CHAPTER 9: CULTIVATING EFFECTIVE MINDS: INTEGRATING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN EFL/ESL INSTRUCTION

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1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has seen tremendous transformations in every aspect of life, including education. Innovations, creativity, inclusion, global communication, multicultural cultures, human mobility, digital literacy, and technological developments are characteristics of this century. As a result, it has become a necessity that students in the twenty-first century develop skills that differ from those of their predecessors. In a same vein, schools should prepare students for a new social and economic environment as well as a more demanding and skill-focused life and job. In other words, in order to better prepare students for a changing environment where they must acquire the skills required for the twenty-first century, education must be improved in every aspect, including teaching methods, course materials, and assessment practices. Therefore, understanding and applying "Critical Thinking" as a 21st century skill is essential.

Critical thinking, as defined by Facione (2020), is approaching information in an active, methodical, and critical manner. This talent enhances a person's capacity to evaluate opposing viewpoints, challenge claims, and draw logical conclusions. Information gathering, assessment, and analysis procedures are all part of critical thinking. Through this approach, people can improve their ability to critically detach themselves from information while also honing their skills in questioning and analyzing it.

Being a critical thinker entails distinguishing between lateral thinking, which is the ability to assess and appraise the nature of an event, occurrence, or issue and integrate solutions that make sense given the circumstances. As a matter of fact, it is the process of thinking through gathering, presenting, and producing new information from individuals. Regardless of the source, critical thinkers never take anything for granted. Rather, they bring up important issues and queries, address them succinctly, gather and assess pertinent data, apply it in an abstract manner, comprehend concepts clearly, and interact with people in a productive manner.

The importance of critical thinking in education has been widely recognized, especially in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL). Critical thinking skills, which enable learners to analyze, evaluate, and create new understandings, are essential for language acquisition and effective communication in a globalized world.

Critical thinking is a cognitive capacity that entails the assessment, analysis, and conclusion-making of data. This talent enhances a person's capacity to evaluate opposing viewpoints, challenge claims, and draw logical conclusions. Paul and Elder (2014) define critical thinking as the ability to analyze and evaluate information objectively. Critical thinking abilities help students study language more deeply in EFL and ESL lessons and encourage them to use language not just for functional purposes but also for meaning creation and communication (Facione, 2015).

Ennis (2011) describes critical thinking as the process of applying reason and clarity when making decisions about what to do or believe. Through this approach, students are able to become active producers of information rather than just passive consumers of it. Critical thinking abilities are particularly crucial for language learners as they enable them to comprehend the grammatical and cultural aspects of language and use language to communicate intricate ideas (Facione, 2015). Students gain a wider perspective when critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making abilities are integrated into language teaching processes.

2. The Value of Fostering Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking abilities help students study language more deeply in EFL and ESL lessons and encourage them to use language not just for functional purposes but also for meaning creation and communication (Facione, 2015). Because critical thinking abilities allow students to do more than just use language for communication, they also allow them to use language to study the world around them, critical thinking has become an integral aspect of English language instruction.

According to Brookfield (2012), critical thinking enables students to challenge their own ideas and be receptive to different viewpoints. Furthermore, critical thinking abilities enable students to assess a text's underlying meaning, better comprehend various cultural viewpoints, and comprehend the language's social context in English classes (Atkinson, 2017).

3. Critical Thinking and English Language Education

Critical thinking is one of the key skills required for both general education and language learning. Students gain various advantages from developing critical thinking skills. Their intellectual capacities as well as their language proficiency are enhanced when critical thinking is incorporated into the language learning process. The importance of critical thinking in EFL/ESL instruction can be covered under a variety of subjects.

Critical thinking guarantees that English language learners do not see language as merely a mechanical process. Language learning procedures take on greater significance as pupils get an understanding of the social and cultural aspects of the language. By applying critical thinking techniques, students improve their communication abilities by doing in-depth text analyses and comprehending the motivations underlying discussions. According to Lipman (2003), critical thinking helps pupils become more cognitively capable as well as more proficient in language.

Critical thinking helps students comprehend language's various meaning levels and social functions in the context of language instruction. Developing a critical mindset when interacting with many cultures and linguistic practices is a crucial aspect of language learning, particularly in the context of globalization. Language educators can facilitate a deeper understanding of the language learners' new language and its social context by fostering critical thinking in their pupils (Brookfield, 2012).

Being able to approach information analytically, critically, and creatively is a thinking talent known as critical thinking. In the context of language instruction, critical thinking gives students the chance to comprehend the language on a deeper level and go beyond only learning grammar rules by memory. Pupils get an understanding of language's social and cultural surroundings, how to examine language meaning, and how to assess other points of view.

