

## Investigating the Influence of Critical Thinking Skills on Learning Achievement among Higher Education Students in Foreign Language Programs

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**Abstract :** Introduction: Critical thinking skills are increasingly recognized as vital for academic success, particularly in higher education. This study examines the influence of critical thinking on learning achievement among undergraduate and master's students enrolled in foreign language programs. By investigating this correlation, educators can gain valuable insights into optimizing teaching methodologies and enhancing academic outcomes. Methods: This cross-sectional study involved 150 students from Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, recruited via random sampling. Participants completed the critical thinking questionnaire (CThQ), assessing dimensions such as analysis, evaluation, creation, remembering, understanding, and application. Academic performance was measured using the students' GPA (0-20). Results: The participants' mean age was  $21.46 \pm 5.2$  years, with 62.15% being female. The mean scores for critical thinking subscales were as follows: analyzing ( $13.2 \pm 3.5$ ), evaluating ( $12.8 \pm 3.4$ ), creating ( $18.6 \pm 4.8$ ), remembering ( $9.4 \pm 2.1$ ), Understanding ( $12.9 \pm 3.3$ ), and applying ( $12.5 \pm 3.2$ ). The overall critical thinking score was  $79.4 \pm 18.1$ , and the average GPA was  $15.7 \pm 2.4$ . Significant positive correlations were found between GPA and several critical thinking subscales: analyzing ( $r = 0.45, p = 0.013$ ), creating ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.001$ ), remembering ( $r = 0.29, p = 0.021$ ), understanding ( $r = 0.41, p = 0.002$ ), and the overall CThQ score ( $r = 0.54, p = 0.043$ ). Conclusion: The study demonstrates a significant positive relationship between critical thinking skills and learning achievement in foreign language programs. Enhancing critical thinking skills through educational interventions could potentially improve academic performance. Further research is recommended to explore the underlying mechanisms and long-term impacts of critical thinking on academic success.

**Keywords :** critical thinking, learning achievement, higher education, foreign language programs, student success

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