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Teaching Foreign Languages in Context: Intermediate Italian and Critical Thinking

Chiara Frenquellucci

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TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN CONTEXT:
INTERMEDIATE ITALIAN AND CRITICAL THINKING

A Thesis Presented
by
CHIARA FRENQUELLUCCI

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research of
the
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TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN CONTEXT:
INTERMEDIATE ITALIAN AND CRITICAL THINKING

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I dedicate this thesis to Dr. Mary Carter for being my Aunt Mary.
ABSTRACT

TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN CONTEXT: INTERMEDIATE ITALIAN AND CRITICAL THINKING

MAY 1993

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Declining student interest in the study of foreign languages in U. S. universities has prompted calls for reform. This thesis proposes to enhance the teaching of intermediate Italian through the integration of critical thinking skills and innovative techniques of language instruction. Implementing such a program requires shifts in both content and teaching methods. Language (both native and foreign) is not a set of detached components, but rather a tool for communication of perceptions and ideas through meaningful exchanges. The learning of a language should fulfill its promise of proficiency and be a congenial opportunity for success in learning.

Exploiting the natural connection between language and thought is beneficial for two reasons: first, it aids the acquisition of the target language, as well as improving "verbal" skills in the students' own language; secondly, it enriches the students' intellectual repertoire in both
related and unrelated fields. Thinking skills are universal and can be applied to a variety of situations, including personal growth outside of academic development.

This thesis presents a background in critical thinking philosophies and classification of thinking skills, and in second language acquisition theories in order to create an alternative intermediate Italian curriculum. The immediate purpose of such a curriculum is to enhance students' linguistic and thinking proficiency through self-expression and communication with others. The long-term goal is to present language within its larger context to make it transferable to real-world situations.

Five sample lessons are developed in this thesis, each centered on a particular critical thinking skill. Students are involved in defining, applying and transferring the skills to many contexts. Each lesson draws from different critical thinking theories and pedagogical models, encourages students to experiment with language, and helps them to express meaning in its most complex forms.

Examples of written and oral exercises and evaluation criteria to assess student progress and overall lesson effectiveness have also been included. Even though intermediate Italian instruction is the main focus of this thesis, the ideas presented are applicable to the teaching of any intermediate level foreign language course.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Organization

This thesis addresses the current crisis in foreign language instruction in U. S. universities (Rivers 1992) by proposing an alternative curriculum for intermediate Italian. Learning a new language offers students a chance to probe the larger implications of communication: namely, how to express oneself most effectively and how to understand others better. Integrating critical thinking with an Italian course means teaching and learning language within its larger context and making it transferable.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first introduces the rationale for this thesis, which proposes a series of sample lessons towards the creation of a critical thinking curriculum for an intermediate Italian language class. It also describes the overall approach to teaching adopted in the curriculum. The second section briefly summarizes the content of each chapter in the thesis. The last section addresses some current issues relevant to foreign language instruction in U. S. universities: the language requirement; profiles of students taking intermediate language courses; the possibility of diversifying such courses at the intermediate level; and how
the integration of critical thinking skills might enhance intermediate language courses.

Rationale

A Critical Thinking Model for Foreign Language Instruction.

Ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century, a steady decline in the humanities in North American universities "has been real, and perhaps more severe in recent decades than previously" (Cates and Melvin 1992, 321). This downward trend has especially affected the study of foreign languages, which, judging from decreasing student enrollment (Rivers 1992), is no longer considered a vital component of "what it...[means]...to be an educated person" (Cates and Melvin 1992, 322). It was believed for a very long time that the discipline involved in "...hard study, instruction in logic, and 'exercise' through mastery of Latin and mathematics...would...'transfer' to all other fields" (Hart 1983, 29). But the opposite proved to be true, as "...studies demonstrated that no particular subject-matter field had special powers to train the mind, as the nineteenth-century educators had believed" (Travers 1972, 480).

As the Critical Thinking Movement begins to spread in North America and Europe, "the root concept of the educated literate person as a critical thinker is not theoretically new but can be traced to the ancient Socratic model of the
learner as a systematic, probing questioner and dialectical reasoner striving to live a reflective and rational life" (Paul 1992, 33-34). The proposed curriculum in this thesis is one attempt to address these two issues: the necessity to re-design foreign language courses to better meet student needs and the desire to provide students with skills that can, indeed, transfer.

Critical thinking in this thesis includes creativity as an essential component, that is all conscious thought that is aimed towards a "product" (Amabile 1983, 31). It also includes the process of "...reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused upon deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis 1987, 10). Beliefs, decision-making and problem-solving are only a few examples of the applications of critical thought. Learning and the successful application and transfer of what we have learned require a great deal of critical thinking.

Whether the students need to study a foreign language to read and study foreign literatures, to communicate in other countries or to pursue research, they need to acquire fluency not only in the grammar and syntax of the language itself but also in the entire, dynamic network of advanced cognitive processes needed to decipher, analyze and apply communication skills.
The Transferability of Language.

...yet what study is there left, apart from the arts and physical training and the crafts?
Come, I said, if we can find nothing outside these, let us take something which bears upon them all.
What kind of thing?
For example, the common thing which is used by all crafts, all modes of thought, and all sciences, and which everybody of necessity must learn to begin with.
What is it?

The act of teaching is the struggle to answer these questions, especially when the subject is language. Because of its interdisciplinary, expressive nature, language "bears upon...all" (Plato 444-445E, 1974, 174) other learning. Teaching a foreign language successfully involves tapping into the whole system of skills and references that the students already possess. Ideally, learning a new language provides students with the opportunity to re-visit and explore their existing framework of knowledge and to discover new tools that can be applied to "all crafts, all modes of thought, and all sciences" (174). The concept of transferability of learning has always been the ultimate educational dream, shared by many throughout the centuries.

This thesis presents sample lessons and a rationale for a curriculum based on the desire to teach foreign languages in such a way that it will enhance the students' overall communication skills. The goal of the lessons outlined in Chapter V is to exploit the natural connections between language (in this case Italian) and critical thinking
skills. The continued practice of the exercises and activities included in the lessons is designed to train college students in intermediate language courses not only in linguistic proficiency, but also in becoming better learners and thinkers.

This curriculum would be beneficial for two reasons:

1. It would aid the acquisition of the target language, as well as improving "verbal" skills in general (in the students' own language, in reading and writing performance, etc.)

2. It would enrich the students' intellectual repertoire in both related and unrelated fields, because thinking skills are universal and can be applied to a variety of situations, including personal growth outside of academic development.

During the lessons, discussions and applications of the critical thinking philosophies, implications and techniques can take place in the target language, so the students would acquire and use a range of new vocabulary.

Though critical thinking skills are an integral part of language, their applications transcend it. Be it native or foreign, natural or artificial, language is, after all, the primary tool of human communication and self-expression, a necessity for survival, a prerequisite for understanding, organizing and mastering knowledge. The skills people rely on to learn, to understand and to use a language are the same ones that they need in other areas. Analyzing and processing information, the principles of logic, the ability
to discern facts from opinions, etc., are not only important in the humanities but also in other fields. Teaching critical thinking skills and promoting their transfer as an integral part of the core curriculum means providing the students with a context for what they are learning, plus skills that they can use and reuse in other courses and in their personal lives, whether they are writing a dissertation, analyzing a business case-study or designing a new bridge.

**Overview of the Chapters**

**Chapter II: Critical Thinking: A Description and Its Role in Education.**

Some of the major philosophies and theories of Critical thinking in education by Richard Paul (1992), Howard Gardner (1983), D. N. Perkins (1987) and Robert Ennis (1987) are described in Chapter II, as well as Teresa Amabile's (1983) study of creativity. Each of the critical thinking skills included in the lessons developed in chapter IV, are also discussed, along with the importance of metacognition and transfer.
Chapter III: Towards a Brain-Compatible Language Class.

Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell (1983), Lynn Dhority (1984), Georgi Lozanov (1980), Gertrude Moskowitz (1978), have developed effective teaching techniques and curricula for foreign language acquisition which are appropriate from the introductory level on. A summary of their theories and others is included in Chapter III, as well as Leslie Hart's (1983) model for a "Brain-compatible education" (xiv). All these theories have influenced the teaching philosophy and the curriculum presented in this thesis.

Chapter IV: Integrating Critical Thinking and Language Skills.

This chapter provides the background for creating lesson plans as part of this curriculum. It discusses the methods, content and rationale for the sample lessons presented in Chapter V.

Defining problems and finding solutions are at the core of critical thinking; the teacher's role in the lessons is to guide the students without directly instructing them. Taking an active part in understanding and finding an appropriate definition for the skills enables the students to learn how to apply them independently. Class activities can be inspired by materials such as movies, stories, newspapers, T.V. commercials and others traditionally used by language teachers.
Chapter V: Five Lesson Plans.

Each of the five lessons suggested in this chapter focuses on a specific critical thinking skill, namely, defining the structure of arguments, understanding analogies, comparing and contrasting, hidden assumptions and frame of reference. The lessons reflect the assumption that, because of the multi-dimensional nature of human thinking, each skill is connected to others. Though centered on one skill, the activities also touch upon others (for instance, a discussion of analogies would be incomplete without some examples of metaphors). The skills are defined, analyzed and applied by the students within the context of practical activities involving cultural and/or literary issues.

Chapter VI: Student and Curriculum Evaluation.

This chapter discusses four different types of assessment employed by foreign language departments to evaluate students' proficiency levels and progress and to test new and/or existing curricula of instruction. It also provides some evaluation tools and criteria to assess the degree of success of the lessons in Chapter V. They include suggestions for testing the students in both linguistic proficiency and in their overall application of the skills learned in class. The format of the oral and written tests is similar to the activities the students have experienced
in class and hence are familiar with; they also provide an opportunity to transfer the skill to a different context, ranging from watching T.V. critically to reading different types of texts. This chapter also suggests possibilities for testing the effectiveness of the curriculum presented in this thesis.

The Role of Foreign Language Instruction

The Decline of the Humanities.

In a fast-paced "age of technology," the rapid growth of computers, space shuttles and satellites has become the primary focus of our society. Along with such dizzying progress in human knowledge and possibilities in one domain, other fields seem to have been pushed aside. The steady decline of the Humanities in U. S. colleges and universities has been one of the educational trends of the 1980's (Cates and Melvin 1992).

As introduced earlier in this chapter, Foreign Language Departments have particularly felt this decline in recent years; between 1970 and 1984, the number of students majoring in a foreign language has decreased by 50% (Bennett 1984). It has become necessary for educators to justify the role of foreign language study as opposed to a progressively more universal Pascal or Cobol. Learning a new language seems to have become a luxury, a lovely but secondary
pursuit, almost a hobby comparable to gardening, ballroom
dancing or making sushi.

It seems paradoxical to accept that, in a shrinking
world that is fast becoming a "global village," (Rivers
1992, 1) by virtue of our growing communications technology
and of the falling of international barriers, learning
foreign languages should not be considered as necessary as
mastering computer skills, not simply for personal reasons,
but also for job-related concerns.

The Foreign Language Requirement.

But in spite of the decreasing importance our society
seems to place on a Liberal Arts Education and in spite of
the apparent waning of student interest, most U. S.
universities continue to maintain a foreign language
requirement as part of every undergraduate's General
Education curriculum. There have been endless debates over
the function and size of this requirement, which often
reflect "in a cyclical pattern, our alternating national
concern and indifference to the teaching and learning of
foreign languages" (Freed 1992, 41).

Because of the devalued perception of the humanities,
one of the implications of such a requirement is that many
students may feel forced to take four semesters of a foreign
language and therefore view it as another bureaucratic
obstacle necessary to get on with the courses they really
want to take; 60 to 80% of language students report that fulfilling the requirement is their only reason for being in the class (Rivers 1992). Of course, not everyone feels this way, but there is evidence to conclude that the majority of college students is questioning the language requirement (Rivers 1992) and awaits an answer which will make it relevant to their studies and their lives.

To a large extent, universities have adopted one of three categories of changes to respond to the decline of the humanities and to the students' need for a reform of language programs. Some institutions have reaffirmed their traditional curriculum of foreign languages and literatures in an attempt to strengthen it. Others have sought to offer new, interdisciplinary courses, study abroad programs, clubs and activities in collaboration with other departments. A third approach calls for a more revolutionary type of change in the philosophical make-up of the individual language departments by updating existing curricula of instruction. These three responses have been classified, respectively, as "defensive," (Cates and Melvin 1992, 325) "tactical," (326) and "strategic" (328). Unfortunately, these approaches have not generated a significant impact on the students; much remains to be addressed in the issues of methodology and content of foreign language courses in U. S. universities.
The Students.

Those who feel that by taking a language course they are merely fulfilling a university requirement are only one of four "special needs" groups of students. Apart from being individuals with different expectations and preferences, students of languages come from very different educational backgrounds. The second group, especially in introductory courses, includes freshmen and sophomores majoring in different disciplines or still undecided. There is also a third group composed of graduate students who need to pass their departmental proficiency exam (a reading knowledge of Italian is usually required in fields such as musicology and art history, among others). The last group is formed by undergraduates who wish to spend a year of study abroad (typically their junior year), who will need a practical knowledge of the language, both for daily survival and in order to function in a foreign university (Rivers 1992). In spite of the variety of interests and needs represented by each group, all language students share the desire for classes that will cater to their individual goals. They also need answers about the role of foreign language programs, in their educations and in their future profession.
Diversification of Language Courses.

One very recent response to renew student interest has been to plan custom-made courses that the students can select (or even help develop) after they have attained a level of basic proficiency in the new language. The intent of this "diversification at the intermediate level" (Rivers 1992, 10) is to appeal to each group of students by creating highly personalized courses that are interdisciplinary or content-based language classes (by including one of the Social Sciences or Linguistics, Literature, Translation, Creative Writing, Drama, Film, Music, Aesthetics, etc.). Also included in this approach are community-based language classes which would emphasize culture on a first-hand or vicarious experiences on the part of the students by drawing on the resources of the local community of immigrants (with visits, phone-calls, etc.). Other plans include courses focusing on selected cultural aspects such as politics, religion, television, ads and commercials (Rivers 1992).

