

# APPLICATIONS OF CRITICAL THINKING RESEARCH: FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN AN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXT

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a methodology of teaching critical thinking skills in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes in an institution of higher education in Kazakhstan. The study findings suggest that the use of critical thinking impacts students' learning in the content area as it makes them aware of critical thinking as a way to approach intercultural exploration. The research results provide practical suggestions on how to guide students to develop and apply critical thinking skills. The critical thinking-based learning of EFL is conceptualized as the development of teaching strategies to help promote critical thinking in regards to students' intercultural awareness. The paper suggests a sample critical thinking lesson plan for engaging in critical thinking when teaching English as a foreign language and examines critical thinking strategies that can be used to foster critical thinking and relevant skills to deal with various problematic issues of conceptualization successfully.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, critical thinking has become a 'buzz word' in educational circles (Fisher, 2001), particularly in North America and the UK (Bailin, Case, Coombs, and Daniels, 1999a). It has also received particular attention in educational journals in Kazakhstan. Following the work of Bailin, et.al. (1999a), we consider the conceptualization of critical thinking as the ability to acquire what can widen our background knowledge, operational knowledge of appropriate standards, knowledge of key concepts, and of certain vital habits of mind. By applying these intellectual resources one can do his/her best to create an environment of critical thinking-based learning through redesigning lessons in which the students are involved.

This paper examines critical thinking strategies, which can be used to foster critical thinking and critical thinking skills to deal with various problematic issues of conceptualization related to intercultural proficiencies successfully. Existing conversations on creating an environment of critical thinking-based learning in EFL classes in an intercultural context in Kazakhstan are also addressed in a novel way.

The objective of the present research is three-fold: 1) to review teaching strategies effective in enhancing critical thinking in EFL classes, 2) to discuss why foreign language teachers should avoid the teacher-centered method to language instruction described by Paul (1995) as "the mother robin teaching" (p.1), and 3) to explore some of the arguments that call for "critical thinking lesson plan remodeling" (Paul, Binker, Martin, & Adamson, 1986). To achieve these goals, a review of the research literature on critical thinking provides a background for the study. It considers the concept of critical thinking, the critical approach, the strategies and skills associated with them, and how to teach thinking critically to develop an effective critical thinker. Second, these underlying issues are discussed in connection with the pedagogical teaching implications, and specifically those present in an EFL classroom. They are discussed as specific ways of applying critical thinking to EFL classes by providing the practical instructions on designing or redesigning a critical thinking lesson plan. The summary of theoretical premises and pedagogical suggestions and their implications conclude the discussion.

## THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Although the term "critical thinking" is used widely in reference to teaching and learning and is often in the center of educational discourse, many educators are unclear of what critical thinking is. Davidson (1998) commented on a survey research completed by in Ruminski and Hanks' in 1995, who found that "the majority of 172 college journalism and mass communication educators had no clear concept of what critical thinking was, though 89 percent of them believed themselves to be teaching it" (p.120). A review of relevant sources reveals differences in the way critical thinking is conceptualized and therefore defined. According to Bailin, Case, Coombs, and Daniels (1999), critical thinking is "a normative enterprise in which, to a greater or lesser degree, we apply appropriate criteria and standards to what we or others say, do, or write" (p.285). In his discussion of critical thinking in TESOL, Atkinson (1997) argued this type of conceptualization with a different and rather controversial point of view when he defined critical thinking as a "social practice" (p. 72) and concluded that "critical thinking is cultural thinking" (p. 89) – heavily dependent on socialization patterns and therefore approached with caution in the teaching of English as a non-native language. In contrast, Davidson (1998) offered multiple researchers' definitions of critical thinking – and some of the suggestions included "the

educational cognate of rationality”, “healthy skepticism”, and “reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused upon deciding what to believe and do” (p.121). Additionally, critical thinking was often defined as “a cognitive activity, associated with using the mind” (Cottrell, 2005); “a basic competency, akin to reading and writing, which needs to be taught” (Fisher, 2001); the ability to recognize, construct, and evaluate arguments, where an argument means “the presentation of a reason(s) to support a conclusion(s), or: *Argument = Reason + Conclusion*” (Haskins, 2006, p.6); and “that mode of thinking – about any subject, content or problem – in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them” (Paul, Fisher, & Nosich, 1993, p.4). This paper adopted a working definition of critical thinking as an *activity where one can build confidence in his/her own ability by applying techniques in argumentation and reasoning to challenge other people’s views from an informed perspective when this is appropriate.*

The described multiple definitions of critical thinking highlight the multidirectional understanding educators apply to the discourse on critical approaches. More specifically, the employment of teaching strategies that promote and enhance critical thinking in EFL classes is justified by the fact that the ability to recognize, construct, and evaluate, which are inherent when engaged in language learning, are at the heart of critical thinking. Yet, these existing connections, raise culture-specific issues that need to be further addressed. In our efforts to seek applications of critical thinking in EFL teaching specifically in Kazakhstan, it is important to address claims of perceived inappropriateness of teaching critical thinking in the Asian context. Presenting the background for such claims, Hongladarom (1998b) stated that “some Western educators who teach at schools or universities in a number of Asian countries have voiced their difficulties and problems they encounter while trying to teach critical thinking and other related skills to Asian students” (p. 1). He further commented on an idea shared by both Davidson (1995) and Atkinson (1997) - that successful utilization of critical thinking skills for some Asian students is influenced by elements in their culture. In response, Hongladarom argued that “critical thinking is not necessarily incompatible with Asian traditional belief systems” (p. 1). On the contrary, he suggested that Asian cultural traditions could be and are reexamined, reinterpreted and adapted in the conditions of the contemporary world (p.2).

