

The Process Integration in Reading Classes: The Enhancement of Students Critical Thinking and Language Learning Abilities

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Abstract: In this article, two vital requirements of the new and innovative educational era: language learning and simultaneously further development of critical thinking skills processes integration issues are highlighted. Basically, it is intended to theoretically and practically test whether the method of analyzing detective short stories using the "Six Thinking Hats" method in reading classes can develop students' critical thinking skills and increase their potential to learn a second language effectively.

Key words: Innovative educational methods, critical thinking, reading skills, intellectual abilities, problem solving ability, six thinking hats method, process integration, language styles, educational potential, learning a foreign language, language efficiency.

Introduction

"Critical analysis, strict discipline and personal responsibility should be the daily rule of every leader's activity."

The President of The Republic of Uzbekistan. Sh.M. Mirziyoyev

We are living in the new era of modern technologies. The world is becoming more developed in all life domains conveying medicine, economics, politics, agriculture and in education as well. Few decades ago people could not imagine that there is a possibility studying abroad or even overseas just sitting at home. Eventually, now, it is a new type of schooling which is widely recognized by anyone as a distant learning. Rapid changes of technological advancements are reforming the sights of every single notion in life. For instance, English was the language of commerce and business and a reliable means of international communications before. In our century as the capabilities of social media is offering wide access to the flow of recent information, which is mostly in English, it has become the language of the information and the globalization now. Thus, received info carries myriad types of ideas, notions, perceptions and facts. Our goal as a teacher is to bring up good critical thinkers as they are the people who can easily distinguish black from white or wrong from right and they acquire the rare ability to foresee upcoming problems and better solutions. To encourage the rapid improvements of language teaching and learning several attempts have been made in our country. For instance, our president Sh. M. Mirziyoyev declared several laws and regulations as PD-5188 dated 19.07.2021 to bring the activity of popularizing the study of foreign languages to a qualitatively new level in the Republic of Uzbekistan and to establish relations with appropriate foreign and local partners and organize their financial, organizational and methodological support for the popularization of foreign language learning in the country.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the State Inspectorate for Quality Control of Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the National Education Agency of Finland in order to implement the experience of Finland in the educational system of Uzbekistan. The memorandum consists of 11 points, which include the following Cooperation relations are envisaged in the following directions. One and the important of them is the development of the educational system in order to promote quality education and educational practice, including new pedagogical methods, teaching processes, pedagogical management, curriculum development, research, evaluation and implementation. Thus, the attempts begun to be taken from the schools and new textbooks were designed in partnership. The head of our country was informed about the contents

of these textbooks. They are designed around the 4K skills most needed by the 21st century person (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication). That is, it forms students' critical thinking, creative approach, teamwork and communication skills.

Modernization processes are taking place in the system of worldwide education outline fundamentally new approaches to the realization of the educational potential of academic disciplines, and therefore, to the development of cognitive abilities and intellectual skills of students. According to the experience of world methodologists and teachers, one of such areas is the development of the critical thinking (CT) of students. The question of the development of critical thinking skills (CTS) of students is important for many humanitarian and science disciplines. If so, what the critical thinking is?

We often make the mistake of confusing being critical with being negative or “nit-picking” and this is in fortune. It is a skill that is taught at school or universities not only gather proper data or information but to examine it carefully and question its reliability. But its main purpose is to better equip people to understand the world, to make more sense of vast amount of information that is available to us and to avoid, being manipulated.

The possibilities and specifics of the development of CTS of students of different ages are thoroughly investigated in modern pedagogical science. The relevance of the study is confirmed by the fact that CT is considered to be one of the key competencies in modern education as it is highly demanded on the job market, on the one hand, and the interest of the scientific community to this problem, on the other hand. This is substantiated by a large number of scientific research in this field of pedagogical science (Khabarova and Sadova, 2020; Kavenuke, Kinyota, and Kayombo, 2020; Nguyễn and Nguyễn, 2017; El Soufi and See, 2019). Nowadays, the issue of CTS development becomes more important in school education. It requires a completely new view on the realization of the educational potential of secondary school disciplines. It also allows looking at the subject “Foreign Language” from a different angle in terms of the feasibility of using new methods and approaches for CT development while teaching a foreign language. The importance of addressing the issues of optimal use of the educational potential of a foreign language in higher education is also necessitated by the formation of global information space and a huge increase in the volume of information, including information in foreign languages. It assumes not only a sufficient level of a specialist's communicative competence but also the ability to critically assess reliability and relevance of information, the ability to work effectively with information (receive, store, interpret, and use), recognize problems and find quick but balanced ways to solve them. Obviously, these skills and abilities cannot be developed only while learning a foreign language in a traditional way. They require intentional training within the framework of a specially organized educational process.

