



## IMPROVING STUDENTS' LEXICAL PROFICIENCY VIA CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES

**Karimova Muattar Fayzullayevna**

*basic doctoral student at Tashkent*

*State Pedagogical University*

[fragrent2207@gmail.com](mailto:fragrent2207@gmail.com)

A key component of language learning is the development of lexical competence, or the capacity to use words correctly and efficiently. Developing students' lexical competence is crucial in the current educational environment, where global interconnection necessitates sophisticated language abilities. This thesis investigates how, specifically in the context of Uzbekistan, including critical thinking activities into language instruction can enhance students' vocabulary acquisition, retention, and application. This article makes the case that critical thinking techniques give students the wider cognitive capabilities they need for lifelong learning in addition to improving their lexical skills, drawing on both local and foreign studies.

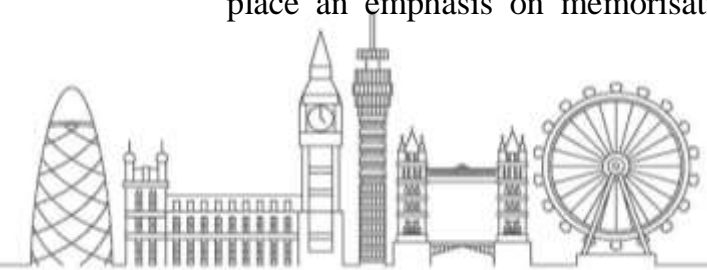
### **The Value of Lexical Competence**

The cornerstone of successful communication is lexical competence. It includes understanding words and their definitions as well as how to use them appropriately in different situations. Nation (2013) asserts that vocabulary is essential to the four language abilities of speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Learners find it difficult to understand texts, communicate ideas coherently, or participate in meaningful conversations when they lack adequate lexical competence. According to Nazarova (2022), Uzbek pupils frequently struggle with vocabulary acquisition since traditional schools do not provide them with contextual exposure or interactive learning techniques. Therefore, a key objective for language teachers is to help students become more lexically competent.

### **Critical Thinking's Function in Language Learning**

The ability to logically and methodically analyse, assess, and synthesise information is a component of critical thinking. Critical thinking activities in language instruction demand that students actively interact with the content and move beyond rote memorisation. According to Brown (2021), giving children higher-order thinking exercises like analysis, creative application, and problem-solving improves their ability to internalise terminology. Students may be required to compare synonyms, analyse word meanings in various situations, or debate the subtleties of word usage as part of a critical thinking assignment.

The inclusion of critical thinking activities can result in a revolutionary change in pedagogical practices in Uzbekistan, where conventional teaching approaches frequently place an emphasis on memorisation (Karimova, 2019). Teachers can encourage both





## MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

lexical competence and cognitive development in their pupils by pushing them to think critically and use terminology in meaningful ways.

### **Frameworks for Theory Underpinning Integration**

A number of educational ideas support the connection between lexical ability and critical thinking.

#### **Theory of Constructivism**

According to constructivism, students actively create knowledge rather than merely absorbing it. According to Richards (2015), critical thinking exercises support this notion by motivating students to actively investigate, evaluate, and internalise terminology. A constructivist approach can, for instance, have students make word family mind maps or have group discussions to assess if word choices are acceptable in particular situations.

#### **The Taxonomy of Bloom**

From fundamental knowledge recall to higher-order thinking abilities like analysis and creation, Bloom's Taxonomy divides cognitive abilities into stages. According to Zwiers (2014), critical thinking activities that focus on these upper levels of Bloom's hierarchy include examining word etymologies and crafting creative sentences that employ recently acquired vocabulary. Students' capacity to utilise words flexibly and contextually is improved by these assignments, which also help them retain more vocabulary.

#### **Theory of Socioculture**

The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky emphasises how crucial social contact is to learning. Rakhimova (2020) claims that group problem-solving exercises and peer discussions are common collaborative activities in Uzbek classrooms that incorporate critical thinking exercises. Through discourse, these exercises help students clarify their word usage, exchange viewpoints, and negotiate meaning.

#### **Useful Implementations in the Classroom**

There are several ways to incorporate critical thinking activities into language instruction:

##### **Contextual Usage and Word Analysis**

Students examine the definitions of words in a variety of settings, including books, ads, and posts on social media. For instance, they could look at how a word's meaning varies in formal and informal contexts.

