

THE INFLUENCE OF CRITICAL THINKING ON DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS

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TANQIDIY FIKRLASHNING YOZISH KO'NIKMALARINI RIVOJLANTIRISHGA TA'SIRI

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ВЛИЯНИЕ КРИТИЧЕСКОГО МЫШЛЕНИЯ НА РАЗВИТИЕ НАВЫКОВ ПИСЬМА

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Abstract. EFL students face several challenges when they are asked to compose essays. As a result, EFL students are often reluctant to participate in written assignments. Language learners try to apply grammatical rules accurately and use as many academic words as possible. However, the concepts offered are highly general, without any specific proof. The sequence of statements also does not complement each other logically but repeats itself. When analyzing existing school textbooks and curricula, little attention was paid to exercises designed to broaden students' horizons. To enrich the content of the essay, it is advisable to expand the existing ideas on the topic and organize classes to form new ideas. To this end, the Socrates Seminar – Discussion – Project Work. Presentation was organized using a sequence of exercises. As a result of this 4-week research process, it was observed that the essays written by the students were different from the previous essays in terms of content and essence. The results show that using exercises help shape cognitive ability, especially critical thinking.

Keywords: Socratic seminars; debate; critical thinking; Project-based-Learning (PBL); Communicative Language teaching (CLT); group work activities; task achievement; repetitive concepts; generic ideas; coherence and cohesion

Annotasiya. Til o'rganuvchilar turli mavzudagi insholarni, yozishda juda ko'p qiyinchiliklarga duch keladilar. Shuning uchun ham ko'pincha ingliz tilini ikkinchi til sifatida o'rganayotgan o'quvchilar yozma nutq topshiriqlarida ishtirok etishni xohlamaydilar. Yozilgan turli janrdagi insholar tekshirilganda til o'rganuvchilar inshoda grammatik qoidalarni to'g'ri qo'llashga va imkon qadar ko'proq kam qo'llaniladigan akademik so'zlardan foydalanishga harakat qilishlarini kuzatish mumkin. Ammo inshoda berilgan fikrlar juda umumiy, aniq dalillar va misollarsiz yoritiladi. Shuningdek berilgan gaplar ketma-ketligida, bir-birini mantiqiy to'ldirayotganini emas, balki mazmunan bir-birini

takrorlanayotganini kuzatish mumkin. Ushbu tadqiqot jarayonidagi kuzatuvlar o'quvchilarni insho yozishga jalb etishda asosan so'z o'rgatish va grammatik qoidalarni to'g'ri ishlatishga qaratilgan mashqlardan foydalanilganligini kuzatildi. Mavjud maktab darsliklari va o'quv dasturlari tahlil qilinganda o'quvchilarni fikrlash doirasini kengaytirishga qaratilgan mashqlarga deyarli e'tibor berilmagan. Insho mazmunini boyitish uchun mavzuga oid mavjud bo'lgan fikrlarni kengaytirish va yangi fikrlarni shakllantirishga mo'ljallangan mashg'ulotlar tashkil qilish maqsadga muvofiqdir. Shu maqsadda Suqrot seminari-Muhokama-Loyiha ishi taqdimoti mashqlar ketma ketligini qo'llagan holda darslar tashkil qilindi. Ushbu 4 hafta davom etgan tadqiqot jarayoni natijasida o'quvchilar tomonidan yozilgan insholar mazmun va mohiyatiga ko'ra avvalgi yozilgan insholardan farq qilishi kuztildi. Olingan natijalarga ko'ra darslarda yozma nutqni shakllantirishda fikrlash qobiliyatini, xususan tanqidiy fikrlashni shakllantirishga yordam beradigan mashqlardan foydalanish o'quvchilarda o'z fikrlarini yozma nutqda erkin va samarali bayon etishlariga katta yordam beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: Suqrot metodi; bahs-munozara; tanqidiy fikrlash; loyihalar asosida ishlash (PBL); tilni muloqot uchun o'qitish (CLT); guruhlarda ishlash; topshiriqni bajarish; takroriy tushunchalar; umumiy fikrlar; gaplar va fikrlar orasidagi uyg'unlik; matn yaxlitligi.