Literature Review

The concept of critical thinking has been widely emphasised in the field of education and it underpins various educational interventions that have been concerned with the development of cognitive skills and curriculum. Various definitions of critical thinking have been proposed. Educators and psychologists have been interested in understanding the cognitive domain of human being and identifying the intellectual skills that one can perform while thinking. First efforts of identifying the nature of cognitive skills go back to Bloom (1956, cited in Bender, 2003). Bloom classified cognitive skills into six levels of thinking and his classification is known as Bloom's taxonomy. These levels of thinking are: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. These thinking levels vary in their complexity. The lowest cognitive level is recalling information, and the second lower level is understanding the meaning of facts. The ability to apply acquired knowledge is known as application, which is the third lower level of thinking. Following the application phase, knowledge is analysed into parts in order to understand the relationship between these parts, and this analysis skill is considered as a higher level of thinking. Synthesis is another higher cognitive level which demonstrates the creation new meaning. Evaluation is the highest cognitive level that is manifested in judgments and is based on defined criteria (Bender, 2003). These higher levels of thinking have been referred to as HOTS in the literature. 14 Other scholars have identified more intellectual skills that an individual can perform, and have referred to

HOTS as critical thinking. For instance, Ennis (1996: 166) defines critical thinking as 'reasonable reflective thinking'. More specifically, he relates critical thinking to particular skills such as reflection, inferring, reasoning, evaluating and the like. According to Ennis, these skills can be learned independently and transferred to various domains, without associating them with any particular disciplines. Similarly, Paul (1982) emphasises the skills domain. He views a critical thinker as someone who has a deep knowledge of himself and can understand the world holistically. Critical thinking can be involved in making decisions (Dawes, 1988), solving problems (Mayer, 1992), in cognitive processes (Rabinowitz, 1993) or in argument analysis (Kahane, 1997). Halpern (1999) examines all the previous definitions and provides a broader definition that includes all previously identified components of critical thinking, as follows: Critical thinking refers to the use of cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. Critical thinking is purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed. It is the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions.

The need to address the educational potential of academic subjects, such as the foreign language, in terms of the development of CT is confirmed by several studies. Milrud (1992) investigated the problem of the developing potential of the foreign language as an educational potential. The scholar noted that activities involving foreign language texts (reading, listening, and writing in specially created pedagogical conditions) contribute to the development of general intellectual abilities of a person, such as analytical skills, productivity, logical intelligence, intellectual flexibility. These intellectual abilities are related to CTS. These principles of communicative, problem-based learning, as well as interrelated teaching of language skills, formed the basis for the methodology of developing students' CTS. Six thinking hats is one of the effective methods that booms CT skills of the learners. The six thinking hats concept is a popular method designed by De Bono for teaching thinking. It is a very practical technique that can be used to teach thinking skills in a meaningful way. De Bono (2000, p.11) wants us to overcome the main difficulty of thinking. As he stated confusion is the biggest enemy of good thinking. We try to do too many things at the same time. We look for information. We are affected by feelings. We seek new ideas and options. We have to be cautious. We want to find benefits. Those are a lot of things that need doing. Juggling with six balls at the same time is rather difficult. Tossing up one ball at a time is much easier. The six hats are directions for thinking. Instead of trying to do everything at once, we learn to handle the different types of thinking one at a time. Students learn that different thinking is needed in different learning situations. Students focus their discussion deliberately on one direction like information. The six thinking hats are grounded in De Bono's famous concept 'Lateral Thinking' which invites us to base our judgement on a comprehensive study of the different aspects of any issue separately. In the end, these different aspects come together to give full-colour thinking. In the six hats method, thinking is represented by a different colour hat to help students visualize six different kinds of thinking and to convey something of the meaning of that thinking, for example, green as grass, white as neutral and objective and blue as the colour of the sky. A summary of the Six Thinking Hats is given in

Figure 1.



Methods

How this method can be harmonized in language lessons?

My plan was to read one short detective story with my students and to ask some questions about it. Thus, finding out more details and having long discussions and deeper look to the facts that lead the learner to the solution of the problem. In this response, they can find the cause or the criminal of the detective story. When I asked the opinions possible answers were: - I do not like that story. -I liked reading the story. -The main character is foolish.

But when I asked with Six Hats answers were: White hat (facts) -The story took place in Canada. Yellow hat (benefits, positive things) -The story teaches us many lessons Black hat (weaknesses/ problems) -I do not understand how a father kills his sons. -I do not think it is true to punish people by killing them because you harm their families. Green hat (creativity / new ideas) - The writer could suggest different ways of punishment. - The writer could suggest another end. Red hat (emotions/feelings) -I enjoyed reading the story. -It's wonderful!

