



## CRITICAL THINKING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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### ABSTRACT

*Critical thinking of a passage read, will help the students to write effective research Papers, Academic writing, Essay writing. By enhancing critical thinking student will learn to create questions that will help them to focus on their reading and writing skills. The student will be able to understand the difference between evaluating and opinion. Teaching and curriculum involves not only adhering to the teaching content, but the teaching methodology, learning strategies and the changed relationship between students and teachers. The purpose is to suggest that what is needed for Critical Thinking particularly is a different orientation to English study. There is a shift of the focus of attention from the grammar to the communicative properties and functions of language. Difficulties students encounter arise not so much from a defective knowledge of the system of language but from the unfamiliarity with English use and the adequate rhetoric used to convey scientific facts. It is suggested that in teaching Critical Thinking learning strategies should play not only important but a vital role. Accordingly, autonomous learning and metacognitive strategies are suggested as basics for teaching and learning Critical Thinking and especially in English Language.*

### WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

There is no single definition for Critical Thinking, That is not to say that people struggle to give an explanation of what it means, but simply that they frame it in different ways.

English is the accepted international language of technology, science and commerce. English Language has created a new generation of learners who know specifically why they are

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learning the language. In fact there was a pre-determined goal in their learning English. Whereas English has now become a subject to needs, and demands of people other than language teachers. Dovey (2006) states courses which prepare students for the workplace in specific ways can be expected to have purposes quite different from those of discipline-based courses and can also be expected to introduce new questions. Metacognitive Approaches to English Language Acquisition has also become an important part of English, probably as a direct result of the introduction of communicative teaching curricula. Its main drive is practical, driven by the increasing number of people around the world who need English for clearly communicative syllabus design in which he presented a system for devising appropriate syllabus specification from adequate profiles of communicative needs. These profiles included the purposes of communication, the communication settings, and the language skills, functions and structures required.

Students think that Critical Thinking Skills has been invented by English teachers to make students interested in English programs. They believe that instructors in their field will be more successful for Critical Thinking.

For Students having knowledge in the field is not sufficient for Critical Thinking, they should have a good command in general English and they should be familiar with the basic principles of teaching and learning theory.

Critical thinking is the ability to use self-regulatory mechanisms or cognitive monitoring to ensure the successful completion of the task, such as checking the outcome of any attempt to solve the problem, for example, planning one's strategies for learning, and remediating any difficulties encountered by using compensatory strategies.

Critical Thinking can be about what the person knows and what the person is currently doing. Metacognition is deliberate, planned, intentional, goal directed and future-oriented, mental processing that can be used to accomplish cognitive tasks (Flavell, 1971). Metacognition involves active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of cognitive processes to achieve cognitive goals. As metacognition involves an awareness of oneself as an actor, a deliberate Store and retrieval of information, it may be reasonable to reserve the term metacognitive for conscious and deliberate thoughts that have other thoughts as their objects (Hacker, 1998). According to Block (2004) metacognition can be defined as a reader's awareness of (1) what he or she is thinking about while reading, (2) what thinking processes he or she initiates to overcome literacy challenges, and (3) how a reader selects specific thinking processes to make meaning before, during, and after reading.

To be an efficient and effective thinker, the learner should be able to monitor his or her degree of understanding, be aware of the knowledge possessed, be aware of the task

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demand, and know the strategies that facilitate thinking. One example of a specific critical thinking skill is distinguishing fact from opinion. Teaching students to think critically is a difficult task and requires a great deal of patience, decision making and problem solving requires reflective thought and action and it is the ability to use self-regulatory mechanisms.

One approach to teaching critical thinking is the metacognitive approach which emphasizes explaining and modeling the thinking strategy. While reading a student's brain becomes active. After previewing, a student can decide how to deal with any particular text, and explore various strategies to have better comprehension. Articles are understood better and students are in a position to skip a few lines to get the gist of the topic.

