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DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The paper describes the research conducted at Vilnius University and Public Language Learning Centre in Vilnius, Lithuania. Conducted under the title Intellectual Output 1 of the EU-funded international project Think4Jobs, it examined the application of critical thinking at the higher education institution and the labour market organization, all intended to prepare students for their future careers. The research consisted of three parts: class observation, four focus group interviews and documental analysis. The results showed a considerable gap between critical thinking designed and implemented at the university and at the language-learning centre. At the end, this article suggests ways in which this discrepancy could be overcome.

Keywords: critical thinking, higher education, labour market, foreign-language teaching

1. Introduction

In the age of the internet and the social media, critical thinking (CT) has become an important tool in learning how to cope with the abundance and the variety of available information. Although development of CT is included in all university curricula as an important learning outcome, questions are raised

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about the preparedness of university lecturers to teach students how to become critical thinkers. Acquiring CT skills and dispositions is useful in all areas of studies, in science as much as in humanities. This study aims to elucidate how critical thinking is developed and applied in the foreign language teaching/learning process at the university level and in labour market institutions.

The research was carried out within the framework of the European Commission-funded project Think4Jobs. Its aim is to improve students' CT skills and dispositions by promoting collaboration between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Labour Market Organizations (LMOs). The participants were five European universities and their corresponding LMOs in different disciplines (veterinary medicine, teaching education, business and economics, business IT and foreign language teaching). The Lithuanian participants were the Vilnius University Institute of Foreign Languages as a HEI and the Public Language Learning Centre, a government institution that prepares teachers and offers foreign-language courses, as an LMO.

The main goal of the research project was to determine whether there are observable differences between the two institutions in class/course objectives, explicit reference to CT, stimulation and application of CT, teaching strategies, methods, tools and materials, and evaluation approaches related to CT. A series of joint initiatives was then designed and implemented in order to develop collaboration between the HEI and the LMO. The overarching purpose of the entire project was to find the means to better prepare students for the demands of their future jobs, in this case teaching foreign languages.

2. Literature Review

Critical thinking has been recognised as an important skill and ability since Ancient Greece. In the modern period, it started to be increasingly nurtured with the rise of rationalism in the 17th century. It wasn't until the 20th century, though, when it became an object of study by scholars from different fields. Some of the most notable definitions of CT came from Dewey (1933), Glaser (1941), Facione (1990) and Paul and Elder (2008). Research on critical thinking has attracted a variety of experts in philosophy, psychology, education and other fields. This literature review will focus only on the investigation of critical thinking related to the subject of the paper – higher education and foreign-language learning.

Considerable research has been done about the relevance of CT skills in higher education, particularly in the last two decades. The development of CT is considered vital in every field and stage of learning. The teacher's role is of utmost importance in fostering those skills (da Silva Almeida and Rodrigues Franco, 2011; Lenin, 2019; Bezanilla et al. 2021). Some researchers (Stupple et al. 2017) argue that CT is an important part of higher education and essential

for academic achievement and for students' professional lives. Moreover, a few of them offer a diagnostic tool to measure students' critical thinking. They identify students who need support in developing their CT skills and predict their academic performance. The findings of Bećirović et al. (2019) point to an urgent need to revise the existing curricula and design new ones, which would include a number of activities fostering CT skills, thus increasing not only students' overall academic achievement, but also providing better opportunities for their professional careers. In a similar vein, findings of Niu et al. (2013) reveal numerous attempts of pedagogical interventions to develop students' CT skills in different areas. Not all of them, however, prove to be effective.

Other authors demonstrate how teachers could contribute to CT development more effectively. According to Thomas (2011), CT skills are complex and should be introduced in the first year of tertiary education and refined over the course of studies. Due to their complexity, teachers should support development of CT skills from the very beginning and raise students' awareness of the importance of CT skills for further studies and their future professional careers. A similar view is expressed by Wilson (2016), who argues that nurturing students' critical dispositions requires "delicate scaffolding" to support their development as critical meaning-makers. This author maintains that developing students' ability to read critically is vital for the development of CT skills.

The research conducted by Nappi (2017) specifies effective ways to develop CT, one of them being constant questioning. Although simple questions are easier for teachers to formulate, as they seek information retrieval and repetition, the author highlights that teachers should attempt to purposefully formulate more complex questions that would encourage students' skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. By asking questions that require high-level thinking, educators foster the kind of engagement students will need to process and to address new situations. Questions that elicit deeper investigation and reflection make the students examine the relevant concepts through the use of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, while ordinary questions simply require students to gather and recall information.

