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И КУЛТУРОЛОШКИ ИСТРАЖУВАЊА

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**Меѓународно списание за лингвистички, книжевни  
и културолошки истражувања**

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## СОДРЖИНА / TABLE OF CONTENTS

### 11 ПРЕДГОВОР

Билјана Ивановска, уредник на „Палимпсест“

FOREWORD

Biljana Ivanovska, editor of “Palimpsest”

### ЈАЗИК / LANGUAGE

### 15 Milena Sazdovska-Pigulovska

DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL EXPRESSIONS AND PROBLEMS OF IDIOMATIC EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATION

### 29 Милена Касапоска-Чадловска

НЕКОИ ФРАНЦУСКИ КОНСТРУКЦИИ СО НЕЗАДОЛЖИТЕЛЕН АТРИБУТ НА ДИРЕКТЕН ОБЈЕКТ И НИВНИТЕ МАКЕДОНСКИ ЕКВИВАЛЕНТИ

**Milena Kasaposka-Chadlovska**

SOME FRENCH CONSTRUCTIONS WITH OPTIONAL DIRECT OBJECT ATTRIBUTE AND THEIR MACEDONIAN EQUIVALENTS

### 41 Mariantonia Tramite

HIKIKOMORI: ANALISI LINGUISTICA E PROPOSTE DI TRADUZIONE IN LINGUA ITALIANA DI UN NEOLOGISMO 2.0

**Mariantonia Tramite**

HIKIKOMORI: LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS AND TRANSLATION SUGGESTIONS IN ITALIAN LANGUAGE OF A 2.0 NEOLOGISM

### 53 Eleonora Fois

THE RENDITION OF METAPHORS AND THE TRANSLATOR'S INFLUENCE IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF GRAZIA DELEDDA'S LA MADRE

### 67 Gülşen Yılmaz

“SÜNGÜ” KELİMESİNİN ETİMOLOJİSİ ÜZERİNE

**Gülşen Yılmaz**

THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD “SÜNGÜ”

### 75 Марија Леонтик

ЗБОРОВНИТЕ ГРУПИ СО ПОСТПОЗИЦИЈА ВО ТУРСКИОТ ЈАЗИК И НИВНОТО ПРЕДАВАЊЕ ВО МАКЕДОНСКИОТ ЈАЗИК

**Marija Leontik**

WORD GROUPS WITH A POSTPOSITION IN TURKISH LANGUAGE AND THEIR EQUIVALENCE IN MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE



- 87 Виолета Јанушева**  
ПЕРИФРАЗИТЕ ВО МАКЕДОНСКИОТ СТАНДАРДЕН ЈАЗИК  
**Violeta Janusheva**  
THE PERIPHRASES IN MACEDONIAN STANDARD LANGUAGE
- 99 Silvana Neshkovska**  
THE RHETORIC BEHIND POLITICAL RESIGNATION SPEECHES
- 113 Мери Лазаревска**  
НИТУ АНГЛИСКИ НИТУ МАКЕДОНСКИ (КРАТКА АНАЛИЗА  
НА АНГЛИЗМИТЕ ВО МАКЕДОНСКИОТ ЈАЗИК И НИВНА /НЕ/  
ОПРАВДАНОСТ)  
**Meri Lazarevska**  
NEITHER ENGLISH NOR MACEDONIAN (SHORT ANALYSIS OF THE  
ENGLISH BORROWINGS IN THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE AND THEIR  
/NON/JUSTIFICATION)

#### КНИЖЕВНОСТ / LITERATURE

- 123 Chiara Fusco**  
VICO E LA CONTEMPORANEITÀ: VISIONI DELLA LETTERATURA IN  
VICO, QUASIMODO E MONTALE  
**Chiara Fusco**  
VICO AND CONTEMPORANEITY: VISIONS OF LITERATURE IN VICO,  
QUASIMODO AND MONTALE
- 135 Mirko Mondillo**  
«ADESSO TU MI DICI COSA VUOI FARE DI ME». TIMIRA. ROMANZO  
METICCIO E L'IPERMODERNO ITALIANO  
**Mirko Mondillo**  
«NOW YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT TO DO ABOUT ME». TIMIRA.  
ROMANZO METICCIO AND THE ITALIAN HYPERMODERNITY
- 149 Marcella Di Franco**  
IL LIRISMO NOSTALGICO E L'ALIENAZIONE MODERNA IN CORRADO  
ALVARO  
**Marcella Di Franco**  
NOSTALGIC LYRISM AND MODERN ALIENATION IN CORRADO ALVARO
- 161 Марија Ѓорѓиева Димова**  
МЕМОРИЈАТА НА РОМАНОТ, РОМАНОТ КАКО МЕМОРИЈА  
**Marija Gjorgjieva Dimova**  
THE MEMORY OF THE NOVEL, THE NOVEL AS A MEMORY