Reading comprehension can be improved by increasing the speed. Associate knowledge about the topic makes it easier to understand. Finding key words questioning, reasoning, logical reasoning active comprehension are the take-away of critical thinking.

With stiff competition and ever increasing job requirements students have to develop their higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking, decision making and problem solving. The current trend of teaching demands that students should be motivated to think and increase their thinking capabilities to be successful.

English literature is one subject in which the thinking skills of a student can be improved. There is a blend of critical thinking skills and subject matter. Thinking skills are reinforced throughout the teaching of the English literature and later retained. Students can enhance critical thinking skills and understanding subject matter simultaneously. A lot depends on the approach used by the educator in the classroom teaching. Students will know what is synthesis of literature and will have different ideas, school of thought, become creative writers and will be able to know the difference between scholarly evaluation and personal opinion.

There is a shift of the focus of attention from the grammar to the communicative properties and functions of English language. Use of course have to be such the students include critical thinking which prepares them for their workplace. This is different from discipline based courses and can also be expected to introduce new questions driven by the increasing number of people around the world who need English for transacting business.

### **Metacognitive Approaches to Critical Thinking:**

Critical thinking has a vital role in education. Students who think critically can ask suitable questions, gather relevant information, creatively sort through this information, reason from this information and come to reliable conclusions about the world that enables one to act

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successfully. In critical thinking a student has to be taught how to analyze or evaluate the 'why' of the statement said.

If a transition and paradigm shift has to be made in teaching and learning in higher education then changes in curriculum design and teaching methods should be considered. Educators must create an environment where a student is encouraged to think, ask questions, reason, analyze debate and come to a conclusion.

The metacognitive approach is an alternative way to teach critical thinking skills and is based on the principles of infusion-the teacher directly teaches students specific critical thinking skills within the context of subject matter. The teacher primarily accomplishes this through modeling the use and application of critical thinking. In addition, the skills are also modeled by the learners.

Cognition or thinking refers to the intellectual functioning of the mind with regard to the learner's ability to attend, acquire, represent, and recall information. Metacognition, which refers to the knowledge and control people have over their own thinking and learning activities (Flavell 1979), deals with the "individual's knowledge about the task, possible strategies that might be applied to the task and the individual's awareness of their own abilities in relation to these strategies" (Taylor 1983, 270).

The teacher shapes students' understanding of the reasoning process by asking them to explain how they made sense of the text. On the basis of what they say, the teacher provides additional explanations to help them reason like experts. Similarly, as they listen to their classmates describing their mental processes, they develop flexibility of thought and an appreciation for the different ways of solving the same problem. Students are asked to pose questions, spot confusions, form hypotheses, and suggest remedies to failures.

A paradigm shift in our education system is required that facilitates development of the critical thinking skills that modern society demands.

Critical thinking opens a space for deeper learning and deeper engagement with the object of learning. Learners employ different thinking skills when learning a language. These can be classified into three types: basic comprehension, critical thinking, and creative thinking. All play a key role in learning and should appear at different points within a lesson, but not necessarily in any particular order. We believe that up to now the lack of a clear working model—along with a lack of clear examples of critical thinking activities—has prevented teachers from helping learners in acquisition of critical thinking strategies.



Among the several major approaches to teaching critical thinking skills, the literature seems to favor infusion-teaching thinking skills in the context of subject matter. This approach entails integrating content and skills as equally as possible in order to maintain a balance of the two (Willis 1992). Thinking skills are reinforced throughout the teaching of the subject and later retained. Research shows that students learn both skills and subject matter if they are taught concurrently (Beyer 1988).

The metacognitive approach we are proposing is an alternative way to teach critical thinking skills and is based on the principles of infusion-the teacher directly teaches students specific critical thinking skills within the context of subject matter. The teacher primarily accomplishes this through modeling the use and application of critical thinking. In addition, the skills are also modeled by the learners.

