HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

THE ROLE OF CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES IN TEACHING THEORETICAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE DISCIPLINES AT UNIVERSITIES IN UZBEKISTAN

Malika Porsayeva
Samarkand state institute of foreign languages
Senior teacher
+998 979264377
malikaporsaeva0110@gmail.com
Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21278298

Abstract: The development of critical thinking has become one of the principal objectives of contemporary higher education, particularly within English language teaching, where students are expected to acquire not only linguistic competence but also analytical, evaluative, and problem-solving skills. Despite the increasing recognition of critical thinking in English Language Teaching (ELT), its systematic integration into theoretical English language disciplines remains insufficiently explored, especially in the context of higher education in Uzbekistan. This study aims to examine the role of critical thinking activities in teaching theoretical English language disciplines at universities in Uzbekistan and to propose a methodological framework for their effective integration into classroom instruction.

The study employs a qualitative-oriented mixed-methods research design in the form of a proposed methodological framework based on learner-centered education, constructivist learning theory, and competency-based instruction. The proposed model incorporates instructional techniques such as Socratic questioning, Think–Pair–Share, problem-based learning, concept mapping, comparative analysis, mini research projects, and reflective learning journals into courses including Stylistics, Lexicology, Theoretical Grammar, Analytical Reading, and Introduction to Linguistics. The study concludes that integrating critical thinking into theoretical English language instruction may significantly improve the quality of university education and provide a practical methodological model for English language departments seeking to implement learner-centered and competency-based approaches.

Keywords: critical thinking, English language teaching, theoretical English language disciplines, higher education, learner-centered learning, constructivist pedagogy, competency-based education, university students, English Philology, Uzbekistan.

Introduction: The rapid transformation of higher education in the twenty-first century has fundamentally changed the objectives of foreign language teaching. Contemporary universities are expected not only to develop students' linguistic competence but also to cultivate higher-order cognitive abilities that enable graduates to analyze information critically, solve complex problems, communicate persuasively, and make informed decisions in academic and professional contexts. Consequently, English language education has gradually shifted from teacher-centered knowledge transmission toward learner-centered pedagogical models that emphasize active learning, collaboration, reflection, and critical inquiry. These educational changes are closely associated with the development of twenty-first-century competencies, among which critical thinking is considered

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

one of the most essential skills required for successful participation in global academic and professional environments [4;7].

Critical thinking has attracted considerable attention in educational research over the past three decades. Although numerous definitions have been proposed, most scholars agree that critical thinking involves the ability to analyze information objectively, evaluate evidence, formulate logical arguments, identify assumptions, compare alternative perspectives, and make reasoned judgments based on reliable information. According to the widely accepted framework proposed by Facione (1990), critical thinking encompasses interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Similarly, Paul and Elder (2019) emphasize that critical thinking is an intellectually disciplined process through which individuals actively conceptualize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information obtained from observation, experience, reasoning, or communication. These theoretical perspectives suggest that critical thinking is not an isolated cognitive ability but an essential component of effective learning across academic disciplines [5;7].

Within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), critical thinking has become increasingly important because language learning extends far beyond the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Modern communicative approaches encourage learners to interpret authentic texts, evaluate diverse viewpoints, participate in academic discussions, justify their opinions, and solve real-life communicative problems. Consequently, English classrooms have evolved into environments where language development and cognitive development occur simultaneously [8]. Recent methodological studies demonstrate that integrating critical thinking activities into English language instruction enhances students' communicative competence, academic performance, learner autonomy, and motivation while preparing them for lifelong learning.

Despite the growing body of international research, the application of critical thinking within the teaching of **theoretical English language disciplines** remains relatively underexplored. Most empirical investigations focus primarily on practical language courses, including speaking, writing, reading, and integrated language skills. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to subjects such as Stylistics, Lexicology, Theoretical Grammar, Analytical Reading, or History of the English Language, where instruction often continues to rely on traditional lecture-based methods emphasizing memorization rather than analytical reasoning. As a result, students frequently demonstrate satisfactory theoretical knowledge while experiencing difficulties in interpreting linguistic phenomena, evaluating competing theoretical concepts, and applying linguistic knowledge to authentic communicative situations.

