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IMPLEMENTATION OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH CLASSES: REVISING GRAMMAR NOTOINS WITH THE MANS OF SOCRATIC QUESTIONS

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Abstract

In this article, two vital requirements of the new and innovative educational era: language learning and simultaneously further development of critical thinking skills processes integration issues are highlighted. Basically, it is intended to offer a new approach to test the efficiency of Socratic questions to revise grammar notions in integrated language classes as selected teaching tool effectively facilitates to high order thinking, reasoning and analyzing skills.

Key words

Innovative educational approaches, critical thinking, grammar notions, Socratic questions, process integration, high ordered thinking,grammar analysis.

INTRODUCTION

We are currently experiencing a new era of modern technologies that have greatly impacted various aspects of our lives, including medicine, economics, politics, agriculture, and education. One notable advancement in education is the emergence of distance learning or online education, which has revolutionized the way people can study abroad or pursue education from overseas without physically being present.

English was the language of commerce and business and a reliable means of international communications before. In our century as the capabilities of social media is offering wide access to the flow of recent information, which is mostly in English, it has become the language of the information and the globalization now. Thus, received info carries myriad types of ideas, notions, perceptions and facts. Our goal as a teacher is to bring up good critical thinkers as they are the people who can easily distinguish black from white or wrong from right and they acquire the rare ability to foresee upcoming problems and better solutions.

Dewey (1910) and Edward de Bono (1976), among so many educationalists, declared the aim of education is to teach young people to think. Critical thinking is a way to take charge of our thinking. Although critical thinking has a long history in the Western world, it is almost a new concept in most Eastern societies including Iran. There are few teachers and students who, when asked what they know about critical thinking or Socratic Questioning, have a vivid picture of these themes. This paper intends to discuss, as its title suggests, the issue of fostering critical thinking by using the potentiality of Socratic Dialectic in an Iranian context, namely language institutes. The

interrelationships of three main themes are, therefore, to be investigated in this paper: (1) Critical Thinking, (2) Socratic Method, and (3) Grammar analysis.

The possibilities and specifics of the development of CTS of students of different ages are thoroughly investigated in modern pedagogical science. The relevance of the study is confirmed by the fact that CT is considered to be one of the key competencies in modern education as it is highly demanded on the job market, on the one hand, and the interest of the scientific community to this problem, on the other hand. This is substantiated by a large number of scientific research in this field of pedagogical science (Khabarova and Sadova, 2020; Kavenuke, Kinyota, and Kayombo, 2020; Nguyễn and Nguyễn, 2017; El Soufi and See, 2019). Nowadays, the issue of CTS development becomes more important in school education. It requires a completely new view on the realization of the educational potential of secondary school disciplines. It also allows looking at the subject "Foreign Language" from a different angle in terms of the feasibility of using new methods and approaches for CT development while teaching a foreign language.

There is a consensus among authors on 'two approaches by McClure and Davies

- (a) the general approach with separate courses for teaching thinking
- (b) the specific approach with integrated courses, which means that the thinking skills are embedded in the school subjects.

In this study, second way of fostering critical thinking was applied.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammar is indeed the fundamental organizing principle of language. Learning about English grammar provides a basis for understanding language elements such as tenses, subject-verb agreement, different kinds of sentences, and sentence patterns. Acquiring knowledge of English grammar can be an extraordinary experience.

By studying English grammar, students can develop a heightened sense of alertness and awareness, which can greatly improve their abilities to communicate effectively in both spoken and written forms. This increased awareness allows students to apply grammar rules more accurately and use the language more proficiently.

English grammar serves as a crucial foundation for language learning, enabling students to enhance their speaking and writing skills, resulting in more effective communication.

What is Socratic questions and how they can enhance Critical thinking abilities of the learners?
Socrates has been recognized as one of the founders of western philosophy. He innovated a method of instruction based on questioning. Socratic questioning was based on a series of organized and systematic questions which helped the students gain awareness towards their ignorance, misconceptions, wrong assumptions, and false conclusions. In this model questions are asked for which there are no definitive answers, in fact the questioner does not seek such answers. The philosophy behind this method is to stimulate the thinking. According to Sigel (1979) Socratic enquiry serves the cause of cognitive development because they activate representational thought. Socratic dialectic is neither a meandering chat nor recitation-style teaching in which the teacher asks

