

Linguocultural And Psycholinguistic Aspects Of Teaching Critical Thinking To International Students In The Uzbek Language Environment

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Abstract: This article provides a scholarly analysis of the linguoculturological and psycholinguistic features of teaching critical thinking to foreign students in the context of the Uzbek language. In the era of globalization, the international integration of higher education requires that not only linguistic competence but also cultural and psychological aspects be taken into consideration in the educational process of foreign students studying in Uzbekistan. The development of critical thinking as a modern educational paradigm enhances students' abilities to think creatively, logically, and independently. From this perspective, the paper investigates the linguocultural context of foreign learners of Uzbek, their psycholinguistic processes of language perception, and their communicative needs within the educational setting.

Keywords: Critical thinking, foreign students, Uzbek language education, linguoculturology, psycholinguistics, communicative competence, interactive methods, cross-cultural communication, educational paradigm, independent thinking.

Introduction: In the context of globalization, the increasing number of international students in the higher education system has significantly intensified the importance of linguocultural and psycholinguistic factors in the educational process [1,43-p]. In particular, the number of international students in the Republic of Uzbekistan has steadily grown in recent years. A significant proportion of these students learn Uzbek as a second or even third language. Therefore, in the educational process, it is essential not only to develop students' language competence but also to foster their critical thinking skills as a matter of priority [10,61-p].

Critical thinking is one of the central concepts of the modern educational paradigm. It serves to shape students not merely as passive recipients of ready-made knowledge but as independent analysts, logical reasoners, and creators of new perspectives [11,39-p]. For international students in the Uzbek language environment, the development of critical thinking is closely tied to both linguocultural factors and

psycholinguistic processes [6,79-p]. Indeed, the interconnection between language and culture, as well as the mechanisms of language perception and processing in the human mind, are among the key factors determining the effectiveness of the learning process [8,64-p].

From this perspective, teaching Uzbek to international students should involve not only the acquisition of grammatical and lexical knowledge but also training in critically analyzing texts and situations, making logical evaluations, and independently solving problems. This, in turn, necessitates a linguocultural approach, since every language is taught as an inseparable part of its national culture [9,54-p] and it is through this cultural lens that critical thinking skills can be formed in students.

From a psycholinguistic standpoint, international students face several major challenges in learning Uzbek: interference from their native languages, difficulties in perceiving the structure and semantics of the new language, and psychological barriers to

developing communicative competence. These factors also directly affect the development of critical thinking. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to scientifically examine the linguocultural and psycholinguistic characteristics of teaching critical thinking skills to international students.

METHODOLOGY

This research focused on identifying the linguocultural and psycholinguistic features of teaching critical thinking to international students within the Uzbek language environment. The methodology employed a combination of qualitative and partially quantitative approaches. Theoretical foundations were drawn from established concepts in educational theory, linguoculturology, and psycholinguistics, as well as principles of the communicative approach in foreign language teaching [2,93-p].

First, theoretical sources were analyzed to explore advanced approaches to developing and applying critical thinking effectively in the educational process. In this stage, the interplay between linguocultural and psycholinguistic factors and their influence on the learning process was examined. Next, classroom activities of international students learning Uzbek were observed. Their interactions, methods of completing tasks, and responses in problematic situations were systematically documented [3,28-p].

A significant component of the study was the use of interviews and surveys. These tools helped identify the psychological difficulties students face in acquiring Uzbek, their needs for critical thinking, and their specific ways of interpreting cultural context. In addition, a specialized educational experiment was conducted. During the experiment, task-based activities grounded in interactive methods were used, including debates, analysis of culturally rich texts, and problem-solving exercises [4,37-p]. Results from this experimental group were compared with those of a control group taught using traditional methods.

The collected data were qualitatively analyzed and synthesized using comparative methods. Responses from interviews and surveys were processed through thematic coding and aligned with observation and experimental findings. This approach provided deep insight into the process of critical thinking formation in international students.

The methodological foundation of the study was an integrative approach. This approach emphasizes the broad use of cultural context in language teaching, considers psychological processes in learners' minds, and aims to promote critical thinking accordingly. As a result, students demonstrated both deeper language acquisition and significant development of critical and

independent thinking skills.

RESULTS

The results of the study show that presenting language material within a cultural context significantly enhanced students' ability to analyze texts deeply, approach problematic situations rationally, and compare various viewpoints. This approach not only activated the language acquisition process but also stimulated independent thinking. From a psycholinguistic perspective, students experienced interference from their native languages and difficulties in processing new lexical-semantic units; however, interactive tasks oriented toward critical thinking increased cognitive engagement and reduced the negative impact of these barriers.

Assessments of communicative competence revealed that students in the experimental group exhibited stronger skills in reasoning, argumentation, and evaluating alternative viewpoints. The integration of debates, role-playing, and cultural text analysis into the classroom increased student participation and transformed them from passive observers into active participants, thereby fostering a favorable psycholinguistic environment for the development of critical thinking [5,29-p].

Openness and tolerance formed through intercultural comparisons extended critical thinking beyond language learning and made it a core component of broader social-communicative competence.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that the integration of linguocultural and psycholinguistic factors is a key determinant in fostering critical thinking among international students [6,18-p]. Tasks built around cultural contexts significantly enhanced students' abilities to analyze texts, provide arguments, and evaluate alternative perspectives. From a psycholinguistic viewpoint, interactive activities activated linguistic processing mechanisms and mitigated the effects of interference, leading to improved communicative competence. As a result, critical thinking emerged not just as a tool for language acquisition, but also as a strategic resource for intercultural communication.

Nevertheless, the study has some limitations: the relatively small sample size and the contextual constraints of local classroom settings warrant caution when generalizing the findings. Future research should involve larger, multi-centered designs and longitudinal observations, as well as incorporate neuropsychological assessments to objectively evaluate cognitive changes.

Overall, the evidence supports the didactic value of the integrative approach and underscores the need for systematic incorporation of culturally enriched materials, problem-based tasks, and analytical assignments into educational programs.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the integration of linguocultural and psycholinguistic approaches in teaching critical thinking to international students within the Uzbek language environment significantly improves educational outcomes. Assignments designed around the integration of language and culture fostered deeper text analysis, argumentation, and independent reasoning skills among students [9,36-p]. Interactive methods that accounted for psycholinguistic factors reduced language processing difficulties and enhanced cognitive activity. In general, the development of critical thinking served as a vital element not only in facilitating international students' mastery of Uzbek but also in strengthening their intercultural communication competencies. The findings suggest that a lesson model based on the integration of linguocultural and psycholinguistic elements provides an effective methodological foundation for cultivating creative and independent thinking. Therefore, the systematic inclusion of this approach in curricula is strongly recommended.

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