

Integrating metacognition and critical thinking skills in the exploration of culture in EFL classroom

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History Submitted: 13 August 2018 Revised: 17 November 2018 Published: 3 December 2018</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords Metacognition Critical thinking skills Myness Otherness Dialogical process</p>	<p>This article describes a qualitative study which compares the effectiveness of the reflective cultural experiences through critical thinking and metacognitive preparation relative to the traditional English language classroom. This study aims to investigate the students' metacognition, critical thinking skills and critical thinking awareness while exploring culture in EFL classroom. Exploring culture in foreign language studies requires students to engage in authentic contexts in order to develop their ability to live/exist in a variety of cultures. This intercultural ability requires awareness of himself and others as cultural beings. Also, exploring culture and language learning requires the development of metacognitive skills and critical thinking skills to reflect on cultural experiences, to analyze them from multiple perspectives, and to apply them in the authentic contexts. Critical thinking and metacognition examine hypotheses, makes the distinction between facts and opinions, and is based on clarity, depth, correctness, accuracy which contributes to the formation of the culture of the taught. The purpose of this study is to describe the introduction of metacognitive and critical thinking awareness and skills in EFL classroom into the learning of 32 students enrolled in the teacher education program at Pedagogical State University 'Ion Creanga', Republic of Moldova. This study was implemented through qualitative research design to reflect on teaching experience and on the professional ground from a rather new perspective through the "culture" lens and student perception of culture awareness and skills in critical thinking in EFL classroom.</p>

1. Introduction

This qualitative research study constitutes the efforts of the researcher in the process of awareness of critical thinking in the curriculum. Critical thinking is a strategy that will improve the quality of our thinking, still there is a broad debate regarding the definition of critical thinking (Lai, 2011a). Critical thinking is self- directed, self- guided, and self- regulated that involves reflection and deep understanding of the events that happen around us. Critical thinking helps:

- understand the micro-cultures "sphere of interculturality" we are confronting every day through analysis and assessment of daily events (Kramsch, 1993);
- develop intellectual, social, economic integrity, empathy, and sense of confidence in our own reason (Ennis, 1985);

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- become better thinkers by analyzing arguments (Halpern, 1998);
- objectively judge the knowledge for its credibility (Facione, 2000);
- transfer the knowledge and skills to new contexts (Halpern, 2001);
- learning to think (Dewey, 1933; Paul, 1992).

Critical thinking is facilitated through metacognition; critical thinking and metacognition are both commonly called as “thinking about thinking” (Flavell, 1979, p. 906). Halpern (1998) claims that critical thinking is a product of metacognition: using specific metacognitive skills like monitoring thinking, checking progress, ensuring accuracy, and making decisions (p. 453).

Metacognition and critical thinking skills seem to be divergent but still they belong to the same hierarchical ranking structure and they denominate completely different parameters of abstract thinking. Kuhn (1999) equates critical thinking with metacognition (p. 17); Martinez (2006) sees critical thinking as a type of metacognition (p. 697). Schraw, Crippen and Hartley (2006), however, see both metacognition and critical thinking as components of self-regulated learning (p. 111).

The research aim was to describe the implementation of the English Language classroom with an exploration of culture through the reflective and metacognitive training and to evaluate whether this approach may prove an effective and productive method relative to the more traditional English language classroom. This study described in the article was performed with 32 students in teacher education program at State Pedagogical University, Moldova.

1.1. Background and hypothesis

Metacognition and critical thinking both appeal to reason and deep thought, to upper level thinking that demands more than the exploration of cognitive domain. The congruence between the critical thinking and metacognition is in terms of recognition of the boundaries of the thought, how far it can travel among the neurological infrastructure of synapses.

The level of the development of the critical thinking skills as well as the shaping of the metacognition originates in the brain at the level of the juncture of two neurons (dendrites of one neuron and axon of another cell body), in the synapse where are located a great amount of neurotransmitters (chemicals that change the polarity and voltage) that send the impulse from one neuron to another (Gardner, 1983, p. 47).

Learning may also be viewed as a process of formation of synapses incorporating a good deal of neural activity and playing the pivotal role in the acquisition of knowledge. The tremendous amount of “electrical operations” i.e. nervous impulses are sent every second from different receptors to different sensory areas to be processed. The forever “active brain” even during the sleeping process keeps its activity to its utmost potential.

