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Introduction

I grew interested in the new teaching methods and gradually, I started to apply them into my teaching. I found them very effective and attractive for my students. Therefore I decided to introduce the principles and goals of this programme in my qualification paper for other teachers who might be interested in this approach.

To think critically means to sort newly acquired facts in terms of their importance or insignificance for the learning process. Generally, critical thinking is a new way of looking at the teaching and learning process at schools. There are many abilities being developed by critical Thinking. To be able to formulate one's own ideas and opinions, to use them in the discussion and to respect other people's dissimilarities are the most important ones for the life in our modern information society. Critical thinking also motivates to further lifelong education.

Topicality of the research. Critical thinking methods are powerful tools for building very effective school learning units and in the hands of teachers, these methods transform uninteresting dull lessons into joyful energetic and active process. All the critical thinking methods are based on scientific knowledge concerning the mechanisms of human learning such as constructivism, cognitivism and cooperative learning, so the processes taking place in the students' minds are natural and the results of learning are more permanent.

There are no special requirements for the classes where the critical thinking teaching methods are applied in the process of education. Teachers can have their prevalent English textbooks and other equipment they use every day.

The aim of this qualification paper is to present critical thinking in the context of English language learning and teaching and to demonstrate that methods of critical thinking applied in the English language teaching

positively influence the learning outcomes and the approach of the students.

Several **tasks** were put in order to achieve the main aim of the research:

- to study the theoretical materials on the critical thinking;
- to define the place of reading and writing in developing critical thinking;
- to study the place of critical thinking in teaching English language;
- to present methods applied in developing critical thinking skills.

Scientific structure of the research. The problem of developing critical thinking skills in education is not new for methodologists. The problems of critical thinking in pedagogy and language teaching were studied by Burbules C. N. and Ruperk R. (1999), Davidson B. (1998), Davidson N. and Worsham T. (1992), Atkinson D. (1997), Ballard B. (1995) and Benesch S.(1993).

Novelty of the research. The qualification paper presents a lot of material and theoretical analysis of approaches and methods used in developing critical thinking skill in teaching English language. Moreover, in the work I tried to define concrete suggestions for applying several methods of critical thinking.

Object of the research is the English language teaching and the development of critical thinking skills.

Subject of the research is the methods of critical thinking in English language teaching.

Methods used in the work. I used the methods of literature analysis, literature review, experimental method in trying the methods of critical thinking with my students.

Practical and theoretical value of the results of the research. The results achieved in the work can be used by teachers of English who wish

to develop their students' critical thinking in teaching English. The results also applicable for students of foreign languages department of universities.

Structure of the qualification work. This qualification paper is divided into two parts. The theoretical part introduces critical thinking and its general ideas. The definition of critical thinking is given. Theoretical basis of critical thinking – constructivism, cognitivism and cooperative learning together with the role of writing are explained. The comparison of their goals is mentioned, too. Critical Thinking methods as alternatives to the traditional teaching methods are elaborated and their features are compared. A block of curricular aspects follow. The description of the environment supporting the Critical Thinking is mentioned. The inseparable component of Critical Thinking – the E-U-R model of learning is elaborated there, too. The theoretical part is closed by a list of the most known Critical Thinking methods and their short description.

Chapter I. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking can be seen as feature of individual person's approach to processing the information where the ability not to rely on the first judgement, impression or pressure coming from the individual's surroundings is crucial. Competency to create person's own individual understanding, opinion and insight on the basis of person's knowledge and experience is the foundation stone. In the educational field, the term Critical Thinking brings very effective and at the same time, very motivating methods of operating with information. All the Critical Thinking methods are based on scientific knowledge related to the system of human learning, so the processes in the students' brains are natural and the results of learning last longer¹.

There are many definitions of Critical Thinking in the educational publications all around the world. Readers mostly encounter open definitions that are further developed by the lecturers or teachers themselves according to their specific needs of students and school environment. The most compact and renowned definition, that many educators can agree on, is given by David Klooster, a professor of American literature at Hope College, Michigan. According to Klooster's article in *Kritické listy* 2 (2000: 8), we can present that

1. Critical Thinking is independent thinking

Each person creates his / her own opinions, values and beliefs in the classroom where Critical Thinking is taught. No one can critically think for others. Critical thinking is such a kind of work that anyone must do only for himself / herself. It is necessary that every student has the relationship to the individual ownership of his / her own ideas. Students need to feel freedom to think for themselves, make decisions about

¹ Burbules, C. N., Ruperk, R. Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits. In S. Thomas, Popkewitz & F. Lynn (Eds.), *Critical Theories in Education*. – New York: Routledge, 1999. – 322 p.

complex issues that concern them. Independent thinking is the first and the most important attribute of Critical Thinking.

2. Gaining information is the starting point, not the objective

Students need to have as much information as possible before they start the process of Critical Thinking. They are not able to discuss and think about problems without knowing existing fact, ideas, theories, hypotheses and terms. Therefore Critical Thinking embodies traditional teaching of facts but it makes this process individual, personal, meaningful, useful and permanent.

3. Critical Thinking begins with questions

Curiosity is the basic feature of life. The aim of Critical Thinking is to arouse students' curiosity and sensibility to the surrounding problems and make them ask, think and solve. Better results in students' learning are gained when they find that the problems being solved are somehow connected with their own life experience.

4. Critical Thinking seeks reasonable arguments

Critical thinkers create their own solutions and support them by convincing reasons. They try to rationalize them logically and practically because they know there could be other different solutions. They use arguments. An argument consists of three elements – statement (the heart of the argument) – reason – evidence (e.g. statistic data, quotations, experience). The emphasis on using arguments in difficult solutions is the core of many definitions of Critical Thinking².

5. Critical Thinking is thinking in company

Thoughts are being verified and improved when they are shared within a company of people. When we discuss, read, debate and disagree, we involve ourselves in the process of deepening and developing our attitudes and opinions. Lecturers and teachers of Critical Thinking use teaching

² Day R. Teaching Critical Thinking and Discussion. Paper presented at the The 23rd Annual Thailand TESOL Conference, Bangkok, Thailand. 2003. – 218 p.

strategies that support dialogue, discussion and group work. They teach their students tolerance and responsibility.

Atkinson closes his definition with the idea that Critical Thinking can be realised in all school activities, but according to his opinion, writing is most important activity. It makes the students to be active, to imply his/her existing knowledge³.

Critical thinking is a notion which dates back to the mid-late 20th century. Critical thinking has been defined as 'a set of independent cognitive abilities which can be taught in relation to any propositional content. Three main notions come into view from this definition; first, critical thinking takes place in our mind as it is cognitive. Second, it is teachable. And the last one it is related to any material which we teach. Another definition given by David Stein considers critical thinking as the process by which adults recognize the assumptions leading their actions, establish the historical and cultural origins of the assumptions, question the meaning of the assumptions and build up alternative habits of acting. These are some critical thinking skills; they show that we should go beyond surface meaning and consider many aspects. As these are subskills students need to develop skills to achieve them. These subskills can be seen in real life and in language learning/teaching environment.