Unfortunately, these and similar suggestions for renewing the strengths of foreign language departments only entail changes in the focus of the courses and though their aim is to promote authentic communication and interaction among the students, few have developed a concrete set of classroom procedures that truly eliminate artificial constraints.
In the great majority of language courses (be they content or language based), the primary means of instruction is a "grammar-centered" inculcation by repetition. In spite of theories suggesting that other methods may be more effective, most language teachers continue to favor the conscious application of grammatical rules. Drills and memorization of verb conjugation require a great deal of stoicism and self-discipline on the part of the students. Other methods have been shown to ease the process of reaching linguistic competence (as defined by Gardner 1983) through more natural techniques, inspired by the process of first language acquisition.

Integrating interactive materials (television, newspapers, ads, native speakers) and other disciplines in the foreign language curriculum (Rivers 1992) can provide the students with stimulating class activities. But the grammatical focus of most foreign language classes, which isolates the components of language areas by teaching only one at the time, would undermine any change in content. Too often and for too long, traditional "grammar-based approaches" (Krashen and Terrell 1983, 9) to foreign languages have been constructed around drills, translations, forced memorization of detached components and "based entirely on the manipulation of language elements as though that is all language learning consists of" (Rivers 1983, 57). In such an artificial, limiting conceptualization of the richness of language itself and of how students learn,
it is a small wonder that the foreign language requirement is now perceived as a chore.

The reasons for the popularity of this grammar-based approach are the lack of teacher training in cognitive processes (which would require extensive preparation) and the difficulties involved in testing and evaluating the knowledge of language as a whole. It seems easier to quantify the students' performance in terms of parts. The results are long hours of memorization of structures and conjugations that are difficult to retrieve and use, as the students' conscious attention is focused on acting as an editor or "monitor" (Krashen and Terrell 1983, 18) of the whole process. The educational goal of language teachers should not be transferring their abstract knowledge of linguistics and grammatical patterns, but to encourage the students to use the language to communicate as naturally as possible. Unfortunately, many foreign language teachers lack native fluency and tend to teach language the same way they have learned it, chapter by chapter, as any other academic subject.

Integration Instead of Separation.

Integrating other disciplines in the teaching of language (as Rivers suggests), as well as taking advantage of the students' diversity for their own enrichment (instead of isolating them according to their objectives and
interests) is an exciting option which should be carried out to its full potential. It would not only lead to performance, but also encourage "transfer" of knowledge, allowing the students to make real, personal connections between the language and other fields, instead of simply accepting imposed relationships such as Business German or French Politics.

The process of learning a language has to occur within a larger context; memorizing components is useless without internalizing how they fit in the whole system and being able to use them. Truly reaching linguistic proficiency...includes not only the learning of skills or the acquisition of knowledge. It refers also to learning to learn and learning to think; the modification of attitudes; the acquisition of interests, social values, or social roles; and even changes in personality." (Stern 1983, 18).

It is only by explicitly teaching towards all these goals at once that teachers can present language in its entirety; separating it from its closely interwoven network of meaning and thinking means teaching it out of context. The individual teachers are responsible for creating an environment that will provide all the components of language and involve the students in a meaningful process of learning.

The first step in a reform of the foreign language requirement is to create introductory courses where language is taught "naturally." A possible second step could be the
incorporation of critical thinking skills discussed in Chapter II to the curriculum of intermediate courses. These radical shifts in both content and teaching methods might lead to a change in the perception of language:

1. from a tedious process which might never fulfill its promise of proficiency, to a congenial opportunity for success in learning and using a language successfully.

2. from a somewhat rigid discipline--almost an end to itself--into an immediate set of "user-friendly" skills, necessary to the development (both intellectual and professional) of any human being.

Adopting a "brain-compatible" (Hart 1983, xiv) approach in teaching language as a whole, ideally from the very beginning and using the principles of first language acquisition, means creating a highly effective learning environment.

Critical Thinking Theories.

The theories presented in the next chapter provide a selective guide to the wide spectrum of critical thinking. Following the description of the wider implications of critical thinking in education is an overview of specific thinking skills which have been included in the sample lessons for this curriculum. The overview, as well as the more comprehensive lists in Appendices A and B, are offered as a guide for those who may wish to create lessons other than those suggested explicitly in Chapter V.
Overview

As discussed in Chapter I, the primary relationship between critical thinking and foreign language instruction in this thesis is the long-standing educational ideal that learning should affect the personal development of students and provide them with skills that are transferable to different disciplines and personal situations. Promoting such an ambitious process requires objectives that are as practical as they are inspirational. The successful integration of thinking in a language curriculum rests on creating activities that will motivate the students to define, modify and apply definite skills in different contexts.

Critical thinking has been approached in two ways in this thesis: as a philosophical, descriptive theory of human reason and as a pragmatic classification of skills and attributes. Theorists and educators from either background have proposed a series of programs to integrate critical thinking into many subjects of study and at various levels. The first section in this chapter summarizes the larger justification for critical thinking in foreign language instruction by:
suggesting some connections between language and thought.


2. defining the role of creative thinking according to Teresa Amabile's (1983) model;

3. explaining why critical thinking is best taught through content.

The second section addresses more specific definitions by:

1. outlining the larger categories for classifying critical thinking skills;

2. discussing the specific critical thinking skills chosen for this curriculum;

3. defining two additional skills (metacognition and transfer), which are relevant components of any critical thinking lesson;

4. introducing the elements for teaching a foreign language through critical thinking, which will be further developed in Chapter III.

The theoretical section is important as a guide for the larger context of this curriculum; the descriptions and definitions of specific skills are meant as references for the lesson plans in Chapter IV.

A Philosophy of Critical Thinking in Education

Thinking and Language.

There is an inherent relationship between language and critical thinking. Natural languages (which are multi- logical) are designed for "dialogical and dialectical reasoning" (Paul 1992, 535), the processes by which people
make decisions and reach conclusions. These types of reasoning or thinking, involve "dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view or frames of reference" (310). The process of human thinking requires a development of ideas; thinking critically sometimes requires a dialectic movement between different ideas towards conclusions (Paul 1992); language is the medium for both creating and evaluating ideas.

The very imperfections of language, which can make it vague and imprecise, are the same features that make it extremely well suited to express all the possibilities of human thinking. The real function of language is not to communicate facts and information unambiguously (only monologic, artificial languages are designed for that purpose); "natural languages are superbly good at what thought strives to achieve all the time: the creation of realities, full not of information but of the possibilities of experience" (Smith 1990, 110). The reality people create, the meanings they find in their human experience and the way they choose to think may well be dependent on the use(s) they make of language.

Since people regularly use language to communicate (however imperfectly), linguistic intelligence "is the most widely and most democratically shared across the human species" (Gardner 1983, 78). In order to exemplify the essence of linguistic competence, Gardner (1983) discusses the processes involved in writing poetry. Using language
requires the application of many complex skills; this applies to engaging in a conversation just as much as it does to writing a poem. Given the essentially synthetic linguistic powers that poets must develop, Gardner's observations on poetry are a valuable insight into the nature of the cognitive applications of language.

Linguistic competence requires the development of four areas of knowledge (Gardner 1983): "semantics" (76) (denotative and connotative meaning, implications), "phonology" (76) (sounds and music in words), "syntax" (76) (aspects of grammar or the structure of language) and "pragmatics" (76) (the uses and functions of language: persuasive, literary, technical, social, informative, etc.). Some of the applications of language are vital to education, especially since the primary vehicle for teaching and learning (including possible mnemonic features), is spoken and written language (Gardner 1983). Helping students understand the connections and rationale of effective thinking will ultimately enhance their ability to use language.

Different Types of Critical Thinking.

Critical thinking can be perceived "in the strong sense" (Paul 1992, 163), as a moral philosophy of intellectual virtues that guide the development of the ideal educated person through self knowledge and reason. While critical thinking in the "weak sense...[is]...understood as
a set of discrete micro-logical skills extrinsic to the character of the person, skills that can be tacked onto other learning" (162), critical thinking in the "'strong sense'...[is] understood as a set of integrated macro- logical skills and abilities intrinsic ultimately to the character of the person and to insight into one's own cognitive and affective processes" (163).

The short term goals of educational reform "for a free society" (Paul 1992, 162) should include the development of "micro-logical" (164) skills. The inclusion of these goals would be the first step towards the long-term objective of integrating "macro-logical" (165) thinking skills in educational curricula, which will directly affect the students' intellectual growth.

Paul differentiates between "uncritical," (47) "critical," (47) "sophistic," (47) and "fairminded" (47) critical thinking. The first is thinking which is "captive to one's ego, desires, social conditioning, prejudices, or irrational impressions;" (47) the second type of thinking actively employs "micro-logical" (164) skills as well as "the art of constructive skepticism" (47); "sophistic" (47) critical thinking is effective, but also restricted by "the vested interests of the thinker" (47) and could be alternatively defined as opportunistic or self-serving thinking; the last type, "fairminded" critical thinking reflects Paul's ideal, where thinking skills are applied in
conjunction with the intellectual virtues of empathy, integrity and humility.

**A Procedural Perspective.**

Robert Ennis (1987) believes critical thinking to be "reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (10). The central words or ideas Ennis puts forth are "practical, reflective, reasonable, belief and action" (10); the model includes "a set of critical thinking dispositions, three basic areas of critical thinking ability and one area of strategical and tactical ability in employing critical thinking" (11). Ennis' detailed taxonomy of critical thinking dispositions and abilities (included in Appendix B) is a very useful and comprehensive breakdown of different areas that can be included in content-based lesson plans.

The term itself, "critical thinking," might be preferable to informal logic because the former can be interpreted as either the name of a course or as its emphasis, while the latter "suggests that the content be offered in a separate course...rather than infused in other subject matter areas" (11).

**Effective Thinking as Intelligence.**

The ability to think and create successfully has also been called "intelligence," as in Howard Gardner's (1983) model of "multiple intelligences" (1). Gardner describes
seven different types of intelligences: linguistic (briefly discussed at the beginning of this chapter), scientific, musical, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial and intrapersonal); people possess all seven capacities to varying degrees, though usually one is more developed than the others. Each intelligence involves the development of skills and overall expertise in one area, though overlap is common (Gardner 1983).

D. N. Perkins (1987a) defines intelligence as "intellectual competence" (42), that is, whatever makes people more effective thinkers: academic skills, good practical everyday problem solving, good judgment in dealing with one's own affairs and conducting oneself with others, and so on" (42). This model is divided into three areas, defined as "power," "tactics," and "content" (43). The "power" aspect of thinking is the perception that "intelligence fundamentally is a matter of the precision and efficiency of the neurophysiological computer in our heads" (43) or the potential of our brain to acquire new skills. The brain's "tactics...[are]...the repertoire of strategies one can deploy for a given task" (43). These strategies can be taught and learned: "research has yielded ample evidence that careful instruction in well-chosen tactics can enhance performance considerably" (44). The "content" (44) factor of our intelligence is our knowledge not only of information but also of procedures, since "people need domain-specific ways of organizing perceptions and attacking problems" (44).
The Role of Creative Thinking.

In order to be creative, which has been defined as the ability to generate a "product" (Amabile 1983, 31), the person's motivation needs to be "internal" (14) and include "a reaction against time pressures; a deliberate rejection of society's demands; and a preference for internal control" (14), which are attributes that Paul also defines as components of intellectual independence. External rewards or recognition are only rarely conducive to creativity; Amabile's (1983) study on factors influencing the production of authors such as Plath, Sexton, Wolfe and Dostoyevsky led her to conclude that external influences are likely to produce inhibiting effects on creativity or productivity.

Although critical and creative thinking are often discussed and treated as opposites, they are inseparable: one cannot arrive at a decision or at a solution without having "created" a result. Originality and novelty are features usually associated with creative pursuits, though they are considered valuable in critical thinking as well.

Even those theorists who perceive two distinct poles in thinking would agree that "indeed, all thinking that is properly called 'excellent' combines these two dimensions in an intimate way" (Paul 1992, 17). Because of its multi-dimensional capabilities, "the brain is more like an artist than a machine. It constantly creates realities, actual and imaginary; it examines alternatives, spins stories and
thrives on experience" (Smith 1990, 12). By considering critical thinking as the process of figuring things out, then "there is a reciprocal logic to both intellectual creation and critical judgment, to the intellectual 'making' of things and the on-going 'critique' of that making" (Paul 1992, 19).

Amabile's (1983) concept of "intrinsic" (as opposed to "extrinsic") motivation is as "essential to creativity" (vii) as it is to critical thinking as a whole. It is especially important in the development of the "fairminded" (47) critical thinker in Paul's "strong sense," (163) where the ultimate objective of thinking is directed towards self-improvement (and not towards ego gratification). This type of motivation from within could be referred to as the creative impulse that makes it possible for people to accomplish any kind of thinking or action.

Just as there may be seven different types of intelligences (Gardner 1983), Amabile (1983) suggests that there may also be different kinds of creativity, four in all: musical, scientific, artistic and verbal (20). But while Amabile specifically focuses on the type of selective creativity that is associated with highly original and artistic pursuits, there is also a more ordinary creative process that goes on in any purposeful thinking, which could constitute a fifth kind of creativity: the use of the imagination.
People are capable of performing a variety of mental activities at once: "the brain can imagine, remember, comprehend, learn and think simultaneously" (Smith 1990, 53) without switching back and forth from one to the other. Thinking is really one multi-dimensional activity, "and the power behind that one activity must be imagination" (53). Perkins (1985) has even suggested that reasoning and the imagination may indeed be the same process. It is only through our imagination that we can make sense of our perceptions, fill in gaps, create the reality of our experiences and "impose meaningfulness" (Smith 1990, 47) to our thinking.