There is strong evidence for the effectiveness of the modeling component of the metacognitive approach. One of the most influential studies of critical thinking in social studies classrooms is currently underway at the University of Wisconsin. Newman and his associates are attempting to find out what teachers do to create classroom environments that foster thoughtfulness.

In relation to the acquisition of critical thinking skills, metacognition refers to what a learner knows about his or her thinking processes (conscious awareness) and the ability to control these processes by planning, choosing, and monitoring.

Thinking skills should be encouraged all throughout while teaching English. Critical thinking to refer to the ability to think, analyze, reason and reflect information.

Educators have to prepare graduates to evaluate the merit & demerit of proposed solutions. Educators have to teach students to perform complex mental operations that will allow them to be successful in their career and personal lives classroom teaching and learning has a deep impact in calculating critical thinking skills.

Thinking processes need to be considered into three broader levels: Basic comprehension, critical thinking, and creative thinking.

Critical thinking can be increased through debates, writing and sharing opinions. Educators and teachers have to create an environment that fosters thoughtfulness. Just nearly explaining the skill is not enough educators have to teach the process and give models to practically apply it in the learning process.





Application of critical thinking in the learning process of learning the English language needs metacognitive approaches in executing the skills.

For example, the teachers can read a text passage during the class and model self-questioning as well as the fix-up strategies adopted to overcome difficulties in understanding. The teachers provide a model of the thinking processes by stating what is going on inside his or her head. Herein the teacher is assumed to be the expert thinkers while the student is seen as the novice.

Students at the multiplicity level realize that uncertainties exist in the world but do not analyze or evaluate why. Students who do not master foundation skills in critical thinking rarely move past the multiplicity position, making this a crucial turning point for development of critical thinking (Kurfiss, 1988; Ryan, 1984). The potential stagnation carries serious implications for higher education. If critical thinking is the desired outcome, but students are only required to memorize facts, evidence is sufficient to speculate that the development of critical thinking skills is not taking place except as a possible result of increase in age or maturity (Chickering, 1981).

A major shortcoming of traditional college classrooms is that faculty presents *products* of their skills, failing to model their own thinking processes for students (Arons, 1985; Davidson & Worsham, 1992; Nelson, 1997). The reality may be that, while faculty value students' upper-level thinking abilities, it is easier to teach and assess lower levels of learning—knowledge and understanding—than to teach and assess higher-order thinking, in particular critical thinking. If classroom activities lie at the bottom of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives, requiring students only to listen passively and recall information, then critical thinking is not consciously being developed, and colleges and universities do not produce the critical thinkers they think they do (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Browne & Keeley, 1994; Chickering, 1981; King & Kitchener, 1994).

If critical thinking remains an educational objective, then changes in curriculum design and teaching methods should be considered by Institutions of higher education and faculty in every classroom must provide students with a foundation of critical thinking skills, an environment that encourages the use of critical thinking, and opportunities “to manipulate information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications, such as when students combine facts and ideas in order to synthesize, generalize, explain, hypothesize, or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation” (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993, 9; Facione, Facione, & Giancarlo, 1997). These views need not be exclusive. Foundation skills can and should have Critical thinking.



Auerbach and Paxton (1997), define metacognition as “knowledge of strategies for processing texts, the ability to monitor comprehension, and the ability to adjust strategies as needed” (pp. 240-41). Research studies (Duell, 1986) seem to confirm that as children get older they demonstrate more awareness of their thinking processes. Metacognition is relevant to work on cognitive styles and learning strategies in so far as the individual has some awareness of their thinking or learning processes.

