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и културолошки истражувања**

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ВО МЕЃУНАРОДНОТО НАУЧНО СПИСАНИЕ „ПАЛИМПСЕСТ“

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Почитувани читатели,

Со објавувањето на деветтиот број на списанието „Палимпсест“ се одбележува и потврдува неговото петгодишно постоење. Тековниот број на ова списание обработува теми кои се однесуваат на областите јазик, книжевност, методика на наставата и културологија и тие се напишани на македонски, англиски, италијански и турски јазик. Тематските области што ги покриваат овие статии се доволно разнолики да го привлечат вниманието на нашите колеги, наставници, студенти, но и доволно мотивирачки да го одржат современиот чекор со актуелните феномени на истражување од горенаведените области. Од објавените трудови во овој број како најбројни се јавуваат авторите од Македонија (Милена Саздовска-Пигуловска, Милена Касапоска-Чадловска, Марија Леонтиќ, Виолета Јанушева, Силвана Нешковска, Мери Лазаревска, Марија Ѓорѓиева Димова, Славчо Ковилоски, Маријана Ѓорѓиева-Ристевска, Ана Стефановска, Оља Стојкова, Екатерина Намичева, Петар Намичев, Нина Даскаловска, Блерина Нухи, Арбнора Сулејмани, Брикена Џафери, Марија Ѓркова, Кирил Трајчев, Ранко Младеноски, Софија Иванова), потоа од Словачка Моника Зазривчова (Monika Zázrivcová), од Австрија Мариантониа Трамите (Mariantonia Tramite), од Италија Елеонора Фоа (Eleonora Foïs), Кјара Фуско (Chiara Fusco), Мирко Мондило (Mirco Mondillo), Марчела ди Франко (Marcella Di Franco) и од Турција Ѓулшен Јилмаз (Gülşen Yılmaz).

Доминантен јазик на статиите во овој број е македонскиот јазик, што го толкувам како наш стремеж во борбата за негово негување и зачувување како наше најголемо културно наследство, како и желбата и намерата обработените тематски содржини да бидат лесно достапни за сите заинтересирани на територијата на целата наша држава. Сепак, се јавува неопходност и од актуелизација и популаризација и на другите јазици, што укажува на фактот дека светот на јазиците е огромен и дека многу аспекти од јазиците треба да се анализираат и да се објаснат. Тоа ја покажува важноста и значењето на странските јазици во современите емпириски текови во науката за јазикот, во науката за книжевноста, методиката на наставата и во културологијата.

Како резултат на електронската достапност на ова списание и на активностите на Уредувачкиот одбор, Редакцискиот совет, рецензентите, јазичните и техничките уредници, горди сме да истакнеме дека присуството на научноистражувачки статии од различни земји од светот говори за неговата актуелност и популарност. Сите што се вклучени во создавањето на ова списание несебично се ангажираат за неговото подобрување и со своите сугестии и добронамерни критики и дискусии влијаат доволно инспиративно да привлечат современи и модерни истражувачки публикации кои ќе најдат на уште поголема читателска публика во иднина, со што современите истражувања ќе бидат широко достапни и ќе овозможат размена на знаења, идеи, како и на научни и стручни достигнувања.

Билјана Ивановска, уредник на „Палимпсест“

FOREWORD

Dear readers,

The ninth issue of “Palimpsest” marks and confirms the journal’s five year existence. The current issue of the journal covers topics related to the fields of language, literature, teaching methodology and culturology, and they are written in Macedonian, English, Italian and Turkish. The thematic areas covered by these articles are diverse enough to attract the attention of our colleagues, teachers and students, and at the same time motivating enough to keep up with the current phenomena of research in the aforementioned areas. From the published articles in this issue, the authors from Macedonia appear as the most numerous, such as Milena Sazdovska-Pigulovska, Milena Kasaposka-Chadlovska, Marija Leontik, Violeta Janusheva, Silvana Neshkovska, Meri Lazarevska, Marija Gjorgjieva Dimova, Slavco Koviloski, Marijana Gorgieva-Ristevska, Ana Stefanovska, Olja Stojkova, Ekaterina Namicheva, Petar Namichev, Nina Daskalovska, Blerina Nuhi, Arbnora Sulejmani, Brikena Xhaferi, Marija Grkova, Kiril Trajcev, Ranko Mladenoski, Sofija Ivanova, then from Slovakia Monika Zázrivcová, from Austria Mariantonina Tramite, from Italy Eleonora Fois, Chiara Fusco, Mirco Mondillo, Marcella Di Franco and from Turkey Gülşen Yılmaz.

