
El Pensamiento Crítico en los Cursos de Inglés Nivel A2 del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia

The Critical Thinking in the English courses A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference

Silvia Miriam Morgan Scott¹

Wilfredo Carbonell Limonta¹

María Caridad Smith Batson²

¹ Universidad de Guantánamo. Cuba

² Universidad de las Tunas. Cuba

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2776-9587>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0825-3419>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4414-0772>

Correo (s) electrónico (s)

mmorganscott@gmail.com

wilfredocl@cug.co.cu

cariemay@ult.edu.cu

Received: 10/04/2025

Accepted: 20/05/2025

Published: 12/11/2025

Resumen: El presente artículo aborda la importancia del pensamiento crítico en el perfeccionamiento del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje de los cursos de inglés nivel A2 desde la nueva política implementada por el Ministerio de Educación Superior para el aprendizaje de las lenguas extranjeras, lo que ha implicado asumir nuevos retos y tendencias para la formación de profesionales en el contexto de la universidad cubana. Se asume como sustento teórico el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia (MCER). Se emplearon métodos teóricos y empíricos, que permitieron sintetizar las fuentes más relevantes del tema. Los resultados que se presentan resultan de utilidad tanto teórica como práctica para la preparación de los profesores con el objetivo de lograr mayores niveles de eficiencia en el desarrollo la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes en este idioma.

Palabras claves: Pensamiento crítico; Nivel A2; Marco Común Europeo de Referencia

Abstract: The article approaches on the importance of the critical thinking at improving the teaching-learning process of English courses A2 level from the new policy assumed by the Ministry of Higher Education for learning foreign languages, which has implied taking on new challenges and trends for the training of professionals in the context of the Cuban university. The Common European Framework of Reference is assumed as theoretical support. Theoretical and empirical methods were used, which allowed synthesizing the most relevant sources about the topic. The results presented are of both theoretical and practical use and serve for the preparation of the teachers with the aim of achieving higher levels of efficiency in the development of the students' communicative competence in this language.

Keywords: Critical Thinking; A2 Level Common European Framework of Reference.

Introduction

The Ministry of Higher Education (MES) prioritizes the study of the English language from two important directions: as a tool for training, self-improvement, and academic and professional development, and as a means to enhance communication among professionals. This interaction reveals the need to strengthen not only the communicative skills to be developed in the English language teaching and learning process, but also other skills that allow for the comprehensive training of the contemporary professional.

In this regard, the implementation of Curriculum E (2015–2016) conceives of English language teaching as competency-based. From that point forward, the teaching, learning, and assessment process for English began to be redefined, taking as its reference point both the rich Cuban pedagogical tradition and the international trends and standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This system of objectives by levels guides the work within the national context and constitutes a common reference point for the development of course programs, advising, self-directed learning, and both standardized and non-standardized assessment. (MES, 2019). Thus began a transformation process that encompasses all degree programs and places greater emphasis on students' autonomous learning.

The CEFR establishes a clear framework for the teaching and assessment of foreign languages, and level A2 represents a basic stage where students are able to communicate in simple, everyday situations. This stage is crucial, as it lays the foundation for more advanced levels of language proficiency and is an ideal time to introduce critical thinking as a transversal skill that can enrich language learning.

In the information age, where access to data and opinions is virtually unlimited, critical thinking has become a fundamental skill for academic and professional life. This ability not only allows individuals to analyze and evaluate information effectively, but also helps them make informed decisions and solve complex problems. In the context of language learning, especially English as a foreign language, developing critical thinking skills can be particularly beneficial.

The aim of this article is to explore how critical thinking can be fostered in A2 level English courses, analyzing its importance and offering practical strategies for its implementation. Different pedagogical approaches that allow for the integration of critical thinking into language learning will be addressed, as well as the benefits this brings to students.

Development

The CEFR provides a coherent framework for teaching and assessing foreign languages, dividing learning into six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. At level A2, students are able to understand everyday phrases and expressions related to areas of immediate relevance, such as personal and family information, shopping, local geography, and employment. However, beyond the mere acquisition of vocabulary and grammar, it is essential that teachers foster skills that go beyond simple communication.

According to the Council of Europe (2001), language learning should be accompanied by the development of skills that enable students to interact effectively in diverse situations. This includes the ability to think critically about the information they consume and produce in the language being studied. Integrating critical thinking into A2 level English courses not only improves language proficiency but also prepares students to face a complex and changing world.

Critical thinking is an ongoing process that values reading, questioning, and analyzing current events. Students can benefit from its use at any level of their language learning, although the complexity of the activities will vary depending on their language proficiency.