This article itself is a glimpse into how language learning and teaching are reflective of history and culture and their influence on the thinking and attitudes of people who belong to different cultures. The authors support Hongladarom's ideas that historical events and social decisions do play a significant role in adopting a particular set of values and his suggestion that societies evolve for the benefit of their members, in relation to the present circumstances of the world while they learn lessons from their historical experiences. As Paul et.al.(1995) stated, knowing world cultures, religions, politics, geography has become so essential that without this understanding survival seems to be impossible in the coming centuries.

### CRITICAL THINKING IN THE CLASSROOM

The next concern is how critical thinking teaching fits with language instruction, how and when critical thinking should be introduced to students, and how students’ use of critical thinking skills in classroom activities applies particularly in an intercultural context. Scholars have questioned the relevance of critical thinking to language teaching. For example Fisher (2001) argued that although critical thinking skills are taught “to facilitate their transfer to other subjects and other contexts” (p.1), they are not considered to be taught in an intercultural context. Atkinson (1997) also expressed doubts that critical thinking is “appropriate for ESL/EFL classes” (p.72). Tsui (1999) studied students’ self-reported data on growth in critical thinking in a variety of disciplines, including foreign language courses. Tsui examined the role of the type of course and form of instruction, and found that both need to have association with critical thinking in order for students report growth. However, slightly greater impact was found for instruction.

Tsui (1999) concludes that “the identification of instructional techniques that are influential to critical thinking can assist those within the academic community to implement changes that will enable courses across the curriculum to become more effective in meeting the widely supported educational objective of educating students to think critically” (p.198). However, more research is needed to develop better understanding of the issue in the realm of EFL courses. For instance, Davidson (1998) considered that “the task of the ESL/EFL teacher is to prepare students for the world outside their societies” and what is most important is that “many students are ready for and in need of critical thinking” (p.122). He continued to suggest that EFL teachers further have the responsibility “to prepare learners to interact with native speakers who value explicit comment, intelligent criticism, and intellectual assertion” (p.121). Davidson further stated that “maybe even more than the L1 teacher, we as L2 teachers have good reason to introduce higher level students to aspects of critical thinking” (p.121). Thus, it is up to the language educators to bring and include critical thinking approaches into their own teaching situations to benefit the intercultural context of ESL/EFL classes.

According to Cottrell (2005), critical thinking teaching benefits the development of critical thinking skills in terms of “improved attention and observation, more focused reading, improved ability to identify the key points in a text, to respond to the appropriate points in a message, skills of analysis” (p.1-2). More specifically, critical thinking includes cognitive skills in (1) interpretation, (2) analysis, (3) evaluation, (4) inference, (5) explanation and (6) self-regulation, which are at the core of critical thinking (Facione, 2010, p.5). Particular attention is given to understanding the language of reasoning, developing different kinds of arguments, and asking the right question, as well as how to clarify and interpret ideas, how to judge the credibility of claims, and how to evaluate decisions. As Facione (2010) discriminates between weak and strong critical thinker in the way they in terms of “how they approach specific issues, questions, or problems”. (p.11). As teachers, we have observed moments when our students can express their opinion but they fail to give good reasons - and this is an issue for us, teachers, to recognize and address. To support the need to explicitly teach these approaches, Fisher (2005) shared her own practice of teaching critical thinking skills to students in a university context for some years. After completing the course, one of her students summarized how these skills were very useful in other courses and noted that “These skills are so useful, I cannot understand why we were not taught them at school.” (p.12). Two of the six core cognitive critical thinking skills (Facione, 2010) appear to have greater importance in the foreign language classroom, namely ‘explanation’ and ‘self-regulation’, as good critical thinkers should know how to explain what they think and how they have arrived at that judgment. In addition, students can apply their power of critical thinking to themselves and revise and improve their previous opinions. Many experts evaluate an effective critical thinker as someone who has ‘a critical spirit’ (Siegel, 1988. p.1-2), and is “fair-minded in evaluation,” “honest in facing personal biases,” “prudent in making judgments,” and ‘willing to reconsider’(Facione, 2000. p.65-66). However, the focus on the question of instructional strategies for enhancing critical thinking skills is lacking in the literature (Paul, Fisher, & Nosich,, 1993; Facione, 2010; Bailin et.al., 1999).

Another concern relevant to the implementation of critical thinking strategies in the foreign language classroom is the need for departure from some established teaching practices that are not conducive to the use of critical thinking skills. Paul (1995) described this style as “when we teach in mother robin fashion - trying to mentally chew up everything for our student, so we can put into their intellectual beaks to swallow - students tend to become, if I can slightly mix my metaphor, ‘Polly parrot’ learners” (p.1). Development of critical thinking skills for students is first and foremost a task for teachers to complete – as their instruction must encourage students to think critically and provide conditions for students’ autonomy to do so. In this sense, this research supports Paul’s statement that “both teaching and learning today are desperately in need of restructuring” (p.1). To do so, teachers need to reevaluate and reconsider their ways of teaching, their role in the teaching process, and in the case of foreign language instruction, how to correlate the teaching of the language with the presence and influence of the different, sometimes opposing, cultural realities. Thus, the inclusion of critical thinking activities is a call for a redesign of instruction. Teaching in critical thinking context is the means by which students can acquire knowledge, master content, and solve problems – all key to building advanced language proficiency geared toward production and communication in intercultural context. And if students become skilled in figuring things out – while reading, writing, speaking, and listening, while studying the subjects that they should master in the target language, while tackling the problems of everyday life related to the use of that language – then they will become proficient in ways that make them independent, self-directed learners. It depends on the foreign language teachers, their well-defined learning goals and objectives, and their good thoroughly circumspect lesson plans to achieve it in the classroom.