- 171 Славчо Ковилоски**  
КРВТА НЕ Е ВОДА: НАРОДНАТА ПЕЈАЧКА ДАФА ЦЕПЕНКОВА  
**Slavcho Koviloski**  
BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER - THE INTERPRETER OF FOLK SONGS: DAFA CEPENKOVA
- 179 Маријана Горгиева-Ристевска, Ранко Младеноски**  
СЕМИОЛОГИЈА НА НЕАНТРОПОМОРФНИОТ ЛИК ВО РОМАНОТ „ЌЕРКАТА НА МАТЕМАТИЧАРОТ“ ОД ВЕНКО АНДОНОВСКИ  
**Marijana Gorgieva-Ristevska, Ranko Mladenoski**  
THE SEMIOLOGY OF THE NON-ANTHROPOMORPHIC CHARACTERS FROM THE NOVEL “THE MATHEMATICIAN’S DAUGHTER” BY VENKO ANDONOVSKI
- КУЛТУРА / CULTURE**
- 193 Ана Stefanovska**  
VIRTUAL REALITY AND READING CITIES: GPS-BASED APPLICATIONS AS A NEW FORM OF LITERARY TOURISM
- 201 Оља Стојкова**  
ПРЕДАТОРСКО ИЗДАВАШТВО  
**Olja Stojkova**  
PREDATORY PUBLISHING
- 213 Екатерина Намичева, Петар Намичев**  
ТРАДИЦИОНАЛНАТА АРХИТЕКТУРА – МОДЕЛИ НА ЗАШТИТА И ЗАЧУВУВАЊЕ НА ФУНКЦИЈАТА  
**Ekaterina Namicheva, Petar Namichev**  
TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE – MODELS OF PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF FUNCTION
- МЕТОДИКА НА НАСТАВАТА / TEACHING METHODOLOGY**
- 225 Нина Даскаловска**  
ПРИОДИ И АКТИВНОСТИ ЗА ИНТЕГРИРАЊЕ НА ВОКАБУЛАРОТ ВО НАСТАВАТА  
**Nina Daskalovska**  
APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES FOR INTEGRATING VOCABULARY IN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION
- 239 Blerina Nuhi, Brikena Xhaferi**  
EVALUATING CRITICAL THINKING COMPONENT OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN SKOPJE

- 253 Arbnora Sulejmani, Brikena Xhaferi**  
TECHNIQUES WHICH PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING IN ELT – A  
STUDY CONDUCTED IN HIGH SCHOOLS OF SKOPJE
- 265 Марија Гркова**  
ОБЈЕКТИВНИ ТЕСТОВИ ЗА МЕРЕЊЕ НА ПОСТИГНУВАЊАТА НА  
УЧЕНИЦИТЕ И ТЕСТИРАЊЕТО ВО НАСТАВАТА  
**Marija Grkova**  
THE CLASSROOM TEST AND THE OBJECTIVE TESTS FOR MEASURING  
STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENTS

#### ПРИКАЗИ / BOOK REVIEWS

- 277 Кирил Трајчев**  
РУСКАТА ПОТРАГА ПО БОЖЈАТА МУДРОСТ  
**Kiril Trajchev**  
RUSSION QUEST FOR THE WISDOM OF GOD
- 291 Monika Zázrivcová**  
COMPTE-RENDU : « LES INTERFÉRENCES LINGUISTIQUES DU  
FRANÇAIS SUR LE SLOVAQUE. L'EXEMPLE DU SYSTÈME VERBAL », PAR  
LUCIA RÁČKOVÁ ET FRANÇOIS SCHMITT  
**Monika Zázrivcová**  
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INTERFERENCES ON SLOVAK. THE EXAMPLE OF THE VERBAL SYSTEM),  
BY LUCIA RÁČKOVÁ AND FRANÇOIS SCHMITT
- 295 Ранко Младеноски, Софија Иванова**  
СОВРЕМЕНАТА КНИЖЕВНОСТ МЕЃУ ЗАПАДНИОТ  
АНТРОПОЦЕНТРИЗАМ И ИСТОЧНАТА ТЕОДИЦЕЈА  
**Ranko Mladenoski, Sofija Ivanova**  
CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE BETWEEN ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND  
EASTERN THEODICY

#### ДОДАТОК / APPENDIX

- 311 ПОВИК ЗА ОБЈАВУВАЊЕ ТРУДОВИ**  
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 Трамита (Mariantonia Tramite), од Италија Елеонора Фоа (Eleonora Fois), 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*

## TECHNIQUES WHICH PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING IN ELT – A STUDY CONDUCTED IN HIGH SCHOOLS OF SKOPJE

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**Abstract:** The field of ELT is evolving every day. Analytical thinking is an important skill when learning a language, which also means that a language learner understands various aspects of the language and its usage in different contexts. At the same time, it increases learners' knowledge and develops the 4 language skills. Since critical thinking is considered as a difficult skill to master, in order to develop and improve one's CT, it is the teachers' duty to use various techniques and methods, find a way to implement them and assist the teaching-learning process, during their teaching. It is difficult to find a suitable technique in order to keep the students' motivation to use critical thinking when acquiring a language, to understand and explain what critical thinking is and to draw personal conclusions and results from each aspect of the language. The objective of this research is to investigate whether there is a significant difference of students' achievements and acquirement of the language by implementing critical thinking techniques, to determine the degree in which critical thinking is used in ELT, the benefits that it presents in facilitating the teaching process and to discover if critical thinking techniques can be successfully implemented in our schools or not, possibly as a 5<sup>th</sup> language skill.