And finally Michael Scriven and Richard Paul define critical thinking as 'the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from ,or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action'. In its ideal form, critical thinking is based on global intellectual principles that go beyond subject matter divisions, i.e. precision, correctness, uniformity, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and

³ Atkinson D. A Critical Approach to Critical Thinking in TESOL. // TESOL Quarterly, 31, 1999. – pp. 71-94. // <http://www.tesol.org>

justice. As can be understood from all of the views, critical thinking requires students to go beyond simple thinking and to perform at a more complex level. Furthermore, it helps students analyze the truthfulness of utterances and come to a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. However, achieving a high level of critical thinking needs training and practice on the parts of teachers and students. Present paper is an attempt towards this goal. To begin with, who is a critical thinker?

An ideal critical thinker

1. analyses different ideas. Analysis is necessary for thorough understanding,

2. formulates reasonable assumptions i.e. he bases his ideas on solid foundations and reasons and always tries to find proper bases and reasons for coming to a conclusion. he really tries to make assumptions about the fact which he is dealing with, for example, when a teacher introduces a new subject in the class, a student who is a good critical thinker tries to link what he already knows to what he is facing now in order to predict or make some generalization for further similar subjects but in a reasonable way; this means that these assumptions are not haphazard⁴,

3. is willing to consider new ideas as novel situations and ideas are interesting not disturbing,

4. is eager to be knowledgeable; more knowledge, more understanding,

5. asks critical questions such as: why is it so? what is the main point? what do you mean by.....?. These are thought provoking,

6. thinks deeply about an idea and considers alternatives,

7. tries to link ideas and never admits an idea without logical thinking. In fact critical thinking is a process which allows a person to think deeply about a concept and to reach to deeper layers of a concept not

⁴ Atkinson D. A Critical Approach to Critical Thinking in TESOL. // TESOL Quarterly, 31, 1999. – pp. 71-94. // <http://www.tesol.org>

just to its surface form, it can lead to meaningful learning because in such a process everyone tries to link what he is dealing with other similar events and do not look at events as independent concepts but as related processes. In other words, a critical thinker moves from known to unknown,

8. tries new ways of tackling a problem,
9. is inquisitive of new topics and situations,
10. is creative in his production of ideas and critically supports them with logical explanations,
11. divides ideas into constituent parts so as to internalize and evaluate them,
12. is skilled in the ability to determine the quality of intellectual thoughts,
13. creatively devises strategies aimed at correcting weaknesses and improving strengths,
14. does not trap his/her mind in oversimplified and prejudiced mental states.

Language classes are especially suitable for teaching critical thinking due to the wealth of material and the interactive methods used. All of the characteristics mentioned above can be linked to language learning in one way or another. As most of the features are related to how to deal with new information, two skills i.e. listening and reading seem to be very important in this regard. For example, when reading one can ask critical questions such as: why is it so? what is the main point? or analyses different ideas. Moreover, when listening one can deal with many such skills e.g. divides ideas into constituent parts so as to internalize and evaluate them or formulates reasonable assumptions for dealing with new ideas⁵.

⁵ Burbules, C. N., Ruperk, R. Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits. In S. Thomas, Popkewitz & F. Lynn (Eds.), *Critical Theories in Education*. – New York: Routledge, 1999. – 322 p.

1.1 Theoretical basis of critical thinking

Critical thinking follows the ideas of constructivism, cognitivism, metacognitive learning, cooperative learning, etc.

Critical thinking has been a well-established subject and a debatable research field across disciplines for a very long time. It was first introduced by Greek philosophers and has been used since the Greek Empire era up to now, obtaining a significant, influential status during its extensive travel all over history. Many historians believe that the roots of critical thinking can be traced from Socrates' teaching practice and vision 2,500 years ago. He brilliantly revealed a probing questioning method that individuals could not logically justify their assertive claims to knowledge. Socrates' view of critical thinking, supported by Plato, was then applied by Descartes and was a theme in essays written by Montesquieu and John Locke⁶.

Critical thinking is the intelligently self-controlled process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. It is based on universal intellectual values that excel subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness. In short, critical thinking is that mode of thinking - about any subject, content, or problem - in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them.

At university level, critical thinking skills are essential abilities in using intellectual tools by which one appropriately assesses thinking. In this case, by utilizing critical thinking skills, students can use the

⁶ Gajdusek L., Van Dommelen D. Literature and critical thinking in the composition classroom. In J. G. Carson & I. Leki (Eds.), *Reading in the composition classroom: Second language perspectives*. – Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1993. – pp. 99-134

intellectual tools that critical thinking offers – concepts and principles that enable them to analyze, assess, and improve thinking. They will be able to work diligently to develop the intellectual virtues of intellectual integrity, intellectual humility, intellectual civility, intellectual empathy, intellectual sense of justice and confidence in reason.

To put it briefly, critical thinking skills are self-improvement in thinking through intellectual tools that assess thinking.

Critical thinking skills play significant roles not only in learners' academic achievements but also in their dynamic life of workforce after graduation. Harmer claims that numerous large corporations all over the globe deal with the lack of basic thinking skills performed by recent college graduates in their companies. He says that, "Many of today's youth lack the basic skills to function effectively when they enter the workforce. A common complaint is that entry-level employees lack the reasoning and critical thinking abilities needed to process and refine information"⁷.

In order to activate students' critical thinking skills, English teachers need to present alternatives, different ways of interpreting texts and different conceptions of the world. The importance of thinking in today's education requires the main concept of critical thinking in which there is always more than one way to see things and that it is always up to the individual to judge just where the truth lies on any given issue.

Regarding the flexible nature of critical thinking, the writer proposes a teaching practice that can be modified in different ways. This is because the implementation of critical thinking skills and meaning in language teaching is not new and an absolute format has not been recommended so far. The underlying principle is that language learning is improved through increased motivation and naturally seen in meaningful contexts. When learners are interested in a topic and are given chances to negotiate

⁷ Harmer Jeremy. *The Practice of Teaching English*. – Longman. 2000. – 386 p.

meaning, they will be motivated to discuss things critically and at the same time, acquire language to communicate.

As stated in the introduction, both critical thinking skills and meaning can be incorporated when teachers do collaborative activities, i.e., pair work and group work. Therefore, the writer would illustrate teaching stages of an English lesson that essentially integrate critical thinking skills and meaning. For practical reasons, the writer would apply a series of teaching stages in a reading lesson⁸. The teaching of Reading is chosen as an example since it provides ample opportunities to exploit students' skills in English learning arise through reading texts. In this case, the proposed reading lesson draws on the lexical approach, encouraging learners to notice language while reading followed by activities involving meaning discovery and critical thinking skills. Accordingly, teachers can flexibly diversify methods and forms of classroom teaching and learning, improve learners' overall and specific language competence, introduce learners' to the wider cultural context, and increase learners' motivation.

More specifically, the teaching stages of the reading lesson are in the following:

(1) Eliciting ideas

- Give students one or two pictures which can be interpreted in various ways (see some alternative pictures and activities in Doff, 1998).
- Ask students what the pictures are about (Let the students speak freely in this stage).
- Dictate key words from the reading text.

