

School N88 after Yohannes Lepsius

RESEARCH PAPER

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Subject: The use of language tasks that develop students' critical thinking in English lessons

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INTRODUCTION

“Critical thinking is a desire to seek, patience to doubt, fondness to meditate, slowness to assert, readiness to consider, carefulness to dispose and set in order; and hatred for every kind of imposture.”

FRANCIS BACON



Critical thinking is an intellectual model for reasoning through issues to reach well-founded conclusions. It may be the single most valuable skill that one can bring to any job, profession, or life challenge. Being able to ask the right questions, critique an argument, and logically dissect an issue occur constantly in the workplace and our lives.

Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. Someone with critical thinking skills is able to do the following: Understand the logical connections between ideas.

In the 21st century, people have to have the higher-order thinking skills called 21st century learning skills to solve new problems of the modern world. Be a critical thinker is one of a kind the higher-order thinking. ‘Being able to think’ means that student should know how to apply their knowledge and skills they developed during learning in real life. Then, this paper focuses on what the competencies that should have for the student to be a critical thinker. Data were collected by using the literature study method. This method aims to gather all information from all written documents such as article journals and books.

The most prominent 21st century competencies is a critical thinking skill. Critical thinking skill refers to one of the learning and innovation skills in 21st century learning. Because the world makes progress in global paradigm, there is a massive change in the framing of references about the ways of life, work, society and how every individual is viewed and organized. These force students to be more competitive and intellectual in facing every problem in their real-life because the real-life issues are involved, so students are required the complex solutions obtained by using critical thinking as a higher order thinking process.

It's important to develop critical thinking skills for more than just academic reasons. Substantial critical thinking capacity serves us well in all aspects of our lives.

It encompasses problem-solving, decision making, personal responsibility, and managing relationships of every kind effectively, just to name a few things. There's no doubt it's one of the most crucial mindsets our learners could ever have, for learning and life. By using real-world examples, teachers can explore concepts that help learners think more critically. However, teachers must recognize the barriers and challenges accompanied by teaching critical thinking skills.

Most importantly, we must discover how to get around these barriers. This article will explore seven common critical thinking barriers and how to effectively get around them.

1. Egocentric Thinking
2. Groupthink
3. Drone Mentality
4. Social Conditioning
5. Biased Experiences
6. Schedule Pressures
7. Arrogance and Intolerance



“Thinking is thinking about your thinking while you are thinking in order to make your thinking better”. - Richard W. Paul



Teaching Critical Thinking

Every pupil should have an effective skill of critical thinking, and they must not accept anything for granted but how can you teach thinking critically to students? There are several ways of organizing for instruction in critical thinking: We can teach a separate course or unit, we can infuse critical thinking into all that we teach, or we can use a mixed approach. The first approach of a separate course or unit requires materials that teach specifically for critical thinking dispositions, skills, and knowledge. The downside is that there may be little transfer from what the program or materials teach to the rest of the curriculum.

Ask questions

Asking questions, especially open-ended questions, gives elementary school students a chance to apply what they've learned and build on prior knowledge. It also allows them to problem-solve and think on their feet, and boosts self-esteem by providing an opportunity for students to express themselves in front of their peers.

Encourage decision-making

Since a large part of teaching critical thinking skills revolves around applying knowledge and evaluating solutions, elementary school teachers should encourage decision-making as much as possible. This enables students to apply what they've learned to different situations, weigh the pros and cons of a variety of solutions, then decide which ideas work best.

Work in groups

Group projects and discussions are another excellent way for elementary school teachers to encourage critical thinking skills.

Cooperative learning not only exposes students to the thought processes of their classmates, it expands their thinking and worldview by demonstrating that there's no one right way to approach a problem.



Incorporate different points of view

Some of the very best critical thinking exercises for elementary school students involve exploring a concept from multiple perspectives. This tactic not only establishes that an idea should be assessed from different points of view before an opinion is formed, it gives students a chance to share their own viewpoints while listening to and learning from others.



