

CONSTRUCTIVIST MODEL FOR PROMOTING CRITICAL THINKING SKILL IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Life Skills are imparted in a supportive learning environment. They are applicable for all ages of children and adolescents in school. There are ten core life skills are laid by World Health Organization. One of them is Critical Thinking. This research tries to study the effects of critical pedagogy on the development of critical thinking through teaching English essay writing. The researcher has developed a constructivist model focusing on critical thinking. The results signify that by incorporating critical thinking in teaching English Essay Writing promotes reasoning skills among the subjects. The research suggests replacing the old cycle of transmission pedagogy with critical thinking pedagogy in language education a vehicle through which the students gradually discover themselves in the process of language learning, and develop the cognizance of appropriate language to reason.



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Introduction

Life Skills are psychosocial competences which enable an individual develop adaptive and positive behaviour so as to deal effectively with challenges and demands of everyday life. According to UNICEF, they are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analyzing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and inter-personal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others. Life skills education is a structured programme of needs- and outcomes-based participatory learning that aims to increase positive and adaptive behaviour by assisting individuals to develop and practice psycho-social skills that minimize risk factors and maximize protective factors. Life skills education programmes are theory- and evidenced-based, learner-focused, delivered by competent facilitators, and appropriately evaluated to ensure continuous improvement of documented results.

The research assumes that critical thinking in Essay writing expands the learning experience and makes the language more meaningful for the learners – a vehicle through which they can gradually discover themselves in the process of language learning. Brown (2004) proposes that the objectives of a curriculum in an ideal academic English program should go beyond linguistic factors, and to develop the art of critical thinking. Critical thinking matters in language learning, and demonstrates that English is regarded as an

international language; there is a great need for its users and learners to be critical in their learning and using of the language (Thadphoothon 2002). Fairclough (2001) comments that no significant advances have been made in terms of critical awareness of language, which endorses to reform ELT pedagogy to brush up the learners' metalinguistic ability. The present research aims to promote critical thinking through English Essay Writing (EEW), and it also suggests how to develop critical thinking pedagogy. The research measures critical thinking in EEW over five areas as:

1. Clarity of writing
2. Analysis of author's argument
3. Use of supporting information
4. Organization of ideas (Coherence and Cohesion)
5. Grammar and syntax accuracy

Critical thinking is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth and fairness.

Need and Significance

Today, the world needs people with qualities of critical thinking to meet up the growing challenges; whereas, the education system in most of the countries is mere examination driven (siddiqui 2007). The empirical findings reflect that the teachers subconsciously provide the pedagogy of answers to the learners (Kabilan 2000). Eventually, the teachers deny the learners the opportunities and the right to question, and the learners are abandoned to reason and reflect higher order thoughts (Freire 1973; Bruss et al 1985). Paul et al (1993) pointed out in a survey study on "Critical Thinking Pedagogy in Twelfth Grade Composition" held in California that only 9% of the teachers of K-12 bring critical thinking in their teaching and assessment. Patry (1996) concludes in a research that critical thinking is not supported and taught in the classroom instructions. The main reasons for this shortcoming are: (a) the teachers are not educated in critical thinking (b) there are less number of standard textbooks available on critical thinking, and (c) the teachers have no time and other instructional resources to integrate critical thinking into their daily instruction (Astleitner 2002 and Petri 2002). These shortcomings count a lot, because critical thinking is highly correlated with students' achievements. The learners may become proficient in English language if they are motivated and taught how to display critical thinking in English language

usage, which signifies that the learners must be reflective in their production of ideas, and they may critically support them with logical details and examples.

The present research endorsed to replace the old cycle of transmission pedagogy with critical thinking pedagogy in language education.

Objectives

The objectives of Research were:

1. To test the existing level of critical thinking of pupil teachers.
2. To develop a Programme for incorporating critical thinking through English Essay Writing skill.
3. To test the effectiveness of the programme.

Assumptions

1. Every individual possesses Critical Thinking Ability in varying extent or intensity.
2. The research assumes that by incorporating critical thinking in the classroom instructions promotes reasoning skills among the students.
3. The learners may become proficient in language usage if they are motivated how to display critical thinking.
4. The teachers may facilitate the process by reflecting language learning practices through writing skill.
5. Critical Thinking Ability is essential for every individual in every mode of life and empowering the life of an individual.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for the research were as follows:

Research Hypothesis: There is a significant difference in the achievement level of student-teachers in the pre-test and post-test.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the achievement level of student-teachers in the pre-test and post-test.

Limitations

1. The effect in achievement due to personal guidance and coaching will not be considered.
2. The conclusion of the study will depend upon the analysis of the responses of the B.Ed. students regarding the extent to which these students possess the Critical Thinking Ability further promoting reasoning skills.

Delimitations

1. The Research was conducted only in Swami Vivekananda College of Education, Wakad, Pune.
3. The present study was related to English Essay Writing.
4. The research included student-teachers of B.Ed. level, who had English as their first method.
5. The tool used for data collection i.e. Rating Scale was developed by the Researcher.

Variables

- **Independent Variable** –Programmedeveloped by the Researcher
- **Dependent Variables** – Mean scores of the pre-test and post-test of Experimental group.
- **Extraneous Variables** – Age of the students, medium of instruction, IQ of the students, topic, time-table etc.

Operational Definition

Critical Thinking Skill:The intellectually disciplined process of writing clearly, analyzing skillfully, using supportive information, organizing ideas and accuracy of grammar.

Method of Study and Research Design

For the present research, researchers had used Experimental Method - True Experimental Design - Single Group Design.

Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling method was adopted for the present study.

Population: All student-teachers (B.Ed.) from University of Pune were the population for the present study.