The objective of this stage is to introduce the topic of the story to students and to give them an opportunity to express their ideas openly. This is expected to be an initial chance for the students to activate their thinking process and encourage them to exchange ideas critically. In doing so, the teacher needs be tolerant with any ideas or interpretations proposed

⁸ Norris S. P. Synthesis of Research on Critical Thinking. // Educational Leadership, 42(8), 2001. – pp. 40-45.

by them as an adage says, "A picture is worth a thousand words". Then, by dictating the key words, the teacher is indirectly fostering the learners to relate more easily to the characters and actions in the text later.

(2) Highlighting lexis and their meanings/vocabulary

- Check the words dictated (ask them to exchange their work with their partners first).
- Check meaning of any words that may cause difficulty.

The purpose of this stage is to focus attention on meaning of key words in order to prepare students for the next prediction task. In this stage, the teacher should use guided discovery and contextual guesswork to discover meaning of the dictated words. Guided discovery involves asking questions or offering examples that guide students to guess meanings correctly. In this way, the learners are engaged in a semantic process that helps vocabulary learning and retention.

Then, contextual guesswork means using the context in which the word appears to derive an idea of its meaning, or in some cases, guess from the word itself, as in words originated from Latin or Greek⁹.

(3) Giving the title of the story

- Give students the title of the story they are going to read
- (Prompt them to the title).

This is an extra stage which is also aimed at assisting the students to do the following prediction task. The teacher can simply write the title on the white board without giving any information about the text. It is expected that the students will be curious and triggered to predict the text topic by relating the title and the dictated key words. In this way, the teacher prepares the students' mind gradually before dealing with the whole text. Metaphorically, it is like a motor cyclist warming up his motor cycle before riding it on streets.

(4) Predicting text

⁹ Norris S. P. Synthesis of Research on Critical Thinking. // Educational Leadership, 42(8), 2001. – pp. 40-45.

- Put students into small groups and ask them to predict the story based on the title and key words given.
- Ask few students representing their groups to tell the class their predictions.
- Encourage other groups to ask questions, share ideas and even criticize each other if necessary.

The goal of this stage is to prepare students mentally to read the text by creating a version of the text first in their minds and give the second chance to exchange ideas critically. In this stage, it is important that the teacher should not judge whether they are right or wrong as the judgment might hinder the students to speak up and reveal their opinions openly. Let them freely predict what the text is about and discuss it in groups. Furthermore, discussing their predictions in class is also a good chance for them to communicate and challenge other people's ideas. This collective interaction is necessary to stimulate their critical thinking skills for the more challenging tasks later.

(5) Ordering jumbled paragraphs/Skimmming

- Hand out cut up version of the text (the students are still in groups)
- Ask students to skim the story and order the paragraphs
- Ask them what they looked for to help them decide on the order of the paragraphs.

The objectives of this stage are to apply group work in order to negotiate meaning and to do skimming. Working in groups help fostering learning independence, and especially in ordering jumbled paragraphs, the students can exchange information and negotiate meaning when discussing new vocabulary items and ambiguous sentences. It is also expected that group work will be a motivating element, as students skim the text together, share ideas, and argue with each other constructively. This is a crucial stage of polishing up students' critical thinking skills in which the

teacher should only monitor and not interfere much in their classroom discussions.

(6) Listening for the right order

- Play a cassette telling the right order of the story.
- Ask students whether or not their prediction is correct.

This stage is aimed to provide the correct order and a reason for gist reading.

While students are listening to the cassette and matching their paragraphs order, they are indirectly reading the whole text and paying attention on pronunciation and grammatical forms in the text. This introduces the pupils to correct pronunciation and grammatical constructions without making them a conscious focus. This kind of ‘inductive learning’ is more interesting, meaningful, and natural than ‘deductive learning, in which learners are presented with rules with which they then go on to apply’. It ‘pays dividend in terms of the long-term memory of these rules’¹⁰.

(7) Reading comprehension

- Ask some short questions based on the story

The purpose of this stage is to focus on overall meaning and main ideas in the text. This is a usual teaching stage in which the teacher commonly uses Whquestions to check whether or not the students are able to find out and understand main ideas and specific information in the text. In other words, Whquestions are utilized to make sure that the students grasp the overall meaning of the text. It is advisable for the teacher to ask short questions that make students find the answers in and beyond the text. The teacher should not spend much time on this task since the final task is also aimed at measuring students’ comprehension.

(8) Acting out the story/Speaking

¹⁰ Thompson C. Teaching critical thinking in EAP courses in Australia. // TESOL Journal, 11(4), 2002. – pp. 15-20.
// <http://www.tesol.org>

- Put students into groups of 3, one person for each character in the story.
- Ask them to act out the story or do a mini drama.

The objective of this stage is to measure students' comprehension in a fun, non-verbal way. In this final productive stage, the teacher can ask the learners to discuss the most practical 'scenario' before acting out the story. This extra oral practice potentially strengthens the previous collaborative activities in a relaxed, enjoyable way. This is in line with Lightbown and Spada's ideas that the more the students are provided with extra oral practice in a target language, the more they will be able to speak it communicatively.

By applying the eight teaching stages above, the writer expects English teachers to consider that the realization of critical thinking skills and meaning is feasible when teachers apply pair work and group work in which students think actively and negotiate meaning. The stages of pair-work and group work are also useful the students' communicative competence. In the productive stages, the students have more opportunities to get more language exposure and practice (Moon, 2005). It would engage the learners talking to one another to exchange information communicatively and critically. They talk in order to communicate, activate thinking process, and exchange arguments, not just to practice the language¹¹.

Costructivism

The basic principle of Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking programme (RWCT) is constructivism. Pedagogical constructivism tries to surpass the traditional transmission of definite educational materials and contents to the learners who are in the role of passive recipients. Constructivism deals with the idea that by this way, students can learn only

¹¹ Zoltán Dörnyei. The Psychology of the Language Learner. - Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2005. – 280 p.

individual facts or mechanical executing of pre-learned procedures. The meaning and sense of the learning material cannot be transmitted. Constructivism promotes active participating of the learner. Meanings and understanding of the sense is constructed, eventually reconstructed, during the active work with learning material. Problem solving is the basis for learning, thinking and development. The constructing of knowledge is influenced by existing life of a child, his/her skills, abilities, experience and mental structures which s/he acquired earlier. Every child has his/her own image about world, how it works. S/he is not “tabula rasa”. Building the cognition is an active process. It is very important to put the starting point of education into the place where the pupil is present at. Construction has two phases. First phase is child’s exploring of the subject or idea and the learner finds that the new piece of information is not in relation to his existing knowledge. The learner gets into imbalance. The second phase leads to solving this discrepancy and setting the new balance which is often connected with a change of existing knowledge – conception. The discrepancy forces the learner to reconstruct the memory scheme and to classify new information. Constructivists consider the moments when the teachers can help the student to realise the discrepancy between existing and new finding as the key feature.

Cognitivism

Cognitivism is one of the most important theories of contemporary psychology. It deals with acquiring processing and using of pieces of knowledge. Metacognitive learning is related to cognitivism. Metacognition can be defined as the ability to plan, monitor and evaluate processes that an individual uses at learning and discovering. It is a conscious activity leading to understanding of individuals own learning¹².

¹² Zoltán Dörnyei. The Psychology of the Language Learner. - Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2005. – 280 p.

