

Workshop on INTEGRATING CRITICAL THINKING IN ENGLISH CLASS

Rohmani Nur Indah

indah@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id

Critical thinking belongs to one of prominent skills needed in 21st education. In this workshop I will discuss critical thinking in four parts. First is teacher reflection of his/her own critical thinking. Second, the definition and requirement of critical thinking. The third presentation is on the discussion of the challenges to integrate critical thinking for today's learners who belong to generation Z. Then, we will practice on how to develop activities to integrate critical thinking in English language classroom.

Part one: Teacher Reflection

The score of the reflection means the following:

- 10-29: exhibits close-mindedness, dislike justify results or procedures, nor explain reasons. Still need much effort to implement CT based ELT. Fighting!
- 30-39: fair-mindedly follows where evidence and reasons lead. Potential to develop CT based ELT. Good job!
- 40: thoughtfully analyzes and evaluates major alternative points of view. Good CT-ers of ELT. Congratulation!

Part two: What is Critical Thinking?

Many different definitions with similar meanings are given by scholars. Yet, the easiest one is that "Critical thinking is the ability to apply reasoning and logic to new or unfamiliar ideas, opinions, and situations." This is relevant to what Socrates, Greek philosopher said "I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think."

In other words, critical thinking is the cognitive competence in using reasoning & logic focusing on what to believe /do based on the mechanism (conducting conceptual & argument

analysis for problem solving & decision making). It is as a part of 4r basic competence (reading, writing, arithmetic, & reasoning)

Why critical thinking is important? In this case I need to mention the main three reasons:

- It fosters innovation and problem solving skills
- It promotes 'outside the box' thinking
- It also promotes higher rates of knowledge retention

What about for EFL students? The facts below emphasize how important CT is.

1. Critical thinking skills are teachable. For EFL, students need to become cognizant of cultural implications.
2. It makes classes better:
 - Classes are more interesting and engaging
 - It creates a sense of community and cohesiveness in the classroom
 - Students are empowered to think and question

Part three: Challenges of Teaching Critical Thinking

The main question is: why do English teachers need to integrate critical thinking in their English class? To answer this we need to see the nature of our learners. Students of middle school today is generation Z whose characteristics are as follow:

- Love to share
- Target oriented
- Want to search for network, etc.

Generation Z students are different in their way of collaborative strategies and contribution orientation. While teachers today are mostly from generation X. In this session, I will show you some pictures showing several phenomena and the participants of this workshop are expected to find sameness and differences between both generations.

Despite the potential of generation Z, they also have the risk namely: prematurely matured as the effect of advancement in communication and technology. But then comes the following questions to the mind of education practitioners:

- Do they really need to be prematurely matured?
- Does it belong to 21st century skill?
- What do they need as the key skill facing the era of technology and communication advancement?

Students of generation Z need critical thinking as one of the skills of 21st century. It is surely inseparable of the roles of their English teachers. There are numerous roles that can be used to integrate critical thinking:

- drama coach,
- puppet maker,
- creative writing specialist,
- folksinger,
- mime,
- photographer,
- cross-cultural trainer,
- public speaker,
- counselor,
- film critic,
- poet,
- story teller,
- discussion leader,
- team builder,
- grammarian,
- jazz chanter,
- reading specialist,
- materials developer,
- curriculum planner,
- curriculum evaluator,
- interviewer,
- friend,
- language authority,
- interaction manager,
- needs assessor,
- language model,

- joke teller,
- disciplinarian,
- language tester,
- text adapter,
- parent,
- strategy trainer,
- artist, and
- EXAMPLARY OF CRITICAL THINKER

Part four: how do you encourage your students to think critically?

There are six steps to do

1. Ask Questions

- An easy answer isn't much of an answer at all.
- Challenge them to think critically, and it gets them using more language
- E.g. [simple future](#), ask: What they will be doing in five years? *What makes you think that? Why are you so sure about that?*
- Idea: combine it with 'mime' strategy

2. Give a minute

- Simply count to sixty after asking a question to give your students a chance to think.
- You can also teach your students phrases like, "*Can I have a minute to think...Give me just a minute*"
- Introduce to interjection technique. E.g. Well, I think that is not an easy question for me because I need to think more, but I will try to answer it.

3. Encourage More

- For students of English as a second language, giving a quick answer is often appealing.
- A quick answer doesn't necessarily encourage critical thinking. You can ask: *Tell me more about that. What else do you think? Why is that good/bad/scary/difficult/or not? What part is most interesting to you? Why?* Asking these questions challenges your students to say more.

4. Provide Scaffold

- When learning something new or tackling a new problem, all people sometimes need support.
- Give them tools i.e. examples, breaking tasks into smaller more manageable steps, giving hints or clues, and providing reminders
- Be patient and give them the assistance they need to reach success.

5. Encourage Argument

- It doesn't mean letting your students go for one another's throats.
- Ask them to express logical and reasonable supports for their opinions during discussion

6. Make Predictions

- Making predictions is a tool that is quite useful in the ESL classroom.
- Ask them to take a guess at what comes next in reading assignments (fiction, essays, informational articles) as well as video segments you play in class.
- The next time your students are reading a passage or listening to a segment, hit pause and ask them what they think will come next.

Practice: Based on some video segments presented, ask questions so that students make prediction. (Except: What happens next?)

Questioning strategies are implemented for various purposes, i.e. asking for clarification, confirmation, evaluation, reflection, etc. In addition, Socratic Questioning (Why, How etc) is applicable in several contexts such as critical listening, critical reading, critical speaking and critical writing.

The following is an example of procedure in the activities using THINK-PAIR-SHARE. First, group the students. Then provide the learning topic using the chosen media (e.g. text, pictures, music, video, etc), give them two options. The next step is ask them to pick one and

describe their reasons which include strength & weakness. Don't forget to provide them with list of related vocabularies which are helpful to support their communication in discussion. After the discussion is done, each group presents their discussion result. The final stage is feedback session.

In integrating critical thinking to our English class, there are some recommendations to keep in mind as follow:

- Clarify instruction by writing on the board and demonstrate 'think-aloud'
- Avoid speaking too fast & too long
- Model the expression
- Simplify the topic, pick the general and easy task using the student's context
- Use Socratic questioning: what, why, how
- Involve passive students by asking them to repeat or paraphrase their friend's response

The last activity in this workshop is brainstorming. There are some learning sources to be used. Observe and plan how to make the utmost of those materials to promote your students' critical thinking skills.

Further readings:

Clark, D. 2010. *Bloom Taxonomy of Learning Domains*.

(<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/learning/learning.html>)

Harmer, J. 1998. *How to Teach English: An Introduction to the Practice of English Language Teaching*. Essex: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.

Hayes-Bohanan, P. & Spievak, E. 2008. You Can Lead Students to Sources, but Can You Make Them Think? *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 15: 1, 173 – 210

Verner, Susan. *Thinking Outside The Blank*. (busyteacher.org/17541-8-critical-thinking-activities-esl-students.html)