

A Review of Critical Thinking Pedagogical Strategies Used in College English Reading

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Abstract. In the teaching of English reading in universities, critical thinking has been emphasized by more and more teachers. In today's society, the internationalization of higher education has become a trend, and putting the internationalization of education into effect requires the growth of critical thinking. This study presents a comprehensive summary of the pedagogical strategies employed to develop critical thinking in college English reading courses. The paper is divided into four parts: firstly, a brief description of the background and educational significance of critical thinking, secondly, an elucidation of the definition of critical thinking, thirdly, a brief review of the thinking ability models related to critical thinking at home and abroad, and finally, a compendium of related teaching strategies to improve critical thinking. The results of this study show that nowadays critical thinking instruction in college reading in English may be taught in relatively straightforward ways, and it is hoped that in the future, educators would look into more adaptable and comprehensive teaching methodologies.

Keywords: Critical thinking; College English Reading; Pedagogical strategies.

1. Introduction

Information technology is a major trend in today's world, and people need to be more critical in order to identify and use information of varying quality. Critical thinking is an important skill and an indispensable tool in all fields, which is very helpful for people's work, study and life. The development of critical thinking is of tremendous practical value because one of the primary objectives of higher education in the modern world is to foster the development of inventive talents with innovative spirit and innovative ability. Critical thinking is the prerequisite and foundation of creativity [1]. In college English teaching, reading is regarded as the best way to cultivate critical thinking, so nowadays how to foster students' critical consciousness in college English reading instruction is becoming a topic of increasing interest. Students can better build critical consciousness in reading to support English learning through practical English reading teaching practice and training.

2. Definition of Critical Thinking

2.1. Abroad

Wastson-Glaser in 1980 proposed that critical thinking integrates the three aspects of attitude, knowledge and skills, a person with critical thinking must have a questioning attitude, sufficient knowledge base to articulate the problem, as well as the ability to analyze and evaluate the results [1]. Robert Ennis in 1991 gave the definition of critical thinking, he believes that critical thinking is thinking rationally, constantly reflecting and focusing on doing what one believes is right [2]. While Halpern in 2001 suggested that critical thinking is the ability to analyze, organize and appraise information and the potential to use these abilities [3].

2.2. Domestic

According to Luo Qingxu's theory in China, critical thinking is a personality attribute in which a person self-regulates judgments regarding the accuracy or inaccuracy of procedures, theories, techniques, backgrounds, proof, and standards for evaluating the information produced [4]. Zhu

Zhixian and Lin Chongde proposed that critical thinking is an intellectual quality that can be evaluated and critically examined in the process of thinking, and it is the extent to which the ability to independently analyze and critique can be achieved in thinking activities, and that problem-solving, creative thinking, and critical thinking are all interrelated [1]. Yang Wujin, on the other hand, stated that critical thinking is a logical discipline [5]. It involves the ability to process a variety of information, the most important of which is the ability to reason and argue, which is a prerequisite for the development of critical thinking [5].

3. Models of Cognitive Skills Related to Critical Thinking

From 1988 to 1989, the “Telfer project” team identified six cognitive skills of critical thinking: (1) interpretation, (2) analysis, (3) evaluation, (4) argumentation, (5) explanation, and (6) self-management, each of which contains a number of sub-competencies, and these skills are used interchangeably during the process of critical thinking (see Table 1) [1].

Table 1. "Telfer" model: Six cognitive skills and sub-skills of critical thinking

Cognitive abilities					
Interpretation:	Analysis:	Evaluation:	argumentation,	Explaining:	Self-management:
Categorizing, Understanding meaning, Clarify meaning	Analyze perceptions, Identify arguments, Analyzing the argumentative process	Evaluating ideas, Evaluating arguments	Questioning evidence, Suggesting alternative hypotheses, Drawing conclusions	Stating results, Describe the methodology, Drawing conclusions	Self- assessment, Self- correction

Paul and Elder proposed a triadic structural model that includes elements of thinking, criteria of thinking, and intellectual attributes. The 8 elements of thinking are: purpose, assumptions, questions, perspectives, information, reasoning, concepts, and revelation [6]. The 10 criteria are: clarity, precision, accuracy, significance, relevance, completeness, logic, rationality, breadth and depth [6]. The 8 elements of thinking form a circular chain, and each element of thinking must be measured by the 10 criteria, and human intellectual traits are developed along with intellectual development [1, 6].

Lin Chongde, a scholar in China, summarized critical thinking as a three-pronged structural model that includes the aim of thinking, the approach of thinking, the way one thinks itself, the value of thinking, the self-control of thinking, and the non-cognitive factors of thinking [7]. This model shows the plurality of thinking structures; it explains that intelligence is mainly the thinking ability that people need to identify, analyze and solve problems to achieve a specific objective under the control and guidance of self-monitoring and the role of non-cognitive factors in a specific material and socio-historical and cultural environment [7].

