THE ROLE OF ENGLISH LESSONS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' LOGICAL AND CRITICAL THINKING

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Abstract. This article analyzes the role and significance of English language classes in developing students' logical and critical thinking skills within the modern educational context. The paper explores the cognitive connection between language and thought, methods of integrating higher-order thinking skills from Bloom's Taxonomy into the learning process, and mechanisms for enhancing analytical thinking through the four primary language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Furthermore, interactive methods applied in the classroom (such as "Six Thinking Hats", debates, case studies, and Socratic questioning) are reviewed, alongside practical recommendations for overcoming potential language barriers.

Keywords: critical thinking, logical thinking, English language teaching methodology, Bloom's taxonomy, cognitive skills, interactive methods, pedagogical strategies.

INTRODUCTION. Enhancing a student's personal and intellectual potential is a key issue in modern educational pedagogy. Research conducted globally during the 20th and 21st centuries on improving educational effectiveness demonstrates that, in an era of rapidly increasing information flow, the ability to properly select, analyze, and evaluate information has become paramount. In pedagogy, these skills are referred to as logical and critical thinking.

The process of learning foreign languages—specifically English—is a complex neuronal and cognitive undertaking for the human brain and mindset. Transitioning between languages and embracing concepts from different cultures and worldviews requires students to constantly perform cognitive operations such as analysis, comparison, differentiation, and generalization. Consequently, English lessons serve as a unique and effective environment for fostering logical and critical thinking.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the theoretical and practical foundations of developing critical and logical thinking in English lessons, to examine effective methods and techniques, and to highlight the opportunities and obstacles associated with this process. Concepts of logical and critical thinking and their distinctions. Thinking is the highest form of human cognitive activity. Although these concepts are often used together in the educational process, they possess distinct differences and points of intersection:

1. Logical Thinking: The ability to consistently identify the relationship between cause and effect, draw deductive and inductive conclusions, and discover patterns. Logical thinking relies on precise rules and structures.

2. Critical Thinking: The ability to question the accuracy, impartiality, logic, and reliability of information, evaluate evidence, draw objective conclusions, and view a problem from various perspectives. According to Bloom's Taxonomy, critical and logical thinking fall under the higher levels of cognitive skills:

Remembering
Understanding
Applying
Analyzing — Higher level
Evaluating — Higher level

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Creating — Higher level

While the traditional model of English language instruction focuses largely on the lower levels (remembering, memorizing vocabulary, understanding grammar), modern methodology requires guiding students toward the levels of analyzing, evaluating, and creating new ideas.

In terms of its structure, the English language encompasses four core skills: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. Each skill involves specific mechanisms for fostering logical and critical thinking.

Reading and text analysis. Reading activities are a rich source for developing critical thinking. While ordinary reading involves simply accepting facts, critical reading requires engaging with the following questions:

What is the author's purpose? (To inform, to persuade, to entertain?)

Is the evidence provided in the text sufficient, or has the author placed exaggerated emphasis on personal opinion?

What is the underlying (implicit) meaning of the text?

Methodological approach: "Fact vs. Opinion" (Distinguishing between fact and opinion).

Students are tasked with distinguishing between objective facts (unchanging data) and the author's subjective views in the text. This exercise fosters the skill of analyzing information rather than accepting it unquestioningly.

Writing and logical coherence. The process of writing an essay is a practical application of logical thinking. Academic essay writing in English (e.g., opinion essays, cause-and-effect essays, problem-and-solution essays) follows a strict logical structure:

Introduction: Thesis statement.

Body Paragraphs: Logical reasons and supporting details.

Conclusion: Logical wrap-up and final conclusion. Supporting ideas with arguments (using logical connectors such as *because*, *however*, *consequently*, and *on the other hand*) helps structure a student's train of thought. The most effective interactive methods used in English lessons to enhance students' critical and logical thinking skills include:

Debates and Discussions

The debate method requires students to analyze their own positions as well as the opposing side's views on a controversial topic.

Example topic: "Is Artificial Intelligence a threat or a benefit to education?"

Thinking process: Students must express their arguments logically in English, identify their opponent's logical fallacies, and provide a suitable rebuttal.

Problem-Based Learning and Case Studies

Students are presented with a real-life or hypothetical problem scenario. Working in small groups, they devise solutions to the problem.

Scenario: "A small town is facing severe plastic pollution. As a team of environmentalists, create a 3-step action plan to solve this issue within a budget." Outcome: Students offer suggestions in English, evaluate resources, and select the most logical and effective solution.

Socratic Questioning

The teacher does not provide a ready-made answer but instead guides the student toward a logical conclusion by asking questions.

Why do you think so? (Clarification)

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What evidence can you provide for this idea? (Probing assumptions)

If this were the case, what would the consequence be? (Probing implications)

Presented below are practical exercises aimed at developing critical thinking in English language lessons, along with their pedagogical analysis:

Exercise 1: "Six Thinking Hats" (based on Edward de Bono)

Students analyze a topic from six different perspectives:

White Hat: Facts and information (What facts do we have?)

Red Hat: Emotions and feelings (How do we feel about this?)

Black Hat: Risks and critical views (What could go wrong?)

Yellow Hat: Positive aspects and opportunities (What are the benefits?)

Green Hat: Creative and new ideas (What new solutions can we invent?)

Blue Hat: Process management and conclusion (What is our summary?)

Pedagogical value: This technique prevents one-sided (stereotypical) thinking and teaches students to view problems from a multidimensional perspective.

Exercise 2: "Reordering the Story" (Jumbled Texts)

A text with a disrupted logical sequence is provided. Students must arrange the text in the correct order based on cause-and-effect relationships and chronological logic. This directly enhances the skill of reconstructing logical sequences.

Several obstacles may arise when fostering logical and critical thinking in **English lessons:**

Language Barrier: If a student's English proficiency (vocabulary/grammar) is insufficient, they will struggle to articulate complex ideas.

Solution: The teacher should provide students with specific templates for expressing ideas (scaffolding phrases such as "In my opinion...", "According to the text...", "This leads to...").

Traditional Assessment System: An excessive focus on tests and grammatical rules, leaving no time for independent thinking.

Solution: Incorporate more tasks based on independent thinking and analysis (formative assessment) into lesson plans.

CONCLUSION. In conclusion, English lessons serve not merely as a means of learning a language for communication but as a key factor in developing students' intellectual potential, as well as their logical and critical thinking skills. Language and thought are inextricably linked pedagogical phenomena: language shapes and expresses ideas, while critical thinking ensures that language is meaningful and substantive.

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