



INGLIZ TILI TA'LIMIDA TANQIDIY FIKRLASH VA MADANIYATLARARO KOMPETENSIYANI RIVOJLANTIRISH

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada oliy o'quv ta'lim muassasalarida ingliz tilini o'rganishda tanqidiy fikrlash va madaniyatlararo kompetensiyani rivojlantirish muhimligi muhokama qilinadi. Muallifning fikriga ko'ra amaldagi EFL darsliklari (ingliz tili chet tili sifatida) ko'pincha madaniy bilimlarni statik faktlar sifatida taqdim etadi, bunday yondashuv esa o'z navbatida tahliliy va tanqidiy fikrlashni cheklashi mumkin hamda an'anaviy o'qitish usullari ko'nikmalarni rivojlantirishga to'sqinlik qiladi. Tadqiqotda tanqidiy fikrlashni hamda madaniyatlararo kompetensiyani rivojlantirish uchun amaldagi o'quv qo'llanmalari, darsliklarni qayta ko'rib chiqish, o'qituvchilar malakasini oshirish va muqobil baholash tizimini joriy etish zarurligi ta'kidlangan.

Kalit so'zlar: tanqidiy fikrlash, madaniyatlararo kompetensiya, ingliz tilini o'rganish, oliy ta'lim, pedagogik yondashuvlar.

РАЗВИТИЕ КРИТИЧЕСКОГО МЫШЛЕНИЯ И МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ В ОБРАЗОВАНИИ ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

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Аннотация. В данной статье рассмотрена важность развития критического мышления и межкультурной компетенции при изучении английского языка в высших учебных заведениях. По мнению автора в нынешних учебниках по EFL (английский язык как иностранный) культурные знания часто представлены в виде статичных фактов, и это в свою очередь, ограничивает аналитическую активность, а традиционные методы обучения препятствуют развитию необходимых навыков. Исследование подчеркивает необходимость пересмотра учебников, улучшения подготовки преподавателей и внедрения альтернативных методов оценки для развития более глубокого межкультурного понимания и критического дискурса.

Ключевые слова: критическое мышление, межкультурная компетенция, изучение английского языка, высшее образование, педагогические подходы.

ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract. *This article discusses the importance of developing critical thinking and intercultural competence when studying English in higher education. According to the author, current EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbooks often present cultural knowledge in the form of static facts, and this in turn limits analytical activity and traditional teaching methods hinder the development of necessary skills. The study emphasizes the need to revise textbooks, improve teacher training, and introduce alternative assessment methods to develop deeper intercultural understanding and critical discourse.*

Keywords: *critical thinking, intercultural competence, English language learning, higher education, pedagogical approaches.*

Introduction.

The improvement of critical thinking and intercultural competence is an urgent problem in education in our country, especially in the context of English language learning in higher education institutions. In our opinion, these two competencies are deeply interrelated, as both require students to think analytically. Deardorff (2009) argues that intercultural competence goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge; it requires critical engagement with cultural perspectives, an idea that coincides with our view that learning about cultures without making sense of them does little to prepare students for real intercultural interactions. The authors Sobolev and Lomakin from Russia (2017) establish cognitive flexibility as both essential for critical thinking and intercultural competence. This perspective shares with the author that teaching students to analyze cultural content should replace passive exposure to cultural content in education. An approach which fails to educate students properly will transform intercultural competence from deep analysis into a shallow understanding.

Literature review.

Recent studies on English language teaching reveals that English language teaching offers an ideal environment for the development of critical thinking skills. That said, the effectiveness of teaching depends entirely on how it is structured. Zhang (Zhang, 2020) studied the effects of different teaching methods in Chinese EFL classrooms and concluded that passive exposure to cultural knowledge does little to promote critical thinking and intercultural competence. According to the study, if students are encouraged to compare viewpoints, analyze cultural assumptions, and reflect on their own biases, they show significant improvements in both areas. From our perspective, this supports the idea that language learning should be more than just an introduction to different cultural norms - it should be a space for critical interaction. Esen (2021) categorizes learning approaches into three categories: implicit familiarity, explicit learning, and task-based learning. The author finds that explicit learning, where students actively engage with cultural material through analysis and discussion, is the most effective. We agree with this finding; without structured opportunities for reflection, students may learn about other cultures but will not develop the analytical skills necessary for meaningful intercultural interaction.

A major problem we have observed in much of the literature is the role of textbooks, which, despite their central role in language learning, often fail to foster deep engagement with cultural content. Sobkowiak (2016) argues although textbooks include cultural references, they rarely encourage students to challenge these references. The study reveals an interesting trend in which cultural knowledge is presented as static facts rather than points of view that can be

analyzed and discussed. According to Jiang et al. (2017) textbooks should provide problem-solving assignments to help students develop critical interaction with cultural material. We consider this situation to be a critical flaw in modern language education methods.

