

УДК 81'271+159.955:81'243

 <https://doi.org/10.28925/2312-5829.2024.113>**Tetiana Zhukova** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1693-8178>

Senior Lecturer of the Department of Foreign Languages,

Dmytro Motorny Tavria State Agrotechnological University,

Zhukovskyi Str., 66, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, 69600

[zhutet788@gmail.com](mailto:zhutet788@gmail.com)

## Critical Thinking Development in Foreign Language Classes

*The article deals with theoretical and practical aspects of critical thinking development in foreign language classes. Some techniques of critical thinking formation are analyzed. The strategies that can be applied to improve one's critical thinking (making a conscious effort to focus on the challenge, learning to ask critical questions, practice to support the ideas with verifiable evidence, etc.) are substantiated.*

*The main facts about the historical path of critical thinking are presented starting with the ideas of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle followed by representatives of the Renaissance. Modern publications of philologists and scientists John Hughes, Paul Dummett (2019); Pagan Castalo, Christen Li (2017); Smith, G., & Peloghitis, J. (2020) and others are aimed to teaching students to think critically and communicate effectively. Some researchers have established a connection between critical thinking and creativity.*

*To be effective in critical thinking it is analyzed how to structure the entire learning process. The article discusses important points of critical thinking efficiency, i.e., making a deliberate effort to single out the ideas contained in the piece of information, weighing the ideas to see what their correlation is, finding out the relevance and importance of each idea, creating one's own arguments.*

*Some practical tasks used for mastering critical thinking at English classes are presented, namely while training reading, listening, writing and speaking skills. The article also describes the signs that demonstrate students have developed the skills of critical thinking. It's also mentioned that in constructing assessments of critical thinking, educators should use open-ended tasks, real-world or "authentic" problem contexts that require students to go beyond restating previously learned information.*

*Key words: critical thinking; communication; strategies; judgments; reasons; evaluating; making decisions; solving problem.*

© Київський столичний університет імені Бориса Грінченка, 2024

© Zhukova T., 2024

**Introduction.** Nowadays the intellectual development of an individual is not defined as the amount of knowledge and information that is kept in memory but the person's ability to select the necessary knowledge through critical analysis, understanding of information and the skills to make decisions independently. Thus, the development of critical thinking is an integral part of the modernization of modern education in general and optimization of English teaching particularly.

Innovative approach to learning foreign languages determines the main task of an educator. It is organizing a productive educational and cognitive student's activities to ensure the realization of his personal cognitive and creative potential which makes it possible to master strategies of educational activities and gain effective independent experience learning and using English in different situations and conditions of self-realization and self-development.

**Purpose.** The article aims to analyze the theoretical and practical aspects of critical thinking development in foreign language classes, techniques of critical thinking formation and exercises of practical direction. The strategies that we can apply to improve one's critical thinking (making a conscious effort to focus on the challenge, learning to ask critical questions, practice to support the ideas with verifiable evidence, etc.) are substantiated.

**Methodology.** Socrates was the first to include the people's ideas into thinking as a belief, he conducted a deep probe with explicit questions on the subject. While analyzing, he traced out complete implications of the expressed idea and the actions

accompanying them. Socratic Questioning thereby becomes the basis for the critical thinking agenda.

Next in the historical path of critical thinking came his successors Plato and Aristotle. Greek tradition helped set up the foundation for seeking the way of thinking that was comprehensive yet responsive to arguments, and help systematic thinking. People needed to think deeper and not be swayed by first impressions.

Sir Thomas Moore was one of the people behind the Renaissance and post-Renaissance forces that opened new roads to scientific thought. This was reflected in the social life of those times by way of an overhaul in the way people thought and this, in turn, led to a democratic process. Every aspect of the world was a matter for discussion and criticism.

Innovative thinkers include Voltaire, Sir Isaac Newton, Hobbes and Boyle. They lived centuries apart but were supportive of critical thinking. They wanted inquisitive reasoning to be a part of the approach to thinking, especially when dealing with scientific regimes.

Pioneers in the field of science, Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton lived and practiced critical reasoning in their everyday lives. This brought them intellectual freedom, which was needed for working with science.

As for the recent research, Bailin (2002) defines critical thinking as thinking of a particular quality — essentially good thinking that meets specified criteria or standards of adequacy and accuracy.

Modern publications of such philologists and scientists as John Hughes & Paul Dummett (2019); Pagan Castalo, Christen Li (2017) should be mentioned. They are aimed to teaching learners to think critically and communicate effectively. Through authentic models of effective communication, students build fluency in the listening, reading and speaking skills needed to achieve academic and personal success.

