

Does Communicative Language Teaching help develop students' competence in thinking critically?

Junko Winch

University of Sussex



Please raise your hand if you think that:

Question 1.

you think critically?

Question 2.

all students equip critical thinking equally as they get older?

Question 3.

development of thinking capability is a by-product of the subject-matter teaching and all we have to do is to follow the prescribed curriculum and thinking would flourish spontaneously?

What is critical thinking in a higher educational context?

Definitions

- 1) Originality/creativity (Moore, 2013)
- 2) Careful and sensitive reading of text and think beyond the text (Moore, 2013)
- 3) Problem solving
- 4) Skills which you can train to obtain

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Background history

Chomsky (1957)

'grammatical competence'



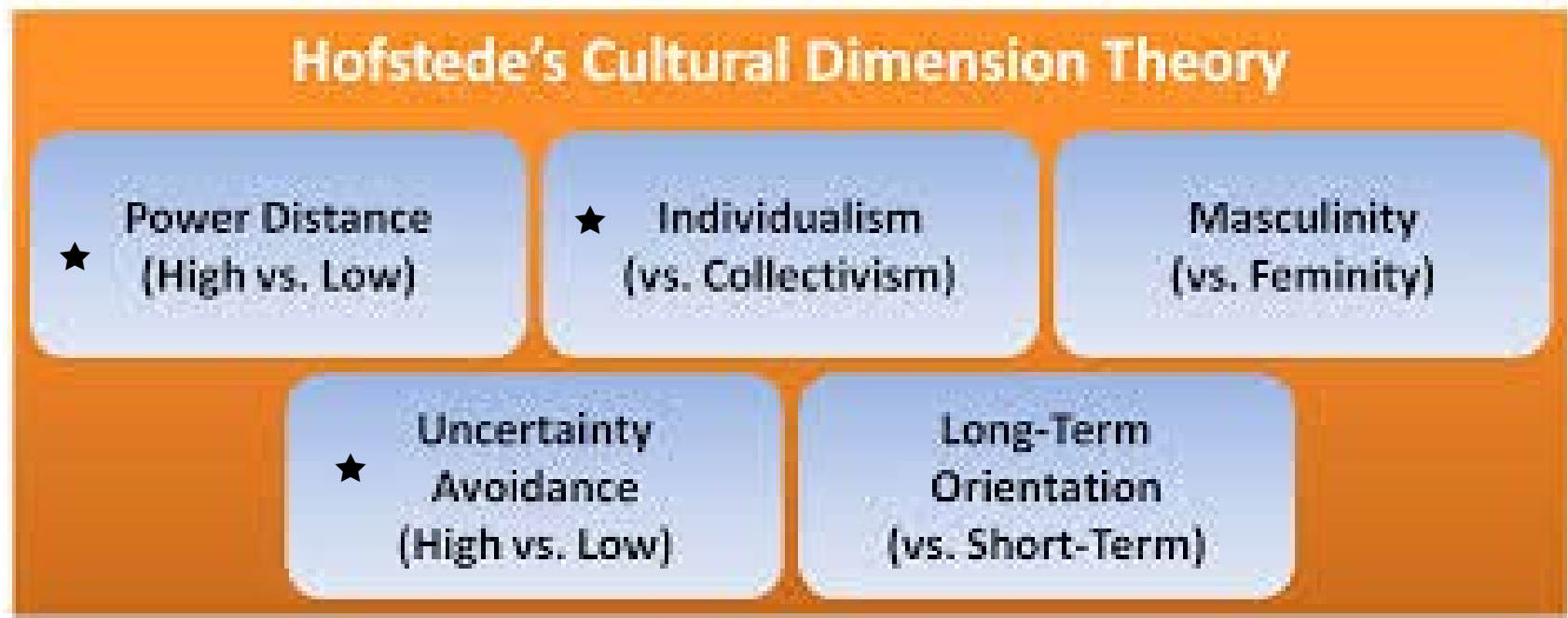
Hymes (1972)

'communicative competence'

Characteristics

- 'CLT is firmly opposed to teacher dominance in the classroom' (Hu, 2002, 95)
- 'CLT avoids linguistic correction entirely' (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979, 173)
- Use of speaking activities such as role play, information gap, games with pair, which allows students to learn at their own pace

Theoretical framework to compare CLT and critical thinking: Hofstede et al. (2010) five dimensions of culture:



