THE ROLE OF OZOD SHARAFIDDINOV'S LITERARY-CRITICAL WORKS IN DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Guzalkhon Ramonaliyeva
Second year student, UZJMCU
rakhmonaliyevaguzal@gmail.com
Lobar Usmanova
Scientific Superviser: English Language Teacher, UZJMCU
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24483731

Abstract

Critical thinking is one of the fundamental competencies of literacy and an essential intellectual ability required in contemporary society. Acquiring knowledge through reading, memorizing information, and understanding texts is not sufficient unless individuals are also able to analyze, interpret, and evaluate the information they receive. Whether reading a literary work, a newspaper article, or information shared on social media, individuals need to examine different perspectives, question assumptions, recognize relationships between ideas, and develop independent judgments. Such abilities enable people to express their opinions confidently, participate effectively in discussions and debates, and make reasoned decisions in different situations. This article explores the contribution of the literary-critical heritage of Ozod Sharafiddinov, one of the prominent Uzbek literary scholars, critics, translators, and public intellectuals of the twentieth century, to the development of critical thinking skills. The study examines his intellectual background, professional contributions, and selected literary-critical publications, focusing on the relationship between his approaches to literary interpretation and the cognitive dimensions of critical thinking. The research employs qualitative methods, including literary analysis, comparative analysis, and theoretical investigation. Particular attention is given to analytical reasoning, independent judgment, interpretation, and evidence-based evaluation. The study argues that Sharafiddinov's literary-critical heritage provides valuable intellectual material for encouraging readers to approach literary works beyond their surface meanings and examine their artistic, social, historical, and philosophical dimensions. Furthermore, the article considers the educational relevance of his works in developing students' independent thinking and analytical abilities.

Key words: Ozod Sharafiddinov, literary criticism, critical thinking, literacy, independent thinking, analytical reasoning, intellectual development, Uzbek literature, literary analysis.

Introduction

Education is not limited to the acquisition of knowledge or the memorization of information. It also involves developing intellectual abilities that enable individuals to understand the world from different perspectives, evaluate information, and make reasonable decisions. Learning is a continuous process, and simply obtaining knowledge does not necessarily mean that an individual has developed the ability to use it effectively. People must also learn how to question what they read, examine what they hear, compare different opinions,

and form their own conclusions. In this regard, critical thinking occupies an important position in education and personal development. Critical thinking is particularly significant in contemporary society, where individuals are exposed to an enormous amount of information every day. Social media platforms, digital newspapers, online discussions, educational resources, and other communication channels constantly provide people with new information and different viewpoints. However, not all the information available is accurate, reliable, or presented objectively. Therefore, individuals, particularly students, need to develop the ability to examine information carefully instead of accepting every statement without questioning it. They must be able to distinguish facts from opinions, identify possible assumptions, evaluate arguments, and support their own positions with relevant evidence.

According to Facione (1990), critical thinking involves several interconnected cognitive skills, including interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. These abilities demonstrate that critical thinking is a complex intellectual process rather than simply the expression of personal opinions.

An individual cannot reasonably criticize an idea or situation without understanding its context, examining available evidence, and considering alternative perspectives. Consequently, critical thinking requires continuous practice, intellectual curiosity, and a willingness to reconsider one's initial assumptions. Moreover, critical thinking is not limited to academic activities. It plays an important role in everyday communication and social interaction. For example, individuals who can analyze information and evaluate different viewpoints are better prepared to participate in discussions, express their arguments during debates, and respond to opposing opinions. They are also more capable of explaining their positions logically and making decisions based on reasoning rather than immediate reactions. Thus, critical thinking can be considered one of the essential competencies for successful participation in modern society.