The results of the study showed that students, had varying degrees of approval in various questions, and that almost every participating teacher had used critical thinking techniques in ELT at some point, resulting in students' growth and improvement in motivation, fluency and linguistic proficiency.

**Keywords:** *critical thinking skill, techniques, student-centered classrooms and environments, students' attitude towards CT, implementation of critical thinking.*

### 1. Introduction

This research is done in the field of education and it investigates the ability to focus, clarify and judge a problem by using problem-solving and decision-making skills, as they represent the foundation of critical thinking. Critical thinking is a skill that involves evaluation of thoughts and their thorough analysis. Even though it emerged lately in the field of teaching, many teachers and researchers on the discipline still do not have a clear depiction of what it really involves. Consequently, ELT professionals, such as high school teachers, believe that to be

critical about something is to evaluate the negative aspects of it. However, it means to analyze thoroughly all the aspects of an item or tool of studying, both positive and negative. Moreover, critical thinking enhances the student's ability to solve problems and make decisions without being biased around a topic. Furthermore, it promotes learners' higher efficacy in acquiring a language, professional growth in the area of judgment, independent learning as well as objectivity.

In the high schools of Skopje and all around the country, many high school teachers and professionals on the field of linguistics, such as ELT teachers and teaching supervisor, believe that critical thinking should be incorporated in the syllabus and curriculum. Nonetheless, teachers are not prone to using activities and approaches which enhance critical thinking in their students' learning process. During my practicing internship and observations in the High School "Zef Lush Marku" in Skopje, I have encountered many teachers that skip exercises and questions which train the critical thinking skill in students. Consequently, many areas of the language remain untouched and undiscovered, since students are not guided to analyze them. This experience has given me the opportunity to observe various teaching methodologies and as a result apply them during my teaching experience. By combining them with something new and innovative like critical thinking, students' interest on the subject of discussion and the language itself was improved. For instance, students were asked to provide personal opinion upon a specific issue and elaborate a question or statement based on how their personal experiences and judgments regarding the topic. Hence, it provided a clear picture regarding the students' attitude, open- mindedness as well as evaluation of it. Since their intellect and personal opinion has been given attention, students followed to practice the skill subconsciously, since it promotes their inner ability to judge issues from an independent and professional point of view. In other terms, the teacher's effort to involve students into the teaching/ learning process would be in vain. Since they remain passive and the teacher is lecturing on the center of the class, students' involvement is not something they can count on. Consequently, teachers should incorporate critical thinking into the teaching process, in order to make students responsible for their learning process. In many high schools in the country, when a teacher struggles to maintain the order within the classroom, the misbehaved students are asked to leave the class, even though it is strictly forbidden according to the regulations. Also, older teachers are not capable of lecturing if any disturbance is on their way. Thus, in order to control the students' boredom and lack of interest during the teaching/ learning process, critical thinking is a skill that would help keep the students intricate during the learning process. Apart from providing them with endless activities and self- growth, it is beneficial also to the teacher, as an interaction and expansion of knowledge and information.

In essence, this research has been conducted to prove that when language teachers and professionals use critical thinking as a skill and its techniques in the teaching process, it boosts students' responsibility for their learning process and well as their self-growth in the area of their study.

### **1.1. Research background**

Critical thinking covers an important place in language teaching, since it trains students to analyze, compare, evaluate and rationally use the acquired language and learning process. Other aspects of English language, such as cultural connotations, usages in different contexts as well as mastering the four language skills may be achieved only through scrutinized inspection of the language. Thus, critical thinking as a skill enables learners to master problem- solving and decision- making skills, which will later account as the grounds of successful academic language achievements. Language professionals have various ways how to incorporate the critical thinking skill into the teaching process. “It is the responsibility of educational institutions to promote and develop students' critical thinking abilities.” (Kaarbalaei. A., 2012, pg. 2). Thus, it is up to the instructor, curriculum and learner whether or not the techniques which promote it will be used accordingly. Promoting critical thinking skills encourages students to plan, implement and evaluate their own learning styles and process. Self-awareness is one of the several aspects that critical thinking encourages students to nurture and maintain throughout their learning process. Thus, it enables students to actively participate in the teaching- learning process, as analytical evaluators to the unlimited usages of language. “An individual, to participate fully in the new economy – as worker, consumer and responsible citizen – needs to be even better informed (and about global as well as local issues) and needs higher-order and more flexible skills.” (G.David, 2006). Therefore, without creativity and imagination one cannot succeed in a world full of rivalry and competition.

