CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH LESSONS: THEIR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Xolboyeva Nodiraxon Abdumalik qizi
Namangan davlat universiteti 1-kurs tayanch doktoranti
E-mail: nodira.31@mail.ru

Abstract
One of the most relevant skills that modern education provides is to improve the critical thinking skills of school-age students. Even until recently, the term "critical thinking" was understood as a critical approach to a particular event, a negative-negative opinion. Currently, the International Assessment Criteria for Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (PISA,TIMMS) also require critical thinking skills from students. This, in turn, requires science teachers to regularly use exercises and assignments that develop critical thinking in the classroom. This article discusses the theories of foreign scholars on critical thinking and some problematic situations that hinder this in exercises, assignments and lessons that develop critical thinking in English language lessons.

Keywords: Critical thinking, ability to analyze-analyze, exercises that increase critical thinking.

Introduction

In our interconnected world, critical thinking has become a cornerstone of education. English lessons, in particular, present a valuable opportunity to cultivate this essential skill, as learning a language naturally involves communication, comprehension, and interpretation. Engaging in critical thinking not only enhances language proficiency but equips students with the tools they need to navigate an abundance of information and varied viewpoints. This article delves into critical thinking, emphasizing its significance in English language teaching, suggesting practical activities for its integration, and outlining effective implementation strategies.

Literature Analysis

In the world on raising the quality of education in the school system leading scientists have been conducting their research since the 80s of the 21st century.

These studies are mainly aimed at studying the needs of critical thinking in the educational process: S.D.Brookfield, Paul,R and Elder,L (2014) [1], English scientists, conducted research by In particular, the British scientist Fisher, A. in the book "Critical thinking: An introduction" (2011)[4], expressed his views on the characterization of critical thinking. Critical thinking can be understood as the capacity to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information to make informed judgments. Paul and Elder (2014) [2] highlight that effective critical thinkers are

adept at questioning assumptions, recognizing biases, and constructing logical arguments. In the context of English lessons, these abilities become evident through tasks that involve interpreting literary works, analyzing persuasive language, and developing coherent arguments in writing [1].

The research methodology

The article discusses the system of developing the quality of critical thinking of students in educational institutions. Its main structural factors and parts are described. The criteria of reading comprehension, ability to analyze problems and find solutions of high school students were analyzed, and highly effective exercises and tasks that can be used in English classes were considered.

Analyzes and results

Unlike rote memorization or passive approaches to learning, critical thinking encourages active participation with the material. For learners of English, this means moving beyond simply acquiring vocabulary to engage with the cultural, emotional, and ideological layers of the language. For instance, analyzing a poem requires not just an understanding of its words but also an interpretation of its themes, an evaluation of its tone, and a consideration of the author's perspective.

Assimilating critical thinking into English lessons has several benefits: 1. Improves Comprehension: Fisher notes that critical thinking enhances students' understanding of texts by questioning and analyzing their meaning deeply[4].

Teachers can guide this process by prompting questions such as, "What does this word choice suggest about the character's emotions?" or "Why do you think the author included this particular detail?" When students think critically, they develop a deeper understanding of texts by questioning and analyzing their meaning.

2.Enhances Communication Skills: Articulating arguments or ideas requires logical reasoning, which critical thinking fosters. Paul and Elder emphasize that developing communication skills is essential for both academic success and civic engagement [2]. 3. Prepares for Real-Life Challenges: Critical thinking equips students to evaluate information, a skill vital in the digital age where misinformation abounds. Brookfield asserts that critical thinking equips students to evaluate information critically, a skill vital in the digital age [1]. For example, analyzing news articles or advertisements in class can teach students how to distinguish fact from opinion.

4. Encourages Creativity: Thinking critically often involves exploring multiple solutions or interpretations, sparking creativity in writing and discussion. Harmer highlights how alternative writing assignments nurture imaginative thinking and problem-solving abilities [5]. For example, when analyzing a novel, students might be asked to discuss why the author chose a particular setting or how a character's actions reflect societal norms. These discussions go beyond surface-level comprehension to engage students in thoughtful, reflective analysis.

