QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF CRITICAL THINKING IN PROMOTING INDEPENDENT LEARNING

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Abstract

This study examines how autonomous learning develops students' critical thinking. Independent learners are more willing to collaborate, exchange ideas, and challenge their classmates, which leads to a deeper comprehension of the content. This study shows the importance of autonomous learning in critical thinking and reflection. Independent learning lets students explore topics of interest, find connections, and form their own conclusions. This approach helps kids develop independent reasoning, critical thinking, and evidence evaluation. The researcher emphasises the importance of critical thinking in independent learning and suggests that well-structured independent learning experiences increase students' critical and reflective capacities. Through collaborative learning, project-based learning, and independent study, educators can develop students' creative and cognitive capacity, preparing them to learn independently. The research used classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with tenth-grade English instructors at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang. The findings showed that structured autonomous learning helps pupils develop critical thinking. Students engaged and understood more throughout classroom activities.

Keywords: Independent Learning, Critical Thinking, Reflective skills, Organization of independent learning

Introduction

During the current stage of the society's growth, the evolutionary process in education is taking place, which means that the priorities of students are shifting from passively absorbing knowledge to engaging in independent, creative, and cognitive activity. This shift is taking into account the students' potential and the particular characteristics of their development. The students who are able to successfully master a foundational course of the school (higher school) program and learn to apply the knowledge in a familiar situation will be awarded their diplomas. However, if they are unable to successfully work with information and acquire new knowledge independently, they will not be able to count on experiencing success in an information society of the 21st century.

As one of the key qualifications for graduates of high school and university, the development of students' abilities to work independently is considered to be a must. An examination of the literature in the fields of psychology and education reveals that almost all of the ancient at every level of the educational system, the subject of developing students' abilities to work independently is brought up by research in the fields of pedagogy and psychology, either directly or indirectly (Witkin & Goodenough, 1981, p.73). Within the context of independent learning, there is a significant motivational force. Students' personal interests and their drive to study are encouraged and supported. When education is content-based and relevant, when information is valuable and offers a way of accomplishing a desired objective, students will be driven to have the desire to study. Such educational pursuits serve as a catalyst for introspective inquiry and ongoing learning development, intellectual

development (Livingston, 2012). On the other hand, when a student is engaged in learning tasks that they are not interested in, they become more reliant on extrinsic incentives and encouragement from outside. Not only does this kind of instruction discourage students from taking initiative in their own learning, but it also discourages them from participating in learning on their own.

The expectation that people would examine issues, reflect on their work, make judgments, and perform activities with a purpose is a consequence of independent learning, which has consequences for responsible decision making. In times of fast societal change, students need to study on a lifelong basis in order to be able to accept responsibility for their own selves. Due to the majority of aspects independent learning will allow people to adjust to the changing demands of job, family, and society. This is because our day-to-day lives are likely to experience fundamental changes on a regular basis.

The following are some of the areas in which students should be trained to take responsibility for their own learning:

- a forming objective;
- the process of determining and devising tactics to accomplish such goals;
- making arrangements for one's studies;
- thinking back on what you have learned (which includes identifying problematic areas and the ways to deal with these issues of concern);
- choosing and locating resources and support that are relevant;
- measuring one's own development, which takes into account the establishment of criteria for evaluating the outcomes of learning.

Research questions of this research are:

1. How can the teacher (of English) effectively cultivate critical thinking skills in students to enhance their independent learning?
2. What practical strategies can be implemented in the classroom to encourage students to think critically and engage in cognitive activities?
3. What qualities and strategies are necessary for students to enhance their critical thinking skills and become independent learners in the educational context?

The purpose of the research is to explore the qualities and strategies necessary for students to enhance their critical thinking skills and become independent learners in the educational context. The research aims to investigate how the teacher can effectively cultivate critical thinking skills in students through various approaches such as collaborative learning, project-based methods, independent work, and the integration of the real-world.

Following are the benefits of this research, as:

- for student,
  By focusing on critical thinking skills development, the research aims to empower students to think independently, analyze information effectively, and make informed decisions in academic and professional settings.
- for teacher,
  By implementing strategies that promote critical thinking, teachers can create a more interactive and engaging learning environment that fosters deep understanding and cognitive activities among students.
- for research or researcher,
  The research emphasizes the importance of promoting active and creative learning to help students adapt to the changing educational landscape and develop skills that are important for success in today's world.

