been developed and defined for each component (high, low and medium). For each level, a certain skillset is essential.

***Parameters of measurements.***

Methodology of transmedia skills evaluation were given next<sup>17</sup> of U. K. Babansky, V. P. Bepalko, T. A. Iliyina, V. A. Yadova.

To measure transmedia skills we used different parameters:

-cognitive-conative component of transmedia skills was measured by asking students to complete a questionnaire;

-analytical component of transmedia skills of students was measured by filling tests on deep understanding of a text, where a student is also asked to express opinion, find requested details, fill in gaps in sentences and choose from different variants to generalize the idea of the text;

-creative-technological component of transmedia skills was measured with the help of specially developed rubrics (Appendix 1), consisting of following components: the content of a product, where communication skills are being measured, its originality, ability to form a subject based on learned material, design and linguistic structure;

-reflective component of transmedia skills was measured through pedagogical observation of students' work.

## **Results**

**Table 2: Pre-experimental evaluation of transmedia skills levels of students**

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<sup>17</sup> D. L. Konstantinovskiy, "Expansion of higher education and consequences for social inequality (the case of Russia)", in *High Education*, no. 7, (2017), pp. 201-2014.

Levels	Reflective component		Creative-technological component		Analytical component		Cognitive-conative component	
	control group	exper. group	control group	exper. group	control group	exper. group	control group	exper. group
High	16.7	21.5	7.1	4.7	4.7	4.7	7.1	0.0
Medium	31.0	45.2	45.2	54.8	31.0	31.0	38.1	57.1
Low	52.3	33.3	47.7	40.5	64.3	64.3	54.8	42.9

Table 2 shows:

-The majority of students have medium or low level of reflective component of transmedia skills-83.3 % in the control group, 78.5 % in the experimental group;

-The majority of students have medium or low level of creative-technological component of transmedia skills-92.9 % in the control group, 95.3 % in the experimental group;

-The majority of students have medium or low level of analytical component of transmedia skills-95.3 % both in the control and the experimental group;

-The majority of students have medium or low level of cognitive component of transmedia skills-92.9 % in the control group, 100 % in the experimental group;

To sum it up there was no significant difference in the levels of transmedia skills components in both groups.

Medium and low levels of transmedia skills show insufficient ability to process and work with information as well as release quality journalistic content by students who are taking journalism as major. Thus, students are not aware of what transmedia is and are not ready to analytical work with information.

**Table 3: Post-experimental evaluation of transmedia skills levels of students**

Levels	Reflective component		Creative-technological component		Analytical component		Cognitive-conative component	
	control group	exper. group	control group	exper. group	control group	exper. group	control group	exper. group
High	19.0	47.6	7.1	33.3	7.1	35.7	9.5	31.0

Medium	35.8	50.0	52.4	57.2	50.0	59.5	35.7	57.1
Low	45.2	2.4	40.5	9.5	42.9	4.8	54.8	11.9

Table 3 shows that transmedia skills in the control group remain unchanged and the majority of students with medium and low levels of all transmedia skill components still prevail.

On the other hand, levels of transmedia skills in the experimental group have changed significantly:

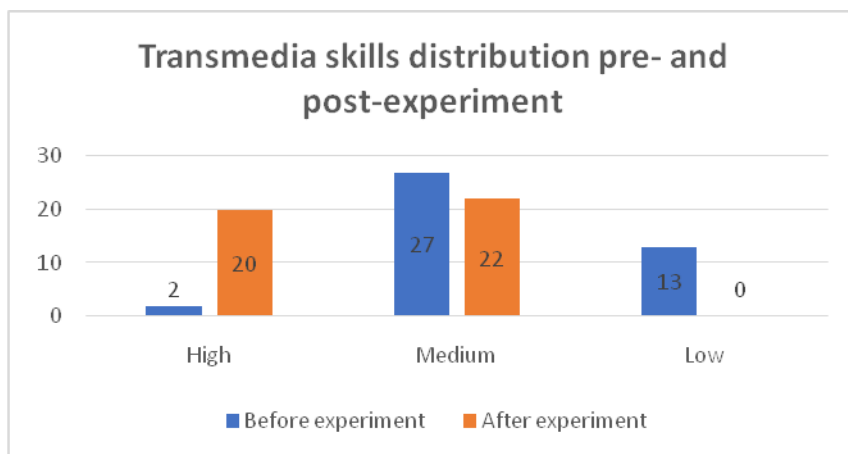
- 47,6 % of students have high level of reflective component of transmedia skills;

- 33,3 % of students have high level of creative-technological component of transmedia skills;

- 35,7 % of students have high level of analytical component of transmedia skills;

- 31 % of students have high level of cognitive-conative component of transmedia skills.

The change in transmedia skill levels confirms success of the experiment and the way it was carried.



**Figure 1: Transmedia skills distribution pre-and post-experiment**

Figure 1 shows that number of students with high level of transmedia skills after the experiment has grown from 2 to 20, and number of students with low level of transmedia skills after the experiment has decreased from 13 to 0.

Positive dynamics verify the successful work done in forming transmedia skills of students, taking a Journalistic Major.

Findings support the idea that transmedia skills can have positive impact on the efficacy of professional skills and level of English of undergraduate students. The research results suggest that specific educational pedagogies, i.e., exercises of integrative nature involving multiple oral and written activities along with various Web-resources support the need to develop transmedia skills.

After taking the course with exercises aimed at developing transmedia skills, participants overall intended to be more: persuasive, media literate, flexible, competitive and collaborative in their future activities. The participants expressed a likelihood to more purposely use facilities that are provided by the Internet and use them to promote and to create an image of a professional.

This study can provide support for educators in designing curriculum for future professionals of any kind. These skills can be widely used for a lot of different professional fields.

### **Appendix 1: Rubrics for assessing creative component**

Criteria	3 points	2 points	1 points	T o t a l
Composition al completeness	Composition is complete (introduction, main body, conclusion)	Composition is almost complete (introduction, main body, conclusion), one of the parts is not clear	Composition is incomplete (missing one of the parts)	
Structure	Problembackgr ound, topicality, storytelling is engaging	Background is not clear, topicality, storytelling is relevant to the topic	Problem is not obvious, no topicality, storytelling prevents from understanding	
Logic	Paragraph division is logical, arguments and evidence are present to each idea	Few mistakes in paragraph division, one logical mistake, arguments and evidence are present to each idea	Mistakes in paragraph division, logical mistakes, arguments and evidence are not present to each idea	
Argumentati on	Clear conclusions, ideas are	Clear conclusions, ideas are relevant to the theories, future	Conclusions are not clear, ideas are not	

	relevant to the theories, future perspectives of the work are evident	perspectives of the work are not evident	relevant to the theories	
Content	Usage of different media sources (2-3), references are present	Usage of different media sources (2), references are present	Usage of one media source, references are not present	
Creativity	Creative attitude to the problem, analysis of the material is present, having own ideas and theories	Creative attitude to the problem, analysis of the material is present, no (not enough) own ideas and theories	Average attitude to the problem, analysis of the material is not relevant	
Design	Design helps the storytelling, style is relevant	Design is relevant	Design prevents from perception of the material	
Language	1-2 mistakes	2-3 mistakes	3-4 mistakes	
Total:				