### **CONNECTIONS TO THE CLASSROOM**

According to Kizlik (1997), becoming a professional teacher depends on one’s commitment and practice, skills in planning lessons and learning activities, as well as in managing classroom behavior. Although we expect that college level students are at least partially self-regulated learners who come to our classrooms with skills in applying learning strategies that are most conducive to their own learning, the college instructor also need to constantly refer to Kizlik’s description. The importance of in-depth lesson planning and its elements; from clearly defines instructional objectives to classroom management, types of activities, and materials, remains critical for effective foreign language teaching. Moreover, our ways of planning and teaching need to be dynamic and changing along with the ways our students change – an important consideration in a changing higher education landscape worldwide. Kizlik (2009) focused attention on the importance of writing learning goals and objectives for effective teaching and learning. In the light of exploring opportunities for including critical thinking in EFL classrooms, it is important to emphasize that the difference between learning goals and objectives is based on their level of specificity. Goals are broad and generalized statements about what is to be learned, while objectives must be specific to the lesson and observable in students’ behavior. Therefore, both goals and objectives are very important in teaching in order to develop a set of performance expectations, which then enable educators to develop content that is appropriate to their instruction. In addition, well-written

objectives can also be an effective tool for measuring students' learning. Lewis (1977) supported this idea by saying that "effective teaching depends upon (1) how clearly the students understand what they are supposed to learn and (2) how accurately that learning can be measured" (p.1).

One way to blend together the theoretical ideas for inclusion of critical thinking as part of EFL classes with the relevant planning for effective learning is to plan lessons that use Socratic questioning in a form of organized Socratic discussions. The main points of Socratic questioning are that they assist students in creating justifiable meaning using high levels of thought in discussion, provide practice in critical thinking, and encourage them in pursuit of their curiosity about the context of the ideas in question. It can be used to expand student's familiarity with works drawn from various sources, including some from non-Western traditions and from minority groups within any society. It should be noted that other types of questioning, like leading questioning or general questions, don't support the development of critical thinking skills in the way Socratic questioning does, as they don't guide the student in a desired direction of thinking. In contrast, Socratic questioning stimulates students' thinking and helps them to create their own way of thinking and judging. According to Dewey (1910) the degree of reflection influences the degree of learning, and reflection can be stimulated by the questioning strategies promoted in the classroom. Thus, the Socratic questioning can be used to get students to think about a subject and to probe what students already know about it. In addition, we can see if they understand the given problem or idea.

A Socratic seminar lesson in the foreign language classroom could be further enhanced by using 'thinking maps' which help improve thinking by asking key questions to students when they are faced with different types of problems (Fisher, 2001). According to Fisher, "applying a 'thinking map' to your own thinking can be difficult at first so it can be useful to put students in pairs for this purpose - one doing the exercise whilst the other helps them focus on answering the questions in the thinking map" (p.ii).

In the review of the literature, we have reached the point of translating general theory into specific teaching strategies. Below, we present teaching strategies that we have found to be effective in enhancing critical thinking in EFL classes. The level of students' skill in using these strategies was responsibility of the teacher and her/his decision-making and thinking. Through data analysis and discussion, we report which critical thinking skills helped students to think their own way through the ethical insights that underlie becoming a fair-minded thinker. Finally, based on the theoretical overview from the literature, this paper explores five basic understandings of why to design critical thinking lesson plan remodeling (Paul et.al., 1986) and offers some practical pedagogical implications.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, Socratic questioning was used in promoting critical thinking in a foreign language environment. It is illustrated here by examining the teaching of a course titled "Linguaculturology" to Kazakhstani students. Linguaculturology is an elective course for fourth year upper-intermediate level students majoring in Foreign Philology. It is aimed at gaining knowledge about the culture where the target language is spoken in order to be able to interpret and synthesize the cultural phenomena and its influence on language. It is taught during seventh semester in the Foreign/English Philology program at the L.N.Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Kazakhstan. For this study, the students met four times a week for 50 minutes over a period of 15 weeks in 2009.

The average number of the students in the course was 25, and as Kazakhstan is a multinational country, most of students are polylingual, because their native languages are Kazakh, Russian, Tatar, Ukrainian and German. There were no native speakers of English. The course is taught in English as a target language because students study at the Foreign Philology Department to get the specialty of a bachelor of Foreign Philology with the knowledge of the English Language. In addition to studying English as a first foreign language, the students learn simultaneously choose a second foreign language - French or German – throughout the duration of the program.

The goal of Linguaculturology is defined as developing students' speaking and discussing abilities in English using authentic materials from Internet resources and published articles of foreign and home scholars as well as textbook, manuals and research journals. The main resource for this course is the textbook by Claire Kramsch (1998) titled "Language and Culture" according to which students were introduced and discussed the main topics like: The relationship of language and culture, Meaning as sign, Meaning as action, Spoken language, Oral Culture, Print language, Literate Culture, Language and cultural identity, and Current Issues in Linguoculturology.