Methodology

As a result of its capacity to make it easier to accomplish predetermined objectives,

methodology is an essential component in the field of research. Creswell (2013, page 45) defines qualitative research as a methodical examination that aims to understand individual and group behaviors while addressing social or human issues. For the purpose of doing an in-depth analysis and engaging directly with the participants at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang, the researcher decided to use this technique. Teachers of English to students in the tenth grade at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang were the participants in this study. There are two key aspects that impact the quality of the study: the research tools and the procedures for collecting the data. It is vital to utilise data collection techniques that fit with the research objectives in order to assure the accuracy and quality of the data. These procedures determine the methods of collecting research data.

We conducted classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with English teachers at SMA Negeri 16 Palembang during the data gathering process. We investigated the tactics teachers use to encourage critical thinking in the classroom during the interviews, and observed the level of student engagement in independent learning assignments. Any research endeavour begins with data collection, and in this case, we employed these methodologies to gain insight into the role of critical thinking in promoting independent learning among tenth grade students. However, it is crucial to note that a more detailed explanation of the methods used for conducting the interviews and observations, along with the specific aspects of critical thinking and autonomous learning observed, would be beneficial.

We chose SMA Negeri 16 Palembang as the study project's location due to its focus on innovative teaching approaches in English education. Because of this focus, the school was a perfect location for investigating how critical thinking may foster independent learning and develop students' skills in the process of teaching and learning English.

Findings and Discussion

The development of students' critical thinking skills is one of the strategies that may be aimed toward the increase of students' creative cognitive activity, their capabilities to make hypotheses and examine them, as well as their ability to pose issues and solve them on their own. They were among the scholars who addressed this issue. According to Halpern (2000, p. 26), the concept of critical thinking may be defined as the disciplined and self-directed thinking ability that exemplifies advancements in thought that correlate to a certain mode or area of thought. Additionally, he stated that when we engage in critical reflection, we make use of our mastery of our thinking in order to accommodate the logical needs of the sort or mode of thought that we are engaging in. The following are some of the particular ways of thinking that we acquire if we have been used to thinking critically in a strong sense, that is, in the interests of other individuals or groups: intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual tenacity, intellectual honesty, and trust to the reason (Halpern, 2000, p.59). Critical thinking is defined as intelligent reflective thinking that focuses on the decision-making process on specific challenges. They believe that critical thinking is a quest for common sense, namely how to assess things in an impartial manner and behave in a rational manner, taking into consideration not just one's own point of view, but also the ideas of others and making an effort to refuse to give in to them.

Critical thinking, according to Halpern (2000, p.22) definition, is "the utilization of such cognitive skills and strategies that increase the probability of receiving the desirable result, when we estimate the results of our thinking processes — how much the decision was made correctly or how much successfully we have coped with a task." Critical

thinking, in her view, also encompasses an evaluation of the thinking that is being done, procedure, or a series of logical steps that culminate in the conclusion. Because it is focused on the acquisition of a desired outcome, critical thinking is also referred to as directed thinking, as stated by Halpern (2000).

It was pointed out that it is hard to compare critical thinking with other types of thinking processes, such as memorization, comprehension, and intelligent creative intuitive thinking. Memory development is essential; however, it is crucial to note that memorization is not the same thing as thinking. Intelligence development is not associated. It is one of the major criteria that the author deems to be relevant for the development of critical thinking.

The capacity of a person to think independently is considered to be one of the most important requirements for the development of critical thinking. The concept of "critical thinking" is characterized by him in five different ways. To begin, critical thinking is one kind of autonomous thought. Using this way of thinking, everyone is able to come up with their own thoughts, estimates, and beliefs, regardless of the opinions of others.

The only reason we engage in critical thinking is for ourselves. As a result, critical thought can only be critical when it has a distinctive tone. Students need to engage in independent thought and work to find solutions to difficult situations on their own. The first step is hence independence. One of the most important aspects of critical thinking is undoubtedly.