“The ambiguous connection between “critical thinking” and “critical thinking skills” is considered another barrier of effective implementation”. (W.Xiaoli, Zh. Huibin, 2016, pg.2) On one hand ‘critical thinking’ is the process of thinking carefully on a specific matter without attaching ourselves emotionally or personally to it, while on the other hand ‘critical thinking skills’ is the ability to do something.

### **2. Literature Review**

In this chapter, the literature review presents goals to be elaborated in terms of critical thinking techniques in the field of ELT. Simultaneously, it proves their importance and benefits in education and teaching. In addition, it scrutinizes and conducts ways of using critical thinking techniques in ELT that promote learners' self-awareness, competence and independence during the teaching-learning process. Critical thinking involves an objective analysis of a certain topic in order to come to unbiased conclusions upon it. It provides the person with the ability to think independently and create their own opinion about a specific matter. A person who thinks critically must be creative and innovative, open- minded about different opinions of others and should master communicative and problem- solving techniques which are highly recommended in any job- position. What is more, critical thinking enables a person to understand deeper connections between ideas, as well as foresee upcoming issues that rise from a present problem.

#### **2.1. Recent studies conducted on the topic of critical thinking in ELT**

**Kawamura, Wu and Ping-Hsing (2015)** conducted a study in Taiwan, Japan and its goal was to test students' attitude of developing critical thinking skills via ‘Youtube’ documentaries and news. The number of participants was 86, varying



from the age of 18-19, majoring Economics. These students, both male and female, were acquiring English language as a foreign one. All participants were exposed to 'Youtube' as a language learning source, by working on the social and economic issue, using activities which require reasoning, research and analysis. The methodology included questions that researchers have used, more specifically 13 questions, and were conducted for quantitative purpose. The survey analyzed the perception of students regarding three topics: English and employment, women in the workforce and first impression on the foreign language. The study has come to two different conclusions. Most students remembered only about 70% from the material in class, both via 'Youtube' videos and textbooks. 1/3 proposed convincing statement regarding their critical thinking development.

Similarly, Kailani Ismail et al, (2015) conducted a study in 2015 in Malaysia. The study examined the development of critical thinking skills in language learning students, using the language learning modules based on problem-based learning or PBL. It also analyzed the usage of critical thinking techniques in solving non- routine language learning issues. Since the school system in Indonesia is focused only in exams and memorization of facts, not using the critical thinking techniques from a young age affects the students' independent thinking. It was analyzed that language learning students in Indonesia are able to solve linguistic problems covered in the workbooks, however were unable to solve non- routine problems.

The PBL system of learning encourages language learning students to use critical thinking in order to generate new knowledge and solve issues. Consequently, this study used dependent and independent variables.

### **3. Research methodology**

#### **3.1. Research aims**

This research aims to elaborate the importance of implementing critical thinking techniques in ELT as advancement in general education, but also, the development of critical thinking skill in English language students. Moreover, it analyses and conducts ways how to use critical thinking skill and techniques in order to acquire the English language masterly and proficiently.

#### **3.2. Research hypothesis**

**H1-** Critical thinking is a demanding skill that improves the overall language proficiency and knowledge on various aspects of a language, therefore learners should incorporate it outside the classroom in order to master it completely.

**H2-** If critical thinking represents the mind's ability to individually analyze and think analytically, then tasks and techniques that enhance learners' interest upon it should be flexible, motivational and student- centered.

**H3-** The level of critical thinking development in a language learner is anticipated based on teacher's approaches and exercises used within the classroom.

#### **3.3. Research methods**

This research investigates whether the usage of critical thinking skill positively influences the overall successful acquirement of the English language, as

well as if the techniques which promote critical thinking are beneficial to ELT. It is conducted through the usage of quantitative data.

### **3.4. Sample**

This research was carried out at 3 high schools “Zef Lush Marku”, “Cvetan Dimov” and “Arseni Jovkov”, in Skopje, North Macedonia. Subjects of this research were 300 students. Students were of both genders; their age was between 16-17 years old. Apart from the two other samples used in this research, such as teacher observation and teacher interview, the student questionnaire was the one that was chosen to be shown on this publication, since it covered a higher number of participants and gathered a wider range of information as well as various anonymous attitudes upon the topic of discussion.