Cognitive strategies differ from metacognitive strategies in that they are likely to be encapsulated within a subject area (e.g., EFL), whereas metacognitive strategies span multiple subject areas (Shraw, 1998). Cognitive strategies are, for example, making a decision, translating, summarizing, linking with prior knowledge or experience, applying grammar rules and guessing meaning from texts (e.g., O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Metacognition refers to awareness and control of cognitive activities. Empirical studies show that successful learners differ from less successful ones in both the quantity and quality of cognitive and metacognitive strategy use (e.g., Oxford, 1989). The literature of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension reveals that poor readers in general lack effective metacognitive strategies and have little awareness on how to approach to reading. They also have deficiencies in the use of metacognitive strategies to monitor for their understanding of texts. In contrast successful L2 readers know how to use appropriate strategies to enhance text comprehension (e.g., Pitts, 1983).

Similar to experiences about metacognitive strategies with intermediate-level students in Critical Thinking courses worldwide.

### **Application of Critical Thinking:**

Application of Critical Thinking enables Students to think more actively in reading as if, students read with their brain rather than their eyes. After previewing Students can decide how they will deal with any particular text, and which other strategies they are going to follow to have better comprehension.

Critical strategies help Students to be more conscious and active. They are used to read a text word for word until then, being afraid to misunderstand the contents. Critical Thinking helps Students to skip as many words as possible even when they are going to read about something not familiar, and are going to deal with the text in which they already have knowledge. Students are able to co-relate and understand the contents of articles. Reading speed can be predicting by the following contents. Students can associate their knowledge concerning the topics and which can help to make their learning much easier. Finding key words in any text is an interesting technique. Relying on Key words is more helpful than relying on the structure in reading a text.

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It is easier to ask questions when students read something. To have prior knowledge with because they have something to base-in to ask questions. Students have critical reading and they can use their background knowledge.

Critical Thinking is an approach to language teaching which aims to meet the needs of particular learners. This means in principle that much of the work done by English teachers is concerned with designing appropriate courses for various groups of learners. It seems reasonable enough to assume that a specification of language needs should define the language content of a course designed to meet such needs. Here “learner needs” is open to question. In fact two different interpretations may be extracted from learners' needs. It may refer to terminal behavior, the ends of learning or it may refer to what the learner needs to do to actually acquire the language.

### **Critical Thinking Skills:**

The most effective Critical Thinking Skill seems not to be that which focuses on knowledge at the teachers' own level, but rather that which deals with subject knowledge in terms of how this is taught to students. There is little evidence that the effective teachers of literacy have an extensive command of a range of linguistic terminology. However, it seems likely that having a greater command might help them further improve their teaching.

As with experienced teachers, developing cognitive, metacognitive and affective strategies involves more than simple practical experience. Novice teachers also need to develop an awareness of “why” and “in what” circumstances they might employ particular teaching approaches so as to enhance the application of the above mentioned strategies. They need not only procedural knowledge about scientific literacy teaching but also conditional knowledge. The development of this knowledge demands the opportunity to compare and contrast their experiences with those of others and thus further their proficiency in specific domain knowledge.

Shirkhani & Fahim (2011) believe that language learners who have developed critical thinking skills are capable of doing activities of which other students may not be capable. Whereas earlier the teachers were at the center and the emphasis was put on what to teach, today's education involves teaching how to think, and how learners can be a critical thinker. There is a need to accommodate critical thinking as an essential aspect of teacher education and teacher evaluation programs. According to this research better critical thinkers are better EFL teachers. Ozkan (2010) believes that critical thinking has a vital role in education. He stated that students who think critically can ask suitable questions, gather relevant information, creatively sort through this information, reason from this information and come

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to reliable conclusions about the world that enable one to act successfully. These students are more productive while using their second language. Critical thinking skills of English learners help critical thinking activities.

Choy and Cheah (2009) found that critical thinking is encouraged inside the classroom among the students when the teacher provides guidelines for them to use materials related to metacognition effectively. Magno (2010) also obtained the same result as he tested a model where metacognition was used to predict critical thinking. This prediction showed that the ability to monitor one's knowledge and thinking processes helps one to think critically. This finding supports another investigation by Valeh (2011) who found a significant relationship between critical thinking dispositions and metacognitive strategy use. The more metacognitive strategies increase in students, the more critical thinking enhances as well. Making those informed decisions requires critical thinking skills. Therefore, effective participation in public life is contingent on the quality of one's critical thinking skills.