The dominant language of the articles in this issue is the Macedonian language, which I recognize as our aspiration in the struggle for its nurturing and preservation of our greatest cultural heritage, as well as the desire and intention to make the thematic contents to be easily accessible to anyone concerned throughout our country. However, there is a need for actualization and popularization of other languages, which points to the fact that the world of languages is vast, therefore, many aspects of languages ought to be analyzed and explained. This actually proves the importance and significance of foreign languages in contemporary empirical currents in the science of language, literature, teaching methodology and culturology.

As a result of the electronic availability of this journal and the activities of the Editorial board, the reviewers, the linguistic and technical editors, we are proud to point out that the presence of scientific research articles written by authors from different countries of the world speaks of its relevance and popularity. Everyone involved in the creation of this journal is selflessly committed to its improvement and with their suggestions, well-intentioned reviews and discussions influence the submission of contemporary and modern research articles that will attract even a larger readership in the future, so that contemporary research will be widely available and will enable the exchange of knowledge, ideas, as well as scientific and professional achievements.

Biljana Ivanovska, Editor of Palimpsest

EVALUATING CRITICAL THINKING COMPONENT OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN SKOPJE

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Abstract: This study investigates the importance of critical thinking skill in the curriculum of the high schools. The critical thinking skill is being given a lot of importance in the 21st century, therefore its further investigation is quite necessary. Implementing the critical thinking skill in schools not only facilitates the process of achieving a language proficiency, but it also helps to build one's personality, since it involves plenty of thinking and analyzing of a matter.

The study is conducted in three different high schools of Skopje and it uses the student questionnaire to evaluate students' perceptions of critical thinking. The results from the research showed that the participants expressed positive attitude to critical thinking. In addition, critical thinking as a skill is being taught in the high schools of Skopje besides the barriers that the ministry of education has set. All in all, critical thinking is an amusing skill, which forms one's logic and intelligence to see the background of a certain situation, beyond what capture the eyes, which means it leads to thinking and imagination, which neither can be seen nor touched.

Keywords: *critical thinking, students, skill, high school, attitude.*

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate critical thinking in education focusing in teaching English as a foreign language in high schools of Skopje. Its implementation with specific focus on the assessment methods. Furthermore, the research indicates also the process of including critical thinking in the school curriculum i.e. how teachers adapt and assess this method in their lectures. "Obviously, critical thinking is an important component of the language that one is capable to master. It depicts the parts of our brains which deal mainly with thinking, analyzing, evaluating, explaining, problem-solving of a phenomenon, in our case of a particular part of speech". In addition, it is a human process which activates the brain to scan the information and catch the points which are crucial in the formulation of a final result. In the 21st century critical thinking has become a crucial part of the curriculum in high School and university level too. Although, critical thinking has its roots in the United States, due to the fact that it was first

introduced as a language skill, its influence can be also sensed here in the Balkan regions. Even in North Macedonia, English teachers started to focus on developing critical thinking and including it in their daily lesson plans. I have faced professors in the high schools of North Macedonia that interpret and use critical thinking skill in teaching English. The curriculum has clearly changed in these recent years, namely both the students and some of the teachers are not aware of the practice of critical thinking, even though they implement it most of the time randomly and unconsciously. Yet, designing a syllabus which includes critical elements is not easy at all, due to the fact that these activities have to be assessed by the teacher. I believe that critical thinking is an element which belongs to a cognitive and rather complex teaching method, because its main issue that it deals with is thinking and logic. Since, its appearance is relatively new in the field of methodology, it has its ups and downs. However, being a trend in the education field, in my concern we as English professors have to include critical thinking, due to the fact that it is a method which brings the students' brains to work. Additionally, it serves as a good practice for the student's brain to function properly in solving a problem. What is more, thinking critically gives additional importance to our personalities, therefore students become self-confident allowing themselves to solve problems. In one word, they become independent and they can stand on their own feet.

All in all, the research investigates the importance of critical thinking mainly in the curriculum of EFL in the high schools of Skopje, by analyzing both the student's attitude towards it and the teacher's responsibility in assessing critical thinking through overcoming the possible obstacles in the whole process.