Аннотация. Студенты, изучающие иностранный язык, сталкиваются с несколькими проблемами, когда их просят написать эссе. В результате они часто неохотно участвуют в выполнении письменных заданий. Изучающие язык стараются точно применять грамматические правила и использовать как можно больше академических слов. Однако предлагаемые правила носят весьма общий характер, без каких-либо конкретных указаний. Последовательность утверждений в студенческих эссе также логически не дополняют друг друга, а повторяются. При анализе существующих школьных учебников и учебных программ мало внимания уделялось упражнениям, направленным на расширение кругозора учащихся. Чтобы обогатить содержание эссе, желательно расширить существующие представления по теме и организовать занятия для формирования новых идей. С этой целью были использованы такие методы, как семинар Сократа – дискуссия – проектная работа. Презентация была организована с использованием последовательности упражнений. В результате этого 4-недельного исследовательского процесса было замечено, что эссе, написанные студентами, отличались от предыдущих эссе с точки зрения содержания. Результаты показывают, что использование указанных методов в упражнениях помогает формированию когнитивных способностей учащихся, в особенности критического мышления.

Ключевые слова: сократические семинары; дебаты; критическое мышление; проектное обучение; обучение коммуникативному языку; групповая работа; выполнение задачи; повторяющиеся концепции; общие идеи; согласованность и сплоченность.

Introduction. Students, according to my observations, are less motivated and inspired to participate in writing activities. Additionally, the results of students' assessments indicate that their writing abilities should be improved through the use of a variety of methods and strategies. The development of one's vocabulary, the use of appropriate terminology in writing, and adherence to grammatical

conventions are all essential components of writing successfully. However, students who are competent in the use of words and the application of grammatical rules were unable to complete the well-written writing assignments given to them. They claimed to have spent a lot of time brainstorming ideas for the beginning of their paper. As a result, the text may be full of academic words and free of grammatical errors. In spite of this, many of the ideas are repetitive or off-topic. Fifteen first-year students were included in the research, all of them struggled with a high percentage of plagiarized work or had to accept lower grades because they did not complete the work successfully. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), they had language proficiency levels ranging from B1 to B2 in the target language. Following the progress of my students' work, I concluded that developing critical thinking abilities and participating in activities that foster critical thinking abilities are essential for EFL learners to begin and accomplish a variety of compositions.

A study conducted by Brown (2) looks into the problem and attempts to understand what it is about writing that so many individuals find difficult, even in their own language.

Writing that is not based on critical reading or critical thinking may be entirely personal, with no reference to a greater context or a specific objective in mind. It may involve “prejudices, biases, misconceptions, and stereotypes”, Students who have strong writing skills, according to Weigle (5), are considered to have acquired the cognitive skills required to succeed in college. In their study, Johnson and colleagues (3) argue that the essay, which is still useful in the classroom for teaching writing, may be used to teach the academic argument.

Beaumont (1) says that critical thinking is essential in educational contexts similarly. Teachers must acknowledge the value of critical thinking and make a significant effort to help their students use it in their classes.

Main Part. Research Methodology. When I was reviewing my students' assignments, I saw several issues with the content, such as an inability to respond to task completion, the repetition of concepts, and overly broad arguments with no supporting ideas. The grading procedure provides insight into students' difficulties and dilemmas while writing essays. Students supplied highly generic opinions with no examples in 72 per cent of cases, while 28 per cent provided one or two explanations. 92 per cent of students were unable to create thesis statements or wrote them ineffectively and generically. As a result, the body paragraphs and the introduction are out of sync with one another. I decided to dig into the matter more and come up with a more thorough explanation for the concerns. I made an effort to take notes whenever I offered assignments to my students during the writing process. Students were more concerned with quantity than quality when they sought to raise a query about the word restriction at the beginning. The students took their time getting started on the first piece of the essay, which was the most extended section. During my observation, the vast majority of students requested that I supply them with an example so that they could follow the structure and themes. Some students did not ask the question due to their preoccupation in searching for information on websites such as Google.

When the papers were returned to me, I used the rubric to compile the following information:

— 60 per cent of students used evidence from a variety of sources without acknowledging it. Turnitin discovered that the percentage of plagiarism in those students' papers was much greater than the average.

— Personal and general opinions on the subject were voiced most often by 30 per cent of the pupils. Furthermore, the majority of notions are repeated.

— 10 per cent of the students were unable to complete the task.

The student samples were used to determine whether or not a student has the capacity to develop well-organized arguments.