While there is general agreement as to the necessity of developing students' critical thinking skills in preparation for effective citizenship, there is less agreement about how to teach these skills (Wilén in-press). Useful thinking skills include those associated with acquiring, interpreting, organizing, and communicating information; processing data in order to investigate questions; solving problems and making decisions; and interacting with others (NCSS 1993).

### **Infusion-Teaching Thinking Skills:**

Among the several major approaches to teaching critical thinking skills, the literature seems to favor infusion-teaching thinking skills in the context of subject matter. This approach entails integrating content and skills as equally as possible in order to maintain a balance of the two (Willis 1992). Thinking skills are reinforced throughout the teaching of the subject and later retained. Research shows that students learn both skills and subject matter if they are taught concurrently (Beyer 1988).

In relation to the acquisition of critical thinking skills, metacognition refers to what a learner knows about his or her thinking processes (conscious awareness) and the ability to control these processes by planning, choosing, and monitoring. Basically, there are two components of the metacognitive process: awareness and action.

The teacher decides which skill is to be taught, lists the steps to follow when executing the skill, and explains why it is important and when students will need to use it. One example of a specific critical thinking skill is distinguishing fact from opinion. For example, in teaching learners to distinguish fact from opinion, the teacher begins by defining the skill.

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English language has traditionally been a staple discipline in general education. However, in a college English language instruction has not consistently integrated critical thinking in its approach to teaching and learning. Explicit teaching of critical-thinking skills in English language courses would strengthen higher-order thinking skills while enhancing language and cultural proficiency.

Today in our ever-changing and challenging world, students are required to go beyond the scope of their knowledge. They need to develop their higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving (Profetto-McGrath, 2003; Riddell, 2007; Sezer, 2008). Ku (2009) States, “besides the ability to engage in cognitive skills, a critical thinker must also have a strong intention to recognize the importance of good thinking and have the initiative to seek better judgment”.

Marin and Halpern (2011) explicit and imbedded instructional modes were compared and critical thinking was assessed with Halpern Critical Thinking Assessment, which uses constructed response and multiple-choice response formats with everyday situations.

Thinking skills are reinforced throughout the teaching of the subject and later retained. Research shows that students learn both skills and subject matter if they are taught concurrently (Beyer 1988).

Accepting critical thinking as an educational ideal brings with it ramifications for *what* we teach and *how* we teach. A paradigm shift in our education system is required that facilitates development of the critical thinking skills that modern society demands.

Development of thinking skills is not a natural occurrence, an accidental outcome of experience, or an automatic by product of study in a subject area (de Sanchez, 1995; Taba, 1965, as cited in Beyer, 1987). It requires deliberate, continuing instruction and practice in order to develop it to its full potential (Arons, 1979; Kirby & Goodpaster, 1999; Perkins, 1985, as cited in Beyer, 1987; Thoms, 1998). Unfortunately, the traditional instruction paradigm, a 50-minute lecture intended to disseminate information, cannot fulfill critical thinking objectives (Barr & Tagg, 1995), and critical thinking will not take place if a student's goal is simply “an exit score from school necessary to enter a professional course, [which only] involves surface approaches to learning with

Critical thinking, which involves knowledge of strategies as well as a propensity toward applying them, is a major component of higher education and a national priority for American colleges and universities (Brookfield, 1987; National Education Goals Panel, 1991; Nelson, 1994; U.S. Congress, 1994). The broadly defined benefits of higher education are

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often operationalized under the construct of critical thinking (Wood, 1997); in other words, the aim of higher education is to transfer abstract principles to concrete applications. University mission statements contain references to critical thinking, but have colleges and universities cultivated student awareness of difficult real-world problems and prepared their graduates to evaluate the merits and demerits of proposed solutions? While faculty in all disciplines want students to perform complex mental operations that will allow them to be successful in coursework, in future careers, and in their personal lives (Pellegrino, 1995; Siegel, 1980; Weiss, 1992/1993), is higher education doing its job? The answers to these questions have concrete implications for what happens in the classroom and how it is assessed.