1. Literature review

1.1. The role of critical thinking in the school curriculum

Critical thinking is a relatively new method that has reached its peak now in the 21st century, especially in the field of EFL. Considering this issue, it has become a serious problem in conducting a syllabus where critical thinking components are part of it, due to its abstract nature. The question that arises is in what circumstances can critical thinking be part of the curriculum, which represents indeed the plan of teaching. "Critical thinking becomes part of the curriculum only when the students are given role in constructing the syllabus and give personal opinions, create activities, suggest different tasks, in that they become self-confident, which affects their ability to think critically and achieve self-reflection and self-assessment" (Radulović and Stančić, 2017, p.21). Consequently, to approach the curriculum critically, one has to consider the involvement of both the teacher and the student in creating the syllabus. Due to the fact that this recent skill seeks critical analysis of the tasks, the management of it in the classroom becomes difficult. Moreover, putting critical thinking components in the curriculum gives the teacher the opportunity to use authentic materials and advanced methods when teaching. "It seems reasonable to argue that, as the availability of information increases and the status of that information may be more questionable (think of Wikipedia, for example), critical thinking must take a more significant place in the curriculum" (Steven Higgins, 2014, p. 19). Due to the new innovation in technology, information has become easily reachable and unfortunately formats like

“Wikipedia” took the place of books by making the students’ work easier, whereas making the teachers’ work much harder. Furthermore, “both perceiving knowledge and learners’ role in the process of creating a curriculum will influence to the extent in which learners will be encouraged to question critically, to create ideas, pose questions, and offer their own insights and observations” (Radulović and Stančić, 2017, p. 21). Speaking from this context, the students’ role is enormous when confronting them with critical thinking. If the students will have the opportunity to take part in the curriculum, they will critically engage and come up with a variety of activities of different kinds and automatically the curriculum will be richer in terms of the quality of the materials and activities provided by them.

1.2. Assessing critical thinking components

Another important issue that has to be addressed when speaking about critical thinking is the manner of its assessment. Every component that is taught during the lessons needs to be assessed by the teacher. Due to the fact that critical thinking is difficult to be included and precepted, it faces some obstacles when confronting it with the phase of assessment. Since, it requires mental activities and a lot of thinking, measuring of its quality becomes harder, when the student completes a task using critical thinking. Nonetheless, critical thinking components are considered to be complex and difficult when it comes to evaluate them. It is a challenge for the teacher to choose which assessment tools or methods he/she is going to use in order to get student’s feedback and performance on critical thinking components. “The best assessment tools are those that are compatible with the content of instruction, or the outcomes being assessed, as well as the approach to learning and teaching used in your class” (Parrish, 2004, p. 271). In order to reach the goal of assessment, critical thinking has to be assessed using a variety of tools which can give appropriate results to the teacher. However, students’ participation in the assessment area is also useful, due to the fact that critical thinking is an inner process coming from the brain itself and the students’ alone can detect where they actually stand. Unfortunately, critical thinking elements are not easy to capture and put into the system of evaluation. The problem arises in the moments when the teacher has to decide which aspect of critical thinking to assess during the task. As this is a cognitive method and it requires high usage of the brain, imagination and creativity from the students, it also requires master tools from the teacher to evaluate it. The assessment has to be done in the way that both the teacher and the student get feedback from their work. It should not damage neither the students’ knowledge and his/her way of precepting things nor the teacher’s point of view of grading critical thinking in the best way possible. Consequently, today assessing critical thinking, the new language skill has become a real challenge for most of the teachers.

2. Research hypotheses

Hypotheses 1: If the curriculum of EFL teaching in high schools in Skopje is directed towards critical thinking, thus English will be learnt for the sake of achieving integration, communication and language fluency.

Hypotheses 2: The teacher is encouraged to use a variety of activities in his/her lecture, mainly authentic materials, in order to get the learner’s attention on developing critical thinking skill.

Hypotheses 3: Critical thinking has to be assessed with the help of the teachers’ and the student’s contribution through the usage of different assessment tools and methods in order to give appropriate feedback and results.

