CRITICAL THINKING AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

КРИТИЧНЕ МИСЛЕННЯ І ВИВЧЕННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

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As the world becomes more technologically advanced and the environment in which we live more complex, the need for education grows with each new generation. One of the important elements of modern educational approaches and models is the development of critical thinking skills. This article aims to provide an understanding of critical thinking in teaching and learning. The ability to think critically has become a widely recognized stage in any field of study, especially in the last few decades. The article comes to a general conclusion about the importance of the ability to think critically. This article explains critical thinking skills in educational processes and the importance of critical thinking for a student attending any educational program.

Critical thinking is a necessary element in the perception of the world and the information in it by a modern human being. It helps people to gain new knowledge deliberately, perceive the world properly. Effective critical thinkers go beyond superficial presentation and draw on other sources of knowledge to fully understand a given situation or scenario. This article focuses on critical thinking as a crucial life skill that is very important in any field of education. The article emphasizes the importance of acquiring critical thinking skills both for general education and for learning foreign languages and as a powerful contribution to personal development. This article describes methods and approaches for developing critical thinking when teaching and learning foreign languages. Various teaching strategies for developing critical thinking skills are presented in the article. It is considered one of the most challenging areas, which requires more attention at any level of education. The article provides examples of the application of practical aspects of critical thinking teaching methods in the English language classroom to prepare students more holistically for further academic study and their future careers in the workplace.

Key words: critical thinking, approach, learning, teaching, education.

Оскільки світ стає все більш технологічно розвиненим, а середовище, в якому ми живемо, все більш складним, потреба в освіті зростає з кожним новим поколінням. Одним із важливих елементів сучасних освітніх підходів і моделей є розвиток навичок критичного мислення. Ця стаття має на меті дати розуміння важливості критичного мислення у викладанні та навчанні. Вміння критично мислити стало загальновизнаною потребою у будь-якій галузі знань, особливо в останні кілька десятиліть. У статті робиться висновок про важливість вміння критично мислити. Пояснюється роль навичок критичного мислення в освітньому процесі та важливість критичного мислення для студента, який навчається за будь-якою освітньою програмою.

Критичне мислення є необхідним елементом сприйняття світу та інформації в ньому сучасною людиною. Воно допомагає людині усвідомлено здобувати нові знання, правильно сприймати світ. Ефективні критичні мислителі виходять за рамки поверхневого викладу та залучають інші джерела знань для повного розуміння певної ситуації чи сценарію. Ця стаття присвячена критичному мисленню як найважливішій життєвій навичці, яка є дуже важливою в будь-якій сфері освіти. У статті підкреслюється важливість набуття навичок критичного мислення як для загальної освіти, так і для вивчення іноземних мов, а також як потужного внеску у розвиток особистості. Стаття описує методи та підходи до розвитку критичного мислення під час викладання та вивчення іноземних мов. Представлені різні стратегії викладання для розвитку навичок критичного мислення. Це розглядається як одна з найскладніших сфер, яка потребує більшої уваги на будь-якому рівні освіти. У статті наведено приклади застосування практичних аспектів методики викладання критичного мислення на заняттях з англійської мови для більш цілісної підготовки студентів до подальшого академічного навчання та їхньої майбутньої кар'єри на робочому місці.

Ключові слова: критичне мислення, підхід, навчання, викладання, освіта.

Problem setting. We live in a modern age where technology is developing at a rapid pace, so life is changing at a rapid pace too. Everything is in constant motion: as soon as we have overcome one challenge, we are confronted with another, which we need to address and which we need to solve. It is up to young people to find solutions to all the problems and challenges of our time. So, every country in the world needs a quality, inclusive and equitable education system that helps young people develop the knowledge, skills and values they need to live and work in a modern world. As educators, we are responsible for ensuring that every young person gets the best possible education they need. Being qualified and knowing how to work remain important, but no longer suffice to succeed. The high-tech world demands higher-order cognitive skills for successful living. Young people should be able to generate and implement new ideas and solutions; use digital tools for knowledge discovery, resource creation and communication; use their knowledge to solve problems in the real world.