Some researchers attempt to identify the reasons why CT development is not successfully implemented at the university level. In his article "The State of Critical Thinking Today," Paul (2005) points out three main obstacles to the acquisition of CT in higher education. First of all, universities are not aware of their misunderstanding of the concepts of CT. Secondly, they think they know what CT is and are already teaching it to students. Finally, lectures, rote memorization and short-term learning habits represent the norm in higher education. Some believe that CT is a single-subject discipline, and it should be taught as logic or study skills. According to Paul (2005), teachers expect intellectual standards from their students, but do not have a clear idea what an intellectual standard is, or how to formalise it. Thus, the way teachers organise

the teaching and learning process depends on their awareness of the importance of the development of CT skills within the framework of their disciplines.

It is also worth mentioning that teachers' viewpoints on the development of CT skills are expressed by a number of scholars (Karakoç, 2016; Uribe Enciso et al. 2017; Bezanilla et al. 2021). Some researchers (Radulović and Stančić, 2017) highlight the role of teachers in designing more contextualized course descriptions to foster students' CT skills, while others (Popil, 2011; Nappi, 2017) address various ways and methods of teaching CT at the university level. Yet others (Grosser and Lombard, 2008) focus on the CT abilities of prospective teachers from the cultural perspective. According to Wilson (2016), teachers differ in their approach to the development of CT skills, and which determines their approach to teaching. For instance, in some English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes, students take a performative role (simply "doing" the task), whereas in others students demonstrate a more intense engagement with the content of their reading.

Some scholars (Atkinson, 1997; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996) argue that it is very difficult for language teachers to nurture students' CT skills, since they are often more concerned with language accuracy than a critical appraisal of texts. They found out that materials used in the language classroom often do not encourage students to think critically. El Soufia and See (2019) sought to establish whether explicit teaching of critical thinking is effective in enhancing the CT skills of English language learners in higher education. The authors reviewed articles published from 1990 to 2018, specifically searching for studies about teaching CT to English language learners in higher education. Almost all the studies in this review turned out to be very small-scale, and had serious methodological flaws. This review also revealed the absence of a single definition for CT, which made the comparison of studies difficult. The authors assert that only explicit instruction of CT skills was found to be effective, and they argue that despite the emphasis on CT in higher education, there is little evidence that such skills are taught in an explicit and systematic way at the undergraduate level.

The analysis of scholarly literature shows that there has been a considerable amount of research carried out about different aspects of CT. However, there seems to be a lack of comparative research about the development of CT skills for English language learners in higher education and labour market institutions. Therefore, the current research makes an attempt to fill that gap.

3. Methodology

The project Think4Jobs was endorsed by a consortium of five universities and five labour market organizations from five countries (Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania). It is a result of the partners' joint experience

in teaching, training and research, and their commitment to empowering University-Business Cooperation (UBC) in Europe. The main aim is to help a successful employment and transition of new graduates from the university to the labour market. It was designed to produce relevant tools and opportunities for the effective assessment, development and support and of students' CT in their transition to a professional context.

The following research describes the first out of five Intellectual Outputs conducted at five different countries, with two representatives from each country: a higher education institution (HEI) and a labor market organization (LMO). In Lithuania, two language-teaching government entities participated in the project: Institute of Foreign Languages at Vilnius University (VU) and the Public Language Learning Centre (PLLC). The goal of Intellectual Output 1 (IO1) was to trace and map the methods and/or techniques by which CT is currently employed in the two institutions, to suggest work-based learning scenarios that could bridge the gap between the HEI and LMO's curricula and to secure the requirements for students' CT development and improvement.

IO1 consisted of three research methods: observation, focus groups and documentary analysis. In the first part, different classes by three VU and two PLLC instructors were observed, and a rubric related to the use of critical skills in the teaching process was filled out. In the second part, an interview with four focus groups, lasting between 70 and 90 minutes, was conducted by a moderator asking them questions and initiating discussion. The four groups consisted of six to eight participants, and they all answered the five given questions, after which a discussion ensued. In the third part, six different VU course descriptions were analyzed and evaluated using another rubric. Each research instrument included a set of variables organised into three categories: the pedagogical aspect of CT development (including class objectives, teaching strategies/methods, tools/materials and evaluation regarding CT), CT aspects (including the ways CT is nurtured, triggered and explicitly taught during instruction) and the implementation of CT (including elements of CT presence in these disciplines).

