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Critical thinking as a means of improving the effectiveness of English language teaching

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to examine strategies for developing critical thinking skills among students, particularly in the context of learning English, and to determine their impact on improving academic outcomes. The research employed comparative methods, pragmatic analysis, and generalisation techniques, alongside strategies such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, discussions and debates, independent research and reflection, as well as the use of digital technologies to foster critical thinking. The study revealed that cultivating critical thinking in students learning English is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of their learning process. Among the strategies, project-based learning (4.2 points) and independent research with reflection (4.1 points) yielded the highest student performance, indicating varying effectiveness of these approaches in developing critical thinking. It was established that employing project- and problem-based learning facilitates the development of skills in analysis, argumentation, and real-world problem solving, which are directly linked to critical thinking. Students actively engaged in discussions, improving their ability to justify their viewpoints and consider alternative perspectives. Additionally, the use of digital tools such as Quizlet and Padlet contributed to the development of analytical skills through interactive exercises and collaborative work. Consequently, the findings confirmed that integrating these strategies into the educational process positively influences students' capacity to critically comprehend and apply acquired knowledge. The research enabled educators to implement effective strategies for fostering critical thinking among students, particularly through project- and problem-oriented learning. Educational institutions can utilise the results to enhance curricula and improve the quality of specialist training

Keywords: learners; educational process; specialist training; effective strategies; technology integration

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of researching critical thinking as a means to improve the effectiveness of English language learning stems from the necessity to develop students' ability to analyse, evaluate, and interpret information, which enhances comprehension and communication skills. Studying English plays a significant role in fostering critical thinking, as the subject requires analysis of lexical nuances, grammatical structures, and contextual understanding. The integration

of critical thinking development technologies in English lessons creates favourable conditions for students' self-realisation and creative activity, which is a key objective of education. The problem addressed in this research lies in the need to develop critical thinking as a core component for increasing the efficiency of English language acquisition. It is essential to understand how critical thinking affects the language learning process as well as students' ability to



analyse, synthesise, and evaluate information. However, challenges exist in implementing methodologies that promote critical thinking development, especially within traditional teaching frameworks.

The authors investigated the implementation of a blended English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course aimed at developing critical thinking skills in computer science students. For instance, N.V. Zaitseva *et al.* (2022) explored a semester-long ESP course combining traditional and online learning, utilising authentic English video materials and multiple-choice testing to assess students' critical thinking levels. C.M. Johnson & A.M. Howard (2025) examined critical thinking development among English learners, emphasising logical reasoning, argumentation, and reasoning skills formation. They analysed how instructional strategies such as argument analysis, debates, critical reading, and essay writing with justified positions enhance students' ability to evaluate and construct arguments.

Additionally, M. Kaviani & D.M. Heidar (2020) studied the impact of critical thinking on developing productive skills among Iranian pre-intermediate students, demonstrating that critical analysis and reflection improve both written and oral performance. Furthermore, S.I. Khan *et al.* (2025) conducted a qualitative study to identify changes in pre-service teachers' perceptions of critical thinking before and after a functional English course, finding that students better understood the importance of critical thinking in the learning process post-training. The attitudes of students towards critical thinking in second language acquisition, particularly English, were also investigated by M. Lailiyah & P.L. Wediyantoro (2021), whose results indicated that positive beliefs and cognitive flexibility contribute to successful language acquisition and better skills in text analysis, argumentation, and problem-solving during second language learning. L. Lazorenko & O. Krasnenko (2020) studied the use of the Agile approach in teaching ESP English. Agile, a flexible project management methodology focusing on rapid iterations, close client interaction, and adaptability to change, was found to enhance student motivation and improve adaptability to evolving learning environments. However, limitations were noted regarding scalability for large projects and insufficient documentation, which can lead to misunderstandings and instability in later stages.

I. Turchyn *et al.* (2022) investigated the development of critical thinking within the Ukrainian educational system, grounding their analysis in Paulo Freire's educational philosophy. They examined how Freire's approach fosters active, independent thinking among students and enhances their engagement in the learning process. Similarly, Z.B. Moghadam *et al.* (2023) studied the impact of a critical thinking development program on English language learners, assessing its effects on students' critical thinking skills, reading comprehension, and group dynamics. Their results indicated that participants exhibited improved analytical and argumentative abilities as well as more active interaction during lessons. A.G. Negoescu (2023) explored

the role of critical thinking in language learning, focusing on its contribution to the formation of analytical skills among students. The study demonstrated that integrating critical thinking into language classes enhances students' understanding of linguistic structures, facilitates higher levels of discourse, and promotes independent thought. X. Yin *et al.* (2023) discussed the importance of critical thinking and the challenges inherent in teaching it. They noted that, despite widespread acknowledgment of critical thinking's significance, there is no consensus on its definition or effective pedagogical methods. Moreover, they emphasised the subject-specific nature of critical thinking, requiring tailored strategies of analysis and synthesis for different knowledge domains.