Critical Thinking in English Language Teaching is sensitive to what is fair and balanced. Robert H. Ennis's (March, 1992) often cited definition describes critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do." The British philosopher Bertrand Russell (April, 1959) said that when studying any matter, we must ask ourselves "what are the facts, and what is the truth that the facts bear out. Never let yourself be diverted, either by what you wish to believe, or what you think could have beneficent social effects if it were believed; but look only and surely at what are the facts." Few would argue with these sentiments. However, in reality we may not always be able to make judgments based solely on facts, since often those facts are incomplete or unavailable to us at a given time. In these instances, the critical thinker must either reserve judgment or try to arrive at a conclusion that is reasonable, in other words, a conclusion that is as free from bias and prejudice as is possible. To sum up, in our working model, we would like learners to view critical thinking as a mindset that involves thinking reflectively (being curious), rationally (thinking analytically), and reasonably (coming to sensible conclusions). Critical thinking skills are not just a box of tools to be used when needed and then put away, but derive from a mindset that involves seeking knowledge in a particular way. A critical thinker's skills are in continual use, not just as an exercise, but as part of a considered and holistic approach to learning (National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, 1987). Just one note of caution here: This mindset, which Dewey (1910) called a "healthy skepticism," does not mean a subversive or cynical approach. Rather, it simply means a curious and considered one. The idea is not to challenge ideas aggressively, but to seek to understand how these ideas were arrived at. We would like learners to view critical thinking as a mindset that involves thinking reflectively, rationally and reasonably. We believe that teachers should stimulate and nurture this mindset by integrating critical thinking activities into their lessons. A good way to explore to what extent your students already possess a critical mindset is to do an activity. It can raise learners' awareness of critical thinking in general or can be used to promote critical thinking in students as they prepare for a debate or write an opinion essay.



### **Higher Order Thinking Skills Versus Lower Order Thinking Skills:**

Higher- and lower-order thinking skills In order to understand how critical thinking occurs within a language learning exercise or lesson and so arrive at a working model, we need to see it in the context of other thinking skills involved in learning. In other words, as well as describing activities that demand critical thinking, we need to describe activities that draw on other cognitive processes. For this, we start with the work of Benjamin Bloom and others who have created taxonomies for thinking. In particular, we need to consider the notion of higher-order and lower-order thinking skills, since these are commonly used reference points for framing educational curricula. It is important to stress from the outset that higher-order thinking does not imply superior thinking skills and lower order inferior ones. Each is an important element of learning in its own way. Bloom's taxonomy In his 1956 work, *A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook 1: Cognitive Domain*, Bloom investigated how different types of thinking lead to learning. His work sought to build a classification of learner behaviors "in the cognitive domain." Bloom's taxonomy was cumulative: that is to say, each behavior or mental process was built upon the preceding one, starting with the simplest and ending with the most complex. First came knowledge, without which you could not have comprehension, then followed application, analysis, comprehension, and very little time was spent on analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—"the higher mental processes that would enable students to apply their knowledge creatively" (Bloom, 1994, p. 1). While Bloom (1956) himself never used the term "critical thinking"—instead, he referred to "intellectual Critical Thinking in ELT Bloom's work stimulated an interest in how educators could more explicitly incorporate higher-order thinking skills in their programs. In 2001, Bloom's colleague David Krathwohl and student Lorin Anderson revised the taxonomy by classifying the thinking skills as shown in Figure 1.2. In their schemes the different thinking skills were described using verbs rather than nouns, and were no longer seen as cumulative and hierarchical. Even though the six cognitive levels are still arranged in order from lower to higher as in Bloom's original taxonomy, Krathwohl and Anderson preferred to see these different skills as being of equal value, and employed at various times in learning. Krathwohl and Anderson's taxonomy of thinking skills Cognitive Processes Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, educators could more explicitly incorporate higher-order thinking skills in their programs.

