study to move up on the proficiency scale (c.f. figure 1). Language performance, on the other hand, is guided by teaching. A learner knows in advance what situation (s)he will encounter, what language forms will be needed, and (s)he will have practiced/rehearsed the language needed to complete that language function or situation. In terms of teaching, instruction often takes the form of modelling the language needed and practicing the relevant language. Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) is gaining popularity as a method that creates a feedback loop whereby teaching feeds directly into assessment.

3. The critical thinking gap

The term Critical Thinking probably has as many interpretations as the educators offering them. Critical thinking could be seen in STEM as the application of the scientific method [3], focusing on the ability to make decisions based on quantitative data, while recognizing the inherent uncertainties and variability in data in physics [4] and chemistry [5]. In social sciences and humanities, critical thinking is viewed in more domain-specific light. In political science and economics, critical thinking has been characterized as the ability to examine and evaluate data [6]. In history, it can be defined in terms of abstraction, identifying patterns, and evaluating historical evidence [7]. While it is practical to define critical thinking in terms of the larger goals outlined by the subject area, foreign language learning faces a rather different challenge in following the same approach, as language acquisition is content-independent. If language is considered a general-purpose vehicle for conveying content, critical thinking in the context of language learning will be much less amenable to a narrower-domain definition. Some approaches fall back on the general nature of Bloom's taxonomy and define critical thinking in terms of the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: analyzing, synthesizing and evaluation [8]. This general understanding of critical thinking can be interpreted into the following skills (adapted from [9]):

- **Information seeking:** searching for information by identifying relevant sources and gathering relevant data.
- **Applying Standards:** judging according to established criteria.
- **Analyzing:** breaking a whole into parts to discover their nature, function and relationships.
- **Discriminating:** recognizing differences and similarities among objects or situations and distinguishing carefully as to category or rank.
- **Transforming knowledge:** changing or converting the form, or function of concepts across contexts.

There is potentially a large gap between language proficiency attainment and the language level needed for effective use of critical thinking skills in an International Studies undergraduate program. For students whose first language is English, this gap

is particularly likely to occur in level 4 languages such as Arabic or Chinese. LCTL courses do not typically assume any familiarity with the language, and start at novice level. After three courses, students reach Novice High or Intermediate proficiency level on the ACTFL scale, or A2(+) on CEFR. At that level, students are capable of understanding and creating second language content of their own at the sentence level expressing simple content about familiar topics. Critical thinking skills, on the other hand, require ability to use language at the paragraph or discourse level. Functions such as breaking an argument to its elements, identifying fact or opinion information require Advanced High (B2+) proficiency. While some skills are transferrable from general education courses, such as logical reasoning, many others are not (e.g. signaling agreement/disagreement, discourse structure of academic writing in the second language, and sarcasm and formality in social media posts).

Such gap leaves students, and at times administration, skeptical of the value of the language component of their International Studies programs. At Leiden University, student course feedback and communication with students have reflected increasing interest for additional more advanced language course offerings. However, offering two or three additional language courses could compromise the quality of other aspects of the program. Even if it were possible to offer a couple of additional elective language courses, it takes much more time to move students from Intermediate to Advanced levels in languages like Arabic, Russian or Chinese.

4. Bridging the gap: task-based performance

In Task Based Language Teaching, students are faced with a realistic task they face in their current studies or are likely to face in the future. The task itself may be linguistic (summarizing a report) or non-linguistic (a visit to the doctor). The task can be completed using real language, and students learn the language through completing that task. Learning tasks are designed such that there is an information gap that students need to negotiate and bridge in order for the task to be completed. Language acquisition takes place through deliberate building of metalinguistic knowledge in the case of complex tasks, and through automatization of language performance through repetition in completing simple tasks [10]. TBLT has been the subject of a great deal of literature, leading to variations and implementations of the general approach (e.g. [11]–[14]). A model based on the shared characteristics of those implementations can be summarized as follows:

- **Pre-task:** students are prepared for the task with detailed instructions and description of the task to be completed, and a roadmap to the successful completion of the task.
- **Task:** typically completed in pair- or group-work settings.

- o **Task performance:** students complete the task (typically without instructor interference).
- o **Planning:** students prepare to report on the task outcome.
- o **Reporting:** students report what they have prepared (task outcome)
- ▪ **Language:**
  - o **Analysis:** Teacher reviews language forms needed for expanding the task.
  - o **Practice:** students perform a more complex version of the task for expansion and further practice.

TBLT renders itself well to performance, rather than proficiency, assessment. Being able to perform a complex task that requires a higher level of language than that of a student can be managed with sufficient scaffolding, input, and well-managed modelling of the learning. Achieving that task, however, does not necessarily mean that the student has achieved a higher proficiency level. The potential of integrating performance assessment with TBLT is in fact a welcome characteristic of that method in a number of intermediate-level LCTL courses. As moving from Intermediate to Advanced proficiency is not a realistic expectation from a single course, assessing performance would give better progress indicators of students.

There is considerable research on TBLT in teaching English as a Foreign Language, world languages, and ESP. Integrated Performance Assessment in world languages has also been the topic of much recent research, as well as critical thinking skills. To the best of our knowledge, the interaction between the three areas has not been explored. In the next section I address how critical thinking skills can be integrated into an intermediate-level course using TBLT.

5. Concrete example: Arabic in practice

Responding to student demand for more language courses in the BA International Studies at Leiden University, a new course, titled Language in Practice, is to be offered to third (final) year students in all languages in the program. It is a Students are expected to spend a total of 140 hours on that course (28 classroom hours and the rest is for independent study and assessment), and receive 5 ECTs (European Credits, approximately equivalent to 3 US upper-division college credits). Students enrolling in Arabic in Practice will have completed three Arabic courses, and are at proficiency level A2+/B1-. The general aim of the course is to consolidate previous knowledge and offer students a way to utilize the language they have already studied for the previous three semesters in a way that helps them in their BA thesis (capstone paper) or professional careers after graduation.

A major challenge in designing the course is that the stated goal is rather ambitious: academic language is well above the level of the students and there is not time to allow