Despite these contributions, insufficient attention has been paid to the influence of critical thinking on intercultural communication and its application in digital environments. Additionally, the impact of diverse cognitive styles on the efficacy of critical thinking development in language learning remains underexplored. The aim of this study was to identify conceptual approaches and methodological foundations conducive to fostering critical thinking during English language learning. To achieve this aim, the study objectives included: characterising the main theoretical approaches, features, and requirements for developing critical thinking in students studying English; evaluating strategies for critical thinking development and determining the most effective approaches for integration into English language teaching; outlining key recommendations for implementing conceptual approaches in the educational process to enhance students' critical thinking skills.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research analysed the concept of "critical thinking", its characteristics, and its impact on students learning English through the method of analysis. Complementary methods such as comparison and generalisation were also employed. The study was conducted at Kyiv National Linguistic University (n.d.), which offers a program in "English Language and Literature, Second Foreign Language, Translation". The sample comprised 120 undergraduate students (third to fourth year) who had completed courses in linguistics and foreign language teaching methodology. Inclusion criteria involved sufficient proficiency in English, active participation in academic activities, and absence of academic debt. Exclusion criteria included significant absenteeism, lack of foundational critical thinking skills, and low academic performance. Thus, the sample consisted of students who met these criteria and could fully participate in the study. The study conformed to ethical standards as per the WMA Declaration of Helsinki (2025), with voluntary participation and adherence to confidentiality principles.

The development of critical thinking was examined using a SWOT analysis framework, systematically assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to effectively implement corresponding strategies within the learning process. Both internal and external factors influencing

education were considered, with ongoing refinement based on collected data and outcomes. Key SWOT criteria included: instructor preparedness, alignment of the “English Philology” curriculum with contemporary standards, availability of modern teaching materials and resources, institution prestige, positive feedback from graduates and employers, involvement in research, development and implementation of innovative teaching methods, clarity of strategic development plans, use of analytical data for decision-making, and market demand for specialists with critical thinking skills.

Based on the SWOT analysis, important strategies for fostering critical thinking were identified and characterised. Students worked in groups to solve specific problems, promoting critical thinking skills development. They studied theoretical materials, collected information, discussed project execution strategies, and presented results to instructors and peers, receiving feedback. Digital tools such as Quizlet were utilised to create interactive flashcards and English language quizzes, enhancing language proficiency and supporting critical thinking through active repetition and self-assessment. Additionally, students used the Padlet platform to collaboratively create and discuss English-language resources, exploring diverse perspectives on linguistic issues, thereby fostering analytical approaches to learning material.

Throughout the course, students completed various project-based and discussion tasks aimed at developing both language competence and critical thinking. Project work included designing English advertising campaigns for hypothetical brands, creating grammar teaching materials for secondary school students, and producing short video lessons on specific grammar topics. Digital tools employed included Canva for visual content design, PowerPoint and Google Slides for presentation structuring, and video editing software for lesson creation. These tasks aimed to integrate linguistic, analytical, and presentation skills in practical applications.

Simultaneously, students participated in structured debates and discussions, following the Oxford debate format on topics such as “Social media causes more harm than good”, “Artificial intelligence will replace teachers”, and “Climate change should be addressed through global taxation”. Prior to debates, students prepared analytical summaries outlining key arguments and counterarguments supported by research and examples. Discussions were conducted exclusively in English; students worked in teams, allocated roles, and responded to questions from peers and instructors during and after presentations. Critical thinking development was indirectly assessed via successful task completion.

An assessment was carried out of the results of the completed tasks based on students’ success in performing the tasks, using a five-point grading system within each strategy, where 5 points represent a high level of task performance; 4 points indicate a well-executed task but with minor shortcomings; 3 points denote an acceptable task

performance with some deficiencies; 2 points mean the task was completed at a basic level with significant shortcomings; and 1 point signifies the task was performed poorly or not completed at all. Several recommendations were identified to improve the educational process aimed at developing critical thinking as a means to enhance the effectiveness of English language learning.

