

# Research on the Classroom Application of English Teaching Method based on the Cultivation of Students' Critical Thinking

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**Abstract:** The focus of quality education is to cultivate students' creativity, and the key to cultivate creativity lies in cultivating students' critical thinking ability. There is no innovation without criticism, which has become the consensus of educators. In practical English teaching, critical thinking has not been paid enough attention. Teachers often only pay attention to students' understanding, and are not very concerned about the authenticity and value of the knowledge they teach. Critical thinking is a process of reflection through analysis and judgment, putting forward one's own views and providing arguments. As a kind of thinking tendency, we can judge it correctly according to the overall environment and guide its correct development trend; As a thinking skill, we can make a targeted evaluation of the inherent thinking mode. By discussing the educational connotation of critical thinking, this paper analyzes the problems existing in traditional English teaching, and puts forward the classroom application strategy of English teaching method based on the cultivation of students' critical thinking, aiming at cultivating students' critical thinking and improving their ability to master the initiative in learning.

**Keywords:** Critical Thinking; English Teaching; Cultivation.

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## 1. Introduction

Critical thinking is the ability to reflect and think independently. The key to critical thinking lies in being able to think rationally and actively instead of passively accepting it. In order to cultivate a large number of high-quality innovative talents, the cultivation of critical thinking ability is particularly important. Because only criticism can innovate, and critical thinking is the core part of innovative thinking [1]. The focus of quality education is to cultivate students' creativity, and the key to cultivate creativity lies in cultivating students' critical thinking ability. There is no innovation without criticism, which has become the consensus of educators.

Critical thinking is not limited to the study of any subject, but a lifelong reading method. In this era of information explosion, it is more conducive to young college students to distinguish right from wrong and think independently, which is an important goal of university higher education [2]. Universities shoulder the mission of cultivating national innovative talents and are an important position for educational reform. College English teachers should consciously cultivate students' critical thinking in classroom teaching. Based on this, starting from the relationship between English teaching and the cultivation of students' critical thinking, this study aims to understand the performance of students' critical thinking ability in English teaching, and explore the teaching situation of cultivating students' critical thinking in English teaching by observing the problems existing in English teachers' teaching preparation and activity design, so as to put forward some suggestions on cultivating students' critical thinking ability in English teaching, with a view to helping students improve their critical thinking ability.

## 2. An Overview of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking does not simply deny anything, but refers

to having one's own views on things and being able to provide arguments [3]. It means that learners have "the ability of reasoning and argumentation", that is, when they or others face complicated information, they put forward their own opinions and provide arguments through analysis and judgment. As a kind of thinking tendency, we can judge it correctly according to the overall environment and guide its correct development trend; As a thinking skill, we can make a targeted evaluation of the inherent thinking mode. As a standard of thinking evaluation, critical thinking is widely used in the education industry [4-5].

Bloom's educational goal classification was founded in 1956, which can be divided into three fields, namely, cognitive field, emotional field and motor skill field. Bloom's classification of cognitive field is closely related to critical thinking. According to students' understanding of existing information and knowledge, the classification gradually rises from primary cognitive problems to advanced cognitive problems, which encourages students to think actively, thus cultivating students' thinking ability, values and evaluation mechanism [6].

An ideal critical thinker has the characteristics of being used to asking questions, being comprehensive in knowledge, believing in thinking, being open-minded, flexible in thinking, being fair and unbiased, drawing conclusions carefully, being willing to reconsider the conclusions already made, being clear about the problems faced and being good at facing complex problems [7]. With critical thinking, students can have their own judgment, distinguish what is a good idea and what is a bad idea, avoid the influence of wrong information transmission on brain thinking, help students accept valuable information, and filter out invalid information and wrong information in reading materials.

The critical quality of thinking comes from the self-consciousness of adjusting and correcting all aspects of thinking activities; This critical thinking quality is an indispensable factor in the process of creative activities and

creative thinking. Cultivating students' critical thinking is conducive to encouraging students to break away from the shackles of traditional thinking and thinking mode, build up the confidence of being unconventional, judge traditional or authoritative knowledge conclusions with a spirit of bold suspicion, reflect on self-cognition with a realistic attitude,

stick to the truth and correct mistakes, and at the same time, improve students' abilities of independent learning, independent practice and independent inquiry in the process of obtaining, analyzing and processing information, and gradually master independent learning strategies, which lays a solid foundation for students' individualized development.