Furthermore, the information is only the starting point of critical thinking; it is not the endpoint. The mountain "raw" - the facts, ideas, texts, the supplied theories, and concepts – must be processed in order to develop complex thoughts. The critical thinking process starts with setting the stage of the problem, including its reasoning, argumentation, and solution, as well as decision making. Critical thinking strives to come up with an argument that is convincing. The thinking person is able to discover a solution to their own issue and back it up with reasonable and solid reasons. They are also aware that there are alternative options that may be made about the same problem, and they make an effort to demonstrate that the decision that they have selected is more logical and rational than the other decision.

The statement is the fundamental element of an argument. The statement is supported by a number of arguments, and each argument, in turn, is supported by proofs. We may utilize endurances from the text, a personal experience, and other relevant evidence. Everything that is used as an argument. A person who is capable of critical thinking and is armed with strong arguments is able to resist the opinion of the majority. Critical thinking is also social thinking. When students argue, read, discuss, object, and exchange opinions with others, they specify and deepen our understanding of the world. According to Dewey, 1997, p.58), an American philosopher and psychologist, the development of critical thinking skills is a complex activity that necessitates decision making in the process of meaningful and content-based learning. He referred to this activity as "reflective thinking" and defined it as the process of contemplating something in an active, persistent, and careful manner.

However, the majority of researchers consider critical thinking to be an individual thinking. According to our point of view, critical thinking is an individual thinking that is aimed at processing, analyzing, and evaluating information for the purpose of creating and solving new ideas. A critical student is a student who is able to continuously treat the world around them, locate and estimate objective ways of getting information, compare and evaluate different points of view, and comprehend the complexity and discrepancy of the situation under consideration. To put it another way, a person who is capable of

critical thinking should be able to solve any difficulties on their own and would back their conclusions with acceptable reasons.

A student's capacity to think rationally and consistently, the ability to solve issues swiftly and imaginatively, the ability to draw proper comparisons, the ability to create supported conclusions, and the ability to make judgments are all indicators of successful critical thinking. The most important sign of critical thinking is its reliability and independence Witkin and Goodenough, 1981, p.120). Because of this, it is believed that critical thinking is formed in the process of students' own work on establishing issues and their solutions. This is because students build their analytical, evaluative, and reflective abilities, as well as their capacity to reason, defend, and communicate their point of view. The development of students' critical thinking abilities within the framework of their autonomous work is thought to be developed via the use of independent learners, which is one of the most significant challenges that exists within the present educational system.

Command work is an active process of teamwork in the pursuit of reaching combined aims and objectives. The command is composed of a small group of individuals who possess abilities of interchangeability, collaboratively working toward the implementation of the shared purpose, and bearing responsibility before each other for its completion. 2 years ago; Meyer, Haywood, Sachdev and Faraday, 2008, p.115). There is a correlation between working in a group and the stimulation of processes that lead to the development of new ideas. It has been demonstrated that a person with average capabilities who works in a group can increase his ability to solve problems by a factor of two. When working in a group, he is provided with the opportunity to find solutions to problems in a variety of different ways. Thought is the source of fresh ideas for other people.

In addition, work done in groups fosters a feeling of competitiveness among the students of the group. Although this competition does not result in aggressive or critical attitudes, it does encourage an intensification of the creative process. This is because each participant strives to outdo the others in terms of promoting new ideas. As a result, command work is one of the most successful methods for educating critical thinkers and autonomous students. It encourages the development of skills such as independence, inquisitiveness, and the capacity to make independent estimates.

The project technology is one of the many variations of the "team approach," which is aimed at the development of students' critical thinking abilities and their ability to become independent learners. According to Polat, 2002, p. 103) project technology is widely used in the instructional system of international education. It is correlated with the content and concepts of the Particular characteristics of student-centered training are the development of students' creative cognitive capacity and the encouragement of students to work independently. As a result, content-based learning and self-focused training, which are the foundations of project technology, assume a change from the conventional teacher-student and subject-object relation.

Students are able to realize their personal potential and stimulate their own cognitive activity as a result of the fact that they are the subjects of the activity that is being provided to them. This technology creates conditions that are conducive to the development of students' creative thinking, makes the educational process more productive, and increases the efficiency of the process. This technology is based on the concept of students interacting with one another in groups (also known as cooperative learning) within the context of the educational process (Polat, 2002, p. 112). By doing so, students begin to accept collective responsibility for the resolution of educational issues and begin to assist one

another. Both parties should take responsibility for the success of the other.