3. Research methodology

The research is a mixture of the three most dominant approaches. This study will follow a qualitative method, along with it the results will be shown in numbers using a quantitative method and also, it will present a chronological flow of data using the historical method. A student’s questionnaire will be used as an instrument for the data collection. This research was done at three high schools: “Zef Lush Marku”, “ArseniJovkov” and Cvetan Dimov”, in Skopje. The participants where 300 students, females and males, at the age of 15-16. The students’ questionnaire was completed by 100 students of I grade in “Zef Lush Marku”; 50 students of I grade in “CvetanDimov”; 50 students of II grade in “CvetanDimov”; 76 students of I grade in “Arseni Jovkov”; 24 students of II grade in “Arseni Jovkov”.

3.1. Research instrument

3.1.1. Student’s questionnaire

The questionnaire contained 21 statements, it was anonymous and the participants had the option to tick the version that suited them the best with the help of the adverbs of frequency (always, often, sometimes and never) for each statement. The statements investigated students’ perception of critical thinking skill, whether it had an impact on the learning process and whether or not critical thinking activities where used in the class.

4. Questionnaire analysis and results

The students’ questionnaire results are presented through descriptive statistics converting the collected data into numbers and percentage, which was completed by students from first and second grade of three high schools in North Macedonia: “Zef Lush Marku”, “Cvetan Dimov” and “Arseni Jovkov”. The overall number of students which have completed the questionnaire is 300. The results of each questionnaire statement is analyzed separately by making a comparison between the three high schools.

High School	Grade of students	Number of students
“Zef Lush Marku”	I	100
“Cvetan Dimov”	I and II	I – 50 II – 50
“Arseni Jovkov”	I and II	I – 76 students II- 24 students

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics*

Table 1 gives information about the grade and the number of the students in every high school. The most prominent results of the 21- statements of the questionnaire

are shown below through descriptive charts. Each data of a statement is given individually comparing the results between the three schools in Skopje using the adverbs of frequency (never, sometimes, often and always).

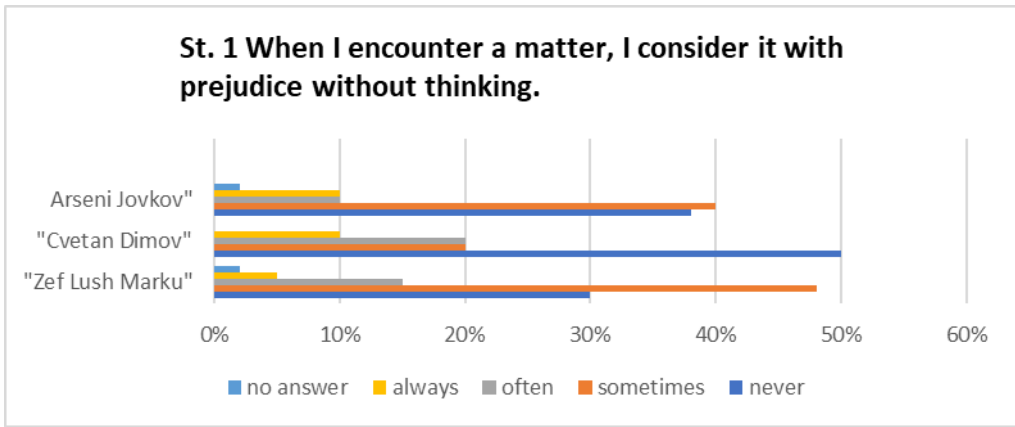


Figure 1. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three High Schools in Skopje

According to Figure 1, the highest percentage of students with 50% in the high school “Cvetan Dimov” never consider a matter with prejudice compared to the other schools, where the percentage of students is 30% in “Zef Lush Marku” and 38% in “Arseni Jovkov”. A lower percentage compared to the two other schools, is in “CvetanDimov” where the students “sometimes” considered a matter with prejudice.

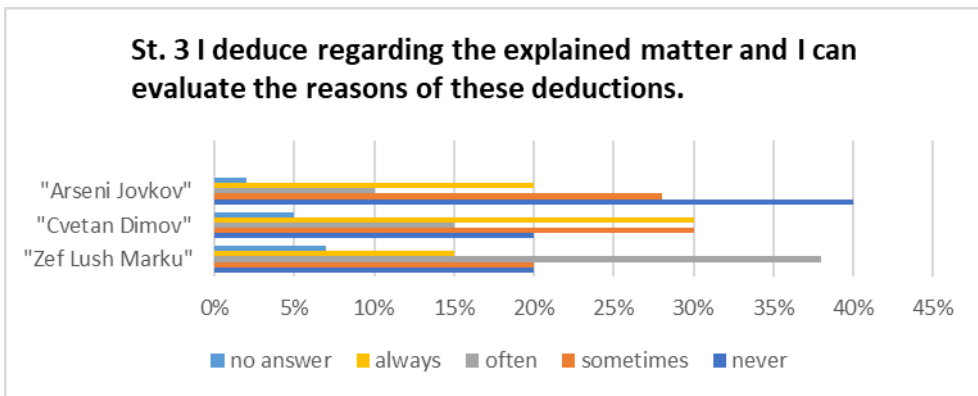


Figure 2. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three High Schools in Skopje