Remembering involves students recognizing and recalling what has been taught. This could be tested, for example, by having students match a list of eight words to their definitions. Alternately, in a reading lesson, remembering could be tested by having students answer Who, What, and When questions, that is, questions that elicit a recall of key words and facts. Understanding involves students constructing meaning by connecting new knowledge with existing knowledge. For example, in the ELT classroom a teacher could show students the rule for forming regular verbs in the simple past tense. As a result, students understand that

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when they see a verb ending in –ed, it indicates a past action. Because they already know the base form of various verbs and the present tense, they are now able to distinguish between past and present actions in reading or listening exercises. Applying involves students testing out this newly gained knowledge, usually in a controlled way. Examples of applying include having students take a phrase and Analyzing involves students breaking concepts down into individual parts and seeing how they contribute to overall structure or meaning. At this point we move into so-called higher-order thinking—what Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) call—“an extension of Understanding” and a “prelude to Evaluating or Creating” (p. 79). Examples of analyzing include reading an argument and identifying supporting evidence or connecting questions with conclusions. Analyzing can take place at text level, as in the above examples, or it can take place at the word or sentence level, for instance, when students try to work out a grammatical rule from language in context. Evaluating involves students making judgments based on their own or someone else’s criteria. Evaluating naturally flows from analyzing. It is in these two levels of higher-order thinking that we see classroom activities that are typically described as critical thinking tasks, especially in the receptive skills of reading and listening. Examples of such tasks include having students analyze a text to identify the different arguments, and then evaluate which are the most and least convincing; or having students solve a problem collaboratively by discussing the merits of different solutions, and then selecting the best plan of action to follow. Evaluating also includes checking and critiquing others’ work, for example, watching peers give a presentation and then giving feedback.

The first three types of thinking (remembering, applying and understanding) are what have come to be known as lower-order thinking and the latter three (analyzing, evaluating and creating) as higher-order thinking. Central to Anderson and Krathwohl’s revised taxonomy was the idea that the different types of thinking are part of a continuum in which the levels overlap and flow back and forth from one to the other (Krathwohl, 2002). In this way, Teachers initiate tasks that practice different thinking skills at different times, and sometimes more than once, in no Critical Thinking in English Language Teaching It is worth noting here that although many people equate critical thinking with the skills of analyzing and evaluating, Anderson and Krathwohl themselves make no such assertion. Rather, they say that classroom activities that could be described as critical thinking “most likely call for cognitive processes in several categories; ... critical thinking and problem-solving tends to cut across the rows” (Krathwohl, 2002, p. 267). A working model for critical thinking in English Language Teaching “The six thinking processes” characterized by Anderson and Krathwohl seem, at first, apt descriptions of activities that take place in the language learning classroom. However, if we adhere too closely to the six levels as a way of framing critical thinking in English Language Teaching, we very soon run into trouble. Questions are raised that are difficult to answer: is understands really a lower-order thinking skill? Aren’t the skills of analyzing and evaluating part of understanding? What is the difference between applying knowledge and creating? These are gray areas. Accordingly, our own framework classifies

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the thinking processes that need to be considered into three broader levels: basic comprehension, critical thinking, and creative thinking. The levels overlap, with the weight given to each in a typical lesson reflected in the space it occupies in the diagram. Much of what is traditionally done in learning in language teaching is at the level of basic comprehension, and often less time is devoted to critical thinking and creative thinking.

