

ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫ БІЛІМ ЖӘНЕ ҒЫЛЫМ МИНИСТРЛІГІ
Л.Н. ГУМИЛЕВ АТЫНДАҒЫ ЕУРАЗИЯ ҰЛТТЫҚ УНИВЕРСИТЕТІ



ЖАС ҒАЛЫМДАР КЕҢЕСІ



Студенттер мен жас ғалымдардың
«ҒЫЛЫМ ЖӘНЕ БІЛІМ - 2016» атты
XI Халықаралық ғылыми конференциясының
БАЯНДАМАЛАР ЖИНАҒЫ

СБОРНИК МАТЕРИАЛОВ
XI Международной научной конференции
студентов и молодых ученых
«НАУКА И ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ - 2016»

PROCEEDINGS
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«SCIENCE AND EDUCATION - 2016»

2016 жыл 14 сәуір
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ӘӨЖ 001:37(063)

КБЖ 72:74

Ғ 96

Ғ96 «Ғылым және білім – 2016» атты студенттер мен жас ғалымдардың XI Халық. ғыл. конф. = XI Межд. науч. конф. студентов и молодых ученых «Наука и образование - 2016» = The XI International Scientific Conference for students and young scholars «Science and education - 2016» . – Астана: [http://www.enu.kz/ru/nauka/ nauka-i-obrazovanie/](http://www.enu.kz/ru/nauka/nauka-i-obrazovanie/), 2016. – б. (қазақша, орысша, ағылшынша).

ISBN 978-9965-31-764-4

Жинаққа студенттердің, магистранттардың, докторанттардың және жас ғалымдардың жаратылыстану-техникалық және гуманитарлық ғылымдардың өзекті мәселелері бойынша баяндамалары енгізілген.

The proceedings are the papers of students, undergraduates, doctoral students and young researchers on topical issues of natural and technical sciences and humanities.

В сборник вошли доклады студентов, магистрантов, докторантов и молодых ученых по актуальным вопросам естественно-технических и гуманитарных наук.

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КБЖ 72:74

ISBN 978-9965-31-764-4

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ұлттық университеті, 2016

IMPORTANCE OF USING CRITICAL THINKING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Critical thinking refers to a type of lateral thinking that enables individuals to analyze and evaluate information about a situation or phenomenon or a problem and to make appropriate decisions that befit in their contexts. As a matter of fact, it is the thinking process through which people tend to gather knowledge, deconstruct the gathered knowledge and create new knowledge. The people who think critically do not take anything for granted, no matter who says. Instead, they raise vital questions and problems, formulate them clearly, gather and assess relevant information, use abstract ideas, think open-mindedly and communicate effectively with others.

One of the most famous contributors to the development of the critical thinking tradition is Robert Ennis. His definition is as follows: “Critical thinking is reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do.” [1]

The ability to think critically is essential if individuals are to live, work, and function effectively in our current and changing society. Harvey Siegel regards that critical thinking aims at producing a self-sufficient person, who is a liberate person, “free from the unwarranted and undesirable control of unjustified beliefs”.

According to Stella Cottrell, critical thinking as a student means:

- finding out where the best evidence lies for the subject you are discussing;
- evaluating the strength of the evidence to support different arguments;
- coming to an interim conclusion about where the available evidence appears to lead;
- constructing line of reasoning to guide your audience through the evidence and lead them towards your conclusion;
- selecting the best examples;
- providing evidence to illustrate your argument. [2]

Critical thinking is not a new concept or practice. Most teachers might be impressed to learn that critical thinking can be traced back many centuries ago. In fact, it has been practiced from times immemorial, notably, by Socrates and Plato.