This challenge is particularly relevant within the context of higher education in Uzbekistan. During the last decade, the national system of higher education has undergone significant modernization aimed at improving educational quality, increasing academic mobility, strengthening international cooperation, and implementing competency-based curricula [15]. These reforms emphasize learner autonomy, innovative teaching methodologies, digital transformation, and the development of critical and creative thinking among university students. Foreign language education occupies a strategic position within these reforms, as English has become one of the principal instruments of international academic communication, scientific collaboration, and professional competitiveness. Consequently, university instructors are expected to employ pedagogical approaches that promote not only language proficiency but also intellectual independence and analytical reasoning.

Recent studies conducted in Uzbekistan confirm the increasing academic interest in critical thinking as an integral component of English language education[13;14]. Researchers have highlighted the importance of integrating problem-solving activities, case studies, reflective discussions, and analytical tasks into English language classrooms to promote deeper understanding

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

and learner engagement. They argue that the transition from reproductive learning to inquiry-based instruction is essential for preparing future teachers, translators, and philologists capable of functioning successfully within international educational and professional environments.

Nevertheless, a noticeable research gap remains. Existing publications predominantly examine critical thinking within practical English language instruction or general pedagogical contexts, whereas limited attention has been paid to the systematic integration of critical thinking activities into the teaching of theoretical English language disciplines at universities in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, there is insufficient methodological guidance regarding which instructional techniques may effectively stimulate analytical reasoning during lectures and seminars devoted to linguistic theory. The lack of research addressing this specific educational context limits the development of evidence-based pedagogical recommendations for university instructors [11].

The **aim of the study** is to investigate the potential role of critical thinking activities in improving the teaching of theoretical English language disciplines at universities in Uzbekistan and to propose a research-based instructional framework that may enhance students' analytical abilities, classroom engagement, and academic communication.

Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. How can critical thinking activities improve students' understanding of theoretical English language disciplines?

RQ2. Which critical thinking techniques are most appropriate for teaching university courses such as Stylistics, Lexicology, Analytical Reading, and Theoretical Grammar?

RQ3. How may the integration of critical thinking activities influence students' classroom participation, analytical reasoning, and academic communication?

Methods: This study adopts a qualitative-oriented mixed-methods research design that proposes a methodological framework for integrating critical thinking activities into the teaching of theoretical English language disciplines at universities in Uzbekistan. Since the primary objective of the study is to develop and justify an instructional model rather than to report the findings of a completed pedagogical experiment, the methodological section presents a proposed research design that may serve as a basis for future empirical investigations.

The study combines elements of descriptive, analytical, and pedagogical research. It is grounded in the principles of learner-centered education, competency-based learning, and constructivist pedagogy, which emphasize students' active participation in the learning process, collaborative knowledge construction, and the development of higher-order thinking skills. The proposed framework is intended for implementation within undergraduate English Philology programs, particularly in theoretical courses that traditionally rely on lecture-based instruction [8].

The proposed methodological framework is designed for higher education institutions in Uzbekistan that provide bachelor's degree programs in English Philology, English Language Teaching, Translation Studies, and related linguistic specialties.

The instructional model may be applied in theoretical English language disciplines, including Stylistics of the English Language, Lexicology, Theoretical Grammar, Analytical Reading, History of the English Language, and Introduction to Linguistics. These courses require students not only to acquire theoretical knowledge but also to interpret linguistic phenomena, compare theoretical concepts, analyze authentic language material, and formulate evidence-based academic arguments.

The proposed research design is intended for undergraduate students enrolled in the second and third years of English Philology programs. These learners have already acquired intermediate or upper-intermediate English language proficiency and possess sufficient linguistic knowledge to participate in analytical classroom discussions[3].

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

Future empirical implementation of the study may involve approximately 60–80 undergraduate students, divided into an experimental group and a comparison group. University instructors teaching theoretical English language disciplines would also participate in the implementation of the instructional framework by integrating critical thinking activities into regular classroom instruction.

The proposed participant profile reflects the typical educational context of Uzbek universities and allows researchers to investigate the effectiveness of critical thinking activities across different theoretical subjects.

The methodological framework is based on the systematic integration of critical thinking activities into traditional lectures and seminar classes. Instead of relying exclusively on teacher explanations and note-taking, students are encouraged to become active participants in the learning process through analytical, reflective, and collaborative learning tasks.