Cognitivism approaches the human mind as a programming machine to store, retrieve, save, recall, and delete the bits of knowledge that are transformed from one physical form into a metaphysical one. Since cognitive skills are shaped primarily in the evolution of the mind through the language system that is acquired by children and metacognitive skills seem to start at the age of 3 to 5 (Kuhn, 1999, p. 19), and later metacognitive strategies start outlining in the human brain; it means that there is no specific area responding of cognitive or metacognitive skills but the linkage between cognitive and metacognitive domain is preordained (Lai, 2011b, p. 16). Good cognition serves as a sound foundation for the evolvement of metacognition i.e. abstract thinking, superior reasoning, upper level of thought. All this is possible only with the help of critical thinking skills, metacognitive skills that can train the human mind to think deeper (Kuhn, 1999, p. 17).

The environment that embraces culture has a strong impact on the brain’s effective functioning as well. Vygotsky (1980) who disagrees with Piaget states that stages of the child’s development are not universal for all children, and historical conditions that determine mostly the human experience are in continuous change; there can not exist a universal scheme that would represent correctly the dynamic relationship between internal and external aspects of the human development. More than that, Birch and Gussow (1970) have stated that the background of each individ is not just a simple context in which he exists but it is more a product resulting from the

interaction of the unique characteristics of the body and the opportunities offered by the environment (cited in, Vygotsky, 1980, p. 125).

The brain makes us who we are and what we represent. It guides and orients us in different cultural settings. Metacognition and critical thinking skills are shaped while learning through:

- formation of synapses
- building the blocks, schemata of knowledge
- responding to external stimuli, reinforcements
- internal and external resources of the human being responding to the environment with all its implications and references to culture, history (Vygotsky, 1980).

But the difference between metacognition and critical thinking skills is in the object of awareness. The following Table 1 summarizes the rationale on metacognition and critical thinking skills.

Table 1.
Defining Critical Thinking and Metacognition

Critical Thinking	Metacognition
1. enhancement of knowledge (Schön, 1983, p. 13);	1. monitors the efficacy of learning strategies, guides the activities through self-regulation and refers to mental processes that control, rule the way we think and learn (Veenman, Van Hout Wolters, & Afflerbach, 2006, p. 3-4);
2. a set of skills identifying ambiguous or equivocal claims or arguments; recognizing logical inconsistencies or fallacies in a line of reasoning; distinguishing between warranted or unwarranted claims; determining the strength of an argument (Beyer, 1984, p. 486 -488);	2. systematizes the knowledge, regulates cognitive activities (Flavell, 1979; Jacobse & Harskamp, 2009), is the cognition of the cognitive processes (Hacker, Dunlosky, & Graesser, 2009);
3. is a product of metacognition and can be divided into: “(a) verbal reasoning skills; (b) argument analysis skills; (c) skills in thinking as hypothesis testing; (d) likelihood and uncertainty; (e) decision-making and problem-solving skills” (Halpern, 1998, p. 452- 453);	3. determines whether particular strategies are effective in the process of organizing knowledge (Schön, 1983, p. 12-14);
4. eight domains of critical-thinking: “storing and retrieving knowledge, deductively generating valid inferences, making or creating arguments, testing hypothesis, thinking under uncertainty, making decisions, developing problem-solving skills, and/or engaging in creative thinking” (Schroyens, 2005).	4. predicts and promotes critical thinking (Magno, 2010, p. 137-138);
	5. rules the comprehension of thinking processes (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006; Vandergrift et al., 2006);
	6. Metacognition is called the Theory of Mind (Schraw et al., 2006; Hacker, Dunlosky, & Graesser, 2009).
Can be taught	

Some Applied Linguists have been considering culture as the fifth skill – after listening, speaking, reading and writing which demands a careful approach in EFL classrooms (Frank, 2013; Sapir, 1949; Shahed, 2013). The relationship between English language and culture is quite challenging and of utmost importance because it is based on learning the thoughts and behavior of the English-speaking societies. To explore and understand the culture means to become a critical thinker, a reflective thinker who can avoid potential conflicts due to cultural differences.

“Cultural ideal is a vesture and an air. The vesture may drape gracefully about one’s person and the air has often much charm, but the vesture is a ready made garment for all that and the air remains

an air" (Sapir, 1949, p. 82). Culture stresses "spiritual possessions" of a micro-culture" (Sapir, 1949, p. 83). Culture may become synonymous with the "civilization as it embodies the national genius", genius being "historical development" (Sapir, 1949, p. 84).

