

Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills in Language Classes

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Article Information

Received: January 18, 2023

Accepted: February 19, 2023

Published: March 20, 2023

Keywords: cognitive, critical, analytical, lower order thinking, higher order thinking, analysis, synthesis, apply, evaluation, creative.

ABSTRACT

The article defines the notion of critical thinking skills and identifying CTS strategies by analyzing the relevant sources. The author of the article suggested implementing LOTS and HOTS and most important strategies for teaching critical thinking skills in the educational process.

Thinking helps language learners to obtain knowledge and a deeper understand of cognitive content which they learn, because learning is a fundamentally a thinking process. Moreover, critical thinking skill is one of the crucial types of thinking that requires attention and development for learners.

Firstly, this term was introduced by Greek philosophers and has been used since the Greek Empire era up to now, obtaining a significant, influential status during its extensive travel all over history. Many historians believe that the roots of critical thinking can be traced from Socrates' teaching practice and vision 2,500 years ago.

Zimnyaya (1989), Lomteva (2001) shows that the student age is a period of intensive development of mental cognitive processes and abilities¹. Akpur (2020) points at the relationship between CT, reflexive thinking, and creative thinking and proves their positive impact on student performance². According to Crockett(2018), critical thinking is more than just thinking clearly or rationally; it's about thinking independently³. Moore (2001) defines critical thinking is based on the standard of objectivity and consistency. It requires higher level of thinking independently. Salmon defined that (2013) critical thinking mainly refers to the cognitive processes related to information processing and evaluation⁴. According to the researcher's idea critical thinking is flow of knowledge, the ability to judge and a mental dispositional process.

Mohamed (2001) and Abdo (2003) classify the trends in defining critical thinking as follows: he first

¹ Lomteva, T. N. (2001). Andragogy in the context of the humanistic educational paradigm. Stavropol: Izdatelstvo SGU.

² Akpur, U. (2020). Critical, Reflective, Creative Thinking and Their Reflections on Academic Achievement. Thinking Skills and Creativity, 37, 1-8.

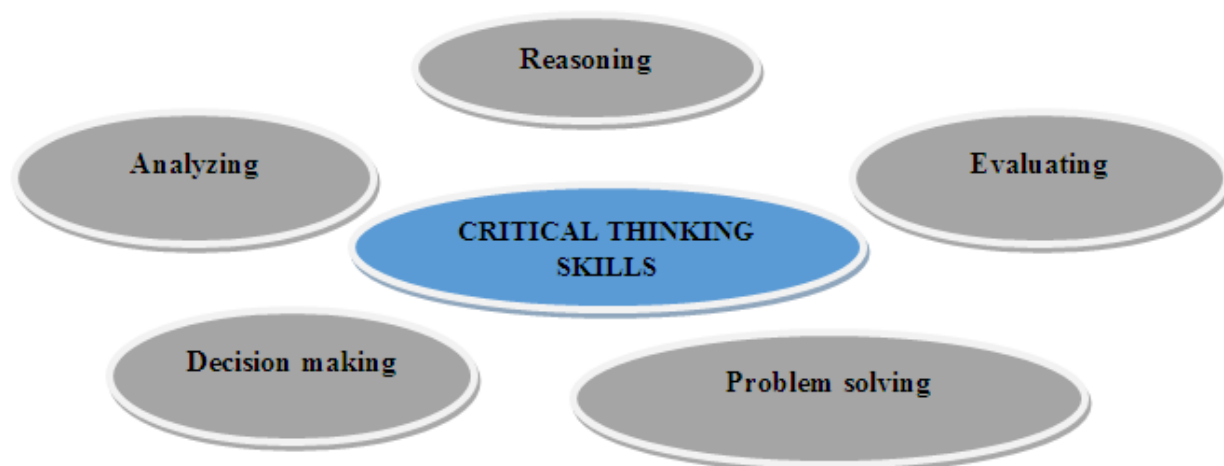
³ Crockett, L.W (2018) 12 strong strategies for effective teaching critical thinking skills

⁴ Salmon M.H.(2006) The teaching of critical thinking –unite research bark.

trend: critical thinking as a process of evaluation or judgment. The second trend: critical thinking and logical thinking are two aspects that go hand in hand. The third trend: critical thinking as a problem-solving skill. The fourth trend: critical thinking is a mental dispositional process⁵. It can be summarized in three trends: First stage is a processes where the focus is on mental processes. The second is the skill where the focus is on critical thinking skills. The third stage is a results, where the focus is on the outcome of critical thinking, whether it is for evaluation and issuance of judgments or other goals and objectives of the critical thinking process, such as solving problems and the like. Besides that critical thinking has lots of strategies that help in teaching process. Hassan (2008), Al-Harbi, (2008), and Al-Jarjara, (2008) pointed out the most important of which are the following: correlated word strategy, presenting a variety of words, discussing with students in order to identify relevant words, asking students to combine the previous words in a sentence, encouraging students to think in logical and correct ways. However, at university level, critical thinking skills are essential abilities in using intellectual tools by which one appropriately assesses thinking. Outlines the key steps in thinking critically, these include:

1. Describing – by clearly defining what you are talking about, what specifically was involved, where it took place and under what circumstances.
2. Reflecting – reconsidering a topic by taking into account new information or a new experience, or considering other viewpoints.
3. Analyzing – examining and then explaining how something is, including comparing and contrasting different elements and understanding relationships to your subject/topic.
4. Critiquing – identifying and examining weaknesses in arguments, as well as acknowledging its strengths. It's important to think of critiquing as 'neutral' and not negative.
5. Reasoning – using methods such as cause and effect to demonstrate logical thinking, as well as presenting evidence that either refutes or proves an argument.
6. Evaluating – can include commenting on the degrees of success and failure of something, or the value of something.

It has been shown that all key steps are crucial in language learning classes. Language learners practice these intellectual tools gradually. In addition to critical thinking skills teach a wide range of skill that can be applied to any situation in social life.



Generally, critical thinking skills have main components: reasoning, analyzing, decision making, problem solving, evaluating which is important in language classes. In order to understand the text or grasp the context language learner should analyze the passage from his/her point of view, while

⁵Abdelati, Hassan. (2008). Critical thinking in the age of informatics. Information studies, 2, pp. 149-180.

analyzing the text different questions will be given in order to clarify the answer. In the text language learners can be faced different problems, at that time they try to solve the problem or predict the issue from their point of view. At last, evaluation is to assess the ability to predict the author's problem.

Benjamin Bloom was an educational psychologist who, in 1956, published a taxonomy allowing us to classify specific critical thinking skills and therefore better understand them. This work has often been described by the educational community as one of the most influential of the 20th century, and it now finds a place in 21st century skills, following revisions by Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl in 2001⁶. The six discrete skills Bloom identified are divided into Lower order thinking skills (LOTS) and Higher order thinking skills (HOTS) as below, with the higher order skills being more cognitively challenging and therefore more difficult to develop.

Lower order thinking skills (LOTS)	Apply-use information in another way (show, complete, use, classify, illustrate);
	Understand-know what information means (compare, discuss, identify, restate, predict, translate, outline);
	Remember-recall information (name, describe, relate, find, list, write, tell);
Higher order thinking skills (HOTS)	Analyze-study the detail of information to find out more (explain, contrast, examine, identify, investigate, categorize)
	Evaluate- judge information and come to a conclusion, or make a recommendation (decide, rank, rate, choose, justify, assess, prioritize)
	Create- make something new (create, invent, plan, compose, construct, design, imagine)

Insight into classroom practice reveal that most questions teachers ask their students during a lesson require students to use their lower order critical thinking skills (Who? Where? Name. List. How many? When? Why? What? etc and higher order critical thinking skills (What facts can you find...? Do you know....? Can you identify.....? Why might....? How would you.....? What alternative....? What do you think.....? What criteria....? In what expend.....? What would you do.....? Critical thinking requires a deep processing of language, which aids in language acquisition. Thus, critical thinking skills covered the following components: *Analyzing*- similarities and differences; *applying*- applying possible solutions to problems; *evaluating*- how relevant, important or useful something is; *inferring*- what a speaker is saying indirectly or implicitly, rather than directly or explicitly; *synthesizing*- appropriate into and ideas from more than one source to make a judgment, summary, or conclusion based on the evidence; *reflecting*- on ideas and information in a text in order to relate them to your own personal experience and viewpoints and to form your own opinion.

Listening and Speaking classes:

Before viewing:

Critical thinking: predicting

Brainstorming

Organizing ideas

While viewing:

Understanding main ideas

Understanding details

Checking predictions

Note taking

⁶ Chris Sowton, Peter Lucantony (2019) Unlock.Cambridge University press.512 p

After viewing:

Personalizing

Presenting

Critical thinking evaluation

Critical thinking skill is self-directed, self-monitored, self-evaluated, self-disciplined and self-corrected thinking. It leads effective communication and problem solving abilities. Critical thinking skill is crucial and essential in many career among many others all have to use critical thinking in their position. Benefits of critical thinking skills are the following:

1. Better decision making
2. Allows for creativity
3. Enhances problem solving skills
4. Activate and refresh for the mind
5. Creates independence/ autonomy
6. Crucial life skill
7. Promotes creative ideas
8. Improves language skills

As it seems, it would engage the learners talking to one another to exchange information communicatively and critically. Students make a speech in order to communicate, activate thinking process, exchange argument and facts, not just to practice the language. It's clear that critical thinking is multiple. It helps language learners to wide their outlook, improve thinking, develop language skills, and analyze issues to reach a correct conclusion. In every class teachers should use wide range of games, tasks, activities and exercises to develop language learners critical thinking skills.

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