Critical thinking is included in language instruction to assist students to become more autonomous and creative thinkers while also strengthening their language proficiency. As critical thinking is observed as the skill of approaching knowledge analytically, critically, and creatively, in the context of language instruction, it gives learners the chance to comprehend the language on a deeper level and go beyond only learning grammar rules by memory. Students learn how to analyze language meaning, evaluate opposing viewpoints, and comprehend the social and cultural context of language. Paul and Elder (2008) contend that students can gain a deeper understanding of language by approaching it with a questioning mindset and that critical thinking is a valuable tool in language learning. This guarantees that students comprehend the

social and cultural aspects of the language in addition to grammatical principles, especially when teaching foreign languages.

Additionally, in language education, critical thinking skills development improves students' ability to communicate in both their native tongue and a foreign language. Conversely, Lipman (2003) highlights that critical thinking empowers students to take a more active part in language learning as well as other learning processes. This viewpoint holds that critical thinking in the context of language instruction gives pupils the skills they need to acquire the language and utilize it more creatively and meaningfully.

Rather than only learning the language's rules by heart, students can gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind and applications of these principles through the application of critical thinking abilities. Students are often curious about the cultural, social, and psychological aspects of language in addition to grammar. They are able to acquire a critical viewpoint as a result (Duron et al., 2006). Hence, students' intellectual capacities as well as their language proficiency are enhanced when critical thinking is incorporated into the language learning process.

Critical thinking improves linguistic proficiency as well as cultural sensitivity. Through the application of critical thinking techniques, students from diverse cultural backgrounds can gain a deeper understanding and empathy for other cultures in EFL/ESL programs. This enables pupils to communicate more successfully by considering cultural variations when utilizing the language (Brookfield, 2012). When using the language in various cultural situations, second language learners, in particular, acquire a critical viewpoint.

In this context, it would be beneficial to examine it under a few fundamental topics in order to comprehend how critical thinking affects EFL students' growth. These comprise crucial components including cognitive growth, cultural awareness, empathy, and the capacity for independent learning.

3.1. Development of Cognitive Skills

Cognitive abilities, which is closely related to the development of critical thinking skills, are mental processes that allow people to comprehend new knowledge, solve problems, process information, and analyze it. These skills are crucial for learning a language as well. In other words, one of the most crucial instruments for the development of cognitive capacities in language learning is critical thinking. Critical thinking directly affects how students learn and

utilize language, especially in EFL/ESL classes. To Zohar and Dori (2003), students can use language more creatively and meaningfully when their cognitive skills in language learning improve. Students who apply critical thinking techniques are able to utilize language more flexibly and creatively, as well as comprehend complicated language structures and meanings better.

Facione (2015), who defines critical thinking as the capacity for in-depth analysis, evaluation, and conclusion drawing, also argues that these abilities are closely related to cognitive abilities. Thus, in the context of EFL/ESL classes, the development of critical thinking skills enhances students' cognitive capacities in addition to their language competency. As Paul and Elder (2014) assert students who engage in critical thinking are better able to examine language and information, which enhances their cognitive processes. Cognitive skills are the processes of thought required by students in order to comprehend, analyse, and apply knowledge to novel situations. These abilities are essential for language learning, usage, and in-depth comprehension in EFL/ESL schools.

Learning a language, according to Bloom (1956) involves more than just memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary; it also entails applying language to analyze new information, solve problems, and cultivate critical thinking abilities. Students can develop these cognitive skills further and gain a deeper understanding of the material by using critical thinking.

3.1.1. Ability to Think Creatively and Analytically

The development of creative thinking abilities is also fostered by critical thinking. Students that use creative thinking are able to come up with novel ideas and articulate them verbally. This frees them from the confines of only learning language's fundamental structures and enables them to acquire more sophisticated thinking and expressing abilities. According to Torrance (1993), critical thinking serves as a catalyst for the development of high-level cognitive abilities, and creative thinking plays a significant part in this process. Students who engage in critical thinking are able to utilize language more creatively and effectively, especially when writing and speaking.

Moreover, students who use critical thinking are able to comprehend language on a deeper level. Students who engage in critical thinking are better able to comprehend and interpret information, according to Duron et al. (2006). For instance, by critically analyzing the meaning of a speech or text, the student acquires a deeper knowledge of the relationship between

linguistic patterns and cultural contexts in the text. This directly affects the maturation of cognitive capacities.

