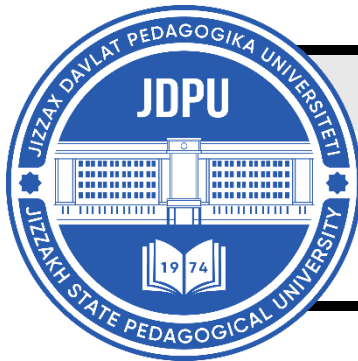


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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL****MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –  
METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**THE RELEVANCE OF CRITICAL THINKING IN LEARNING  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES****Gulruh Majidova***Senior Lecturer**Jizzakh State Pedagogical University**Jizzakh, Uzbekistan**E-mail: [gulruxmajidova199@gmail.com](mailto:gulruxmajidova199@gmail.com)***ABOUT ARTICLE**

**Key words:** critical thinking, cultural awareness, rational thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, resource evaluation, creative thinking, language acquisition strategies, emotions or personal biases, logical reasoning, cultivation of critical thinking.

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**Abstract:** Numerous studies have been carried out to reveal the importance of critical thinking within educational and social settings, as well as learning foreign languages regarding the relationship between critical thinking and academic achievement in language acquisition. The full realization of language learners' potential emerges when learning foreign languages is aligned with the cultivation of critical thinking abilities. To grasp, assess, and construct language meaningfully, particularly to enhance communication and language proficiency students ought to focus on honing their critical thinking skills. This study aims to explore the connection between students critical thinking skills and their engagement in the classroom to gain a comprehensive understanding of how critical thinking influences students' academic performance.

**INTRODUCTION**

Critical thinking is a cognitive process that involves analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information and arguments in a systematic and rational manner. It's a skill that allows individuals to objectively assess situations, ideas, and beliefs, and make reasoned judgments or decisions based on evidence and logical reasoning rather than on emotions or personal biases. It is a skill that can be developed throughout life undergoing various experiences. It involves considering all the points before making a judgment on any matter. The skill of critical thinking holds a great importance in every field as well as education to assess the situation properly and take sensible steps to overcome the problems. As well, the importance of being able to think critically is in the

center of discussion among teachers and language policy makers to reveal its significance in learning foreign languages.

### THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

There are a lot of factors that have a lot of influence on learning foreign languages effectively and one of them that holds paramount importance is being able to think analytically. As Servat Shirkhani a and Mansour Fahim (2011) [1] states that introducing critical thinking into foreign language teaching (FLT) classrooms holds considerable importance for several reasons. Initially, when language learners feel responsibility for their own thinking, they can effectively control and assess their learning methods. Furthermore, critical thinking enriches learners' educational journey, rendering the language more relevant and significant to them. Lastly, there is a strong correlation between critical thinking and learners' academic accomplishments. It can be understood that being in charge of one's own learning can be a trigger for taking all responsibility and act accordingly. If one feels that they are the only person who can take steps themselves in achieving something the sense gives them power to go forward in their learning process. The sense of responsibility helps learners to monitor their learning. Namely, the learners know how much time they should spend on working on themselves, choose methods that they are certain to work for themselves and can use effectively as well as the appropriate time in which they can be active in their performance. If the learners develop reflective thinking skill they will be able to assess their learning too, how much progress they are making, what their strength and weaknesses are and what to do to improve those weak points which is helpful to make improvement in their learning.

As for Syarif Hidayatullah (2019) [2] acquiring a new language broadens one's perspectives and enables communication with individuals worldwide. Mastering a second language is a crucial aspect of achieving cultural competence in the contemporary globalized society. However, the full benefits of language learning can only be realized when accompanied with the cultivation of critical thinking abilities. To truly comprehend, assess, and utilize language effectively, students must focus on improving their critical thinking skills.

Malikhatul Lailiyah, Prilla Lukis Wediyantoro (2021) [3] point out that studies conducted in educational settings have demonstrated that there is necessity for teachers to equip students with the necessary skills for success in their future endeavors. Consequently, educators must focus on fostering students' critical thinking abilities. Nevertheless, it is imperative for teachers to employ effective strategies to aid students in cultivating and utilizing critical thinking skills to solve various challenges they encounter while learning foreign languages.