In the third chart, there is a major increase of the number of students who “never” make logical conclusions regarding a particular matter. This is widely seen at the high school “Arseni Jovkov” with 40%. Another significant change we have

in the category is “often”. Students in the high school “Zef Lush Marku” make conclusions more often regarding a matter, attaching to it the evaluation of these deductions.

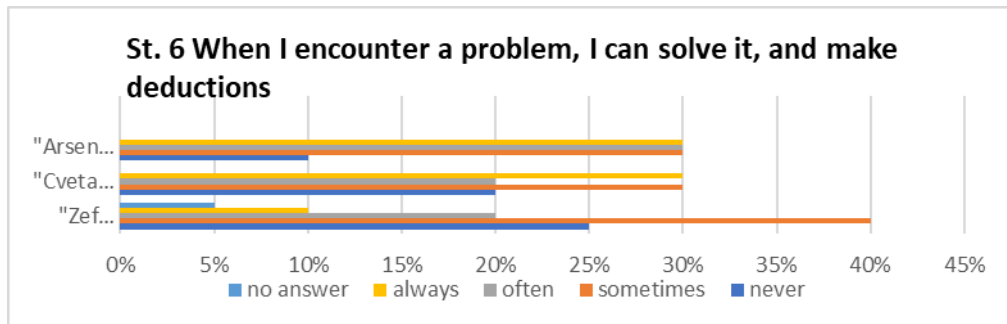


Figure 3. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three high schools in Skopje

In figure 3 students who “always” detect the problems in a matter and the same can explain and define belong to the high school “Cvetan Dimov” with 40%. Only in the high school “Zef Lush Marku” 8% of the students did not respond to this statement and are marked with *no answer*. The results of the chart show that students of the high schools “Cvetan Dimov” and “Arseni Jovkov” are “always” prepared to solve a problem in contrast to students from the high school “Zef Lush Marku”, which number is relatively lower with 10%. The majority of students from the high school “Zef Lush Marku” do not solve a problem.

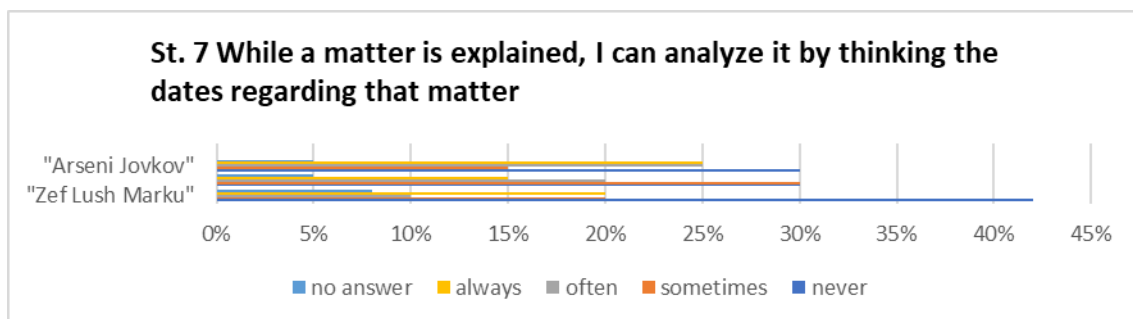


Figure 4. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three high schools in Skopje

In this chart, the higher number of students who “never” analyze the dates regarding a matter is in the high school “Zef Lush Marku” with 42%. This statement was not answered by 8% of the students in “Zef Lush Marku” and 5% in both high schools: “Cvetan Dimov” and “Arseni Jovkov”.