RESULTS

Key theoretical approaches, features, and requirements for developing critical thinking in students studying English

When learning a language, it is important not only to mechanically memorise words and rules but also to have the ability to analyse the context in which these words are used, as well as to critically evaluate information received from various sources. Studying English requires students to continuously engage with texts that may be literary, scientific, or media-related, which demands the ability to correctly interpret information, draw conclusions, and critically assess the knowledge acquired. In the process of learning English, critical thinking assists students not only in better understanding grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics but also in analysing how these language elements are used in real communicative situations. This enables students to use English more effectively to express their thoughts, participate in discussions, write essays, and undertake other forms of written work. Furthermore, critical thinking fosters the development of argumentative skills, which are an essential component of language learning. Students who can critically evaluate information are able to construct more logical and persuasive arguments, which are necessary for successful learning.

Moreover, the development of critical thinking in students learning English encourages the formation of an independent approach to study. They become more confident in their abilities, capable of independently finding information, analysing it, and drawing conclusions. This allows students not only to achieve high results in language learning but also to develop their capacity for self-reflection, which is important for personal and professional growth. Critical thinking also promotes the development of intercultural competence in students, as studying English includes not only grammar and vocabulary but also acquaintance with the cultural aspects of English-speaking countries. Students must be able to critically assess different cultural contexts, understand their differences, and take these factors into account when communicating in English (Dubovyk, 2024). Thus, critical thinking becomes the foundation not only for developing language skills but also for understanding the cultural particularities of other peoples, which is crucial for effective intercultural communication. In general, critical thinking is an integral part of the process of learning English, as it enables students not only to improve their language skills but also to develop analytical and cognitive abilities that are necessary for successful learning and personal development.

The educational-professional programme “English Philology” at Kyiv National Linguistic University envisages the development of students’ critical thinking through a complex of interconnected requirements and educational components. One of the primary aims of the programme is to develop the ability to analyse, evaluate, and interpret information, which facilitates an analytical approach to working with language material, critical reflection on translation strategies, and the scientific substantiation of linguistic phenomena. The first important aspect involves the design and implementation of disciplines focused on developing analytical and research skills. Students receive training in text analysis, interpretation of meanings, and recognition of logical connections between concepts, which cultivates the ability to critically assess texts of various genres and styles. Within the educational process, future philologists master methods of analysing literary, scientific, journalistic, and technical texts, helping them not only to broaden their professional competencies but also to improve their ability to systematise acquired knowledge and apply it in practical activities. The second key component of the programme is the integration of information technologies, which promotes the development of skills to critically evaluate and use modern information sources. During their studies, students become familiar with databases of scientific research, electronic libraries, language analysis software, and automated translation programmes. This not only enhances

their information literacy but also develops skills in selecting relevant information, verifying it, and systematising it – key elements of critical thinking. Special emphasis is also placed on forming a well-argued personal position and skills in conducting academic discussions. Students learn to construct logically sound reasoning, present convincing arguments, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different viewpoints. This process is implemented through essay writing, critical reviews, analysis of scientific articles, preparing presentations, and participating in debates.

An important structural component of the programme is the inclusion of specialised courses aimed specifically at developing critical thinking. For example, the course “Foundations of Critical Thinking” is designed to cultivate students’ ability to reflect, evaluate alternative viewpoints, identify logical fallacies, and recognise manipulative techniques in texts. Interdisciplinary courses are also integrated into the curriculum, allowing students to analyse issues in linguistics, literary studies, and translation from various perspectives. Additionally, the programme promotes the development of general competencies, among which critical thinking is a key aspect. This is realised through the cultivation of problem-solving skills, the application of logical argumentation schemes, evaluation of the reliability of information sources, and decision-making based on analysis of facts and statistical data. A more detailed analysis of the programme is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the educational programme “English Philology”

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high level of training of teachers with experience in developing critical thinking; • the curriculum is in line with modern requirements, which includes an analytical approach to linguistics and literary studies; • availability of the latest teaching materials and resources that promote the development of analytical thinking; • prestige of the educational institution and positive feedback from graduates and employers on the level of training; • the use of innovative teaching methods that support an analytical approach to the study of linguistic phenomena. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insufficient number of integrated courses directly aimed at developing critical thinking; • limited access to some international scientific databases and resources used for analytical thinking; • lack of systematic assessment of students’ critical thinking in the educational process; • insufficient application of an interdisciplinary approach in the formation of critical thinking.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active participation in international research on the development of critical thinking; • introducing new teaching methods based on the analysis and critical reflection of information; • expanding international cooperation with universities to exchange experience in teaching critical thinking; • use of analytical data to improve the educational process; • increased demand for professionals with developed critical thinking in the professional environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high competition in the market of educational services, which requires continuous improvement of educational approaches; • the impact of information overload, which complicates the selection of quality learning resources; • insufficient motivation of students to develop critical thinking through traditional assessment methods; • limited funding for the introduction of new educational technologies.