The course was taught using questioning techniques, and students were guided to construct knowledge and understanding themselves, rather than only discover or received it from the instructor. One sample activity included an analysis on the differences between the values celebrated in cultures. One discussed example was an American Coca-Cola commercial, and the lack or the existence of analogous values in its Russian, Kazakh or German equivalents. A sample set of questions used to guide students' construction and understanding of the notions 'culture' and 'language' while examining values present in the commercials during the activity included:

- What do you mean by...?
- What is your main point?
- How does language relate to culture?

Some questions that probe assumptions like:

- What are you assuming by that?
- What do you think culture shock is assuming?
- Why would someone make that assumption?

And questions that probe reasons and evidence such as:

- What would be an example?
- How do you know?
- Why do you think that is true?
- What are your reasons for saying that?

The specific practice-based strategies were selected from a large number of critical thinking strategies (Paul et.al., 1986) and included: 1) affective strategies: "those which emphasize the affective side of critical thought, promoting autonomy, empathy, and understanding of obstacles to critical thought" (p. 4); 2) cognitive strategies-macro-abilities: "those which generally require extended use of cognitive skills, emphasizing extended exploration of ideas, perspectives, and basic issues" (p.5); 3) cognitive strategies-micro-skills: "those which highlight a specific, usually brief, critical move" (p.5). Additionally, this paper suggests the inclusion of argumentation skills as a critical thinking strategy. To support this division we rely on thoughts of Paul et.al. that "critical thinking requires integration of the affective and cognitive dimensions of thinking, macro-abilities usually require use of micro-skills" (p.4), micro-skills are defined as "pointless unless used to some end" (p. 4). As for argument, it is on the one hand, a tool of giving good reasoning, and on the other hand, highlighting the conclusion. The complete set of strategies is included below.

#### A. Affective Strategies

- developing confidence in reason
- developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment
- exercising fair-mindedness
- developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity
- thinking independently

#### B. Cognitive Strategies - Macro-Abilities

- reasoning dialogically: comparing perspectives, interpretations, or theories
- reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts
- analyzing or evaluating arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or theories
- Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
- Clarifying issues, conclusions and beliefs
- Developing one's perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories
- comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts

#### C. Cognitive Strategies - Micro-Abilities

- noting significant similarities and differences
- examining or evaluating assumptions
- distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
- making plausible inferences, predictions, or interpretations
- recognizing contradictions