Debates and Discussions: Paul and Elder suggest that debates are excellent tools for developing reasoning and argumentation skills [2].

Example: "Should school uniforms be mandatory?" The aim of this task will be to develop argumentation and reasoning skills of students.

How it can be implemented: teacher should divide students into two groups—pro and con, provides time to research, then conducts a structured debate where each side presents their case, followed by rebuttals and conclusions.

Debates require students to gather evidence, anticipate counterarguments, and articulate their views clearly, all of which hone critical thinking.

Analyzing Texts for Bias and Perspective: Scriven and Paul emphasize the importance of identifying persuasive techniques in texts [3]. An activity might involve students working in pairs to analyze an editorial or speech, using a checklist of rhetorical strategies. Text: An editorial or a speech.

Aim: Identify persuasive techniques and evaluate objectivity.

A teacher provides a checklist of rhetorical strategies (e.g., emotive language, appeals to authority). Students work in pairs to identify these in the text and discuss how they influence the reader. By dissecting arguments, students learn to question sources and recognize the influence of language on opinion.

Role-Playing Scenarios: Brookfield advocates for activities that encourage empathy and problem-solving [1].

Scenario: A city council debate on whether to build a new supermarket. The objective of this task is to encourage problem-solving and empathy.

Teacher implements the activity by assigning roles (e.g., business owners, environmental activists, residents). Students present arguments from their character's perspective and collaborate on a decision. Role-playing allows students to consider multiple viewpoints, enhancing their ability to evaluate various viewpoints critically.

Jigsaw reading and collaborative problem solving: a case study on climate change

Objective: Analyze and synthesize information. Teacher divides the text into sections, assigning one to each group. Groups summarize their section, and then collaborate to piece together the wider message or solution. This activity promotes teamwork and the integration of diverse pieces of information, key aspects of critical thinking.

Creative writing with constraints task: write a story that includes a surprise ending and uses specific vocabulary. The objective is to enhance the problem-solving and creativity of students. In order to implement the task teacher should provide a word list and ask students to create a logical story that uses all the words naturally.

With the help of this task, students will learn to think critically about word choice, plot structure, and reader impression.

Another way is to start with simple tasks, such as asking open-ended questions about a text, before introducing more complex activities like debates or role-playing.

Critical thinking encourages collaboration of students: group work fosters the exchange of ideas, helping students learn from different perspectives. In order to create a bond between foundational knowledge and new concepts we can imply a scaffolding method that provides frameworks or guides (e.g., graphic organizers, discussion prompts) to support students as they develop critical thinking skills. Without incorporating technology tools like Padlet or Google

Docs lessons become engaging and up-to-date they enable collaborative brainstorming and sharing of ideas, while platforms like Kahoot make quizzes attractive[4].

Providing feedback highlights strengths and areas for improvement in students' speech: and reasoning, encouraging them to refine their arguments and analysis. In speaking lessons, teachers may give feedback coming out from their speeches, or students may give feedback to each other. As Brookfield recommended, teachers should gradually introduce critical thinking activities and highlight their relevance to real-life skills.

Teachers mostly come face to face with challenges like limited time in lessons [2], the solution they recommend is to include critical thinking into routine tasks, such as discussions or writing assignments, to maximize time.

Sometimes teachers face a challenge called uneven participation according to Scriven and Paul, they should assign roles in group activities to ensure all students contribute [3].

Conclusion

In conclusion, incorporating critical thinking activities into English lessons enriches the learning experience, equipping students with essential skills for academic and personal success. Through debates, text analysis, role-playing, and collaborative tasks, students become more analytical, empathetic, and articulate. With thoughtful implementation and consistent practice, teachers can foster a classroom environment that values inquiry and reflection. By embracing critical thinking, educators prepare students not just for exams but for a lifetime of informed decision-making and effective communication.

References

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