##### **Tasks for Solving Problems**

Students work on assignments that ask them to solve linguistic puzzles. One example is a vocabulary challenge in which students use root analysis and contextual cues to infer the meanings of unknown words.

##### **Discussions and Arguments**

Students engage in conversations or arguments that call for the usage of the target vocabulary. This method develops critical thinking abilities as well as lexical competency.







## MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

**Storytelling and Creative Writing :** Students are encouraged to employ new terminology in creative ways through assignments like composing conversations or short stories. The usefulness of storytelling activities in Uzbek schools, where students can relate language acquisition to their cultural tales, is highlighted by Nazarova (2022).

### **Engaging Interactive Games**

Word association games and vocabulary scavenger hunts are examples of gamified learning activities that encourage critical thinking and active participation.

### **Advantages of Critical Thinking Activities**

#### **Improved Memory for Words**

Students who engage in critical thinking activities are better able to internalise terminology. According to Brown (2021), pupils are more likely to retain terms when they actively interact with them through application and analysis than when they merely commit them to memory.

#### **Awareness of Context**

Students gain a sophisticated vocabulary by investigating word meanings in a variety of scenarios. This ability is especially crucial for second-language learners who have to deal with situational and cultural differences in word usage, according to Richards (2015).

#### **Development of the Mind**

Critical thinking exercises improve cognitive skills like creativity, logical reasoning, and problem-solving. Students that engage in these kinds of activities show better overall academic achievement since they can apply these abilities to other disciplines, according to Gunderson (2020).

### **Problems and Remedies in the Uzbek Setting**

Notwithstanding its advantages, there are obstacles to introducing critical thinking activities in Uzbekistan, including:

**Conventional Methods of Instruction:** In Uzbekistan, a lot of schools use teacher-centered methods that put memorisation ahead of active learning. Rakhimova (2020) recommends professional development courses to teach educators how to create and lead critical thinking exercises.

**Limited Resources:** The technology and resources required for interactive learning may not be available to schools. This problem can be lessened by forming alliances with foreign organisations and utilising low-cost tactics like group activities (Karimova, 2019).

**Student Resistance:** Critical thinking exercises may initially be difficult for students used to passive learning. Clear instructions and gradual execution can aid in their adaptation.

**Proof of Success:** Research conducted in Uzbekistan and overseas offers factual proof of the value of critical thinking activities in language acquisition. For instance, Uzbek pupils who engaged in critical thinking exercises had a 25% increase in vocabulary test





## MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

scores when compared to those who used conventional approaches, according to a study by Nazarova (2022). Similar results were observed by Zwiers (2014) in a U.S. context, when students who participated in critical thinking exercises showed enhanced contextual usage and vocabulary retention.

### Conclusion

One effective method for improving lexical competence in language instruction is to include critical thinking activities. Teachers can encourage deeper learning and cognitive development in their pupils by pushing them to analyse, evaluate, and apply terminology in meaningful ways. Although there are difficulties, especially in the Uzbek setting, these can be overcome by developing resources, training teachers, and implementing changes gradually. Critical thinking techniques are a revolutionary way to provide kids the language skills they need to succeed in a world that is becoming more interconnected, as evidenced by studies conducted by both domestic and foreign academics.

### REFERENCES:

1. Brown, H. D. (2021). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York: Pearson Education.
2. Gunderson, L. (2020). *The role of cognitive development in second language acquisition*. London: Routledge.
3. Karimova, L. (2019). Challenges in lexical competence development in secondary schools of Uzbekistan. *Uzbek Journal of Language and Education*, 5(2), 45–58.
4. Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
5. Nazarova, N. K. (2022). Enhancing lexical competence among Uzbek learners through innovative methodologies. *Journal of Uzbek Linguistic Studies*, 12(1), 30–49.
6. Rakhimova, M. S. (2020). The role of critical thinking in foreign language teaching in Uzbekistan. *Pedagogical Innovations in Central Asia*, 3(3), 10–20.
7. Richards, J. C. (2015). *Key issues in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
8. Zwiers, J. (2014). *Building academic language: Meeting Common Core Standards across disciplines*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