Cooperative learning

Cooperative learning can be seen as essential involvement of students learning from each other in groups according to Larsen-Freeman, (2000:164). She continues that the important thing is the way in which students and teachers work together. The teacher helps students learn how to learn more effectively. In cooperative learning, teachers teach students collaborative or social skills so that they can work together more effectively¹³.

Cooperative learning supports the development of Critical Thinking. It is contrary to traditional teaching approach based on competition and rivalry. Communication between the students within a group, among groups and in the directions teacher – students, students – teacher, is seen as the essential part of learning. This approach also supports active learning and students' independent activity in the course of learning. Diversity of students' opinions, knowledge, skills and ability to help and cooperate is seen as very important because these facts enrich the individuality of student himself/herself¹⁴.

1.2 Critical thinking and language learning

Throughout history, humans have used tools to alter nature in order to enhance their performance. However, in this digital age, even with new technology, many aims of education remain unchanged. One such aim is developing the ability to think critically. Critical thinking remains highly valued in all fields of study. Societies generally, but especially those in the West, would like their educational institutions to produce individuals with critical thinking abilities. Most educators regard critical thinking as a primary aim of education. Concern with critical thinking in its broad sense is not new. Burbules and Ruperk (1999) have said that critical thinking has

¹³ Zoltán Dörnyei. *The Psychology of the Language Learner*. - Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2005. – 280 p.

¹⁴ Siegel H. *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking and Education*. – New York: Routledge. 2001. – 244 p.

been an important element in the Western tradition of education. An ancient Greek scholar Socrates (470-399 BCE) sought to develop critical thinking skills when he used his method of questioning to develop human thought; he sought to make his students more reflective about their lives.

Critical thinking is highly valued in other parts of the world also, in the south and the east of Asia for example.

The decision to believe, or not to believe, requires critical thinking ability. In his book, *How We Think*, Dewey writes that learners should be reflective about their learning and thinking. Dewey proposes that critical thinking or 'reflective thinking' be one of education's principal aims. Passmore, Ennis, Paul and Elder, Siegel, Lipman and McPeck also are scholars associated with the tradition of using reflection for training in thinking. According to this tradition, educational institutions should not primarily provide students with facts and specific systems of knowing or meanings. Students should be equipped with skills and knowledge, so they can become critical language learners who are cooperative, open-minded, reflective, and autonomous.

Most educationists seem to agree that there is more than one system of meaning, and many ways to teach learners to think and reason well.

Similarly, there is more than one way to express the same illocutionary force. All agree too that thinking, although significantly pre-determined by initial genetic make up, can be learnt.

The main aim in language education is to produce successful communicators, that is, students who understand linguistic conventions and are capable of delivering them to suit particular situations and contexts¹⁵. Such students are effective language learners and users. Most language educationists today would agree that a focus on the forms of language, for example by emphasizing pattern drilling, is inadequate.

¹⁵ Burbules, C. N., Ruperk, R. Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits. In S. Thomas, Popkewitz & F. Lynn (Eds.), *Critical Theories in Education*. – New York: Routledge, 1999. – 322 p.

Grammar learning and translation are not sufficient for successful communication. With English as a universal language, in the context of TESOL there is a crucial need for students to be critical in their language learning as well as in their language use. In the ELT context, when students express their ideas or feelings through English (exercise their critical thinking skills), they need to consider lexico-grammatical and a myriad of socio-cultural aspects. In recent decades, TESOL educators have implemented the communicative approach to language learning and teaching. The communicative language learning movement focuses more on language in use than on rigid pattern drilling, and it is less teacher-centred than was previously the case. The main purpose of using this approach is to equip students with a competence to communicate¹⁶. In CLT, learners are invited to exercise their thinking ability, for when they use the language they have to take into accounts factors such as the audience and the setting when they communicate.

This study is situated within the broad approach of communicative language teaching and learning. Many current methods of teaching fall into this category: The Natural Approach, Cooperative Language Learning, Content-Based Instruction, and Task-Based Language Teaching¹⁷. The communicative approach invites learners to be more critical when they learn and when they use the language for communication. It is argued that the transition from the audio-lingual method to the communicative approach marks the beginning of the reflective era of English language teaching and the introduction of critical thinking elements to the field. will discuss this issue at length. Factors promoting the growth of the communicative approach are: (1) the popularity of English as a global means of communication; (2) the humanistic movement in education; and, (3) the importation and integration of other disciplines such as sociology

¹⁶ Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching English as Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁷ Richards J.C. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. – Cambridge Univ. Press. 2008. – 269 p.

and anthropology, into traditional linguistics. The globalization of English, fuelled by global trade and new communication technologies, means more users, more differences and more varieties of English, as well as more discourses or critiques on its roles. As there are more factors for consideration, EFL/ESL learners in particular, in order to become effective communicators of English as a global language, need to be critical language learners and users.

The term ‘critical thinking’, as Day¹⁸ notes, began to appear in TESOL literature in the 1990s. However, a discussion of aspects of critical thinking in language learning probably started earlier than that, in the late 1970s when the communicative approach was introduced to the field of English language teaching.

Critical thinking in the ELT literature may have emerged, at least partially, from the fact that there are now large numbers of international students studying in English speaking countries. In Australia (Wilson, 1998a; Thompson, 2002), as in North America and the United Kingdom (e.g. Briggs, 1999), international students need a high level of language proficiency, but they also need to adjust their discourse style to suit their new situations and cultural contexts. They need to apply their critical thinking in new and different ways.

With more linguistic and rhetorical conventions to consider, the use of L2 to communicate can be very challenging for students. English teachers often hear international students complain that they know what to say but cannot put it into English. The students may have a wide vocabulary and theoretical knowledge but they may not be able to construct grammatically correct sentences. This seems to be primarily a linguistic problem. When students have to use L2 to present their ideas and feelings, as they do when undertaking a number of the tasks that are

¹⁸ Day, R. (2003). Teaching Critical Thinking and Discussion. Paper presented at the The 23rd Annual Thailand TESOL Conference, Bangkok, Thailand.

required of them in an academic context, they need to use the ability to think critically as well as their linguistic skills. While developing their L2 competency, students face tremendous challenges in exercising critical thinking in L2. From the sociocultural perspective, when learners express their thoughts in L2, either through spoken or written language, they are not only translating their thoughts from L1 to L2, but also redefining their identities. Expressing one's critical thinking in L2 may require that one adjust one's ways of saying things. In short, it requires both lexicogrammatical competence and socio-cultural competence, which is in accordance with the aims of CLT.

Three major research areas contribute to our assessment of the significance of critical thinking in language learning. These are communicative language teaching, metacognitive learning strategies, and L2 writing research, especially in reference to academic writing.