Source: compiled by the author based on Kyiv National Linguistic University (n.d.)

Strengths of the program lie in its modern teaching approach, which combines classical and innovative methodologies. Instructors employ interactive strategies such as debates, analysis of authentic texts, case studies, and problem-based learning. This fosters the development of skills in argumentation, source evaluation, and forming

independent opinions based on factual data. A high level of methodological training among faculty and the implementation of advanced educational technologies enhances the effectiveness of the learning process. At the same time, certain weaknesses have been identified that may hinder the development of critical thinking among students. Despite

the availability of individual courses dedicated to analytical thinking, the systematic integration of this competency throughout all stages of learning remains insufficiently developed. The lack of regular assessment of students' critical thinking levels complicates the adjustment of educational approaches. Furthermore, unequal access to international academic resources may limit students' opportunities for independent research on current issues in philology and pedagogy. The analysis of the program's opportunities points to prospects for expanding international collaboration, which would promote the use of advanced methods for teaching critical thinking. Educational policy shifts and potential changes in national standards might lead to shifts in focus within the curriculum, complicating long-term planning for the development of critical thinking. Competition with other universities demands constant improvement of methodologies and approaches, while limited funding may constrain the implementation of new technological tools. Additionally, information overload typical of the modern educational environment may impede students' ability to distinguish reliable from unreliable information sources.

Thus, the educational-professional program "English Philology" ensures the development of critical thinking in students through a comprehensive approach that includes text analysis, the use of information technologies, the formation of reasoned positions, integration of specialised courses, and the development of general competencies. This contributes to the preparation of highly qualified specialists capable of deep information analysis, effective resolution of professional tasks, and independent decision-making in complex communicative situations. Overcoming potential threats is possible through strategic planning, adapting the curriculum to the demands of the educational environment, and continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented methodologies.

Evaluation of strategies for developing critical thinking and identifying the most effective approaches for integration into English language learning

Based on the conducted SWOT analysis, key strategies for developing students' critical thinking were identified. To

assess their effectiveness in the process of learning English, a study involving 120 students engaged in various forms of work such as Project-Based Learning (Center for Teaching & Learning, n.d.), Problem-Based Learning (Leming, 2020), discussions and debates, as well as independent research and reflection, was carried out. Project-based learning, which involved students working on real projects such as developing advertising campaigns or creating teaching materials for English language instruction, proved to be highly effective in fostering critical thinking. Students were able to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, which allowed them not only to deepen their understanding but also to develop skills in independent analysis and decision-making. Regarding problem-based learning, students worked on solving specific problems such as developing methodological guides for teaching English or creating presentations on linguistic topics. This strategy facilitated group work, promoting the development of communication skills and collaborative problem-solving.

Students studied theoretical materials, discussed project execution strategies, and presented their results, which stimulated critical reflection on the learning content. Discussions and debates on topics such as the influence of culture on language or the role of English in globalisation served as tools for critical thinking development. Students analysed different viewpoints, prepared arguments to support their positions, and spoke before the group, fostering the ability to critically evaluate various approaches to problem-solving. Additionally, students conducted independent research, studying additional literature sources and analysing the obtained information. Regular reflection on their learning process enabled students to assess their achievements and identify areas for further development. Digital technologies such as Quizlet for creating flashcards and tests or Padlet for discussing English-language resources allowed students to actively engage in the learning process, improve language skills, and support critical thinking development through self-assessment. All results were summarised in Table 2, which presents the average scores for each learning strategy.