Critical thinking, on the other hand, is the capacity for in-depth examination, comparison, and challenging of concepts, ideas, or information that is offered. According to Ennis (2011), critical thinking is the capacity to reason logically, challenge information sources, and come to a consistent conclusion. Analyzing the meanings and social settings behind language is just one aspect of critical thinking, which is a talent that extends beyond knowing grammar. Halpern (2014) asserts that language learners can gain a deeper grasp by challenging the language's cultural and historical settings in addition to concentrating on the language's surface structure by applying critical thinking techniques.

Students that use critical thinking skills are able to examine the underlying meanings, intents, and views of a book in addition to understanding it at a surface level. According to Duron et al. (2006), students' use and comprehension of language are greatly enhanced by critical thinking. Students that use critical thinking skills are able to examine the underlying meanings, intents, and views of a book in addition to understanding it at a surface level. The development of these abilities gives students the chance to analyze texts critically and gain a deeper understanding of how language is utilized in various linguistic and cultural contexts in EFL/ESL classes.

As focused on by Elder and Paul (2009), students with critical thinking abilities are able to evaluate a problem from several perspectives, especially when writing and speaking, which enhances their ability to communicate effectively and creatively. Language learners can improve their understanding of grammatical structures and the processes involved in meaning creation and communication through these practices. Students with critical thinking abilities can approach language learning from a variety of angles. Pupils can challenge the material in books, comprehend language usage, and creatively convey this information. Critical thinking, according to Elder and Paul (2009), improves students' ability to solve problems and think creatively. By applying these abilities, students can analyze more deeply and communicate more effectively, particularly in written and spoken communication.

Therefore, it is vital to concentrate on how these two ideas interact in EFL/ESL courses in order to comprehend how critical thinking helps to enhance cognitive abilities. Students that possess critical thinking skills are better able to use language, analyze, question, and evaluate information; cognitive talents are also important in these processes.

3.1.2. Fostering Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Skills

The importance of developing critical thinking skills for EFL/ESL students cannot be overstated, as it improves their capacity for decision-making and problem-solving. Additionally, students who practice critical thinking are taught how to analyze language, create arguments, and take a multifaceted approach to problems in addition to linguistic skills. Thus, they become better equipped to solve problems and think analytically in order to overcome language obstacles.

According to Jonassen (2011), students who use critical thinking are able to approach language learning challenges in a more imaginative and analytical manner. The problem-based learning (PBL) approach fosters critical thinking while enhancing students' capacity for analytical thought and problem-solving. Through this technique, students may use language to answer problems in a logical and ordered manner. The verbal and cognitive growth of students is supported by their ability to solve problems. Therefore, these abilities let students transcend beyond linguistic patterns and use language as a tool for communication and meaning creation, particularly when learning a language.

Students with critical thinking abilities can access, evaluate, and make reasoned conclusions from a variety of sources. In language studies, students are required to analyze texts, scenarios, and real-world examples and decide which course of action to take after considering the available information (Facione, 2011). For instance, debating exercises or debates help students hone their abilities to evaluate claims, weigh opposing viewpoints, and stand by their own conclusions. To Paul and Elder (2014), these kinds of exercises improve students' capacity to make wiser decisions in a variety of real-world scenarios and go beyond the language acquisition process

The process of problem-solving requires critical thinking. According to Brookfield (2012), students analyze problems they come across by considering their causes, effects, and potential remedies. In order to overcome language or cultural hurdles, students in EFL/ESL classes must actively apply their problem-solving abilities. Students may need to go past linguistic or cultural obstacles in order to collaborate to solve a problem in a group study, for instance. Lau (2011) argues that their capacity to think critically allows students to come up with original and practical answers during this process.

Critical thinking skills are incorporated into the course curriculum in EFL/ESL programs, which helps students' cognitive and language development. Through critical reading exercises,

according to Fisher (2011), for instance, students can challenge the concepts found in books, formulate their own concepts, and use language to communicate these concepts. Fisher (2011) adds that by providing students with more methodical and in-depth thinking skills, these activities enhance both their language acquisition and general life skills.

3.2. Development of Empathy and Cultural Awareness

In its broadest definition, empathy is the capacity to comprehend the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of another person and, through doing so, to form an emotional connection. In other words, it is the ability to comprehend the thoughts and feelings of another person and behave accordingly is known as empathy. According to Batson (2009), empathy is the capacity to take on another person's viewpoint and comprehend and experience their feelings. In this situation, empathy is both a cognitive ability and an emotional activity. People can comprehend many points of view and challenge their own ideas by combining critical thinking and empathy.

Empathy is a critical component of language learning because it allows learners to understand the thoughts and feelings of language users. Therefore, in order to foster a supportive environment for language learning in the classroom, empathy is also crucial. Therefore, as a crucial element of critical thinking, empathy can be incorporated into language acquisition procedures.