1.3 Role of reading and writing in critical thinking

The starting point of Critical Thinking is the work with the language, both spoken and written. It is predominantly based on learning by reading and writing where reading is considered the basic tool for acquiring information during the whole individual's life. Reading is understood as the ability to get information and at the same time, thinking about the information. Critical view and analysing the read text is very important. Reading is related to writing very closely. Writing helps record our ideas, opinions, impressions and images. The possibility to return to our recorded text and analyse it from a time distance develops the ability to think critically, eventually to create new solutions to the problems. Klooster evolves the idea that writing is the most powerful tool for Critical Thinking. Writing forces students to be active. By writing, the thoughts of students become visible and accessible to teachers. Writing is independent thinking requiring author's knowledge and skills. Well written text is

always intended to solve some problems and to give the reader answers. Writing is the most difficult task for students generally, but when they find out that their teachers or classmates are really interested in their writing, they will like it¹⁹. We can deduce that writing improves thinking and leads to better understanding at students'. It should be used as often as possible in the teaching process. Grecmanová (2000:23, 24) gives recommendation that teachers should

- ❖ Put emphasis on the process of writing itself
- ❖ Prefer the content to the form
- ❖ Encourage the students to do their own notes connected to their thoughts and ideas for discussion
- ❖ Support the students' feeling that they themselves can be authors, because they are experts in their own experience

Ideas, principles and theories of the mentioned movements put emphasis on activity, independence, ability to make decisions and communicate properly in different situations, which is the ground of the Critical Thinking theory.

There are many arguments that support the use of CL or group work in language learning. According to Long and Porter (1985) group work increases language practice opportunities, improves the quality of student talk, helps individualize instruction, promotes a positive affective climate and motivates learners. CL creates more input and more output. It creates context variables that facilitate language acquisition. This is why, according to Kagan, CL and ELT support each other. Even very early research shows that CL can be an effective aid to communication in the classroom across a broad range of social and interpersonal functions.

CL is not free from criticism. In fact, there are some serious concerns about its application in English language learning and teaching. Two major

¹⁹ Siegel H. *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking and Education*. – New York: Routledge. 2001. – 244 p.

concerns are negative learning and the students' use of L1 when doing group work. Negative learning refers to CL reinforcing incorrect learning. Plann suggests that exposure to incorrect peer input may lead to the fossilization of incorrect language use. Similarly, Pica points out that group work, while it may allow learners increased opportunity to interact in the target language, may also reinforce errors.

However, such concern is only speculation. Jacobs reports a study that investigated the presence of miscorrection when students engaged in peer feedback on writing tasks. Participants were 18 third-year English majors at a university in Thailand. Peer feedback consisted of corrections and indications of uncertainty about correctness. Corrections were coded into four categories: (A1) wrong in original – correction wrong; (A2) wrong in original – correction right; (A3) correct in original – correction also right; (A4) correct in original – correction wrong. Indications of uncertainty were coded into two categories: (B1) wrong in original; (B2) correct in original.

The researcher found that by far the largest category was A2, wrong in original – correction right. Categories A1 and A4 were the smallest.

Furthermore, of the seven A4 miscorrections, just four were adopted when the original author wrote the final draft. All four were in the same student's draft and all concerned the identical grammar point: articles. The author notes that the findings of this study are consistent with the results of a study on spoken interaction. This latter study found only a small number of miscorrections by peers. Citing the two studies by Porter, Ellis believes that peer correction seems to be fairly accurate; and it is likely to be more helpful than harmful.

The other major concern is the use of L1. Prabhu prefers not to rely on group work for his communicative activities, reasoning that, in monolingual classes, students will want to talk to each other in L1. Similarly, Porter reports evidence that group work among L1 and mono-cultural speakers might result in

inappropriate input, and therefore may not help learners develop socio-linguistic competence from their interactions.

Concerns have been raised about the size of the classroom. Problems can arise for teachers when trying to use CL in classes of 50-55, especially where the administration does not tolerate any sound other than the teacher's voice. For some participants also, group work is too noisy although noise is not necessarily a problem. As Slavin, a leader in CL implementation studies, puts it, "A cooperative learning classroom should sound like a beehive, not a sports event"²⁰.

Teachers have raised other concerns. Where students in a class have widely divergent proficiency levels some students may not benefit; in particular, high achievers may not benefit from interacting with low achievers. Another concern is about group conflicts. There can be many problems with student-student relations in diverse classrooms; for example, the high achievers may not want to help the low achievers. Here it is argued that teachers should aim to make the group heterogeneous. The more students of different backgrounds and language levels work together, the more they can learn from one another. If students cannot read well, teachers should not avoid group work activities that involve reading; instead, they should redouble their efforts to help the students learn to read. The belief here is that teachers actually do the high achievers a favour by giving them the opportunities to help peers.

There is one other very important concern about the use of CL. Some teachers argue that students need a certain level of proficiency before they can engage in group activities. In this study it is accepted that, with the proper amount of language support, even low proficiency students can participate in group activities. Groupmates can provide some of the required support.

²⁰ Murray D. What English Language Teachers Need to Know Volume II: Facilitating Learning. – Routledge, 2011. – 250 p.

Chapter II. Critical thinking methods as alternatives to the traditional methods

“A teaching method can be seen as a coordinated and complex system of teaching processes done by a teacher and learning activities executed by students, the system oriented to meeting the educational objectives.”²¹

As for the beginning, the traditional teaching methods are to be described. They have to be referred to as the methods not obsolete, superannuated or condemned to doom. They are the methods proved reliable by the practice, fully rooted in the educational process as a part of the traditional approach. They represent the foundation necessary for the existence of a system and the starting point for the further development. The attempts leading to innovative elaborating of the traditional methods can be considered the indication of subsequent progress.

The alternative teaching methods denote less known, unusual or abnormal elements in the school work. Nonetheless, they can be found as the ways leading to more effective teaching and learning process because of the inner motivation involvement at the individual students. The teaching activities are often run in the stress-free atmosphere with the full participation of the learners. They allow original procedures, commentaries, evaluation, discussion and unconventional solutions. Other important features are the association and coherence of the learning material or processes that enable easier remembering. Yet the application of the alternative methods is connected to some attendant changes that can essentially interfere in the run of the school, the organization of the teaching process, the curricular content or the climate of the particular school.

²¹ Gajdusek L., Van Dommelen D. Literature and critical thinking in the composition classroom. In J. G. Carson & I. Leki (Eds.), *Reading in the composition classroom: Second language perspectives*. – Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1993. – pp. 99-134

The Critical thinking methods can be considered alternative to the traditional teaching methods. They are not widely used within the Czech school system yet. They employ student's active learning, methods of metacognitive learning, evaluation and self-evaluation. The methods of the Critical Thinking are based on constructivism. They provide a student with a space for thinking over the problem, searching for information, finding various original solutions and discussion with the peers. The students are being respected and at the same time, they respect of other people's opinions.

In the following table there are traditional (it means used in common practice) methods' features ²² compared to the Critical thinking methods.

Features of Traditional methods	Features of Critical Thinking methods
<p><i>The Grammar-Translation Method</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The goal is to learn a language in order to read its literature - The language is studied through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by translating sentences into and out of, the target language. - Reading and writing are important, little attention is paid to listening and speaking - Not demanding for preparatory work - Little respect of student's needs - Students only learn to manipulate with language material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The goal is to learn all four language skills - The language is studied through the content/ideas, the grammar is secondary - Reading, writing, listening and speaking are of the same importance - Very demanding for preparatory work - Full respect of student's needs - Students are able to formulate ideas and give arguments

²² Richards J.C. Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. – Cambridge Univ. Press. 2008. – 269 p.

