# IMPLEMENTING VISIBLE THINKING ROUTINES IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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Learning is considered a consequence of thinking. Therefore, different types of thinking, primarily *critical* and *creative thinking,* are of paramount importance in the process of language acquisition. Critical thinking incorporates lower thinking skills such as remembering, identifying, understanding, and classifying, and higher thinking skills such as analysis, problem-solving, imagination, evaluation, etc. Additionally, creativity is a type of thinking that implies exploring ideas, formulating alternatives, searching for many right answers rather than just one, and partaging of results. In other words, creative thinking aims at developing learners' curiosity in discovering something new, *i.e.* their openness to acquire new skills [1, p.1-2].

To nurture both critical and creative thinking, researchers of Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education proposed a new method of teaching – *Visible Thinking*. According to them, visible thinking is not only a simple approach but also a flexible and systematic conceptual framework, which aims at integrating the development of students' thinking with content learning across subject matters [2, p.3].

In *Making Thinking Visible or How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners,* to explain the complexity of visible thinking routines, the authors classify them according to the three distinguished criteria: as tools, because with their help learners achieve certain goals or perform the given tasks (e.g. Think – Puzzle – Explore), as structures, because they serve as scaffolds that guide learners' thinking towards higher-order levels, such as *mind mapping* (e.g. Generate – Sort – Connect – Elaborate), and as patterns of behaviour, because the repertoire of routines plays an important role in establishing the context shared between learners and teachers as well as their behaviour (creates a dynamic classroom environment). In the same book, the authors sort several thinking routines according to several categories: Introducing and Exploring Ideas (e.g. See, Think, Wonder), Synthesizing and Organizing Ideas (e.g. Colour, Symbol, Image), and Digging Deeper into Ideas (e.g. Values, Identities, Actions) [3, p.30].

The aim of the conducted research consists of evaluating the effectiveness of implementing visible thinking routines in the process of language acquisition through the activation of thinking skills. The conducted research hypothesis is that implementing visible thinking practices in a language classroom boosts learners' engagement and motivation to learn a foreign language. The corresponding routines of this approach foster learners' metacognitive skills. In addition, visible thinking establishes a positive, open-minded, active, and collaborative environment in an EFL classroom. The formulated objectives of the research are: to investigate how visible thinking routines develop

learners' critical thinking; to identify different thinking practices, that help learners develop their language learning; to examine how visible thinking strategies foster different language areas and foster learners' competences; to explore the influence of visible thinking techniques in nurturing the creativity of EFL learners; to determine the role of the teacher in activating learners' visible thinking skills.

To prove the hypothesis of the research, a quasi-experimental design was conducted at the "Mircea Eliade" Theoretical High School in Chișinău. The group involved was the 8th graders. The input used for the group included materials from National Textbook *English: Level A 2.4* (2023) and additional sources suitable for integrating visible thinking activities. The tasks implemented during the quasi-experimental design targeted three areas: Core Thinking Skills (*Making observations (noticing)* – See, Think, Wonder), Introducing and Exploring Ideas (*Activating schemata (elicitation)* – Think, Puzzle, Explore), Digging Deeper into Ideas (*Summarising* – Colour, Symbol, Image). The group had the pre- and posttests that were focused on four major visible thinking routines targeting each of the above-mentioned areas. In terms of the pretest, the results showed that an average of 57,8% of the initial group used visible thinking routines in doing the tasks. The posttest results indicated that an average of 78,2% of students have successfully used the visible thinking routines in doing the tasks. Therefore, the number of students who applied visible thinking practices within the test has considerably increased.

In conclusion, visible thinking is not a simple set of strategies or routines, it is a new approach to studying that allows learners to take ownership of their learning journey. Using visible thinking routines, students develop critical thinking skills, metacognitive skills, and a deeper understanding of the language content. These essential 21st-century skills go beyond the classroom and help them in all aspects of life. Additionally, they foster a culture of inquiry, where creativity and curiosity are nurtured, questions are valued, and diverse perspectives are taken into account.

**References:**


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