

THE ROLE OF CRITICAL THINKING IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION**YAKUBOVA MAKHBUBAKHON MAMATISMAILOVNA**

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Annotation

This article examines the pivotal role of critical thinking in foreign language education, particularly within the context of a developing society such as Uzbekistan. It argues that the modernization of the educational system – through the integration of innovative pedagogical approaches and advanced information technologies – is essential for fostering learners' intellectual and linguistic development.

Special attention is given to the importance of cultivating critical and creative thinking through instructional strategies such as inquiry-based learning, collaborative tasks, Socratic dialogue, and argumentative writing. The article also discusses challenges in assessing critical thinking and recommends alternative assessment methods, including performance-based tasks and portfolio evaluation.

Key Words

Critical thinking, Language education, Cognitive development, Inquiry-based learning, Socratic dialogue, Argumentative writing, Communicative competence, Experiential learning

The trajectory of any developing society, such as Uzbekistan, hinges upon the advancement of its educational system. Elevating the lifelong learning framework in our nation, which is charting an independent course of development, to a superior echelon of quality stands as a cornerstone of state policy. Embracing progressive pedagogical methodologies and cutting-edge information technologies, alongside bolstering educational efficacy, has been enshrined as a paramount objective.

The augmentation of pedagogical techniques and their integration into the educational milieu, coupled with the rapid evolution and integration of information technologies, has democratized professional development and skill enhancement. A robust framework for foreign language instruction and scholastic undertakings, in alignment with national educational standards, necessitates learners to exercise autonomy, engage in critical cogitation, and concurrently refine their professional proficiencies and acquisitions.

Regardless of the methodological paradigms employed in contemporary educational paradigms, their overarching objective is rooted in the imperative of augmenting the cognitive faculties or critical thinking prowess of learners. This underscores the essence of fostering critical thinking among foreign language learners, as precise comprehension of lexical entities furnishes invaluable utility, enabling their application across disparate contexts and temporal settings. In essence, the cognitive processes engendered during communicative exchanges entail information assimilation, synthesis, and analysis, with cognition encapsulating these processes through lexical utilization. Thus, the cultivation of critical and creative cogitation becomes imperative for linguistic proficiency.

In delving into the essence of critical and creative thought, one must attend meticulously to the interplay between cognition and language, for this nexus, though seemingly rudimentary, eludes comprehension for many. Language serves not only as a conduit for the expression of

thoughts but also as a crucible wherein thoughts are forged. Hence, language proficiency extends beyond mere verbalization to encompass cogitation and subsequent expression. A learner commencing their odyssey towards critical thoughtfulness employs the written mode to articulate their ruminations while traversing the terrain of foreign language acquisition.

John C. Bean's investigation into cogitation within the target language, specifically its transcription in written form, unveiled a perplexing conundrum. Students grappling with writing and critical thinking often confront an impasse, wherein the pedagogy of thought cultivation ostensibly intertwines with the evolution of their intellectual faculties, a testament to the symbiosis between scholastic instruction and student development.

Critical thought assumes the mantle of an intrinsic facet of human cogitation, as individuals invariably subject each phenomenon to the crucible of their mental faculties. A nuanced examination of critical thought unveils the profound interest evinced by medieval luminaries in the Near and Middle East, who scrutinized various facets of science, its axioms, framework, and the symbiotic relationship between science and human intellectual progress. Noteworthy luminaries such as Khorezmi, Farabi, Beruni, and Ibn Sina, alongside their contemporaries and adherents, manifested an abiding preoccupation with the process of conceptual abstraction, which underpinned the crystallization of an object's essence, thereby affording clarity and conceptualization.

Critical thought permeates myriad facets of the pedagogical spectrum, with exercises tailored to cultivate such ruminative faculties. Consider, for instance, exercises honed to stimulate critical thinking, as expounded upon in the article "7 Ways to Teach Critical Thinking," disseminated through the Walden University online portal. Inquisitive questioning serves as a cornerstone, inviting students to traverse the labyrinth of knowledge acquisition and self-reflection. Collaborative endeavors furnish fertile ground for cognitive cultivation, fostering an environment wherein diverse viewpoints converge and intellectual synergies abound. Encouraging students to consider divergent perspectives instills resilience and adaptability, pivotal traits in an era marked by complexity and flux. Synthesizing disparate ideas encapsulates the essence of critical cogitation, with learners tasked with discerning the optimal mode of conveyance in a milieu replete with linguistic diversity. Fostering creativity imbues the educational landscape with vitality, underscoring the imperative of fostering an ambiance conducive to uninhibited ideation. Brainstorming, a beloved pedagogical tool, engenders spontaneity, nurturing the instinct for rapid problem-solving, a quintessential skill in navigating the exigencies of contemporary life.