### **3.5. Research instrument**

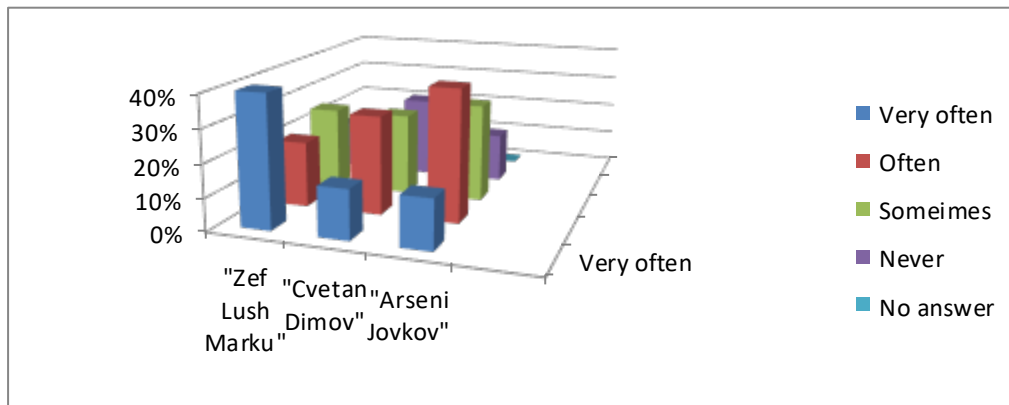
#### **3.5.1. Student questionnaire**

The instrument used in this research was a questionnaire that was given and completed by the participants from 3 high schools, “Zef Lush Marku”, “Cvetan Dimov” and “Arseni Jovkov” in Skopje, North Macedonia. Students from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year were given the same student questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions in English Language. However, each question was explained and translated to the students, step by step as they were answering them anonymously. These questions were designed to bring out information about students’ learning experiences in ELT, usage of critical thinking skill in developing and acquiring the language and the involvement of critical thinking in the teaching process of the language. Furthermore, it gathered data about whether students learn English better by following the principles of traditional teaching techniques or the usage of critical thinking skill. All questions were answered according to the adverbs of frequency (very often, often, sometimes and never). Students had the option to choose only one of the adverbs of frequency (always, often, sometimes, rarely and never) for each question. The questionnaire has 20 questions in total, but there are only 5 questions analyzed in this publication. In that, emphasis is given to the majority of the similarities and differences regarding this instrument, as well as the major discrepancies regarding the results, let them be positive or negative. The 5 carefully chosen research questions are shown separately below through descriptive charts. Each data of a statement is given individually comparing the results between three High Schools in Skopje, using the adverbs of frequency (very often, often, sometimes and never).

### **4. Questionnaire results**

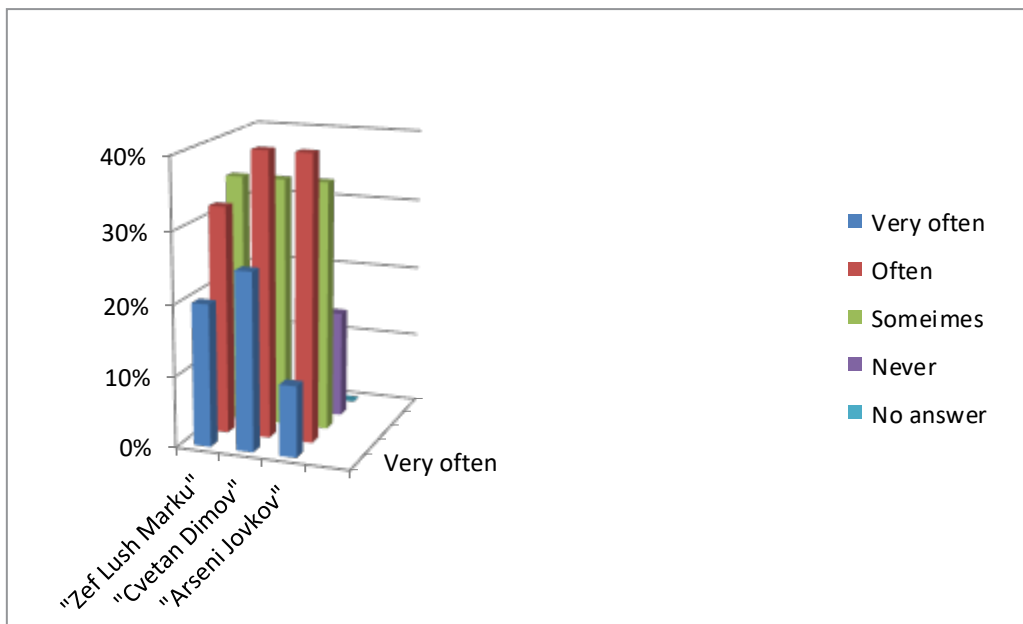
The questionnaire was completed by: 100 students of 1<sup>st</sup> year in “Zef Lush Marku” high school, 50 students of 1<sup>st</sup> year and 50 students of 2<sup>nd</sup> year in “Cvetan Dimov” high school. Last but not least, 40 students from 1<sup>st</sup> year and 60 students from 2<sup>nd</sup> year in “Arseni Jovkov” high school in Skopje, North Macedonia.