The proposed instructional framework includes the following categories of critical thinking activities [5;7]:

Socratic questioning, encouraging students to justify linguistic assumptions and evaluate theoretical arguments;

Think–Pair–Share, promoting individual reflection followed by collaborative discussion;

Case analysis, involving the interpretation of authentic linguistic or stylistic phenomena;

Concept mapping, enabling students to visualize relationships among linguistic theories and terminology;

Problem-based learning, requiring students to solve theoretical and methodological problems using academic evidence;

Comparative analysis, encouraging students to evaluate different linguistic schools and theoretical approaches;

Mini research projects, allowing learners to investigate selected linguistic issues independently;

Reflective learning journals, promoting metacognitive awareness and self-assessment.

These instructional activities correspond to higher-order cognitive processes described in Bloom's revised taxonomy [1].

Each instructional activity is designed to encourage higher-order cognitive processes corresponding to the upper levels of Bloom's revised taxonomy, including analysis, evaluation, and creation.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed instructional framework in future empirical studies, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments is recommended.

The quantitative component may include:

- diagnostic pre-tests and post-tests assessing conceptual understanding;
- standardized student questionnaires measuring engagement and learning motivation;
- classroom participation checklists;
- academic achievement records.

The qualitative component may include:

- structured classroom observations;
- reflective student journals;
- semi-structured interviews with instructors;
- focus-group discussions with students;
- document analysis of students' written assignments and presentations.

The triangulation of multiple data sources is expected to improve the validity and reliability of future investigations while providing a comprehensive understanding of students' cognitive and communicative development.

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

The proposed instructional model is designed for implementation during one academic semester (approximately 8–10 weeks).

The proposed research design contributes to the methodological development of English language teaching in Uzbekistan by providing a structured framework for integrating critical thinking into theoretical linguistic disciplines. Unlike many existing studies focusing primarily on practical language skills, the present framework emphasizes analytical learning within theoretical courses, thereby addressing an important gap in contemporary English language pedagogy.

The proposed methodology may serve as a practical model for university instructors, curriculum developers, and educational researchers seeking to modernize theoretical English language instruction in accordance with international educational standards and current higher education reforms in Uzbekistan [12].

RESULTS: The proposed methodological framework demonstrates that the systematic integration of critical thinking activities into theoretical English language disciplines may substantially transform the learning process from passive reception of information to active analytical engagement. The analysis of pedagogical literature, contemporary ELT methodology, and the educational context of Uzbekistan suggests that critical thinking activities can positively influence students' comprehension of theoretical concepts, classroom participation, and academic communication.

Particular importance is attached to the application of critical thinking techniques in disciplines such as Stylistics, Lexicology, Theoretical Grammar, Analytical Reading, and Introduction to Linguistics, where students are required to interpret abstract linguistic phenomena, compare theoretical approaches, and formulate evidence-based arguments.

Table 1. Proposed Critical Thinking Activities for Theoretical English Language Disciplines

Critical Thinking Activity	Instructional Purpose	Expected Student Outcome
Socratic questioning	Evaluation of linguistic assumptions	Analytical reasoning
Think–Pair–Share	Reflection and peer discussion	Active participation
Case analysis	Interpretation of linguistic phenomena	Application of theory
Concept mapping	Visualization of theoretical relationships	Conceptual understanding
Problem-based learning	Solution of theoretical problems	Higher-order thinking
Comparative analysis	Comparison of linguistic schools	Evaluation skills
Mini research projects	Independent investigation	Academic autonomy
Reflective journals	Self-assessment and reflection	Metacognitive awareness

The activities presented in Table 1 are designed to stimulate different dimensions of critical thinking [2;6]. Socratic questioning and comparative analysis primarily target evaluation and argumentation, whereas concept mapping and case analysis facilitate deeper conceptual understanding. Mini research projects and reflective journals additionally promote learner autonomy and metacognitive awareness, which are increasingly emphasized in contemporary higher education reforms in Uzbekistan[12].