Quality, equitable educational system should develop – critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity and innovation, learning and metacognition; – cooperation and communication; – digital and ICT (information and communication technology) literacy; – civic responsibility, cultural awareness and competence.

Critical thinking can help people to understand themselves better. It allows them to be objective, less emotional and more open-minded because they need to value the views and opinions of others. By getting used to thinking things through, people gain the confidence to bring fresh perspectives and new ideas to the table to solve problems that concern them. Critical thinking increases creativity and improves the way people use and manage their time [3, p. 464], and critical thinking describes not only the ability to think according to the rules of logic and probability but also the ability to apply these skills to real-world problems that are independent of content. Therefore, the ability to think and to think critically needs to be developed at every stage of education and in every area of knowledge, including the learning of a foreign language.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Thinking is the main point of all cognitive activities or processes and is unique to humans. It involves the manipulation and analysis of information received from the environment. Such manipulation and analysis are done through abstraction, reasoning, imagination, problem-solving, judging, and decision-making. The brain's thinking processes are involved in processing information, for example, when we form concepts, solve problems, reason and make decisions. Critical thinking has been interpreted and defined in different ways. In a seminal study of critical thinking and education, Edward Glaser defined critical thinking as "the ability to think critically" [2, p. 49]. In considering the components of critical thinking, Glaser pointed to the importance of a variety of personal experiences, as well as a disposition to consider problems and issues thoughtfully and to be proficient in methods of logical inquiry and reasoning. He also suggested that certain skills in applying these methods should be taken into account [2, p. 41].

Other leaders in the field have included in their understanding of critical thinking the skills, practice and need for reflection on the part of both the learner and the teacher. Scriven and Richard identified the following attributes of critical thinking: clarity, precision, coherence, relevance, validity, convincing evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth and fairness. Elder and Paul [1, p. 102] also endorse fairness and empathy as characteristics and attributes of critical

thinking. They included in their definition of critical thinking not only the skills of acquiring information, forming beliefs and processing them, but also added the importance of developing the habit of using these skills to guide behaviour. Similarly, Rudd [5, p. 46] agrees that learning skills is not enough. Students need to practice using them. According to him, the development of critical thinking requires a total focus on improvement, i.e. exercises to improve results that are gradual and involve repetition and guidance with timely feedback. According to Elder and Paul [1, p. 112] and Rudd [5, p. 40], the skills of critical thinking can be applied to any subject, any content and any problem.

It is also disputed whether critical thinking is synonymous with higher-order thinking. Malnix [4, p. 478] and Elder and Paul [1, p. 48] refer to the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy when they describe critical thinking. At the same time, Rudd [5, p. 48] argues that higher-order thinking and critical thinking are not equivalent, as critical thinking also involves decision-making, creative thinking and problem-solving. Notably, Glaser [2, p. 146] also points to the importance of these factors. In line with this view, he made practical recommendations, including acquiring, retaining and seeking knowledge, and emphasized the importance of problem-solving, decision making and creative thinking.

Setting objectives. The purpose of the article is to discuss some issues of teaching a foreign language emphasizing the importance of mastering critical thinking skills. The article intends to draw attention to the relationship between critical thinking skills and the ability to understand a problem in time and find the right solution. The aim of the article is to explore the importance of critical thinking skills for educational and language development, their characteristics, aims, challenges and benefits, and the use of innovative approaches and methods to develop critical thinking skills in foreign language teaching.

Presenting the main material. To meet modern requirements, the education system is constantly changing. To do so, education systems need to have a clear vision of the purpose of education and to develop in young people the necessary skills and competencies relevant to the world. Changes are also taking place in the way foreign languages are taught.

As English teachers, we focus on the development of four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking. While our students are practicing these skills, we should encourage them to develop other important skills – critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication. Of course, it is easier to develop critical thinking skills in the English

classroom if students already have strong language skills. But the fact is that these skills can and should be taught at all levels.