Further intellectual outputs focused on developing an apprenticeship in which CT skills would be evaluated and developed within the university curricula, and then on publishing scholarly articles related to this research. In this paper, only the results and discussion related to the first intellectual output conducted in Vilnius, Lithuania will be presented.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Class observations

At the Higher Education Institution (Vilnius University), 12 classes (or 24 academic hours) delivered by three different university instructors, one

female and two male, were observed and analysed. It is evident from the observations that critical thinking in higher education is developed and sustained by a variety of teaching methods and activities – both implicit and explicit. The attempt at students' active engagement during class activities is obvious. This is achieved by group work and use of analogies between theoretical issues and current social reality. In addition, the instructors always encouraged students to discuss and consider a multitude of perspectives on the same pressing social issue (e.g., discrimination, technological impact on human relationships, lack of motivation, etc.). This allows students to learn the skills of negotiation, reasoning and acceptance of different points of view. Reasoning is mainly developed through discussions and debates. Furthermore, creativity seems to play a significant role in developing CT skills at the university level. Teachers encourage students to be more creative by offering them a combined approach to using language in a variety of contexts such as analysing a specific case, debating on a specific issue and considering opposite views, as well as integrating art as a means of exploring social reality.

Most classes are highly student-centred, where the instructor assumes the role of a facilitator. Nevertheless, there are a few instances when the teacher did not fully engage the students in class activities. This occurred during theoretical lectures, when the instructor intended to share a lot of information with the students. This one-sided teaching method is a reason why students tend to lose interest in the topic and prefer to stay silent during the class. A possible excuse is the nature of the class or that the teacher does not know how to critically engage students by drawing a parallel between the theoretical/historical issues and their manifestation. It can be argued, however, that most of the teachers focus on encouraging students to speak and express their opinion through analysis, interpretation, reflection and engagement in meaningful interaction.

At the Labour Market Organization (Public Language Learning Centre), six sessions (four academic hours each) delivered by two British teacher trainers-lecturers were observed by four PLLC researchers, i.e., language teachers and teacher-trainers. The total duration of the lecture observation was 24 academic hours. The observations showed that the lectures were teacher-centred, and the listeners were not actively engaged in the process. Thus, most of the CT skills were tentatively evoked, and it was not very clear whether the participants of the courses are practically engaged in the activities. This could be explained by the nature of the class. Nevertheless, it was the teacher who played a pivotal role in the delivery of the material, while the participants were just active listeners.

Still, it can be argued that there were three major CT skills encouraged during these lectures. First, there was an engagement of listeners through a genuine and lively atmosphere created by the teacher, which was noted by all the observers. Second, the teacher tried to encourage creativity by explaining how various teaching resources can be combined and their effectiveness tested. Another observation is the teachers' focus on autonomous and

independent learning. However, it still remains unclear how this can be specifically achieved. There was also a clash between engagement and autonomy that serve different purposes in CT development.

4.2 Focus Group Interviews

The interviews in the focus groups were conducted during the winter semester 2020/2021. Since they were carried out during the lockdown caused by the pandemic, they took place online. The recordings were made with the consent of the participants, and later transcripts of the interviews were made. The content analysis method was applied in order to identify the categories and subcategories that emerged in the answers to the interview.

The first focus group consisted of seven lecturers at the VU Faculty of Philology Institute of Foreign Languages; the second of seven students from the Institute of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Philosophy and English Philology; the third from three trainers from the PLLC with four instructors from the VU Institute of Foreign Languages asking them questions; and the fourth from six trainees of the PLLC, interviewed by the trainers. The report, together with the reports from the participating HE institutions from four different countries, was published in the Think4Jobs Toolkit: Ten-work-based learning scenarios (Dumitru et al. 2021).

The questions given to the VU teachers and PLLC trainers are almost the same, but the question given to the VU students and PLLC employees differ slightly. They are as follows:

Teachers and trainers:

1. What does CT mean to you?
- 2, How do you teach it? (aims, content, methods/strategies, time) Do you communicate CT specific concepts to your students/trainees?
- 3, How do you know your students/trainees learnt CT? (assessment, methods, instruments?) Is CT necessary for passing the exam?
- 4, Which are the materials that support CT learning? (syllabi, documents produced for students or given)
5. Do you believe there is a gap regarding CT between what you teach and what is needed on the labor market?