Table 2. Summarised results of student performance assessment according to learning strategies

Learning strategy	Main assessment criteria	Average score (max 5)
Project-based learning	Application of theory in practice, project quality, teamwork, presentation of results	4.2
Problem-based learning	Problem solving, depth of analysis, quality of group collaboration, presentation of results	3.8
Discussions and debates	Quality of argumentation, analytical ability, response to counterarguments, logical reasoning	4.0
Independent research and reflection	Independent information analysis, reflection on own achievements and mistakes	4.1
Use of digital technologies	Creation of flashcards, working with platforms (Quizlet, Padlet), active revision, linguistic analysis	4.0

Source: compiled by the author

The highest average score was recorded for project-based learning – 4.2 points. This indicated that involving students in real projects focused on the practical application of theoretical knowledge had a positive impact on their performance. Students demonstrated high quality in their completed projects, showed the ability to collaboratively solve tasks, worked effectively in teams, and presented their results at an appropriate level. Therefore, project-based learning contributed to the development of applied skills and ensured the formation of abilities to solve professional tasks in conditions close to real-life situations. A slightly lower but still high result – 4.1 points – was observed for tasks performed within the strategy of independent research and reflection. This suggested that autonomous research activities fostered the development of students' analytical thinking, their ability to deeply reflect on their own learning process, and independently analyse information. The completed tasks evidenced a sufficient level of students' research skills, including their ability to plan and implement educational projects independently. Discussions and debates yielded an average score of 4.0, confirming the effectiveness of this strategy in developing critical thinking, argumentation skills, and communication abilities. Students actively participated in group discussions, demonstrated the capacity to defend their own positions, analyse counterarguments, and logically structure their speeches. Engagement in debates contributed to the formation of public speaking skills and the ability to make quick decisions in dialogic settings. A similar average score of 4.0 was recorded for the use of digital technologies. This indicated students' adequate readiness to utilise information and communication technologies (ICT) in the learning process. Employing digital tools for creating educational materials, visualising information, and implementing project tasks enhanced learning efficiency by enabling students to better organise the study material and present their work results. It is also worth noting the positive impact of digital technologies on students' engagement and the development of their information competence. Problem-based learning showed the lowest average among the strategies studied – 3.8 points. This might indicate certain difficulties students faced when tackling complex learning problems. In particular, some students demonstrated insufficient depth in analysing problematic situations and encountered challenges in group collaboration. Nevertheless, even under these conditions, problem-based learning remained an effective means of developing analytical skills and the ability to find solutions in complex situations.

Overall, the research results indicated that the most effective strategies in terms of students' academic success were project-based learning and independent research with reflection. These strategies ensured deeper student involvement in the learning process and promoted the development of autonomy, critical thinking, and the ability to apply knowledge practically. Meanwhile, discussions, debates, and the use of digital technologies also positively influenced the formation of professional and communicative

competencies, increased student activity, and contributed to better assimilation of educational content.

Recommendations for implementing conceptual approaches in the learning process to enhance critical thinking among students studying English

Several recommendations were identified to improve the learning process aimed at developing critical thinking as a means to increase the effectiveness of learning English. These recommendations are addressed to students, teachers, and government bodies, encompassing both individual and general strategies that enable achieving high learning outcomes and fostering language skills development. An important aspect is not only improving students' language competence but also enhancing their ability to analyse, independently comprehend, and present their thoughts logically – skills essential for successfully using English in real-life situations. It is crucial to actively use interactive platforms such as Quizlet and Padlet. These tools help students develop not only language skills but also independent thinking abilities. Quizlet allows creating flashcards and quizzes that promote deeper comprehension through repetition and self-assessment. Using Padlet facilitates collective discussion of linguistic issues, forming an analytical approach to studying the material – an important component of critical thinking.

Students should be given opportunities to work in groups on real projects. For example, designing advertising campaigns in English or creating grammar teaching materials helps combine linguistic and analytical skills. A significant part of this work involves using modern digital tools such as Canva for creating visual materials and PowerPoint or Google Slides for presentations. Utilising these tools stimulates students to engage more deeply with the material and effectively apply their knowledge. To develop critical thinking, discussion and debate methods should be actively incorporated. The Oxford debate format enables students to discuss important social topics requiring analysis and argumentation. It is essential that students prepare analytical abstracts before debates, allowing them to develop skills in logical thinking and structured presentation of ideas. Additionally, discussing topics in English provides opportunities to practice language skills in real-life contexts. Such interactive methods will help students integrate critical thinking into their daily learning practice more easily. For teachers, it is important to provide regular feedback, helping students better understand their mistakes and develop self-monitoring skills. Using clear assessment criteria allows precise determination of each student's level of achievement and enhances the effectiveness of the learning process.