Literacy is closely connected with this intellectual process. Reading is one of the primary ways through which individuals acquire information, develop vocabulary, and become familiar with different perspectives. Nevertheless, reading alone does not automatically develop critical thinking. A reader must actively engage with a text by examining its central ideas, interpreting its message, questioning the author's assumptions, and evaluating the arguments presented. Whether an individual is reading a literary story, a newspaper article, or an academic publication, the ability to think critically makes the reading process more meaningful and intellectually productive. Literature can contribute significantly to this process because it introduces readers to different human experiences, moral questions, social conflicts, and philosophical ideas. By placing themselves in the situations presented in literary works, readers can examine characters' decisions, understand different motivations, consider alternative outcomes, and reflect on their own values. Literary criticism further develops this process by providing systematic approaches to understanding artistic works, examining their meanings, and evaluating their significance. It encourages readers not merely to understand what an author writes but also to investigate why particular ideas are expressed and how they relate to broader social and cultural realities. In this context, the intellectual heritage of Ozod Sharafiddinov deserves particular attention. Ozod Sharafiddinov (1929–2005) was a distinguished Uzbek literary scholar, critic, translator, and public intellectual who made a substantial contribution to the development of Uzbek literary studies. Born on 1 March 1929 in the village of Oxunqaynar

near Kokand, he graduated from the philological faculty of the Central Asian State University in 1951 and continued his academic education in Moscow. He received his Candidate of Sciences degree in 1955 and devoted a significant part of his professional life to teaching, literary research, and criticism. He later became a professor and served as the editor-in-chief of the journal Jahon adabiyoti. In recognition of his achievements, he was awarded the honorary title of

Hero of Uzbekistan in 2002.

Throughout his professional career, Sharafiddinov examined the literary works and creative contributions of numerous Uzbek writers, including Oybek, G'afur G'ulom, Abdulla Qahhor, Maqsud Shayxzoda, Mirtemir, and Zulfiya. His publications include Zamon. Qalb. Poeziya (1962), Adabiy etyudlar (1968), Yalovbardorlar (1974), Iste'dod jilolari (1976), Birinchi mo'jiza (1979), and Cho'lponni anglash (1994). These works demonstrate his continuing interest in literary interpretation, artistic creativity, national literary traditions, and the relationship between Uzbek and world literature.

His literary-critical activity was not restricted to describing the content of literary works. He also addressed questions concerning artistic value, the creative personality of writers, the role of literature in society, and the relationship between artistic expression and human experience. His studies of Cho'lpon's literary heritage are particularly significant because they demonstrate the importance of examining literary figures and their contributions through historical, cultural, and critical perspectives. Sharafiddinov's intellectual contribution provides an important opportunity to explore the connection between literary criticism and critical thinking. His literary-critical heritage can be approached not only as a significant part of Uzbek literary history but also as a source for examining how individuals interpret ideas, evaluate artistic achievements, and develop independent intellectual positions. This relationship deserves particular attention in contemporary education, where students are expected to move beyond memorization and develop the ability to analyze and evaluate information independently. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate how the literary-critical works of Ozod Sharafiddinov reflect principles associated with critical thinking and how his intellectual heritage can serve as an educational resource for developing students' analytical and independent thinking abilities. The main research question is: How do Ozod Sharafiddinov's literary-critical works reflect and encourage the principles of critical thinking, independent judgment, and analytical reasoning? The objectives of the study are to examine Sharafiddinov's intellectual development and literary contribution, analyze selected publications, identify critical thinking principles reflected in his literary-critical approach, and explore the educational significance of his heritage in contemporary learning.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to investigate the relationship between Ozod Sharafiddinov's literary-critical heritage and the development of critical thinking skills. Since the research focuses on the interpretation of literary ideas, intellectual principles, and educational implications, qualitative methods provide an appropriate framework for examining the selected materials. First, literary analysis is used to examine selected publications by Sharafiddinov, particularly Zamon. Qalb. Poeziya (1962), Adabiy etyudlar (1968), and Cho'lponni anglash (1994). Attention is given to the author's critical perspectives, methods of

literary interpretation, evaluation of artistic works, and treatment of literary and cultural questions.