Students studying EFL/ESL have the opportunity to cultivate empathy by attempting to comprehend the viewpoints of individuals from other cultural backgrounds. As they acquire the language, this aids students in being more culturally aware. Rogers (1951) suggests that teachers can help students and foster a more inclusive learning environment by being aware of their unique challenges. Students gain confidence in their language learning process and become less fearful of making mistakes as a result. An empathic teaching style can significantly lessen students' fear of making mistakes when learning a language. Empathy, to Mercer (2016), fosters positive interactions between students and instructors as well as positive relationships among the student body. By fostering relationships based on empathy, this connection aids in the process of learning a language.

According to Barrett (2017), empathy also helps students understand words and grammar structures as well as the cultural and social aspects of the language, especially when learning a second language. Students can gain a deeper understanding of how and why people use language in particular ways by developing empathy. This improves communication proficiency during the process of learning a language.

Developing empathy is essential to the growth of critical thinking abilities. The teacher can assist students in developing empathy and comprehension of various viewpoints. Students with empathy abilities are able to apply their understanding of various cultural and social situations to critical thinking exercises.

Critical thinking abilities and empathy are two crucial cognitive processes that work well together. While empathy in language acquisition enables people to comprehend many points of view, critical thinking promotes the process of challenging and assessing these viewpoints (Paul & Elder, 2019). As a language learner attempts to develop empathy in order to comprehend a foreign culture and language, his critical thinking abilities enable him to assess the social dynamics of this language at a deeper level. With the help of these two abilities, students can approach the language learning process with greater flexibility, comprehension, and openness. These two competencies facilitate students' ability to approach the language acquisition process with greater adaptability, receptivity, and comprehension.

3.3. Acquiring Self-Drive and Self-Resilience

Students' cognitive awareness and self-regulation skills both improve with critical thinking. A person's capacity to observe and manage their own thought processes is known as metacognitive skills. Flavell (1979) explains that by strengthening their metacognitive abilities, students who engage in critical thinking are better able to better oversee their own learning processes. Within EFL/ESL classes, metacognitive abilities enable students to make decisions about which language learning tactics to employ, assess their efficacy, and adjust when needed.

The capacity of students to organize, oversee, and assess their own learning is known as self-regulation. According to Schraw (1998), with this ability, students can learn languages more responsibly and independently. Students that engage in critical thinking become more adept at assessing and refining their own learning practices. For instance, while they are learning a language, pupils examine their own errors and figure out how to improve. In EFL/ESL classrooms, critical thinking abilities boost students' drive to learn and their ability to study on their own. Lai (2011) believes that students approach knowledge more thoughtfully and participate more actively in the learning process when they use critical thinking skills. This raises students' enthusiasm in the learning process and gives them the ability to take on greater responsibility, particularly while learning a language.

3.4. Contributions to Career and Life

Students' language competency is increased in EFL/ESL classes by developing critical thinking abilities, which also have a positive impact on their daily lives and jobs. People with critical thinking abilities can approach challenges more critically and come up with workable answers. Facione (2015) writes that this ability is crucial for decision-making, particularly in the business sector, as well as for enhancing problem-solving skills and producing knowledge-based analyses. In addition to improving academic performance, critical thinking abilities enable people to make wiser judgments in both their personal and professional lives. As mentioned by Paul and Elder (2014), people with higher critical thinking skills, for instance, analyze situations more effectively and come up with more original answers to difficulties they face in daily life or during job interviews, which help them become more successful.

Students who develop their critical thinking abilities grow into more adaptable and imaginative professionals. The ability to think critically gives one the chance to assess many viewpoints and solve complicated problems. This, as explained by Davidson and Dunham (1997), is particularly significant in the context of the worldwide business world because it makes it possible to function well in settings where disparate intellectual and cultural frameworks collide.