Textbooks fail to develop true intercultural competency since they lack mechanisms that guide students through cultural comparison and evaluation. Koyama together with Matsumoto and Ohno (2017) analyzed Japanese educational materials to determine how they fall short in providing students with opportunities to develop intercultural competence even though the CEFR prioritizes this skill. This deficiency demonstrates an essential disagreement between guidelines shown in educational policies and the actual teaching methods applied within classrooms. Educational materials should combine cultural awareness education with analytical evaluation methods because students need both skills to achieve real intercultural comprehension. Intercultural competence development requires active student engagement with comparative cultural analysis through textbooks although such textbooks fail to achieve this outcome.

Koyama, Matsumoto, and Ohno (2017) concluded that, despite the CEFR's emphasis on intercultural competence, instructional materials rarely provide students with the tools to develop it. In our understanding, this highlights a fundamental gap between educational policy and classroom practice. We can definitively state that, without well-designed instructional materials that encourage questioning and reflection, students may develop cultural awareness, but they lack the analytical skills necessary for deeper intercultural engagement.

However, it is important to note the fact that the effectiveness of any university curriculum ultimately depends on the role of teachers. We found that teacher training is one of the most critical factors in determining whether students develop these competencies. Authors Yaprak and Özmen (2021) conducted a study of professional development programs designed to integrate critical thinking into intercultural education. According to their results, although teachers recognize the importance of these skills, they often have difficulty implementing them effectively and this reveals a serious limitation in current teaching methods. Without teaching how to lead discussions that encourage students to analyze and reflect on cultural assumptions, even the best curricula will fail to develop critical engagement.

Scholars Khatami and Ghaffarzadeh (2015) found that when teachers receive targeted training in critical discussions, students show significant improvement in both critical thinking and intercultural awareness. We argue that this emphasizes the need for ongoing professional development for educators. Unless teachers themselves have strong critical thinking skills or an understanding of how to develop them, they will not be able to guide students toward meaningful intercultural engagement.

Methodology.

Our study is based on a systematic review of current literature on the integration of critical thinking and intercultural competence in English language learning. In our analysis, we examined eight peer-reviewed studies (2015-2024) that included analyses of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook selected based on relevance, diversity of educational contexts (China, Poland, Iran, global EFL), and empirical framework (quantitative and qualitative studies, textbook analysis, surveys) to assess how these competencies are integrated into instruction.

Analysis and discussion of results.

Critical thinking and intercultural competence are essential in English language learners but remain inconsistently integrated into curricula. Textbooks often present cultural knowledge as static facts rather than encouraging analytical engagement Sobkowiak (2016). We found that students rarely question cultural perspectives, which limits their ability to develop higher-order thinking skills. Teacher training is another major challenge. Studies by

Zhou et al. (2024) and Zhang (2020), highlight how many EFL teachers rely on outdated, memorization-based methods without fostering critical discourse. This implies that without explicit instruction, it is difficult for teachers to engage in meaningful cross-cultural discussions. Several effective strategies have been identified in analyzing the literature (Table 1). For example, Gutiérrez (2022) found that films, media analysis, and real-world case studies help students develop cultural criticism skills. Similarly, alternative assessment methods, reflective writing and role-playing, are more effective than standardized tests for measuring both critical thinking and intercultural competence (Khatami & Ghaffarzadeh, 2015).

Table 1.

Key Findings on Critical Thinking and Intercultural Competence in English Language Learning

| Author | Methodology | Findings |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Esmaeili & Kuhi (2023) | Qualitative content analysis of pedagogical intercultural tasks and critical incident tasks | Pedagogical intercultural and critical incident tasks enhance learners, intercultural skills and reflective thinking. |
| Karatsu (2021) | Case study using CLIL methodology and film analysis | Using films improves students critical awareness of cultural hegemony and stereotypes. |
| Gutiérrez (2022) | Classroom-based study analyzing preservice teachers, responses to critical intercultural education | Critical language education helps preservice teachers affirm multiple identities but presents instructional challenges. |
| Zhang (2020) | Mixed-method approach assessing Chinese EFL students' critical thinking skills | Chinese EFL students exhibit weak critical thinking ability; instructional changes are needed. |
| Sobkowiak (2016) | Textbook content analysis of 20 EFL coursebooks | Most EFL textbooks do not encourage deep critical thinking or intercultural engagement. |
| Khatami & Ghaffarzadeh (2015) | Correlation analysis between critical thinking and intercultural competence | There is a positive correlation between critical thinking and intercultural competence. |
| Zhou et al. (2024) | Systematic literature review on ICC in EFL instruction | Telecollaboration fosters ICC, but teachers lack cohesive methods for assessing it. |

Based on this study, the authors recommend that EFL textbooks need to be revised to include structured critical thinking exercises. We also suggest that teacher training programs need to be improved to provide teachers with strategies to promote intercultural discussions and critical analysis in the language learning process. We also need the integration of media and real-life examples, especially through movies, to enhance students' ability to critically evaluate cultural narratives. Standardized tests should be supplemented with alternative assessments such as reflective essays, role-plays, and case studies to effectively measure both competencies. The author proposes applications of Paul and Elder's (2006) critical thinking framework (Figure 1), which provides a structured approach to integrating critical thinking and intercultural competence into English language learning.