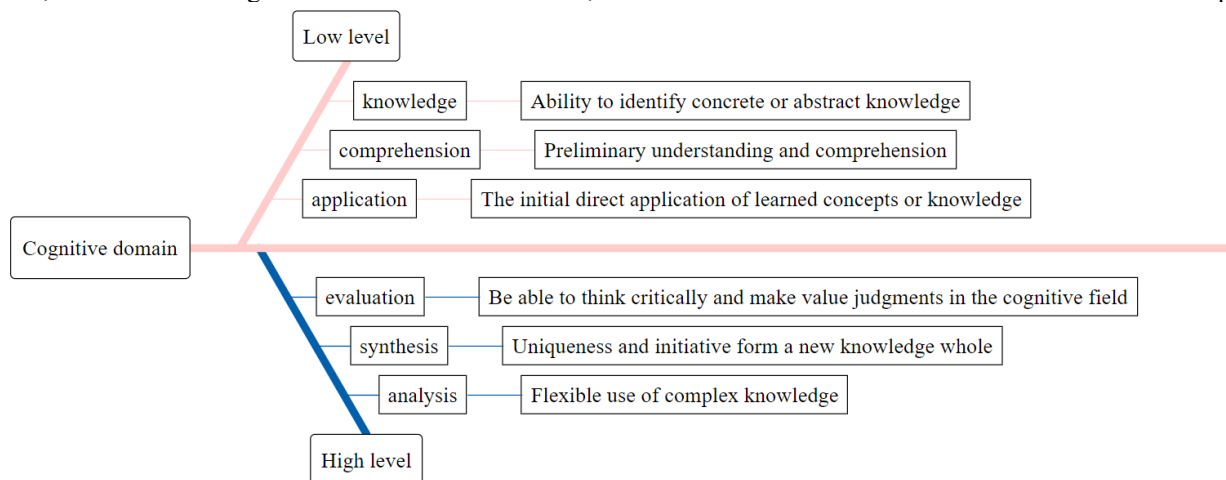


Figure 1. The classification and characteristics of Bloom's cognitive domain

### 3. Problems Existing in Traditional English Teaching

#### 3.1. Lack of Attention to Critical Thinking

In practical English teaching, critical thinking has not been paid enough attention. Teachers often only pay attention to students' understanding, and are not very concerned about the authenticity and value of the knowledge they teach. Both teachers and students regard teachers as possessors and imparting knowledge, and teachers are the authority of knowledge. In the past, teachers often used traditional teaching models and methods in teaching, usually teachers asked students to answer questions, which had a negative impact on the formation of students' problem consciousness. Students could not actively find, analyze, think and solve problems in their studies, which led to students' over-reliance on teachers and limited the formation and development of students' critical thinking.

#### 3.2. Students' Learning Enthusiasm is Low

The ability of critical thinking is manifested in explanation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation and self-judgment. When judging things, we should take an objective and serious attitude towards things, adopt an inclusive thinking towards foreign ideas, and achieve the principle of fairness and justice to prevent adverse effects caused by uneven adoption of ideas. At present, some teachers only explain their knowledge with short questions and answers in the teaching process, so it is difficult to communicate with students too much. When teachers answer knowledge points, they usually ask questions with students in the form of separate questions. When the questions are answered incorrectly, they continue to look for the next classmate to answer the questions until they are answered correctly. This practice fails to guide students correctly and is not conducive to students' understanding of knowledge points.

#### 3.3. Unreasonable Evaluation of English Teaching

In the classroom, teachers mainly evaluate students' speeches and homework in order to cultivate their critical thinking ability, and the evaluation method is single. Pay attention to the enthusiasm of students to speak and evaluate the rationality of expressing their opinions in class. The homework is mainly aimed at the exercises, the topic exercises, and the criticism of students' opinions in the composition. From the perspective of teaching evaluation, teachers' pay insufficient attention to "evaluation" and the evaluation method is single; From the point of view of assignment, assignment tends to learn and use knowledge points, and assignment lacks innovation. Some teaching behaviors of teachers in reading teaching point to the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability, but the implementation effect is not good, and students' critical thinking ability needs to be improved.

### 4. Classroom Application Strategy of English Teaching Method based on the Cultivation of Students' Critical Thinking

#### 4.1. Renewing Educational Ideas and Cultivating Critical Thinking

Good learning begins with questions, not answers. In the process of learning, memory is an important skill, and the questions raised by teachers cannot be limited to the content of short-term memory, but stimulate students to think deeply through progressive questions. In classroom teaching, in order to cultivate students into strong critical thinkers, teachers should first change their ideas, become equal partners of students in critical dialogue in the teaching process, become promoters and helpers of students' autonomous learning and cooperative learning, and no longer pretend to be a treasure house of knowledge and a spokesman for truth. Cultivate students' team consciousness of helping, learning

and exploring together; Establish a harmonious communication relationship between teachers and students and create a relaxed, democratic and harmonious external environment for the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability.

Traditional English teaching focuses on the dissemination and memory of knowledge, ignoring the cultivation of students' thinking ability and other intellectual factors, and students' ability to use language knowledge flexibly is poor [8]. Therefore, it is very important to select materials to cultivate students' critical thinking ability in English teaching. Choosing controversial topics can easily stimulate students' enthusiasm for thinking, analyzing and solving problems, and at the same time provide free space for thinking, which can encourage students to think hard and answer tactfully, so that students' critical thinking ability can get the best performance on controversial topics.