Ennis (2011) also asserts that critical thinking has a positive impact on people's lives by helping them manage personal issues, properly assess information from the media, and interact with others more skillfully. The ability to make more autonomous, thoughtful, and rational decisions in their daily lives is given to pupils via these skills.
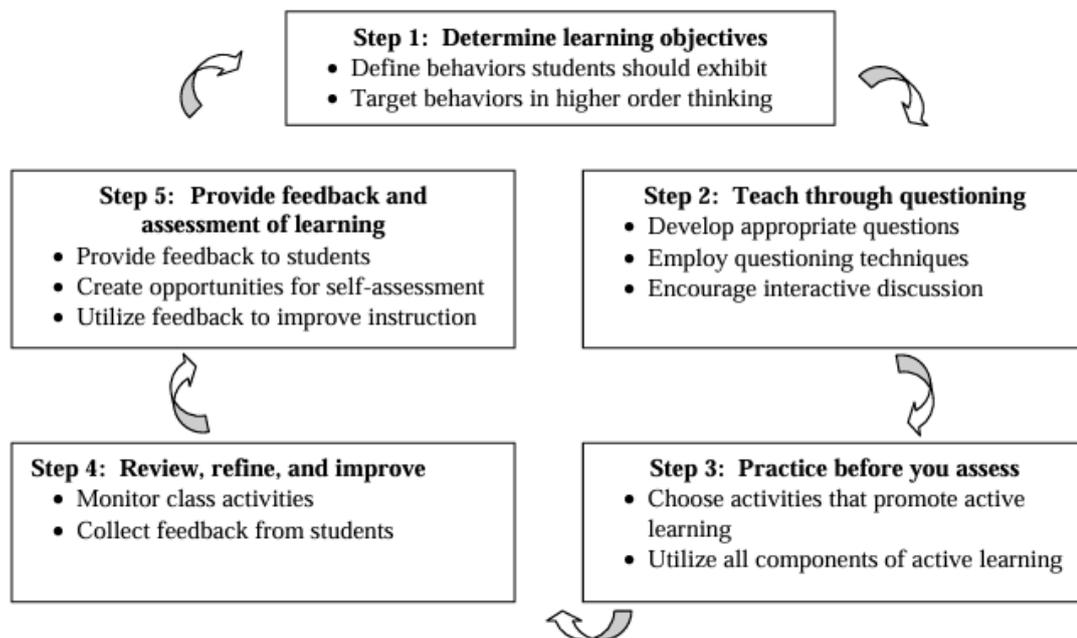
4. Strategies for Developing Critical Thinking Ability

Although the lecture style is a time-tested and widely used method of delivering knowledge in higher education, according to Duron et al. (2006), it frequently discourages students from engaging in active learning or critical thinking. Because the lecture style is teacher-centered and has a solid academic tradition, it is frequently chosen by those who are new to teaching. Unfortunately, the lecture format makes it exceedingly difficult for students to develop their critical thinking abilities. Since the lecture style makes it easier to impart much knowledge, topics are covered in a sequential manner rather than critically, and students have a tendency to memorize the content.

As focused on by Duron et al. (2006), incorporating critical thinking skills into the curriculum helps students' cognitive and language growth in EFL/ESL programs. Students can challenge

concepts found in books, generate original ideas, and use language to communicate these ideas through critical reading exercises, for instance. Fisher (2011) also writes that by equipping students with more methodical and sophisticated thinking abilities, these activities enhance both their language learning and general life skills

To successfully encourage students to think critically, Duron et al. (2006) propose a 5-step framework (see Figure 1) that can be used in almost any type of training or educational environment. With its foundation in current theory and best practices in cognitive development, productive learning environments, and outcomes-based assessment, this interdisciplinary model offers teachers a helpful framework for guiding students and lecture-based courses toward an experiential learning environment.

Step 1: Determine learning objectives
- Define behaviors students should exhibit
- Target behaviors in higher order thinking

Step 5: Provide feedback and assessment of learning
- Provide feedback to students
- Create opportunities for self-assessment
- Utilize feedback to improve instruction

Step 2: Teach through questioning
- Develop appropriate questions
- Employ questioning techniques
- Encourage interactive discussion

Step 4: Review, refine, and improve
- Monitor class activities
- Collect feedback from students

Step 3: Practice before you assess
- Choose activities that promote active learning
- Utilize all components of active learning

Source: (Duron et al., 2006, p. 161)

Figure 1. 5-Step model to move students toward critical thinking

Duron et al. (2006) explain the steps they suggest in Figure 1 as summarized below:

Step 1 is related to establishing the learning goals. That is, the teacher should first determine the major learning objectives, which specify the behaviors that students should display when they leave the class, taking into account the significance of the course, its placement in the program of study, and its function in providing a foundation of information to be built upon by later courses. These learning objectives, along with the activities and assessments linked to the higher levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, are necessary to foster critical thinking. Writing clear learning objectives in line with Bloom's Taxonomy levels is explained in the text. Students

are encouraged to exhibit particular behaviors at each level, which are illustrated via questions that encourage critical thinking. As an illustration:

- ➤ Knowledge requires simple recall of facts, "Who" and "What" inquiries, are necessary for knowledge.
- ➤ Understanding the material entails comprehension (e.g., summarize, explain).
- ➤ Application requires students to apply knowledge to novel contexts (e.g., apply, solve).
- ➤ Pattern recognition and component classification (e.g., categorize, analyze) are necessary for analysis.
- ➤ Synthesis is the process of blending knowledge to generate original work (e.g., create, construct).
- ➤ Assessment requests a conclusion based on a well-reasoned case (e.g., assess, evaluate).