Lauren Starkey in “Critical thinking skills success in 20 minutes a day” says that “a critical thinker approaches problems and complicated situations aware of his or her thoughts, beliefs, and viewpoints. Then, he or she can direct those thoughts, beliefs, and viewpoints to be more rational and accurate. A critical thinker is willing to explore, question, and search out answers and solutions. These skills not only mean greater success at school and at work, but they are the basis of better decisions and problem solving at home, too”. [3]

If our students knew and used critical thinking skills, the whole process of studying would become easier and more effective. Students clearly feel the need for these skills when carrying out their own researches which are an essential part of their being a university student.

Critical thinking requires active and interactive learning. It does not tolerate passive learning, taking new things and opinions as ready-made words of wisdom. In our experience, students tend to learn better by actively communicating with each other in a particular academic content, especially if they are encouraged to apply critical thinking when comparing their views and ideas, when evaluating arguments, when probing into the intellectual standards of clarity and accuracy, breadth and width, relevance and fair-mindedness, etc. John Dewey defined the nature of reflective thought

as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends". [4]

While we are teaching English, we teach different kinds of texts such as essays, poems, stories, memoirs, biographies, dramas, novels, ect. In order to teach these discourses, we can very wisely utilize critical thinking strategies, which can help us shift activities from teacher centered to students centered. These strategies can help us dissect texts into various pieces and analyze each piece with some criteria or standards.[5]

Engaged in the interactive activities while practicing both communicative skills and critical thinking, students have a better chance to improve their self-consciousness, their understanding of their abilities and of their limits and thus paving the road to self-improvement as learners, as future professional, and as individuals.

The application of critical thinking in EFL or ESL classrooms is quite possible, because the strategies such as Think Pair Share (TPS), quick write, know- want to know- learned (KWL), pen in the middle, jigsaw, predictions by terms ,debate etc. prescribed by critical thinking are almost familiar to the teachers of English. Similarly, the ABC (Anticipation, Building knowledge, and Consolidation) framework followed in teaching following critical thinking is very much similar to the PWP (Pre-, While and Post) or BWA (Before, While and After) framework used in teaching reading and listening.

One more aspect justifying and even requiring critical thinking introduction in the ELT class arises due to the rapidly growing international student mobility trends and the use of English as the language of instruction in universities around the world. Researchers of the American Foundation for Critical Thinking [6] argue that critical thinking is not as a natural skill as speaking or running, it is a deliberately developed complex set of skills and features which takes years to acquire. Similarly, a foreign language acquisition needs years of persistent training. So practicing both simultaneously saves time and provides a synergy effect: developing the former we improve the latter and vice versa.

However, if we consider teaching critical thinking as a part of educational process, some other problems emerge. Let us see what Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan says about it.

In his opinion, the very important element that needs to be address is the change of teachers' attitudes towards of students (1), pedagogy (2), and themselves as teachers (3).

(1) There are teachers who regard learners as empty vessels, which need to be filled with knowledge. They thus ignore, whether they want to or not, the individuality of students. As a result their lessons are boring and unimaginative because of the minimal participation and involvement of learners. The learners feel left out and assume their opinions and beliefs as not relevant or important enough to be heard in the classroom. Eventually, this would be a cause to the detriment of creative and critical thinking. To avoid this, teachers should develop a mutual relationship with their learners, they need to consider learners as individuals who are equals in a situation of genuine two-way communication. More importantly, the learners learn from the teacher, and the teacher learns from the learners.

(2) The current situation is that teachers widely practice the pedagogy of answers, whereby teachers provide the answers and solutions to learners. [7]

By giving answers, teachers deny the learners the opportunities and the right to question, to doubt and to reject. In addition, the learners will not be exposed to challenges and stimulation of thoughts. Freire added that teachers tend to adopt the pedagogy of answers because they are sometimes afraid of questions to which they are unsure of the answers, and also because maybe the questions do not correspond to the answers they already have. Thus, it is extremely vital that teachers have positive beliefs and attitudes towards questions. The right way to behave in this situation is to adopt the pedagogy of questions, which requires posing questions to learners and listening to learners' questions. This is a practice which forces and challenges the learners to think creatively and critically, and to adopt a critical attitude towards the world.