Students and employees:

1. What does CT mean to you?
- 2, How is CT taught in your university? Can you give some examples? (aims, content, methods/strategies, time)
3. How do you know you acquired CT skills? Through self-evaluation, peer evaluation or teacher evaluation?
4. Which materials supporting CT learning did you receive? (syllabi, other documents produced for students)
5. Do you believe there is a gap regarding CT between what you learnt in university and what you believe is necessary on the labor market?

In general, all the interviewees agreed about the importance of critical thinking, although they define it differently and emphasize various aspects needed for its development and application. Both the instructors/trainers and students/trainees describe several classroom activities that stimulate CT and suggest implicit and explicit methods for evaluating it. The four focus groups made a significant contribution to the project because their discussion highlighted the difference between the approaches and perception of critical thinking at the Vilnius University and the Public Service Language Center. As CT is needed in the process of foreign language teaching and learning, the qualitative results obtained present a clear indication of the discrepancies between the university and the labor market (Poštić et al. 2023).

4.3. Documental Analysis

The documental analysis in the HEI is based on six different course descriptions. Two courses – English for Academic Purposes and Research (Childhood Pedagogy) and English Language Didactics (and final project) were taught to future or already working teachers. The rest of the courses, such as 20th century Drama, History of US culture, British Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults and English for Academic Purposes and Research (Philosophy) were delivered to BA students studying different subjects.

Looking through course descriptions, one can easily observe that critical thinking skills are clearly stated as one of the faculties students are supposed to develop during the course. Critical thinking skills are stimulated through self-reflection and peer review, task-based learning methods and the student-centred approach via discussion, debates, project work/assignment, case studies, research proposals, problem-solving, reflections. Students are encouraged to understand and critically evaluate authentic research articles and popular scientific media sources. Furthermore, they are encouraged to convey information by formulating problems, presenting different views and arguments through writing and speaking activities.

One thing that is left unclear in course descriptions is how HEI teachers evaluate students' ability to think critically. The assumption is that evaluation depends on the content students create, how good their information analyses are, how sound their arguments are. However, this evaluation should be defined more specifically, having in mind that there should be a starting point and a clear progress evaluation system if CT skills are listed as one of the competencies developed during the course.

The documental analysis in the LMO was based on two in-service EFL Teacher Training Programs considered to be most popular. As mentioned earlier, they are run by British native-speaking teachers-trainers from the UK. These teacher training programs comprise 58 academic hours ("Technology and The Classroom") and 50 academic hours ("Student-centred Learning in the

Remote Classroom”), and have already been offered to over 180 teachers (each). Both programs are designed to empower educators, especially from ethnic minority schools by using computers, tablets, smartphones for group work, to track student performance, evaluate them and cooperated with parents. The programs consist of 13 and 11 sessions (webinars), each of them covering theory, practice and self-study strictly limited in time/duration. From the titles of those webinars/sessions, one can assume that CT skills, methods and strategies are included in the process of teaching, like student autonomy, encouraging collaboration and hands-on learning, reflection, presentation, practical conference of attendees etc. Also, those programs come with lists of literature sources and resources for the attendees, but what kind of methods or teaching strategies trainers use to implement CT skills is not explicitly mentioned.

4.4. Differences between the HEI and the LMO

Regarding class/course objectives concerning CT, the main observable difference lies in the form of the presentation of the classes: in the case of HEI, the classes are student-centred, while in the case of LMO they are all lecturer-centred. Thus, the level of active participants’ engagement crucial in CT development is completely different. In the case of HEI, the students immediately demonstrate how they apply CT skills and how they try to reach the objectives, while in the LMO they are all tentative, as the listeners are only the recipients of the provided information and not active doers. CT skills are part of the courses offered at PLLC, although they are not mentioned explicitly. On the other hand, some trainers say that CT objectives need to be cultivated by bypassing the rigid academic framework. A discrepancy is observed; while instructors identify CT in the curricula, some trainers identify a gap that needs to be filled. The objectives of the courses offered by the university and the teacher-training institution are composed in many ways similarly, except that the objectives concerning CT at the university are usually spelled out more specifically. From the perspective of the HEI, CT skills come as a competence that students would develop during the course. Those CT skills are explicitly mentioned in course descriptions.