(Duron et al., 2006)

Step 2 focuses on the significance of using question while teaching. In other words, the relevance of asking questions in the classroom is emphasized throughout the text since it fosters the emergence of new ideas and aids in the assessment of prior knowledge. Interaction is sparked by questions, which also push pupils' critical thinking. It is asserted that that students' thinking is greatly influenced by the questions they are asked in class, and that the complexity of the questions has an effect on the students' thinking level. As students gain familiarity with concepts, teachers should gradually introduce higher-level questions that are carefully planned and purposefully presented. Careful planning is essential to make this experience easier. Students' ability to think can be developed through the use of questioning strategies. There are several categories into which questions can be divided. Using the broad categories of convergent and divergent inquiries is one easy way. Divergent questions aim for a broad range of correct responses, whereas convergent questions seek one or more extremely specific answers. Convergent questions, such as "Define nutrition," relate to Bloom's lower levels of Knowledge, Comprehension, and Application as explained by Duron et al. (2006).

Step 3 suggests practicing before assessing. According to Duron et al. (2006), active learning has been the focus of a significant change in education during the last ten years. Instructors who have employed this strategy report that their classes are more fun and that the students learn more. Teachers must learn how to improve the entire learning process by including opportunities for reflective dialogue and experiential learning if we are to make learning more dynamic. It is added that in-depth reflective dialogue is a crucial component of active learning. Students might use this as an opportunity to consider the significance of their educational

experience. Reflection can be done in private, as in a journal, or in public, such as in a class discussion. Teachers, to Duron et al. (2006), should think about the forms of active learning that might foster critical thinking when deciding what should be covered in a course. Extending the definition of active learning to encompass obtaining knowledge and concepts, experience, reflection, and, if feasible, firsthand experience is necessary in order to optimize the learning process and provide a comprehensive set of learning activities.

Step 4, as suggested by Duron et al. (2006), dwells upon evaluation, polishing, and enhancing. To guarantee that their teaching strategies are actually assisting students in developing critical thinking abilities, educators should make a constant effort to improve their curricula. Teachers need to keep a careful eye on everything going on in the classroom in order to achieve this. A teaching journal can be used to record student involvement by listing the students who took part, outlining the major activities in class, and offering a grade based on their performance. This diary allows for the tracking of additional reflecting remarks, which are quite helpful for updating or changing educational materials. In addition, utilizing student input is another crucial strategy for course enhancement. One method suggested in this step is that students are asked to name the most essential lesson they learned. Teachers can go over the comments and utilize them to highlight certain concerns in upcoming lessons. Teaching and learning can be improved by having a discussion with the students about the response patterns.

Step 5 focuses on the significance of the assessment of what was learned and giving feedback. In order to measure the quality of work, teacher feedback, like evaluation, contrasts criteria and standards with student performance. Feedback, however, is intended to improve the level of student performance and learning rather than to assign grades. More significantly, though, is that it may teach students how to evaluate their own work in the future. Feedback enables the teacher and student(s) to examine standards and criteria and to have a conversation about what separates successful performance from bad performance. Instructors, according to Duron et al. (2006), ought to give their students constructive criticism by giving them plenty of chances to practice the skills they will need for assessments. Instructors must dedicate sufficient time to assisting pupils in comprehending the meaning behind the standards and criteria. Peer assessment and comments are also possible. All these methods, some of which are explained briefly below, assist students in learning the difference between acceptable and unacceptable work.

4.1. Discussions and Debates

Students can assess many viewpoints and hone their critical thinking abilities when given the chance to debate a particular subject. As per Brookfield (2012), students can study diverse points of view by engaging in a discussion about the characters in a literary text. One of the best techniques for helping pupils improve their critical thinking abilities, according to Paul and Elder (2019), is the Socratic discussion method. With this approach, the instructor probes the students' thought processes and helps them do the same. Such talks help students develop their critical thinking abilities and language proficiency, especially in language learning classrooms.