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Critical Thinking Integration in Theoretical English Language Teaching

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

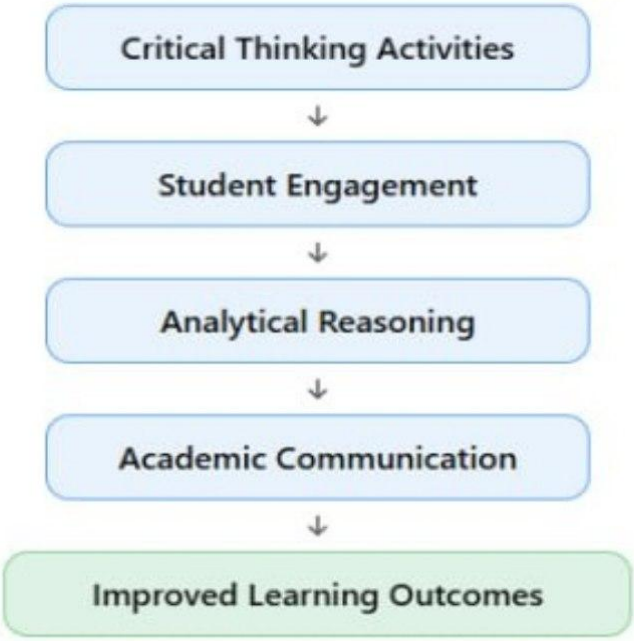


Figure 1 presents the conceptual logic underlying the proposed methodological framework. The model assumes that critical thinking activities increase students' engagement with theoretical material, which subsequently strengthens analytical reasoning and academic communication. These interconnected processes are expected to contribute to improved learning outcomes in theoretical English language disciplines.

The proposed methodological framework demonstrates that the integration of critical thinking activities into the teaching of theoretical English language disciplines represents a promising direction for improving the quality of higher education in Uzbekistan. Unlike traditional lecture-centered instruction, which frequently emphasizes the memorization of theoretical concepts, the proposed learner-centered model encourages students to analyze, evaluate, compare, and apply linguistic knowledge in authentic academic contexts. Such an approach corresponds to contemporary educational paradigms that regard students not as passive recipients of information but as active participants in the construction of knowledge.

Discussions: The findings of the present study are consistent with internationally recognized theories of critical thinking. Facione (1990) argues that effective learning requires students to develop interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Similarly, Paul and Elder (2019) emphasize that critical thinking is an intellectually disciplined process that enables learners to formulate logical judgments based on evidence rather than memorized information. Within the context of theoretical English language disciplines, these cognitive processes become particularly significant because students are expected to interpret complex linguistic concepts, compare competing theoretical approaches, and justify their academic conclusions using scientific evidence [7].

The proposed instructional framework also supports the principles of constructivist learning theory, according to which knowledge is actively constructed through interaction, collaboration, and reflection. Critical thinking activities such as Socratic questioning, problem-based learning, concept mapping, and comparative linguistic analysis create opportunities for students to engage in meaningful academic dialogue and collaborative knowledge construction. As a result, theoretical disciplines become more interactive and intellectually stimulating, increasing students' motivation and facilitating deeper conceptual understanding [4;5].

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

An important contribution of the proposed framework lies in its adaptation to the educational context of Uzbekistan. During recent years, national educational reforms have emphasized competency-based education, academic mobility, digital transformation, and the modernization of teaching methodologies in higher education institutions. These reforms require university instructors to implement innovative pedagogical strategies that promote analytical thinking, creativity, communication, and independent learning. Consequently, integrating critical thinking activities into theoretical English language disciplines directly supports the strategic priorities of higher education development in Uzbekistan[10;11].

The proposed methodology may be particularly valuable for courses traditionally considered difficult by undergraduate students, including Stylistics, Lexicology, Theoretical Grammar, Analytical Reading, and Introduction to Linguistics. These disciplines frequently involve abstract terminology, multiple theoretical interpretations, and extensive conceptual knowledge, which may reduce student engagement when presented exclusively through conventional lectures. The incorporation of structured analytical tasks enables learners to transform theoretical information into practical intellectual experience through discussion, reflection, interpretation, and collaborative problem-solving [9].

Furthermore, the proposed framework complements communicative language teaching by extending communication beyond language practice toward academic reasoning. Students are encouraged not only to express opinions in English but also to defend arguments, evaluate evidence, identify logical relationships, and synthesize information from multiple academic sources[6;8]. Consequently, language development and cognitive development occur simultaneously, contributing to the formation of highly qualified graduates capable of participating effectively in international academic communities.