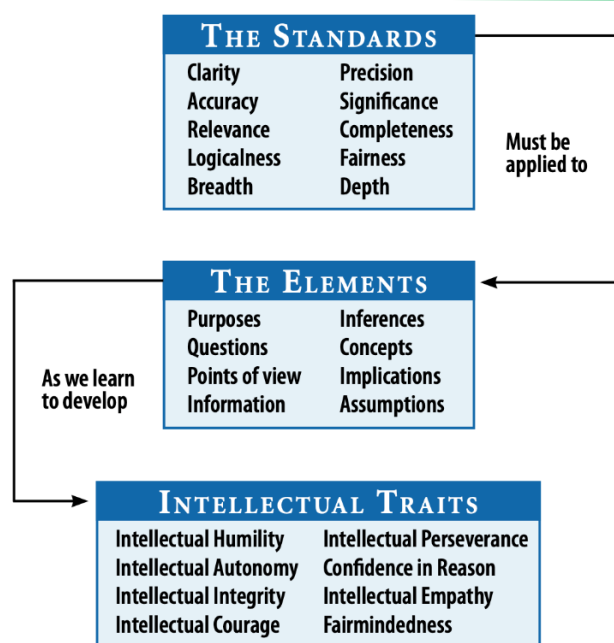


Figure 1. Framework for Enhancing Critical Thinking and Intercultural Competence
(Paul, R., & Elder, L. 2006)

In this framework, intellectual standards (clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness) help students critically evaluate cultural perspectives rather than memorizing facts. The elements of thinking (purpose, question, information, interpretation, assumptions, implications, and point of view) help students analyze cultural encounters with deeper reflection. Developing intellectual qualities such as humility, fairness, and empathy ensures that students will be open-minded and critical of different cultures.

Research from this study supports making extensive modifications to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks by adding structured activities which develop critical thinking abilities in students. The revisions should focus on developing activities which force students to question information while analyzing and synthesizing advanced concepts. Textbooks exert significant impact on classroom teaching so they need analytical content updates to help students learn analytical skills.

Our proposed improvements to teacher education programs would deliver methods to mentors which enable them to teach multicultural discourse and analytical thinking within language education. The ability to master linguistic elements alone does not meet teaching requirements because instructors must excel at facilitating discussions through which students can question different perspectives and cultural beliefs. The education system needs to focus on developing teaching training programs for future and existing professionals.

The educational curriculum must include multimedia content including cinematic materials to help students learn cultural message analysis skills. Teaching with real-world materials gives students the opportunity to find cultural bases and builds their skills for assessing cultural content.

Using this approach film narratives serve as a means to link theoretical principles to actual practical assessment methods.

We support the augmentation of standardized testing practices with different assessment methods which include reflective essays as well as role-plays and case studies. The alternative assessment techniques give teachers a better understanding of how students develop their critical thinking along with intercultural abilities beyond what traditional tests reveal. Multiple assessment methods used together lead to complete understanding about student learning progress.

Conclusion.

In settings, around the world it is widely recognized that traditional teaching methods and mindless memorization continue to dominate, hindering the growth of critical thinking abilities. This entrenched teaching approach limits students' chances to hone their ability to think critically and reflectively in order to participate effectively in discussions. These discoveries call for a reassessment of teaching approaches.

Kutlimuratova and Urazboev (2023) study Uzbekistan native English speaker challenges in post-Soviet educational systems at the regional level to demonstrate why teaching methods should be adapted to the socio historical environment and promote critical thinking for Uzbek students through modern interactive learning approaches instead of traditional memorization methods. According to the provided information EFL teaching methods that incorporate thinking and intercultural education through structured initiatives produce students with only basic awareness of cultural differences upon graduation. The shallow understanding that the current world demands fails to meet the standards required in deep engagements. An essential change needs to occur that promotes intellectually demanding teaching methods.

Our paper ends with the finding that critical thinking along with intercultural competence function as essential components for successful English language learning. Although textbooks act as a starting point students encounter difficulties in critical cultural analysis which prevents them from questioning different perspectives about culture. Various global educational research shows that instructional methods focused on the teacher and memorization techniques block the development of skills in students. Uzbek scholars have conducted research about the specific obstacles which confront non-native English speakers in their post-Soviet educational systems. Traditional rigid educational practices in Uzbekistan hinder critical thinking for their students because they demand memorization while restricting analytical discussion according to Kutlimuratova & Urazboev (2023).

University students only achieve basic knowledge of cultural differences when there is no explicit teaching of critical thinking and intercultural learning. The solution to these challenges needs educational transformations using systematic questioning techniques along with challenging discussions and different assessment strategies

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