"Culture" is used to "embody any socially inherited element in the life of a man, material and spiritual. Culture is coterminous with man himself characterized by a network of habits, usages and habits" (Sapir, 1949, p. 79). Bodley (1994) stated that culture is "what people think, make, and do" (cited in, Frank, 2013, p. 3). Frank concluded that culture consists of: perspectives, practices, and products. Perspectives are "what members of a culture think, feel, and value" (Frank, 2013, p. 3). Practices are the behaviors of the members of the cultural groups and products are clothing, music, literature. The second application of the word "culture" would be a conventional ideal of "individual refinement built on a certain modicum of assimilated knowledge and experience" and "manner seen as a certain preciousness of conduct which takes different colors" (Sapir, 1949, p. 81).

Culture is viewed as a progression from monological to dialogical processes that help people understand and "interpret people's actions, patterns of thinking, and human artifacts" recognizing "Myness" and "Otherness" (Valencia, Medina, 2009, p. 162). The dialogic dynamics between "Myness" and "Otherness" represent the sphere of culture between society and the individual. *For this purpose, we need to explore critical thinking skills and metacognition to understand culture.*

Teaching a foreign language and culture form a symbiosis that contain the following:

(1) the process of learning English is going to be very productive if cultural awareness and English skills are going to be learnt in the same time;

(2) approaching culture as a domain within English Language learning involves the acquisition of specific terms such as: the stereotypes, high context cultures, low-context cultures... (Frank, 2013);

(3) teaching culture in the English classroom helps the students to develop their metacognitive and reflective abilities, and self-learning.

Shahed proved that "under the issue of 'Impact of globalization" in Bangladesh acquiring English skills, through cultural sensitivity and awareness have become a major concern in enhancing the need for culture in English teaching (Shahed, 2013, p. 104). Cultural awareness is "acknowledgement, tolerance, and acceptance of diversity and ability to reflect and evaluate it critically" (Valencia, & Medina, 2009, p. 163). But the need of learning English through scientific and technological inventions, international organizations, global economic trade, and finance is increasing (Shahed, 2013, p. 106).

Frank introduces the term "self as cultural" when people "associate culture with conventions such as social interaction, patterns, values, ideas, and attitudes" (Frank, 2013, p. 2-3). The author determines the elements of culture: surface culture (traditional music, dance, literature, national costumes); sub-surface culture (body language, eye contact, facial expressions); deep culture (unconscious values and attitudes) that all are influencing the "self as cultural" being (Frank, 2013, p. 4). According to Sapir "culture is not something given but something to be gradually and gropingly discovered" (Sapir, 1949, p. 205).

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The methodology for this study included qualitative research design to describe student perception of culture awareness and skills in critical thinking in the teacher education program at Pedagogical State University "Ion Creangă". This introductory research process included a self-selection sample of students in teacher education. There were 16 students in the second year, all female with age range of 20 -23 and 16 students in the third year, 14 females and 2 males with age range of 22-38 majoring in teaching English as a foreign language. The 2nd year students will teach English in Primary school, and the 3rd year students will teach English in Pedagogical College or high school.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Reflecting on teaching experience and on the professional ground from a rather new perspective through the “culture” lens the main focus would be on interculturality, and on fostering on a critical approach to culture. Keeping these two terms in mind (culture and interculturality) it should be introduced the term “the educational community” where is revealed the relationship between individual’s “Myness” and “Otherness” with all its implications.

Both metacognition and critical thinking require: practice and training. But, still there can be provided solid base and training for the upper level thinking through metacognitive instruction and reflective thinking instruction within the culture.

Participants besides their English teacher preparation program were receiving metacognitive and reflective thinking instruction through exploration of culture. They were also asked to keep reflective journals, think aloud protocols, conduct reflective reading and discussions. Certain activities have been conducted with the students from State Pedagogical University; one of the activities was “My identity wheel”. After talking about it they were asked to draw their “Identity wheel” and how has it changed in the last few years (more specifically from high school to university).

The “Reflective description” assignment consisted of describing the objects the students mostly use during English classes or daily routine promoting critical thinking or reflection. It was more of a description with associated terminology and a personal perspective on things and events. In the assignment there is only the intention to strengthen the sense of community and cultural awareness.