First, it is necessary to determine the sequence of exercises – from simple to more complex, to identify vocabulary and grammar that can be specifically used in the practice of teaching critical thinking.

The sequence of critical thinking training is as follows: observation, comprehension, analysis of what is seen or heard, synthesis, which reflects a thorough analysis of information, and then judgement. For example, when dealing with visual information, we need to understand the limits of our certainty about it and ask questions not only about what we can see but also about what is missing to provide complete information. At the initial stage of this exercise, we need a picture, grammar: there is/are, prepositions of place, Present Continuous tense. Types of tasks: Fill in the blanks. 1. Objects: Present/Exist 2. Activities: Present Continuous.

When students are asked to describe a picture or event, they should not make statements, they should make assumptions. For example, a picture where one can see people is necessary to describe as follows: Maybe they are …. They are probably …. They might … I [think/feel/believe] that they are … It is possible that they are … The photo suggests that they are …. We teach our students to doubt, to assume and to look for evidence, not to say something is certain at first sight.

There are many task-based activities that English language teachers can use to engage students in real-life communication. One of such task is a survey project. It helps students to integrate the skills they have learned previously. They have to think about the questions, ask them correctly, collect the necessary information, analyze the findings and make a report. Brainstorming, research, writing, problem solving and group work can be used to achieve this. The survey project provides an opportunity to combine the purposeful use of language with the development of critical thinking. According to Facione, critical 'thinkers' typically possess qualities such as honesty, openness and flexibility, and a set of cognitive skills such as 'the ability to interpret, analyze, evaluate, infer, explain and self-regulate, such as metacognition' [2, p. 10]. The survey project has the potential to improve all of these cognitive skills. Interpretation skills and self-regulation are particularly important. Facione [2, p. 8] defines interpretation as the ability to analyze information received in the form of experiences, data, viewpoints and rules. Interpretation is divided into two sub-skills: (a) categorizing information and (b) clarifying or explaining.

As part of the development of critical thinking skills, it is important that students are encouraged to express a range of opinions on the subject. Through these exercises, students learn to find more specific information, formulate questions differently, propose, agree and disagree. They learn to express themselves more sensibly and clearly. Students who demonstrate what Facione [2, p. 4] calls a 'critical mind' are likely to be good at brainstorming; they are the ones who ask questions such as 'why' and 'how' and 'what if'. As natural 'critical thinkers' they should be included in the groups as they have the potential to encourage creative thinking among their peers in a way that teachers cannot. With the right guidance from the teacher and regular practice, students should gradually begin to think critically and become more creative in their questioning. They can ask questions that go beyond the text.

Questioning is the cornerstone of critical thinking, which is the source of knowledge creation, and as such should be taught as the basis of all learning. Students often develop their approach to learning from their experiences in classrooms where the teacher is the one who guides the process through a textbook [4, p. 468]. This situation worries modern educators, who prefer to choose the latest models and methods that are more effective in encouraging students to think. Critical thinking occurs when students analyze, evaluate, interpret or synthesize information and use creative thinking to form an argument, solve a problem or reach a conclusion. The purpose of critical thinking is the promotion of independent thinking, personal autonomy and reasoned judgement in thought and action. This includes two interrelated dimensions: 1) the ability to reason well and 2) the inclination to do so. Critical thinking involves logic and creativity. It can involve inductive and deductive reasoning, analysis and problem-solving, as well as creative, innovative and integrated approaches to solving issues and problems.

All of these skills can be developed through language learning. Knowledge and skills are interrelated, and when students develop both at the same time, they learn more effectively. Teachers who teach these skills should focus on highly effective teaching methods. Therefore, interactive, student-centred lessons, which include the most effective approaches, will play an important role. Students' experience and knowledge should be used in teaching. Positive attitude towards students is very important. The development of metacognition, self-regulation and self-directed learning is also encouraged.