The students showed high interest and enthusiasm towards the lesson by the way they enriched their vocabulary storage and reading skill as reading for details.

The short-term pilot study was conducted at school number 73.36 pupils were chosen from grade 6 for the experiment. They divided into two groups with equal amount of participants where one of them treated as an experimental one. The study involved 1) pre-test questionnaires; 2) experimental training; 3) post-test questionnaires. Placement tests and questionnaires used for this study were an adapted version of critical thinking self-assessment test "Measuring My Critical Thinking, an adapted test "Pre-Test of Critical Thinking" (Starkey, 2004). There were three stages of the experimental training. At the first stage, students were introduced to the concept of CT. The purpose of this step was the formation of knowledge and goal-setting necessary for the development of CT, general ideas about CT, and the notion of Six hats method to generate intellectual skills and abilities that contribute to the development of CT. This stage was represented by the thematic sections "Introduction to Critical Thinking" and "Six hats method". The content of this stage was theoretical material on the problem of CT and practical reading exercises which are detective stories.

Criteria for checking of critical thinking skills.

Tasks Reflection of own thinking process:

- Evaluate the process of own thinking, reasoning, presentation of arguments;
- Develop objectivity of thinking, be able to put yourself in the place of others in order to understand and accept different points of view;
- Refrain from hasty judgments, purposefully question facts and information in order to formulate correct and logical conclusions;
- Recognize the degree of influence of extraneous factors (emotions, social stereotypes, own beliefs and ideas) on the thinking process.

Justification of one's position:

- Clearly state own position and be precise in the choice of language tools
- Select and build arguments in defence of your point of view.

Information analysis:

- Evaluate the reliability of information;
- Select necessary and relevant information;
- Obtain necessary additional information through various ways: asking questions, comparing different sources of information.

Analysis and evaluation of arguments:

- Analyze and evaluate quality, validity, reliability, and consistency of statements, assumptions, arguments, conclusions, arguments, evidence.
- Detect the presense or absence of subjective assessments and biases in the sources of information concerning the presented information.

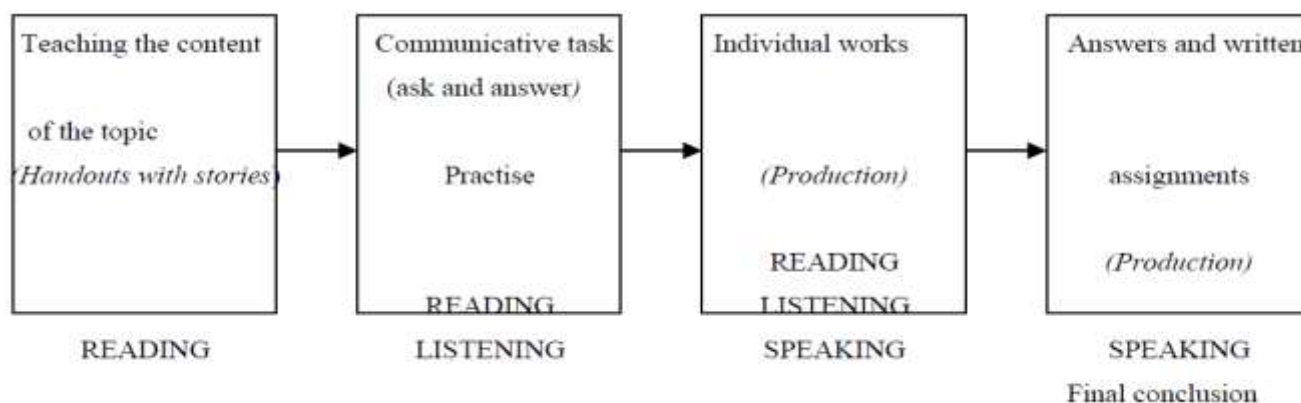
Solving problems:

- Recognize the problem and look at it from different angles, compare and contrast different opinions;
- Anticipate and evaluate possible solutions to the problem situation.

Decision making: - Consider and evaluate alternatives for a decision;

– Anticipate the consequences of the decisions made.

