



INTEGRATING COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOMS: METHODOLOGICAL AND PHILOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Author:

Kamola Mamurdjonovna Xamidova

Teacher of English Language and Literature

at Kokand Railway Technical Collage

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in EFL Classrooms: Methodological and Philological Perspectives

Abstract: In recent years, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching has undergone significant methodological transformations due to globalization, technological development, and the growing demand for communicative competence. Traditional grammar-based approaches are no longer sufficient to meet the needs of modern learners. This paper explores the integration of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with critical thinking skills in EFL classrooms from both methodological and philological perspectives. The study analyzes the theoretical foundations of CLT, the role of critical thinking in language acquisition, and practical strategies for classroom implementation. The paper argues that combining communicative methodologies with critical thinking activities enhances learners' linguistic competence, cognitive development, and intercultural awareness.

Keywords: *EFL, Communicative Language Teaching, critical thinking, methodology, philology, language competence*

1. Introduction

English has become a global language used in education, science, business, and international communication. As a result, the objectives of English language



teaching have shifted from mastering grammatical rules to developing communicative competence. In many EFL contexts, learners are expected not only to understand the language but also to use it effectively in real-life situations.

However, despite numerous methodological innovations, many classrooms still rely on teacher-centered instruction and rote memorization. Such approaches limit learners' ability to think critically, express opinions, and engage in meaningful communication. This issue highlights the necessity of integrating Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with critical thinking skills to foster both linguistic and intellectual development.

This paper aims to examine how CLT and critical thinking can be combined effectively in EFL instruction and to analyze their significance from a methodological and philological point of view.

2. Theoretical Background of Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching emerged in the 1970s as a response to structural and audio-lingual methods. According to Hymes (1972), language competence involves not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. This concept later became known as communicative competence.

CLT emphasizes:

- meaningful communication
- learner interaction
- authentic materials
- fluency over absolute accuracy

From a methodological perspective, CLT shifts the focus from the teacher to the learner. Classroom activities such as role-plays, discussions, problem-solving



tasks, and pair or group work are central to this approach. These activities encourage learners to negotiate meaning, express personal opinions, and develop confidence in language use.

From a philological standpoint, CLT views language as a dynamic system influenced by culture, context, and discourse. This aligns with modern linguistic theories that emphasize pragmatics, discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics.

3. The Role of Critical Thinking in Language Learning

Critical thinking is widely recognized as a key skill in 21st-century education. It involves analyzing information, evaluating arguments, making reasoned judgments, and solving problems. In EFL learning, critical thinking enables students to go beyond surface-level understanding and engage deeply with texts and communicative situations.

According to Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating are essential for meaningful learning. When applied to language instruction, critical thinking encourages learners to:

- interpret texts critically
- compare ideas and viewpoints
- justify opinions in English
- use language creatively

Philologically, critical thinking supports textual analysis, interpretation of meaning, and understanding of discourse structures. It allows learners to recognize implicit meanings, cultural references, and rhetorical strategies in authentic texts.

4. Integrating CLT and Critical Thinking in EFL Classrooms



The integration of CLT and critical thinking can be achieved through carefully designed communicative tasks. These tasks should require learners to think, analyze, and express ideas rather than simply recall information.

4.1 Task-Based Learning

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), a branch of CLT, is particularly effective in promoting critical thinking. Tasks such as debates, case studies, and problem-solving activities require learners to collaborate, make decisions, and defend their viewpoints in English.

4.2 Use of Authentic Materials

Authentic materials such as newspaper articles, videos, podcasts, and literary texts expose learners to real language use. Analyzing these materials helps students develop both communicative competence and critical awareness of language and culture.

4.3 Questioning Techniques

Teachers play a crucial role in fostering critical thinking by asking open-ended questions. Instead of asking “What is the meaning of this word?”, teachers may ask “Why do you think the author used this expression?” or “Do you agree with this opinion? Why?”

5. Methodological and Philological Implications

From a methodological perspective, integrating CLT and critical thinking requires a shift in lesson planning, assessment, and teacher roles. Teachers become facilitators rather than information providers, and assessment focuses on communicative performance and reasoning skills.



From a philological perspective, this integration deepens learners' understanding of language as a cultural and social phenomenon. It enhances discourse competence, pragmatic awareness, and interpretative skills, which are essential for advanced language use.

6. Challenges and Recommendations

Despite its advantages, integrating CLT and critical thinking presents certain challenges. These include large class sizes, limited instructional time, and insufficient teacher training. To overcome these challenges, the following recommendations are proposed:

providing professional development for teachers

adapting tasks to learners' proficiency levels

gradually introducing critical thinking activities

7. Conclusion

The integration of Communicative Language Teaching and critical thinking skills offers a comprehensive approach to EFL instruction. It addresses both methodological and philological dimensions of language learning and prepares students for real-world communication. By fostering interaction, reflection, and analysis, this approach contributes to the development of competent, confident, and critical language users.

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