Teaching Critical Thinking through Content.

Knowledge of content cannot be simply acquired by way of detached facts or components; it is difficult for students to "receive knowledge disconnected from features that make it understandable and meaningful" (Perkins 1987b, 63). Without understanding their purpose and applications, concepts and facts are notions in search of a proper context, components waiting to be assembled. Teaching critical thinking through content can provide the students with "knowledge as design" (62) or learning made meaningful because it functions within a framework of which the students are aware.

Paul's (1992) suggestions for teaching critical thinking directly contrast the present pedagogical model or
the "Didactic theory of knowledge" (21). The nature of "Critical knowledge" (21) is that all "content is generated, organized, applied, analyzed, synthesized, and assessed by thinking; that gaining knowledge is unintelligible without engagement in such thinking" (21). In a series of charts, outlining the dichotomy between the two models, Paul suggests that in the "Critical" theory, students are shown "how" to think and not "what" to think (21). They run no danger of merely acquiring notions from their teacher, but they "puzzle their way through knowledge, and explore its justifications as part of the process of learning" (21). Leading the students to construct and control their own learning process may redefine traditional teacher and student roles; the students should be given "many opportunities to teach what they know, to formulate their understanding in different ways, and to respond to questions from others" (41).

Critical Thinking Skills

Elements of Thought, Dispositions and Abilities.

In spite of objections by some theorists that charts and lists run the danger of reducing the scope and breadth of critical thinking, a good taxonomy can be extremely useful in planning lessons. It only becomes narrow and limiting if it is accepted as a definitive, self-contained entity instead of a guide, a starting point for focusing the
lesson. There are always opportunities for overlap, further subdivisions and/or variations in each skill.

As part of Paul's (1992) definition of "thought which is conceptual and inferential" (28), as opposed to "thought which is purely associational and undisciplined" (28), he has constructed a "guiding logic" (28) or criteria to classify general areas within the realm of critical thinking. It is very important to keep in mind the conceptual framework behind each individual skill incorporated into a lesson in order to remain flexible.

Paul's (1992) eight "elements of thought" (28), included in Appendix A, constitute a list which is broader than a taxonomy and is therefore extremely helpful in determining the curricular objectives or the overall perspective of lesson plans. The individual elements should be taught implicitly, allowing the students to extract the skills or to "actively create" (29) them. The teacher should participate in the process without directly instructing the students.

Ennis' (1987) taxonomy of critical thinking "dispositions and abilities" (12-15), in Appendix B, is the most exhaustive and is specific enough to be effectively integrated in content-specific curriculum development. Ennis notes that all the abilities are "interdependent" (24) on each other and on the critical thinking dispositions. As complete as it may seem, this list is "only a first step in the development of a total curriculum" (25).
Paul's (1992) list of critical thinking dispositions, which he refers to as "Affective Strategies" (394) is similar to Ennis', though the emphasis is on intellectual virtues such as independence, intellectual humility and courage, integrity, perseverance and all the attributes of the "fairminded" (47) critical thinker. The classification of critical thinking abilities or "Cognitive Strategies," (394) is hierarchically subdivided in "Micro-Skills" (394) and "Macro-Abilities" (394); most are included in Ennis' taxonomy, under different labels.

Perkins (1987a) suggests teaching "tactics" (47) or "thinking frames--which are defined as a guide to organizing and supporting thought processes" (47) or as critical thinking skills. Learning tactics involves three steps:

1. acquiring an understanding of the process that is sufficient to apply it in basic situations;
2. automating the process with practice so that it becomes easier and easier to apply; and, finally,
3. transfer, when the skill can be applied to a variety of different contexts.

These steps are a useful structure to plan lessons based on a critical thinking skill; students will benefit from the opportunity to first become familiar with the skill, then to be able to apply it until they can automatically use it in different situations.
The Skills in this Curriculum.

Each of the sample lesson plans developed in chapter IV is designed to explore one specific critical thinking skill, chosen from the lists included in Appendices A and B. These lists are a guide for developing additional lessons: any of the skills offers a variety of opportunities for language activities. A more detailed discussion of the skills can be found in the "Teacher’s Background" section of each lesson plan in Chapter V.

The first lesson focuses on extracting the argument, which involves identifying two primary elements: premises and conclusions. The second lesson leads students to analyze analogies, by finding their structures and evaluating their effectiveness. The third lesson is based on comparing and contrasting, where the students examine similarities and differences and assess their relevance. The fourth lesson involves finding assumptions of different types, such as bias, stereotypes and generalizations; the students also need to consider issues of accuracy and justification. The skill in the last lesson is understanding frame of reference by becoming more sensitive to one’s own as well as other people’s point of view.

Metacognition and Transfer.

Two areas need to be further emphasized, as they constitute part of the rationale for integrating critical thinking in content-specific curricula. Metacognition and
subsequent transfer of abilities are the larger objectives behind the instruction of critical thinking skill development. While solving a problem, making a decision or implementing a course of action, students should acquire a consciousness of their own thinking process in order to perfect it and apply it to other situations.

Metacognition is the introspective monitoring of one's own mental processes by consciously following one's thinking as it unfolds or in retrospect. Metacognition helps students to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of their application of skills. By becoming more aware of the "inner dialogue" (Costa 1984, 57) that guides the generation and application of plans, students can evaluate and improve their own thinking processes. When they are encouraged to engage in metacognition, they begin to "question themselves about their own learning strategies...[and]...evaluate the efficiency of their own performance" (57). In many ways, metacogitating leads to learning how to learn, through "thinking about thinking" (Beyer 1990, 47).

Teaching metacognitive abilities is a deliberate attempt to "install intelligent behavior as a significant outcome of education" (Costa 1984, 58). "Much research indicates that metacognition, practiced as an integral part of thinking skills instruction, can have a dramatic impact on learning and using thinking skills" (Swartz and Perkins 1989, 83).
Paul (1992) also discusses the metacognitive process, which he has labeled "Socratic questioning" (360). Its ultimate function is to help students make their thinking explicit. "It is based on the idea that all thinking has a logic or structure, that any one statement only partially reveals the thinking underneath it, expressing no more than a tiny piece of the system of interconnected beliefs of which it is a part" (360). Through discussions among themselves and with the teacher, students must actively exercise their critical thinking apparatus as a whole. They have to "listen carefully to what others say, look for reasons and evidence, recognize and reflect upon assumptions, discover implications and consequences, seek examples, analogies and objections, discover, in short, what is really known and distinguish it from what is merely believed" (361).

Successful metacognition cannot be instructed directly (Costa 1984). In order for the metacognitive process to become spontaneous and automatic, the students need the opportunity to define their own objectives and to develop and evaluate their own techniques (Sternberg and Wagner 1982). Teachers can promote and enhance metacognitive activity in their students by discussing some general guidelines, as well as specific strategies for dealing with problems; through questions and discussions, the teacher can help the students identify, keep track of and evaluate their own thinking (Costa 1984). The self-monitoring process
implicit in metacognitive activity can also aid the teacher in following the students' progress, by providing clues on their cognitive path (Costa 1984) and by setting the stage for transfer.

Transfer is the last step in the acquisition of critical thinking skills. It requires students to have internalized the patterns involved in using that skill to the extent that its application becomes automatic and natural. Students can then learn to transfer other skills as well, whenever the context or situation warrants it.

Without some degree of metacognition, transfer of skills to other domains would be difficult. The students need enough cognitive distance from the issues in order to identify alternative uses for the skills. Teachers can promote transfer by providing "varied practice...[which is] reflective and deliberate" (Swartz and Perkins 1989, 85) and by offering multiple contexts in class activities for the application of the same skill(s). Instilling the ability to improve and transfer skills in the students is the last stage in skill acquisition.

Effective Foreign Language Instruction.

Including critical thinking in intermediate language course is an opportunity to allow the students to reach as high a level of proficiency as possible by exploring the most sophisticated uses of language as a representational, expressive medium. Understanding how learning takes place
and, more specifically, how people learn languages, is the first step in creating the most effective environment for language acquisition by the students.

By exploiting the available research on learning and recent discoveries in Cognitive Psychology (and related fields, such as Artificial Intelligence), language teachers can take advantage of the trends that are beginning to influence education at large (Hart 1983). The desire to incorporate the new understanding of how to best present information in foreign language teaching has inspired theories as well as debates on issues such as learning vs. acquiring (Lozanov 1980; Dhority 1984), the natural vs. the direct method (Krashen and Terrell 1983), the values of affective learning (Moskowitz 1978) and the need for real communication in the classroom. The emergence of a wealth of theories, especially in the past twenty years, reflects a strong need for change in the conceptual design, purpose and practice of foreign language teaching.

Some of the current theories for teaching foreign languages have begun to respond to the precarious status of "the foreign language requirement" in U. S. universities, which is the primary reflection of the students' changing needs and educational expectations (Rivers 1992), as discussed in Chapter I. The next chapter will discuss some of the most significant and ground-breaking foreign language teaching theories and what types of changes they propose to implement; the ultimate goal is to create a "brain
compatible education" (Hart 1983, xiv) and to explore further possibilities for its application to foreign language instruction.
CHAPTER III

TOWARDS A BRAIN-COMPATIBLE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS

Overview

This chapter proposes a model of foreign language instruction inspired by: Leslie Hart's (1983) suggestions for "brain-compatible" (xiv) education in any field; Stephen Krashen's (1982) theories of language acquisition; Stephen Krashen's and Tracy Terrell's (1983) "Natural Approach"; Georgi Lozanov's (1980) "suggestive" techniques for teaching foreign languages; Lynn Dhority's (1984) practical model for "Accelerative, Full-Spectrum Learning" (CH 4, 1); some aspects of Gertrude Moskowitz' (1978) affective theories and Eric Jensen's (1988) teaching strategies. These theories constitute new approaches to teaching foreign languages because they are based on first language-acquisition research and have been adapted to best suit the way students learn.

The foundations, assumptions and techniques in the theories presented here are often complementary: they share a great deal of respect for the students as human beings, an authentic appreciation for the possibilities and implications of language, as well as an understanding of effective teaching.
New Approaches

Language, like other domains, is subject to processing on the part of the brain before it can be deciphered and incorporated into a body of knowledge. Understanding how the brain acquires and processes information to create new skills is essential in finding the best way to present new material so that it will be received readily and as "naturally" as possible.

While presently most "teachers and administrators usually emerge from their preparation with little or no knowledge of the brain," (Hart 1983, 10) hopefully, in the near future "more resourceful, brain-based approaches" (Hart 1983, 11) will be introduced and successfully integrated in college courses (and schools in general). Hart's model includes general fundamentals of human learning, discussed below.

Hart's Programs and Patterns

There are two fundamentals to keep in mind about learning in general: the brain is an "amazingly subtle and sensitive pattern-detecting apparatus" (Hart 1983, 60) that functions in a multimodal (as opposed to linear) way and that human beings acquire and store a great repertoire of "programs" (80) that allow them to perform activities ranging from very simple (forming a word) to extremely
complex (playing a musical instrument). People are naturally inclined to "extract patterns" (65) from continued exposure to random stimuli or facts-- "input" (55) and, in turn, to create and implement successful how-to programs. In everyday life, people process an incredible amount of such input.

Driving to work every day is an example of what Hart defines as a "program" (80), involving many sets of behaviors and procedures or "subskills" (87) that need to be coordinated: finding the correct key, turning the car on (sometimes this step requires additional subskills), selecting the correct gear, steering, judging distance, paying attention to signals lights and pedestrians, braking, turning, signaling, speeding up, slowing down, following the correct route and many others. Hart describes learning as the acquisition of new and "useful programs" (86).

In terms of language learning, a "program" might be described in terms of finding the appropriate word to name an object, forming a sentence, engaging in a conversation, writing a paragraph, answering a question or reading a page. The production of language "requires a tremendous number of programs" (93) because it involves the physical utterance as well as "the programming of an idea, itself containing no intrinsic temporal order, into a sequence of linguistic units, which are also intrinsically unordered" (Krashen 1977, 151).
Input

While in daily life, "input" (Hart 1983, 55) is comprised of a continuous flow of multiple stimuli that come from the environment, in a foreign language class the variety and amount of input (or exposure to the language) is artificially controlled by the teacher. In order to ensure effectiveness we need to provide comprehensible, sufficient and relevant (Krashen 1981) input. The students must be able to understand the meaning of the input (the stress here is on deciphering meaning, which may not necessarily involve decoding every single word) and be motivated to do so by the fact that the communicative task is interesting or relevant to them. The level of input should be "i + 1" (Krashen 1981, 100) or slightly above the students' level of comprehension ("i" stands for input). This allows students to understand, but also provides enough additional input so that the brain remains involved and continues to acquire new information. Though artificially controlled by the teacher, the concept of "i + 1" is very similarly to the type of input people process regularly in daily life.

The teacher's goal should be to create such an environment where the students do not consciously realize that they are acquiring, because their attention is focused on the content, not the structure of the input (Krashen 1982). This method will also aid recall of the material learned (Krashen 1982).
The human brain functions by "going down many paths" (Hart 1983, 52). The best way for students to acquire new programs and knowledge is to receive new material in all its complexity, avoiding oversimplification. Teaching individual aspects without allowing the students to envision the whole concept of how language functions would be similar to showing parts of a T.V. set to a child and expecting that "he would then be able to assemble the receiver and also grasp how the interrelated, interdependent components work as a system" (53). Similarly, attempting to absorb a new language one "piece" at a time is as ineffective (and dangerous!) as driving by only implementing one subskill at the time, without co-ordination with the others.