Smith, G., & Peloghitis, J. (2020) claim that critical thinking education in academic writing courses should include extensive practical guidance on how to apply debiasing strategies and structure one's environment to create optimal decisions.

Finally, many researchers have made connections between critical thinking and creativity (Bailin, 2002; Paul & Elder, 2006; Thayer-Bacon, 2000). Bailin (2002) argues that a certain amount of creativity is necessary for critical thought. Paul and Elder (2006) note that both creativity and critical thinking are aspects of "good," purposeful thinking. So, critical thinking and creativity are two sides of the same coin. Good thinking requires the ability to generate intellectual products, which is associated with creativity. However, good thinking also requires the individual to be aware, strategic, and critical about the quality of those intellectual products.

A. Fatmawati, S. Zubaidah and Sutopo Mahanal (2019) investigated the correlation between critical and creative thinking skills; critical thinking skills and learning achievement.

Some Ukrainian scientists pay considerable attention to the study of the issue of critical thinking. They are I. Bondarchuk, T. Voropai, O. Pometun, S. Terno, O. Tiaglo, L. Terletska and others. O. Tiaglo (1999) emphasized the significance of the critical thinking development in the conditions of the information society. Among the main signs of critical thinking T. Voropai determined the ability to distinguish and analyze various situations that arise in real life; to offer options for solving tasks; to compare, evaluate, identify information; to make independent decisions. S. Terno (2009) defines critical thinking as the ability to use certain information processing techniques that allow to get the desired result. He thinks that the main features of critical thinking should include the following skills: making logical conclusions; making informed decisions; giving an assessment of positive and negative traits; focusing on results.

**Results.** Firstly, it should be stated what critical thinking is.

Critical thinking is the ability to actively and creatively perceive information, optimally apply the required type of mental activity, to analyze information from various

sides, have a personal, independent opinion, be able to assure it correctly, and apply the acquired knowledge in practice.

Definitions of critical thinking that have emerged from the cognitive psychological approach include “the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome” (Halpern, 1998, p. 450); and “seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems, and so forth” (Willingham, 2007, p. 8).

In critical thinking, you begin to evaluate something the moment you hear it; that is before deciding whether to believe it or not. Actually, what you begin with is analyzing all the parts of what has been said or written and then assessing each of them in the context within which it has been expressed.

To be efficient in critical thinking, one needs to know how to structure the entire process. The following points can help:

- Making a deliberate effort to single out the ideas contained in the piece of information a learner is analyzing
  - Weighing the ideas, one finds against each other to see what their correlation is
  - Finding out the relevance and importance of each of the ideas
  - Picking out the arguments involved in the situation one is assessing and see how weighty or flimsy they are
- Creating one’s own arguments to demonstrate how many of the ideas that were presented were ideas that a student agrees with and which of the arguments go against what one believes in
  - Identifying any inconsistencies contained in the text or arguments during one’s analysis
  - Thinking up solutions that can rectify any shortcomings that learners find (Simon Bradley & Nicole Price (2016)).

Educators should think of what we usually do in communication. We provide information and facts, but not just facts — analyzed and evaluated facts. In fact, it includes data that has not just been analyzed and evaluated; it can also be organized in a logical manner to tell a story or to create a particular image. So, really, we need to be able to think critically if we have to present our ideas in an effective way.

**Discussion.** Critical thinking is a process that most often starts with identifying the problem, then follows the understanding and analyzing the information, it ends with a decision to solve the problem. A person who thinks critically should be aware that often the same problem can have several solutions, therefore, one has to support his decision with weighty, persuasive, own arguments that would prove that one's solution is the best one.

To prove one's position a person should do it in communication. As a result of communication, dispute, discussion a person deepens his position or can change something in it. But freedom and independence, i.e. ability to express an idea independently of others, are very crucial.

What are the strategies that we can apply to improve one's critical thinking?

- Making a conscious effort to focus on the challenge
- Learning to ask critical questions
- Practice to support one's ideas with verifiable evidence as well as logical thinking
- Getting into the habit of interpreting matters in depth
- Learning to synthesize the ideas that are available
- Practicing handling complex questions by breaking them down first
- Practicing making decisions only after evaluating them properly
- Learning to apply high level thinking to analyze and solve real life challenges
- Making critical thinking a daily habit
- Practicing being open to new ideas; be ready to see things from different viewpoints

- Being open to alternative solutions
- Learning to collaborate with other people when it comes to problem solving.

To sum up, these standards are universal in nature. They include “having clarity; seeking to be accurate and precise; using only what is relevant; being vast in breadth and deep in your analysis; being logical; and also considering the significance of information and all other factors involved” (Simon Bradley & Nicole Price, 2016).