Furthermore, teachers conducting debates and utilising the aforementioned tools should participate in state-supported courses and programs, such as the Teacher Professional Development Program for Foreign Language Teachers organised by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine titled "Remote English Language Learning Program for General Secondary Education Institutions"

(Order of the Ministry... , 2023) or courses conducted within Erasmus+ projects. These programs provide teachers with opportunities to master new teaching methodologies, including interactive and digital technologies that promote the development of critical thinking among students. Participation in such programs enables teachers to update their knowledge, enhance pedagogical skills, and implement innovative approaches to teaching English.

In addition to participating in professional development programmes, English language teachers can also take advantage of courses organised by international educational organisations such as the British Council. These courses offer up-to-date knowledge of the latest teaching methodologies, including the use of technology to foster students' critical thinking skills. The British Council, in particular, conducts training sessions where teachers can familiarise themselves with innovative approaches to teaching English and developing students' analytical abilities. They learn to use interactive tools such as videos, podcasts, and online games that help students critically evaluate information while enhancing their argumentation skills and expressive writing. Moreover, an important aspect of teachers' professional growth is engagement with online platforms such as Coursera or edX, where they can enrol in courses specialising in foreign language learning as well as critical thinking development. These resources provide access to courses from leading universities worldwide, such as Harvard University (n.d.) and Stanford University (n.d.), allowing teachers to acquire new knowledge and improve their qualifications in a format convenient for them. Participation in such courses enables teachers not only to become acquainted with best practices in foreign language teaching but also to develop new approaches to organisation.

Kyiv National Linguistic University should update its curricula to prioritise the integration of contemporary teaching methods that promote the development of critical thinking. It is essential to implement project-based learning, where students work on real-world tasks that require analytical approaches. Tasks such as creating advertising campaigns in English for hypothetical brands, developing educational materials for secondary school pupils, or producing grammar video lessons combine linguistic, analytical, and presentation skills. These tasks can be realised using tools like Canva for visual materials, PowerPoint or Google Slides for presentations, which not only foster critical thinking but also enable students to master necessary modern technologies. Furthermore, it is important to actively utilise online platforms for interactive student engagement. For example, Quizlet can be used to create flashcards and tests that assist students in improving their language skills while also developing critical thinking through active repetition and self-assessment. The Padlet platform can serve as an effective tool for collaborative work and discussion of linguistic issues, allowing students to cultivate an analytical approach to the material.

Regularly organising debates, particularly in the Oxford format, will help students enhance their logical

thinking, argumentation, and public speaking skills. Debate topics such as "Social media does more harm than good" or "Artificial intelligence will replace teachers" encourage students to develop skills in information gathering and analysis, as well as in formulating arguments and counterarguments – key components of critical thinking. Additionally, the university should develop a strategy for utilising digital technologies to support the learning process. This includes creating and upgrading infrastructure for distance learning, access to online courses, electronic libraries, and webinars. The use of the latest digital tools will enable students to acquire knowledge and skills in a more interactive and accessible format.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrated that the development of critical thinking significantly impacts the effectiveness of English language learning, particularly in terms of material retention, students' ability to analyse information, and apply knowledge in practical situations. This aligns with the conclusions of J. Liu & A.J. bin Sihes (2025), who identified critical thinking as a key 21st-century skill in English language learning. They emphasised that critical thinking, English language learning in secondary and senior schools, and English reading instruction were among the most frequently used keywords in research. Various tools and methods are applied to foster critical thinking and improve the English learning process. Notably, platforms such as Canva serve as effective tools for creating interactive materials that support learning. This study notes that Canva can be used to create infographics, flashcards, and presentations, enhancing visual perception and analysis of information. This, in turn, assists students in developing critical thinking, as they engage with texts and visual materials to formulate conclusions and evaluate the presented information. This is also consistent with the findings of M.-P. Rodríguez-Rojas *et al.* (2024), who developed and validated a critical thinking scale for academic reading among students learning English. They reported that using tools like Padlet to create virtual boards for group discussions and collecting students' ideas facilitates more effective integration of critical thinking in the learning process. Padlet allows students to express their thoughts in real time, conduct discussions, and gather comments on texts, thus fostering analytical and communicative skills.