The best way to introduce new material is in a "relaxed, global, and multi-modal" (Dhoriy 1984, CH9, 1) way, to intrigue the students into "extracting" the message. The new input is decoded in terms of the students' "knowledge of the world and extra-linguistic information" (Krashen 1981, 100) or in terms of its representational meaning. Dhoriy (1984) refers to the "multi-modal" (CH4, 1) possibilities of our brain when he states that "we all have extraordinary, unused potential, which can be tapped" (CH4, 1) and suggests that "high quality, high volume input is the raw material on which the brain thrives" (CH1, 4).

By using onomatopoeias and words that appeal to the senses (CH6, 2), teachers can create highly representational and meaningful input that involves the "multi-modal" (CH4,
1) channels of the brain, since "when we represent our experience internally, we do it in visual, auditory, kinesthetic, gustatory and olfactory" (CH6, 3) ways. In his Total Physical response theory, Asher (1982) also suggests a variety of kinesthetic activities to promote multi-modal comprehension of input. There is evidence that this kind of sensory association may also encourage later recall, as "when information first enters the human system, it is registered in sensory memory" (Anderson 1990, 47).

**The Whole Brain**

A large component of the continuous, multi-modal process of learning is non-conscious; it is the same creative apparatus which allows our brain to produce solutions or to transfer a program and obtain new ideas, insights and discoveries unexpectedly, in our sleep or while performing unrelated tasks (Hart 1983). In order to fully perceive and process input people need the resources of their "whole brain...[since] external stimuli are far too complex to manage or hold with only the mechanisms of our conscious attention" (Dhority 1984, CH2, 3).

Neurological research done by various scientists dating back to the XIX century suggests that there is a closely integrated relationship between the left and right hemispheres, though each performs different functions.

Simplistically, the processes in the left side of the brain (usually where language and reasoning skills are
stored) are "somewhat analogous to the way words are arranged on a page... that is, ... sequential, linear, and analytic" (Loviglio 1980, 9); the right side perceives and organizes information in a more holistic, "informal" manner and is where visual, "spatial perception and orientation, musical perception, non-verbal communication and intuition" (Dhority 1984, CH1, 7) occur.

Consistent with the principle of multi-modal input as a key to unlock potential student resources, classroom activities should be planned to appeal to both hemispheres and to create a "unity of the conscious and the paraconscious... brain activity" (Lozanov 1980, 258), by combining different elements. For example, writing a jingle on existing or original music, requires musical, rhythmical synthesis along with linguistic processes. The affective and mnemonic powers of music are, indeed, astonishing and powerful tools for language learning (Gardner, 1975, found that patients whose aphasia had rendered them unable to speak or remember words, could still sing the entire lyrics to songs).

Using the students' imagination in class activities is what Lozanov describes as "liberating-stimulating didactic art" (1980, 262) because it engages the students' creative and aesthetic self. These activities can involve role-playing, drawing, the participation of a puppet, various games, songs and the use of physical objects (Asher, 1982, has further developed the role of kinesthetic mediums).
Dhority (1984) has implemented and modified many Lozanov-inspired techniques, especially those which involve the students' imagination. Since "the mind creates its own 'reality' on the basis of what it imagines to be true" (CH4, 1), through positive suggestion the teacher can help the students exploit their whole brain. Playful skits with costumes, card games, interventions by "Fritz" (Dhority 1992, 107) the puppet, the use of music, "fantasies and relaxations" (94) guided by the teacher, songs and folk dances, empowering stories and a special text, are all highly effective learning opportunities. The students are playing and enjoying their interaction with the language: they almost forget they are learning and never find themselves forced to memorize or "study" grammatical structures.

Communication and Feedback

Communication is the most appropriate format for language acquisition to take place. It provides a continuous input/output process similar to first language acquisition. Each class should be based on a real, meaningful exchange: the activities should involve the students to such an extent that they will want to participate and not feel that they are compelled to perform an exercise.
The other essential function of communication in the classroom is to fulfill the students' need for "feedback" (Hart 1983, 74), throughout the learning process, since they have to find out whether their program or pattern is working successfully. Hart suggests that teachers' right/wrong feedback is not as effective as the kind the students can obtain through experimenting with the degree of success they encounter while communicating. For example, asking a question in the target language and being understood by the class, is tangible proof that the structure of the question was comprehensible (the "program" was executed successfully); praise from the teacher for formulating a sentence correctly is not quite as effective. Since programs are acquired and perfected through trial and error, feedback allows for self-correction to occur as part of natural process.

The teacher should not "force the students to speak before they are ready and will be tolerant of errors in early speech" (Krashen 1985, 61); the students "should never be made to feel embarrassed by the mistakes they make" (Lozanov 1980, 273). Correction of mistakes can be substituted by creating a situation "in which the same words or phrases or similar ones are used by other students or by the teachers themselves" (273).
Stages of Language Acquisition

The brain needs to "extract" the logic behind the framework and to understand how components fit within the whole. This process occurs "in a dominantly random fashion" (Hart 1983, 54) as people "detect and recognize characteristics and features and also relationships among these features" (63). Trying to impose a ready-made logic in the presentation of class material is ineffective, as its linear, sequential structure does not match the multi-modal, subjective features of human intelligence. The only compatible logic for the brain is one of its own design, which it constructs along the path to learning and cannot be implanted even with the best of the teacher's intentions (Hart 1983). Teachers can only facilitate a natural process to occur.

The most obvious implication of these fundamentals is the advantage of natural language acquisition as opposed to learning grammatical components. When people consciously learn a language, they focus on studying and applying the rules of morphology and syntax in a sequential manner. While acquiring a language, the learners' attention is focused on "what is being said, not how it is being said" (Krashen and Terrell 1983, 19). This focus on meaning is important when the goal of the class is to incite authentic communication.
It is important to note that in the acquisition model introduced by Krashen, learning occurs in three stages, which are similar to the pattern of first language acquisition, but not exactly the same (Krashen 1977). Following the input (1), there is an incubation stage (2) that precedes production, a "silent period" (Krashen and Terrell 1983, 20) of varying length, after which fluency begins to develop (3) while the brain sorts out the patterns. Dhority (1984) describes this stage as "active silence," (CH7, 11) because even though the students are mostly not speaking, they are showing their comprehension and involvement with the material through non-verbal means. This process is similar to the way young children extract the rules of speech in their native language. For example, in English, adding "ed" to change a verb from the present to the past tense or adding an "s" for plurals. Children extract these rules from their environment, from what they hear and apply them consistently, following the program they have developed even when there may be an exception, as in "he hitted me" (Hart 1983, 66).

Another similarity between first and second language acquisition is that "comprehension precedes production" (Krashen and Terrell 1983, 20). Comprehension can be defined in terms of three processes: perceiving the words formed by the sounds, understanding the meaning of the words and using the words according to a subjective interpretation (Anderson 1991). Production is characterized by
progressively more complex forms of communication, which are:

1. response by non-verbal communication,
2. response with a single word: yes, no, there, O.K., me, house, run, come, on, etc.,
3. combinations of two or three words: paper on table, me no go, where book, don't go, etc.,
4. phrases: I want to stay, where are you going? The boy running, etc.,
5. sentences and, finally,
6. more complex discourse.

(Krashen and Terrell 1983, 20)

In his model, Dhority (1984) also allows for the natural learning process to occur by planning his course in three phases: the first involves "the presentation of material: relaxed, global, and multi-modal" (CH9, 1). The second stage is "the activation phase: retrieving and using what is learned" (CH10, 1) and the third is designed as an opportunity for the students to experiment with their acquired patterns. Hart's (1983) "input" (55), "pattern extraction" (65) and "feedback" (74) stages corroborate Dhority's (1984) principles.

Cognitive psychologists describe this process as the development of competence or expertise and also summarize it in three stages: 1. the cognitive stage, learning about the procedure; 2. the associative stage or developing a method for performing the skill; and the 3. autonomous stage, where
the implementation of the skill is perfected and becomes faster and automatic (Anderson 1990).

**The Affective Environment**

Emotions are an important part of the whole brain, as they can determine the degree of receptiveness to learning. If we sense any kind of danger or threat, our brain can "downshift" (Hart 1983, 108) to a more primitive, survival mode, which precludes other cognitive processes. Apart from the obvious advantages of creating a warm class atmosphere, most theorists agree on the basic principle that "relaxed and self-confident students learn faster" (Dulay et al. 1982, 262).

It has been suggested that the ideal learning environment promotes communication through stimulation of the students' natural desire to express themselves. Teachers cannot force input in the students' minds (Hart 1983); they can only create an atmosphere where the "absence of threat" (Hart 1983, 109) encourages meaningful exchange and discussion. Krashen and Terrell (1983) refer to this emotive condition as lowering "the affective filter" (19) of the students; and Lozanov (1980) calls it promoting "...joy, absence of tension and concentrative psychorelaxation" (258), in an atmosphere which "produces a sense of relaxation or, at least, no fatigue" (257).

The students' affective comfort needs to be taken into account as emotions are one of the most important channels
to tap unused brain resources (Lozanov 1980). Student response should be respected and encouraged as part of the nurturing environment that will foster acquisition. Through personalized attention, pleasant voice intonation and by acknowledging students in a "relaxed, accepting way" (Dhority 1984, CH5, 3) the teacher can begin establishing comfortable rapport and begin building "mutual respect" (CH4, 9).

Moskowitz (1978) has centered her humanistic theories for teaching Foreign Languages, on the students' very real need for reassurance. She proposes to teach the whole brain by combining techniques that involve both the intellectual and affective realm. The humanistic teacher perceives her/his role as a facilitator for the students' self-actualization (Maslow 1970) or fully functioning self (Rogers 1961).

Of course, a class alone is not enough to cater to all of a person's affective needs, but the necessary conditions have to be established to create an environment where it is safe to express oneself. Sometimes such an environment can guide students to a greater degree of self-awareness and self-esteem or even produce therapeutic results (Lozanov 1980).

The key to a successful humanistic classroom is the creation of a very strong rapport between teacher and students and among the students themselves, in "a climate of acceptance" (Moskowitz 1978, 24) and trust. Feelings of
self-worth and success are nurtured and the focus of the activities is always "positive" (25), as students are encouraged to share values, memories, dreams and creative ideas with each other. The results range from collages, to group projects, sculptures and short songs.

In his model, Dhority (1984) also describes teaching techniques which are designed to be "a relaxed, non-stressful experience... playful, imaginative and enjoyable" (CH4, 1) through the use of humor, positive suggestion, metaphors, visualization and centering exercises and other "rapport-building techniques" (Dhority 1992, 51).

The focus of classroom communication is "on topics which are interesting and relevant to the students and encourage them to express their ideas, opinions, desires, emotions and feelings" (Krashen and Terrell 1983, 21). The teacher is the main orchestrator in creating a "low anxiety level, good rapport..., (and a) friendly relationship.... Such an atmosphere is not a luxury but a necessity" (21).

The Physical Environment

The students experience the room where the class takes place as part of the total input. The importance of the setting is "as much psychological as it is physiological" (Dhority 1992, 44). Apart from its potential to establish (or destroy) a positive affective influence, the room can be used to showcase and review material. Dhority (1984) suggests that it should be decorated and arranged so that it
becomes "strikingly pleasant place to enter" (CH7, 3), as opposed to "just" another classroom. The addition of colorful tablecloths and other fabrics, plants, carpets and even a hot water dispenser so the students can prepare drinks during the break (CH7, 3). Everything is arranged in an orderly, neat way; entering students may be greeted by background music, as they are invited to "new, fresh possibilities" (CH7, 3).

Other important components of an ideal room include a comfortable temperature (between 68 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit), an open space (or at least an illusion of openness), cleanliness and order, which will all contribute to a feeling of safety and comfort (Jensen 1988).

The seats should be comfortable and allow for "flexibility of student grouping" (Hart 1983, 140), usually arranged in a semi-circular position that is more comfortable and conducive to communication and interaction. Flexibility is also significant in the students' experience of the classroom environment; changing their position in relation to the room and to each other will greatly affect their overall perception (Dhority 1984, CH7, 4).

Posters with pictures and words, names, verbs, etc., are strategically positioned for the students to acquire subconsciously, as Lozanov's (1980) extensive research on peripheral visual stimuli has documented. Moskowitz (1978) encourages the use of posters which convey empowering, humanistic messages designed to positively affect the
students' expectations of themselves. Instead of the traditional blackboard, "easel pads with colorful markers" (Dhority 1983, CH8, 1) can provide more engaging input and longer lasting recall. The position of these visuals affects how they are perceived: if they are at eye level they will have an auditory impact; if higher than eye level they will elicit a visual mode; lower posters will trigger a kinesthetic mode (Jensen 1988).

Adopting these new, revolutionary approaches to teaching foreign languages is the first step in the implementation of this curriculum. The next chapter will present ways of integrating thinking and language skills in lesson plans.
CHAPTER IV

INTEGRATING CRITICAL THINKING AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

Overview

The discussion in this chapter focuses on how to integrate the critical thinking theories and the models for foreign language instruction presented earlier into practical lessons for the curriculum proposed in this thesis. This chapter also provides a summary of methods and content of the five sample lessons in Chapter V.

Critical Thinking Skills to Enhance Communication

Perfecting Language Production.

Real, authentic communication is a process of defining and transmitting meaning. Everyday exchanges between people may not reach the level of sophistication of poetry in communicating different levels of experience, but they do require a synthetic, multi-dimensional use of language (Gardner 1983). Encouraging true linguistic proficiency entails providing the students with the tools necessary to understand, define and use language critically. The communicator needs to assess the context and implications of the subject matter as well as the more strictly linguistic features of language use (e.g. syntax).
The conditions and methods described in this chapter are necessary in all levels of language acquisition. When the students have reached the point of strong comprehension and their overall knowledge of the target language allows them to engage in conversations about a variety of topics, there needs to be a shift in the content of the language course (Rivers 1992).