Second, comparative analysis is applied to identify similarities and differences in the critical approaches presented in the selected publications. This method makes it possible to examine how Sharafiddinov approaches different writers, literary traditions, and artistic problems. Third, theoretical analysis is employed to establish a conceptual understanding of critical thinking. Facione's (1990) framework is used as a theoretical reference, particularly its emphasis on interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. These cognitive skills provide a basis for identifying the intellectual dimensions of literary criticism. Finally, synthesis is used to connect the findings of literary analysis with the theoretical principles of critical thinking. Through this process, the study considers the potential educational value of Sharafiddinov's literary-critical heritage, particularly in relation to students' analytical reading, independent judgment, and intellectual development. The research is primarily interpretative and does not involve an experimental assessment of students. Therefore, its conclusions concern the potential contribution of literary criticism to critical thinking development rather than measurable improvements in students' cognitive performance.

Main Discussion

3.1. Ozod Sharafiddinov's Life, Intellectual Development, and Contribution to Uzbek Literary Criticism Understanding the intellectual contribution of Ozod Sharafiddinov requires consideration of his academic background and the literary environment in which his critical ideas developed. His professional journey demonstrates a long-standing commitment to literary scholarship, education, and the promotion of intellectual culture. After graduating from the philological faculty of the Central Asian State University, Sharafiddinov continued his academic studies in Moscow. His academic preparation provided a foundation for his later research into Uzbek poetry, literary traditions, and artistic creativity. From 1955 to 1995, he worked at Tashkent State University, where he contributed to the education of several generations of students. One of the important characteristics of Sharafiddinov's intellectual activity was his attention to the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of literature. His book Zamon. Qalb. Poeziya (1962) represents an important stage in his development as a literary critic. Later publications, including Adabiy etyudlar (1968) and Iste'dod jilolari (1976), explored writers' creative personalities and their contributions to literature.

Sharafiddinov also played an important role in drawing attention to literary figures whose works required renewed critical examination. His research concerning Cho'lpon is particularly noteworthy. Through Cho'lpon (1991) and Cho'lponni anglash (1994), he contributed to the reconsideration and interpretation of an important figure in Uzbek literary history. His professional activities extended beyond literary research. As a translator, he introduced Uzbek readers to works of international literature, including Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist and Leo Tolstoy's A Confession. His involvement in literary journalism and editorial work also contributed to cultural and intellectual discussions in Uzbekistan. These activities demonstrate that Sharafiddinov's contribution was not limited to the study of individual writers. He participated in the broader development of literary culture by encouraging engagement with national and international literary traditions. His intellectual legacy therefore provides a

valuable foundation for investigating the relationship between literary interpretation and independent thought.

Major Literary-Critical Works and Their Intellectual Significance

An examination of Sharafiddinov's major publications provides an opportunity to understand the intellectual principles underlying his literary criticism. Although the selected works differ in subject matter and historical context, they collectively demonstrate his interest in artistic value, literary interpretation, and the relationship between literature and society. One of his early publications, Zamon. Qalb. Poeziya (1962), represents an important stage in his development as a literary critic. The work focuses on questions concerning Uzbek poetry and artistic expression. Its significance for the present research lies in the opportunity it provides to examine literary works through their artistic characteristics rather than approaching them only as collections of words or general ideas. From the perspective of critical thinking, literary evaluation requires readers to identify the central idea of a text, examine the relationship between its form and content, and consider the effectiveness of the author's artistic expression. Such activities involve interpretation and analysis, which are recognized as essential components of critical thinking. Another significant publication, Adabiy etyudlar (1968), addresses writers, their creative personalities, and artistic production. This subject provides an opportunity to consider how an author's experiences, intellectual background, and artistic choices influence literary production.

The analysis of an author's creative personality encourages readers to move beyond superficial interpretations. Instead of simply identifying the subject of a literary work, readers can consider why particular ideas are expressed, how artistic decisions influence meaning, and what perspectives are reflected in the text. This approach can contribute to the development of interpretative and analytical abilities. A further example is Cho'lponni anglash (1994), a work devoted to the literary heritage of Cho'lpon. The title itself draws attention to the process of understanding and interpreting a literary figure. Examining a writer's legacy requires attention to historical circumstances, literary traditions, artistic characteristics, and different critical perspectives. This type of literary investigation is closely connected with critical thinking because it requires readers to examine literary works within their historical and cultural contexts. It also demonstrates that understanding literature is not always a straightforward process; it may involve comparing interpretations, examining evidence, and developing reasoned conclusions. Taken together, these publications provide a foundation for exploring how literary criticism can become a form of intellectual engagement. They demonstrate the importance of approaching literature through interpretation, evaluation, and contextual understanding. A more detailed examination of their individual arguments and textual examples is necessary to establish the precise ways in which these intellectual principles appear in Sharafiddinov's writing.