Individualism vs. Collectivism

Individualism

- 'The interest of the individual prevail over the interest of the group' (Hofstede et al, 2010, 91)
- Anglophone countries (Dimmock, 2000)

Collectivism

- 'The interest of the group prevail over the interest of individual' (Hofstede et al, 2010, 91)
- Asian countries (Dimmock, 2000)



Underlying pedagogy of Individualism vs. Collectivism

Individualism

- One-to-one interaction:
pair work
- One-to-one instruction:
dialogue/tutoring
- **Independence**

Collectivism

- Whole class instructions
- Interdependence or dependence

Power Distance

- ‘the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally’ (Hofstede et al, 2010, 61)



Underlying pedagogy of Power Distance

Large Power Distance

- Teachers are guru who transfer personal **wisdom**
- Students treat teachers with respect
- Teachers are expected to take all initiatives in class

= **teacher-centred class**

Small Power Distance

- Teachers are experts who transfer impersonal **truth**
- Students treat teachers as equal
- Teachers expect initiatives from students in class

= **student-centred class**

Confucius vs. Socrates

Confucius (6 century BC)

‘Confucius is asked questions by his students and responds with **wisdom**’

‘He is a messenger who **transmit the wisdom** of the ancient’

(Hinkel, 1991, 19)



role of a transmitter

(Hinkel, 1991, 19)

Socrates (5 century BC)

- ‘to lead him(youth) to the **truth** by means of questioning’

- ‘helps give birth to a **truth** that lies within’

(Hinkel, 1991, 19)

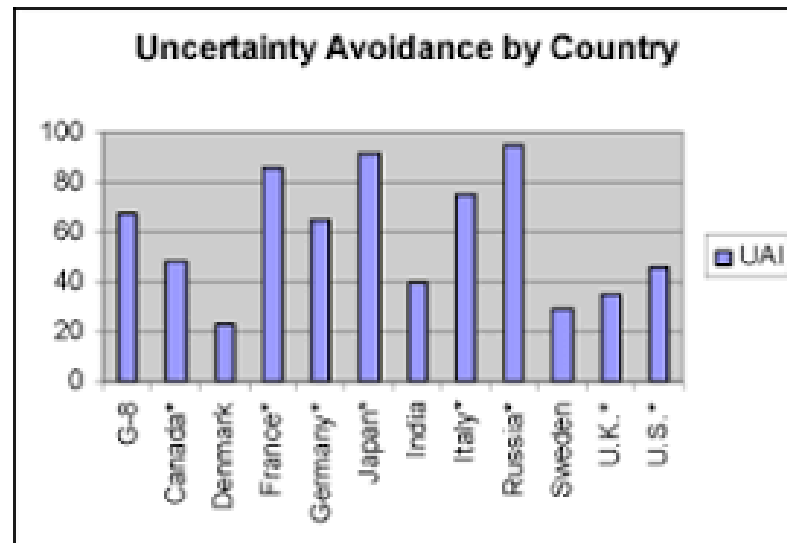


role of a midwife

(Hinkel, 1991, 19)

Uncertainty avoidance

- ‘the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situation’ (Hofstede et al, 2010, 191)



Underlying pedagogy of Uncertainty Avoidance

Strong Uncertainty Avoidance

- Students are comfortable in structured learning and concerned with **right answers**
- Teachers are supposed to have all the answers

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance

- Students are comfortable with **open-ended** learning and concerned with good discussion
- Teachers may say 'I don't know'

Control vs. Freedom

Control

- Right answer/One correct answer
- Routinisation
- Rehearsed activities
- Rote learning
- Recitation
- Strong discipline

Freedom

- Open-ended learning/questions
- Creativity
- Essay writing

Those who prefer **Strong**
Uncertainty Avoidance in
university context:

1. Generally, Asian countries are labelled as Strong Uncertainty Avoidance nations
2. Those who study and teach STEM subjects
3. The lower track students who study language in a mixed ability class

Those who prefer **Weak**
Uncertainty Avoidance in
university context:

1. Generally, Anglophone countries are labelled as Weak Uncertainty Avoidance nations
2. Those who study and teach arts or music subjects
3. The high track students who study language in a mixed ability class

The studies of mixed/stream classes and higher/lower track students

Teachers who teach lower track students

- emphasised pedagogies such as 'getting along with others, working quietly, improving study habits, punctuality, cooperation and conforming to rules and expectations' (Oaks, 1985, 85)

Teachers who teach higher and average track students

- emphasised pedagogies such as 'critical thinking, active participation, self-direction and creativity' (Oaks, 1985, 85)

Methodology

Does Communicative Language Teaching help develop students' competence in thinking critically?