(3) Teachers need to believe that their major roles are to think, guide, initiate, facilitate and encourage the learners. This will put them in a right frame of mind and lead the learners into

becoming a community of collaborative inquirers. Teachers are not providers but thinkers who constantly think of what could be done to encourage creative and critical thinking in their learners.

Critical thinking is one of the most thought provoking methods of teaching, which can be implemented in any discipline. From the above discussion, it can be discerned that this methodology can be applied in teaching English as a foreign language, disregarding to whether the learners are in elementary level or advanced level. The implementation of critical thinking can help learners bring about positive changes in the ways they think and expand the horizons of their knowledge. Therefore, if it is implanted in ESL classrooms, the learners will not only build up communicative competence in English, but also intellectual traits.

If you want your students to start thinking critically, it's important that both you and they share a common understanding of the term. Interestingly, even among teachers themselves, definitions can vary. On the one hand, the word *critical* suggests that it is about being constantly negative or dubious about what you have just read, heard or seen. On the other hand, the term is sometimes used loosely to describe any kind of thinking in the classroom where students have to be creative in their responses. [8]

We constructed following critical thinking activity according to mind mirror project by Mathew M. Tully. Mind mirror activities enable language teachers to integrate target language objectives with the development of critical thinking skills. According to Facione (2007), critical thinking is defined in terms of six cognitive skills: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Although mind mirrors can enable learners to develop all of these cognitive skills, students used interpretation, inference, and self-regulation skills most. [9] Thus, these skills are discussed in greater detail below.

1. *Interpretation skill.* Facione (2007) defines interpretation as comprehending and expressing meaning based on experiences, situations, data, and beliefs. The interpretation skill is comprised of two sub-skills: *categorization*, used when students locate appropriate key elements from the story and apply them to the mind mirror poster: and *clarifying meaning*, demonstrated when students when students review and discuss the connection between key elements and character identity.

2. *Inference skill.* Inference means considering relevant information and determining the consequences resulting from data, statements, beliefs or other forms of representation (Facione 2007). As a sub-skill of inference, students had to *draw a conclusion* to identify characters based on elements exhibited on posters.

3. *Self-regulation skill.* The self-regulation skill is perhaps the most remarkable critical thinking skill because it enables critical thinkers to improve their own thinking. Self-regulation occurs when we self-consciously monitor and evaluate our own work with a view toward questioning, confirming, or correcting either our reasoning or results (Facione 2007). *Self-examination* and *self-correction* are two sub-skills of self-regulation. Students used self-examination to remind themselves that viewers should be able to see a clear and obvious connection between the character and corresponding mind mirror elements. As a result, students used self-correction skills to revise mind mirror elements to better reflect the character represented. Additionally, students used self-examination skills by reflecting on the connection between tasks and critical thinking skills used throughout the project

For this activity we chose the book "Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone" by J.K. Rowling, because:

- The level of the book is acceptable
- Vocabulary and grammatical structures were appropriate for the students

Before beginning the activity we discussed about the key theme and vocabularies from the book. We talked about their impressions from the book. Then they were divided into groups and given the tasks for the critical thinking activity (Appendix 2). Each group would be given by one character and they should answer the questions on the paper, and describe their given characters. In order to supplement the written instruction, one student was displayed as a sample mind mirror of her that all students could identify. The activity consisted of following items:

- Two symbols – a book and a pen

- Two background images – doing home works and a dormitory
- Two adjectives that describe the person's feelings or actions – *cheerful* and *warm-hearted*
- Two sentences in the character's own words:
 - 1) "I should have been prepared for my lessons."
 - 2) "I miss my long hair."
- Two original statements that describe how the reader feels about the character:
 - 1) "I think this character enjoys everything she does."
 - 2) "Even this character seems thoughtless, she cares about everyone around her."