The “Professional development context” assignment promoted critical thinking through considering the context of my students’ professional development. The students had to step out of their “myness” and examine from distance their professional identity and professional personality. The goal was to strengthen the sense of professional community within educational community.

In the “Past products reflection” assignment, the students had to describe their past learning experience promoting critical thinking and reflection on their past products, and the entire educational context with its implications describing it with associated terminology. The students had to give a holistic picture and considered the future implications in their further training.

2.3 Data Analysis

There should be established the dialogic dynamics between the teacher and student’s “Myness” and “Otherness” which is at the beginning of acceptance, perseverance, consent and satisfaction of intercultural issues within the classroom micro-culture, the role of culture in acquiring the foreign language. The culture should be another skill (among reading, speaking, writing, and listening skills) taught within the classroom micro-culture. The language teachers must enrich the cultural awareness of themselves first, and then of their students. The best way to achieve the “training” of intercultural speakers is to explore the native and foreign cultures through invasions in authentic settings: films, books, customs, and traditions raising the awareness not only of the target culture but of their own as well (Frank, 2013, p. 6).

Critical thinking is driven from analysis – a set of questions and answers that are outlined to get „reflected on” information, reasoning, judgments about the world. The following Table 2 displays the critical thinking behavior elucidated by descriptors.

Table 2.
Criteria for Evaluating Reasoning

Criteria for Evaluating Reasoning and Abstract Thinking	Descriptors
What language does the student use and what are the implications and consequences of the stance she/he is taking?	Analyses and assesses key concepts, and alternative points of view clearly and precisely.
Does the student show empathy to group mates' relevant points of view? Is she/he considering the lines of reasoning of counterparts?	Draws thoughtful, perspicacious conclusions. Makes up pertinent questions.
Does the student develop coherence in reasoning?	Justifies inferences and judgments.
Does the student show confidence in his assumptions while constructing his field of reflections?	Insightfully addresses and evaluates major alternative points of view.
Does the student elucidate key concepts when is asked?	Decodes evidence, statements, info graphics, questions, literary elements, etc.
Is the assumption well-structured, transparent and unbiased?	Thoroughly elucidates assumptions and justifies his line of reasoning.
Does the student cite relevant evidence, resources to the issue? Can the resources be trusted?	Consults various resources and illustrates the data objectively.

3. Results

As a result of the training for the upper level thinking through metacognitive and reflective instruction of the students micro-cultures it was established a considerable development of English communication competencies (writing, reading, listening, speaking) and a predilection towards the establishment of a positive emotional group culture and a democratic teacher-student relationship; reflective activities generate a privileged atmosphere, leading to an increase in students' self-esteem and confidence.

On average almost all students have mentioned the same components of their Identity Wheel: Family Identity, School Identity, Hobby Identity, Friend Identity, Party Identity, Job Identity. Most of students have identified more components of their identity wheel in the high school than at the university. Even if the structure of their Identity Wheel has not changed much, they have emphasized that each rubric takes up a different timing space. It is because they are aware of the fact that they need more time, effort and grit to complete a successful task. It should be pointed their determination and resolution about their future career; they know exactly what they have to do and what they need to do to accomplish it.

In other assignments the students have struggled with the concept of "the educational community" where they would reveal the relationship between their "Myness" and "Otherness" with all its implications. However, they started to reflect on the thought of "Myness" and the educational communities created from cultural perspectives. It was used the model of experiential learning based on real life experiences. The students, insecure in the beginning, gradually observed, thought, reflected on, analyzed the assignments from multiple perspectives, and meditated on their past experiences with more care and depth than usual. I assisted students, helping them think about "their" culture and critical thinking by giving them thoughtful, constructive feedback. Critical thinking is generated from active participation in the discussions, free exchange of ideas and experiences increasing the quality of communication that is why my goal was to create group unity as a culture and maintain the community of practice.

Verbatim quotes from the study participants are labeled in terms of:

- Critical thinking and metacognition have an assertive effect on student engagement within the English language classroom;

- Critical thinking and metacognition trigger an increase in student achievement;
- Critical thinking and metacognition provoke an increase in students' upper level of thought.