<p><i>The Direct Method</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classroom instructions are only in the target language - Only everyday vocabulary is taught - More natural way of learning - Grammar is taught inductively - Concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstration, objects, abstract by association of ideas - Speaking and listening is very important - The grammar is emphasized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classroom instructions could be in the target or in mother language - Vocabulary can consist of any areas - Respect of natural learning processes - Grammar is taught inductively - Vocabulary is taught by reading - Reading, writing, listening and speaking are of the same importance - The grammar is secondary
<p><i>The Audio-Lingual Method</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No use of mother tongue - Employs drill exercises based on stimulus response behaviour - Listening comprehension is very important - Use of non-authentic language adjusted to learners' levels - Manipulation with the language material is the prevailing technique - Teacher's role is central and active - It is the teacher's dominated method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classroom instructions could be in the target or in mother language - No drill - Reading, writing, listening and speaking are of the same importance - Real life or original texts are used - The student is the centre of the learning
<p><i>Communicative Language Teaching</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language is learnt through using it to communicate - Authentic and meaningful communication is the goal - Authentic materials are used - Students are guided to express their opinions - Errors are tolerated to a certain extent - The social context is essential - Teacher acts as advisor/facilitator - Grammar is taught inductively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication is applied after reading or writing activities - Real life or original texts are used - Students are able to formulated ideas and give arguments - Grammatical errors are secondary - Teacher acts as advisor/facilitator

<p><i>Community Language learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher consider students as whole persons - He respects also feelings, physical reactions and desire to learn - Students learn how to use the language communicatively - Teacher's role is a counsellor - Dialogs are recorded and then replayed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full respect of student's needs - Communication is used in a way of argumentation - Teacher acts as advisor/facilitator - Students' products/texts are published as the source of thinking in society
<p><i>Task-Based Approach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aim is to provide students with a natural context for language use - While working on a task, students have to interact - Central purpose is language learning, task presents problem - solving negotiation - Teacher provides equipment for completing the task, then he monitors the class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Real life or original texts are used - Cooperation is the most used technique - Project work is very important for RWCT - Teacher acts as advisor/facilitator
<p><i>Lexical Approach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocabulary is very important - Ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases = chunks - It resembles mother tongue acquisition - Collocations are used very often - Grammatical translations are used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocabulary serves as a tool for expressing ideas and opinions - Text comprehension is very important

We can deduce from the comparison of the methods and approaches mentioned above that on one hand, the key features of the Critical Thinking methods correspond to Communicative Language Teaching, Community Language learning and Task-Based Approach, i.e. to the methods which are learner-centred, use natural communication methods and processes. On the other hand, the Critical Thinking methods are diametrically opposite to the features and contents of the Grammar-Translation Method, the Audio-Lingual Method and Lexical Approach.

Only the Direct Method can be found as the intersection of the traditional method and the Critical Thinking approach.

2.1 Environment supporting the critical thinking

Critical thinking is not to be considered as the learning matter that is aimed to be easily forgotten by the students after finishing the lesson. The appropriate learning environment can noticeably support the process of students remembering with the development of the critical thinking. It is understandable that learning environment has to meet several conditions. Most of the conditions are elaborated by Jeannie L. Steele. She suggests that critical thinking environment should:

- Provide students with time and opportunity to use critical thinking
- Allow students to formulate their ideas freely and express their assumption openly
- Accept various ideas, thoughts and opinions without prejudice
- Support active participation of students in the learning process
- Secure risk free environment where the pupils would not be ridiculed
- Ensure the students that everyone is able to think critically
- Appreciate the thinking
- Be prepared to formulate own opinions or to give them up

Steele said that the critical thinking is a demanding process. The student has to clarify in his/her mind what s/he knows about the given topic before s/he starts to think about it in detail. Sharing the ideas with others requires a lot of time, too. The student has an opportunity to listen to the commentaries and ideas of other students and think about them. It is advisable that teachers should wait sometime after asking a question because the students can gain the space for thinking and their answers will be better elaborated.

Critically thinking students formulate many various hypotheses, they reform them and offer their own concept. They are able to see the problem from many different angles. The teacher should support this way of thinking and call the students to form different hypotheses. At the same time, it is obvious that students in pleasant environment will tend to create absurd theories. Students have to realize even this is the process of thinking.

The next important feature of the critical thinking environment is the variety of opinions and attitudes. When teachers show the interest in students' ideas they start to produce a lot of different speculations, opinions, hypothesis, explanations and evaluations. This type of critical thinking is developed in the class with supportive atmosphere that accepts various opinions and judgment. In the case of existence of only one correct answer it is necessary not only to evaluate the answer itself but also the way the students got to this answer. The process of thinking is more important than the result.

Passive students who only acquired knowledge from the teacher's lectures or reading texts must be evocated to critical thinking. The teaching methods that lead the students to creating, formulating and supporting their ideas and opinions activate them and motivate them to further learning.

The critical thinking sometimes brings the absurd ideas and senseless combinations. It is necessary to introduce the rule that no one can ridicule others. Derision increases the willingness to risk and the thinking is strangled. In the stress free environment where all the possible ideas are accepted students can be motivated to active participation in the thinking process.

In the felicitous environment there should be teacher's respect to the students on one side and students' responsibility on the other side ideally. When students see that their ideas are evaluated by the teacher they react responsibly and they are interested in learning process.

Strengthening the environment can be done also by sharing student's ideas with the learning community. When the student shares his ideas, thoughts, attitudes it allows him/her to join the community of the class easier.

It is also important to learn to listen to others, to hold the need to present ideas or react immediately.

2.1.1 E – U – R

In this chapter, the inseparable component of Critical Thinking, the E – U – R model of learning, is elaborated. All the methods of Critical Thinking are built on this three-stage model. E-U-R is the abbreviation for Evocation – Understanding – Reflection.

This three-stage model respects the mechanisms of natural learning – it gives teachers the universal teaching aid for building any learning units, where the process of acquiring knowledge is the most similar to spontaneous learning.

At the beginning of every learning process, our mind is not empty. There are our previous knowledge, ideas, remembered facts, attitudes and experience. These synapses are called pre-concepts. During the process of learning which uses Critical Thinking, it is operated with them and they are being connected with the new facts we need to learn. Teachers of Critical Thinking do not neglect them because they are integral parts of human individualities. Teachers then build new synapses – concepts – that help remember the learning material much better and longer²³.

Evocation

Evocation is the first opening stage of learning. There are several important cognitive activities in this part of acquiring knowledge.

Firstly, students individually and actively recall their existing knowledge concerning the topic / problems. They formulate their

²³ Siegel H. Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking and Education. – New York: Routledge. 2001. – 244 p.

hypotheses and put down their questions connected with the problems being solved. This part is a highly motivating activity. During this evocation, students interconnect their facts and create future knowledge structure where they later put their new information.

Reconstructing students' previous knowledge means making bases for future accepting and understanding new facts. Students are able to create their context, which is very important for permanent remembering of the facts.