In EFL lessons, a number of additional widely used strategies can be used to enhance critical thinking skills. For example, problem-based learning (PBL) fosters both linguistic competency and critical thinking by encouraging students to analyze real-world challenges by applying language abilities in a meaningful context. Engaging in role-playing and discussion exercises enables students to weigh other viewpoints, assess arguments, and develop well-reasoned responses. Furthermore, Socratic questioning can be used to go deeper into comprehension by encouraging students to critically evaluate their presumptions and concepts. Group projects and peer reviews are examples of collaborative learning activities that provide students the chance to debate ideas, clarify meaning, and improve their thought processes. Teachers can improve language acquisition and foster higher-order thinking in their students by incorporating these strategies into their classes. In today's increasingly globalized and information-rich contexts, higher-order thinking is critical for students' academic and personal growth.

4.2. Problem-Based Learning

As students solve real-world issues, they hone their critical thinking abilities. With this approach, as Atkinson (2017) writes, children can utilize language not just grammatically but also functionally and meaningfully, which is especially beneficial in the context of language instruction. Brookfield, (2017) also writes that students' critical thinking abilities can be developed quite effectively through problem-solving exercises The foundation of this approach is posing actual issues to pupils and encouraging them to look for answers. Students actively use language and engage in critical thinking while they analyze challenges. As an illustration, students can attempt to come up with fixes for environmental issues. Through this process, students hone their critical thinking abilities and improve their language proficiency.

4.3. Writing Exercises

High-level mental abilities like evaluating, comparing, drawing conclusions, and considering outcomes can be developed by students through writing tasks that foster critical thinking. Duron et al. (2006) suggest that writing a story from the perspective of a different character can aid students in developing empathy and thinking critically about events. To illustrate, when presenting a story to students in an EFL lesson, the teacher asks the students to evaluate the actions of the main character. This enables pupils to do critical analysis of characters.

Similarly, Stapleton (2019) asserts that students can effectively arrange their thoughts and communicate them critically by using writing tasks. Analytical writing procedures particularly encourage critical thinking. By requiring them to create an argument on a given subject, teachers help students assess competing viewpoints, locate supporting data, and build strong arguments for their own ideas and reinforce their own opinions. For instance, requiring students to write about a subject that is debatable and does not require clear-cut 'True' or 'False' solutions encourages critical thinking. Students who write about a subject need to provide evidence for their claims and take into account opposing viewpoints. Students, according to Cottrell (2017), can overcome their tendencies to view events from one perspective by engaging in such studies and their critical thinking and linguistic skills both improve as a result of these kinds of activities.

Furthermore, writings that focus on finding solutions to problems encourage critical thinking as well as creative thinking. Halpern (2014) asserts that students examine an issue, offer several solutions, and assess the potential effects of each choice. In addition to problem-solving-oriented writings, writing tasks related to comparing and contrasting ideas help students understand concepts more deeply, which makes it another crucial component of critical thinking. For instance, a comparison essay highlighting the distinctions between two topics can be required of the students. They acquire the ability to compare and contrast two thoughts in this way because they must weigh the benefits and drawbacks of different approaches to accomplish this.

Additionally, text analysis, or the ability to evaluate a spoken or written material, is one of the fundamental elements of critical thinking. For text analysis essays, students need to assess the language, messages, and subtexts used by the author. According to Paul and Elder (2008), these types of writings assist students in gaining a deeper comprehension and critical analysis of the

text. As an example, students can be asked about the narrative and linguistic techniques used to support the main idea in this story. Paul and Elder (2008) believe that these kinds of essays assist students in gaining a better comprehension and applying critical analysis to the text.

4.4. Reflective Learning

Reflective learning enriches learning and critical thinking in important ways. In the view of Schön (1983), when students examine their own educational experiences and assess the lessons they have acquired from them, they are engaging in reflective learning. Brookfield (2012) asserts that throughout the review process, critical thinking is crucial because it enables individuals to examine, assess, and create future learning strategies that are more successful.

Students, according to Moon (2020), that engage in reflective learning are able to consider and critically assess their own learning processes. Through journaling, students can watch how they learn and apply critical thinking techniques to these processes. For instance, teachers can invite students to journal every week on their educational journey. With the aid of these journals, students can evaluate how they are learning the language and consider more efficient ways to acquire it. By giving students the chance to assess information and experiences in a more flexible and inquisitive manner, critical thinking abilities promote deep learning as opposed to surface-level learning (Moon, 2020). The learner can comprehend not only what he has learned but also how and why he has learned it in this manner through the use of critical thinking in this process. Therefore, as Kember (2001) asserts, students can become more adaptable and innovative problem solvers in the complex situations they will face in the future by utilizing the relationship between reflective learning and critical thinking When paired with critical thinking abilities, reflective learning empowers people to make better decisions in their personal and professional life.