3.1 Critical thinking and metacognition have an assertive effect on student engagement within the English language classroom

The awareness of needing to adopt a critical view on past and present learning experiences initiated a behavioral change. The participants were aware of, and broadly endorsed, the impact of a critical thinking skills and metacognition on their program of study:

„I am excited about my attending the classes; about what and how the whole group is doing during the task. I am having the feeling that I am moving correctly toward the accomplishment of my goal. I believe that there is no wrong or bad answer; as a team member I take an active part in the discussions and do not hesitate to share my opinion”. (M.C.)

"This is a time when I'm thinking deeply on different culture concepts (e.g. myness and otherness) and I am engaging in the classroom activities with pleasure". (M.G)

"It's not news that I've got to think and reflect before doing something. I think my colleagues as well as me are aware and choose to ignore it as it is hard to make the brain work (especially in the beginning). It is much easier to be a passive listener and pretend to participate in the activities. But the moment I started to take pains and effort in the reflective activities I felt a different person ". (A. M)

„I just feel better, my inner world, my ego is satisfied. I get through my assignments much easier. I comprehend what I am asked to write or read and can respond appropriately”. (I. S)

„The more I reflect, express in words, share my opinions with my colleagues the better I feel about myself, the more confident I am. I am not shy and afraid I might say something wrong. I just reflect on my thoughts, express my opinion and then listen to the others and reformulate my ideas". (I.B)

„I am not afraid anymore of thought-provoking questions, quite the opposite, they give me the strong desire to take part in the discussions and find the answers...” (I.P)

3.2 Critical thinking and metacognition trigger an increase in student achievement

All the participants have the strong and increasing feeling of responsibility on their own learning process. They are perceiving the teacher more as an advisor and guide, they are conscious of the fact that they are the doers of their knowledge and expertise. The study participants cited several perceived advantages of the metacognitive and critical thinking training on their mental development:

„I feel stronger to commit to exercising in class and after classes with my colleagues. I can learn the new vocabulary much faster and easier”. (T. M)

„I am prioritizing better my assignments, I am aware of the sequence of my learning process”. (M. C)

„When I started the metacognitive training, I was reluctant but in time I got interested and I liked the „tell what's on your mind” approach. I can concentrate longer on different assignments, I am more energized and never get bored. The learning of new vocabulary prior to this training was always boring and hard, which I cannot say at the moment”. (N.V)

„The thing I love the most is reading the assignments in English and simultaneously catching the meaning, I don't have to stop and do the word- by - word translation. I can pick up the overall meaning that saves me time and gives me plenty of satisfaction”. (N. D)

„I am learning the Language in a different way, it is not linear anymore, I can learn vocabulary and grammar in various ways, sometimes it is more of acquisition rather than learning. I like it the most ”. (C.G.)

3.3 Critical thinking and metacognition provokes an increase in students' upper level of thought

The participants understand deeper their professional development, they become skeptical and insightful, curious and eager to learn.

„When I started to learn Didactics of the English Language I thought I will fail the course. It is a theoretic course, it demands a lot of reading, designing lesson plans and teaching. Reflective and metacognitive training helped me in the process of writing and reading, systematizing all the resources, take a stance, and be ready for teaching”. (I.B.)

„I can internalize what I hear and my questions about it and develop my reflections. I can talk about customs and traditions with respect and tolerance; I have developed the feature of the reflective thinker”. (V. G.)

“I can expand what I learnt in my English Language class to other disciplines e.g. philosophy, Romanian Literature, Economics.” (R. D.)

“I think that keeping a reflective journal, where I could reflect on my learning process gave the desired result. I don't need it anymore, but sometimes when I am facing a new challenging problem, I write instinctively my thoughts and it helps me meditate and find the answers”. (I. S.)

“I am prepared for teaching: I am not scared as much as in the beginning; I will be a good reflective teacher of English facing cultural diversity”. (T. M.)

The participants have become better at concentrating, organizing, controlling and exploring metacognitive and critical thinking skills while writing, reading, speaking and listening through accurate, clear, fluent, precise, conscious, polite and amicable communication.

As a result of this metacognitive and reflective instruction the students attained progressively higher levels of metacognitive and critical thinking skills described in the Table 3.

During metacognitive and reflective training students demonstrated increased motivation and interest in the monitoring, supervision, negotiation, guidance and counseling of reflective activities, correlated with a high degree participation at lessons, which contributed to the improvement of academic results, cultural awareness and sensitivity. The students demonstrated after all the inexhaustible *freedom* of communication with no peer or culture *constraints* and the desire to participate in different activities.