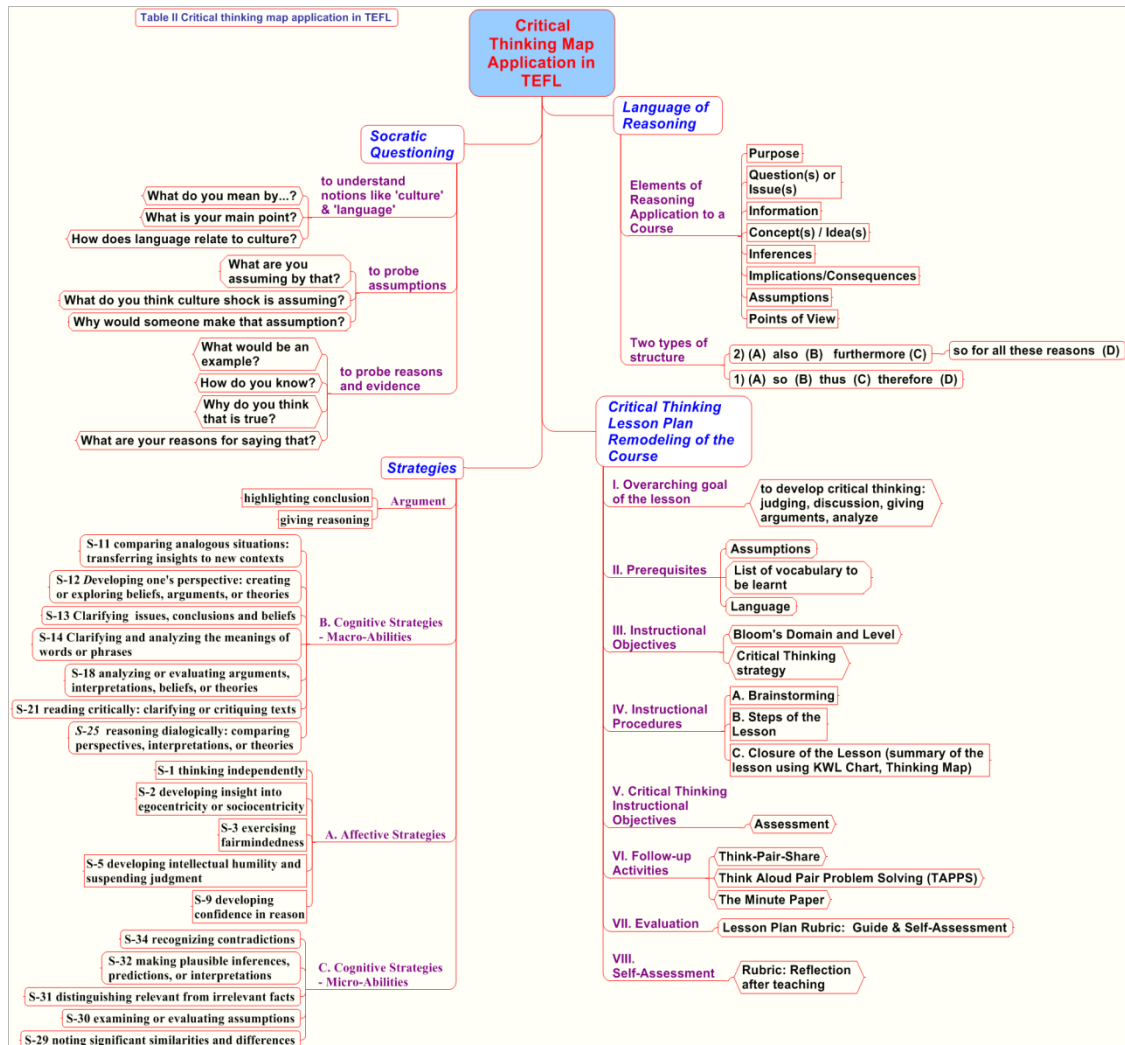
#### Argument

- giving reasoning
- highlighting conclusion

**RESULTS**

Students' experience building and applying critical thinking skills in Linguaculturology was emergent, uncertain, and their use of the strategies was subject to revision; it was concerned with what students already knew, and was created in cooperation rather than being a product solely of the author's or teacher's effort. The summary of the four components of the processes that unfolded is presented on Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Critical Thinking Map: Application in TEFL.**

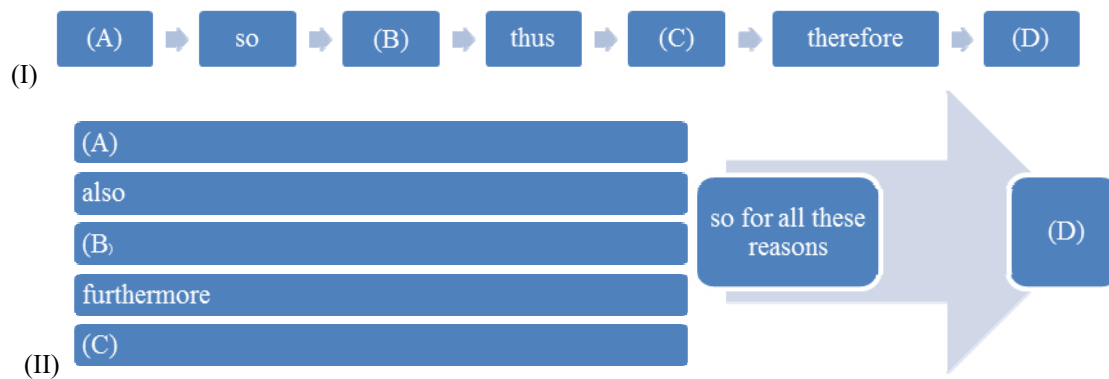


Systematic training of students in insiders' and outsiders' views of cultural phenomena started early on with activities and questioning techniques that required students to adopt different points of view. For example, engagement in the critical thinking process occurred when the class began discussing and defining culture shock as a crucial component of intercultural communication, and then examined its stages. The process highly motivated the students to interact with each other, to take an active part in discussions and, most important, to express their own opinions, show their curiosity about the context of the ideas in question, and think critically. The topics discussed were related to the use of language and included internal cultures (behavior, beliefs, values and thought patterns; the breakdown of communication (verbal and nonverbal greetings, getting down to business, social space, etc); the loss of culturally-specific cues or reinforces (physical and social cues), object loss; and identity crisis. With this specific content and its relevance to the topic, the instructor guided the discussion through appropriate questions and statements and was available to answer clarifying questions. The inferential connection between the five basic understandings of redesigning a lesson plan to include critical thinking and critical thinking strategies was important in fostering critical thinking skills. The approach to critical thinking lesson plan design used here was adapted from Paul, Binker, and Charbonneau (1986). It was based on 1) concept clarification; 2) cognitive interaction of teaching strategies components with critical thinking components; 3) selection of effective ways for strategies components application; 4) assessment of lesson plan remodeling; and 5) a thinking map of argument analysis and evaluation. The thinking map of

argument analysis and evaluation was included because it highlights the relation between the critical thinking efforts, the related arguments, and their premises in order to “identify the obvious and the hidden messages more accurately, and to understand the process by which an argument is constructed” (Cottrell, 2005, p.2).

In order to arrive at a reasonable evaluation of the remodeling of critical thinking lesson plan to include the use of critical thinking strategies, its structure was carefully identified. Due to the fact that critical thinking is a very clear and practical way to reason out problems and to act upon relevant conclusions, the connection between the teaching strategies and the behavior of the ideal critical thinker (Facione 2000, p.65) was fostered in the lesson plan. It was important to recognize the need to apply the elements of reasoning to the course content while designing it, because they were useful when a student tried to: a) persuade to accept his point of view by presenting the reasons, which is called “arguing case” or “presenting an argument” (Fisher, 2001); b) rectify a wrongdoing by giving the reasons in support of the action; c) implicitly assume about something without clearly stating it. Therefore, EFL teachers should carefully consider the language of reasoning including “conclusion indicators”, “reason indicators”, and “argument indicators” because they “give you a vital clue about the structure of the reasoning” (Fisher, 2001, pp.22-23).