Being introduced to the language involves language-based class activities, but perfecting the production process (Krashen and Terrell 1983) and reaching the autonomous stage (Anderson 1990) requires an understanding of the different uses and shades of meaning that language affords.

Students at the intermediate level need new class activities that provide them with the opportunity to discuss complex ideas for further communication and feedback, maintaining the level of input at "i + 1" (Krashen 1981, 100). The focus of the activities must remain on communicating meaning, not grammar, though some general rules might be introduced if requested by the students (Krashen and Terrell 1983, 47). Focusing on critical thinking skills and techniques will engage the students in a deeper understanding of the uses of language and therefore strengthen their competence in using it.
Encouraging Proficiency.

The acquisition of critical thinking skills is the key to understand the different functions and levels of language. For instance, by analyzing an analogy, students need to pay close attention to figurative and emotive language; unlike the introductory input stage, where such language is a tool used mostly by the teacher to evoke suggestions and associations (appealing to the subconscious and feelings), at this stage the students can use, analyze and assess it themselves, as it becomes a source for output and feedback.

In the five lessons presented in the next chapter, students will have the opportunity to learn the dynamics and applications of select critical thinking skills. This process will enable them to better appreciate nuances and implications, inferences and other levels of language production. Paying such close attention to meaning is an extremely sophisticated process, even in one's own language. The students will also follow their own learning progress through metacognitive and transfer activities, which "can have a dramatic impact on learning" (Costa 1984, 58).

While applying thinking skills to a poem, a movie, a T.V. commercial or to their own skits, students can actively work towards perfecting the new language. New sentence structures, linguistic variations and configurations can be easily acquired and implemented, almost as a by-product,
because the students are dealing with semantics and content, not grammar. They are involved in creating and applying meaning in its most complex forms.

Rationale

A Model of Critical Thinking.

The primary goal of the following lessons is to enhance linguistic proficiency through the application of selective critical thinking skills. The interdisciplinary nature of each critical thinking skill offers endless possibilities for language activities in different contexts and by using different types of materials. The first three lessons in this unit are based on a literary theme, using poetry, though each could easily be adapted to include materials from many different fields. In fact, to enhance the potential applications of the skills, each lesson has been extended to include activities based on different types of audio-visual materials in the transfer section. The class activities for the last two lessons focus on generalizations and frame of reference and could also be adapted to work within many contexts.

The students should always be encouraged to personalize their own activities, especially when they sense the opportunity to contribute their own interests and fields of specialization to the class. Whenever possible, the lessons allow for different modes of expression, by offering the
opportunity to speak, as well as write, draw, build, compose, etc. Since verbal communication is the focus of the class activities their primary format is discussion and involves both group and individual participation. Writing takes place on an individual basis.

The introduction of the lessons and the beginning of the critical thinking process involve the sorting of components in order to analyze them. Recognizing and identifying the issue is the first step (Ennis 1987) in the process of analyzing, evaluating, making judgments and finding solutions to problems or answers to questions. The beginning of each lesson for the students involves defining the elements of the thinking process that they are about to explore.

This first step could also be perceived as setting the groundwork for further thinking. In the beginning, the students need to clarify what they are dealing with, to define the terms and components of the problem (or statement, idea, issue, situation, etc.) before them. They also need to establish their goal (or goals) for the task. It seems that the most direct way for the students to approach the definition of a problem is by formulating as many questions as possible about it (Paul 1992). If the issue at hand is a statement or a claim, the students need to clearly establish its premise(s) and conclusion(s). They can then move on to verify its validity.
Thinking critically involves a series of decisions (or conclusions) based on clarification, first in terms of basic definitions, classification, etc. and then followed by more complex ones (which involve more analysis, decision-making and/or a deeper contextual understanding). Each of the skills is, indeed, interdisciplinary and lends itself to a variety of opportunities for metacognition and transfer, necessary activities for the critical thinker, as they allow learners to distance themselves from the immediate task and to check their methods and results. Metacognition provides the type of feedback that students need to perfect their mental programs (Hart 1983).

Attempting to include the teaching of thinking skills in the very beginning stages of language learning could be counter-productive, as it may slow-down the students' progress instead of enhancing it. Hopefully, this view will soon be challenged, as new teaching philosophies and technologies are created. But for the time being, very little exists in the form of publications for the development of students' critical thinking in introductory language classes.

This curriculum is designed for intermediate students. During the sample lessons presented in this chapter, class discussions and student evaluation of the critical thinking philosophies, applications and techniques, can take place in the target language, so the students would acquire and use a range of new "thinking" vocabulary.
The sample lesson plans in the next chapter have been based on the assumption that the students have already acquired a degree of confidence in using the language. Ideally, they have been attending a language course with a teacher who adopts the philosophies and techniques described in Chapter III. Otherwise, they need to be familiar with specific areas of grammar, as are usually covered in two semesters of introductory Italian. They are familiar with a textbook such as Prego! An Introduction to Italian (Lazzarino 1990) and are comfortable reading adapted texts, such as stories in the Easy Reader series (Odland 1974) or Favole al telefono (Rodari 1971); they have been exposed to listening comprehension activities (other than listening to the teacher) such as lab sessions, films, songs, the news, etc., though they do not necessarily understand every word; the students have worked individually and in groups on writing assignments such as short compositions (about two to three pages), skits (five to ten minutes) and on oral presentations; they are able to participate in a conversation on a variety of topics. These are only general assumptions: there are many different levels of proficiency even in students who have been exposed to the same material by the same teacher in the same class.

The sample lessons are designed to enhance both linguistic competence and critical thought. Their immediate goal is to encourage the development of specific skills, but their long-term goal is to create a framework for the
students' growth as critical thinkers "in the strong sense" (Paul 1992, 163) or towards becoming more competent and confident people. After all, critical thinking is not simply a taxonomy of skills, but an educational ideal. The class discussions, therefore, focus on both practical applications of the skills and on their wider implications.

The length of each lesson will vary depending on how often and for how long the class meets. Another variable is the amount of work that the teacher might want to assign as homework instead of a class activity. This is an option every time the lesson includes an assignment sheet or a list of questions. An approximate time frame is included in each lesson, though it can be expanded with further practice or transfer activities, depending on student response.

Content.

The content of the first three lesson plans is mostly designed to promote a thorough analysis of a poem, from different perspectives (and by applying different skills). The activities could be used for any type of analysis (short stories, novels, essays, articles, TV shows, movies, legal events, political tactics, etc.), since they really focus on linguistic meaning, as well as visual thinking and abstract concepts. Lessons IV and V involve watching television commercials and preparing group skits, while evaluating the structure and impact of generalizations and the analysis of frame of reference.
While the last two lessons are not meant to work as a series (though they could), it may be appropriate to introduce the first three lessons in order, since they require an increasingly complex relationship with the text: the first activity (identifying arguments) focuses on basic reading comprehension and on determining how sentences form the structure of the poem; the second one explores a more complex feature of the poem—its analogies; the third lesson plan (comparing and contrasting two poems) involves an understanding of many different types of evaluations or assessments (analogies, types of language, etc.) and how they apply to different texts.

In order to make the activities as engaging as possible, the teacher should take advantage of any hobbies or sports that the students are already involved with and enjoy. Current events, holidays, school gossip, personal concerns can be very powerful motivators for an activity and should be used whenever possible as an introduction, a topic for discussions and papers or even as a workshop.

**Methods.**

Class discussion and presentation of new material should be conducted, as much as possible, in a format that will encourage all students to participate. Different classes may require different approaches; a group of students may be more interested in one skill or certain
types of applications and each lesson plan will vary according to student response.

Stressing the importance of the process, instead of the result, encourages the students to be involved actively in guessing or evaluating and reduces the anxiety of speaking out. Dividing the class into groups is often an effective way to lower the students' "affective filter" (Krashen and Terrell 1983, 19). Being part of a group also reduces some of the common classroom pressures. The classroom atmosphere should always be pleasant and relaxed (Dhority 1983). The activities should always provide the opportunity for building a stronger rapport with and among students (Moskowitz 1978).

All the activities involve a creative component, because the students are often asked to apply the skill in creating a new "product" (Amabile 1983, 31), such as a poem or an analogy. The personal involvement required by the creation of a skit or a jingle, is an active process which can be more effective than (and makes one more sensitive to) simply analyzing an existing example, because the students need to use their senses as well as their emotions.

In each lesson plan there is an initial motivator to engage the students' interest right at the beginning of the class and to provide a way to introduce the skill as a problem to be solved. The students themselves need to create the definition and structure of the skill; the teacher can offer suggestions and ask focusing questions,
but it should be up to the students to "extract patterns" (Hart 1983, 65) that are most effective for them. Defining the problem is an integral part of the critical thinking process and the skills should be extracted by the students themselves. The model applications for the skills in these lessons are meant to serve as a reference point for the teacher and not to represent a definitive structure of the skill to be explicitly presented to the students.

The lesson plans are fairly flexible: the class will go where the activity leads. They can be used right at the beginning of the semester, especially because they follow a new format that the students will need to adjust to. The metacognition and transfer sections can be used as homework assignments or as a continuation of the classroom activity. The lesson could take a few hours or a few weeks, depending on student interest, time available, etc.

Each lesson includes with suggestions in seven areas: teacher's background, a model application of the skill, a motivator to engage the students, an introduction, a thinking activity, questions to encourage metacognition and ideas for further activities and assignments to promote transfer. All class interactions take place in the new language, including definitions of new vocabulary; the students' native language should only be used as a last resort to insure clarity and in the interest of time. The students need to feel free to ask for explanations at any time, but they should also be encouraged to do so in the new
language. Just as the class activities revolve around applying the same skill on several types of media, the evaluation stage (discussed in Chapter VI) also requires transferring the skill to a different context. The evaluations follow a format similar to the one used in class.

The lesson plans presented in the next chapter are perhaps the most direct way to express the integration of critical thinking and language in this curriculum. They are only samples, as the variety of possible combinations for activities based on both critical thinking and language skills are limited only by time restrictions.
Lesson Plan I: Identifying the Argument in a Poem

Teacher's Background.

This lesson plan reinforces the basis for reading comprehension, which involves some of the skills Ennis (1987) groups under the category of "elementary clarification" (12). Given the often complex structure of poems, it seems useful to start their analysis by finding their structure and to establish the links between the ideas at work. The skill to develop is finding the premise(s) and the conclusion(s). Depending on the familiarity of students with poetry, the length and complexity of the poem selected and the how far the students wish to continue analyzing it, this activity can range from a few hours to much more. A possible poem to use could be Umberto Saba's "Trieste," about the poet's hometown and childhood memories, included in Appendix C. The lessons will be most effective if the teacher is presents a favorite poem.

Indirectly, this activity also involves uncovering implications, assumptions, ambiguities, implications, equivocations, generalizations, etc., in short, everything that contributes to meaning. The students have to take into account many rhetorical devices, as well as indirect modes
of expression. Poems can provide examples of multi-dimensional, complex uses of language that demonstrate one of the levels of linguistic competence (Gardner 1983).

**A Model for the Application of the Skill.**

1. Establishing the conclusion(s) in order to know what sort of premise to look for.

2. Identifying the premise(s):
   
   a. Establishing the sequence of the sentences (sometimes poetic license changes the standard sentence structure; this could be done at the very beginning, as step #1);
   
   b. Establishing the link between sentences (are sentence #1 and #2 two separate premises or is one a development of the other?).

3. Evaluation:
   
   a. How are the ideas developed?
   
   b. Is the conclusion a result of all the ideas at work?
   
   c. What other relationships are there?
   
   d. What are the implications of this argument?

**Motivator.**

As a motivator, the teacher could use a funny or very intriguing poem, either on a poster or on the blackboard, preferably using markers or chalk in different colors (Dhority 1984); the position of the poem (e.g. slightly higher than eye level) will affect its perception by the students (Jensen 1988). The teacher could also say that poems are puzzles and that the students are going to find
out how to solve them. (If there is enough time, a song may be used instead of a poem; the class could then begin by learning and singing the song, which is always a pleasant and powerful motivator.)

Introduction.

In order to introduce the skill, the class should begin discussing a working definition (written and revised on the blackboard) of premises and conclusions for the purposes of the class, since the structure of a poetic argument is not as linear as it may be in logic (premises: propositions, ideas or statements whose logical sequence leads to a conclusion; conclusion: a result or synthesis of its premises). The class can use the poem on the board to illustrate the points, as well as other examples.

The teacher may want to tell the students that by searching for premises and conclusions they are exploring how the poet conveys his/her view. Much like a chemist, the class is going to find the basic elements that compose the whole and then see how they interact.

Thinking Activity to Involve the Students.

The students would then be asked to write a short poem with two premises and a conclusion (not necessarily in that order), perhaps as a homework assignment for the next day. The class can then read some samples out loud and identify
the parts. Examples from other poems can also be used to further model the structure of a poetic argument.

Metacognition.

To promote metacognitive reflection the teacher can ask some of the following questions:

1. Can you describe the process of writing a poem? How did you do it?
2. What skills did you use (memory, observations, humor)?
3. How would you differentiate a poetic premise from a scientific hypothesis?
4. What other types of premises can you think of?
5. What about conclusions?
6. What prerequisites are involved in establishing that something is a premise? A conclusion?
7. How could you improve your "detective" self?
8. Draw a graph of your thinking process during our activity.

(These metacognitive questions could be used as a written homework assignment due the following day).

Transfer.

The students can begin to identify premises and conclusions from other poems and different types of texts, such as newspaper articles, syllogisms, etc. To promote transfer of the skill, further class activities can take place using different types of materials or media; individual assignments can be suggested as homework and then discussed in class in the form of presentations. The
students should be encouraged to find other applications for the skill, especially in their own lives. The test (in Chapter V, for this lesson and the following ones, provides activities and questions that require using the skill in a new context).
Lesson Plan II: Evaluating Analogies from Different Texts

Teacher's Background.