We should learn as many methods of developing critical thinking as possible and be familiar with the features of their effective application.

What steps do we have to start with? I think, determining the purpose of the lesson and the topic, thinking about what we already know about it, what can be useful, what learning resources we have, how much time we have for studying. It is also important to collect necessary information, systematize the collected information, look for the connections between key concepts, the whole topic and everyday life, think about how we could demonstrate our knowledge on the topic.

We should think of grammar use as well: we need to follow a pattern of thinking. Grammar consists of classifying words. Associations between the words give the meaning or classification. So, when we say, we refer to the group of words that explain what happened. To find this group of words, one needs to see what the sentence says and who the doer of the action is. Just like in all other cases where we apply critical thinking to practical aspects of life, in grammar too, one needs to understand the use of verbs in future, present and past forms; linking words expressing reason, contrast, result, etc. Besides, one needs to have a wide vocabulary to express his thoughts clearly.

When our students' life experience increases, their approach to critical thinking will be better. They will deal with ideas in a practical and sensible manner. All this leads to understanding. Students begin to realize how success and failure are becoming the parts of their life.

There is a great variety of tools and tasks for the development of critical thinking nowadays. It is important to remember that developing critical thinking means teaching students how they should think, i.e. developing their skills of analysis, synthesis, search and rethinking information, learning them to find non-standard solutions, analyze their actions.

I would like to introduce some practical tasks used for mastering critical thinking at English classes while learning the course by Caroline Krantz and Julie Norton. It is *Navigate/ Coursebook (B1)*. — Oxford University Press, 2015 — 199 p. [9].

While listening and speaking about people's behavior concerning greeting strangers in a lift, in a shop, in a doctor's waiting room, on public transport a class discussion is conducted firstly (Caroline Krantz & Julie Norton, 2015, p. 31). Then the students are proposed to apply their own experience on the topic: *From your experience, do people behave the same on public transport in different countries?* The learners are encouraged to think of concrete reasons to support their answers, to give examples of behavior from their own experience which surprised them.

Working over the vocabulary on the topic "*Internet activities*" we discuss which activities are the most important to the students and why (Caroline Krantz & Julie Norton, 2015, p. 38). They are asked to write brief notes about the reasons to help them organize their thoughts. They are given sentence starters, e.g. *The most important activity for me is.../One of the most important activity for me is.../Another important activity is.../*. Being able to put things in order of priority or importance is a useful skill to practice. By putting things in order, students can make choices more easily. And it is a good idea to learn useful phrases for outlining and explaining choices.

When we start the topic "*The secrets of successful education*" the students are proposed to discuss in pairs or groups whether they think their own education as a child was successful or not and give reasons. After brainstorming the vocabulary (*use of latest technology, an enjoyment of learning, regular exams, lots of homework, studying for many hours a day, small classes, well-qualified teachers, strict rules*) and reading the



article about two different education systems in Finland and Shanghai students are asked to discuss the most important thing and to put each one a score from the most important to the least one and conduct a class discussion, eliciting the thing which most surprised them. They are encouraged to explain why. Then the students are put into small groups to write some rules for a perfect education system (Caroline Krantz & Julie Norton, 2015, p. 78).

If students focus on different stages of education or people involved in education system, they will practice critical thinking. Students are usually asked to think about different education contexts, for instance *primary school, secondary school, university studies or to think from the perspective of different people, a secondary school student, a university undergraduate, a primary school teacher, a parent or a child at primary school, a university professor, etc.*

When training using the target grammar *will, won't, might, might not* students are asked to make predictions concerning transport use in future. Before that we read the article about a new kind of train Maglev and practice grammar (Caroline Krantz & Julie Norton, 2015, p. 65). So, first, we discuss what we know about the topic to support the predictions. It is more convincing to use evidence such as what has already happened or what is happening nowadays, for example *because some people are using electric cars in my home town*. Students are asked to think of a *because statement* to give the reasons for supporting their explanations and predictions.

