

CRITICAL THINKING IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION.

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The English language today serves as a means of communication between people and nations of the universe. The importance of learning and teaching English gave priority to the learning of it. Every teacher must have heard at some point throughout their teaching careers the term “critical thinking”. This concept seems to be present daily in educational speeches, articles and syllabuses. Moreover, there seems to be a general agreement on the “correctness” of such a term and its usage. The English language developed over time in its birthplace – England and later in such countries as the USA, Australia, and New Zealand. The development of a language is determined by the development of literature. All the positive (and negative) features of a language can find their reflection in literature. Thus language is influencing the literature. In this point, we can say that literature and language are intertwined and the learning of one demands the learning of the other one.

Critical thinking is a fundamental skill that empowers students to analyze, evaluate, and create meaning through language. In the context of language education, fostering critical thinking not only enhances linguistic competence but also develops students' cognitive and problem-solving abilities.

Critical thinking, the focus of this thesis, is at the heart of life in a democratic society in the twenty-first century. Dam & Volman (2004) point out that, critical thinking is the essence of thoughtful, democratic citizenship, and thus occupies a central position in education in the modern world. As such, the teaching of critical thinking is of concern to education at all levels. Marzano (1988, p. 2) holds a similar view: “The success of any democratic system depends on the individual's ability to analyse problems and make thoughtful decisions.

A democracy thrives on the productivity of its diverse constituency — productivity fostered by free, critical, and creative thought on issues of common interest”. It has also been claimed that critical thinking is the basis of ‘progressive’ thinking; thus it is valued by democratic social institutions. So, Lipman (2003) puts critical thinking at the heart of education. He states: “Education can be seen as the great laboratory for rationality, but it is more realistic to see it as a context in which young people learn to be reasonable so that they can grow up to be reasonable citizens, reasonable companions, and reasonable parents” (p. 22).

Critical Thinking: a mental process of analyzing or evaluating information, particularly statements or propositions that are offered as true critical thinking can be described as a —gradual progression from the superficial to the increasingly complex.

There were described the nature of critical thinking by explaining why it is so hard to do and to teach, and explore how students acquire a specific type of critical thinking: thinking scientifically. Along the way, we'll see that critical thinking is not a set of skills that can be deployed at any time, in any context. It is a type of thought that even 3-year-olds can engage in—and even trained scientists can fail in.

And it is very much dependent on domain knowledge and practice. The ability to analyze and creatively adapt to new situations is at the heart of critical thinking. Paul and Elder (2008) highlighted that critical thinking serves as a means to cultivate the intellect (p. 88). Given the limited timeframe of four years in high school, it is impractical to cover every possible situation students may face in life within a classroom setting. This limitation means educators cannot teach students exactly what to think, but they can guide them in how to think. High school students who excel in college are often those who have developed the discipline to think critically and engage thoughtfully across various topics (p. 91).

The high school English classroom offers a distinct opportunity to foster and apply critical thinking skills. Here, students engage in activities such as reading rhetorically, thinking critically, and writing authoritatively—skills that extend far beyond academics (Bernasconi, 2008, p. 19). Literature serves as a platform for examining life's most perplexing and compelling themes, enabling students to debate and reflect on ethical and moral dilemmas while learning collaboratively. Mendelman (2007) argued that literature provides an ideal framework for teaching critical analytical skills, as understanding the world parallels interpreting texts (p. 300).

To contribute meaningfully to society, young individuals must demonstrate the ability to think critically, whether through reading, writing, or verbal communication. The English classroom stands out as a prime environment for cultivating the habits of mind essential for profound and insightful critical thinking. However, Mendelman (2007) also pointed out a significant gap in the U.S. education system, asserting that most schools fail to teach critical thinking, leaving much of the population without this essential skill (p. 300).

There are some matters of critical thinking in language education:

- Critical thinking helps learners to interpret, analyze, and synthesize information, which deepens their understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and communication contexts.

- In a globalized world, students encounter diverse perspectives. Critical thinking equips them to navigate and engage in meaningful conversations with cultural and intellectual sensitivity.

- Students become active participants in their learning process, questioning assumptions, and exploring ideas beyond rote memorization.

In conclusion, critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

LITERATURE:

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