This lesson plan is designed to help students analyze and evaluate analogies by understanding both the components and the dynamics involved. Students have to break down an analogy into its claims and assumptions as well as assessing vividness and emotional strength in order to evaluate its effectiveness in a literary context.

The activity also implicitly involves an additional skill that is always at work in literary analysis: distinguishing literal from figurative language. Depending on the number of analogies and transfer activities to be done in class (as opposed to homework), this lesson could span over the course of three or four one-hour sessions.

A Model for the Application of the Skill.

1. Identifying the components of the analogy.
2. Composing a diagram for the analogy (based on A/B = C/D).
3. Preparing lists of similarities and differences.
4. Comparing and contrasting the lists.
5. Evaluating how effective/persuasive the analogy is.

Motivator.

As a motivator, the teacher could refer back to the poem discussed on the previous day and ask a question based on one of its analogies (e.g. "how is the poet like the
city?"). In order to arouse the students' curiosity the teacher could also tell them that even though the poem is short and the class has already discussed it, there are still many puzzles in it left to be solved.

**Introduction.**

The teacher may encourage the students to look at a particular analogy in the poem and then to try to come up with a working definition together. Once the class has reached a consensus regarding the definition, the students can begin to discuss how analogies work, using the specific example as a model.

**Thinking Activity to Involve the Students.**

As a starter activity to further motivate and involve the students, the teacher may want to encourage them to come up with their own analogy for a rainy city (or whatever the original analogy was about). The class could then write some of its own analogies on the blackboard and analyze them together.

**Metacognition.**

Some of the following questions may be used to initiate a discussion and to promote metacognition and reflections on the skill:

1. What is involved in creating an analogy?
2. What makes an analogy effective?
3. What list of requirements can be used to determine whether an analogy is effective or not (maybe a diagram)?

4. Which emotions were involved when you read/wrote the analogy?

5. Which of your senses did you use?

6. Who else besides poets uses analogies?

7. How can you become more effective in diagramming and analyzing analogies?

Transfer.

The class might also look at other passages with analogies, such as a story or a newspaper article and discuss the differences between a poetic analogy and other types. Follow-up activities can take place in class after the students have had a chance to find or create other analogies on their own.
Lesson Plan III: Comparing/Contrasting Poems

Teacher's Background.

In this lesson plan the students are asked to compare and contrast two different poems. The first one could be the one they have already been working on in Lessons I and II. The second one could be another poem describing the poet's relationship with his/her native town or city, such as Giuseppe Ungaretti's "San Martino del Carso" (1931, 47), included in Appendix C. In any case, the two poems should be similar in terms of content: they should both describe a tree, an animal, etc. While this may seem a little forced or artificial, it may be useful to begin applying the skill to a simpler context and gradually move on to more complex ones. Because of the complexity and richness of poetic language, this lesson will be somewhat longer than the previous two.

A Model for the Application of the Skill.

1. Determine a set of attributes of poem #1 (main ideas, conclusions, analogies, poet's feelings).
2. Determine the same attributes for poem #2.
3. Evaluation: how is poem #1 similar from #2? How is it different?

Motivator.

Asking personal questions may encourage the students to start thinking in terms of their own perceptions of cities,
childhood and traveling (or the issues contained in the poem):

1. Do you enjoy visiting new cities? Why?

2. Which cities have you been to? Which ones did you read about or seen (on T.V., at the movies)? Would you like to visit them? Why or why not?

3. What is the first thing you look for in a new city? What is the first thing you notice?

4. How do you feel about your hometown?

(It may also be effective to show a videotape on a city, parts of a movie, postcards or photographs).

Introduction.

Looking at the new poem (on the blackboard) the students think about the structure and devices (such as analogies) in it. (The teacher might want to ask questions similar to those used in Lessons I and II). The students would then begin to answer comparative questions, such as "how is the city in the first poem similar to the one in the second poem?." Answering these questions involves a great deal of analogical thinking in poetic terms, since in reality, the two poems share very little (other than being the two poets' birthplaces, their favorite trees or their pets). The class can then move on to think in terms of the poets' individual perceptions, by answering questions such as "what kind of relationship do the two poets have with their respective city (or tree, animal, etc.)"

The teacher should clarify that, in comparing the two poems the class is looking for their similarities and their
differences; the students would then proceed to discuss the two poems in terms of poets' feelings, analogies, images, conclusions, etc.

Thinking Activity to Involve the Students.

The students can be asked to write a short poem or paragraph on a topic similar to the one that is being discussed, while trying to focus on expressing how they feel about it. On a voluntary basis, some of the students can read their poems out loud. At this point, the class could compare some of the student writings to each other, in terms of feelings, analogies, etc.

Metacognition.

As a homework assignment, the students answer some or all of the following questions in writing (in order to use their answers to elicit a continuation of the discussion on the following day):

1. How did you find the similarities in the two poems?
2. How did you find the differences?
3. Do questions 1 and 2 involve similar processes?
4. How is comparing/contrasting poems different from comparing/contrasting people, places, classes, etc.?
5. In what other contexts do you think this skill could be useful?
6. How can you improve your comparative skills?
7. How would you diagram the comparing/contrasting process?
Transfer.

The students could compare two objects in terms of their subjective perception and write another poem on their similarities and differences. They could also compare/contrast two articles, two actors, two movies, two countries, two views or philosophies.

In order to encourage transfer relevant to the students' lives, the teacher might suggest a compare/contrast assignment designed to help the students make an important decision in their lives, by listing the pros and cons and evaluating the results (e.g. which graduate school should I apply to? What type of job should I pursue? Should I move off campus? etc.).
Lesson Plan IV: Identifying Stereotypes in Advertising

Teacher's Background.

This lesson plan revolves around "faulty generalizations," also known as stereotypes which are conclusions reached by superficial observation without further thinking. The purpose of this activity is to involve the class in identifying such stereotypes in an Italian television commercial (such as the one used to advertise Barilla pasta: a couple picks up their newly adopted Chinese daughter at the Milan airport. Everyone seems very nervous and sad until they reach home where a grandmother and some young cousins are waiting. As soon as everyone sits down to dinner and starts eating spaghetti the atmosphere changes radically; the children play with their food laughing as the adults watch with a satisfied smile. The caption translates into: "Barilla makes it home").

In the students' approach to culture (both their own and the new one), it is vital to stress in-depth, critical thinking. Advertisements and commercials exploit and reinforce cultural stereotypes such as "the perfect family," "the healthy person," "the ideal house," in order to promote their products. This phenomenon, so deeply ingrained in our popular culture, can provide very immediate, powerful material for teaching language along with culture.

Some of the stereotypes portrayed are universally accepted "values" (e.g. the mother who expresses love to her
family through her amazing cooking and baking) and that can be described as cross-cultural; other forms of stereotypes are peculiar to a few or only one culture. Given the amount of preparation required for the activities in this lesson (watching and reading commercials, writing, rehearsing, performing and so on) plenty of time should be allowed for the students to complete their assignments; the actual class time needed is about three to four one-hour sessions.

A Model for the Application of the Skill.

1. Observe concepts, ideas or representations.
   a. What are the components?

2. Analysis:
   a. What is the motivation?
   b. Is there a bias?
   c. Is there enough evidence to support representations?
   d. Are people, places, situations truly representative?
   e. Can there be other representations of the same?
   f. What elements are subjective or objective?

3. Evaluation of the results:
   a. Is the representation accurate?

Motivator.

The previous week the teacher has handed out products (e.g. a box of pasta, laundry detergent, a toy), along with a suggestion sheet (below) and has asked groups (2-3 students) to write and rehearse a short commercial to promote one of the products. They can use jingles, rhymes, catchy phrases, etc. On the day of the lesson, the students
begin the activity by performing their commercials for the rest of the class.

Suggestion Sheet for Commercial Assignment:

1. What audience are you targeting?
2. What do you think your audience would value?
3. How can you portray the product so it will appeal to the audience?
4. How can you link the product to positive situations and pleasant ideas?
5. Can you integrate an Italian idiom or cliché in your commercial?
6. Can you create the whole commercial from an Italian point of view and target an Italian audience?

Introduction.

After the performances, the class is encouraged to engage in a discussion on the commercials answering each other's questions and addressing the issues on the suggestion sheet, as well as the use of effective techniques, humor, etc. The concepts of generalizations, stereotypes, assumptions need to be clarified and discussed by the class before the students can create an appropriate model for the process of identifying stereotypes. The discussion can then move on to establish which of the stereotypes presented can be characterized as "Italian" (or as typically belonging to the target culture) and which can be considered universal.
Thinking Activity to Involve the Students.

The teacher shows some Italian commercials and the class applies the model skill for identifying stereotypes to each one (the commercials should be played continuously, so that students are able to watch them over and over again) in order to identify as many stereotypes as possible. This activity can be even more involving if the groups are encouraged to compete against each other. The team that identifies the most stereotypes wins.

Metacognition.

Asking the following questions will help the students reflect on their own thinking process:

1. What makes a commercial effective (or not)?
2. What is involved in analyzing a generalization?
3. How did you determine you had a stereotype when you saw/heard one?
4. How did you determine the effectiveness of a commercial?
5. What emotions did you feel during the commercials? What elements evoked your emotions?
6. What reasons can you find for the existence of stereotypes and other faulty generalizations?
7. How could you enhance your own effectiveness in identifying stereotypes?

Transfer.

Possible transfer may include activities based on movies, idioms, editorials, scientific theories and
discoveries, historical documents, speeches, etc. The teacher might also assign a more personal activity by asking the students to analyze further their own assumptions by exploring their feelings on controversial/current issues.
Lesson Plan V: Frame of Reference and Role-playing

Teacher's Background.

In this lesson, the students have the opportunity to explore the implications of frame of reference and some of its possible applications. A person's response to an issue, a situation or even a simple image, is influenced and determined by the pre-existing knowledge (memories, feelings, associations, assumptions, values, expectations, opinions, beliefs) that a person possesses. Understanding how opinions are formed and how one's frame of reference influences one's judgment (both positively and negatively) can help the students become more objective and critical.

The old proverb "Putting oneself in someone else's shoes" really means exploring another person's frame of reference. Pretending to be someone else involves assuming everything about his/her identity, including likes and dislikes. Though role-playing is essentially considered a purely creative act, it may well be one of the best examples of how inextricable critical and creative thinking really are. Successful role-playing requires an in-depth understanding of the character's point of view, as well as the ability to translate and express such an abstract concept into practical behaviors.

The activity in this lesson allows the students to improvise orally, in addition to writing a script to guide them. It is intended as an on-going project to last over
the course of a few weeks (the actual number is determined by the length and frequency of class meetings). Some of the work needs to be done on an individual basis, but there are also group rehearsals, class discussions and a final class performance of the students' skits.

A Model for the Application of the Skill.

1. Exposure to a topic, object, idea, person.
2. Record the response elicited by the topic.
3. Analyze the subjective, emotional response (explain why it was positive, negative or both).
4. Evaluate the objective response to facts, evidence and information (what can you conclude?).

Motivator.

While discussing some well-known characters, who may be historical figures, T.V. celebrities or characters from movies, plays and novels, the students are asked to think about how those particular characters would feel about different topics or issues and what they might do or say in a given situation. The questions should range from obvious situations (e.g. What would Snow White do if you offered her daughter an apple? What about Newton? Willhelm Tell?) to more subtle ones, about current events or other interesting issues. The discussion can be especially enjoyable if the questions are humorous and unexpected and if the students themselves create new situations.
Introduction.

After the discussion, the students are asked to describe how they came to answer the preceding questions. What about Snow White's past led them to decide that she would not allow her daughter to accept apples from strangers? The concept of frame of reference can be introduced by asking for an immediate (positive or negative) response to a set of colors, pictures, places, etc. and then asking them to explain why (e.g. Lisa hates yellow because as a child she was forced to eat custard). Explaining one's response in terms of one's frame of reference is not always possible and can take a long time. The most important goal of this lesson is understanding that observations and judgments are more often determined by subjective responses than by objective conclusions; everyone has a distinct viewpoint justified by his/her frame of reference.

Thinking Activity to Involve the Students.

Once the students are comfortable with the concept of frame of reference, they are encouraged to choose a character and a situation (e.g. Pinocchio goes to the dentist). Two sets of note-cards could also be prepared ahead of time and a drawing can be held. The students are divided in groups of three or four. As a homework assignment for the next class, each student writes a brief description of the character's likes/dislikes (almost a
quick biography in note form) and the possible reaction(s) the character would have in that situation. The groups then meet and prepare a skit that accommodates a role for every member in the group. The skit should showcase, as much as possible, each character's frame of reference.

Metacognition.

The following questions can be assigned as a written homework assignment to promote metacognition at the end of the lesson, when each group has had the opportunity to perform the skit for the rest of the class. The students can discuss their answers in the following class.

1. How can you better understand your own frame of reference?
2. In what ways can a better understanding of your frame of reference be useful to you?
3. What did you think about when you were describing your character?
4. What can you do to further your understanding of frame of reference?
5. How can you help others understand your point of view in a difficult situation?
6. How can you better understand a contrasting viewpoint?

Transfer.

Transfer activities based on frame of reference can be the basis for debates, the key to discussing different accounts of the same event, a unit on prejudice and many
other types of character analysis and impersonation. The ultimate transfer or an increased understanding of frame of reference is gaining insights on one's own way of thinking.

Evaluating Students' Performance in the Lessons.

Since the classroom activities presented in this curriculum are based on applying the same skill on several types of media and in different situations, the evaluation stage will require a similar degree of transfer. The next chapter presents a series of sample written and oral tests designed to assess both linguistic proficiency and understanding of the critical thinking skills. The tests are intended as a continuation of the class activities previously described and follow the same type of format. They should be given to the students at the end of each lesson plan.
CHAPTER VI

STUDENT AND CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Overview

The first section of this chapter discusses the four different types of evaluation methods used by foreign language departments. A summary of Valette’s (1992) criteria for the evaluation of student progress in a new language has been included, as well as a survey of possible objectivity problems that teachers may encounter while evaluating student performance.