## **4.2. Constructing a Relaxed English Teaching Atmosphere**

Teachers should create a good classroom atmosphere and educational environment, and provide students with a stage and space to cultivate and develop critical thinking skills and critical spirit. Integrating critical thinking can enliven the classroom atmosphere and stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning. In the communication with students, teachers should communicate with students on an equal footing, listen to students' views patiently, carefully analyze the advantages and disadvantages of problems, actively guide students to think independently when looking at problems, skillfully introduce topics that students are interested in and can discuss and criticize, and encourage students to choose judgment criteria in an orderly and rational way on complex issues. The teaching method of "critical thinking" emphasizes the equal exchange of opinions between teachers and students, encourages students to ask questions and solve problems, rather than relying on teachers to instill them, thus arousing students' strong interest and in-depth thinking about things.

By creating a good reading atmosphere in teaching, students can release their feelings of pressure in learning and be able to analyze and think independently. For example, in addition to the euphemistic expressions of requests mentioned in the text, what other ways are there to express requests? Let students not only master the knowledge in the textbook, but also review the historical knowledge. By looking for information to supplement new knowledge, students' knowledge is enriched and their critical thinking is cultivated.

In college English teaching, teachers should improve students' three core skills of analysis, evaluation and reasoning through question design, thus cultivating students' critical thinking ability [9]. Teachers can show some related pictures, ask questions around the pictures and end with open questions, which can not only stimulate students' imagination, but also improve their observation and analysis ability. Guide students to skim when reading shallowly, and ask students to grasp the key information of the article, refine the keywords and sort out the context of the article, so as to achieve the overall reading effect. Teachers should guide them to grasp the author's writing intention and text details, summarize the text information, and clarify the deep meaning of the text according to the internal relationship analysis of the article, so as to grasp the main idea and connotation of the full text. In this link, teachers should give students the opportunity to fully express their views and opinions, so as to test their

overall understanding of the text.

## **4.3. Strengthen Critical Thinking Training**

At present, in English teaching, the critical thinking mode is introduced, and through the cultural differences between China and the West, the western cultural ideas are spread through the explicit teaching mode, and through the continuous integration and innovation of the teaching mode, the students in English teaching classroom are trained in critical thinking. Through the continuous integration of Chinese and western ideas, students can correctly analyze what they have learned and draw conclusions, which can expand their thinking and form reflections on themselves. Through continuous training, students can enhance their learning ability and form independent thoughts. Teachers can make students debate through the teaching content, make students participate in the topic discussion through the way of free speech, and express their own opinions. Through most students' opinions on a problem, students' logical thinking can be exercised and their critical thinking ability can be improved.

Critical reading is an important way to cultivate students' critical thinking. The focus of critical reading is the deep understanding of the text. Readers should take a positive attitude and constantly think and evaluate during reading. Critical thinking has three dimensions "analysis, evaluation and innovation" to determine the true value and significance of a thing and adopt appropriate evaluation criteria to achieve accurate evaluation of things. For critical thinking teaching, meticulous measurement standards and objective evaluation tools are important issues in critical thinking research. The measurement goal is mainly to diagnose students' critical thinking level and help teachers detect teaching effects. In English teaching, we should gradually infiltrate critical thinking and actively carry out critical thinking practice.

To cultivate students' critical thinking, teachers need to let students have a deep understanding of the connotation of reading and cultivate students' critical thinking ability, that is, to let students raise their own doubts about different viewpoints, and to deeply understand and master knowledge, which is not a single critical reading. Let them gradually establish correct thinking and make correct choices, so that critical thinking can always be reasonable and scientific and play a role in practical application.

## **4.4. Improve the Ability of Evaluation and Self-regulation**

When designing learning activities in English classroom activities, we should pay attention to the process of learning activities and attach importance to the relationship between learning content and life. When designing teaching activities, teachers should make clear the relationship between various activities. Through classroom observation, it is found that teachers have a high proportion of learning, understanding and practical activities in the setting of reading activities, and classroom activities lack expansion and extension [10]. Carrying out extension activities in classroom teaching can realize the transfer and application of knowledge and skills, promote the transformation of ability into literacy, and cultivate students' higher-order thinking ability. In the problem-oriented teaching situation, students are easy to participate in activities and express their ideas. In the process of students' learning, teachers can guide students to question other people's views with a critical eye. After sharing, they try

to make students think from different angles, criticize themselves and improve their answers.

## 5. Conclusion

Critical thinking is not limited to the study of any subject, but a lifelong reading method. In this era of information explosion, it is more conducive to young college students to distinguish right from wrong and think independently, which is an important goal of university higher education. With critical thinking, students can have their own judgment, distinguish what is a good idea and what is a bad idea, avoid the influence of wrong information transmission on brain thinking, help students accept valuable information, and filter out invalid information and wrong information in reading materials. Therefore, in the process of English teaching, teachers should master the correct teaching methods and conduct targeted training for students to increase their mastery of critical thinking skills.

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