

THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL READING IN EDUCATION

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Annotation. This article explores critical reading methods in secondary education, focusing on their effectiveness and applicability. The study reviews experiments taken by several researchers and focuses on the several questions have been raised about applications of CT into curriculum, so this paper will look at the benefits of it, obstacles hindering broad application and activities fostering critical reading and thinking of school pupils.

Keywords: critical thinking, secondary education, ideologies, motivation, assumptions, perspectives

Critical reading has become an effective method in education, having significant role in contemporary world of diverse and complex ideologies. The importance of critical reading in academic success and necessity of CT in our daily lives was observed by several researchers and this paper discusses the case of some (Al Roomy,2022; Brookfield,2012; Tsai&Wu&Braten&Wang,2022; Alam&Ferdous,2022; Yuan&Stapleton,2019). According to Brookfield (2012) “when people think critically they question the fundamental assumptions behind how problems are defined”. Also Brookfield (2012) states that “ideologies are everywhere; they are beliefs accepted by majority as natural for organizing the world; ideologies like capitalism and democracy are highly public; mostly ideologies are learned from schools, media, families, workplaces, church, political associates”. So critical thinking assists the reader not to be logical or solve problems but rather to gain understanding of ideologies in the society or media. As extensive research has shown that critical reading is not facile method, this paper highlights the strategies for critical reading. Also several researches was conducted to experiment the effect of critical reading into reading comprehension which will be analyzed in this paper

According to Halonen and Gray (2000) “critical reading is not one activity; rather the term refers to a collection of thinking skills that advance intellectual focus, motivation and engagement with new ideas”. Critical reading generally consists of 6 strategies according to Ferdous and Alam(2022). Authors generally consider that previewing, annotating, summarizing, analyzing, rereading and responding are key components of critical reading. However, Brookfield (2012) associates critical reading with for processes: hunting assumptions, checking assumptions, seeing things from different viewpoints and taking informed actions. If author delves into specifics he

explains that hunting assumptions is discovering assumptions that influence the way we think, checking assumptions is checking reliability and accuracy of them. He also points out that seeing things from different viewpoints means to look at idea from different perspectives. Brookfield considers taking informed actions into ideas is last but most significant step as he defines this step as taking actions based on accurate understanding of situations which can bring satisfactory results. The research of Tsai & Wu, Braten and Wang(2022) has tended to focus on thinking aloud while reading is crucial in order to explore cognitive process during task completion. Authors points out that “ it is an overt data about covert process”. However, Tsai & Wu, Braten and Wang(2022) studies do not take into account the time spent for that process as thinking aloud needs data that produced by interview and data-analysis which might take a long period of time. Also Carigus(2002) suggested strategies for critical reading which consist of two steps. The first is skimming the text for main idea and identifying the organization of text by transitional phrases. The second is utilizing higher level of thinking on making synthesis, summary, evaluation of material. On the other had Huijie(2010) provided a hierarchy for critical reading in four stages: structural analysis, rhetorical analysis, social relevance and holistic evaluation. The first and second is associated with understanding the context while third level reveals and links retrospective basis of reader to the context. The fourth is alternative of analyzing, gathering the evidence, questioning the sources and ideologies to contrast facts and opinions. Huijie (2010) emphasizes on incorporating higher order of thinking where students should not remember data but analyze, evaluate and create a summary of it.

Several researches were conducted by authors which analyzed the impact of critical reading to reading comprehension (Tsai & Wu & Braten & Wang,2022). The result of studies showed that participants could achieve positive outcomes by implementing critical thinking into reading tasks (Tsai & Wu & Braten & Wang,2022). It also affected on writing responses where they were able to question statements and justify their viewpoints with justifications. Another study by Bag and Gursoy (2021) was conducted about applying critical reading into the curriculum of EFL students. The results were positive as participants by integration of CR could rectify their higher order of thinking skills and language proficiency. The implication of CR into school curriculum was observed by several authors who conducted a research in three-year Master of TESOL Program in China (Yuan & Stapleton ,2020). During the research two groups of students 6 of each had group interviews where authors were facilitators by asking questions and organizing discussions. Questions were about their comprehension of CT in pedagogy, the description of CT and the methods of implementing CT in teaching. Participants were also encouraged to define the merits and obstacles they encountered during the practice of CT. As a result, students understanding of CT and CR was considerably poor which hindered their efforts to

