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The Effect of Practicing Critical Thinking Skills on Undergraduates English Learners: Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the effectiveness and the value of practicing critical thinking skills on undergraduates' English learners. It is also carried out to identify the challenges that face second language instructors practicing critical thinking skills in their teaching. To achieve these objectives, the researchers used the descriptive analytical approach for data analysis that obtained by questionnaire which addressed to second language instructors, 50 second language university instructors in Sudan universities selected randomly. This study tries to answer these questions: To what extent do critical thinking skills enhance learning English for undergraduates second language learners? And what challenges do instructors in Sudan universities face in practicing Critical Thinking Skills (CTSs) in their classroom? Then, the data was analyzed and discussed.

Keywords: Critical Thinking Skills (CTS), Second Language Undergraduate Learner, Instructor

INTRODUCTION

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

- Explore the effect of practicing critical thinking skills in Sudan EFL undergraduate classroom
- Identify the challenges that faced Sudan EFL teachers practicing critical thinking skills in their teaching

Questions of the Study

This study tries to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do critical thinking skills enhance Sudan EFL undergraduates English language learners learning?
- What challenges do Sudan EFL instructors face in integrating critical thinking skills in their classroom?

Hypotheses of the Study

- Critical thinking skills enhance Sudan EFL undergraduate English language learners learning
- EFL instructors consider challenges for critical thinking skills practicing in classroom such as motivation, teaching environment and curriculum

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical thinking is the ability to think and make connection between ideas. It is the ability to evaluate one's thinking. It the ability to think about difficult problems and find solution. That means to gather evidence and all aspects logically and objectively. Critical thinking is the opposite of regular, everyday thinking. It guides beliefs and actions.

The Importance of Critical Thinking in College Life

Critical thinking allows college students to generate worthy arguments and back them up. That is give Students' opinions. It helps students to evaluate their own work and they can improve it. It helps them to analyze what is at hand e.g., text to reach satisfactory conclusions. It allows them to continue to develop intellectually after they graduate. That is to keep learning as much as they can and long as long as they live. When students encounter

new information and you know how to think critically that will help them to evaluate it and use it. It helps students make hard decisions. Critical thinking allows students to take their own available options (choices) and compare the negative and positive of each one. When students approach a decision critically, they may even realize them to have more options than they imagined. Critical thinking helps students to avoid being manipulated by others. This when students take everything at face value.

Learning English language as foreign language and thinking have long been considered as lifelong processes which are connected with each other. This statement is assured by Mundy and Danham who suggested that critical thinking should be the primary objective of education. The inculcation of critical thinking in learning and education is important for many reasons such as: Facilitate students to think for themselves and make decisions, to equip them with skills to do well in subjects such as science, literature, art and history, to prepare students for challenges of adulthood and to enable them to lead a democratic life which involves good and analytical thinking according to Facione [1]. While the short-term objective of training students to become critical thinkers is to make them better students, the far more important goal is to make them high functioning and productive adults who are able to contribute to the development of a nation. Cimer and Timucin [2], specified that although critical thinking is seen as a rather complex concept to explain, it has been widely defined by educators and theorists worldwide, along with the evaluation criteria, skills and dispositions that go along with it. Aghazadeh [3] explains thinking critically as viewing things from "various perspectives, to look at and challenge any possible assumptions that may underlie the issue and to explore its possible alternatives". In terms of Bloom's taxonomy, the three highest levels of thinking which are analysis, synthesis and evaluation are believed to represent CTSs.

Of the many definitions found on critical thinking can be summarized as a skill to assist.

Why Critical Thinking is Important How Do EFL Students Get Better at Critical Thinking

EFL students should ask basic questions e.g., what do I already know?, how do I know that?, what am I trying to prove, disprove, demonstrate… etc. Question basic assumption e.g., when I assume, I should make sure not to fail to question my assumptions. Questioning assumptions are steps of writing paragraph and composition and techniques of answering reading comprehension questions. In addition, critical thinking trying link words to each other (spelling), some words have share same basic litters e.g., Man = mango = manipulate = manufactory = manager… etc., use = cause = abuse = house = mouse = accuse… etc. In reading comprehension, for example, critical thinking is essential to academic reading. it includes critical analysis of the work of other people, students need to keep asking themselves, what are the main things the writer wants me to accept?, what reasons does the writer present to encourage me to accept this?. In academic writing, critical thinking help EFL students to evaluate the line of reasons. This refers to reasons given to support the argument. Reasons should be relevant and continual to the argument supportively. This helps to identify the validity of the conclusion. Also, logical progression: This means to question whether one point follow logically from another. A line of reasoning begins from a premise (a statement on which reasoning is based) that leads to a conclusion that follows directly from what has gone before.