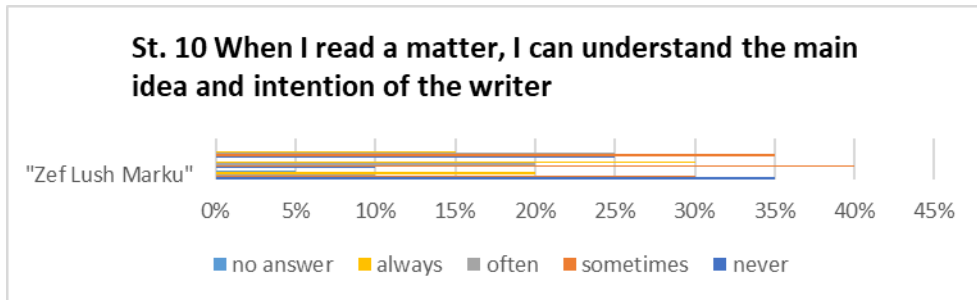


Figure 5. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three high schools in Skopje

According to the Figure 6 students of the high school “Cvetan Dimov” are more likely to understand the main idea and the intention of the writer when confronted with a matter. In contrary 35% of the students in the high school “Zef Lush Marku” “never” understand the concept of a matter after reading it.

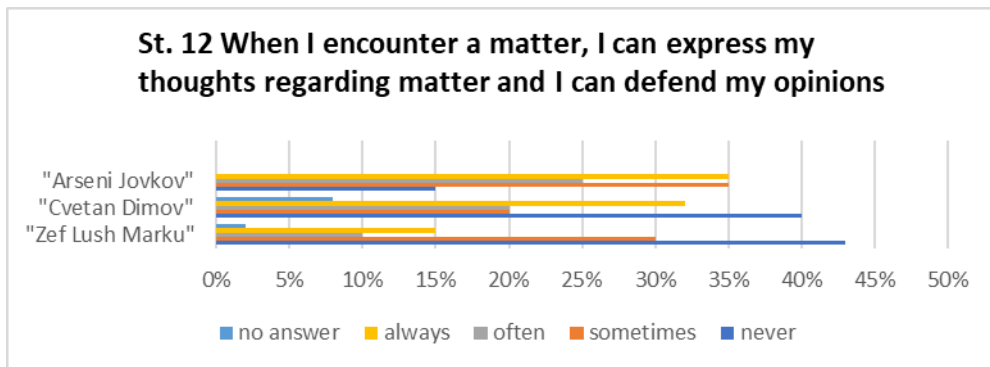


Figure 6. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three High Schools in Skopje

From this Figure, it can be seen that both students from the high schools: “Cvetan Dimov” and “Arseni Jovkov” have nearly the same percentage in “always” expressing their thoughts regarding the matter and defending their opinions. Hence, the percentage of the students who negatively reacted to it is in the high school “Zef Lush Marku”, where the percentage of students who never defend their opinions and express their thoughts is 43%.



Figure 7. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three high schools in Skopje

According to figure 7 the percentage of the students who sometimes can explain a matter convincingly and logically is 40% in both high schools: “Zef Lush Marku” and “Cvetan Dimov”. In contrast, the higher percentage of the students who never explain a matter in a logical and convincing way is in the high school “Arseni Jovkov” with 30 %.

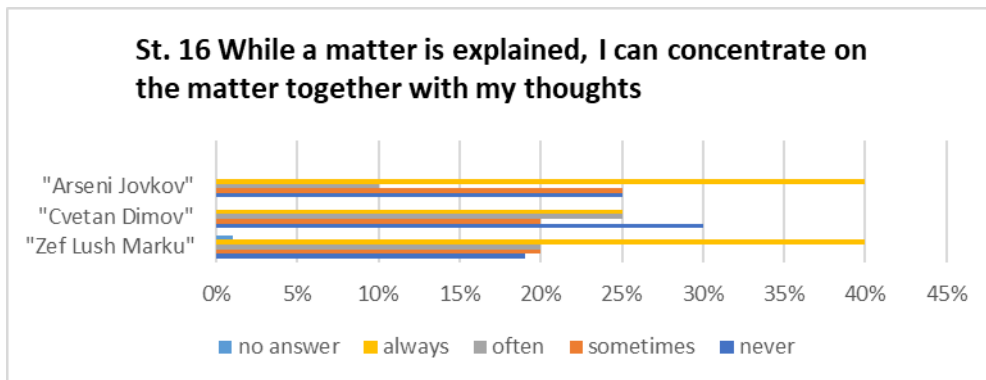


Figure 8. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three high schools in Skopje

From the chart above, the percentage of the students who always concentrate on the matter while it is explained is 40% in both high schools “Zef Lush Marku” and “Arseni Jovkov”. A lower value of the percentage of the students who often concentrate on the matter is in the high school “Arseni Jovkov” with 10%.