Secondly, the aim of the evocation part is to activate students. Effective learning presumes activity of the learning individuals. It is common that students in the classroom only sit and daydream and the teacher does the whole work for them. It is not correct for effective learning and permanent remembering. Students must be actively interconnected with the learning activity. Active connection can be understood as students' independent thinking and expressing their ideas aloud or on the paper.

Thirdly, the evocation part is to provoke students' internal interest in solving the given problems, i.e. to learn. Learning becomes much more effective when students see the apparent goal and they are internally identified with it. In the use of the Critical Thinking methods, the students have their concrete goal that they set themselves by formulating their questions and hypotheses in the evocation part. Answers will be found in the second phase of learning - understanding.

Understanding

Understanding is the phase when students actively go through new experience and process new information obtained from deliberately presented sources, for example from reading new texts, watching films, listening to lectures or going to educational excursions. The new information is confronted with the students' evoked original opinions, new thought interconnections are made.

During the understanding phase, teachers have the smallest extent of influence on students. Students go through this phase with the full inner engagement.

Chief tasks of this phase are to maintain the interest evoked in the first phase and to stimulate the students to monitor their own understanding of the new facts.

When the students are aware of the state that they begin to understand the new information, they are already able to put it into their knowledge schemes and then they remember it effectively.

The source itself should be well considered before it is presented by the teacher for it must bring something new to the students. Yet it cannot be an isolated piece of information or a list of facts. It must carry coherent statement concerning the whole problem being solved so that there could be a clear goal connected to understanding, thinking and learning. The source should offer a lot of different information in order to be able to answer as many students' questions as possible.

Reflection

Reflection is the third and final phase. It is sometimes neglected by some teachers but it is a very important closing phase of effective learning. During reflection the students realise, systemize and integrate the new knowledge they acquired, the facts they understood and the attitudes they changed in the process of learning. They transform their former knowledge schemes. This is the place of creating students' permanent knowledge.

It is important for this phase that the students do the reflection only for themselves. Teachers should not interfere in the process; they can only lead students to recognizing important and unimportant facts useful for remembering.

At this stage, several goals must be fulfilled:

- Students are expected to express their ideas in their own words, not to repeat somebody else's sentences.

- There must be an exchange of views between students, which enriches the students' vocabulary. It also discovers different thought schemes; the students think about them and they can use them for their own understanding. They learn that once produced thought scheme is not necessarily definite, they can see that it is possible to accept an idea even if it did not originate in their own minds.
- Students are supposed to look back at the process of learning they have just gone through and formulate their own new picture concerning the topic / problems, i.e. what they know about it now, what they corrected in their opinions, what questions remained unanswered, what things they would like to learn next time²⁴.

The E-U-R model helps teachers make the teaching process more effective, so in the lesson planning, it is advisable to keep in mind the whole structure of the lesson, not to focus only on the evocation part, for example. Teachers must think thoroughly what their students do in each part and what results should be reached. The time structure is also important. All the parts of the E-U-R model need their time, it is not proper to discriminate one part against the rest.

Most educators consider self-reflection an important element in learning. For Dewey (1993), being self-reflective allows us to be more objective and openminded. Surely, we learn through doing or observing and then reflecting on what has taken place. Frequently, we reflect before we apply ourselves. Killon and Todnew (1991) refer to this activity as "reflection-for-action.

Self-reflection in the present research entails what Dearn (2003) refers to as reflective learning. Following Dewey (1993), he urges students to be more reflective in their learning. However, educators, he says, should

²⁴ Siegel H. *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking and Education*. – New York: Routledge. 2001. – 244 p.

play a part in this, by designing courses that make students think about their learning, because it is very difficult for students to be reflective by themselves. He believes that every course should have reflective elements. To be constructively reflective, learners should be reflective about their own performance, their learning experience, and their methods or strategies of learning

Communicative language activities provide students with opportunities to test their ideas and reasons in order to determine their positions. According to Sofo, group activities commonly employed in CLT can bring out many facets of thinking in students: mental total awareness, observation skills, how differences are valued, capacity for empathy, openness to new ideas and values and ability to balance emotion and cognition.

This study figures the three components of the proposed critical thinking model as five aspects of the students' language learning in a CMCL environment. They are:

1. Linguistic Conventions: Do the students use linguistic conventions appropriately?
2. Audience: Do the students communicate their ideas and feelings with their audience appropriately?
3. Aims: Do the students attain their communicative objectives?
4. Reasoning: Is the students reasoning appropriate?
5. Self-reflection in Language Learning: Does the environment encourage students to be self-reflective in their language learning?

In sum, the study approaches critical thinking in language learning from a holistic viewpoint, proposing three related aspects: communication, reasoning, and self-reflection. Critical thinkers are effective communicators who understand their audience and use linguistic conventions appropriately.

In this model, meaning and form are equally important to communicators. Also, communicators consider their means and aims in their communications.

They apply appropriate reasons. Above all, they are objective and open-minded and use self-reflection in their language learning.

2.1.2 Using E-U-R in Practice

This is a short lesson plan that serves as an example of E-U-R model in practice. This lesson is a component of the practical part – lesson 20.

Task: Project 2, revision of lesson 4 (topic Food)

Time: 45 minutes

Teaching aids: copies of prepared table (see Appendix, picture no. 2)

Process:

- 1) Give the copies of the tables to the students. Start the game.
- 2) Students play the game. They go round the class and communicate. The answers are being put down into the table cells.
- 3) When the time is up, the students count their lines.
- 4) Check the answers, discuss them with the students. If there is a need, give them an explanation of the possible problem (for example, why bread is uncountable).
- 5) Count the real correct lines with your students.
- 6) Give the prize (chocolate, sweets) to the winner(s).

Analysis according to the EUR model:

- 1) EVOCATION => at the point two, the students are curious, they want to win the game.
- 2) UNDERSTANDING => at the point three, the students explore the questions, they guess the partners' abilities to give the correct answer, they must think about the correctness of the answer, too.
- 3) REFLECTION => at the point four, the students recall their knowledge from unit 4.

2.2 List of the Selected Critical Thinking Methods

The teaching methods of Critical Thinking that employ the three-stage model of learning, E – U – R, are highly effective and at the same time, they are very amusing for the students. In this chapter, I mention only those methods which I used in the practical part. They are the methods that I consider very appropriate for teaching the English language at the elementary school – lower secondary learners.

- Jigsaw Classroom or Expert Groups
- Mind map
- I.N.S.E.R.T.
- BINGO
- Five-leaf clover
- Mixed up sentences
- Free writing
- Brainstorming
- Key words
- Discussion web

Jigsaw Classroom

Jigsaw Classroom is a cooperative learning technique increasing positive educational outcome. Each student's part is essential for the completion and full understanding of the final product. The main aim is that the students learn and teach themselves reciprocally.

The students are divided into small groups. These groups are called the Home Cells. All groups have the same task. Then they are re-divided into the Expert Groups. Each Home Cell sends one member to every Expert Group. Each Expert Group has got a different part of the learning

problem. These groups can use encyclopaedias, teacher's notes, the Internet, pictures, books, etc²⁵.

After the time limit, the students return to their Home Cells and give the information to other students in their groups. Once they complete the task together, they present their work to the class.