The second section introduces the rationale for evaluating students participating in this curriculum and offers a series of sample written and oral tests designed to be administered at the end of each of the five lesson plans outlined in the previous chapter.

The last section provides some guidelines to compare the effectiveness of the curriculum presented in this thesis to existing ones.

Evaluation in Foreign Language Departments

The Four Areas of Evaluation.

In language teaching and learning, evaluation is essential in the four areas of student placement, student progress (grades), curriculum development, and curriculum
effectiveness. Testing allows teachers to gather information about the students: "what courses they should take, how they stand in relationship to one another, and whether they have completed course or diploma requirements" (Valette 1992, 199). It also provides teachers and administrators with clues about what to improve, change or remove from the curriculum. These four types of assessment are "formative evaluations" (Norris and Ennis 1989, 103), as they aim to assess a process, or a project which is in progress. The fourth aspect of educational evaluation in foreign language courses is comparative in nature, as it focuses on determining which curriculum was the most effective in encouraging the highest level of proficiency. This type of "summative evaluation" (103) is conducted after the curriculum has been implemented, at the completion of the course. (Some suggestions to approach a summative evaluation of the curriculum presented in this thesis have been included in the last section of this chapter).

Standardized Tests.

Placement Tests or "proficiency tests" are educational tools used by individual departments to advise students, and to help them enroll in the right language course. Some universities use self-placement as well. The tests given can be either standardized, multiple-choice questions prepared by an educational service, or tests that have been designed by the individual department. The biggest
criticism of these standardized or "direct tests is that the
descriptions are, of necessity, only partial descriptions of
complex language behavior" (Hyltenstam and Pienemann 1985,
254). The results are not a reflection of the students'
overall proficiency, but their knowledge of specific
grammatical areas, such as vocabulary, verb conjugation, and
pronouns.

The Italian Achievement Test, prepared by the
Educational Testing Service in New Jersey, is usually given
at the end of each academic year to evaluate student
performance at different levels (second semester, fourth
semester, etc.), but is very similar to language placement
tests. The 1992 version is composed of four sections; all
the questions are multiple choice. Section A involves
filling in blanks in three different passages; the choices
involve finding the right tense, adjective, noun, or other
grammatical element. Section B follows a similar format,
but the blanks to be filled are in a variety of sentences
about different topics. Section C contains sample ads and
charts; the questions are about their content. Section D is
a repeat of Section A, with three new passages. Most of the
test entails reading comprehension and is really testing
vocabulary as well as specific grammatical knowledge rather
than proficiency or overall competence.
Valette's Prerequisites.

Valette (1992) suggests that student evaluation can be reliable if it conforms to four prerequisites:

1. The students should be posed the same questions
2. The questions should reflect the variety of components involved in the coursework
3. The conditions (amount of time, questions, place, etc.) of the test should be the same for all students
4. The tests should be scored in the same way.

Ultimately, the validity of a test is determined by whether or not it actually measures what it claims to test. One possible pitfall to keep in mind is standard error, where "even if a test were extremely reliable and completely valid, most students' scores would still fluctuate somewhat, except for those at the extremities of the scale" (Valette 1992, 203). Even by conforming to Valette's criteria, language teachers and departments using current assessment tools would only acquire a composite reflection of the students' language proficiency.

Possible Teacher's Observation Flaws.

Given the extensive exposure to the students, there is always an ongoing evaluation on the teacher's part as far as group dynamics or "class participation" are concerned; but those considerations are based on subjective impressions, which can be biased. It may even be that an objective test is a contradiction in terms, since it is likely to "reflect
the value judgments, priority systems, likes and dislikes" (Jensen 1983, 214) of the tester. The aim of objective tests is to "quantify" the results as much as possible and to be aware of observational fallacies in order to avoid them. The students' final grade would be a combination of both the teacher's observation and test scores (written and oral).

Teacher's observation and evaluation of the students' oral performance is a special kind of qualitative research, where the observer is actively participating in the classroom dynamics and in the individual interviews. Asking a colleague to occasionally visit the class or to participate in the individual conferences as a second observer can be extremely useful (in spite of the "curiosity factor" in the students and possible inhibition of spontaneous behavior). An outside observer can provide the teacher with fresh impressions of the students' class performance; but the ultimate evaluation responsibility rests with the teacher's judgment.

The teacher's dual role might have an effect on the precision of the observations and even cause significant "omissions" (Borg and Gall 1989, 496) in recording data. Even though the teacher, and not a stranger, would be asking questions in class, and administering the tests to her or his own students, the mere fact that it is an assessment situation would produce an observer "impact on the observed" (Borg and Gall 1989, 490).
Teachers can avoid the problems of the qualitative evaluation process by clearly stating and defining what is to be observed from the beginning, and avoiding "observer drift" (Borg and Gall 1989, 496), or the blurring of the observational variables. The teacher/observer should keep an open mind at all times, by knowing and watching out for possible bias, as well as by systematizing the evaluation criteria. Being aware of possible problems is the first step in avoiding them.

Teachers are not immune to personal bias. Apart from the larger race/class/sex/etc.. categories, bias might take the form of higher expectations of certain students or lack of appreciation of thinking styles different from one's own. These types of bias or preconceptions can be part of what is referred to as "contamination" (Borg and Gall 1989, 494) or when the teacher/observer's allows one aspect of the evaluation (or any type of prior knowledge) to influence another.

There are also three other common errors in observation, which may also be categorized as personal bias. The first one is the "error of leniency" (Borg and Gall 1989, 493), also known as "everyone gets an A" where results tend to fall on the upper end of the grading scale. The second possible observational pitfall is the "error of central tendency" (Borg and Gall 1989, 493), or "playing it safe," where results tend to fall in the middle of the scale. The third problem, and perhaps the most relevant to
teachers, is the "halo effect" (Borg and Gall 1989, 493) or typecasting, where once favorably impressed by a student's performance, the teacher/observer continues to grade accordingly even when inappropriate. Since teachers/observers also play the role of individual human beings, there will be days on which they are tired, bored, demoralized, etc. These states of mind can detract from their evaluative ability. This problem is known as "reliability decay" (Borg and Gall 1989, 496).

Evaluation in this Curriculum

Student Evaluation.

Evaluation is necessary, especially in an institutional setting, to determine student progress and, therefore, to establish the degree of effectiveness of a given curriculum of instruction. As discussed in Chapter III, true linguistic proficiency is difficult to quantify; the danger involved is the tendency to test for linguistic components or specific areas of grammar, which are only a partial reflection of the students' progress and may even be a misrepresentation.

Student evaluation should not depend entirely on testing situations; it should reflect the individual student's involvement and performance in an on-going process. In a foreign language classroom based on natural language acquisition such as the one supported by this
thesis, the teacher is the principal orchestrator. It is the teacher who controls the amount and quality of input, who personally responds to and encourages language production by the students in classroom dynamics. The teacher is, in fact, the only person who has constant, direct feedback of student progress.

In order to accurately reflect such progress, a large portion of the evaluation process can only be determined qualitatively by the teacher and balanced by more quantifiable tests, such as the ones suggested in the second section of this chapter. Establishing a nurturing, parental rapport with the students may influence teacher perception of their progress; being aware of possible pitfalls, such as the objectivity problems discussed earlier can help avoid them.

Testing as a Teaching Tool.

The evaluation stage in this curriculum is designed to evaluate the students' progress in an intermediate foreign language class where language and culture are taught in conjunction with thinking skills. The written and oral tests presented later in this chapter should be an opportunity to re-explore and apply the critical thinking skills learned in class in an atmosphere of real communication.

The same elements presented in the class activities should be presented in the test, hoping that the students
will perceive them as engaging and stimulating, and approach them accordingly. There would not be the same cooperation among students as there was in the classroom activities, since it would be more useful in this case to assess each student individually.

The written and oral tests attempt to assess three areas: 1. oral and 2. written proficiency in the language as well as 3. specific critical thinking skills. The "cultural" aspects, as well as the more ethereal features of language use and ideas, constitute a variable in the tests. Since such subjective aspects cannot be easily separated from the previous three categories, they should be assessed as part of the most general heading in the evaluation criterion: "originality and flexibility."

There are also other variables grouped under the same general heading such as the features more traditionally associated with creativity. In spite of its vagueness (because of the subjective features it proposes to detect), "originality and flexibility" constitutes a necessary category. The critical thinking skills in the sample lessons are all aimed towards the creation of a "product" (Amabile 1983, 31), such as a poem, an analogy or a skit, and require creative thinking as a necessary component of the learning process.

The tests would be used to grade students as well as to assess the effectiveness of the class activities. Important factors would be how comfortable and enjoyable the students
found the activities, and how effectively the activities conveyed the material. Tests are not only an evaluation tool, but also a teaching tool. "Through...tests...[teachers]...are able to encourage the types of learning activities most conducive to successful language acquisition" (Valette 1992, 199). In short, tests can show students how to study/learn language most efficiently and successfully. It is very useful to discuss these very points with the students, explicitly presenting the teacher's goals and the purpose of the tests, the elements being tested, and the evaluation criteria. With a clear idea of what is expected of them, students can focus on specific goals for reviewing class material before a test.

Each sample written test presented in this chapter is best given at the end of the corresponding lesson plan discussed in Chapter V. However, the tests follow a general pattern that can be applied evaluate student performance in other lessons of the same type (where thinking skills are taught within the context of subject-specific content). The interview is an individual teacher-student conference, which takes place after the written test. It includes standard questions about the activity and the skill, which are asked to every student, as well as questions on the individual written applications, which can involve further clarification of a point, and/or a more general discussion of ideas. One of the primary purposes of both the written
test and the interview is to provide both the teacher and the students with concrete feedback on the development of the class.

During the interview, the students have a chance to add to their written test, correct themselves, change their minds, and express their line of thought. The teacher has the opportunity "to ask students to clarify what they have said, or to request further reasons for their conclusions, and to ask specific questions about what might have influenced their thinking" (Norris and Ennis 1989, 145-46). In many ways, both the oral and written tests are a further opportunity to explore metacognition, to help the students clarify their own understanding and application of thinking skills, and a chance for the teacher to gain further insights on the students' point of view and learning style.

Conducting both a written test and an oral interview is essential to evaluating progress, since "many students can express their ideas far more easily and coherently in oral than in written form" (Norris and Ennis 1989, 145); while others may prefer writing (as well as other modes of expression, such as drawing). Unfortunately, the interview can be very time-consuming and difficult to schedule, especially in larger classes (18+ students). Grading is more challenging than in written tests, since it has to be recorded during or immediately following the interview, before the teacher forgets. Dhority (1992) suggests inconspicuously videotaping the interview.
Since the lesson plans are subject-specific but stress transfer to other domains they should be evaluated accordingly. The tests should require the students to be flexible without requiring them to research many topics or to possess highly specialized knowledge and vocabulary. For instance, the lesson plan on analogies in poetry could be enhanced by a test where the students are asked to analyze the analogies in an editorial from a newspaper in the target language; the lesson plan on comparing/contrasting poems could be tested by having the students compare and contrast two photographs, two characters, or two paintings.

The use of poetry is especially relevant in both language and thinking, since "the ability to conceptualize a verbal abstraction and see relationships within and around it is a major component of all the higher cognitive processes" (Ross 1988, 6); poetry also exemplifies "linguistic intelligence" (Gardner 1983, 73) or competence.

Another option in evaluating the students is to allow those who feel comfortable to do so to choose their own application of the specific skill to be tested and to develop it. This could be extremely motivating, especially for those who feel passionately about bringing their own field of expertise into the new language. The ideal class atmosphere during the evaluation should suggest to the students that individual ideas and suggestions are encouraged and valued, not only by the teacher, but by the class as a whole.
It is up to the teacher to make sure that the testing situation is as natural and relaxed as possible in order to produce an authentic reflection of the student's performance. The rapport should be on-going throughout the class; it cannot begin during the test. Reassuring the students is the first step; after all, the test is nothing new, since they have already gone through the same process in class. Each teacher has an individual style and rapport with her/his students, and should choose the most appropriate way to reduce their test-related fears.

Frequency of testing leads to habituation and eliminates some of the pressure. Humor also helps. It is beneficial to create a situation where "the student sets the pace" (Rivers 1981, 370) for the oral interview. The best conditions involve providing written and oral activities that are engaging to the point that they will motivate the students to focus on the task as opposed to the testing process. The knowledge that the evaluation is composed of two parts and that the teacher-student interview is an opportunity to bring up new ideas or points that the students might have forgotten to make in the written test, (which tend to occur immediately after handing in the test) is also reassuring.

As far as "test anxiety" is concerned, especially in oral tests, "anecdotal evidence...shows that skillful interviewing may create such an atmosphere that the learner is unaware that a test is proceeding, to the point, in fact,
where, at the end of the interview, they have asked when they would 'come back for the test'" (Hyltestam and Pienemann 1985, 253). Stressing the authenticity of the conversation as opposed to the "artificiality of the testing situation" (Dhority 1984, CH12, 3) is an effective means of reducing anxiety, as well as creating a pleasant, aesthetic atmosphere (with background music, and a graceful environment), and by changing the name of the tests to "'expansion exercises' or 'loops'" (Jensen 1983, 217)

Sample Tests, Interviews and Evaluation Criteria for Lessons I-V

Structure.

The following tests should provide some guidelines for testing both linguistic competence and understanding of specific critical thinking skills. The students are asked to use the vocabulary and concepts learned in connection with the respective lesson plans in Chapter IV. The format of the test is similar to the suggestions for transfer activities in the lessons.