Regarding the variable of CT as an explicit reference during instruction, in both cases (HEI and LMO), the explicit reference to CT is not as obvious, though in HEI it is more common. There were a few instances in HEI when the teachers explicitly mentioned CT, while in the LMO there were none during the instruction. Generally, both teachers and trainers speak about a need for more explicit references to CT. Since VU courses follow the task-based approach by implementing activities like debates, conferences and case studies, there are moments and scenarios where CT skills are explicitly mentioned. Trainers, on the other hand, only incorporate CT tasks into their activities. There is not that much difference between the perception of CT between university students and the labour market trainees. Both students and trainees think that critical thinking

is one of the most important parts of the training of future professionals in most disciplines. While students think that subjectivity is needed to formally assess CT, the trainees, as experienced teachers, are familiar with all the techniques that stimulate CT.

Concerning the variable model of a good critical thinker, we found there is an observable difference in providing a model of a good critical thinker offered by HEI, as most of the classes are based on the practical implementation of CT skills during their activities. The students are actively engaged in CT through a set of well-organized activities that have a clear structure and a well-defined outcome, expressed by the conclusions in debates, their own created solution to the pressing issue in the case study, their own analysis of the polarity of views in the moral dilemma discussion, etc. By contrast, in LMO the listeners are not actively engaged in terms of action, they are more in the role of listeners. Thus, it is unclear whether they are able to practically apply those recommendations provided by the instructor. Also, in HEI there is a lot of teamwork, which is another essential skill for the development of CT, while in LMO the focus is more on individual and autonomous learning.

The differences between the two focus groups with teachers are subtle, almost unnoticeable. For both teachers and trainers, the model of a good critical thinker revolves around problem-solving, the analysing objects from a different perspective and flexibility in tackling problems. Nevertheless, teachers are also concerned with what Facione (1990) defines as self-regulation, the ability to identify and correct one's own mistakes based on reason, deduction, and logic. For the trainers, a good critical thinker is oriented more towards the others. Members of both focus groups (with students and with trainees) imply that the examples are given by instructors themselves and exemplified by their ability to stimulate critical thinking in students. One can assume that at HEI students are considered to be good critical thinkers if they understand and critically evaluate authentic research articles and popular scientific media sources, convey information by formulating problems, present different views and arguments, clearly express their point of view in a debate, while LMO gives more attention to the practical aspect of knowledge and its use.

Most students unequivocally think that CT is encouraged at the university, but they are not aware that it is specifically mentioned. Trainees, on the other hand, consciously use CT in their daily work while emphasizing self-evaluation, identification, research, and pointing out prejudices. They also look for materials that would trigger discussions, expression of personal opinions, and questioning different views. This is also partly observable in documental analysis. It can be observed that in HEI, students are encouraged to reflect more on their progress during classes. Also, students are always encouraged to participate in debates, discussions, etc. Thus, during the activities and feedback from the teacher, an improvement of CT can be achieved. Still, the documental analysis did not indicate clearly how CT improvement is achieved in the LMO.

The focus group with students shows that they have not had relevant enough jobs in order to assess their needed level of CT skills for a successful job, and most of them have not had jobs for which CT is highly significant. Concerning critical thinking teaching strategies, there is an observable difference in terms of very specific and well-structured activities that are offered by HEI such as debate, moral dilemma discussion, story-telling, integration of visual arts, team projects, etc. All these activities have a clearly defined structure and sequence based on the development of CT skills. In the case of LMO, the activities are of a more generalised nature, where the specific structure and the sequence line are not presented. The teachers at PLLC prefers to use various forms of Socratic dialogue and brainstorming to trigger improvements in students' critical thinking. This would be hard to deduct with students and trainees, because CT is only part of the task for both institutions, albeit a very important one, but it is not part of any higher strategy.

Furthermore, HEI uses other strategies such as case studies, the task-based approach, debates, conferences, self-reflection, peer review, writing assignments, discussions, team projects. Those are very specific activities that are mentioned in HEI course descriptions, and those activities help to develop students' CT skills. Looking through LMO teaching programs, one can see that CT teaching methods are incorporated in the teaching process, albeit not distinctively mentioned.