Fisher (2001) determined two types of the structure of reasoning: (I) representing “the ‘chain’ of reasoning, where successive conclusions are also reasons for the next conclusion”; and (II) representing different structures (pp.30-31). The first type of structure implied giving a sequence or chain of reasons for a conclusion, while the second implied providing side by side support to the conclusion. By using the language of reasoning, the students enhanced their recognition of the value of an argument and its potential for persuasion purposes. It is convenient to represent these structures in the following way:



Thus, by using the language of reasoning, the EFL students enhanced their ways of recognizing whether an argument was strong and whether was able to persuade them or not. Drawing on the above evidence and on the teaching experience, the implementation of the elements of reasoning in an EFL course is offered together with the practical implications for critical thinking development in the lesson plan. An example is presented in Table I and Instructions 1.1 below.

**Table I:** Applying the elements of reasoning to a course “Context and Culture in Language Teaching”.

Element	Question(s)	Response
Purpose	How is this course intended to benefit students?	To equip students with the tools which will enable them to gain greater awareness of their own cultural values and of intercultural issues, to develop a “working knowledge” of the “target culture” and to develop an understanding of the process of communicating across cultural boundaries.
Question (s) or Issues	What problems and issues will students learn to solve during this course?	Through this course, the students will learn how to solve the problems of the need for intercultural learning and communication that arise from the basic fact that cultures are different, and these different cultures come into contact and communicate with each other. In addition, students will learn how to connect people from various cultural backgrounds and to increase tolerance for diversity and ambiguity.
Information	What kind of information do students need to access during the course?	Students need to access information from a variety of sources, such as textbooks, articles, journals, and Internet. Moreover, we should familiarise students with sources of information about the target culture. Again, newspapers and websites can be an invaluable source of reading materials here. Films and literary texts often depict and interrogate their own cultures.

Concepts/ Ideas	What basic concepts or essential ideas do students learn in this course?	The basic concept, which students will learn is the concept of intercultural competence that should be studied in the <i>context of culture</i> and in the <i>context of specific situations</i> , both linguistic and extralinguistic.
Inferences	What inferences are cultivated during this course? What will students learn to make reasoned judgments about?	While learning in this course, students will acquire an ability to evaluate, critically using the language of reasoning and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. Moreover, teachers try not to change students' values but make them explicit and conscious in any evaluative response to others.
Implications/ Consequences	What are the possible implications and consequences of those inferences?	Students will be able to study culture from the perspective of action and communication theories that will increase international and cross-cultural tolerance and understanding. Because culture guides the student's action through the interactive process and offers him orientation in the shape of background expectations and cognitive models. Here, we should emphasize that intercultural awareness in language learning is often talked about as though it were a 'fifth skill' - the ability to be aware of cultural relativity following reading, writing, listening and speaking.
Assumptions	What assumptions are made about the students taking this course	It is suggested that students develop their communicative competence which implies linguistic and pragmatic competences. According to Ellis (1994) by linguistic competence, we understand the knowledge of the items and rules that comprise the formal systems of a language and by pragmatic competence it is considered the knowledge that speaker-hearers use in order to engage in communication, including how speech acts are successfully performed.
Points of View	What points of view will students develop during this course?	Some possible points of view that students may develop during this course are that students enhance their proficiency in nonverbal communication, and their ability not only to interpret native speaker nonverbal communication, but also to adapt their nonverbal communication in ways that enhance intercultural communication and avoid miscommunication, including knowing when and where to perform these behaviours and to whom. Students will learn cultural models of another community by expressing their learned cultural knowledge, linguistic patterns, and discourse patterns, cultural assumptions of that community and by correlating all these patterns with their own cultural tools. Students will also develop a number of points of view via exposure to a variety of topics and perspectives presented in course materials.

Creating a critical thinking-based learning environment in an intercultural context in EFL classes fosters students' abilities to think critically (i.e. critical thinking values like truth, open-mindedness, empathy, autonomy, rationality and self-criticism) when articulating good arguments using the language of reasoning. The role of the teacher in this context is to encourage and to reward students, which may help learners come to believe in their power of thinking and ability to identify and solve problems and decision-making. Another important teacher's role is to ask questions, and keep discussions from becoming confusing by leading students to make fruitful comparisons and contrasts. As an exercise that fosters learner participation, inclusion of role-playing as part of instruction becomes crucial of enhancing critical reciprocity in class activity. In addition, building Socratic questioning into the lesson is another form of probing beneath the surface of things, which is aimed at pursuing problematic areas of thought.

## **INSTRUCTIONS 1.1 CONTEXT AND CULTURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

### **I. Personal constructs**

Step 1: I ask my students to contrast and compare their own culture with other phenomena. For example, the concept of friendliness was constructed by one native speaker of American English (student 1) by contrasting 'friendly' with 'don't like you', then contrasting 'don't like you' with 'trust you', 'trust you' with 'exclude you', 'exclude you' with 'sociable', 'sociable' with 'conceited', and so on.



Another native speaker of English (student 2) might have constructed the concept along a quite different axis of thinking.

Step 2: Then I ask my students in the same manner construct such concepts as ‘challenging’, ‘successful’, ‘happy’, ‘work’.

Step 3: I ask them to choose the contrast that makes the most sense to them, after that they should repeat the procedure four or five times.

