

The Social Necessity Of Developing Students' Critical Thinking Skills In English Language Classes

Mavlonova Dildora Shuxrat qizi

Phd researcher of Jizzakh State Pedagogical University, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: In the conditions of globalization, digitalization, and rapid socio-economic change, modern education systems are required to prepare learners who are capable of independent thinking, informed decision-making, and effective communication. Critical thinking has therefore emerged as a socially significant educational outcome. English language education, due to its communicative, cognitive, and intercultural nature, provides a particularly effective context for developing these skills. This study substantiates the social necessity of developing students' critical thinking skills in English language classes and empirically examines the effectiveness of critical thinking-oriented teaching technologies. A mixed-methods approach combining pedagogical experimentation, testing, observation, and statistical analysis was employed. The results demonstrate statistically significant improvement in students' critical thinking and communicative competence ($p < 0.01$), confirming the social and pedagogical value of integrating critical thinking into English language instruction.

Keywords: Critical thinking, English language teaching, social necessity, pedagogical experiment, higher-order thinking skills.

Introduction: Modern society is characterized by an unprecedented flow of information, technological advancement, and complex social interactions. These changes require individuals who are able not only to acquire knowledge, but also to analyze information critically, evaluate sources, solve problems creatively, and make reasoned decisions. As a result, the development of critical thinking skills has become a socially significant objective of contemporary education.

English, as an international language of communication, science, and technology, plays a crucial role in preparing students for global interaction. English language classes are no longer limited to grammar and vocabulary instruction; they are expected to contribute to learners' intellectual development and social competence. Therefore, integrating critical thinking into English language teaching is not merely a methodological choice, but a social necessity.

This article aims to justify the social necessity of developing students' critical thinking skills in English language classes and to highlight its importance in meeting the demands of modern society. The research addresses the following questions:

1. Why is critical thinking socially necessary in modern education?
2. How can English language lessons contribute to the development of critical thinking skills?

METHODS

Research Design: The study employed a quasi-experimental research design with control and experimental groups to determine the effectiveness of critical thinking-oriented instruction in English language classes. The research was conducted during one academic semester and followed the principles of pedagogical experimentation.

Participants: The participants of the study were undergraduate students studying English as a foreign language. A total of 60 students participated in the experiment and were divided into two groups: an experimental group (30 students) and a control group (30 students). Both groups had comparable language proficiency levels at the beginning of the study, as confirmed by a diagnostic pre-test.

Instruments and Data Collection: To assess the development of students' critical thinking skills, the following research instruments were used:

- a standardized critical thinking skills test adapted for EFL learners;
- pre-test and post-test tasks measuring analytical reading, argumentative speaking, and reflective writing;
- observation checklists focusing on students' participation, reasoning, and interaction;
- student questionnaires to identify attitudes toward critical thinking-based instruction.

Experimental Procedure: At the initial stage, both groups completed a pre-test to determine their baseline levels of critical thinking and language competence. During the experimental phase, the control group was taught using traditional grammar-translation and drill-based methods, while the experimental group received instruction based on critical thinking strategies, including problem-based learning, debates, case analysis, open-ended questioning, and reflective tasks.

English language lessons in the experimental group were structured to encourage analysis, evaluation, interpretation, and synthesis of information. Authentic materials and socially relevant topics were integrated

to enhance learners' engagement and real-world applicability.

At the final stage, a post-test was administered to both groups. The collected data were analyzed using comparative and descriptive statistical methods to identify differences between pre-test and post-test results.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using percentage comparison and mean score analysis, while qualitative data obtained from observations and questionnaires were interpreted through content analysis. This combination allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the experimental instruction.

RESULTS

The results of the pedagogical experiment were analyzed on the basis of pre-test and post-test data obtained from the control and experimental groups. The quantitative analysis focused on students' critical thinking indicators and overall English language performance.