The methodology of teaching was designed according to the following model:

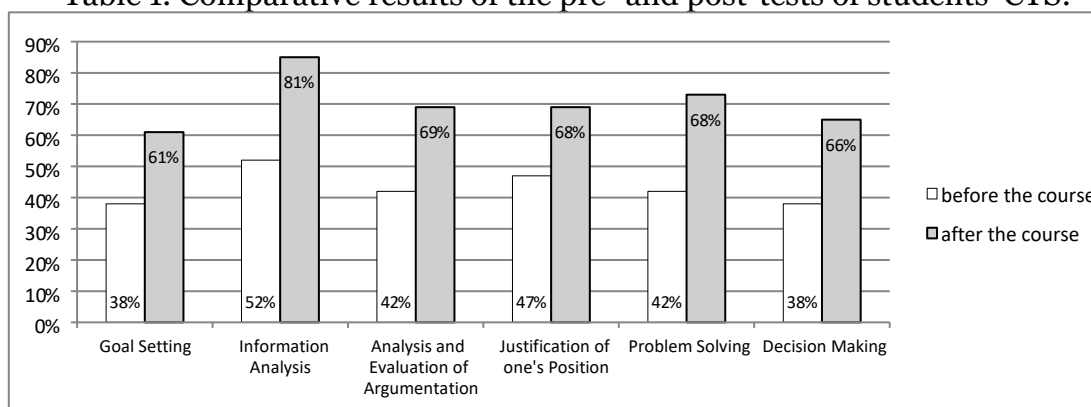


Results And Discussions

Observations carried out during the experimental teaching showed that the indicators of the level of CTS, the ability to apply them in daily life and learning activities have improved considerably in the experimental group. The post-test of students' CTS revealed that students had a much higher evaluation indicator of CTS (89% of students were satisfied with own skills and noted a qualitative change in the CT process).

"Post-Test of Critical Thinking" showed that the increase of the development of CTS level in the experimental group was 26%. The greatest effectiveness of the method was noted for the ability to make balanced and logical decisions (growth rate was 28%), work with information (29%) and solve problem situations (26%). The lowest growth rate was for the ability to justify own position (21%). The effectiveness of the proposed methodology was reflected in the quantitative indicators obtained during the comparison of the input and final results of critical thinking skills tests.

Table 1. Comparative results of the pre- and post-tests of students' CTS:



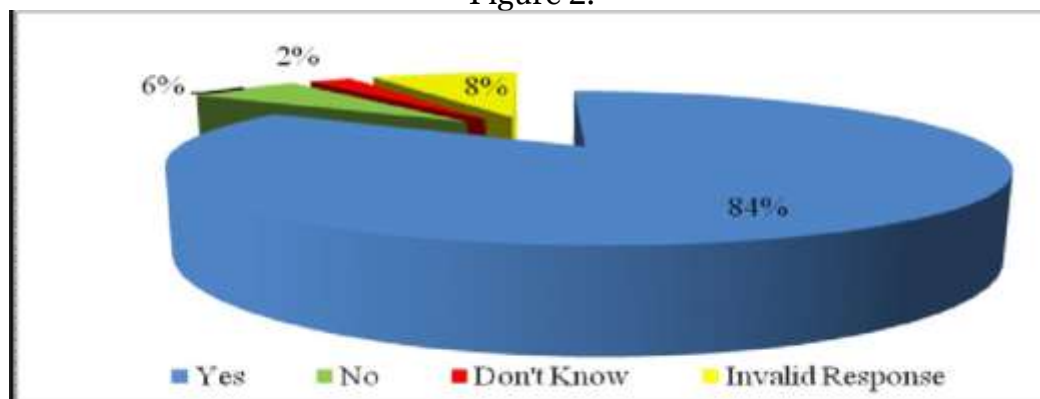
Pupils noted that they became aware of the way they think, obtain and process information, read texts. It is the indication of their reflection, which is the most important component of critical thinking, a conscious attitude to their own mental activity. Pupils highly appreciated the practical orientation of the course, pointing out the possibility of using the skills and strategies of CT in their daily life and educational activities. Most of the students noted the high problem -solving value and interactivity of the exercises, the opportunity to express their point of view, to discuss current topics, which also indicates the development of students' communicative competence. One my students claimed that they now look forward the reading English activities which were considered as boring because of endless translation processse before the experimental lessons.

For drawing final conclusions, a questionairie was conducted with following questions:

- Were the reading classes interesting for you?
- Have you had enough understanding about CT?

- Do you want to continue having reading lessons in the same phase?
The answers are demonstrated in the Figure 2 in the form of pie chart.

Figure 2.



Conclusion

In a conclusion, pupils noted that they became aware of the way they think, obtain and process information, read texts. It is the indication of their reflection, which is the most important component of critical thinking, a conscious attitude to their own mental activity. The participants of the experimental lessons highly appreciated the practical orientation of the reading course, pointing out the possibility of using the skills and strategies of CT in their daily life and educational activities. Most of the pupils noted the high problem-solving value and interactivity of the exercises, the opportunity to express their point of view, to discuss current topics, to find out more details and analysing by comparing and contrasting which also indicates the development of students' communicative competence. Critical thinking is not the only educational purpose but also life skill that facilitates pupil's further achievements. This ability makes them the most required and successful ones in the fast developing and demanding world of workforce and for their future whole life domains.

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