Many EFL students struggle with the process of developing their ideas in writing. Given that learning to think clearly and draw conclusions is a necessary aspect of developing critical thinking, it is possible that problems with task completion as well as preserving coherence and cohesion are related to a lack of in-depth consideration. Deep analytical thought is essential to comprehend the problem, present plausible responses to the question asked within the essay topic, and effectively critique the solutions. Deep thinking necessitates the use of critical thinking skills.

I wanted to compare the perspectives of my students and colleagues on the influence of critical thinking on the writing process to have a better grasp of the issue. In addition, I was interested in how my pupils acted when they were required to produce compositions in class. How do the students get started on their writing?

Research questions:

1. Why do I think it is essential for students to develop critical thinking skills in essay writing?

2. What are the perceptions of students and teachers about critical thinking?

3. What do my students do when I ask them to write an argumentative essay?

4. What impact does critical thinking have on composition writing development?

The exploratory phase of my study took place for two weeks (4 sessions). Ten first-year students participated in the process, and two of my colleagues assisted me in completing the research.

Interview with ESL teachers

Two teachers were interviewed, and both stressed the necessity of critical thinking in the writing process because it aids in the evaluation and analysis of the scenario. They also stated that they had little experience as a learner in cultivating critical thinking because they were taught using the GTM (Grammar Translation Method) and ALM (Audio-Lingual Method). We discovered that we all had similar issues with our students' writing abilities during the interview. They provided extra pre-writing tasks such as brainstorming questions, discussions, extensive reading process to assist students in gaining ideas, analyzing them, and selecting the best one for their writing.

Ten students were invited to fill out the questionnaires:

— While 70 per cent of students find the writing process challenging due to a lack of input or useful ideas, 20 per cent of students find it enjoyable since they believe it is a good exercise for improving their cognitive abilities. According to the survey, only 10 per cent of them are uninterested in writing because they believe it is unimportant for their everyday communication or future jobs.

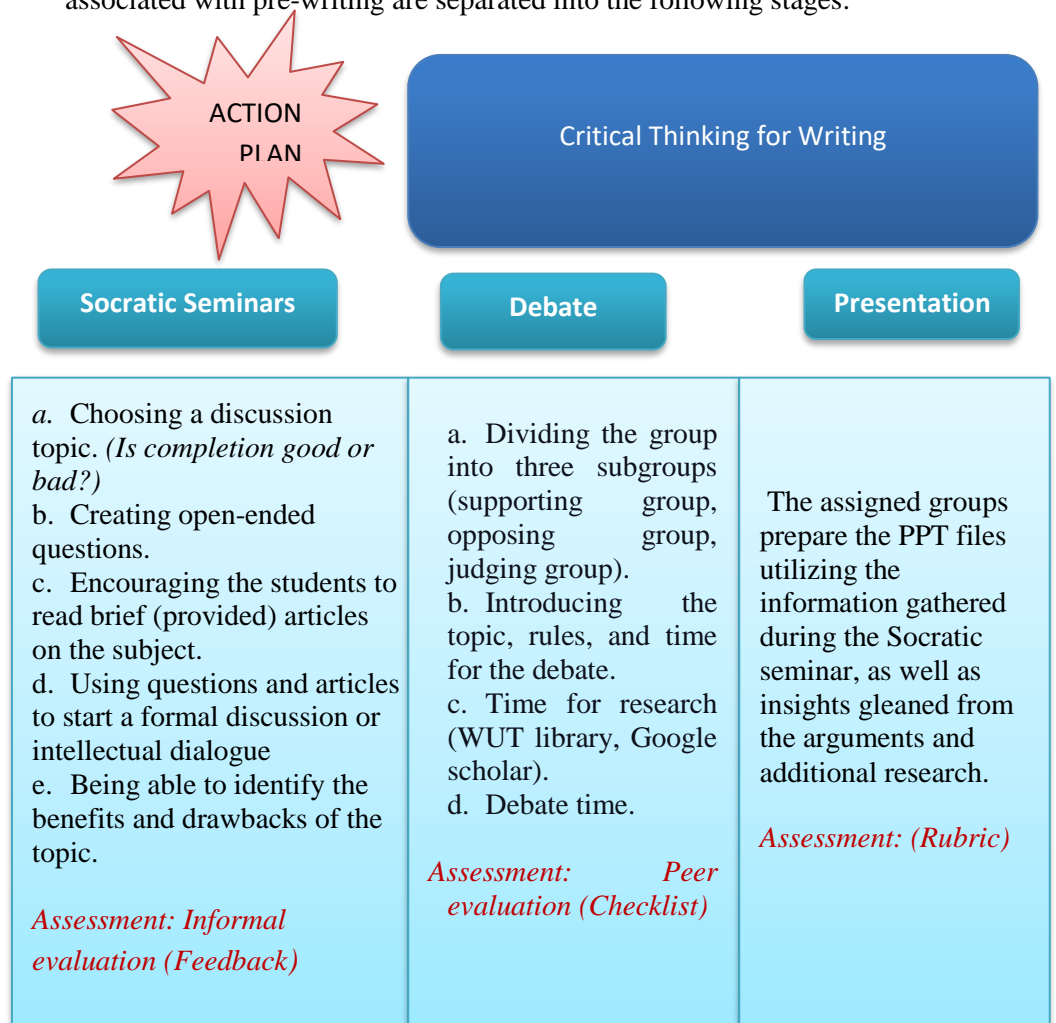
In response to a question regarding their primary concerns, 20 per cent of students said they were concerned about grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. 80 per cent of them are concerned about their lack of previous experience in the field.