The students could immediately guess that the mind mirror was about their groupmate. They found out by identifying symbols and phrases. After they saw the example of mind mirror, they started to do their own work sheets, each group their own characters. Before they started their tasks, they were told to:

- When they do their own mind mirror items, they should do it that other their group mates could guess, they should do it understandable.
- They should work as one, instead of creating separate pictures.
- They should remember that they are not in the art lesson. Instead they should be creative and work in team.
- In their work they are allowed to draw any symbol and texts, to make facial features as eyes, lips, nose, ears, and hair.

After they were instructed about the process and rules of making mind mirror, each group chose one character from a hat. They mustn't tell the name of their character to each other. In first they worked individually, they didn't share their findings with their group mates, who have the same character. They filled the worksheet with their answers about the character they had picked.

Then they were asked to sit together with the group mates who had taken the same character's name. They reviewed each other's answer and decided on which elements from their worksheets they would create their group mind mirror poster about the character.

Each group were given different color of markers to illustrate their posters, and told to use only their own color. Each group started to draw their decisions and opinions about the character on the poster.

Each group posted their works on the wall, and they started to guess other group's characters. During the activity, we could see that students are comfortable and confident. They openly uttered their opinions, discussed their answers with group mates without problem. All the students take part in this activity, even those who were actually shy and quiet. It was the reason of they were divided into small groups, where they can discuss about everyone's answer and share opinions openly.

This activity can help students easily guess the key themes and vocabularies of the texts and books. Instead of individual home works, making such activities in the class, where participate all class, is better. This activity helps students to focus on task and teamwork.

This activity helps teacher to provide opportunities for students to discuss thinking process used to complete the tasks, and help students to become self-aware, confident.

The activity above helps teacher to develop his students' interpretation skill, to teach students' to catch the key elements easier. Also it helps to build inference skill. By this activity teacher teaches his students' to draw right conclusions. And finally this activity develops the students' self-regulation skills. By working in groups and listening to their group mate's opinion students correct their own mistakes. They learn to share their thought with others.

To sum up, it is useful to use critical thinking activities in English language lessons. Any English Language teacher faces the tough problem of teaching the language in a creative and innovative method. Though many students are able to understand the language, most of the students face the problem of communicating their ideas effectively. Critical thinking activities at lessons help to solve this problem, as it increases motivation and improves learning outcomes. We should challenge our students, make them consider alternative opinions, require the reasons for their own opinions and decisions. Providing situations that simulate real-life situations increases the probability that skills will be used. Providing modeling of the skills, ample opportunities for

practice, and feedback on the effectiveness of the student's thinking are also important considerations. Critical thinking skills help students to make better judgments about the veracity and worth of information. It guides students to a more natural discovery of language and how it can be used effectively.

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UDC 004.738.5: 811.111

WEB-BASED TEACHING AT ENGLISH LESSONS

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Since the advent of the Internet, it has been named the greatest communication revolution of the twentieth century which is uncomplicated in the usage for everyone. The instant worldwide connections enabled through the Internet have changed the way people everywhere think about communication, information, and doing business. Although Internet applications are really just computer programs that know how to use the Internet to interact, we view them as an extension of the world that we live in, an extension that brings the world to our fingertips. We can share all sorts of things with the world, get authentic materials from anywhere, and interact with people in distant locations as never before [1].

Today "web" of the Internet has braided almost the entire planet. It comprises millions of users worldwide the number of which is still increasing. The popularity of the World Wide Web has spread to the educational community that greatly affect teachers and masters to review the fundamental assumptions about the methods and purposes of teaching English.

Web-Based teaching has been defined as a learning environment for delivering interactive multimedia education using the WWW as a communication medium. WBT is similar to and different from multimedia teaching. Multimedia refers to the integration of the text, voice, graphics and video modes of information. It is often a one-way presentation. It can work on standalone computers. There might be limited interaction between man and machine. But there is usually little interpersonal interaction [2,19].

Educators are daily inundated with new technologies and new media, not only new knowledge to convey to students. Many various pedagogical approaches are debated and practiced