Critical thinking is defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in a logical and reflective manner. Facione (2015) points out that this skill involves not only understanding information, but also the ability to question its validity and relevance. In the context of language learning, critical thinking allows students to evaluate different perspectives and construct coherent arguments, while also fostering related life skills such as organization, planning, open-mindedness, and communication skills, among others. As a vital skill in itself, critical thinking allows individuals to easily face challenges in their personal and professional lives.

The importance of critical thinking is evident in a world where misinformation and fake news are commonplace. Paul and Elder (2014) argue that critical thinking is essential for developing informed citizens who can actively participate in a democracy. Therefore, by fostering these skills in A2-level English courses, educators contribute not only to their students' linguistic development but also to their formation as critical thinkers.

Integrating critical thinking into the English classroom can be achieved through various pedagogical strategies, such as: encouraging questioning, stimulating student interests, teaching problem-solving skills, incorporating open-ended activities, collaborative learning, using technology strategically, and providing diverse learning experiences, among others.

There are different strategies to promote critical thinking in the classroom, such as:

- Guided discussions

An effective strategy for fostering critical thinking is through guided discussions. Teachers can present relevant topics that encourage reflection and debate. For example, an article about a current event or a cultural topic can be discussed. During these discussions, students should express their opinions and justify their viewpoints using evidence from the text or their own experiences.

- Analysis of Authentic Texts

The use of authentic texts is another valuable strategy. Authentic texts, such as news articles or short stories, provide students with a real-world context in which they can apply their language skills. By analyzing these texts, students can identify biases, evaluate the credibility of sources, and discuss different interpretations. Lipman (2003) emphasizes that this type of analysis not only improves reading comprehension but also stimulates critical thinking by requiring students to question what they read.

- Role-playing games

Similarly, role-playing games are a powerful educational tool for developing critical thinking skills. By assuming different roles in a simulated situation, students must consider the motivations and perspectives of other characters. This helps them develop empathy and understand that multiple points of view exist on any given topic. Furthermore, it encourages language practice in a dynamic and collaborative context.

- Collaborative Projects

Collaborative projects are another way for students to work together to solve problems or create presentations on specific topics. This approach not only improves language skills through teamwork

but also fosters critical thinking by requiring students to analyze information and reach consensus on their conclusions.

Among the procedures that can be used in English classes to develop critical thinking skills are:

- Recognize problems in order to find viable ways to address them.
- Understanding the importance of prioritization and order of precedence in problem solving.
- Collect and organize pertinent (relevant) information.
- Recognize unstated assumptions and values.
- To understand and use language with precision, clarity, and discernment.
- Interpreting data to evaluate evidence and arguments.
- Recognizing the existence (or non-existence) of logical relations between propositions
- Draw justified Conclusions and generalizations
- Test the conclusions and generalizations reached
- Reconstructing one's own belief patterns based on broader experience
- To make accurate judgments about specific aspects and qualities of everyday life.

The most commonly used exercises to develop critical thinking can include, among others:

- To debate both sides of an issue.
- Group discussion.
- Project work.
- Exercises in student participation as teacher.
- Production of a video or a play.
- Incorporate visual expression into the presentation through illustrations, models, diagrams, etc.
- Incorporate current events or trending topics into discussions and formulate alternative positions or points of view.

- To express any feeling or experience from another person's perspective.
- Plan virtual events in detail (since they are virtual, the imagination is the limit).
- Plan and manage a real event.
- Make predictions about what will happen in x years.
- Create the plot of a sequel to a popular book, short story, or movie.

The development of critical thinking becomes vitally important in A2 level English courses by combining it in learning with practices such as debate, reflection and reaction, problem solving, critical analysis and peer review (among others). Students should be able to apply the knowledge built in the classroom within their own personal contexts and disciplines, as they would be able to discern between different sources of information and use the information found in them for their personal purposes (Breen and Mann, 1997; Nunan, 1997).

This type of thinking also improves oral expression skills. By participating in debates and discussions, students learn to articulate their ideas clearly and coherently. In this regard, Brookfield (2012) argues that critical dialogue not only enriches learning but also fosters students' confidence in expressing their opinions in English.

Learning English often involves interaction with diverse cultures. Fostering critical thinking allows students to question stereotypes and prejudices, promoting a deeper and more respectful understanding of other cultures (Bennett, 2017). This is essential in a globalized world where intercultural communication is increasingly common. By integrating these skills into English courses, we are preparing our students for not only their academic future, but also their professional future.