Future studies may empirically examine the effectiveness of critical thinking activities through quasi-experimental and mixed-methods research designs involving undergraduate students from different universities in Uzbekistan.

Researchers may compare traditional lecture-based instruction with learner-centered models incorporating Socratic dialogue, problem-based learning, concept mapping, collaborative projects, and reflective learning journals. Longitudinal investigations may also examine the long-term influence of critical thinking instruction on students' academic achievement, communicative competence, and professional development.

Another promising direction involves investigating the integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence tools into critical thinking instruction. Educational platforms employing adaptive learning systems, virtual collaboration environments, and AI-assisted feedback may further enhance analytical reasoning and student engagement within theoretical English language disciplines.

Cross-institutional comparative studies involving universities from Central Asia and other international educational systems may also contribute to identifying best pedagogical practices and developing internationally applicable methodological recommendations.

Conclusion: The modernization of higher education in Uzbekistan requires innovative instructional approaches capable of developing not only students' linguistic competence but also their analytical, communicative, and intellectual abilities. Within this context, critical thinking represents one of the fundamental competencies necessary for successful academic and professional development[13].

The present study proposed a methodological framework for integrating critical thinking activities into the teaching of theoretical English language disciplines at universities in Uzbekistan. The framework combines learner-centered pedagogy, constructivist learning principles,

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

communicative language teaching, and competency-based education to create interactive learning environments that encourage analysis, evaluation, reflection, and collaborative knowledge construction.

The significance of the proposed framework extends beyond individual classroom practice. It contributes to the broader modernization of English language education in Uzbekistan by aligning theoretical instruction with contemporary international educational standards and national higher education reforms[12]. The implementation of such approaches may strengthen the preparation of future teachers, translators, linguists, and researchers capable of critical inquiry, evidence-based reasoning, and effective participation in the global academic community.

In conclusion, the integration of critical thinking activities into theoretical English language disciplines should be regarded not merely as an innovative teaching technique but as a strategic direction for improving the quality, relevance, and international competitiveness of higher education in Uzbekistan[10;11].

References

1. Bloom B. S. Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain. – New York : Longmans, Green and Co., 1956. – 207 p.
2. Brown H. D. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. – 6th ed. – New York : Pearson Education, 2014. – 408 p.
3. Cameron L. Teaching Languages to Young Learners. – Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2001. – 258 p.
4. Ennis R. H. Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum: A Vision // Topoi. – 2018. – Vol. 37, No. 1. – P. 165–184.
5. Facione P. A. Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction. – Millbrae, CA : California Academic Press, 1990. – 112 p.
6. Harmer J. The Practice of English Language Teaching. – 5th ed. – Harlow : Pearson Education Limited, 2015. – 446 p.
7. Paul R., Elder L. The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools. – 8th ed. – Tomales, CA : Foundation for Critical Thinking Press, 2019. – 48 p.
8. Richards J. C., Rodgers T. S. Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. – 3rd ed. – Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2014. – 410 p.
9. Ruzieva K. K. Specifics of English Language Instruction in Higher Education Institutions of Uzbekistan // Ethiopian International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research. – 2024. – Vol. 11, No. 11. – P. 412–414.
10. Ruzmetova D. A. KASA Is a Professional Development Program for Foreign Language Teachers in Uzbekistan // International Scientific Journal Alfraganus. – 2026. – Vol. 3, No. 4. – P. 67–72.
11. Vokhidova T. Contemporary Issues in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Linguistic Universities in Uzbekistan: A Theoretical-Analytical Study // Qo‘qon Universiteti Xabarnomasi. – 2026. – No. 2. – P. 118–126.
12. Yandashova S. English-Medium Instruction as an Educational Reform in Uzbekistan // International Conference on Modern Development of Pedagogy and Linguistics. – 2026. – Vol. 3, No. 2. – P. 60–62.
13. Khaydarova N. G., Sharopov M. N. Teaching Foreign Languages in Higher Education Institutions in Uzbekistan // Eurasian Research Bulletin. – 2022. – Vol. 7. – P. 34–38.