After learning the vocabulary devoted to describing a character, we start reading the article about the qualities of introverts based on the findings of Susan Cain in her book “Quiet” (Caroline Krantz & Julie Norton, 2015, p. 56). The students are proposed to give their opinion about the ideas in the article. For critical thinking development they are asked to reflect on what they have read, link it to their own experience and apply the information they have got from it: *Have you ever thought about introverts before? What information is new for you? Do you know anyone who is an introvert? If so, do they have the characteristics described in the article? Does it make you think the ideas in the*

*article are true or not?* Applying the information that leaders who have read the book “Quiet” are changing their practices we discuss the issue *What can they do to make life better for introverts?*

Having read the information about recruiting staff through the use of technology and, specifically, through computer games the students’ experience is discussed in job interviewing (Caroline Krantz & Julie Norton, 2015, p. 119). Then we read the tips about succeeding in video interviews and choose the best ones to their opinion. The students are asked to read their tips to the class and discuss the best ones. They can also be organized in small groups. Pyramid discussions can be useful to help students explain and defend their ideas in more depth. Firstly, small groups who have chosen the same topic work together and present their tips to each other. Then they discuss and choose the five best tips. After all the students are put together and each group reads out their top five tips explaining their reasons. The process also involves polite disagreement and compromise.

Some ‘for’ and ‘against’ essays are proposed to students. For sure, they develop the skills of critical thinking. For instance, while writing the essays “Is global warming primarily due to human activities or a natural process of the earth’s evolution?”, “Is homework harmful or helpful?”, “Should marijuana be legalized for recreational purposes?”, “Should rich people be required to pay more taxes? etc. learners provide a comprehensive picture of their opinion while simultaneously challenging the opposing viewpoint with the help of actual data, reasons, evidences, examples.

As it is known, the first paragraph is the introduction including a thesis statement which summarizes the main issue. The second paragraph should focus on the advantages of the subject. Students should include at least two arguments, if possible, give examples where appropriate introduced by phrases like *For example* or *For instance*. Some useful phrases for demonstrating ‘for’ arguments may be the following: *The most important advantage is ...*, *Another advantage is ...*, *Many people are convinced that ...*, *For this reason ...*, *Therefore ...*

The third paragraph should focus on the disadvantages including at least two arguments. It usually starts with a phrase like *On the other hand* or *However* to express contrast with statements in the previous paragraph. ‘Against’ points should be started with *The most important disadvantage is ...*, *An additional disadvantage is ...*, *Some people are against ...*, *As a result, ...*, etc.

The last paragraph is the conclusion in which students state their own opinion and decide whether the arguments ‘for’ outweigh the arguments ‘against’ the thesis statement. These essays are an opportunity for tutors to determine students’ skills set in being analytical, structured, and rational in discussions.

These are some examples of critical thinking mastering. And they prove that critical thinking is worth learning and practicing.

There are some signs that demonstrate students have developed the skills of critical thinking:

- They become more reliant on reasoning than emotions
- They are comfortable evaluating issues from varying perspectives and not just their own point of view
- They accept new evidence, findings and fresh explanations even after they have undergone deep evaluating an issue
- They are receptive to the idea of re-assessing the information received
- They are open to different options
- They do not make hasty conclusions and judgments.

It should be noted that students really illustrate these signs as a result of practical exercises aimed at mastering critical thinking.

**Conclusion.** Thus, the development of critical thinking becomes most relevant in times of intense social changes when it is impossible to act without constant adaptation to new political, economic or other circumstances without effectively solving the problems

which can be unpredictable. In the context of modern changes, critical thinking becomes an important characteristic of a modern personality.

Critical thinking helps to acquire the following skills: analyze information, assess its reliability, evaluate thoughts and external influences on them, consider various approaches to the problem in order to make substantiated decisions about it; formulate independent judgments and build a convincing argumentation.

Critical thinking includes the component skills of analyzing arguments, making inferences using inductive or deductive reasoning, judging or evaluating, and making decisions or solving problems. Background knowledge is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for enabling critical thought within a given subject. Critical thinking involves both cognitive skills and dispositions. These dispositions which can be seen as attitudes or habits of mind, include open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, flexibility, a propensity to seek reason, a desire to be well-informed, and a respect for and willingness to entertain diverse viewpoints (Simon Bradley & Nicole Price, 2016).

**Prospects for further research.** Although some people tend to be natural critical thinkers, many are those who need to learn the skills and take time to practice them. So, instructors should provide explicit instructions in critical thinking to teach how to transfer to new contexts and to use cooperative or collaborative learning methods and approaches that place students at the centre of the learning process. In constructing assessments of critical thinking, educators should use open-ended tasks, real-world or “authentic” problem contexts and problems that require students to go beyond recalling or restating previously learned information. Such tasks should have more than one defensible solution and embed adequate collateral materials to support multiple perspectives.

Finally, such assessment tasks should make student reasoning visible by requiring students to provide evidence or logical arguments in support of judgements, choices, claims, or assertions. Thus, this issue should one of the directions of further research.

The types of practical exercises and new techniques for developing and mastering critical thinking in foreign language classes have to be discussed.