Similarly, the development of critical thinking facilitates self-evaluation, leads to deeper analysis, synthesis and communication of information, fosters original thinking and a sharper understanding, greater academic performance in all skills, as well as a higher order of thought.

Assessing critical thinking can be challenging, especially in a language-learning context. However, it is possible to design rubrics that include specific criteria related to analytical, evaluative, and synthetic abilities. For example, when evaluating a debate or presentation, one can consider not only

linguistic fluency and accuracy, but also the clarity of the argument presented and the ability to answer critical questions.

Rubrics are a preferred method for communicating expectations to students and reliably and consistently assessing their progress and work. While many rubrics exist for assessing critical thinking, the complexity of the tasks can result in extremely challenging assessment tools.

From a practical standpoint, the simpler the rubric, the more efficient its implementation. With this in mind, focus the rubric on the specific skill elements embedded in a particular assessment, rather than attempting to use a pre-designed rubric. Assessing the full range of critical thinking skills will facilitate the use of the assessment tool. According to Watanabe-Crockett (2019), critical thinking skills are always a challenge to teach and effectively convey to students, and the best approach is to adopt Bloom's Taxonomy as a foundation for learning, which is divided into six main categories:

- Questioning ability
- Use of information
- Open-mindedness
- Draw conclusions
- Communication and collaboration
- Self-awareness

In this regard, Ennis (2011) proposes a series of indicators that can be used to measure critical thinking in educational contexts. These include identifying problems, formulating relevant questions, and evaluating arguments. By using these criteria in assessment, educators can help students recognize their progress in this area. This comprehensive assessment helps students appreciate the importance of critical thinking in their learning process.

Promoting critical thinking in A2 level English courses offers multiple benefits such as:

- **Competitive Improvement:** Students develop greater communicative competence by learning to express their ideas clearly and coherently.
- **Autonomy in Learning:** By learning to question information and seek answers for themselves, students become more learners that are autonomous.

- Preparation for Social Challenges: Critical thinking contributes to personal and social development, preparing students to actively participate in a democratic society.

Teachers play a crucial role in promoting critical thinking among their students. It is essential that they recognize its importance and seek innovative ways to integrate it into their teaching practice. This may include ongoing professional development in pedagogical methodologies that foster critical thinking and creating a classroom environment that values intellectual curiosity and respectful debate.

Conclusions

Integrating critical thinking into CEFR A2 level English courses is essential to train students to be competent not only in the language, but also in their ability to analyze and evaluate information.

By implementing effective classroom strategies, teachers can significantly contribute to students' intellectual and personal growth, equipping them with the tools necessary to navigate an increasingly complex environment. Pedagogical strategies that foster discussion, critical analysis, and problem solving enable students to develop crucial skills in a globalized world.

By cultivating these skills from the early stages of language learning, the foundation is laid for a more comprehensive and meaningful education. Furthermore, by promoting critical thinking in the English classroom, students are given a holistic development, becoming critical thinkers capable of facing complex challenges and actively participating in their social environment.

Bibliographic references

- Bennett, M. J. (2017). *Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice*. Routledge.
- Breen, M. P., y Mann, S. (1997). Shooting arrows at the sun: Perspectives on a pedagogy for autonomy. *Autonomy and independence in language learning*, 132-149.
- Brookfield, S. D. (2012). *Teaching for Critical Thinking: Tools and Techniques to Help Students Question Their Assumptions*. Jossey-Bass.
- Breen, M. P. (1997). *Shooting arrows at the sun: Perspectives on a pedagogy for autonomy*. *Autonomy and independence in language learning*, 132-149.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ennis, R. H. (2011). Critical Thinking: A Streamlined Conception. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical*

Thinking in Higher Education (pp. 31-47). Palgrave Macmillan.

Facione, P. A. (2015). Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts. Measured Reasons LLC.

Lipman, M. (2003). Thinking in Education Cambridge University Press.

Ministerio de Educación Superior. (2019). Orientaciones generales para la implementación de la Política de perfeccionamiento del proceso de formación en idioma inglés de los estudiantes de la educación superior cubana. La Habana: (MES, 2019, p. 7). Cuba.

Nunan, D. (1997). Designing and Adapting Materials to Encourage Learner Autonomy. En Benson, P. & Voller, P. (Eds.). Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning (pp. 192-203).

London: Longman.

Paul, R., Elder, L. (2014). Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life. Pearson Education.

Watanabe-Crockett, Lee (2019). The critical thinking companion. Wabisabi& Learning.

wabisabilearning.com .Independently Published

Conflicto de intereses.

Los autores declaran que no existen conflictos de intereses