incorporate it during teaching. Another interesting research was conducted by Tsai & Wu, Braten and Wang (2022) who utilized several innovative technologies to identify participants' information processing during reading. That study used eye-tracking technology that tried to discover how students allocated their visual attention on text and what strategies they used while reading. The findings indicated that students who scored higher on critical reading were mostly focused on supporting and opposing arguments, while others paid huge attention on unfamiliar words. So critical reading assisted readers to foster their analyzing and evaluating skills which are highly essential while receiving new information. In the study of Moeniasl; Taylor; Debraga; Manchanda; Huggon & Graham (2022) EFL undergraduate students participated by applying critical reading in reading. The findings revealed that students' performance were low because of their low general English. Also Gao (2019) with EFL students conducted a research on how analytical reading mode influenced on students' cognitive skills. The research concluded that analytical mode has positive impact on students thinking process. Participants could transfer their thinking from logical to flexible. In one study conducted by Ozensoy (2019) there were discovered the influence of critical reading on students' reading comprehension. The findings were positive where students were productive in academic reading by using critical reading strategies. In one study, Karacok, Ruegg & Gu (2022) conducted a research for undergraduate students. The findings revealed that in order to improve critical reading students should have access to the wide range of academic sources like books and journals.

Developing critical thinking ability of students has become crucial for their learning (Al Roomy, 2022). So how essential to implement critical reading into curriculum? Approaches to this question are ambivalent. On the question of incorporating CR into curriculum, Al Roomy (2022) highlighted that “critical thinking and reading are key skills that EFL students need the most to expedite and promote the learning process”. He suggests that reading plays a pivotal role in developing general English as reading is fundamental receptive skill which is really essential for succeeding in academic course. But what challenges occur while applying critical reading in schools and universities? According to Yuan & Stapleton (2019) the research findings demonstrated that the potential obstacle for applying CR was due to the rigid school policies which hindered intensive implication of CR. Also teachers' limited and unsystematic knowledge about CR triggered passive implementation of CR during classes (Yuan & Stapleton, 2019). Another interesting research finding show that students considered critical reading as a new subject with challenging questions (Al Roomy, 2022). However, after systematic understanding of strategies of critical reading students task completion boomed. They began look for main ideas of text rather than translating every new words (Al Roomy, 2022). So, implementation of CR in education can transfer students thinking level from lower to higher. But there should

be gradual application. Firstly, language teacher education should emphasize on CR by providing rich and authentic materials to encourage student teachers rectify their CR as future language teachers (Yuan & Stapleton, 2019). To be precise, it is important to study with student teachers' global issues regarding English and methods of teaching them in different socio-cultural contexts. Group discussion in classes about global problems leads learners to analyze, synthesize and evaluate the issues which generally can make lessons more interactive and student-centered. Secondly, teachers should be flexible and creative in order prepare meaningful, engaging tasks with authentic learning materials (Wilson, 2016). For example, as Brookfield (2012) proposed there are variety of activities to utilize during lessons at schools and universities. According to Brookfield (2012) an activities called “critical debate” is designed to persuade students think critically and express their ideas with clear justifications. In this activity students in two groups organize debate about one particular issue. But interesting fact is that they argue against positions they were committed at the beginning. This method makes students to form both supporting and opposing arguments towards one issue. Another activity designed by Brookfield (2012) can be implemented during classes. This is called “Exemplars and Flaws” where students choose a topic which influenced their knowledge about topic. Topic might be about mathematical proof or historical event that students enthusiastic to delve into details and investigate at home. Finally, students in trio share their responses why they made their choice. These explanations follow tern-taking which enrich each students' insight into different events. The most beneficial part of this activity is focusing on particular text, concept that learners encouraged to choose (Brookfield, 2012). However, there are some contradicting viewpoints about application of CR and CT in education. For instance, Willingham (2007) considers that “critical thinking is inextricably intertwined with domain knowledge and highly contextual and students may learn to think in one area but be unable in another”. So, Brookfield (2012) agrees with Willingham's idea and supports the idea of unnecessary of teaching critical thinking within the context of academic subjects or disciplines. He suggests that critical thinking should be taught within the context of students' own life for dealing with challenges they encounter during the college or university period.

Since critical thinking associates with higher order of thinking, critical reading is likely to enhance learners reading skills. As Yuan & Stapleton (2019) suggests that “the cultivation of CR is significant goal of language education in today's increasingly complex social environment”. However, Brookfield (2012) argues that “teaching students to read critically, the way they practice considerably varies from department to department, program to program”. For EFL learners this job requires CT-oriented language teachers who gained deep understanding of CT and have sufficient pedagogical methods to promote CR in their classrooms. But as Brookfield (2012)

mentioned “ critical thinking and reading are not something that only people with college degree can do”. So this method can be learned outside the classroom either. And students have to think critically not only in classroom but outside of class (Al Roomy, 2022). Because students encounter majority of information while surfing the net. So critical reading form a habit of making appropriate assumptions leading to actions which will bring satisfactory results.

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