Figure 1: Question 1 results



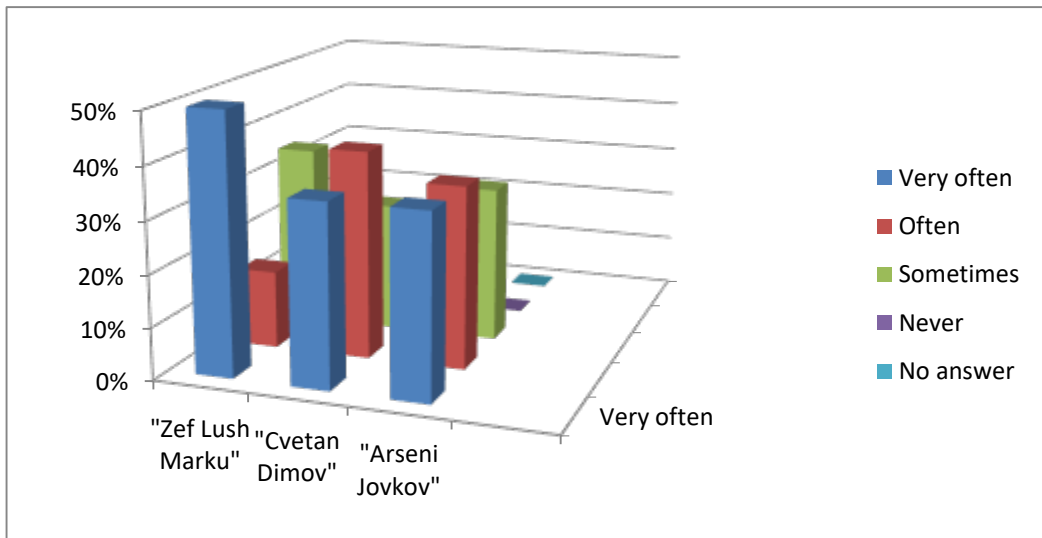
According to the chart, the highest percentage of students with 40% chose ‘very often’ in “Zef Lush Marku” high school, whereas “often” in “Arseni Jovkov” high school. The lowest percentage included the adverb of frequency ‘never’ with 15% in “Arseni Jovkov” high school. Only in “Cvetan Dimov” high school there is a 5% value of the adverb of frequency ‘never’, whereas in “Zef Lush Marku” and “Arseni Jovkov” high schools it is 0%.

Figure 2: Question 2 results



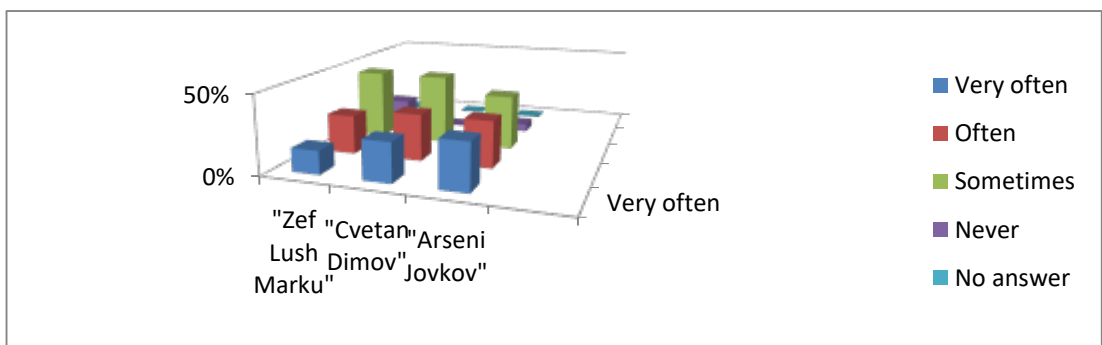
From the chart above, the adverb of frequency ‘often’ was the highest in all three high schools, with 40% in “Arseni Jovkov”, 40% in “Cvetan Dimov” and 32% in “Zef Lush Marku” high school. The most appealing feature is shown in “Cvetan Dimov” high school with the adverb of frequency ‘never’, that resulted in 0 %.

Figure 3: Question 3 results



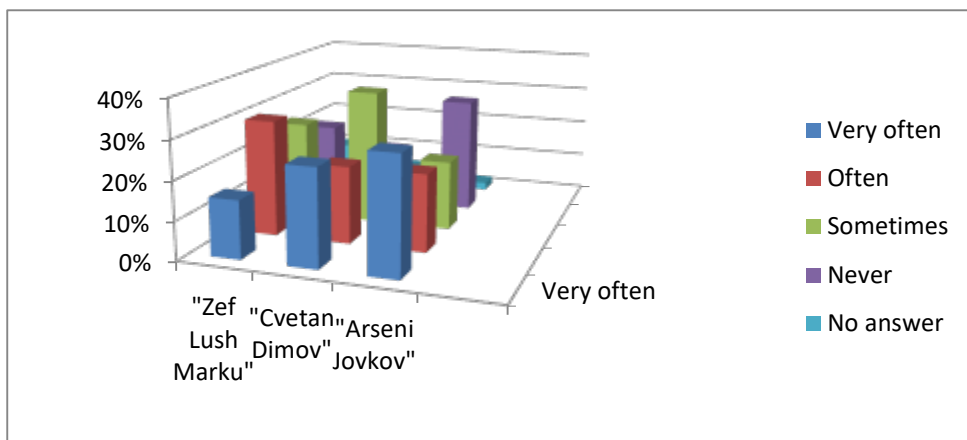
In the chart above it can be clearly depicted that the most prevalent feature is that all students have answered this question, with the result of 0% in the adverb of frequency ‘no answer’ or in the part of ‘never’. In that, all students have received feedback on their written/ oral assignments.

