

# Developing Students Critical Thinking Through Reading Activities in EFL Classes

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## ABSTRACT

*The article deals with the issues based on developing students' critical thinking through reading activities in EFL classes. Particular attention is paid to the technology of developing critical thinking through reading activities, which can be used as part of the independent work of students, namely in preparation for practical classes.*

**Key words:** critical thinking, foreign language, technology for developing critical thinking through reading, professional ideas.

## INTRODUCTION

In modern society, in the network resources of which there is a huge amount of information flows, the process of obtaining and processing information plays an important role. The ability of an individual to find, analyze and select the information necessary to solve every day and professional problems is one of the most important skills required by a modern person for the successful implementation of his professional ideas.

As you know, the processes of obtaining and processing information are somehow connected with the processes of thinking, since when working with information resources, abilities are required for comparison, analysis and synthesis, abstraction and generalization, which, in turn, refer to "the main operations of

mental activity aimed at to adequate knowledge” [2]. In the scientific literature, several types of thinking are distinguished, however, in our opinion, given the requirements of modern higher education, such a type of thinking as critical deserves special attention. According to Richard Paul, critical thinking is disciplined, self-directed, and self-regulating thinking that exemplifies the perfections of thinking that are appropriate to a specific mode or area of thought [1].

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The literature on psychology and related sciences provides definitions of critical thinking, in which this type of thinking is understood from the point of view of cognitive psychology [3]. Critical thinking is the use of cognitive techniques or strategies that increase the likelihood of obtaining a desired end result. This definition characterizes thinking as something distinguished by controllability, validity and purposefulness, - this type of thinking, which is used in solving problems, formulating conclusions, probabilistic evaluation and decision-making [Halpern, 2000, p. 19]. One of the main cognitive processes for the receipt and processing of information by an individual can be considered the processes of categorization and conceptualization. The process of categorization involves "dividing the world into categories, that is, the allocation of groups, classes, categories of similar objects or events in it" [5]. Conceptualization is defined as one of the most important processes of an individual's cognitive activity, which consists in understanding the information coming to him and leading to the formation of concepts in the human brain [4]. At the same time, the concept is conceived as “an operational unit of memory, mental lexicon, conceptual system and language of the brain, the whole picture of the world, reflected in the human psyche” [2]. In other words, a concept is a general idea of an object, concept, and

this idea is formed by an individual primarily due to his ability to categorize and conceptualize. So, a critically thinking student should be able to independently analyze the information received, that is, question and draw appropriate conclusions, express his point of view and argue it, correlate new information with existing information in order to solve every day and educational problems.

Studying the problem of the development of critical thinking of students, attempts are made to “construct individual trajectories for the development of critical thinking of teachers and students, taking into account their personal characteristics. Corresponding individual trajectories of the development of critical thinking of the subjects of the educational process are developed in a multidimensional space of professional and personal qualities and abilities of subjects, as the basic vectors of which are considered individual typological features, features of self-regulation and features of personality thinking” [4]. According to researchers, these individual trajectories are schematic programs for the development of critical thinking that define specific goals, objectives and ways to achieve them.

Technologies for the development of critical thinking are actively used in various disciplines, while each discipline has its own characteristics. The discipline "Foreign Language" is no exception, in which the development of critical thinking is seen as a way of motivating the study of a foreign language and a means of forming foreign language communicative competence.

According to D. Halpern, critical thinking is, first of all, creative thinking. In her book, the nature of critical thinking is revealed from the point of view of its development and effective methods for its formation are proposed.

The main problems here are students' misunderstanding of the communicative task facing them, lack of language means for solving this task, various

psychological factors, insufficient knowledge of the issue under discussion, etc. [Halpern 2010: 166].

Critical thinking is independent thinking. In the lesson, using the techniques of critical thinking, the mental processes of students are activated: analysis, synthesis, comparison, evaluation. Students learn to predict, put forward hypotheses, and defend their point of view. Therefore, reading texts should be aesthetically pleasing and appropriate for the age of the students. The topics of the works should be of interest to teenagers so that students want to share their opinions with others.

Experience shows that the successful assimilation of information by schoolchildren occurs on the basis of their views and interests. This is a powerful means of motivating learning activities. The exercises that the teacher is going to conduct in the lesson should be natural and create conditions for communication. Exercises should involve students in the process of reading the work.

The teacher offers to perform a series of exercises before reading the text, thereby creating motivation. At this stage, existing knowledge is updated. At the text stage, with the help of questions and tasks, the teacher draws students' attention to the content of the text: the main characters of the work, the place of the event, the moral portraits of the characters, how they cope with solving certain problems.

Tasks are needed that help put yourself in the place of the main characters. After reading the text, the children are invited to retell, discuss the title of the story, and draw conclusions about the moral behavior of the main characters of the work. For the successful use of critical thinking technology, it is necessary to create conditions for discussion. Such discussion will help to better understand the work through interaction with peers. The teacher organizes and coordinates the activities

of students. Critical thinking is one of the types of human intellectual activity, which is characterized by a high level of perception, understanding, objectivity of the approach to the information field surrounding it. In pedagogy, this is evaluative, reflective thinking, which develops by imposing new information on personal life experience.

Critical thinking has 5 characteristics:

- critical thinking is independent thinking;
- critical thinking is generalized thinking;
- critical thinking is problematic and evaluative thinking;
- critical thinking is reasoned thinking;

Critical thinking is social thinking.

Critical thinking is the ability to ask new, meaningful questions, develop diverse, supporting arguments, and make independent, thoughtful decisions.

The elements of critical thinking include the following skills:

- application of knowledge for decision-making and problem solving;
- reflexive statement of questions;
- providing reasonable and justified arguments;
- research [2].

A modern person, to one degree or another, has certain qualities of critical thinking, but this does not guarantee the formation of a special state of thinking as a whole.

The State Educational Standards states that by the end of their education in a general education school, students should be able to organize their own learning activities, determine methods and methods for performing educational tasks, evaluate their effectiveness and quality; be able to solve problems, evaluate and make decisions in non-standard and life situations. Possessing critical thinking, the

student is able to analyze information from the standpoint of logic in order to apply the results obtained to both standard and non-standard situations and problems. Today, the goal of many teachers at different levels of education should be to develop the qualities of thinking that are adequate to free thinking. A special role in this process is given to foreign language lessons.

Foreign language lessons are very important, as they not only teach communication with representatives of another culture, but also create the necessary conditions for the development of the student, his further professional definition and formation. So, if a student plans to go on to study as a specialist in international relations, a guide, an interpreter, etc., he must pass the exam in a foreign language.

### **CONCLUSION**

Thus, critical thinking is the ability to analyze information from the standpoint of logic, the ability to make informed judgments, decisions and apply the results obtained to both standard and non-standard situations, questions and problems.

The development of critical thinking is impossible without the involvement of students in the educational process, which should be interesting and understandable. One of the components of the development of critical thinking is the various methods of its development in the process of learning and preparing for the oral part of the exam in a foreign language.

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