### References

- Bailin, S. (2002). *Critical thinking and science education*. *Science & Education*, 11(4), 361–375.
- Caroline Krantz, Julie Norton. *Navigate/Coursebook (B1 Pre-intermediate)*. — Oxford University Press, 2015. 199 p.
- Christen Li (2017). *21st Century Communication: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking*. *National Geographic learning*. Cengage Learning. 184 p.
- Fatmawati, A., Zubaidah, S. & Sutopo Mahanal (2019). *Critical thinking, creative thinking, and learning achievement: How they are related*. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, IOP Publishing, 1417 (1). 127 p.
- John Hughes, & Paul Dummett (2019). *Critical Thinking in ELT: A Working Model for the Classroom*. National Geographic. 158 p.
- Paul, R. W. & Elder, L. (2006). *Critical thinking: The nature of critical and creative thought*. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 30(2), 34–35.
- Simon Bradley, & Nicole Price (2016). *Proven Strategies To Improve Decision Making Skills, Increase Intuition And Think Smarter!* CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. 106 p.
- Smith, G., & Peloghitis, J. (2020). *Critical thinking and debiasing: Experimentation in academic writing course*. In P. Clements In P. Clements, A. Krause & R. Gentry (Eds.), *Teacher efficacy, learner agency* (pp. 443–450). Tokyo: JALT. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPCP2019-51>
- Terno, C., O. (2009). *Krytychne myslennia — suchasnyi vymir suspilstvoznavchoi osvity*. Zaporizhzhia: Prosvita. 268 s.
- Tiahlo, A. V. (1999). *Krytychne myslennia, problema svitovoi osvity XXI stolittia*. Kharkiv: Instytut vnutrishnikh sprav. 285 s.
- Willingham, D. T. (2007). *Critical thinking: Why is it so hard to teach?* *American Educator*, 8–19.

**Тетяна Жукова**, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1693-8178>, старший викладач кафедри іноземних мов, Таврійського державного агротехнологічного університету імені Дмитра Моторного, вул. Жуковського, 66, м. Запоріжжя, Україна, 69600, zhutet788@gmail.com

*У статті розглядаються теоретичні та практичні аспекти розвитку критичного мислення на заняттях з іноземної мови. Проаналізовано деякі техніки формування критичного мислення. Подано практичні завдання, що використовуються для оволодіння критичним мисленням на заняттях з англійської мови, а саме під час тренування навичок читання, аудіювання, письма й усного мовлення.*

*Метою статті є аналіз теоретичних і практичних аспектів розвитку критичного мислення на заняттях з іноземної мови, прийомів формування критичного мислення та вправ практичного спрямування. Обґрунтовано стратегії, що застосовуються для покращення критичного мислення.*

*Наведено основні факти щодо історичного шляху розвитку критичного мислення — від Сократа, Платона, Арістотеля і до представників ренесансу. Сучасні публікації філологів і науковців Джона Хьюджіса, Пола Даммета (2019); Пейгена Кастало, Крістена Лі (2017); Д. Сміта, Д. Пілогітіса (2020) та інших спрямовані на те, щоб навчити учнів мислити критично й ефективно спілкуватися. Подано кілька дефініцій поняття «критичне мислення».*

*Для того щоб бути ефективним у критичному мисленні, аналізується, як структурувати весь процес навчання. У статті розглядаються стратегії, які ми можемо використати, аби покращити критичне мислення (вміння ставити критичні запитання, вироблення звички глибоко тлумачити питання, практика відповідати на складні питання, практика прийняття рішень лише після їхньої належної оцінки, навчання застосовувати мислення для аналізу та розв'язання реальних життєвих завдань тощо).*

*Розглянуто основні етапи підготовки викладача до проведення занять з іноземної мови щодо розвитку критичного мислення студентів. Також представлено досвід навчання студентів критично мислити, використовуючи різноманітні практичні вправи з читання, аудіювання, письма.*

*Критичне мислення включає складові навички аналізу аргументів, висновків за допомогою індуктивного чи дедуктивного міркування, судження чи оцінки, а також прийняття рішень чи розв'язання проблем. Під час побудови оцінювання критичного мислення викладачі повинні використовувати відкриті завдання,*

*«автентичні» проблемні контексти, які вимагають від студентів вийти за рамки переказу раніше вивченої інформації.*

*Є потреба в обговоренні типів практичних вправ та нових прийомів розвитку й опанування критичного мислення на заняттях з іноземної мови.*

**Ключові слова:** *критичне мислення, спілкування, стратегії, судження, міркування, оцінювання, прийняття рішень, розв'язання проблем.*

*Стаття надійшла до редакції: 25.12.2023 р.*

*Прийнято до друку: 21.03.2024 р.*