Figure 4: Question 4 results



An interesting and astonishing feature of this chart is that students from all three high schools have answered the highest upon the adverb of frequency ‘sometimes’ and often. For instance, for the adverb of frequency ‘sometimes’ there is 45% in both “Zef Lush Marku” high school and “Cvetan Dimov”, whereas only with 10% difference in “Arseni Jovkov” high school, with a result of 35%. Moreover, for the adverb of frequency ‘often’ the result shows 30% in both “Cvetan Dimov” and “Arseni Jovkov”, whereas 25% in “Zef Lush Marku” high school, with only 5% difference.

Figure 5: Question 5 results



The chart above shows that the analysis and judgment of materials has been the highest in percentage in “Arseni Jovkov” high school with 30% and in “Cvetan Dimov” high school with 25%, whereas the lowest in “Zef Lush Marku” high school with 15%. An appealing feature of this chart is that only 2% of students didn’t answer this question.

### 5. Discussion

The aim of this research was to find out if techniques which promote critical thinking can be used as a basis to promote critical thinking as a 5<sup>th</sup> language skill. Moreover, if a combination of both critical thinking techniques and communicative method is efficient and beneficial to the process of language teaching and learning.

The first hypothesis **“Critical thinking as a challenging skill, demands learners’ integral engagement upon it (outside the classroom) in order to master it completely”** stated that students need to use critical thinking outside classroom in order to provide its highest results. The result of students’ questionnaire, teachers’ interview and classroom observations support the first hypothesis. All of the interviewed teachers that had used critical thinking in teaching, admitted that the usage of critical thinking in ELT has shown to have

positive results in motivating students when acquiring the language. Since it promotes and improves students' communication, it is also beneficial to students of lower level of linguistic proficiency.

The second hypothesis **“Critical thinking as a skill improves the overall language proficiency and knowledge on various aspects of a language”** implied that critical thinking has benefits in upgrading and boosting language proficiency in general. All of the research instruments provided above support this hypothesis. Students' questionnaire prove that students prefer and learn better through working effectively on their own or debating about issues with their peers. Additionally, students preferred to be the center of attention during ELT and asked frequent questions and contributed to class discussion. Furthermore, from the teachers' interviews we can understand that all teachers elicited critical thinking via debates, classroom discussions or via the usage of communicative teaching method. Whereas, regarding classroom observations, each of the teachers observed, incorporated critical thinking techniques through essential questions related to the material.

The third hypothesis **“Techniques which promote critical thinking need to be student- centered since critical thinking is an individual skill that differs in every learner”** demands that critical thinking differs in every student, since every student is different from one another. Thus, techniques which promote critical thinking should not have one mutual criteria of grading, however, they should be created to suit at least some student-types of learners, such as advanced, beginner, shy, communicative, withdrawn etc. It is true that not every student has the same capacities and possibilities as their peer, nonetheless critical thinking is understood differently by everyone. These hypotheses are supported by the student questionnaire and by the teachers' interview, but is not supported by the observation checklists. Thus, students and teachers believe that critical thinking is different for each student but only in theory, only some of them tried to prove it in practice. Most of the students agree that they are responsible for their own learning. Moreover, they agree that different communicative teaching techniques such as self-assessment, peer feedback, and real-life situations help them reflect on their learning methodologies and result in becoming more independent. Furthermore, all of the teachers stated that they believe that promoting critical thinking techniques in teaching has an impact in learner centeredness.

This research brings to conclusion that all activities, which seek and develop critical thinking competence and promotion of techniques in ELT, serve also as means of putting the student in the center. In such way, students become conscious about the purpose of learning a lesson or performing a particular task, hence, understanding that it is their duty to consistently engage in the learning process and thoroughly scrutinize it in order to draw specific conclusions.

## 6. Conclusion

Considering that a language is taught and learned only to be used effectively, transparently, objectively and academically outside the classroom, following the techniques which promote the critical thinking skill is an essential step for language professionals in the field of ELT. To sum up, a combination of critical thinking techniques and approaches are a good way of meeting nowadays students' needs. Consequently, promoting critical thinking skill in the field of teaching may be used to create a relatively student- centered classroom, where learners grow as independent individuals and take responsibility of their own learning process and future achievements in a professional and unbiased way.

