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STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING CLASSROOM

The purpose of this article is to illustrate possible ways of developing critical thinking in ESL classes. We try to state that one step of doing this is to change teacher's attitude towards students. Critical thinking means making reasoned judgments. Basically, it is using criteria to judge the quality of something. In essence, critical thinking is a disciplined manner of thought that a person uses to assess the validity of something: a statement, news story, argument, research, etc.

While investigating the reality in Armenian educational settings we suggest that the first step that should be taken is for teachers change their attitudes towards students. But what kinds of attitudes need to be changed? Usually, some language teachers look upon their students as empty vessels, which require to be filled with information. In fact these teachers disregard their students' qualities and ideas. In addition, they do not allow their students to come into their own and express themselves. In the case of passive learners, teacher is the only one who speaks. Such teachers expect their students to do as they are told and they do not allow them to ask "why" or "how". This kind of attitudes will destroy the opportunities for learning and critical thinking. The solution to this problem is that teachers should become patient listeners to learners' opinions and questions. Teachers

should do their best to avoid these attitudes and move to being open-minded in their attitudes and actions. In the following section some of the strategies which can help teachers reinforce critical thinking of their students are presented.

When the teacher answers questions or asks them, some challenging questions such as "Why is it so? What do you think about...? What is your idea about...? etc. can help students think critically. These are mostly influential in verbal exchanges in the language class. R Ennis (1992) proposes the three underlying strategies as "Reflection, Reason, and Alternatives."

1. Encourage your students to be Reflective, to wait and think, instead of making impulsive judgments, or accepting the first thought that occurs in their mind, or promptly accepting whatever is manifested in the media. Many students accept whatever they are told especially if something is said by someone who they trust e.g. their friends or if something is written in books and newspapers. As such, students should be taught to wait after receiving ideas and think deeply and then accept them in case the information corresponds to logic and reasoning. This will lead to improvement in their critical thinking ability.

2. Kindly ask questions such as "How do you know", "what are the Reasons?" so as

to make sure they have underlying reasons for their ideas and to search for rationales for others' views.

3. Highlight alertness for alternatives, hypotheses, conclusions, explanations, points of views etc. Students should understand that there is no fixed idea and most of the times, there are some alternatives if the point be viewed from a different angle. This point can be taught to students and they should be sharp enough to devise new options. You can ask them e.g. "Is it possible to solve this problem in another way?" or "Do you know any cheaper way for dealing with these costs?"

4. Give your students adequate time to ponder about questions and situations. This is vital for deep thinking and logical reasoning.

5. In a debate, write down each student's statement on the board with the student's name, so that the student receives attention and assumes some responsibility, and invite other students to comment on it. This will also lead to improvement in students' self-esteem which consequently gives them impetus for thinking critically.

6. Ask students to formulate their own questions. They need to realize that it is not just the teacher who can ask questions, students also have the right to ask. The students' understanding of the roles which they have in the process of teaching/learning is one of the first steps in leading them toward critical thinking.

As it is widely known the lecture format of learning is a venerable and popular approach to content delivery in higher education; however, it frequently does not encourage active learning or critical thinking on the part of students. Those new to the teaching profession often adopt the lecture format because it is both teacher-centered and comes with a strong academic tradition. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to increase a student's critical thinking skills with the lecture format. Topics are

discussed sequentially rather than critically, and students tend to memorize the material since the lecture method facilitates the delivery of large amounts of information. The student is placed in a passive rather than an active role since the teacher does the talking, the questioning, and, thus, most of the thinking Maiorana (1991, p53-64).

Active learning can make the course more enjoyable for both teachers and students, and, most importantly, it can cause students to think critically. For this to happen, educators must give up the belief that students cannot learn the subject at hand unless the teacher covers it. While it is useful for students to gain some exposure to the material through pre-class readings and overview lectures, students really do not understand it until they actively do something with it and reflect on the meaning of what they are doing.

To provide the greatest benefit to students, teachers should provide many opportunities for students to engage in the upper levels of Bloom's taxonomy where critical thinking takes place. While most teachers believe that developing critical thinking in their students is of primary importance Albrecht, Sack (2000), few have an idea exactly what it is, how it should be taught, or how it should be assessed Paul, Elder, Batell (1997). The following model is a 5-step framework that can be implemented in any classroom or training setting to help students gain critical thinking skills.

Here are some step models to move students toward Critical Thinking:

Determine learning objectives.