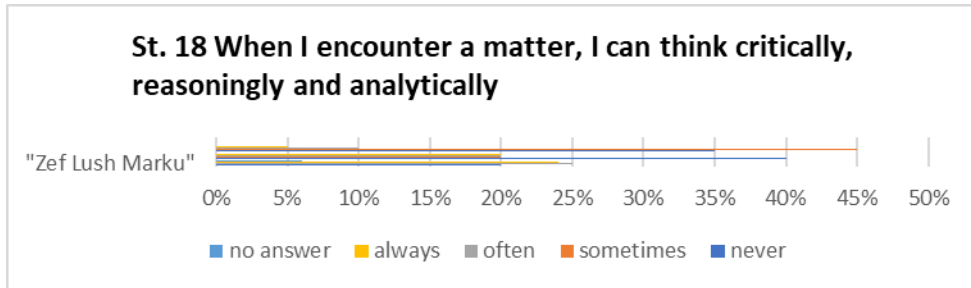


Figure 9. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three high schools in Skopje

In this chart, students who never think critically, reasoning and analytically regarding a matter are of the high school “Cvetan Dimov” with 40%. Whereas, a higher percentage of the students with 45% in the high school “Arseni Jovkov” sometimes think in a critical way when they are confronted with a matter.

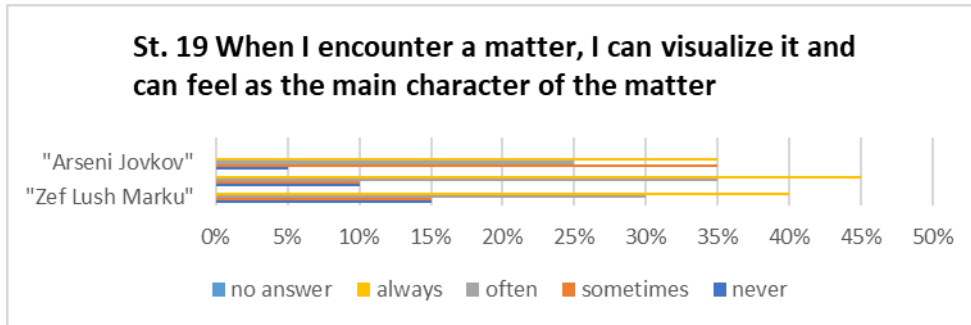


Figure 10. Results on counts and percentage based on adverbs of frequency and based on the three high schools in Skopje

Regarding the chart (4.1.20) the majority of students from the three high schools **do** feel themselves as the main protagonist when encountered with a matter. However, the peak of this increase appears in the high school “Cvetan Dimov” with 45% in the category of *always*. On the other side, the highest percentage of the students who never visualize the matter and feel like the main character in it appears in the high school “Zef Lush Marku” with 15 %.

5. Discussion of the findings

The collected data from the questionnaire together with the literature review gave various answers to the research questions and enhanced the process of testing the set hypotheses.

Research question 1: How is critical thinking included in the curriculum of EFL with its main focus on high schools in Skopje? From the overall research process that was done, it is argued that critical thinking is included in the curriculum of EFL. The language teachers were using this skill constantly

without even being aware of it. The findings of the study show that even here in North Macedonia, teachers practice this skill during their lecture. They use questions and open-discussions together with essays and debates which bring the students to think critically.

Research question 2: What is the students' attitude towards the critical thinking in the classroom? The results from the research process showed that students reacted positively towards critical thinking. They were entertained, excited and motivated whenever they participated in debates, discussions, and other communicative activities. This is due to the reason that students are free to express their thoughts, their ideas on interesting and actual topic.

Research question 3: What are the assessment methods of critical thinking, how are they evaluated and what are the obstacles that might arise along the way? Since critical thinking from its nature on, is delicate to be precepted and measured, it appears a challenging for the teachers too in the essence of its evaluation. However, the findings show that the teachers do assess critical thinking components. They use questions by which they get student's feedback and understanding of the text, task or grammar structure. With the help of open-ended questions, the teachers can grade students on the basis of their logical understanding of a situation but at the same time he/she can assess their creativity and ideas on a topic too. On the other side, critical thinking is also assessed through written activities. For instance, teachers apply essays and blog comments in order to evaluate the students critical thinking skills.

