

Linguodidactic Possibilities for Fostering Critical Thinking in the Instruction of Foreign Languages

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Abstract: One of the main objectives of teaching foreign languages in modern schools is the development of critical thinking skills. In modern linguodidactics much attention is paid to the development of analytical, introspective and intercultural skills, together with the language proficiency. The essay explores the linguodidactic possibilities for critical thinking development in the process of foreign language teaching. This study explores the effectiveness of communicative, task-based, reflective and problem-oriented approaches as teaching tools in enhancing the critical thinking skills of students through an analytical and theoretical research methodology. The study shows the importance of speech activities such as speaking, listening, reading and writing in the development of self-regulation, interpretation, evaluation, analysis and inference. The study also inquires into the contribution of questioning, debate, discussion, reflection and problem based learning towards the development of students' cognitive and metacognitive abilities. The findings reveal that the application of critical thinking techniques in foreign language training considerably enhances students' skills in autonomous thinking, professional reflection, and communication. The study finds that teaching foreign languages with an emphasis on critical thinking helps to form future teachers who are analytical, introspective and creative.

Keywords: Critical thinking; linguodidactics; foreign language teaching; communicative competence; reflection; problem-based learning; metacognition; EFL.

Introduction: In the era of globalization and changing educational paradigms, the development of critical thinking skills has become one of the most important goals of higher education. Today's society needs specialists that are able to think critically, make reasoned decisions, solve problems independently and participate effectively in the intercultural communication. Consequently, foreign language teaching is no longer exclusively aimed at the development of grammatical and lexical competence but is increasingly aimed at the development of higher order thinking skills and communicative competence.

From the linguodidactic point of view foreign language education is a complex pedagogical system, aimed at formation of communicative, cognitive and intercultural competencies. So the development of critical thinking is a constituent of this process. The

language learning environment is rich in opportunities for analytical reasoning, interpretation, reflection and evaluation as learners are constantly interacting with authentic information, diverse perspectives and communicative situations, highlight researchers.

The present foreign language methodology that is dominated by the communicative approach requires students to actively participate in meaningful interaction. Such interaction requires learners to express opinions, defend arguments, compare viewpoints and reach logical conclusions. According to Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, communicative approaches transform language learning from passive memorization to active cognitive engagement. Similarly, critical thinking can be developed through task-based learning, debates, case studies, and problem-solving activities.

Moreover, intercultural communication in the foreign language education allows students to have experiences of different cultural values, perspectives, and ways of thinking. This process helps to develop open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance of alternative points of view which are critical thinking dispositions.

The article is aimed at analyzing the linguodidactic possibilities of developing critical thinking in foreign language teaching and determining effective pedagogical methods that contribute to the formation of analytical and reflective thinking in students.

Materials and Methods

The current research applied qualitative theoretical research methods with the use of analytical review and synthesis of pedagogical, psychological and linguodidactic literature on the issues of critical thinking and foreign language education. The empirical basis of the research was a comparative analysis of the works of foreign scientists in the fields of linguodidactics, cognitive psychology and pedagogy.

The theoretical framework of the study was based on communicative language teaching, sociocultural theory, constructivist pedagogy and reflective learning approaches. A systematic analysis of scientific sources on the theory of critical thinking, communicative competence, metacognition and methodology of teaching foreign languages was conducted. Special emphasis was placed on the works of Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey, Peter A. Facione, Benjamin Bloom and Richard Paul.

The analysis was aimed at the identification of linguodidactic mechanisms that foster the development of critical thinking in activities of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Additionally, pedagogical tools for cognitive development such as questioning techniques, problem-based learning, analytical tasks, debates and reflective activities were discussed as ways of teaching.

Methods of theoretical generalization and interpretation were used to make conclusions on the effectiveness of the integration of critical thinking strategies in foreign language teaching.

Results

The analysis revealed broad linguodidactic possibilities

of foreign language teaching for the development of critical thinking competencies. The communicative and interactive nature of language learning provides favourable conditions for analytical reasoning, interpretation, argumentation and reflection.