Considering the importance of a course, its placement in a program of study, and its role in providing a base of knowledge to be built upon by other courses, a teacher should first identify the key learning objectives that define what behaviors students should exhibit when they exit the class. To make critical thinking happen these learning objectives, as well as the activities and

assessments, must include those tied to the higher levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy.

A well-written objective should include a behavior that is appropriate for the chosen level of the taxonomy. Bloom's Knowledge level requires an answer that demonstrates simple recall of facts. Questions at this level could ask students to answer who and what and to describe, state, and list. Comprehension requires an answer that demonstrates an understanding of the information. Questions at this level might ask students to summarize, explain, paraphrase, compare, and contrast. Application requires an answer that demonstrates an ability to use information, concepts and theories in new situations. Questions at this level may ask students to apply, construct, solve, discover, and show. Analysis requires an answer that demonstrates an ability to see patterns and classify information, concepts, and theories into component parts. Questions at this level could ask students to examine, classify, categorize, differentiate, and analyze. Synthesis requires an answer that demonstrates an ability to relate knowledge from several areas to create new or original work. Questions at this level might ask students to combine, construct, create, role-play, and suppose. Finally, b requires an answer that demonstrates ability to judge evidence based on reasoned argument. Questions at this level may ask students to assess, criticize, recommend, predict, and evaluate. Thus, a well-written lesson plan should target a specific behavior, introduce and allow for practice of the desired behavior, and end with the learner exhibition of the behavioral response. The development of well-written questions will greatly accelerate a learner's movement into critical thinking.

Consider computer security as an example. Say that the objective is: "Students will be able to classify common security threats by category." The verb classify is a behavior typically identified with the

Analysis level of Bloom's taxonomy. The three categories (natural disasters, employee errors, crime) would be presented to the students using questions to enhance the students' understanding. These questions could include (a) "What natural disasters are common in the area in which you currently live?" (b) "Are employee errors intentional acts?" and (c) "What computer crimes or acts of fraud have you read about in the past two months?" Once an understanding of the basic categories has been established, the students are placed in groups and assigned a business. Students will then be asked to identify at least three security threats from each category for that business to be shared in discussion with the entire class. Finally, students are asked individually to classify security threats by category for a business on the exam.

Teach through questioning.

Questioning is a vital part of the teaching and learning process. It allows the teacher to establish what is already known and then to extend beyond that to develop new ideas and understandings. Questions can be used to stimulate interaction between teacher and learner and to challenge the learner to defend his or her position, (i.e., to think critically). Clasen and Bonk (1990) posited that although there are many strategies that can impact student thinking, it is teacher questions that have the greatest impact. He went on to indicate that the level of student thinking is directly proportional to the level of questions asked. When teachers plan, they must consider the purpose of each question and then develop the appropriate level and type of question to accomplish the purpose. All students need experience with higher level questioning once they become familiar with a concept. Thoughtful preparation on the part of the teacher is essential in providing that experience.

Practice before you assess. In the past decade, a major shift has taken place in education; that shift is toward active

learning. Teachers that have used this approach generally find that the students learn more and that the courses are more enjoyable. Bonwell and Eison (1991) described active learning as involving the students in activities that cause them to think about what they are doing. Fink (2003) indicated that the concept of active learning supports research which shows that students learn more and retain knowledge longer if they acquire it in an active rather than passive manner. To make learning more active, we need to learn how to enhance the overall learning experience by adding some kind of experiential learning and opportunities for reflective dialog.

Review, refine, and improve. Teachers should strive to continually refine their courses to ensure that their instructional techniques are in fact helping students develop critical thinking skills. To accomplish this, teachers should monitor the classroom activities very closely. To track student participation, a teaching diary can be kept that identifies the students that participated, describes the main class activities, and provides an assessment of their success. Other reflective comments can also be tracked in this journal and can be very useful when revising or updating instructional activities.

Provide feedback and assessment of learning. Teacher feedback, like assessment, compares criteria and standards to student performance in an effort to evaluate the quality of work. However, the purpose of feedback is to enhance the quality of student learning and performance, rather than to grade the performance, and, importantly, it has the potential to help students learn how to assess their own performance in the future. Feedback allows the teacher and student(s) to engage in dialogue about what distinguishes successful performance from unsuccessful performance as they discuss criteria and standards Fink (2003).

Teachers should provide good feedback

to their students through frequent opportunities to practice whatever they are expected to do at assessment time. Teachers should spend ample time helping students to understand what the criteria and standards are and what they mean. Student peers may also provide feedback and evaluation. Each of these techniques help students learn to distinguish between satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance.