The written questions allow for some flexibility--the students are encouraged to include their personal impressions and insights in addition to the straight-forward application of the skill. The interview questions are both standardized and personalized. In the interest of fairness and consistency, both the written test and the interviews should be carefully (if inconspicuously) timed.
It is extremely important that the testing atmosphere should be relaxed and that the interviews be conducted as conversations. Evaluation is one of the many components of a class and should reflect an on-going rapport between teacher and students. All questions and answers need to be in the target language.

Evaluation Criteria for Both Written and Oral Tests.

1. Degree of comprehension
2. Variety of vocabulary
3. Ease and sophistication in sentence structure and flow
4. Use of verbs (tenses, conjugations, construction)
5. Use of qualifiers (adjectives, etc.)
6. Overall fluency
7. Comprehension of skill (components, procedure, graph, organization)
8. Application of skill
9. Transfer
10. Originality and flexibility (humor, cultural sense, exclamations, content)

These criteria are intended to be applied twice: first for the evaluation of each written test, and then for the interview. Each category above is worth 10 points: the total grade is x/100. The student should be made aware of the grading criteria beforehand. If the teacher prefers not to show the students a numerical grade an alternative form
of feedback could be used (e.g. Stupendo! (90-100) Bravissimo/a! (80-90) Bene (70-80), O.K. (70-60).
Sample Written Test for Lesson I: Identifying the Argument.

A T.V. commercial will be continuously playing on the screen, so the students can watch it as many times as they need (those who have seen enough can just take off their headphones and write).

1. Describe what you have seen and heard as objectively as possible. Break down the events and/or patterns in a logical/chronological sequence (Graph them if you like).

2. What is the conclusion? Is there more than one?

3. What are the premises? How are they linked?

4. What messages are implied?

5. What other relationships do you see at work?

6. Does the conclusion follow from the premises? Why or why not?

7. How are the structure and elements of this commercial similar/different to that of a poetic argument?

(This test can be changed to test reading comprehension instead of listening comprehension by substituting a newspaper editorial, or an article from a magazine.)

Sample Standard Interview for Lesson I.

1. Did you think this was an effective commercial?

2. Would you call it an argument? If so, was it effective?

3. How did you establish the conclusion(s) of this argument?
(Additional personalized questions can be asked at any time to help the students clarify their answers. Individual questions on the students' written test would follow.)
Sample Written Test for Lesson II: Evaluating analogies.

The students are assigned five different analogies from sources such as poems, editorials, quotes. The test consists in their answering the following 10 questions:

1. Identify the components of each analogy.
2. Diagram each analogy (A/B=C/D).
3. List the similarities and differences.
4. Evaluate the analogies in terms of vividness, effectiveness, precision.
5. How different was the style of language in the analogies?
6. Does the style make the analogy more appropriate for a specific context?
7. Can you guess where the analogy came from?
8. What makes an analogy persuasive?
9. Make a diagram of your thinking process.
10. Create a new analogy.

Sample Standard Interview for Lesson II.

1. Which analogy was most striking to you? Why?
2. Analyze your own analogy (from question 10 above) by using the same criteria.
3. When do you think you might need/want to use analogies?
Sample Written Test for Lesson III: Comparing/Contrasting.

This test can be based on two Italian movies that the class has watched; the comparison/contrast test below can be applied to the most appropriate aspect of the movies (e.g. the two protagonists, two views/messages, two styles).

1. List the similarities.
2. List the differences.
3. How did you know which were similarities and which were differences?
4. Are some similarities more significant than others? Which ones? Why?
5. Are some differences more important than others? Which ones? Why?

Sample Standard Interview for Lesson III.

1. When was the last time you had to compare and contrast something (outside of this class)?
2. When will you need/want to in the future?
3. How can you improve your ability to compare/contrast?
Sample Written Test for Lesson IV: Identifying Stereotypes.

Students are presented with a picture (of a house, a famous monument, an animal).

1. Write an ad designed to sell the item in the picture. (Have a target audience in mind and use at least 3 assumptions/stereotypes/generalizations.)

2. Describe your target audience.

3. Explain your choice of stereotypes, etc.

4. Why do you think your ad is effective?

5. Why would your audience want to buy the item?

Sample Standard Interview for Lesson IV.

1. What is the difference between a stereotype, an assumption and a generalization?

2. What other assumptions/stereotypes/generalizations could you have used in your ad?

3. Explain why those alternatives would also be an effective tool for selling your product.
Sample Written Test for Lesson V: Frame of Reference.

After reading a controversial passage or article, the students are asked to answer the following questions:

1. Describe your reactions to the article, both positive and negative.
2. Drawing from your own frame of reference, explain your responses as thoroughly as you can.
3. How much does your frame of reference affect your opinions?
4. How can you use what you know to become more objective?
5. Should you be objective at all times?

Sample Standard Interview for Lesson V.

1. What is meant by frame of reference?
2. What do you think (your character) eats for breakfast?
3. How can you use what you know about frame of reference in real life?
Evaluating the Effectiveness of this Curriculum

Evaluation Implications.

This section addresses possible directions for comparing the effectiveness of traditional intermediate Italian coursework to the curriculum presented here. The focus of the comparison lies in the potential to promote the highest possible degree of linguistic proficiency in the students.

Assessing the effectiveness of a curriculum that entails two dimensions of learning, critical thinking and a foreign language like Italian, is a challenge in both practical and conceptual terms. In a foreign language classroom, even one that where thinking skills were included, the primary evaluation concerns the level of linguistic competence reached by the students, followed by their understanding and application of the thinking skills. There is also a third aspect to be evaluated, and possibly the one which presents the greatest number of variables; that is, assessing the effectiveness of the interaction between the two elements in the curriculum.

Comparing the progress of the language class proposed in this thesis to one where the language is taught on its own (a "control group") would be useful to evaluate the overall impact of this curriculum. The hypothesis to be tested is to determine whether or not the "treatment" (Norris and Ennis 1989, 165) was effective, that is whether
teaching thinking fosters language proficiency. The "different levels of impact" (Light and Pillemer 1982, 9) to be tested in conjunction with this curriculum could be narrowed down into four categories in order to determine whether the integration of thinking and language skills has produced an effect in the students' academic performance:

1. Students' performance in the target language
2. Students' performance in critical thinking
3. Students' overall academic performance (any changes?)
4. Students' performance in direct standardized tests

Class size, location, teachers' styles and meeting time are all variables which would be difficult to recreate for testing purposes, so the "control group" would never exhibit the exact same conditions as the group to be tested. One solution would be to have the same teacher teach both classes (even though there are likely to be bias problems). Also, two classes are too small a sample. In order to obtain a reliable score, a larger number of classes would have to be tested; observers would have to be hired, and expert evaluators consulted.

Baron's Criteria for Curriculum Evaluation.

Effective evaluation criteria should be especially created to establish whether significant changes occurred in the students' thinking processes as a result of the implementation of the curriculum. Such criteria should
respond to the following characteristics, adapted from Baron's (1987) curriculum evaluation requirements:

1. Determining that the implementation did indeed take place as intended.

2. Comparing student performance before and after the implementation, as well as to other "control" groups.

3. Noting the intended effects of the treatment as well as possible unintended effects.

4. Using a variety of channels and qualitative and quantitative means of gathering information.

5. Determining that the tests are indeed designed to measure the elements they proposed to assess.

6. Using discrete methods, to avoid producing an effect on the performance to be observed.

7. Considering long-term changes and effects.

8. Determining whether the initial changes continue to develop.

9. Determining whether transfer of skills is taking place.

10. Evaluating the overall meaning, implications, and results of the program.
    (Baron 1987).

As with all kinds of evaluative procedures, these larger objectives need to be clearly stated and observed over the course of the assessment process.

The evaluation of the larger implications of this curriculum, as any experiment, would only be truly "controlled" if "through the design used, certain factors are ruled out as plausible, competing explanations of the experimental results" (Norris and Ennis 1989, 167). The results of the evaluation must, in turn, be evaluated themselves. A truly representational comparative evaluation
of curricula in language classes is a project of monumental proportions. But in an institutional setting, each change or addition to existing curricula needs to be justified.

**Student Response.**

Witnessing the individual progress of each student provides the most important kind of feedback for the teacher. It confirms that progress did indeed occur and suggests ways to improve both the lesson plans and the evaluation process itself.

In fact, the most significant criteria for curriculum evaluation rests with student response and involvement in the class. The ultimate goal of the implementation of a critical thinking model in foreign language instruction is to elicit renewed excitement for language in the students and to help them recognize their potential as human beings.

* * *

Hopefully, there will be further suggestions and examples for the uses of critical thinking in many fields, but especially in foreign language courses, where the need for change is greatest. It seems that both teachers and students are asking to be reminded of the context and purpose of language, that has somehow become as isolated and disconnected as the pieces of a puzzle.

While it is only one of the possible answers to the need for reform in foreign language departments, the
integration of critical thinking in language courses offers a unique opportunity for teachers and students alike. There is a great variety of complementary combinations of thinking and language skills for classroom activities; the lessons suggested in this thesis are only examples of their virtually endless possible classroom applications.
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APPENDIX A

PAUL'S ELEMENTS OF THOUGHT

The following list of Richard Paul's (1992) eight "elements of thought" preserves Paul's original order, even though he does not believe in a hierarchy of components:

1. Keeping the final goal clearly in mind: reasoning should be focused towards achieving a specific outcome.
2. Stating the goal of the reasoning process.
3. Being aware of the framework in which reasoning occurs, such as personal point of view or frame of reference, in order to control it.
4. Using objective or empirical means in selecting the appropriate evidence, associations and other elements to include in the reasoning process.
5. Choosing which criteria, concepts and ideas will guide and organize the evidence collected.
6. Recognizing the elements which underlie the thinking process and are accepted as true, such as assumptions.
7. Identifying the deductions and inferences which are being used.
8. Predicting and considering possible implications, consequences, and other outcomes of the thinking process.

(Adapted from Paul 1992)
APPENDIX B

ENNIS' CRITICAL THINKING DISPOSITIONS AND ABILITIES

Robert Ennis' (1987) critical thinking dispositions are some of the necessary attributes that people should cultivate:

1. Focusing on a clear definition of the thesis, question or issue at hand.
2. Looking for reasons, causes and explanations.
3. Seeking evidence and being well informed.
4. Evaluating sources and using only reliable ones.
5. Keeping the larger picture or the whole situation in mind as a guide.
6. Being coherent, sticking to the main point.
7. Maintaining relevance to the original thesis or issue.
8. Looking for and considering possible alternatives.
9. Exercising open-mindedness by withholding judgment, recognizing possible bias and considering other viewpoints.
10. Taking or changing positions when the evidence and/or the situation warrants it
11. Being as precise as possible.
12. Dealing systematically with the parts of a complex system.
13. Using the critical thinking abilities (outlined in the next page).
14. Being sensitive to others by recognizing their feelings, knowledge and frame of reference.

(Adapted from Ennis 1987)
The following critical thinking abilities are "interdependent" (Ennis 1987, 24) on the dispositions listed above:

**Elementary clarification:**

1. Focusing on a question: identifying and defining the problem is necessary in order to come to terms with it; appropriate criteria to judge it are also needed. The whole situation or context must be kept in mind.

2. Analyzing arguments: considering their structure (premises and conclusions), their reasons and impact by following a criteria such as comparing and contrasting, judging relevance and summarizing.

3. Posing questions for clarification or challenge: they must be relevant and focused in order to obtain further information, examples or perspective on the issue.

**Basic support:**

4. Judging the credibility of a source: deciding what to accept/reject, evaluating the source's expertise, motivation, evidence, frame of reference and background information.

5. Observing and judging observations and reports: being objective in one's own reports and applying objectivity criteria (corroboration, proximity, conditions, overall credibility, etc.) to those of others.

**Inference:**

6. Deducing and judging deductions: this is traditionally an element of formal logic and includes generating and interpreting claims and arguments in terms of language (e.g. double negation, if-then statements) and structure (does the conclusion follow? Are the conditions necessary and sufficient?).
7. Inducing and judging inductions: generalizing, seeking and investigating evidence, inferring and evaluation different kinds of claims (such as cause and effect relationships, explanations, generalization and inferences).

8. Making value judgments: generating and evaluating moral claims or situations (Ennis' example is the deliverance of a verdict by a jury in a murder trial).

Advanced clarification:

9. Defining terms and judging definitions in three dimensions: finding appropriate linguistic and semantic approaches to the problem or question by evaluating both form and content and by generating one's own definitions.

10. Identifying assumptions: seeking both stated and unstated assumptions, bias and frame of reference in one's own and in others' arguments.

Strategies and tactics:

11. Deciding on an action (problem-solving): defining and evaluating the problem as well as possible solutions, forming and implementing a hypothesis and evaluating its effectiveness before making a final choice.

12. Interacting with others: presenting an organized argument which takes into account audience, employing rhetorical and logical strategies and familiarity with fallacies.

(Adapted from Ennis 1987)
APPENDIX C

SAMPLE POEMS

Trieste

Ho attraversato tutta la città.
Poi ho salita un'erta, popolosa in principio, in là deserta, chiusa da un muricciolo: un cantuccio in cui solo siedo; e mi pare che dove esso termina termini la città.

Trieste ha una scontrosa grazia. Se piace, è come un ragazzaccio aspro e vorace, con gli occhi azzurri e mani troppo grandi per regalare un fiore; come un amore con gelosia.

... Intorno circola ad ogni cosa un'aria strana, un'aria tormentosa, l'aria natia.
La mia città che in ogni parte è viva, ha il cantuccio a me fatto, alla mia vita pensosa e schiva.

(Saba 1988, 89)

San Martino del Carso

Di queste case non è rimasto che qualche brandello di muro

Di tanti che mi corrispondevano non è rimasto neppure tanto

Ma nel cuore nessuna croce manca

É il mio cuore il paese più straziato.

(Ungaretti 1931, 47)