When it is about fostering critical thinking Adriana Ximena Cundar-Ruano (2021) [4] says that in the EFL classroom, both teachers and students should aim to encourage active language

use, enabling students to engage in debate, analysis, criticism, evaluation, creation, judgment, and reevaluation of their thoughts. Activities should also facilitate students in enhancing their existing knowledge to improve their comprehension of new concepts. From this standpoint, EFL education should adopt a more dynamic and intentional approach, going beyond mere skill acquisition tasks. So teachers should emphasize the significance of fostering critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom and offer insightful and practical guidance on conceptualizations, benefits, and methods to accomplish this objective. It can be easily inferred that the materials used to teach languages should not only developed to improve the students' language skills but also their critical thinking. So, the content of the subject and critical thinking are interconnected that is to say one can be improved by the other.

Rational thinking skills encompass a diverse range of abilities crucial for navigating various aspects of life where reflection, analysis, and planning are needed. These skills transcend specific domains and prompt individuals to engage in clear and rational thinking across all endeavors, whether in education, research, management, or legal contexts. Critical thinking emerges as a vital skill in each of these areas (Dr. Subahi Abdulqadir Elimam Ahmed.et.al. 2023) [5] as well as learning foreign language in which the learners need to think about the purpose of their learning, materials they need to use in order to achieve that purpose and plan their learning. Having made a clear route for their learning the learners will analyze their progress and reflect their learning if they are able to think critically.

Learning a language holds immense significance from early childhood onwards. Beginning with our native tongue, we typically progress to acquiring additional languages, commonly including English, Spanish, German, or French. However, traditional methods of teaching and learning do not always yield the desired results. Conventional approaches are gradually being surpassed by more effective methods, among which critical thinking stands out as particularly promising.

The initial advocate for integrating critical thinking into education was the American philosopher John Dewey. According to Dewey's philosophy, the primary objective of education is to instill critical thinking skills in students.

Aligned with this philosophy, engaging students in school or college activities that requires critical thinking can significantly enhance the effectiveness of their learning. Incorporating experiential learning with real-world tasks encourages students to think creatively, leveraging their emotional intelligence. Consequently, learning occurs in a manner that resonates with the student's comprehension and enjoyment.

Moreover, mastering a language can be facilitated through various practical activities that merge critical thinking with classroom content. Consequently, learning becomes more comprehensive and applicable to real-life situations.

In numerous instances, it has been demonstrated that incorporating activities that demands rational thinking greatly enhances language learning outcomes. This is because students not only draw upon their existing knowledge but also apply it within real-world contexts. Consequently, the knowledge acquired through these activities tends to be more enduring.

Moreover, when students engage in such activities, they are highly likely to become active participants, interacting with peers as they construct their understanding. Through this active involvement, students interpret newly acquired knowledge in a manner that resonates with their individual perspectives, leading to improved retention and practical application of the learnt material. As a result, learning changes from being overly theoretical to being readily applicable in practice.

Critical thinking plays a crucial role in learning a foreign language as it empowers learners to engage deeply with the language, understand its nuances, and effectively communicate in diverse contexts. Here are several ways in which critical thinking is relevant to learning a foreign language:

In order to understand language structures the learners need to think rationally. Critical thinking enables learners to analyze language structures, identify patterns, and make connections between words, grammar rules, and syntax, facilitating a deeper comprehension of the language. Based on the information provided earlier, it can be inferred that critical thinking plays a vital role in acquiring language. It helps students understand and assess language in various situations, enhances their communication abilities, improves overall language proficiency, and fosters independence and self-motivation. Hence, educators and language learners should prioritize the cultivation of critical thinking skills within the language learning journey (Syarif Hidayatullah.2019) [6].

Problem-solving is another factor in learning languages for which the ability of critical thinking is required from learners. Learners with strong critical thinking skills can effectively address language-related challenges, such as deciphering unfamiliar vocabulary, understanding complex texts, or navigating cultural differences in communication. Reading and listening comprehension is a form of measurement by which the students' linguistic competence is assessed. To enhance the reading comprehension abilities of English Foreign Language (EFL) learners, teachers can employ critical-thinking and problem-solving approaches as instructional methods in teaching English (Idris Sadri.et.al.2019) [7]. The test on reading comprehension skill designed to ensure test takers' ability on key issues or information extraction from the given sample of text.