Step 4: the task is to compare student 1 line of constructs with that of another speaker of English (student 2).

Step 5: the whole class should analyze how each one may have a socially or culturally different way of classifying the world. Give good arguments in supporting your ideas by using the language of reasoning.

## II. Role-play

Student Tasks:

a) Describe your school and your daily routine to a French student in a lycée. What points will you emphasize, knowing what you know about the French school system and your public or private school? Give good arguments in supporting your points by using the language of reasoning.

b) You are an American salesperson in Germany. Knowing what you know about the way many young Germans feel about nature and ecology, compose a sales pitch for fruit, natural produce, or a beauty product for German ‘green’ buyers.

c) You have been offered a position as a teacher of French in the United States. You have one semester to teach the whole of French history. Which events will you stress to help your students understand better present-day French? How will you interpret these events for them? Give good arguments in supporting your ideas by using the language of reasoning.

The strategies defined above can be applied in more than one way. The teacher should begin to develop the micro-skills first (i.e. noting significant similarities and differences, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts, recognizing contradictions) in order to train students “to gain insight into the traits, values, and dispositions essential for strong sense critical thinking” (Paul, et.al., 1986. pp.25-26).

In Table II below, the model of critical thinking lesson plan remodeling is offered.

**Table II:** Critical Thinking Lesson Plan Remodeling of the course “Linguoculturology”.

Instructor: Saltanat	Title of Course: Linguoculturology	Student Age/Level: 4 <sup>th</sup> year students
Title of Lesson: Language and culture: their relationships	Number of Students: 25	Time Allowed: 50 min.
I Overarching goal of the lesson: to develop critical thinking: judging, discussion, giving arguments, analyze		
II Prerequisites. These are assumptions you are making about your students’ skills, knowledge, and experience for this lesson. At the beginning of this lesson, students are expected to have or to know: general knowledge about culture, language, appropriate vocabulary, some skills to debate and play the role play List of vocabulary to be learned: acculturation, act of identity, appropriateness, appropriation, arbitrariness, barbarism, code, code-switching, cohesion, connotation, context of culture, context of situation, context-dependent, cultural identity, cultural literacy, denotation, diffusion, discourse, discourse community, <i>ad absurdum</i> etc. Language – Really? That’s interesting, I didn’t know that! I think that’s a good idea! Are you? Did you? Absolutely, because..., Right! I agree because..., I see what you mean, but don’t you think..., I’m afraid I don’t understand you. Can you... Rubbish! No way! That’s not true! Can you put it another way? etc.		
III Instructional Objectives:	Bloom’s domain and level	CT Strategy (No more than 2 macro-abilities.)
1. (Audience) The students in this course (Behavior) will be able to give a definition of culture and language, define their relationships (Condition) focusing on previously introduced key vocabulary and read different definitions given by outstanding scholars and using paraphrasing techniques (Degree) without plagiarizing.	Cognitive Analysis Level Knowledge level Evaluation level	S-13 Clarifying issues, conclusions and beliefs; S-30 examining or evaluating the assumptions

2. The students will be able to <i>describe the context of culture</i> after reading the article using the background. <i>They should illustrate not less than two- three specifics.</i>	Cognitive Comprehension Level	S-14 Clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
3. The students will be able to <i>analyze the context of situation</i> , after answering the comprehension questions focusing on critiquing the article using <i>appropriate vocabulary</i> .	Cognitive Analysis Level	S-12 Developing one's perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories S-21 reading critically: clarifying or critiquing texts
4. The students will be able to <i>compare and contrast</i> different scholars' point of view focusing on the theme and own attitude to this or that issue.	Cognitive Analysis Level Evaluation Level	S-25 reasoning dialogically: comparing perspectives, interpretations, or theories S-18 analyzing or evaluating arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or theories S-11 comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts

IV Instructional Procedures:

A. I will open the lesson by: brainstorming the students some definitions about culture and language and then asking them how they consider the statement 'We speak the same language We speak the same culture' and share their ideas in Think-pair-Share groups

B. Steps of the lesson (including instructional techniques, activities. Please also indicate in parentheses where in this lesson the critical thinking strategy(ies) occur):

1) Now the definition of culture and language as a notion is clarified and defined (cognitive strategies-macro skills).

2) With the definition in one's mind, examples are presented. Then we discussed the issues of linguistic relativity which denotes that different people speak differently because they think differently, and that they think differently because their language offers them different ways of expressing the world around them. Then students are asked to think independently (affective strategy) of how to explain Whorf's views on the independence of language and thought which is known under the name of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Students will give me reasons of their arguments why they think so, express their attitude to these questions (cognitive strategy-macro skills). Just some students have difficulties to do so.

3) Defining the interpretation of word stereotype, (cognitive strategy-micro skills), students can be asked to discuss in pairs their understanding. After that, the classification of meaning is brought out like conceptual meaning, then they are asked to scan the text "National stereotypes" discuss it, do the assignments after the text.

4) Then each group does the role-play in front of the class (cognitive strategy-macro skill).