Z. Umarova & N. Zubaydova (2024) also investigated the role of critical thinking in English language development and concluded that integrating critical thinking into English teaching stimulates learning and promotes an analytical approach to language study. They utilised Google Classroom as a tool for creating online assignments where students could work with various materials, comment on texts, ask questions, and respond to prompts, thereby encouraging reflective thinking. The study by M.P. Arthi & S.N.S. Gandhimathi (2025) also highlighted the importance of structured assessment methods, such as SWOT analysis, which help evaluate the strengths and weaknesses

of the learning process. They note that this tool allows for identifying effective teaching strategies and opportunities to improve learning processes, including the use of Kahoot for assessing material retention. Kahoot enables interactive quizzes that motivate students to actively participate and instantly analyse information during lessons.

The results of this study confirmed that integrating digital learning platforms supports the development of students' critical thinking skills. Completing practical tasks, such as literary analysis or creating educational materials, helped students apply theoretical knowledge in practice and develop analytical abilities. This corresponds with findings by D.Yu. Koposov *et al.* (2025), who demonstrated that a critically oriented approach to English language learning improves the cognitive skills of secondary school students. Similarly, V. Batdi *et al.* (2024) employed a mixed meta-analysis to evaluate the impact of critical thinking in instruction and confirmed its positive effect on students' academic achievements. Furthermore, this study found that problem-based learning enhances argumentation skills and independent decision-making. Students engaged in solving practical problems employed analytical thinking and showed a high level of understanding of the language material. This aligns with the findings of M.E. Nejad *et al.* (2022), who established that critical thinking plays a mediating role in the relationship between students' writing performance and their learning strategies. Research by G. Tillyeva & D. Mavlonova (2022) and Z. Yan (2021) also demonstrated that developing critical thinking among secondary school students promotes not only improved language skills but also the formation of general cognitive competencies essential for further education.

The results of this study demonstrated that the use of technologies to foster critical thinking in the process of learning English contributes to the enhancement of students' cognitive skills, increases their active participation in the learning process, and promotes the development of analytical abilities. This aligns with the findings of A. Schenck (2024), who investigated the relationship between technological tools and critical thinking among South Korean students learning English as a foreign language. His research confirmed that digital platforms and interactive tasks support the development of critical analysis and argumentation skills during language acquisition. The study also revealed that the use of digital technologies, specifically Quizlet and Padlet, positively influences the development of critical thinking. Students working with interactive platforms more frequently analysed and critically reflected on information by comparing different approaches to studying language material. This corresponds with the conclusions of Q. Huang *et al.* (2023), who demonstrated that critical thinking combined with learner engagement enhances success in foreign language learning.

Similarly, L.W.S. Merta *et al.* (2023) found that technological tools can stimulate the development of critical thinking in English language learning. J. Wei & H. Li (2024) also emphasised that ICT support in English

language teaching can improve students' critical thinking, which in turn increases learning effectiveness. Comparable conclusions were drawn by F. Tang (2024), and W. Liu & Y. Wang (2024), who studied the role of digital immersive technologies in English instruction. They discovered that using virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) tools fosters critical thinking, autonomous learning, and teamwork skills, making the educational process more efficient and sustainable. This is consistent with the findings of A.F. Shakil *et al.* (2021), who highlighted that applying critical thinking in university-level English teaching enhances the structure of students' written work and their ability to present ideas logically. It has been shown that students who actively apply critical thinking during learning demonstrate adequate language competence and confidence in expressing their own ideas.

The study's results indicated that analysing personal achievements and errors helped students better understand the learning process and identify areas for improvement. This is in line with Y. Jia's (2021) conclusions emphasising the importance of reflection in developing critical thinking during language learning. The research showed that participation in discussions and debates promotes a critical approach to analysing information and arguing one's point of view. This aligns with the findings of W. Liang & D. Fung (2021), who found that integrating critical thinking into teaching English as a second language significantly improves students' language competence. Similarly, S. Poštić *et al.* (2023) emphasised that connecting to global educational platforms and implementing joint courses with foreign universities would provide students with access to a broader range of scientific materials and innovative teaching approaches. The use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence to analyse the learning process would allow for more precise adaptation of teaching strategies to students' needs. However, there are existing challenges that may affect the effectiveness of implementing these changes. Similar conclusions were drawn by H.A.E. Shamboul (2022), who noted that developing critical thinking in students not only enhances their cognitive skills but also increases their autonomy and independence in learning. His study also showed that the problem-based learning approach helps students better understand the material and find creative solutions to linguistic tasks. Moreover, the results indicated that the implementation of the flipped classroom method promotes a higher level of critical thinking among students, as they have more opportunities for analytical reflection on the material and active interaction during classes.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of this study, a number of conceptual approaches and methodological foundations conducive to the effective development of critical thinking in the process of learning English were identified. In particular, it was established that critical thinking development has become an essential component of modern education, especially in the context of foreign language acquisition, including English. It was