The three components of cognitive capacity can be directly noticed in instruction at the second level of Wen Qiufang's suggested hierarchical theoretical model of critical thinking, so it is regarded as explicit critical thinking ability, and cognitive standards are the process of progressive development of critical thinking ability [8]. Within this model, the affective dimension of competence assumes an inspiring and moderating function, serving as both the genesis of critical thinking skills and the culmination of their development (see Table 2) [9].

Table 2. Wen Qiufang's hierarchical theory model of critical thinking ability

Level 1 - Meta-Critical Thinking Skills (Self-Regulation Skills)		
Level 2 - Critical Thinking Skills		
cognition		emotion
skill	standard	
Analyzing (categorizing, identifying, comparing, clarifying, distinguishing, elaborating, etc.) Reasoning (questioning, assuming, inferring, elaborating, arguing, etc.) Evaluating (critiquing presuppositions, assumptions, arguments, theses, conclusions, etc.)	Clarity (clear, precise) Relevance (on-topic, well-detailed, clear-cut) Logic (well-organized, well-founded reasoning) Profundity (breadth and depth) Flexibility (quick change of perspective, skillful alternation of different discursive skills, etc.)	Curious (suspicious, inquisitive, eager to learn) Openness (tolerance, respect for different opinions, willingness to correct one's own inappropriate views) Confidence (trusting one's own judgement, daring to challenge authority) Integrity (pursuing truth, advocating justice) Perseverance (having determination, perseverance, not giving up easily)

4. Strategies of Enhancing Critical Thinking in College English Teaching

4.1. Preparation of Teaching Materials

The development of thinking skills should receive more emphasis during the creation of educational materials than just the development of linguistic skills. At present, more and more post-class practice questions in college English textbooks are more concerned with grammar training, word choice, vocabulary transformation and so on, and less concerned with examining thinking ability [10]. Therefore, textbook writers should appropriately increase the proportion of critical thinking practice questions and set the questions in a gradual hierarchy. In addition, the writers should pay attention to the selection of materials, deepen the content of critical thinking in the materials, pay attention to the different modules of English textbooks, and integrate critical thinking into each module of the textbooks.

4.2. Teachers' Teaching

4.2.1 The role of the teacher

A democratic teacher-student relationship is a prerequisite for good teaching, and if colleges and universities want to promote the development of students' critical thinking, they should pay more attention to establishing a democratic teacher-student relationship [11]. Teachers, in their own role positioning, should change the previous "teacher-centred" teaching mode, become a facilitator of students' learning, classroom activities, organizer, participant. For example, in the teaching process, teachers should use more task-based teaching, set tasks according to students' suggestions and interests, give full play to students' initiative, and cultivate students' problem-solving skills by encouraging their awareness of issues. In addition, teachers should also follow the law of students' thinking development, respect students' ideas, encourage them to actively participate in the process of knowledge construction, and take the initiative to express their own views [12].

4.2.2 Teacher questioning

In the regular English teaching process, teachers usually ask a series of questions to guide students to understand the text and find useful information. Therefore, questioning is essential for helping kids improve their critical thinking abilities. Open-ended questions should be used more often in the questioning process. Closed questions may result in students' answers being too one-dimensional to achieve the purpose of divergent thinking. Open-ended questions, on the contrary, have many

acceptable answers and allow students to think critically and respond from different perspectives [13]. Secondly, teachers can imitate the role of Socrates' "midwife" to implement heuristic questioning [10]. For example, if students' answers are not related to the topic, teachers can start a multi-faceted discussion on students' answers and give students enough time to think through continuous guidance and questioning to achieve the purpose of developing students' critical thinking.

4.2.3 Teacher questioning

Teacher evaluation is a crucial part of education and teaching. McLellan notes that evaluation measures like portfolios, summaries of learners' progress through educational resources, diagnosis, reflection, and self-evaluations can be used to create more trustworthy assessments [14]. Therefore, teachers can develop an evaluation scale and the evaluation can include the number, perspective, depth and breadth of questions asked or answered by students [12]. It is also important to focus on the variety of the examination of the usual grades as a means of comprehensively evaluating the effects of students' English learning. More importantly, teachers must pay attention to the implementation of process evaluation, provide timely feedback on students' learning, and assess the effect of students' critical thinking ability.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, teaching strategies for critical thinking are multifaceted. When preparing teaching materials, apart from the need for writers to incorporate more critical thinking into the teaching materials, schools and teachers should focus more on the selection of instructional materials. The textbooks chosen should cover as much rich content as possible and have a more dialectical point of view, so as to stimulate students' desire to express themselves. As for teachers' teaching, teachers should change their identities, let students become the masters of the classroom, adopt a variety of questioning and evaluation methods, choose more flexible and creative teaching strategies, guide students to read English critically, and improve students' critical thinking system. In the future, it is hoped that colleges and universities will make more efforts to cultivate college students' critical thinking and actively explore new ideas for English learning, especially for teaching English reading. This will be of great help not only to the students themselves, but also to China's education.

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