The imperative of bolstering critical thinking in foreign language pedagogy assumes paramount significance in the present milieu. Various factors impinge upon the cultivation of critical ruminative faculties among learners, as discerned through the prism of research conducted by M. Lipman, S. Norris, and R. Ennis. Their research underscores the multifaceted nature of critical thought, encompassing observation, analysis, interpretation, reflection, evaluation, inference, explanation, problem-solving, and decision-making. While critical thought finds utility across diverse age cohorts, educators bear the onus of tailoring instruction to encapsulate these facets comprehensively, cognizant of the developmental imperatives underpinning each stage of cognitive maturation. The exigencies of the contemporary landscape accentuate the indispensability of robust critical thinking faculties, particularly in the realm of foreign language acquisition. An empirical study, conducted among a cohort of students, illuminated a disconcerting reality: a mere fraction of participants exhibited fluency in foreign tongues. Why do these linguistic disparities persist? While grammatical acumen may approximate parity, divergent aptitudes in verbal expression underscore deeper maladies: mnemonic lapses, conceptual opacity, and an incapacity to navigate exigent scenarios. These

maladies find their genesis in the paucity of cognitive scaffolding, a neglect of ruminative faculties, and an inattentiveness to the mechanics of ratiocination.

Conversely, students invested in introspective rumination, fortified by a scaffold of analytical thought, manifest the capacity to assimilate, comprehend, articulate, and scrutinize the vagaries of diverse subject matter. An empirical exploration, conducted among consenting participants, laid bare the contours of cognitive development, spotlighting the transformative potential of structured introspection. Critical thought, far from an innate proclivity, emerges as a learnable, teachable process, underscoring the pedagogical imperative of cognitive cultivation.

The ubiquitous integration of activities fostering critical thought within the educational ambit places formidable demands upon foreign language instructors. The conundrum at hand is encapsulated in a poignant query: How can the fortification of critical thinking augur enhanced language acquisition? Metacognition emerges as the linchpin in this dialectic, foregrounding the pivotal role of reflective introspection in cognitive maturation. Ergo, critical thought finds fertile ground only when sown upon the bedrock of linguistic proficiency, rendering the pre-intermediate threshold a sine qua non for its fecundity.

Central to the mandate of modern language educators is the cultivation of critical ruminative faculties, for it is through this crucible that students discern the nuggets of verity amidst the maelstrom of information. The exigencies of communicative exchanges underscore the imperatives of analytical cogitation, inferential processing, and lexical transference, all prerequisites for meaningful linguistic engagement. Language acquisition, with its dynamic tapestry of syntactic and semantic contours, mandates an acuity of discernment, a facility for synthesis, and an aptitude for nuanced interpretation.

An efficacious strategy in this pedagogical enterprise is the deployment of argumentative dialogues, a milieu wherein pre-intermediate learners can meaningfully engage. Encouraged to dissect topical issues, articulate their perspectives, buttress assertions with evidence, and engage in dialectical exchanges, students hone both their linguistic and cognitive faculties. Thus, the symbiotic relationship between linguistic acquisition and cognitive maturation becomes manifest, with critical thought serving as the crucible wherein linguistic proficiencies are tempered and refined.

In today's interconnected world, language education holds immense importance. As globalization continues to blur geographical boundaries, proficiency in multiple languages is increasingly becoming a valuable asset. However, the acquisition of a new language entails more than just memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules. It requires the development of critical thinking skills, which play a pivotal role in the language learning process.

Critical thinking can be defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in a logical and coherent manner. It involves questioning assumptions, examining evidence, and considering multiple perspectives before forming opinions or making decisions. In language education, critical thinking goes beyond linguistic competence; it enables learners to engage deeply with the language, understand its cultural nuances, and communicate effectively in real-world situations. The importance of critical thinking in language education cannot be overstated. In today's globalized and rapidly changing world, language learners need more than just rote memorization to succeed. They must be able to think critically about language use, understand the subtleties of communication, and adapt their language skills to various contexts.