Connect different ideas

Connecting different ideas is key to teaching critical thinking. For example, elementary school teachers can ask students if they know anyone who has to take a bus to work, and if so, why it would be important for that person to also have a train schedule. Questions like these help children consider different situations (delayed buses, for example) and potential solutions (taking the train instead), helping them apply prior knowledge to new contexts.



Inspire creativity

Imagination is key to teaching critical thinking in elementary school. Teachers should seek out new ways for students to use information to create something new. Art projects are an excellent way to do this. Students can also construct inventions, write a story or poem, create a game, sing a song—the sky's the limit.



Brain storm

Brainstorming, a time-honored tradition in elementary education, is an excellent learning tool. It's also an excellent critical-thinking exercise, especially when paired with visual elements that bring original thinking and classroom discussions to life.

Read, think, repeat: Developing critical thinking skills in the English classroom

Among the many goals of English language development at various levels of study, we find critical literacy, critical thinking and critical reading development. With the flood of information that our students encounter on various online platforms, it has become a central concern to equip them with the skills to critically approach and evaluate the texts they read. Let's look at some key terms and strategies to help students become critical thinkers and readers.

Unfortunately, critical thinking is often seen as a blurry area and students are often confused by what exactly is expected from them. However, both critical thinking and reading can be modelled, taught and developed in classrooms. As teachers, we need to reflect on what our subject area values as critical thinking skills. What do we, teachers, perceive as the demonstration of critical thinking and reading practices? When we have a clear view of our own expectations, it becomes easier to prepare students for critical thinking tasks.

First of all, it is important that the students need to possess the language and reading strategies to engage with a text and to approach it critically.

We will look at these strategies below.



When we read critically, we think about and reflect on our reading. It entails a conscious reading approach, in which we predict what we are reading, we seek information, and we have expectations. It also means that we analyze and evaluate our reading process and materials with the intention of judging their value.

Although we can define universal characteristics of critical thinkers, it is important to mention that different school subjects and academic disciplines approach texts in different ways.

By giving students strategies to work with texts critically, we can help them become well-informed and confident readers and thinkers. At the same time, vocabulary, grammar and syntax form an equally

important part of our comprehension of a text, especially when we read in a foreign language.

As our students improve their English and obtain more vocabulary, they will become better readers and will be able to combine different strategies.

- ✓ Define the purpose of their reading
- ✓ Predict the content of the text
- ✓ Activate their background knowledge
- ✓ Make a reading plan
- ✓ Understand text structure
- ✓ Check if their predictions were right
- ✓ Ask questions that help them understand the structure
- ✓ Ask questions that help them reflect on the topic and storyline
- ✓ Find the answers to these questions
- ✓ Make summaries
- ✓ Draw conclusions
- ✓ Find evidence to support their inferences and conclusions
- ✓ Guess new words from context
- ✓ Check their own comprehension
- ✓ Discuss and reflect on their reading experience

As a language teacher, you are already doing a lot to develop your students' critical thinking and reading skills. Just think about the various reading and writing activities you carry out in class. You ask students to understand, analyze, interpret and find evidence in reading comprehension tasks. When you prepare them for writing tasks, they need to follow clear instructions and produce arguments and stories with details.

Here are some questions to help your students approach texts critically. You can select and adapt these questions for your students' language and reading levels. Remind your students that critical reading always has a purpose. They can start by asking why this author has written this text. Did she simply want to entertain their readers? Is the author trying to

tell you something? Is the author trying to convince you of their values and opinions?

- ✓ Who wrote the text?
- ✓ When and where was it written?
- ✓ Why did the author write the text? If there is a narrator, what is his/her point of view?
- ✓ How do the time and place of the writing influence the views expressed in the texts? Are there any cultural, social or scientific assumptions in the texts?
- ✓ Can you evaluate the source? What points of view are presented in the text?
- ✓ Would the phenomena described in the text be approached in a similar or different way today?

When your students are reading a story, an article or a news item, remind them to pay attention to all the details.