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Appendix: Students' questionnaire

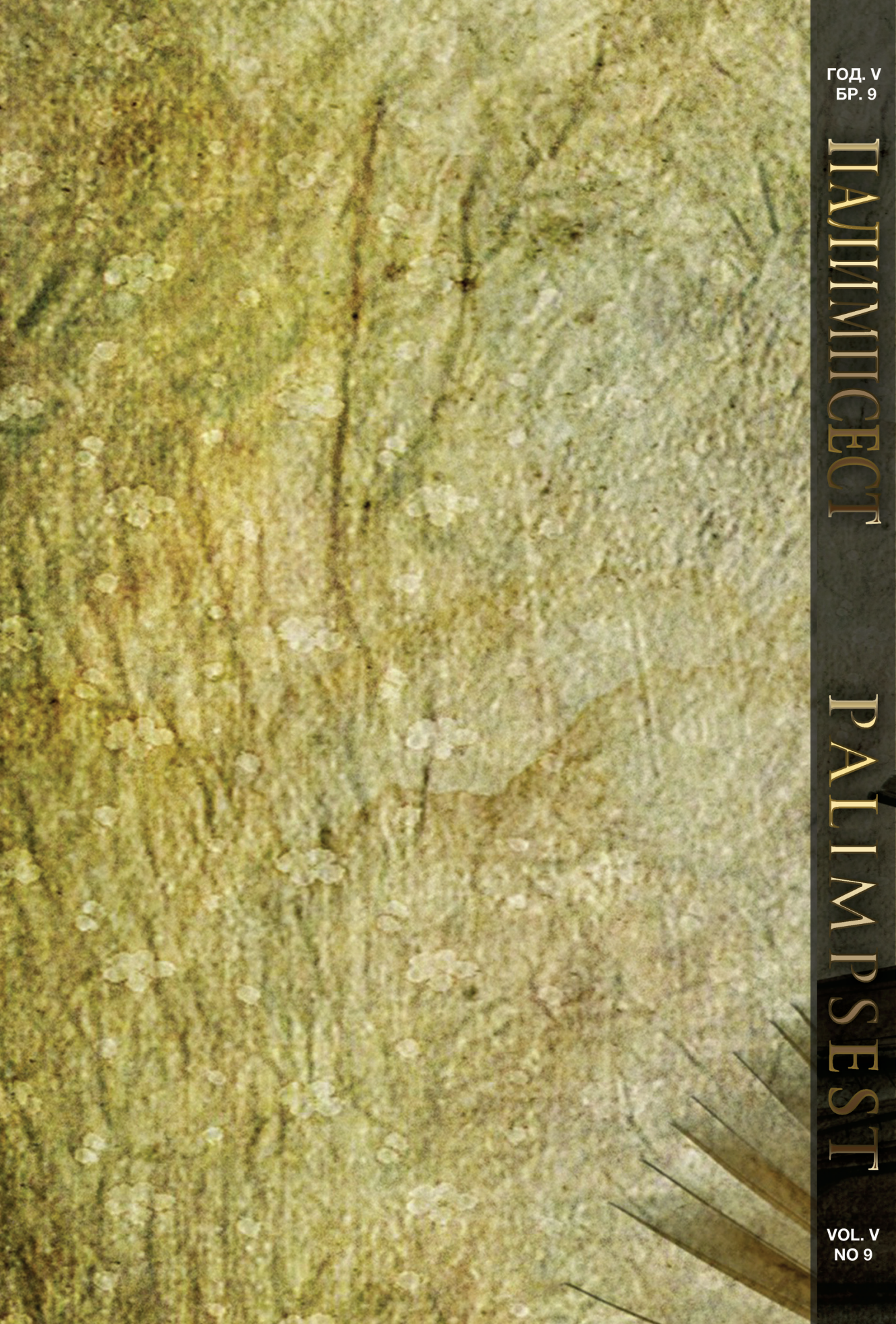
Student Questionnaire Used to Evaluate Undergraduate Student Learning

\* Please tick how often have you done the following activities/issues in class

Questions	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never
1. Asked questions in class/ contributed to class discussions				
2. Worked on a paper/project that required info. from various sources				
3. Received comment feedback from your written or oral assignments				
4. Memorize facts and material				
5. Analyze and make judgments upon a topic in class				
6. How often tests challenged your overall knowledge?				
7. Learning effectively on your own				
8. Working effectively with others in class				
9. Thinking critically and analytically				
10. Acquiring the 4 language skills at same rate				
11. Analyzing/working on problem- solving exercises				
12. Spending significant amount of time learning new info				
13. Instructor providing material which helps you succeed academically				
14. Instructor providing support which helps you to succeed socially				
15. Instructor tests only what is covered in the book				
16. Instructor making clear and understandable explanations				
17. Enhance/usage of students' general knowledge within classroom topics				
18. Exchange of ideas between peers/ debate				
19. Testing of 4 language skills including critical thinking				
20. Instructor tests the overall knowledge of students on the subject (orally, written form)				

\* Thank you for your time and help





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