Immediate student feedback (including ongoing teacher feedback) is necessary. Collaborative lear-

ning (pair and group work) and collaboration are features of an advanced approach to teaching, as well as the use of digital, non-digital, local resources and materials. Lesson planning embraces diversity (i.e., different approaches in teaching). Speaking interventions (interactive questioning, dialogue, etc.) are widely used in teaching.

A more forward-looking approach to teaching foreign languages involves integrating critical thinking into academic subjects. Critical thinking strategies – such as looking at a problem from different perspectives – should be clearly taught by the teacher and widely practiced by students. Teachers need to know how to model critical thinking, how to ask open-ended questions, and how to provide feedback that allows students to solve non-standard problems. To meet these expectations, teachers need new skills and better tools. Curriculum resources must be redesigned to incorporate critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It will make a huge difference to their lives and happiness if they learn to think critically and solve problems.

By encouraging students to think about how they arrived at a particular answer, teachers encourage them to think critically and get them to use more language and put it into practice. For example, in a simple future tense activity, the teacher can ask students what they will be doing in five years' time. A student might answer that he is going to be a politician. The teacher can ask questions like these to get the student to think more critically: Why do you think this? What evidence do you see in your life now that will support this in the future? By asking these questions, the teacher encourages the students to reflect on their thinking. At the same time, the teacher allows them to use English to express what they want to say.

For example, if a class is working on a vocabulary unit about professions, a teacher can ask an open-ended question that encourages students to think more deeply. It could be something like this: If you were a taxi driver working the night shift, how would your life change? How would you balance your studies and your work? Encourage this kind of thinking and expression and students will benefit in many ways. When you ask a question, giving students a few minutes to think before answering can mean the difference between a short, easy answer and one that comes from serious thought. Students can be taught to use phrases like: 'Give me a minute to think...' when they want to think about their ideas. When they use these phrases, it shows that they are actively trying to answer the question. They need the time to put their ideas and words together before speaking.

To encourage students to think more carefully, the teacher can use the following phrases: 'Tell me more about this. What else do you think? Why is this good/bad/scary/difficult or not? Which part do you find the most interesting? Why?'

A teacher can support students as they learn new skills by giving them tools to help them. It can be done by providing examples, breaking down tasks into smaller, easier-to-follow steps, and giving hints and reminders. A teacher can help his/her students by giving them temporary support with a new and challenging task. As the students become more comfortable with the task, the support should be removed and their successes, big and small have to be rewarded.

Critical thinking means the ability to provide arguments in favour of one's own beliefs or opinions. A teacher can encourage students to make logical and well-reasoned arguments to support their opinions in discussions and written assignments. This will help them think analytically, which is part of critical thinking. Students will learn to support their arguments naturally if a teacher asks them to give reasons or examples to support their ideas.

A teacher can ask students to guess what happens next in the reading assignments (fiction, essays, news articles) and in the video clips that are shown in class. In making these predictions, they have not only to think critically but also use the language skills they have learned.

Thinking about both sides of an argument will force students to think beyond their own opinions and beliefs. A simple way of doing this is to take a controversial statement and ask students to list some arguments to support and some to oppose it

Conclusion. Critical thinking is one of the skills that young people should have as part of their studies. It can be practiced in English lessons too. It can be taught at all levels of English.

According to the Critical Thinking Cooperation, critical thinking is an ability that goes beyond rote learning. When students think critically, they are encouraged to think for themselves, question hypotheses, analyze and synthesize events, and go a step further by developing new hypotheses and testing them against facts.

A large part of learning a language is learning it by heart. But critical thinking can and does take place in the foreign language classroom. If the teacher encourages students to think more, they will speak more, and speaking more means using language creatively and communicatively. When teachers try one or more of the above methods with their students, they will see how well their students can express themselves in the language they are learning.

Critical thinking is much more difficult in a second language because the learner is confronted with

incomprehensible language when reading and listening and has to be clear and precise in writing and speaking.

If critical thinking is the main focus of a lesson or a side story in a grammar or vocabulary lesson, it can deepen students' engagement with the material.

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