— When they were questioned about the stages they take in the writing process, 50 per cent of the students who responded stated they prefer to utilize a

search engine such as Google to get information. Students begin the process based on their own personal experiences and perspectives, accounting for 30 per cent of all students' starting points. Twenty per cent of the pupils were totally confused where to begin or where to finish their work.

Findings and the results

To assist students in developing their writing skills, I chose to include specific assignments that would help them in their exploration of the writing process as well as their analysis of the data gathered during the exploratory phase. Because the survey replies revealed that the most students were suffering from a lack of ideas, I decided to conduct three activities to fix the situation. Consistency throughout all of these activities is the most critical aspect of their implementation to assist students in developing effective ideas for their assigned tasks. The tasks associated with pre-writing are separated into the following stages:



The International Literacy Association and the National Council of Teachers of English in the United States offers this list of the elements of a Socratic seminar:

Following the guideline, the steps for the process organized:

- a. Choosing a discussion topic. (*Is completion good or bad?*)
- b. Creating open-ended questions.
- c. Encouraging the students to read brief (provided) articles on the subject.

- d. Using questions and articles to start a formal discussion or intellectual dialogue.
- e. Being able to identify the benefits and drawbacks of the topic.

Assessment: Informal evaluation (Feedback)

The students were quite engaged in the discourse, and it was rather enjoyable to listen in. In addition, students were provided with a few brief pieces about the benefits and drawbacks of competing in business. Before they were encouraged to engage in the conversation, the students were requested to read the articles that were being discussed (one article per student). Their entire time allotted for reading and absorbing the information was 10 minutes. For several reasons, numerous students were not completely engaged in the activity throughout the first few minutes of the talk, which was particularly frustrating. To launch the conversation, students who are used to participating in the discussions gave facts and their viewpoints on the subject. After a while, students who had previously avoided participating in the discourse started to do so, even expressing their controversial points of view based on information gained from the articles offered by the teacher. Some background information on the issue was provided to the learners throughout the 30-minute conversation. The role of the teacher is that of a facilitator of educational activities.

At the end of the session, students were given oral feedback and were instructed to do further research using Google Scholar to complete their assignments. They were informed that they would participate in a Debate at the next meeting.

Activity 2. Debate

The second session was dedicated to continuing the discussion that had taken place during the previous session. Afterwards, the students were separated into three groups: a supportive group consisting of four students, an opposing group consisting of four students, and a judging group including four students. It was then determined that these groups should be divided into two categories: group A and group B. Afterwards, the participants were separated into three groups based on their birth dates. As part of this exercise, the three groups pull the piece of paper around at random (supporting, opposing, judging). Preparation time for this activity was provided to each of the three groups. When the judging group was requested to establish a checklist throughout the evaluation process, they did so without hesitation. Each phase of the argument was filled with enthusiasm from the students, who thought they could significantly contribute to the group's overall success. "Judges" rated groups at the end of the debate, and students who took part in it were handed a checklist listing the points they had received from the "judges".

The students were given the task of coming up with a presentation and presenting it to the same group of people for discussion in the following session. The students were provided with the rubric and its criteria before the session began. The role of the teacher is a facilitator.

