

**DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING  
IN ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING  
*PHÁT TRIỂN TƯ DUY PHẢN BIỆN  
TRONG HỌC VÀ DẠY TIẾNG ANH***

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**Abstract:** Critical thinking has been an important part in education. It has become the close word used in learning a language and been recently interested in. Theoretically, critical thinking has been practiced to help teachers as well as learners develop their creativity and research. This paper is conceptualized to state the ways by which critical thinking is able to be imbued among English learners. Basically, the paper examines such issues as the concept of critical thinking, the importance of critical thinking to language learning, and finally makes recommendations on how this could be effectively carried out.

**Key words:** critical thinking, creativity, research, language learning

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the process of comprehensive reform of education and training in the direction of learner-centeredness, it is very necessary to build critical thinking for students. Recently, English Language Learning (ELL) indicated that the teachers have paid much attention to developing critical thinking. However, many of them have not fully understood in critical thinking and have not seen its importance to language learning. In this paper, concepts as well as notions will presented to point out the ways in which language teachers applied critical thinking in the classroom effectively.

## **CONCEPT OF CRITICAL THINKING**

Critical thinking according to Robert (1996) is reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do. Seven years later in the book titled “Thinking Education” Lipman, M. (2003) developed the concept about critical thinking as skillful and responsible thinking that is conducive to good judgment because it is sensitive to context,

relies on criteria, and is self-correcting. Assoc. Prof., Dr. Huynh Van Son. (2018) defined critical thinking as the ability to think and multi-dimensional thinking in which the problems will be refuted; every aspect will be taken into consideration to find the truth. After all, critical thinking is very helpful. It helps people overcome stereotypical thinking and direct toward the new ones in which there are a variety of choices with the best answers.

Learning helps students develop intellectual lives and intellectual activities are the basis of the ability of independent thinking and critical thinking. Thus, the quality of thinking depends on the process of intellectual development. That process, according to Prof., Dr. Huynh Huu Tue is divided into four necessary stages: (1) dualism; (2) multiplicity; (3) relativism; (4) commitment.

### ***Dualism***

In this early development phase, students often view lives as goodness and badness, black and white; and in their thinking, knowledge gathered is clear and transparent, not ambiguous; learning is simply a process of information exchange. To them, the teacher lectures on presenting new knowledge in the form of events; students just need to memorize the task of learning. At this stage, students will urge the teacher to give a conditional answer, or not answer but ask other questions.

### ***Multiplicity***

In this stage, the students realize everything depends on perspective and personal opinion. They feel strong enough to think for themselves; however, they are not sufficiently capable of judging different views. They think the teacher's assessment of their individuality is completely subjective.

### ***Relativism***

During the relatively complex stage of development, students are aware of the importance of evidence and reasoning when seeking to improve their perspectives. They accept what other people may not agree with their view; and even the opinion of the leader should be carefully analyzed and refuted.

### ***Commitment***

This is the final stage of intellectual development. It is not a leap into the complexity of the intellect, but is the approach to the problem. The students apply all the knowledge gained during the period of relativism to make choices or decisions based on critical thinking and analysis.

Critical thinking is “considered to be one of key skills for any 21<sup>st</sup> century learner” who can both fill in a bubble on a test and possess 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like “problem-solving” and “critical thinking”, (Hughes, 2014). In order to develop a system of thinking and encourage higher-order thinking, Bloom, B. (1956) as presented on Table 2.3 below provided a set of sub-skills taking the learner from thinking of lower level to a higher level as (1) remembering- recalling previous studied information; (2) understanding- when reading or listening to a text, the reader processes it and then tries to understand it; (3) applying- having studied a text, he takes the new information and applies it to something; (4) analyzing- returning to the text and beginning to question how the writer’s information is presented; (5) evaluating- one of the key „higher-order“ critical thinking skills; (6) creating- having studied a topic by drawing on a number of texts, students need to apply their new knowledge and to create something of their own out of it.

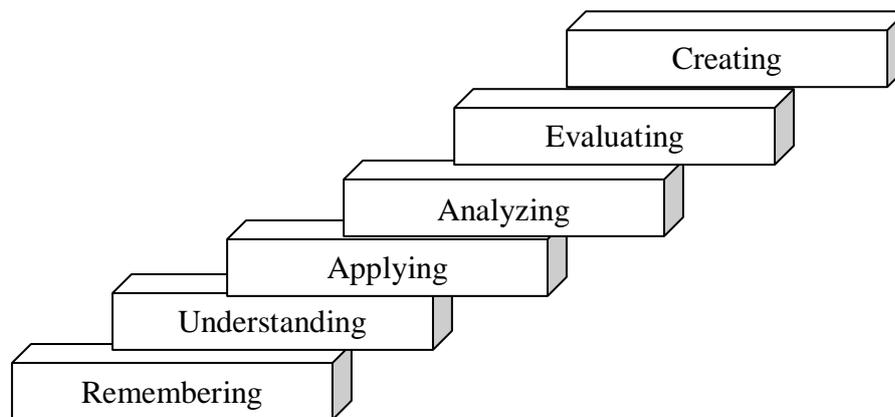


Table 2.3: The sub-skills of Bloom’s Taxonomy

Critical thinking is an important skill in life; however, not all of us is taught the way of thinking in school. According to Phuong Anh (2016), there are four basic steps to develop critical thinking as (1) making a question; (2) searching for information; (3) objectively analyzing the issues; and (4) bringing out communicative solutions.

*Making a question.* Making questions is the first stage of the learning process. Most people think critically are always curious and have a habit of asking themselves what is going on in their eyes. Asking questions does not only help them have answers, but it also gives them a broader, more objective perspective in choosing among many different answers.

*Searching for information.* Searching for information is a very necessary stage after making a question because the more information we have, the more different opinions we know. At that time, we become much smarter when suggesting, protecting our personal opinion and bringing out the final decision.

*Objectively analyzing the issues.* When we have the information, we will analyze it all with an open, objective, unbiased mind. This may be the hardest step; however, it is the most rewarding and the most enjoyable step to practice.

*Bringing out communicative solutions.* No matter how thoughtful we are, not knowing how to communicate with others will not produce the results we want. We have to practice to know how to express our thoughts to others. We try to listen, acquire and empathize with others to come up with the final solution.

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