A project technology assumes the resolution of a problem by, on the one hand, utilizing a variety of techniques and technologies and, on the other hand, integrating knowledge and skills from a variety of scientific fields. The outcomes of projects that are carried out should be of a real nature; if the problem is theoretical, there should be a concrete decision regarding it, and if it is practical, the concrete result should be ready to be taken into consideration Polat, 2002, p. 122). Project technology is a sophisticated kind of educational activity that is used in the teaching of foreign languages. It incorporates a variety of speech activities that are used in foreign languages in order to solve particular constructive-practical, informational, research, problem-solving, and creative objectives.

Thus, on the one hand, the language that is being studied is portrayed as a means of educational, informational, constructive, and creative activity for the learner; and on the other hand, during the process of creating the project, the learner acquires new knowledge in the language that is being studied in a variety of aspects of its direct use. It can be placed as a strong emphasis on initiatives that have the potential to be used in the teaching and learning process of intercultural communication in the area of teaching and learning process. The teachers use these following projects:

1. Playing a role in a game, acting out a scenario, or writing your own play are all examples of role play projects.
2. Information sharing and research initiatives.
3. Projects related to surveys include "The foreigners' attitude to my country", "English language use in my country, in my city".
4. Performance and organizational projects such as "Organization of club meetings,"
5. The creative works, which include the literature creation such as a fairy tale, the narrative, as well as the translation of literary into the local language.

Within the context of a process for teaching and learning a foreign language, the project work is focused on participants interacting with one another, working together, and providing assistance to one another rather than students competing with one another in the process of research project activity. On the basis of interaction, consultation, and reciprocal responsibility among all members of the educational group, participants in the project work are able to establish equal relationships with one another. The role of a teacher also shifts within the context of the project technology and is capable of performing a variety of social tasks in small groups, including being a source of ideas, the coordinator, the advisor, and the referee, among other roles.

While project work in a foreign language "is not adhered" directly to the subject content of the curriculum on the mastery of the language and culture that is being studied, the fundamental orientation of project work in a foreign language is a constructive research project activity that makes use of the language that is being studied. At the same time, project technology creates the situation for the mediated mastery of the program. The process of carrying out project work in a foreign language creates natural circumstances for learners to independently grasp specific parts of the culture and language that they have become familiar with.

During the process of carrying out project work, the characteristics that are essential for the development of students' creative and critical thinking skills have been identified as follows: the capacity to make independent critical decisions, the capacity to empathize, the interest in engaging in problem-solving activities, general inquisitiveness, and susceptibility to capacity to perceive things in a new way,

independence and an openness to new ideas, a positive and hopeful attitude toward any circumstance, and the ability to reflect on one's own self-evaluation are all examples of fresh knowledge. A tangible result, or the ultimate output of project work, is the focus of project technology. Students gain new information in the language and culture that they have studied while working on project tasks, and their performance is the condition and the outcome of the project. The successful completion of project work requires the proper development of students' language communication abilities in all forms of oral and written speech. The selection of the topic and implementation of specific issues are also important. Through the use of project technology, the teacher gives students the opportunity to select the problem that best suits their interests within the context of the syllabus subject. matter, and in this sense, it has the effect of engaging individuals in activity that is self-significant.

Teachers can cultivate critical thinking skills in students by promoting questioning, providing challenging tasks, encouraging reflection, fostering collaboration, using real-world examples, and offering diverse learning opportunities. It means that promoting critical thinking skills in students requires teachers to create an environment that encourages questioning, reflection, collaboration, and real-world application of knowledge. By incorporating these strategies into their teaching practices, teachers can cultivate critical thinking skills and empower students to become independent thinkers and problem-solvers. Socratic questioning, problem-based learning, idea mapping, debates and discussions, critical reading and analysis, role-playing, and feedback and reflection are examples of some of the practical tactics that may be used. Qualities and strategies include collaborative learning, project-based approaches, independent work, critical reading and analysis, role-playing,

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