In the language class we tend to concentrate on written and spoken texts, however, our overall judgement of a text also depends on visual elements. Ask questions about the following details.

- ✓ What does the cover tell you about the text?
- ✓ What does the title suggest?
- ✓ What do the colours of the book / website make you feel and think about?
- ✓ Is the text illustrated? If so, what are the illustrations like? How do they make you feel? Do they help you understand the text?
- ✓ Does the text look easy or hard to read? Does it come across as funny, serious or boring? Pay attention to the fonts in the texts.

Good readers are good critical thinkers, as they constantly analyze, evaluate what they read, say, hear and write. They learn to think in structures, in different patterns, and they think about their thinking in another language. When you think in another language, you use reference points, ask questions, and form opinions in a more conscious way.

As we can see, critical thinking and critical reading share a lot of characteristics, and they support each other. Good readers will be good learners. It also means that they will be good thinkers.

Be patient. Give your students time to think and reflect. This may seem obvious but we are often short of time and want a quick answer. If your students feel safe and comfortable, they will think and read more confidently.

Start debates. Group debates work very well when we'd like to practise reasoning and argumentation. During debates students recycle new vocabulary and consciously use functional language.

Character interview and analysis. This is a kind of hot seating activity. Choose a character from a story and put him or her in the hot-seat, then ask him/her questions.

As mentioned above there are some barriers which the teacher must overcome.

Egocentric thinking is a natural tendency to view everything in relation to oneself. This type of thinking leads to the inability to sympathize with others or analyze and evaluate various perspectives.

Sadly, since most egocentric people are not willing or cannot see this character flaw within themselves, this increases the difficulty in overcoming the barrier.

As young learners contemplate who they are and where they fit in, egocentric thinking may become more apparent. After all, they need experiences, opportunities for debate, brainstorming sessions, and the chance to ask meaningful questions in order to recognize and understand the viewpoints of others.

Creating a classroom that encourages critical thinking can help learners lose egocentrism. Especially during social conflicts, teachers can help learners think more abstractly by pointing out the opinions and attitudes of others. Teachers will do well to encourage empathy as their learners ponder other people's perspectives, opinions, and thoughts.

Groupthink can lead to unhealthy decision-making patterns. Like egocentric thinking, it is difficult to overcome. Breaking the cycle requires individuals to stand apart from the group and question opinions, thoughts, and popular ideas. This can be especially difficult for adolescents, but teachers can play a key role in **encouraging** Facilitating student learning in a classroom while avoiding a groupthink teaching style is possible by expanding teaching methods that help learners think creatively. This allows them to make connections and challenge reasoning, both of which are important for critical thinking. **independent thought** and action in students.

If you have a **drone mentality**, this means you don't pay attention to what is going on around you. A drone mentality can sneak up on anyone at any time. This mentality is dangerous in a classroom because learners forget how to respond to new circumstances. Teachers should avoid the temptation of slipping into patterns that can lead to a drone mentality effect in the classroom.

Unwanted assumptions and **stereotyping** leads to **social conditioning**. It does this by blinding us from the realization that we are even making assumptions and stereotyping in the first place. Teachers can help their learners assess their own thinking by helping them take inventory of their thoughts and beliefs. It's also important to teach clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness in their thinking patterns.

Personal biases can prohibit critical thinking because they prevent the thinker from being fair, inquisitive and open-minded. Teachers should encourage learners to lean on logic to become critical thinkers. This challenges them to evaluate the clarity and accuracy of their thinking.

Time constraints often serve as a barrier to integrating learning opportunities that support critical thinking skills. With training, practice and patience, teachers can learn various strategies that equip them to naturally model thinking behaviors in the classroom that improve learners' critical thinking skills.

True critical thinkers do not welcome **arrogance and intolerance** into their minds. It is nearly impossible to find the best solution to a problem with a close-minded mindset. Without critical thinking skills, individuals often react thoughtlessly and recklessly to situations. What they should do, however, is assess and take responsibility for their

choices while accepting the rewards or consequences that follow those choices.