Using literature, examine the educational culture and underlying pedagogy of critical thinking and CLT



Compare the similarities and differences of critical thinking and CLT

Educational culture and underlying pedagogy of CLT

- Use of speaking activities such as role play, information gap, games **with pair**, which allows students to learn **at their own pace**

- 'CLT avoids linguistic correction entirely' (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979, 173)

- CLT promotes **creativity**' (Littlewood, 1981).

- 'CLT is firmly opposed to teacher dominance in the classroom' (Hu, 2002, 95)

• Pair work
Individualism

• tolerance for error & creativity
Weak uncertainty avoidance

• student-centred class
Small power distance

Please match left and right side

Findings: CLT

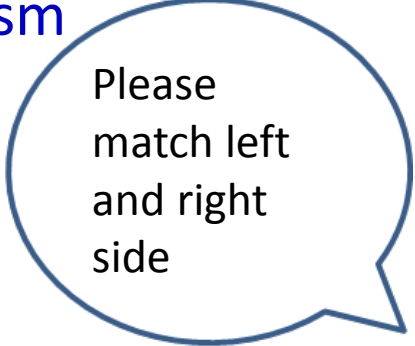
	Collectivist vs. Individualist	Strong vs. Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Large vs. Small Power Distance
Preferred educational culture	Individualism	Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Small Power Distance
Underlying pedagogy	Pair work	1. Creativity 2. Tolerance for errors	Student- centred class

(Winch, 2013)

Educational culture and underlying pedagogy of critical thinking 1: Individualist culture

'critical thinking very often takes place in the context of person's thinking things through together by means of discussion and **dialogue** (Bailin et al, 1999, 289)

- One-to-one instruction(dialogue)
Individualism



Please
match left
and right
side

'Students must learn to teach themselves' (Pithers & Sodon, 2000, 243)

'students must ultimately teach themselves, for they must be responsible for finding out what methods of problem finding and problem solving work for them (Stenberg, 1987, 459)


- Independence
Individualism

Educational culture and underlying pedagogy of critical thinking 2: Uncertainty Avoidance culture

‘critical thinking often requires imagining possible consequences, generating **original** approaches and identifying alternative perspectives.(Bailin et al, 1991, 288)

Sternberg’s(1987) 8 fallacies in teaching critical thinking, one of which includes ‘**right answers**’

- Creativity
(weak uncertainty avoidance)



Please
match left
and right
side

- Fallacies of
right answers
(weak uncertainty avoidance)

Educational culture and underlying pedagogy of critical thinking 3: Power distance culture

‘**student-centred** orientation is more consistent with approaches for developing student thinking’ (Pithers & Soden, 2000, 247)

- Student centred class (small power distance)

Findings: Critical thinking

	Collectivist vs. Individualist	Strong vs. Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Large vs. Small Power Distance
Preferred educational culture	Individualism	Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Small Power Distance
Underlying pedagogy	1.Dialogue 2. Independence	1.Creativity 2. Fallacy of one correct answer	Student- centred class

Similarities and differences between CLT and critical thinking

Similarities shared:

- Educational culture :
 - 1) Individualism
 - 2) Weak uncertainty avoidance
 - 3) Small power distance
- Underlying pedagogies:
 - 1) Student-centred orientation (Small Power Distance)
 - 2) Creativity (Weak Uncertainty Avoidance)

3) one-to-one instruction (dialogue) and one-to-one interaction (pair work) in Individualism

Differences

- Independence (individualism) is an underlying pedagogy of critical thinking, but it does not share with CLT.

Conclusion

Does Communicative Language Teaching help develop students' competence in thinking critically?



CLT appears to help develop students' critical thinking

Implications: What can language teachers do to supplement independence?

- Role of a 'transmitter'



- Students are not given the opportunity to think for themselves

- Role of a 'midwife'



- Students are given the opportunity to think, overcome uncertainty, may have to use creativity and will eventually be able to think on their own.

Do you agree or disagree and why?

- Teacher sets the problem and shows the students how to pose and solve it and then leaves the students to solve similar problems, often with model answers provided as feedback (Pithers & Soden, 2000, 243)

Reference

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