Moreover, critical thinking fosters intellectual independence, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, which are essential for success in both academic and professional settings. Integration of Critical Thinking in Language Education: Effective language education programs

incorporate critical thinking at every stage of the learning process. From lesson planning to assessment, educators must design activities that promote critical thinking skills and encourage learners to engage deeply with the language. Here are some strategies for integrating critical thinking into language education: **Inquiry-Based Learning:** Encourage students to ask questions, seek answers, and explore topics independently. Design activities that require students to research, analyze, and evaluate authentic language materials, such as articles, videos, or interviews. Foster a classroom environment where curiosity is encouraged, and students feel empowered to pursue their interests and investigate new ideas.

Present students with real-world language problems or scenarios and challenge them to find creative solutions. Assign tasks that require students to collaborate, communicate, and negotiate with their peers to achieve common goals. Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their problem-solving process, identify areas for improvement, and learn from their mistakes.

Teach students how to critically read and analyze written texts in the target language, focusing on identifying main ideas, supporting details, and author's purpose. Guide students through the process of writing argumentative essays, persuasive speeches, or research papers, where they must present evidence, construct logical arguments, and defend their viewpoints. Encourage students to peer-review each other's writing, providing constructive feedback and suggestions for revision.

Socratic Dialogue: Facilitate classroom discussions where students engage in open-ended dialogue, ask probing questions, and challenge each other's assumptions. Use the Socratic method to guide students through the process of critical inquiry, encouraging them to think deeply about complex issues and consider multiple perspectives. Create a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their opinions, sharing their insights, and engaging in intellectual debate. **Assessment of Critical Thinking in Language Education:**

Assessing critical thinking in language education can be challenging, but it is essential for gauging students' progress and identifying areas for improvement. Traditional assessment methods, such as multiple-choice tests or fill-in-the-blank exercises, may not adequately measure students' critical thinking skills. Instead, educators should employ authentic assessment strategies that require students to demonstrate their ability to think critically in real-world contexts. Here are some examples of assessment tasks that can effectively evaluate students' critical thinking skills:

Performance-Based Tasks: Assign projects or presentations that require students to apply their language skills in meaningful ways, such as creating a multimedia presentation, staging a role-play, or participating in a debate. Use rubrics to assess students' performance based on criteria such as clarity of communication, depth of analysis, and coherence of argumentation. **Portfolio Assessment:** Have students compile a portfolio of their work throughout the semester, including written assignments, audio recordings, and video presentations. Ask students to reflect on their learning process, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for future improvement. **Authentic Tasks:** Present students with real-world language tasks, such as writing a letter of complaint, conducting an interview, or giving a formal presentation. Evaluate students' ability to navigate these tasks successfully, considering factors such as language accuracy, communicative effectiveness, and cultural appropriateness.

Critical thinking plays a crucial role in language education, enabling learners to engage deeply with the language, understand its cultural nuances, and communicate effectively in diverse contexts. By integrating critical thinking into language education programs, educators can empower students to become independent, creative, and resourceful language learners. Moreover, assessing critical thinking in language education provides valuable insights into

students' abilities and helps guide instructional practices for future improvement. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the importance of critical thinking in language education will only continue to grow, shaping the future of global communication and collaboration.

Furthermore, the integration of technology in language education offers additional avenues for fostering critical thinking skills. Digital tools and online resources provide opportunities for interactive learning, collaborative problem-solving, and authentic communication in the target language. For example, language learning platforms and mobile applications often incorporate gamified activities, virtual simulations, and multimedia content, which engage students in active learning experiences and encourage them to think critically about language use in context.

Moreover, experiential learning opportunities, such as study abroad programs or immersive language camps, offer students the chance to apply their language skills in authentic, real-world settings. These immersive experiences not only enhance linguistic proficiency but also promote cultural understanding, adaptability, and intercultural communication skills. By stepping outside their comfort zones and engaging with diverse communities, students develop empathy, open-mindedness, and a global perspective, all of which are essential components of critical thinking in language education.

It is crucial to recognize the role of assessment in promoting critical thinking in language education. Traditional assessment methods, such as multiple-choice tests or fill-in-the-blank exercises, often prioritize rote memorization and lower-order thinking skills. However, alternative forms of assessment, such as performance-based tasks, portfolios, and reflective journals, provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their critical thinking abilities in authentic contexts. For example, asking students to analyze and evaluate authentic texts, produce creative writing pieces, or engage in debates and discussions encourages higher-order thinking skills and deepens their understanding of language and culture.

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