### **Basic Comprehension Example:**

Basic comprehension means understanding the essential meaning of a word, sentence, text, or idea. In many cases—for example, reading a cooking recipe, learning the meaning of a concrete noun (e.g., warehouse), or interpreting a sentence such as I leave the house at 6:30 am in the morning to drive to work—basic comprehension will suffice. There is little to be gained from further reflection or analysis. Teachers devote a great deal of classroom time in helping students comprehend language and ideas at this basic level: matching words or phrases to pictures, answering true or false questions about a reading text, discussing what sports people like to play, and so on. By basic comprehension, we mean understanding the essential meaning of a word, sentence, text, or idea. Included in the idea of basic comprehension is testing learners' ability to recall and then apply language in a controlled way to show that they have learned it. This could be something as simple as completing a sentence with a missing word: The products are stored in a large \_\_\_\_\_ for distribution around the world.(answer: warehouse). Alternately, it could be a more demanding activity, such .This lower-order thinking, which we can broadly refer to as basic comprehension, will seem familiar to most teachers around the world. It links in with a historical model of teaching where students are presented with new language, then practice it in a controlled way, and finally try to produce it in a more open (or personalized) context to demonstrate they have “learned” it.

### **Skills and Abilities Associated with Critical Thinking:**

Following are some of the skills and abilities associated with Critical Thinking:

- Inquisitiveness and intellectual curiosity
- Objectivity and truth-seeking
- Flexibility
- Open-mindedness
- Self-evaluation and self-regulation
- Intellectual skepticism
- Perception and interpretation of information

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- Systematic analysis and inference
- Persistence
- Decisiveness

Teaching learners to think critically is a difficult task and requires a great deal of patience. But the time and effort are well spent in trying to prepare students capable of making decisions, and solving problems using reflective thought to guide action for the common good. One approach to teaching critical thinking is the metacognitive approach, which emphasizes explaining and modeling the thinking strategy. The metacognitive approach proposed serves as a guide for teachers interested in orienting their teaching towards helping learners become more analytical and independent thinkers.

While there is general agreement as to the necessity of developing students' critical thinking skills in preparation for effective citizenship, there is less agreement about how to teach these skills (Wilén in-press). Useful thinking skills include those associated with acquiring, interpreting, organizing, and communicating information; processing data in order to investigate questions; solving problems and making decisions; and interacting with others (NCSS 1993).

There is strong evidence for the effectiveness of the modeling component of the metacognitive approach. One of the most influential studies of critical thinking.

Based on the research conducted to date, primary dimensions of classroom thoughtfulness have been identified. These are observable qualities of classroom activity and talk that facilitate students' development of subject matter understanding, thinking skills, and dispositions of thoughtfulness. The most important characteristic is the demonstration by the teacher of how he/she has thought through problems, rather than the mere provision of answers. This is modeling. Other characteristics are that the teacher shows interest in students' ideas and their approaches to solving problems, and acknowledges the difficulties students have in understanding problematic topics (Newman 1991).

The teacher is the "expert" and models the thought processes involved in executing a particular critical thinking skill, such as establishing whether a statement is fact or opinion. The teacher breaks this skill down into steps and demonstrates the execution of each step by thinking aloud.

According to Sanacore (1984), metacognition is "knowing what you know," "knowing what you need to know," and "knowing the utility of active intervention." However, this metacognitive skill is apparently not developed in all students. To be an efficient and effective thinker, the learner should be able to monitor his or her degree of understanding, be



aware of the knowledge possessed, be conscious of the task demanded, and know the strategies that facilitate thinking.

The teacher decides which skill is to be taught, lists the steps to follow when executing the skill, and explains why it is important and when students will need to use it. One example of a specific critical thinking skill is distinguishing fact from opinion. For example, in teaching learners to distinguish fact from opinion, the teacher begins by defining the skill

The ability to think critically is considered an important component of a college education, and secondary institutions typically include critical thinking in student learning outcomes, particularly in the general education curriculum.

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