6. Recommendations

After the recent research conducted on this topic, it is by no means important to give several recommendations for other researcher and EFL teachers: EFL teachers should give importance to critical thinking skills, as they bring out the real abilities of the students; critical thinking skills should be included in every school curriculum, because they enrich the process of education and enhance the English language learning; It is highly recommended to construct a curriculum, in which critical thinking components are incorporated due to the fact that they complete each activity and lesson; Teachers should assess students on the basis of their way of thinking, precepting things and their creativity; Critical thinking should be taught as a non-separate skill, and as a skill which can be found in every single task.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated the following aspects: the ways in which critical thinking is included in the curriculum of EFL focused in high schools of North Macedonia; the students' attitude towards critical thinking in the classroom; and the assessment of critical thinking components together with the obstacles which may occur.

The first hypothesis *“If the curriculum of EFL teaching in high schools in Skopje is directed towards critical thinking, thus English will be learnt for the sake of achieving integration, communication and language fluency”* implied that teaching critical thinking skills will bring the sense of achieving a higher degree of language

proficiency in terms of communication, integration and fluency. The second hypothesis ***“The teacher is encouraged to use a variety of activities in his/her lecture, mainly authentic materials in order to get the learner’s attention on developing critical thinking skill”*** implies that teachers have the freedom to choose materials beyond the textbooks in order to develop a critical thinking skill. The findings show that critical thinking skill by nature requires from the teachers to use innovations and situations from the real world, and this is what students are interested into and what the students can debate and discuss more about. The third hypothesis ***“Critical thinking has to be assessed with the help of the teachers’ and the student’s contribution through the usage of different assessment tools and methods in order to give appropriate feedback and results”*** implies that critical thinking shall be evaluated with the help of both sides, the teacher and the students together through the usage of a variety of assessment tools. From the results in the study, there are shown some ways in which the teachers tend to evaluate the students on critical thinking skills. They use open-ended questions, discussions, debates, blogs and essays in order to achieve a good percentage of their contribution. Nevertheless, the teachers have the power to assess the students on a communicative level, whether in written or spoken form. The students themselves do not have the right to get involved in the process of evaluating themselves or their peers.

To conclude, the results imply that critical thinking has won a specific place in the school curriculum here in North Macedonia. Teachers are undergoing a significant change in terms of their teaching methodology; they perceive this trendy new skill very positively. Both the teacher and the student **do** appreciate critical thinking components being taught and learnt, since this language skill opens the doors to many beneficial opportunities in the future. Students will form a critical view of the things that they might encounter along the way and for the teachers, they will definitely have the chance to teach the language in a real, visual context in which in reality the language is being spoken.

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Student's questionnaire

Me	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. When I encounter a matter, I consider it with prejudice without thinking.				
2. When I encounter a matter, I realize whether the subject is from first hand or second hand.				
3. I deduce regarding the explained matter and I can evaluate the reasons of these deductions.				
4. I can understand pale in the matter and obscurities from explanations regarding the matter.				
5. I can detect the problems in a matter, explain and define them.				
6. When I encounter a problem, I can solve it, and make deductions.				
7. While a matter is explained, I can analyze it by thinking the dates regarding that matter.				
8. By means of my thoughts regarding a matter, I can improve hypothesis regarding the matter.				
9. I can pass an accurate judgement on the matter, and I can come to a conclusion with my thoughts.				
10. When I read a matter, I can understand the main idea and intention of the writer.				
11. By means of my thoughts, I can make comments and can judge the matters.				
12. When I encounter a matter, I can Express my thoughts regarding matter and I can defend my opinions.				
13. I can explain my thoughts regarding a matter convincingly and logically.				
14. By means of explanations regarding a matter, I can predict the ideas unexplained.				
15. From the explanations regarding a matter, I can find the contradiction between reason and result.				

16. While a matter is explained, I can concentrate on the matter together with my thoughts.				
17. By means of explanations regarding a matter, I can establish striking connections regarding the matter.				
18. When I encounter a matter, I can think critically, reasoningly and analytically.				
19. When I encounter a matter, I can visualize it and can feel as the main character of the matter.				
20. When I encounter a matter, I can be more elaborative thanks to my thoughts.				
21. When I encounter a matter or an action, my thoughts do not misguide me.				



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