As we could see above there were many approaches to teaching Critical Thinking and their importance in ESL classes. In our strong belief teaching Critical Thinking is to be taught starting from pre-school to advanced students. Hence, we describe a range of experimental lessons with B1 level students. According to Common European Language Framework B1 level students are able to understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken, to produce connected texts which are familiar or of personal interest, to describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. After a detailed survey on teaching we pick up specific methods, activities, approaches, which are very effective in teaching Critical Thinking. The participants of the study were 3rd year students of Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University, Department of Foreign Languages. The group consisted of 14 students of different skills and knowledge. The tasks and activities that had to be used were taken from different sources, including their textbooks and also some extra materials.

The first step in teaching Critical Thinking should be the investigation of the character of teaching-learning process alongside with the nature of intermediate level student. For this reason it will be relevant to know that intermediate level

student acquire knowledge automatically. One of our principal goals is to get the student get automatize i.e. get the students use the bits and pieces of language, that are readily available automatically (immediately) whenever is needed. For this reason the role of the teacher should be that of conductor, facilitator not of the imitator of the language. Students should be encouraged to interact with each other, ask and answer questions, work in small and large groups maintain topics of discussions and so on. One of the main goals of this level is to reinforce and develop the students creativity, for this reason common interactive techniques such as pair work, role play, problem solving are widely encouraged .

While teaching, it's extremely important to establish rapport in the classroom. By saying rapport we mean creating positive energy in the classroom. One can always wonder at the ability of the students to see through the teachers/ instructors: they know what you think about them how eager you are to help them etc. In our strong belief only sincere, eager to teach, competent teachers are able to create rapport in the classroom. The main and crucial factors for this are good terms established among the teachers and the students. To hit this target the teacher should be interested not only in the teaching process but also in every student of the class, should give necessary feedback to each student's progress thus showing that he /she is compassionate and eager to help the student to overcome the learning obstacles, respect his/her students, their feeling and get the others respect each other too, laugh with them and not at them, as humor seems to come to help in situations there is no way out, and finally, work out with them in the same team and not against them, the students should feel safe and relaxed.

As a teacher we have **a Slogan** and it's of crucial help to effectiveness of our lessons: ***the students should leave the classroom***

smiling and looking forward to the next meeting. According to this slogan the lesson should be interesting and full of enthusiasm. We also take the psychological aspect into consideration i.e. one always remembers the events that came the last and in case the lesson is an ordinary one with questions and the very last activity is interesting , stimulating and creative so as the student went for the break in a good mood, laughing and discussing the lesson. If one hears that the lesson was short or that's a pity it was over, it's the sign that he/ she succeeded. During the short experience we came to the conclusion that the students are less aggressive and disciplined in case the student shows care and supportive attitude towards them does not try to prove that then students are wrong all time.

The second paramount factor for successful lesson is ***the seating arrangement.*** In those days the traditional sitting pattern i.e. all desks line up in columns .We should have the opportunity of face to face interaction.

The third and most important factor for an effective lesson is motivation he/ she gets.

The forth important factor is certainly the activities, techniques used during teaching-learning process. Having investigated the activities and techniques of interactive teaching we consider the combination of controlled techniques listed below to be highly productive in developing Critical Thinking.

Warm up-has the purpose of getting the students stimulated, relaxed, motivated, attentive, engaged and ready for the class.

Setting - focus on the lesson topic. Either verbal or nonverbal evocation of the context that is relevant to the lesson point, by way of questioning, miming or picture presentation.

Organizational part- is the managerial structure of the lesson or class activities. It includes disciplinary action, organization

of class furniture and setting, general procedure for class interaction and performance, structure and purpose of the lesson.

Role-play demonstration- the use of selected students or teacher to demonstrate the procedure to be used in the lesson segment to follow, brief illustration of language.

Question –answer, display-activity involves prompting of student responses by means of display questions.

Testing-format setting procedures to evaluate student progress

Problem solving-activity involving specific problem and limitation of means to resolve it, requires cooperative action on part of participants.

Preparation –student study, pair planning, preparing for later study

Debate –This is a kind of task which enables have some discussion in groups .It enables also each member express their own thoughts. Group members choose their group leader and later on he or she represents their thoughts.

Decision –making –The principle of

this task is to reach a decision or solution through some kind of interaction .Decision –making tasks are usually based on a piece of information that is given in a pre-task stage or the information which is known by the learner from their personal life experience. In those tasks learners are working individually or together to find some solution and come the final decision.

