



An Accredited Institution of the University of Westminster (UK)

Developing Students' Critical Thinking Skills in Academic English Module

Dildora Tashpulatova

Nargiza Tadjiyeva

Global English Department

What is wrong with the following statements?

- He received a good grade on his essay because the teacher likes him.
- I am proud that I am humble.
- I argued with Mrs. Smith before I turned in my homework so I got a bad grade on my paper.
- Three friends ate at Spacey's Restaurant last night, and all are sick today. It is obvious that the restaurant served them food with salmonella poisoning.

Formulate a title for an essay

Topics:

- Education
- Art
- Money
- Health

- Do you think using activities that encourage students to think critically needed in the classroom? If yes, why?

- Define critical thinking in your context

Defining Critical thinking

- A “slippery eel” (Molinary and Kavanagh, 2013)
 - Complex
 - Context dependent

Definition of critical thinking

- Norris and Ennis (1989) - “reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused upon deciding what to believe and do” (p3).
- Elder and Paul (1994) - the ability of thinkers to take charge of their own thinking and develop sound criteria and standards for analyzing and assessing their own thinking
- Maiorana (1992) stresses that the purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems.

A process by which we use our knowledge and intelligence to effectively arrive at the most reasonable and justifiable positions on issues, and which endeavors to identify and overcome the numerous hindrances to rational thinking. (Haskins, 2006)

AE Indicative syllabus content

- Academic style and vocabulary
- Listening and reading strategies
- Basic analysis and research skills
- Using sources in written work
- Evaluating sources
- Presentation skills
- Working in groups
- Reflective writing
- Writing emails
- Referencing
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Report writing
- Basic critical skills
- Essay types and structures

EA Assessment tasks

- Academic essay
- Academic blog
- Reflective writing
- Research presentation
- Research report

In AE students struggle with

Essay/Academic blog

- formulating their arguments
- finding a strong support for their argument
- analyzing (question) what they have read and use it properly in their writing (do not have sufficient skills in critical reading)
- summarizing the information from different academic sources (lectures, books, articles)
- writing mostly descriptively

Reflection

- analyzing and reflecting their learning experiences

Research presentation/report

- formulating a research question
- finding relevant/appropriate articles to use in the literature review
- designing questions (in the questionnaire or interview) that relate to their research question
- interpreting and summarizing their findings

Causes of lack of CTS in students

- Previous academic experience
- Transition from one system of education to the other (from teacher-centered to autonomy-requiring environment)
- Limited reading skills
- Little reflective and analytical skills

Causes of lack of CTS

- a culture of rote-learning and memory-based, product-oriented assessment tasks (Gunawardena and Petraki, 2014)
- the learning of higher-level thinking skills appears to be more challenging for Asian learners of English than for EFL learners of other ethnicities (Liaw, 2007)
- limited language skills (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, cited in Gunawardena and Petraki, 2014)

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- Liaw, M. (2007). Content-based reading and writing for critical thinking skills in an EFL context. *English Teaching & Learning*, 31 (2), 45-87. Available from <http://www.ntcu.edu.tw/meeilingliaw/vitae/20070827185727.pdf> [Accessed September 9 2018].
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