Quantitative Results

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores of Students' Critical Thinking Skills

Group	Pre-test Mean Score	Post-test Mean Score	Improvement %
Control Group	56.4	61.2	+4.8%
Experimental Group	55.9	72.6	+16.7%

The data presented in Table 1 indicate that both groups showed some improvement; however, the experimental group demonstrated a substantially

higher increase in critical thinking performance. This suggests that critical thinking-oriented instruction had a significant positive effect on students' cognitive development.

Table 2. Development of English Language Skills (Post-test Results)

Skill Area	Control Group %	Experimental Group %
Analytical Reading	63	78
Argumentative Speaking	60	81
Reflective Writing	58	76

The experimental group outperformed the control group across all assessed language skills. The most notable differences were observed in argumentative speaking and reflective writing, which are closely associated with higher-order thinking skills.

Qualitative Results: Qualitative data obtained from classroom observations and student questionnaires revealed increased learner engagement, higher

participation in discussions, and improved ability to justify opinions in the experimental group. Students reported greater confidence in expressing ideas and evaluating information critically.

Overall, the findings confirm that systematic integration of critical thinking strategies into English language instruction significantly enhances both linguistic competence and cognitive skills.

Table 3. Independent Samples t-test Results (Post-test Scores)

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Control Group	61.2	5.4		
Experimental Group	72.6	6.1	4.27	0.001

Statistical Significance of Results: To determine the statistical reliability of the obtained results, an independent samples t-test was applied to compare the post-test mean scores of the control and experimental groups.

The calculated t-value ($t = 4.27$) with a significance level of $p < 0.01$ indicates a statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups. This confirms that the observed improvement in the experimental group was not random, but the result of systematic implementation of critical thinking-oriented instructional strategies.

DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study corroborate findings reported in international research on critical thinking in foreign language education. Scholars such as Facione (2015) and Paul and Elder (2019) emphasize that critical thinking develops most effectively when embedded in subject-specific instruction rather than taught in isolation. The present study supports this view by demonstrating measurable improvement in students' critical thinking skills through English language lessons.

Comparatively, similar studies conducted in EFL contexts (e.g., Richards & Rodgers, 2014) report that communicative and problem-based approaches lead to higher learner engagement and deeper cognitive processing. The significantly higher post-test scores of the experimental group align with these international findings, confirming the effectiveness of debates, case studies, and reflective tasks in promoting analytical and evaluative thinking. Despite the positive outcomes, the study acknowledges limitations related to sample size

and duration. Future research should involve larger participant groups and longitudinal designs to further validate the results. Nonetheless, the findings provide strong empirical evidence supporting the social necessity of developing critical thinking skills in English language classes.

Furthermore, the improvement observed in argumentative speaking and reflective writing supports previous research indicating that language production tasks are particularly effective in fostering critical thinking. This suggests that English language classrooms offer a unique environment where cognitive and communicative competencies can develop simultaneously.

From a social perspective, the findings highlight the role of English language education in preparing learners for participation in a globalized world. The ability to analyze information, articulate reasoned arguments, and engage in intercultural dialogue corresponds to the competencies required by modern society and the international labor market.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that the development of students' critical thinking skills in English language classes is not only a pedagogical objective, but also a socially and educationally necessary task. The results of the pedagogical experiment confirm that critical thinking-oriented instruction significantly improves students' analytical reasoning, reflective judgment, and communicative competence. From a social perspective, the findings indicate that English language education plays a crucial role in preparing learners for the challenges of the information society, where the

ability to evaluate information critically, express reasoned opinions, and engage in constructive dialogue is essential. The integration of critical thinking into English language lessons contributes to the formation of socially active, responsible, and intellectually independent individuals.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the study highlights the effectiveness of learner-centered, problem-based, and communicative teaching technologies in fostering higher-order thinking skills. The statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups ($p < 0.01$) provide empirical evidence supporting the systematic inclusion of critical thinking strategies in English language curricula.

In conclusion, the study substantiates the social necessity of developing critical thinking skills through English language education and recommends that curriculum designers, educators, and policymakers prioritize critical thinking as a core component of foreign language instruction. Further research involving larger samples and longitudinal designs is recommended to strengthen and expand the empirical base of these findings.

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