Sample: Twenty five students-teachers from Swami Vivekananda College of Education, Wakad, Pune, were selected as a sample by using Purposive sampling method -Non probability sampling method.

Tools for Data collection

Data collection tools:

Pre-achievement test : (Rating Scale)

To testthe existing level of critical thinking of the B.Ed. students.

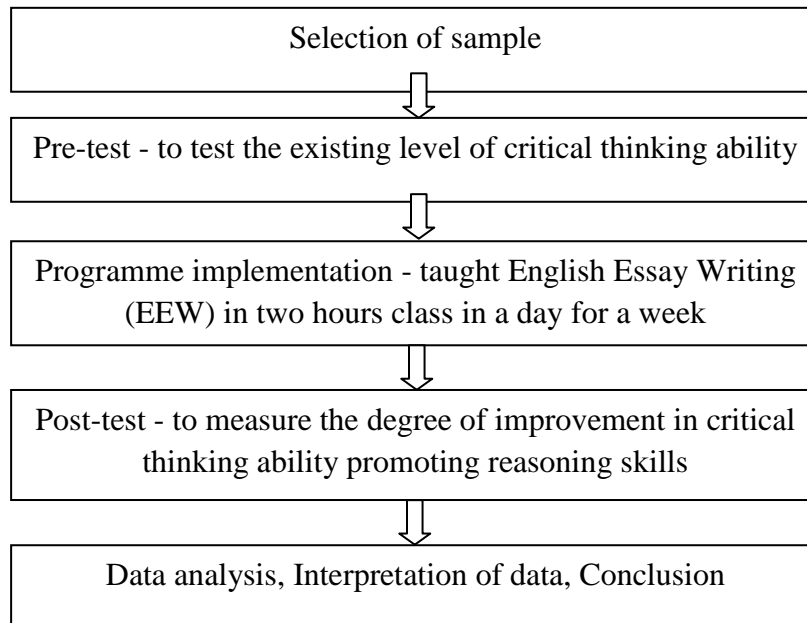
Post-achievement test : (Rating Scale)

To find out the achievement level of B.Ed. students after implementing the programme.

Statistical tools:

For the research undertaken, the Researchers has made use of Mean, Standard Deviation and co-efficient of correlation for Descriptive Statistics. For testing the hypothesis, the researcher had made use of t-test from Inferential Statistics along with the Descriptive Statistics.

Procedure of Research



Qualitative method was executed to measure the progress in Pre-test and Post-test. The data were quantified from 0 to 4 Grade Point (GP) among Low-range achievers, Mid-range achieves and High-range achievers over five rubrics for assessment: Clarity, Analysis, Support, Organization and Grammar. The participants were divided into three categories on the basis of their Pre-test as the followings: High-range (3.70 and above GP), Mid-range (3.69 to 3.30 GP) and Low-range (3.29 and below GP). In the Pre-test and Post-test, the participants were asked to write an essay (200-250 words) on one of the present issues such as Poverty Alleviation, Global Warming, Suicide Bombing, Inflation, Nuclear Proliferation, Patriotism, Tolerance and National Integration. The study looked for signs of heightened composition skills reflected by an increased clarity of writing, level of analysis, use of supporting information, organization of ideas, and accuracy of grammar and syntax. Essay written for pre-test and post-test were different.

Data Analysis

The Mean Score (MS) in the first execution (before the instruction) was 41.12 with 15.67 Standard Deviation (SD); whereas, the MS in the second execution (after the instruction) was 82.38 with 18.53 SD respectively.

It is evident that the average MS has a significant increase (41.26) as the result of the instruction. The t-test value -15.67 *** was found to be significant at $p \leq 0.05$.

	N	S.D	T	df	Df
Before Instruction	41.12	52	15.68	-15.677	
After Instruction	82.38	52	18.53	51	.000

Table 1

The following comparison among five rubrics: Pre-test and Post-test. B.Ed. Students' English Essay Writing Performance in Two Executions:

	Pre-test	Post-test
Clarity	2.15	2.43
Analysis	1.75	2.08
Support	1.47	2.03
Organization	1.98	2.18
Grammar	1.99	2.04

The score on all the given rubrics was less than 2.00 GP except on Clarity; whereas, the lowest score 1.47 GP was recorded on Support in the Pre-test. In the Post-test, the score on all five categories of measurement was above 2.00. The minimum score 2.03 GP was recorded on Support and the maximum score 2.43 GP was on Clarity. The subjects had a significant improvement in their critical thinking ability in EEW over the two executions.

Data Interpretation

- Low-range achievers showed low affective filter for the assimilation of critical thinking instructions; whereas, the High-range achievers had high affective filter which prevented a significant improvement in their critical writing skill.
- It was synthesized that critical thinking pedagogy benefited the Low-range achievers more than the Mid-range and the High-range achievers.

Conclusion

1. The present research explored whether or not by incorporating critical thinking in English essay writing promotes reasoning skills of the students.
2. By incorporating of reasoning in teaching English Essay Writing promotes thinking skills among the subjects.
3. It signifies that by incorporating critical thinking in teaching English Essay Writing promotes reasoning skills among the subjects.
4. A significant difference was found in the improvement of critical thinking among the Low-range achievers as compared to the High-range and the Mid-range achievers.
5. Although the High-range achievers scored the highest grade points yet their performance remained slightly even; whereas, the Low-range achievers had remarkable shift in their critical thinking ability on five rubrics in all the tests.
6. The Mid-range achievers showed a noteworthy improvement in their critical thinking in Post-test.

Implications

- This research motivates English language teachers to infuse critical thinking skills in their instructions.
- The research also influences testing and evaluation procedure indirectly. That is; the research not only encourages the teachers to blend critical thinking in the transmission of knowledge and contents but they also are motivated to design standardized tests which could measure metalinguistics ability over all language skills.

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