a question, the student gives an answer and the teacher finally offers a feedback through his or her final remark. Socrates believed the true vocation of a teacher is to help the learners to collect their thoughts and build new understanding from previous knowledge. Through questioning, sometimes, we notice people cannot rationally justify their beliefs. Socratic dialectic is an effective tool to help people distinguish reasonable and logical beliefs from irrational and unfounded beliefs. Through questioning the students can be led to new discoveries, so the function of questions is not limited to assessing the amount of knowledge obtained but creating new levels of understanding, to uncover contradictions. In Socratic Method teachers are expected to abandon their role as deliverer of the course content and engage the students with the material Gunter, Estes, and Mintz (2010) argue that the success of a classroom discussion depends on the kinds of questions that teachers prepare. They assert that "good questions are educative – they provide the opportunity for deeper thought" (p.192). Based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy and Paul's Taxonomy of Socratic Questions, Gunter et al try to introduce different types of questions teachers can ask in order to not only evaluate and assess students' knowledge but also raise their level of understanding. Bloom's Taxonomy contains six types of questioning for six cognitive levels:

1. Remembering questions which ask students to recall what they have learned,
2. Understanding questions which ask students to explain what they have learned,
3. Applying questions which ask students to use new learning in other familiar situations,
4. Analyzing questions which ask students to break what they have learned into its parts and explore the relationships among them,
5. Evaluative questions which ask students to render a judgment,
6. Creating questions which ask students to generate new ways of thinking about issues and subjects,

METHODS

To be more precise let`s take one example from the carried study:

Task 1:
Analyze the sentence according to the parts of the speech , grammatically , with the help of Socratic questions:

Liza bought two red balloons from the store yesterday?

1) Who bought the balloons?
Answer: Liza - noun
2) What did Liza do yesterday?
Answer: bought - verb
3) How many balloons did Liza bought form the store?

Answer: two balloons - numerals

4) When Liza bought two balloons?

Answer: Yesterday – adverb

5) What kind of balloons did Liza buy yesterday?

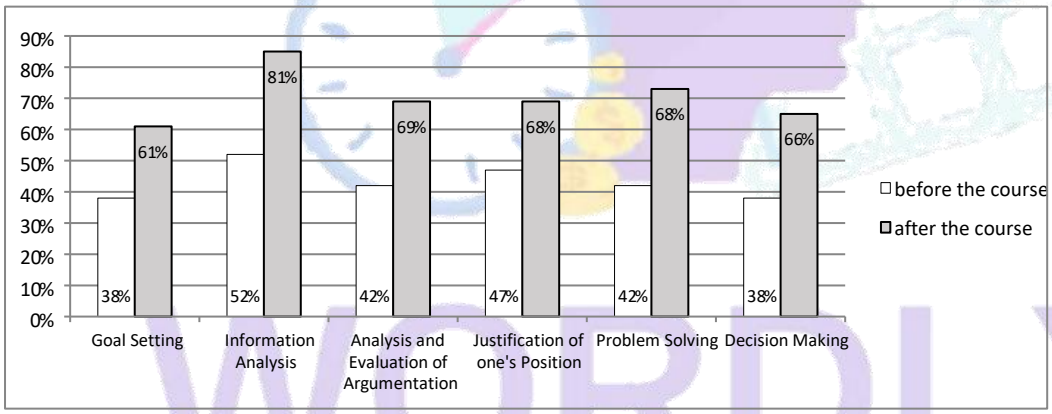
Answers: red – adjective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Observations carried out during the experimental teaching showed that the indicators of the level of CTS, the ability to apply them in daily life and learning activities have improved considerably in the experimental group. The post-task of students' CTS revealed that students had a much higher evaluation indicator of CTS (89% of students were satisfied with own skills and noted a qualitative change in the CT process).

"Post-Test of Critical Thinking" showed that the increase of the development of CTS level in the experimental group was 26%. The greatest effectiveness of the method was noted for the ability to make balanced and logical decisions (growth rate was 28%), work with information (29%) and solve problem situations (26%). The lowest growth rate was for the ability to justify own position (21%). The effectiveness of the proposed methodology was reflected in the quantitative indicators obtained during the comparison of the input and final results of critical thinking skills tests.

Table 1. Comparative results of the pre- and post-tests of students' CTS:



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, students noted that they became aware of the way they think, obtain and process information, read sentences. It is the indication of their reflection, which is the most important component of critical thinking, a conscious attitude to their own mental activity. Students highly appreciated the practical orientation of the course, pointing out the practicality of using Socratic questions of CT in their both grammar classes and other educational activities. Most of the students noted the high communicative value and interactivity of the exercises, the opportunity to think orderly and easily, which also indicates the development of students' communicative competence. Critical thinking is not the only educational purpose that makes lessons fruitful but also life skill facilitating student`s further achievements.

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