4.5. Role-play and Simulations

In EFL/ESL classes, the use of role-playing and simulation techniques to foster critical thinking has grown in significance in recent years. These methods, to Al-Issa and Al-Qubtan (2010), allow students to actively apply their critical thinking abilities in addition to helping them to become more proficient language learners. Through the approach of role-playing, students learn to comprehend other people's viewpoints as well as their own by acting out a specific circumstance while assuming a character. As explained by Rojas-Drummond and Mercer (2003), students gain critical thinking abilities as a result of this, which fosters empathy and examination of opposing viewpoints.

Through the use of simulation tools, as Tompkins (2011) focuses on, students can experience difficult scenarios that they would come into in real life. Using these strategies, students solve problems, make decisions, and construct logical arguments all within the confines of a predetermined scenario. According to Bozdoğan (2015), students can enhance their critical thinking abilities, make well-informed decisions, and hone their ability to defend such decisions through the use of simulations. Furthermore, to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), learning becomes deeper and more lasting since these procedures require students to continuously apply critical thinking abilities.

Recent studies have shown that role-playing and simulation methods help students learn language while also fostering their ability to solve problems and think analytically (Vatanartiran & Karadeniz, 2015). Children benefit from these activities by feeling more confident since they can make mistakes in a safe environment in the classroom and learn from them. Also, by contextualizing language learning and giving students the chance to practice real-world scenarios, these strategies help students apply their newly acquired language abilities more successfully (Ertürk & Şahin, 2020).

4.6. Text Analysis

In EFL/ESL programs, the use of text analysis as a critical thinking method not only helps students become more proficient in language but also reinforces their ability to evaluate and conduct knowledge-based inquiry. Bacha (2010) writes that this method assists students in delving deeper into the texts they read, examining the author's aims as well as the language and rhetorical devices employed Students, to McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2016), can specifically challenge the information provided, assess other viewpoints, and examine the underlying themes of texts through critical reading and text analysis

By encouraging students to analyze language patterns, semantic linkages, and writing styles in texts, teachers can help them develop critical thinking skills. As focused on by Yang, (2012), this approach is known as text analysis strategy. With the use of this technique, students can examine the author, context, and goal of the text critically. For instance, Klimova (2013) explains that students can assess the reliability of the supporting evidence and the logical coherence of the arguments in a text while doing an analysis. Through this process, the learner gains proficiency in information analysis and evaluation in addition to learning language structures.

The development of students' critical thinking abilities, to Fahim and Sa'eepour (2011), has proven to be greatly aided by EFL/ESL instruction in recent years. Lun et al. (2010) assert that text analysis teaches pupils to think through more tasks and improves their reading comprehension. According to this method, it impacts and develops their independence as learners.

Students' critical perspectives and cross-cultural understanding are expanded when they can comprehend texts published in various cultural contexts better thanks to text analysis according to Abednia and Izadinia (2013). Students' language ability is enhanced by this component of critical thinking not only in terms of vocabulary and grammar but also in terms of expressive and critical language use.

5. Conclusion

Fostering critical thinking abilities in English language learners benefits their linguistic and cognitive growth. These abilities help students become more successful people in life and get a deeper understanding of the language and the world around them. Students' language learning processes are deepened and their ability to utilize language more creatively is enhanced when critical thinking abilities are incorporated into language education. This enhances the language and cognitive abilities of the students. In addition, empathy and critical thinking abilities are crucial elements of language learning. Students can have a deeper knowledge of language in terms of grammar, culture, and social interactions by honing these skills. These abilities encourage people to participate more actively, feel more comfortable learning a language, and have a deeper understanding of the language's cultural context.

Critical thinking skills development helps EFL/ESL students become more than just language learners; it also helps them become competent decision-makers and problem solvers in all spheres of their lives. Students have the chance to succeed in their social and academic life when these skills are reinforced in the classroom through activities. Gaining critical thinking abilities in EFL/ESL lessons helps students to analyze language learning processes, think critically, and assess various points of view. By assisting learners in this process, teachers may promote critical thinking settings and empathy abilities in their students.

These abilities can be developed through techniques like Socratic dialogues, problem-solving exercises, and reflective learning. Subsequent studies may investigate the function of critical thinking in the process of acquiring a language. These abilities can be developed through techniques like Socratic dialogues, problem-solving exercises, and reflective learning.

Subsequent studies may investigate the function of critical thinking in the process of acquiring a language.

In brief, students who possess these abilities will be broadly competent in communication, problem solving, and decision making. Through the development of critical thinking abilities in EFL/ESL classes, students can become more productive, self-reliant, and imaginative people in both their personal and professional lives.

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