As the final stage we describe a sample of experimental lesson with the activities and worksheets designed by us. Those lessons aimed at proving that above mentioned activities will contribute to the enrichment of student’s knowledge and help them have clear idea of what Critical Thinking is.

Lesson Plan

Subject: Introduction to Critical thinking

Level: Intermediate **(BI)**

Lesson Duration: 45 minutes

Materials required for the lesson:

Power Point presentation on Critical Thinking in general, worksheets, handouts.

Aim: The students will be able to identify what is Critical Thinking, name the main problems concerning the problem of thinking critically and analytically.

Procedure	Interaction	Timing
	T→S	10 minutes
Introduction to Critical Thinking		
Worksheets in order to measure students’ Critical Thinking level.	T→S	15 minutes
Collection of the worksheets and a short discussion on this topic.	T→S	20 minutes

Lesson description and Self-Assessment

We used a worksheet made by us in order to measure the level of Critical Thinking of students. Then we watched a Power Point Presentation on Critical Thinking. Students had chance to express their thoughts of what do we mean by saying Critical Thinking. They had really amazing view points on Critical Thinking. Some expressed the idea that we should never criticize the thoughts and ideas of the lecturers, some expressed the contrary ideas .It was an interesting debate. The strongest point of this method was that each member of the group wasn't isolated, that's to say they all have the right to express their thoughts. They had a chance to cooperate with each other and came to the final conclusion.

At the end of our research the following conclusions can be made:

1. Students mentioned that they don't consider teacher-centered classroom teaching an effective way for conducting lessons. They also mentioned that liked very much the way we had our discussions, as

we organized the desks in a way that they could have face to face communication.

2. As we could see the notion of Critical Thinking was very interesting, motivating and it created an enjoyable atmosphere as it had some connection with real lives of the learners. Tasks helped us to have an interesting debate. Tasks also helped and encourage the students to plan and be more open-minded in real life. They changed their minds in expressing their thoughts.

3. While engaged in the completion of such various types of tasks students performed naturally which in its turns increased their confidence and increased motivation.

4. The results of the analysis indicate that Thinking Critically has a lot of benefits for the Armenian learners. The findings could help the teachers of our country to provide learners with a variety of learning tasks and instructions that would give an opportunity to involve learner in a communicative, creative and cognitive way of learning.

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IV. Արդյունքի անվան հայկական պետական մանկավարժական համալսարանի օտար լեզուների դասավանդման մեթոդիկայի ամբիոնի դոցենտ, մանկավարժական գիտությունների թեկնածու

Հոդվածում ընդգծվում է արդի ժամանակաշրջանում սովորողների քննադատական մտածողության զարգացման կարևորությունը: Ապացուցվում է, որ ավանդական կրթության մարտավարությունները, որոնք հիմնվում են պասիվ սովորողի, տեսության և տեղեկատվության փոխանցման վրա, վաղուց արդեն արդյունավետ չեն, և որ անհրաժեշտ է զարգացնել սովորողի քննադատական և վերլուծական վերաբերմունքը այս կամ այն խնդրի շուրջ՝ շեշտը դնելով իրատեսական, բազմակողմանի և բազմաբովանդակ մտածողության և վերլուծության վրա:

СТРАТЕГИИ РАЗВИТИЯ КРИТИЧЕСКОГО МЫШЛЕНИЯ

АНИ МАНУКЯН

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Статья посвящена особенностям применения технологии развития критического мышления. Практика сегодня показывает, что слишком малый процент выпускников школ реально владеют информационной культурой, культурой мыслить критически. Современного ученика трудно мотивировать к познавательной деятельности, к поиску пути к цели в поле информации и коммуникации. Происходит это потому, что дети часто испытывают серьёзные затруднения в восприятии учебного материала по всем школьным предметам. Причина этого – в недостаточно высоком уровне развития мышления и, прежде всего, критического. А это очень важно для человека в современном мире, который живёт в новом веке с новым обликом познавательной культуры, для которой «человек репродуцирующий» – понятие, в сущности, устаревшее и неинтересное. Кроме воспроизводящей деятельности существует и другой род деятельности, именно деятельность комбинирующая или творческая. Сегодня мы не можем ограничивать себя методами, побуждающими ученика к механическому воспроизведению. Современная жизнь требует мышления высокого уровня, общения, способности адаптироваться в широком спектре общественных и интеллектуальных ситуаций.