Table 3

Critical Thinker Profile

The Profile of the Critical Thinker	Critical Thinking Guidelines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective, careful appeal to rational reflection • Evidence of critical, analytical thinking • Evidence to reflect beyond the visible • Considers all possible variants • Examines contradictory evidence • Able to sequence the line of reasoning • Justifies his line of reasoning • Develops intellectual honesty • Understands the ambiguity of resources • Develops the ability to identify what is important • Examines the resources skeptically • Monitors his own thinking • Develops a strong intellectual confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the main theory on metacognition and critical thinking and how it applies to everyday life; • the need to practice these skills and incorporate them into EFL setting; • An appreciation of the importance of intellectual self- confidence; • An understanding of the determining role of critical thinking in learning culture; • An awareness that critical thinking and metacognition can be taught; • An awareness of the need for self-assessment of thinking; • An understanding of the concepts „myness” and „otherness”; • An awareness of empathy and cultural sensitivity and awareness; • An awareness of the role of analytical and reflective thinking; • An appreciation of the need for integration of critical thinking into professional competence.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Education today needs teachers capable of providing students with quality education. Students' needs, which can be extremely diverse, are the driving force of continuous training designed as human, individual or collective exigencies; they must be satisfied in time and space to ensure the normal development of the life and activity of the educational institutions. The fundamental change of conception of "philosophy of education" and of the vision of the human being as supreme value will bring more respect for the social reality, the mechanisms of real life, of the micro- cultures and personalities to whom the system and the organization is intended for.

It was hypothesized that the inclusion of more metacognitive and reflective learning constituents into the English language classroom might increase learning. Marzano (1998) concluded that the students who are performing metacognitive and critical thinking training are aware of their own learning processes, use any learning strategy in a flexible way to develop new ideas and new *ways* of solving problems, so it is absolutely necessary for students to be taught how to shape metacognitive and critical thinking skills. Hacker, Dunlosky and Graesser (2009) advocated that shaping metacognitive skills develops the ability to assimilate and acquire a foreign language; Jacobse and Harskamp (2009) revealed the positive impact of metacognition on cognitive development (p. 448). Schunck and Zimmerman (1997) stated that students with solid metacognitive skills can easily adjust their knowledge in different learning contexts (p. 199).

The English Language classroom was conducted and facilitated by trainings for the upper level thinking through metacognitive instruction and reflective thinking instruction while exploring culture that lasted the whole semester. A typical learning session in the English Language classroom consisted of: (a) describing the objects the students mostly use during English classes or daily routine promoting critical thinking or reflection, (b) stepping out of their "myness" and examine from distance their professional identity and professional personality, (c) describing their past learning

experience promoting critical thinking and reflection on their past products, and the entire educational context with associated terminology, (d) keeping reflective journals, think aloud protocols, (e) conduct reflective readings and discussions based on teamwork.

A highly significant increase in the students' performance was found in the English Language classroom with metacognitive and critical thinking preparation relative to the traditional English Language classroom. The students have become reflective learners by appealing to rational reflection; using critical, analytical thinking; using evidence to reflect beyond the visible; considering all possible variants; examining contradictory evidence; sequencing and justifying their line of reasoning; developing intellectual honesty ; understanding the ambiguity of resources; developing the ability to identify what is important and relevant; examining the resources skeptically; monitoring their own thinking; developing a strong intellectual confidence.

The main conclusion drawn from this study is that the English Language classroom enriched with reflective cultural experiences through critical thinking and metacognitive preparation has potential to help students think deeper and beyond the mind limits, learn more than they do with traditional lectures. In the traditional classroom, there is no room for deep reflective exercises, collaboration between students.

The success in the classroom depends on the joint activity of the teacher and the students who form a classroom community. The teacher is to create an effective community ("the educational community") where all participants could benefit from each other previous experiences and knowledge; they all should be taught and guided through collaborative joint teaching-learning activities constructed and reconstructed on the cultural background of each student. This is the goal of each educator as a future perspective to strengthen the sense of his/her "educational community", "professional community" considering the components of culture, cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.

The continuation of the study of critical thinking skills and metacognition is connected to academic achievement and student learning at all levels of education. It is the intent of the researcher to follow these students into the teaching profession and measure pupil achievement once metacognition and critical thinking skills are implemented in the curriculum.

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