The following steps were covered to complete the task.

- a. Dividing the group into three subgroups (supporting group, opposing group, judging group).
- b. Introducing the topic, rules, and time for the debate.
- c. Time for research (WUT library, Google scholar).
- d. Debate time.

Assessment: Peer evaluation (Checklist)

Activity 3. Presentation (PBL)

When I observed the pupils, I saw that they were all excited by the idea of becoming an important member of their group. Individuals from within the group took part in the presentation by offering evidence and applying their ideas to the subject matter. The teacher's duty is an assessor and an evaluator in addition. Using the criteria, the students' presentations were evaluated and graded accordingly. One of the components of the rubric is the application of critical thinking skills to the situation.

The assigned groups prepare the PPT files utilizing the information gathered during the Socratic

Seminar, as well as insights gleaned from the arguments and additional research.

Assessment: (Rubric)

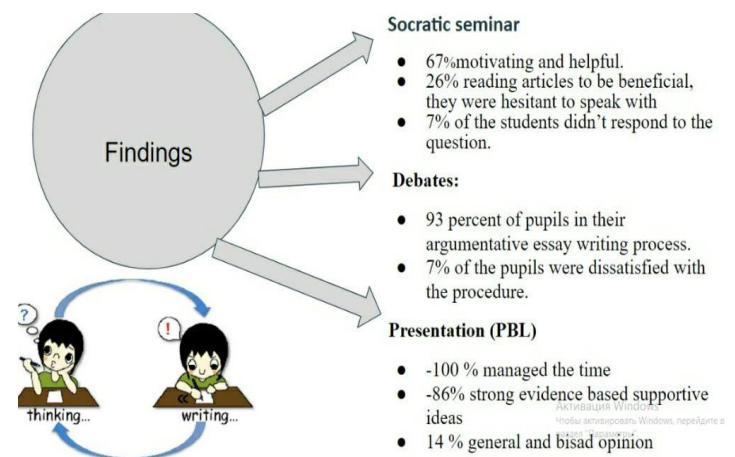
Activity 4. Composition Writing. Argumentative essay

The students were given the task of writing an argumentative essay. "Some say that competition is good for children's development, while others argue that it is harmful. Discuss all sides of the argument and give your perspective".

The teacher's role is a Task designer. The instruction includes a task description, actions to follow, structure /outlining of the essay, and rubrics. One of the rubric's components is the use of critical thinking.

Reflection and Conclusion

Two data collecting tools were used to determine the effectiveness of the activities to nurture critical thinking abilities to improve the quality of the composition.



Questionnaires for students

Socratic seminar

67 per cent of students regarded the Socratic seminar to be motivating and helpful. Although 26 per cent of students considered reading articles beneficial, they were hesitant to speak with others. 7 per cent of the students didn't respond to the question.

Debates

The activity was incredibly motivating for all of the pupils. The technique was beneficial to 93 per cent of pupils in their argumentative essay writing process. 7 per cent of the pupils were dissatisfied with the procedure.

Presentation (PBL)

All of the students stated that they had enough time to digest the information and participate in the self-study process. (The process was challenging for 47 per cent of students out of 100 per cent, yet it was still motivating.)

86 per cent of students know how to create a solid argumentative essay by considering both sides of the issue and avoiding prejudiced opinions. 14 per cent of the pupils could not distinguish between a well-researched and synthesized opinion and a biased one.

Students written works

The pupils' work was assessed using the analytical rubric's criteria. The outcomes of 15 pupils have been evaluated and graded.

— 86 per cent of students were able to respond to task achievement by providing evidence to back up their reasons. 14 per cent of the students used broad and biased viewpoints.

— 40 per cent of students who completed the task successfully using their developed critical thinking skills struggled with referencing the source.

Compared to the outcomes of earlier students' works, the result for the latter composition shows a 58 per cent higher rate.

Based on the summary of conducted Exploratory Action Research, I discovered how suitably used activities could help achieve the target objective that has been included in the syllabus. It may take some time to invite pupils to the activities that would help them develop their critical thinking skills. However, these types of exercises can assist students in avoiding the use of generalized and biased viewpoints. Maintaining consistency between Socratic seminars, debates, and presentations allows students to improve their writing skills. The essential aspect of the tasks is that it will enable students to practice their cognitive ability to analyze, synthesize, and assess situations before making a final judgment and conclusion in their written work.

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