5) At last students asked to present their home task 'Countries Project' according to Required Information List

- Country Name
- Description of Geographical Location
- Geographical Features
  - o Explain how the geographical features affect the culture of the target country, i.e. clothing, agricultural products, transportation, etc.
- Role of Education
  - o Importance?
  - o What type of system?
- Importance of Religion
- Role of the Family
- Foods
  - o What foods are important and WHY?
- Traditions

- The Arts
  - o Literature
  - o Theatre
  - o Dance
  - o Visual Arts
- Legends/Myths
- Views on Americans

C. I will bring closure to the lesson by: Summary of today’s lesson using KWL Chart, Thinking Map.

<p>V Critical Thinking Instructional Objectives. By the end of the lesson,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. (Audience) The students in this course (Behavior) will be able to give a definition of culture and language, define their relationships (Condition) focusing on previously introduced key vocabulary and read different definitions given by outstanding scholars and using paraphrasing techniques (Degree) without plagiarizing.</li> <li>2. The students will be able to <i>describe the context of culture</i> after reading the article using the background. <i>They should illustrate not less than two- three specifics.</i></li> <li>3. The students will be able to <i>analyze the context of situation</i>, after answering the comprehension questions focusing on critiquing the article using <i>appropriate vocabulary</i>.</li> <li>4. The students will be able to <i>compare and contrast</i> different scholars’ point of view focusing on the theme and own attitude to this or that issue.</li> </ol>	<p>Assessment</p> <p>Describe how you will determine the extent to which students have attained the critical thinking instructional objective(s) on the left.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students will work in TAPPS after reading the article “The relationship of language and culture”, then give the definition of culture and language, define the relationships between them using the principle of Sapir about the linguistic relativity. The quality of the analysis will be assessed based on distinguishing main statements on linguistic relativity, clarifying issues, conclusions and beliefs in the form of discussion such as ‘ language and thought reinforce each other’; ‘ language not only reflects, but also shapes reality’; ‘grammar is not universal, it is particular to each language’. Also, the assessment will be based on using appropriate vocabulary list given previously.</li> <li>2. Students will share their ideas of how they understand the meaning and context of the term ‘the context of culture’, then debate Sapir’s claim that our language determines the way we think. The assessment will be based on eliciting the potential differences between Sapir’s and Whorf’s views on linguistic relativity, describing the most controversial of Whorf’s statements on linguistic relativity and then giving reasonable justifications.</li> <li>3. Students will give their arguments of understanding the notion of ‘context of situation’, then answer some comprehension questions focusing a concrete example how a grammatical feature in one language formulates an idea which cannot be easily expressed through the grammar of another language. The assessment will be based on the effective use of the appropriate language of the lesson.</li> <li>4. Students will present/discuss their/others points of views on the analysis of the issues raised by the writer in the article “The relationship of language and culture”. The assessment will be based on the effective use of the language of the article as a sign of their formed skills of argumentation, on the quality of interpretations, as well as their reasonable judgments.</li> </ol>
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VI Follow-up Activities: What follow-up activities will you use to extend and reinforce the critical thinking components of this lesson (e.g. *Think-pair-Share, Think Aloud Pair Problem Solving (TAPPS), the Minute Paper, homework, follow-up reports for workshops*)? Which critical thinking strategies will these activities target?

*I will ask the students to do the following:*

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1. in small groups to discuss the first two paragraphs of the article “The relationship of language and culture” where Pinker seems to claim that people are guided by their senses more than by the language that surround them. They should express their agreement (*S-12 Developing one's perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories; S-34 recognizing contradictions*).
  2. As homework, write their respond to each of the two arguments to the situation where Pinker pushed Whorf's claims ad absurdum (*S-12 Developing one's perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories*).
  3. Give further ‘subjective experiences and objective facts’ that might contest the validity of linguistic relativity (*S-5 developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment*).
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#### VII Evaluation:

The information I will need in order to appraise the strengths and weaknesses of this lesson are:

1. The number of the students participating.
2. Comments from the students.
3. Lesson Plan Rubric: Guide and Self-Assessment.

I will gather this information by:

- a) assessing their learning outcome through their answers in their homework;
  - b) assessing their speaking performance through the “debate” technique since this can make me know how they master the skills of thinking precisely about thinking by using critical vocabulary and the ability of distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts.
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#### VIII Self-Assessment (your own assessment of your teaching):

My process/technique for reflecting on my own teaching of this lesson will be Proposal Elements: Bridging the Gap-Assessment or Rubric: Reflection after teaching.

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### CONCLUSION

The explicit inclusion of critical thinking in a EFL course guided students to make appropriate use of critical thinking skills and strategies in order to increase its fruitfulness. Our conception highlights the fact that the process of remodeling lesson plan was embedded in complex practices of critical deliberation conceptualizing critical thinking and discussion. Doing so, the critical thinker was guided to acquire good judgment in determining what critical thinking strategies were required in particular contexts.

Our practice and experience in remodeling a lesson plan and implementing it into the EFL teaching process in Kazakhstan can be helpful for teachers as it distinguishes the main components of the process. It also involves practices that are familiar to teachers – like using the Socratic questioning – but further extends the critical thinking nature of the processes by engaging students in tasks that call for reasoned judgment or assessment. This is achieved by providing an environment of critically thinking-based learning in which students are encouraged and supported in their attempts to think critically and engage critically in discussion.

More research on opportunities for engaging EFL students in creating the environment of critical thinking-based learning in EFL classes in an intercultural context will help further explore the processes that arise in critical thinking teaching in EFL classes. The critical thinking lesson plan remodeling **presented here is one starting point** in illustrating the ways for developing students' critical thinking skills and evaluating them as effective participants in the critical thinking EFL discourse.

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