Most of the CT teaching methods in HEI focus on teamwork, while in the case of LMO the independent and autonomous learning is emphasized. The teaching methods developed by the HEI encourage the development of general skills, as defined by course descriptions and curricula. Receptive, productive, interactive, and mediation skills are equally covered. For the LMO, teaching strategies are oriented towards specific competencies. After analysing the focus group with trainers, they favour interactive and mediation skills, mainly associated with CT. In the case of tools and materials reflecting CT, an observable difference was identified; namely, in HEI most of the tools and materials are created by the teachers themselves so that students' needs can be approached from a personalised perspective, while in LMO a ready-made toolkit is offered.

Although both the HEI and the LMO stress the importance of authentic literature in developing CT skills, the approach seems different. LMO Trainers prefer to use authentic literature as an educational tool for problem-solving tasks. The HEI includes scientific research articles in the category of authentic literature, which become part of various activities such as case studies, debates, research proposals, etc. Judging by some of the answers, in the teacher's training institution the tools and materials are more readily taught and available, because they teach how to teach, while this method could only be applied to pedagogy courses at the university. Some university instructors consciously use tools and materials reflecting CT, but they are usually more focused on conveying the class material, and sometimes their tools indirectly

stimulate critical thinking in students.

There is a consensus about the difficulties of assessing CT. The labour market does not discuss the possibility of evaluating CT separately. The trainers describe CT's assessment tools as part of the general evaluation. At the higher education institution level, there is a debate about the need to evaluate CT independently. Both parties are aware of the important degree of subjectivity involved in assessing CT. There is no specific mention of evaluation approaches of CT neither in HEI course descriptions nor in LMO programs.

For the last variable, regarding the presence of CT, it could be maintained that in HEI there is more presence of discipline-related CT. By comparison, in LMO there is more emphasis on the generalised mode of teaching and its effectiveness. The HEI offers courses where CT is explicitly mentioned in the course description. Each case should be studied separately, but from the answers to the questions it could be concluded that there is no marked difference between the students and trainees regarding this question. More or less, all members of the two focus groups are aware of the importance of CT in education. Whereas trainees have to use these skills to teach, students have to apply them in a different situation, depending on their future career, which is not always directly related to what they have studied. The CT mechanisms have to be applied in most jobs, and they are sometimes not overly explicit. CT also involves social and communication skills, which are not taught anywhere, but students acquire this only by being in a collective and having constant interaction with their peers. Critical thinking skills are specifically mentioned in the course descriptions, what is more, teaching methods and strategies involving critical thinking are distinctly described in HEI course descriptions.

Apart from the research questions, the researchers noted the following: some notable differences could be more explicit if the observation of HEI and LMO would follow the same categorization pattern. In HEI, practical tutorials were observed where the number of students would not exceed 16. In LMO, these were lectures that were delivered to a group of 30 teachers, who were in the role of passive listeners rather than active participants or so-called doers. Also, the focus student group in HEI is very specific, and there are specific aims to be achieved that are very context-related and also more personalised and individualised. By contrast, in the case of LMO, the aims are very generalised, and the audience is varied with different aims that are not necessarily supposed to be achieved during the delivered lectures.

5. Conclusions

A detailed comparison of critical thinking implemented at Vilnius University (Higher Education Institution) and Public Language Learning Centre (Labour Market Institution) show different approaches to critical thinking in

foreign-language teaching. In university course descriptions, CT is mentioned explicitly, observations show that it is often used, especially through the student-centred method of teaching and the encouragement of student participation. Both instructors and students interviewed in focus groups mention different ways in which CT is fostered and implemented in the curriculum. A course designed to teach CT, as El Soufi and See (2019) argue, would probably increase CT skills and dispositions even more by making them part of a planned and conscious effort.

In the LMO course descriptions, critical thinking is not explicitly mentioned, only implied. Observation of the PLLC classes show a teacher-centred approach, although trainees were engaged in other ways. Trainers recognise the importance of critical thinking, and mention the discrepancy between the teaching approach of those who have completed their studies in the Soviet period with those who studied after Lithuanian independence. In the past thirty years, the teaching and learning methods have not only changed because of political and economic reforms, but also due to other advancements, such as the appearance of technology in classroom and the increased exposure to foreign languages. In the latter stage of the Think4Jobs project, a blended curriculum program tried to bring the methods of the two institutions closer together. Also the training of the instructors and the trainers in critical thinking have considerably raised the awareness of the importance of nurturing CT in the language-learning process.

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