How Students Can Apply Critical Thinking

Tatsumi [4] Quick research may show different ways to do it but there are elements in common:

- Identify the question, that is, what you would like to know
- Do research on it. It is important that students use reliable sources of information
- Apply the information found in their research to the initial question
- Analyze it and do more research if necessary
- Draw conclusions, make decisions, prioritize them
- Take action and create steps to make your decisions applicable to the initial question

Tatsumi [4] points out that students not always be able to follow all steps in the English language classroom, depending on the activity. That should not mean teachers should not teach critical thinking, even (and especially) to young students. Rather, we should encourage them. Teachers can simply ask "Why?" when a student makes a statement in class or "How do you know?" or "Where did you see that?" The goal is not to discredit the student but to teach them start thinking about topics, from different sides, in new ways.

Curriculum and Critical Thinking

Most of the current teaching-learning methods have their origins in traditional ones and are based on behaviorist perspectives which regard teaching as an attempt to express and deliver information to students and are generally unsuccessful in developing high-level thinking skills [5]. While critical thinking skills can be improved via curriculum, Mundy and Danham, state the continuous complexity of countries' educational problems such as the massive capacity of the content, incorrect teaching approaches and insufficient assessment approaches resulted in educational administrators' focus on its importance and placement as the only responding reference for educational issues more ever, from one hand and change in educational structure needs an optimal change in curricula as a basic loop in society's education system from the other hand. Cimer and Timucin [2] believe that in order to develop critical thinking skills, a thoughtful revision needs to be made in curricula and such a paradigm shift requires reflection on instructors' role, assessment approaches, learning significances and above all, believing those students build their knowledge themselves based on their own proficiencies and backgrounds. As one of main objectives of a curriculum is to motivate students' research propensities, analytic and innovative abilities and judgment and think critically. Ja'fari-sani, claims that it includes designing, implementing and evaluating teaching-learning activities

in order to make principal changes in learners. Mehr, the forming elements of curriculum are one of debates in the field without any consensus about them among researchers. Curriculum should include all activities and experiences of teachers. According to Billings and Halstead, 2005 today's classes do not reflect students' critical thinking development requirements. Both the active involvement of students in learning process and the guiding role of instructors are vital in critical thinking.

Edwards [6] states that curriculum inadequate attention to critical thinking as one of main reasons for their dissatisfaction of various curricula. Despite curriculum emphasis on critical thinking and educational administrators' argued on it, there is not any motivation and willingness to encourage students' critical thinking skills and also in spite of their claims on the importance of critical thinking in developing and facilitating more and better training, lecturers only provide some formalized and regular approaches to memorization rather than critically thinking. Maleki and Habibipour [7], explain that students are often asked to list and memorize some items rather than analyzing, interpreting, evaluating and determining their assumed relations Lecturers' attitude towards concentration on methods based on knowledge transmission in certain limits into students' minds increases their reliance on their instructors and worsens the learning process. Maleki and Habibipour [7] point that critical thinking is the best develops in an environment with thought exchanging and problem-solving, educational objects often emphasize information learning and memorizing content rather than empowering thinking abilities. Lampert observed that that the development of critical thinking as the best educational importance requires the learning approaches which help EFL students to improve their critical thinking abilities and propensities. Modern learning approaches in education systems waste lots of time to put certain and separated information items in learners' minds rather than assisting them in revising previous outcomes and encouraging them to develop critical thinking skills abilities through presenting them with new ideas.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher approaches a qualitative descriptive to do the research. The paper mainly follows the qualitative methodology collecting data from a different source that would lead to its conclusion. This study mainly tries to include the data as quasi- corpora somewhat. To justify the first question researcher adapted the qualitative descriptive study to find out whether there are any similarities in Chinese and Bengali language in terms of using proverbs or not. For the second question which is more an important part of the paper, as the question would find the answer to how different that these two cultures have including how different they are treated in Chinese and English language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The First Hypothesis

Critical thinking skills enhance Sudan ESL/EFL undergraduates learning (Table 1-12).

Table 13 indicates that instructors agree with this statement.

Table 1: My Students Can Easily Identify Problems and Focus into Topics and Issues to Solve

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	9	15
Agree	22	36.7
Neutral	15	25
Disagree	11	18.3
Strongly disagree	3	5
Total	60	100

Table 2: My Students Are Good in Expecting the Outcome of Different Action

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	13.3
Agree	24	40
Neutral	16	26.7
Disagree	10	16.7
Strongly disagree	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Table 3: My Students Can Exactly Make their Decisions Clear

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7	11.7
Agree	26	43.3
Neutral	12	20
Disagree	9	15
Strongly disagree	6	10
Total	60	100

Table 4: My Students Are Able to Make a Difference Between Reasonable and Non-Reasonable Sources of Information

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	16.7
Agree	23	38.3
Neutral	13	21.7
Disagree	12	20
Strongly disagree	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Table 5: My Students Can Listen Carefully to Others and Provide them with Suitable Comments

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7	11.7
Agree	21	35
Neutral	16	26.7
Disagree	11	18.3
Strongly disagree	5	8.3
Total	60	100

Table 6: My Students Can Critic, Discuss and evaluate Different Statements told by Others

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	13.4
Agree	23	38.3
Neutral	16	26.7
Disagree	11	18.3
Strongly disagree	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Table 7: My Students have Curiosity and Eager to Know More

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7	11.7
Agree	18	30
Neutral	18	30
Disagree	11	18.3
Strongly disagree	6	10
Total	60	100

The Second Hypothesis

EFL instructors consider challenges for critical thinking skills practicing in classroom such as motivation, teaching environment and curriculum (Table 14-20).