The study concludes that listening, speaking, reading and writing activities in speech are effective means to develop critical thinking skills. In listening activities learners are not passive recipients of information, they evaluate arguments, identify hidden meanings, recognize bias, analyze logical connections. For example, listening tasks like interviews, debates or lectures challenge students to recognize speakers' arguments, assess evidence and make independent conclusions.

Speaking activities were also found to make a significant contribution to critical thinking development. In discussions, debates, role-plays and case-study presentations, students must defend opinions, reply to opposing arguments and substantiate positions logically. Effective critical thinking in the Paul–Elder model is closely related to communication and reasoned argument.

Reading activities help students differentiate facts from opinion, understand authors' intentions, and critically evaluate textual evidence. Based on Bloom's taxonomy, research shows that educational tasks are cognitively meaningful when they go beyond memorization to analysis, evaluation and creation.

The research also showed that the questioning techniques are one of the most powerful linguodidactic tools for promoting critical thinking. Open-ended, divergent and analytical questions stimulate learners' reasoning processes and foster independent judgment. Socratic questioning strategies foster cognitive involvement as they require learners to justify assumptions, evaluate evidence, and consider alternative perspectives.

Another important finding relates to the effectiveness of problem-based learning. In problem-solving exercises, students identify problems, analyze causes, evaluate alternatives, and propose solutions independently. Simultaneously reflective and analytical thinking as well as development of communicative competence was promoted by real-life communicative scenarios and case studies demonstrated.

Moreover, reflection was identified as a key component of metacognition of critical thinking. The self-assessment checklists, reflective journals, and microteaching reflection reports enable the learners to analyze their own performance, identify gaps, and develop professional competencies.

The results show that in general the combination of communicative, analytical, reflective and problem-oriented methods makes foreign language learning a cognitively active process that develops higher-order thinking skills.

Discussion

The results of the study confirm the modern linguodidactic theories on the indissolubility of language and thinking. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) argued that higher mental functions are developed through social interaction and language-mediated communication. In the foreign language classroom, communicative interaction provides opportunities for learners to conduct analytical reasoning and reflective dialogue. This supports the sociocultural perspective on cognitive development through dialogue and meaningful communication.

The results also correspond with John Dewey's concept of reflective thinking, where true thinking begins with the awareness of a problem and continues through processes of inquiry and problem-solving. Just such conditions are provided by problem-based learning activities in foreign language classrooms, which encourage students to analyze authentic communicative challenges and formulate evidence-based solutions.

Moreover, the results are in line with the Delphi Report by Peter A. Facione, which defines critical thinking as a combination of cognitive skills such as interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. The study shows that these skills can be developed effectively with the speech activities and interactive teaching methods in EFL contexts.

The identified role of reflection in this research is especially relevant for teacher education and professional development. Reflective practice enables future teachers to critically evaluate the choices they make in their teaching and to constantly improve their teaching effectiveness. In this sense, microteaching activities with reflective analysis are particularly useful

for the preparation of professionally competent and critically reflective educators.

A further important implication relates to intercultural communication. Authentic materials expose students to different cultural perspectives, which creates tolerance, openness and flexibility of thought. Such intercultural awareness contributes not only to communicative competence, but also to the dispositional component of critical thinking.

Therefore, the use of critical thinking techniques in the process of teaching foreign languages should be regarded not only as an additional pedagogical component, but as a core objective of modern linguodidactics.

Conclusion

The study confirms that teaching foreign languages provides great linguodidactic opportunities for the development of critical thinking skills. Communicative interaction, authentic materials, reflective practices, analytical tasks and problem-based learning are ways to create positive conditions for the development of higher-order cognitive skills.

Development of learners' analytical reasoning, evaluation skills, interpretation abilities and reflective thinking is given decisive importance to speech activities (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Similarly, techniques such as interrogation, debate, discussion, analysis and reflection promote students' independent and evidence-based thinking.

The introduction of critical thinking in foreign language teaching makes the learning process an active cognitive activity, and not just passive assimilation of knowledge. As a result, students are able to critically evaluate information, communicate informed opinions, solve problems independently and reflect on their professional development.

Therefore, in the modern foreign language methodology what should be continued is the focus on innovative and interactive ways of teaching that combine the development of communicative competence and critical thinking. Such approaches are useful in training future teachers and future specialists who are intellectually independent, analytically competent and professionally reflective.

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