The test on reading comprehension skill designed to ensure test takers' ability on key issues or information extraction from the given sample of text. The test takers would be presented to variety of questions forms such as yes or no statements and some sorts of multiple choices questions. Overall, the test takers may be asked to read the given sample text and answer the questions from the reading text afterward. So as to find answer to the reading questions the student apply their problem solving skill, so while doing different tests and tasks the students will foster their critical thinking skills and at the same time doing the tests involve critical thinking skills and problem solving skills. To become fluent in a language and must be able to think critically and express thoughts, students need practice speaking activities using critical thinking skills .

As language and culture are closely connected to one another in the process of learning languages the learners will have an opportunity to be aware of culture of the country whose language they are studying if they have developed analytical thinking. Critical thinking encourages learners to question cultural norms, perspectives, and assumptions embedded within language use. This fosters cultural sensitivity and promotes a deeper understanding of the cultural context in which the language is spoken. Through rational thinking the language learners may be aware of different cultural features of various countries and compare them to establish similarities and differences while learning foreign languages. In their learning process they will be exposed to cultural norms and traditions of other countries, analyze them and draw conclusions for themselves which make culturally competent person in the long term.

The learners can take the advantage of critical thinking to improve their effective communication. By critically evaluating language choices and considering the audience, purpose, and context, learners can communicate more clearly, accurately, and persuasively in the target language. To become fluent in a language and must be able to think critically and express thoughts, students need practise speaking activities using critical thinking skills ([Dilafuz Mahkamova, 2020](#)) [8].

While teaching languages the students will be exposed to the target language in which they encounter wide range of grammar structures, phrases and other linguistic forms. In that process the learners can acquire the language better comparing the target language and their native language. Critical thinking allows learners to assess the credibility and validity of language resources, such as textbooks, online materials, or spoken language, enabling them to discern reliable sources and distinguish between different registers and dialects. Furthermore, it is believed that connecting the new language to the learner's existing knowledge is crucial. For example, identifying parallels between Uzbek and the learner's current linguistic repertoire, including languages encountered previously and those spoken in their surroundings, can provide the learner with a foundation and cultivate a greater enthusiasm for the new language

Critical thinking encourages learners to express themselves creatively in the target language, whether through writing, speaking, or other forms of communication, by synthesizing and applying their language knowledge in innovative ways. As Kani ÜLGER (2016) [9] states creative thinking generates ideas, fosters alternative viewpoints, relies on imagination, and has the capacity to generate innovative ideas and instigate changes. It thrives on generating numerous ideas, enjoys imaginative exploration, and habitually approaches problems from multiple angles. Moreover, it excels in expanding and challenging the boundaries of problems.

On the other hand, critical thinking evaluates ideas, assesses the validity of facts prior to decision-making, operates logically, and seeks substantial evidence for issues. It establishes guidelines and criteria for the thinking process, excels in questioning and problem definition, and endeavors to identify the most suitable problem-solving approach.

Overall, both thinking abilities emphasize fresh perspectives rather than adhering strictly to rules or conventional thinking. Essential traits of critical thinking encompass analysis, assessment, decision-making, and logical problem-solving. In contrast, creative thinking prioritizes imagination, the generation of original ideas, and the discovery of innovative problem-solving strategies. Creative thinking tends to yield unique ideas, viewpoints, and perspectives for problem-solving, while critical thinking tends to produce logical ideas, viewpoints, and perspectives.

Critical thinking skills equip learners with effective strategies for language acquisition, such as analyzing language input, monitoring their progress, and adapting their learning approach based on feedback and reflection. To navigate societal challenges, engage with diverse issues, and foster self-directed learning, individuals need to possess the capacity for critical thinking and sound reasoning. Given the notable correlation observed between critical thinking proficiency and the application of language learning strategies, it follows that employing such strategies can aid students in refining their cognitive abilities, specifically in fostering a more discerning approach to thinking, commonly known as critical thinking (Jahanbakhsh Nikoopour et al. 2011) [10].

## CONCLUSION

In summary, critical thinking is essential for learning a foreign language as it enhances language comprehension, problem-solving abilities, cultural awareness, communication effectiveness, resource evaluation, creative expression, and language acquisition strategies, ultimately enabling learners to engage more deeply and proficiently with the language.

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