Arrogance and intolerance block creativity and leaves no room for other suggestions for problem-solving. If learners believe no better solution to a problem exists, a teacher must have students question their logic. Encourage them to ask the following questions:

- What are my thoughts on this topic?*
- Why do I think like this?*
- Where did I learn this information?*
- What does the information imply?*

Breaking Down Barriers

- There are multiple ways to get around critical thinking barriers. One way is to have learners choose a topic of choice and write a paper demonstrating a variety of approaches to solve a problem on the chosen topic. Teachers can use real-life situations, such as car buying, as examples when strengthening critical thinking skills. You can have learners discuss the steps in buying a car and how to make the best decision based on a variety of factors, such as income, down payment options, car insurance prices, etc.*
- Another way to teach critical thinking skills is to highlight how a bad decision can lead to a poor outcome. The goal is to illustrate that making mistakes and suffering consequences are natural parts of decision-making. More importantly, that problem solving is a powerful skill that will impact almost every aspect of each student's future.*
- Teachers are key in influencing student's behavior as well as the use of critical thinking skills. These skills can make a positive difference in the achievement level in both the classroom and throughout a student's life.*

Conclusion

If the teacher practices critical thinking she logically connects the ideas, evaluates arguments, finds inconsistencies and errors, solves complex problems and engages in reflection.

Critical thinking allows a person to analyze information and makes an objective judgement. Being able to properly analyze a solution and come up with a logical and reasonable conclusion. The ability to think critically helps people in both their personal and professional lives.

More importantly, when you hear a statement such as ,“You should drink at least 4 glasses of wine per day”. You will know that something isn’t right. You will be prepared to think critically about the statement and will be in a position to make a more educated decision about the information.

Using the mode of teaching with critical thinking ,the class will start with a given topic. Discussion and dialogue can be started up among students and the teacher may raise some questions in between, derive the students with different solutions and justify them accordingly.

Thus it’s important to know how to use critical thinking in class but also reflect this area of knowledge as a useful subject.

Nowadays critical thinking helps students to think and develop confidence ultimately. I think critical thinking practices in class are really useful especially when teacher seems to be novice in using questioning ,reasoning and providing thinking times .Also, we can enhance the environment. Seats can be arranged in a way that students can see each other ,ask questions and interact with each other. This in turns will help to minimize the passive teaching.

Over the years, various meanings for critical thinking have been passed down. As for me, main thing for the development of critical thinking skills is to give students something to think about. It is necessary for organizations to commit to teaching in ways that support the critical thinking skills.

I believe that teaching students to use critical thinking may require a much more careful planning and selection prior to instruction which have to be matched to desire learning outcomes. Some teachers may fear their own imperfections, and some describe making changes to teaching may create discomfort. However, it must be stressed out that teaching students with critical thinking skills has implications for the quality of not only education, but also students’ mental development. This is because critical thinking is a provision of opportunity for students to think aloud as well as to show what they know. It is very

important for both the students and teachers to recognize and make decisions based upon their current frames of reference.

Last but not least, perform critical thinking either in life or class no doubt is a start for systemic health in our society. It is crucial for us to interact with people and solve problems in our lives. We can always improve our critical thinking by regularly engaging our mind in solving puzzles or in activities that employ strategies.



Resources

<https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2018/04/04/teaching-critical-thinking/> (Ana Tatsuni, published 04 April, 2018)

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317763720_Critical_thinking_in_the_language_classroom_Teacher_beliefs_and_methods (Victoria Tuzlukova, Saleh AL-Busaidi Sultan Qaboos University, published June, 2017)

<https://www.waldenu.edu/online-bachelors-programs/bs-in-elementary-education/resource/seven-ways-to-teach-critical-thinking-in-elementary-education> (Walden University)

<https://www.helblinglanguages.com/int/en/blog/read-think-repeat-developing-critical-thinking-skills-in-the-english-classroom> (Maria Cleary May 03, 2021)

<https://blog.futurefocusedlearning.net/critical-thinking-barriers> (Lee Crockett)