Table 8: MyStudents Can Easily Tell Apart Opinions from Facts and Do Not Treat Them the Same Way

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	13.3
Agree	23	38.3
Neutral	16	26
Disagree	11	18.2
Strongly disagree	2	3.2
Total	60	100

Table 9: My Students Easily Accept Criticisms and Try to Overcome Them

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	13.3
Agree	21	35
Neutral	18	30
Disagree	11	18.4
Strongly disagree	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Table 10: My Students Create Suitable Questions

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	16.7
Agree	23	38.3
Neutral	19	31.7
Disagree	6	10
Strongly disagree	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Table 11: My Students Can Gather Data from References and Books Which are Associated to a Problem in Order to Solve It

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	14	23.3
Agree	28	46.7
Neutral	12	20
Disagree	6	10
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	60	100

Table 12: My Students Can Paraphrase or/and Summarize What They Read or Listened Using their Own Words

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	13.3
Agree	25	41.7
Neutral	18	30
Disagree	9	15
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	60	100

Table 13: My Students Can Freely Share Their Experience, Knowledge, and/or Point of View

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	13.3
Agree	23	38.3
Neutral	16	26
Disagree	11	18.2
Strongly disagree	2	3.2
Total	60	100

DISCUSSION

Gandimathi *et al*. [8], by integrating learning and critical thinking, students' engagement on the subject matter can be improved. During the process of initiating critical thinking, exploratory task is utilized and it has a close connection with reflection as it encourages students to think independently Bean, 2011. In addition, in a study by Zemsky [9], it is argued that the focus should be on high-priority material which simultaneously promotes critical thinking rather than content coverage. In addition, researchers should delve more into the aspect of critical thinking whereby more suggestions are available for the public. The importance of critical thinking should be highlighted and the government should make room for these to happen through the curriculum. Bringing critical thinking in classrooms is beneficial as it deals with real life

Table 14: I Am Aware of the Conception of Critical Thinking Skills

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	31	51.7
Agree	18	30
Neutral	9	15
Disagree	2	3.3
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	60	100

Table 15: I Know How to Combine Critical Thinking Skills into My Teaching Method

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	18	30
Agree	29	48.3
Neutral	7	11.7
Disagree	3	5
Strongly disagree	3	5
Total	60	100

Table 16: My Student Know How to Use Critical Thinking in LEARNING CÇÇÇEFL

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	16	26.6
Agree	28	46.7
Neutral	10	16.7
Disagree	4	6.7
Strongly disagree	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Table 17: I Receive Annual Professional Courses and Workshops in the Institute I Work with in Order to be Aware and Well-Known of Modern Trend

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	23	38.3
Agree	31	51.7
Neutral	5	8.3
Disagree	1	1.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	60	100

Table 18: The EFL Curriculum that I Use is Supported with Activities and Ways that Promote Critical Thinking Skills

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	14	23.3
Agree	25	41.7
Neutral	9	15
Disagree	10	16.7
Strongly disagree	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Table 19: I Am Motivated to Teach My Student in Critical Thinking Method

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	23	38.3
Agree	31	51.7
Neutral	5	8.3
Disagree	1	1.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	60	100

Table 20: My Teaching Environment Help Me to Practice Critical Thinking Skills

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	23	38.3
Agree	30	50
Neutral	6	10
Disagree	1	1.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	60	100

situations. As a whole, critical thinking should be started from a young age which would enable students to cultivate creative and critical thinking through-out their studies. In the near future, students would be able to use their critical thinking in their working life. By using critical thinking, students' curiosity for getting solutions to the problem will be generated, help them in active learning that will develop their understanding and appreciation of varied points of views.

The recent study is carried out to discover the effect and the value of practicing critical thinking skills on Sudan EFL undergraduate students learning. To reach this objective, the researcher hypothesizes that critical thinking skills enhance Sudan EFL undergraduate learners learning.

According to Table 1-13, they approve that this hypothesis is true and has accepted, where most of participants more than 50% agree on the effectiveness and the value of practicing critical thinking on Sudan EFL undergraduate students learning.

The second objective of the study is to identify the challenges that face Sudan EFL instructors in integrating critical thinking skills in their teaching. To reach this objective the researchers hypothesizes that EFL instructors consider challenges for critical thinking skills practicing in classroom such as motivation, teaching environment and curriculum. According to the Table 14-20 this hypothesis is also accepted, where more than 50% of respondents agree with it.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed at examining the practice of critical thinking amount English foreign language students in Sudan Arabia. The findings of this study indicate that critical thinking skills enhance Sudan EFL undergraduate learners learning. Practicing critical thinking skills help EFL students to share their knowledge, experiences or point of view. Integrating Critical thinking skills helps students to paraphrase and/or summarize what they read or listened on their own words. Practicing Critical thinking skills helps students to accept criticisms and overcome them. Practicing Critical thinking skills gives students an opportunity to listen carefully to other and provide them with appropriate comments.

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