The Educational Value of Sharafiddinov's Literary-Critical Heritage in Developing Critical Thinking Skills

The educational value of literary criticism becomes particularly relevant when considered in relation to contemporary teaching and learning. In many educational environments, students are required to remember information, reproduce definitions, and provide expected answers. Although these activities may contribute to knowledge acquisition, they do not always provide

sufficient opportunities for independent intellectual engagement. Literary criticism can offer an alternative approach by encouraging students to investigate texts, formulate questions, compare interpretations, and support their conclusions with evidence. In this regard, Sharafiddinov's literary-critical works can serve as useful materials for analytical reading and classroom discussion. For example, when studying Cho'lponni anglash, students can investigate how historical circumstances influence literary interpretation. They can compare different perspectives on Cho'lpon's contribution and consider why literary figures may be evaluated differently across historical periods. Such activities encourage students to recognize the relationship between literature, history, and society. Similarly, selected discussions from Zamon. Qalb. Poeziya can provide opportunities for students to examine artistic expression and evaluate poetic works. Rather than simply memorizing information about a poem, students can identify its central themes, analyze its artistic characteristics, and explain their interpretations. Another useful educational activity is comparative reading. Students can examine how different critics interpret the same literary work and identify similarities and differences in their arguments. They can then evaluate which interpretations are more convincing and explain their decisions using textual evidence.

Furthermore, literary criticism can encourage students to connect academic knowledge with real-life experiences. Literature frequently addresses questions of identity, responsibility, social relationships, morality, and cultural values. Discussing these issues enables students to examine different viewpoints and reflect on their own positions. It is important to emphasize that the educational value of Sharafiddinov's heritage does not mean that reading his works automatically develops critical thinking. The process depends on how these materials are used. Passive reading and memorization may provide information, but active engagement through questioning, discussion, comparison, and evidence-based interpretation offers greater opportunities for intellectual development. Consequently, integrating selected works of Ozod Sharafiddinov into literature and language education may create meaningful opportunities for developing students' analytical abilities and independent thinking. His literary-critical heritage can therefore be considered not only an important part of Uzbek literary history but also a potential educational resource.

Conclusion

The study has examined the role of Ozod Sharafiddinov's literary-critical works in developing critical thinking skills, focusing on his intellectual contribution, selected publications, and the educational significance of his literary heritage.

The analysis demonstrates that literary criticism and critical thinking share several important intellectual principles, including interpretation, analytical reasoning, evaluation, independent judgment, and reflection. Sharafiddinov's publications, particularly Zamon. Qalb. Poeziya, Adabiy etyudlar, and Cho'lponni anglash, provide valuable material for investigating these connections.

His contribution to Uzbek literary studies extends beyond the evaluation of individual literary works. Through his research into Uzbek writers, literary traditions, and the relationship between national and world literature, he participated in the development of a broader intellectual and cultural perspective. His engagement with Cho'lpon's literary heritage also

demonstrates the importance of examining literary figures through historical and critical approaches.

From an educational perspective, his literary-critical heritage offers opportunities to develop students' analytical reading, interpretative abilities, independent judgment, and evidence-based argumentation. However, these competencies are more likely to develop when students actively engage with literary texts through discussion, comparison, questioning, and reflection.

In conclusion, the literary-critical legacy of Ozod Sharafiddinov represents a valuable intellectual resource for contemporary education. Studying his works can help students understand that literature is not merely a subject to be memorized but an intellectual space in which ideas are examined, perspectives are questioned, and independent judgments are formed. Further research may explore the practical application of his literary-critical heritage in educational settings and investigate its contribution to students' critical thinking development.

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