determined that the educational-professional program “English Philology” demonstrated strengths through combining classical and innovative teaching methods, which contributed to the development of students’ analytical and critical skills. A high level of teachers’ methodological preparation and the introduction of advanced technologies enhanced the effectiveness of the learning process. However, certain weaknesses were identified, including insufficient integration of critical thinking development throughout all stages of learning and a lack of regular assessment of this aspect. It also emerged that students had unequal access to international scientific resources, limiting their opportunities for independent research of current issues. The program has potential for expanding international cooperation, which would provide students access to the latest methodologies and materials.

Various strategies for developing critical thinking applied in English learning were evaluated. Project-based learning demonstrated a high level of effectiveness, with an average score of 4.2, confirming its success in forming practical skills, teamwork abilities, and problem-solving capacities. This points to the importance of integrating project tasks oriented towards practical application of theoretical knowledge to foster critical thinking in students. This strategy enabled students not only to acquire new knowledge but also to successfully apply it in real-world contexts, promoting active development of analytical skills. Independent research and reflection also proved effective strategies, receiving an evaluation of 4.1 points, indicating a significant impact on the development of deep understanding and autonomous thinking. Through independent research, students gained skills in self-monitoring,

reflection, and analysis of their own learning process, which are essential components of critical thinking. Discussions and debates, although scored slightly lower at 4.0 points, also became powerful tools for developing argumentative skills and communication abilities. Students demonstrated the capacity to defend their viewpoints, analyse counter-arguments, and effectively present research findings. Engagement in such discussions fostered listening skills and understanding of alternative perspectives, an important element of critical thinking. Project-Based Learning, despite receiving the lowest average score (3.8), still proved useful in developing analytical skills and problem-solving abilities. However, some difficulties encountered by students during work on problem tasks indicate the need for greater support in resolving complex situations and integrating problem-based learning within more structured approaches.

Future research prospects include expanding the sample by involving students from various educational institutions and studying the long-term effects of identified strategies over the course of an academic year or several semesters, which would allow evaluation of their influence on the sustainable development of students’ analytical and research skills.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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Критичне мислення як засіб підвищення ефективності навчання англійської мови

Анотація. Метою дослідження було вивчити стратегії розвитку критичного мислення у студентів, зокрема в контексті навчання англійської мови, та визначити їх вплив на покращення навчальних результатів. У дослідженні були використані методи порівняння, прагматичний та метод узагальнення, а також стратегії проектно-орієнтованого навчання, проблемно-орієнтованого навчання, дискусій і дебатів, самостійного дослідження і рефлексії, а також використання цифрових технологій для розвитку критичного мислення. У дослідженні було з'ясовано, що розвиток критичного мислення серед студентів, які вивчають англійську мову, має важливе значення для підвищення ефективності їхнього навчання. Серед стратегій найвищі бали отримали проектне навчання (4,2 бали) та самостійне дослідження з рефлексією (4,1 бали), що свідчить про різну ефективність цих підходів у розвитку критичного мислення. Було визначено, що застосування проектно-орієнтованого та проблемно-орієнтованого навчання сприяє розвитку навичок аналізу, аргументації та вирішення реальних завдань, що безпосередньо пов'язано з критичним мисленням. Студенти активно брали участь у дискусіях, що допомогло їм удосконалити вміння обґрунтовувати власні думки та сприймати різні точки зору. Також, використання цифрових інструментів, таких як Quizlet та Padlet, сприяло розвитку аналітичних навичок через інтерактивні вправи та групову роботу. В результаті дослідження було підтверджено, що інтеграція цих стратегій у навчальний процес позитивно впливає на здатність студентів критично осмислювати і застосовувати отримані знання. Дослідження дозволило викладачам впроваджувати ефективні стратегії для розвитку критичного мислення серед студентів, зокрема через проектно- та проблемно-орієнтоване навчання. Освітні установи можуть використовувати отримані результати для вдосконалення навчальних програм та підвищення якості підготовки майбутніх фахівців

Ключові слова: здобувачі освіти; навчальний процес; підготовка фахівців; ефективні стратегії; інтеграція технологій