Mind Map

Mind map is a teaching strategy that encourages students to think freely and openly about a topic. It can be best used in the evocation or in reflection phase. It can stimulate thinking before the given topic is examined thoroughly. It can be also used in summarizing of the analyzed topic, in creating the new associations or images of the new knowledge.

A. Tomková and V. Strculová (2001: 14) say that mind map is not only a modern method, but it is very effective, because it enables children to learn actively. The students use their existing experience. It shows what students know, it encourages students' interest to learn and ask. Finished maps can encourage students' further thinking and work, so it is important that the map is still available at the end of the lesson or it may be shown for a longer time (e.g. for a week or so).

How to create a mind map:

- Write the head word in the middle of the paper (board).
- Write the words that students thought out in connection with the head word.
- Draw all possible connections.

INSERT

INSERT stands for:

I interactive

²⁵ Thompson C. Teaching critical thinking in EAP courses in Australia. // TESOL Journal, 11(4), 2002. – pp. 15-20. // <http://www.tesol.org>

Ur P. A Course in Language Teaching. – Cambridge Univ. Press. 1991. – 375 p.

Zoltán Dörnyei. The Psychology of the Language Learner. - Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2005. – 280 p.

N noting
 S system for
 E effective
 R reading and
 T thinking

This method can be recommended when we intend our students to read a text carefully and to think thoroughly about it. Students learn to sort information in this activity. They realize what knowledge is new for them, what information they do not understand, what they need to learn. During the reading the students are to use symbols ✓, +, -, ? next to the text. The paradigm of use is as follows.:

- "✓" - Students tick the things from the text that correspond to their previous knowledge.
- "+" – Students put the plus sign to the information which is new for them and they accept the fact
- "-" - Students put the minus sign to the information which is new for them, but they don't accept the fact, it is in contrast to their previous knowledge.
- "? "- Students put the question mark where something in the text is not understandable for them or they would like to have additional information.

There is usually a time limit. The teacher prepares four flip charts after reading, each with one symbol, and sticks them on the wall. When the time is up, the students go to the flip charts and put down the most important information according to their marks in the text. The teacher discusses individual flipcharts with the class.

Bingo

This method can be used as an introductory survey before presenting a new material, but it is advisable to use it after a unit or block of topical materials as a reliable feedback. It is a competition. Every student gets a prepared worksheet (see Appendix n.1). The winner is that student who

first gets all the answers from his/her colleagues by asking. One student – the questioner – can ask other students as many questions as s/he wants but the other student – the opponent – can answer only three questions. The opponent can choose whichever question s/he likes to answer. Then the opponent writes her/his answers to the questioner's table. The questioner is not allowed to write into his/her own table. When someone gets all the answers, s/he shouts "BINGO" and the game is over.

The students return to their places, they count the fulfilled lines and write them into the summary bubble. Then the teacher discusses the questions and gives the correct answers. Students tick or cross out their answers in the cells. After this process, the students count the complete lines which consist of the correct answers only. The winner is the student who has the highest number of the correct-answer lines.

Five-leaf clover

This method supports and develops the ability to summarize information and formulate related statements simply and briefly. In fact, Five-leaf Clover is a poem in five lines which requires connecting information with a brief expression. This activity can be a very effective warm up or a reflective end of the lesson.

The clover must have this structure:

- a) The first line is the name of the topic written in one word, usually a noun
- b) The second line describes the topic, usually two adjectives
- c) The third line are three verbs related to the topic (e.g. what it does)
- d) The fourth line is a sentence with four words.
- e) The last line is one word association or synonym to the topic

1st line

3rd line

2nd line

4th line

5 th line	SHOWS TEACHES LEADS
READING	I LIKE MY BOOKS
INTERESTING AMUSING	LEARNING

The time allocated for creating the clover is five minutes. Then the students introduce their work to each other in pairs. They must create one Five-leaf Clover from the original two. This work is very important, because the students are forced to discuss and give arguments. They must explain why they chose those particular words. They must cooperate. They are to make a compromise.

Five-leaf Clover is supports students' ability to express ideas simply and briefly, to discuss efficiently and respect the others' opinions.

Mixed-up sentences

It's a whole class activity. Teacher copies a text onto a large sheet of paper. S/He cuts it into small parts - sentences, for older students s/he can cut it into short logical units or paragraphs. Then s/he sticks these pieces of paper on the board. Students come to the board one after another, read the texts on the pieces, choose one and stick it on the other side of the board in the correct order. The rest of the class can cooperate, they can give their advice. When the class thinks that the whole text is in the correct order, the teacher gives them the original text or children can find it in the textbooks. They check and compare it with the text on the board.

During this method students must cooperate within a big group, give their ideas in the discussion and listen to each other.

Free writing

Free writing is a method which helps to deepen ability to think about the given topic. The aim is not to write stylistically, but to present a coherent unit of thoughts. It is to develop finding new associations or original understanding of the topic. It is time a limited activity (usually two to ten minutes). During the writing, students are not allowed to stop

writing until the time is over and to return to what is already written. The students do not need to think about the grammar.

When the time limit is over, they read their texts to the partners in pairs. They try to find the points where they have got the same ideas. Then the pairs share their work with the whole class.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a universal method employing creative and critical thinking in a group of learners. It is suitable for the evocation part of the lesson. It is based on spontaneous, original and non-stereotypical ideas related to the given topic presented randomly by the members of the group. During proposing, any ideas must not be criticised. The freedom of expressing is supported. All the ideas are written for further use.

Key words

The method Key words can be applied at predicting the texts' or stories' content. It can be used for the evocation part of the lesson. Students can think over the key words individually, in pairs or in a group. Teacher presents five key words on the board. Students are to imagine the story related to the words. Teacher can ask what roles the words play in the story, what is the content of the story. Students work in pairs at the beginning then they present their versions to the class. Group work can be also applied.

Discussion web

This method is suitable for work with problematic issues. It is based on giving arguments pro and con in groups.

The students put down the title of the lesson, then they continue writing arguments supporting the issue on the left side of the paper, arguments against on the right. When they finish their individual work, they

compare their ideas in pairs, eventually add partner's ideas. Then they compare the ideas with another pair of students.

Teacher divides students into two groups. The first group advocates the arguments supporting the issue, the second group is against them. A discussion follows. After several minutes the students are allowed to re-group according to the change of their opinions.

2.3 Principles of Choosing Teaching Methods

Teaching method determines the way to fulfilment of educational goals. It is a coordinated system of teacher's and students' activities focused on achieving the objectives with keeping all the didactic principles. For the individual choice of the method, it is important what teaching aids and equipment is available for the teacher together with his/her teaching style and his/her teaching experience.

It is advisable to respect the following criteria when choosing an optimal teaching method:

- 1) Relations of learning process – the method should activate the student, arouse cooperation, eventually support individual work and self-realisation and respect the student's interests and needs
- 2) Application of learning principles – principle of complex personality development, principle of individual approach, principle of activity
- 3) Fulfilment of learning objectives – the method helps to fulfil the objectives
- 4) Time – different methods are differently time consuming
- 5) Mode of teaching – school lesson, field trip, forum
- 6) Space – some methods need more space
- 7) Equipment – school equipment of various character

- 8) Characters and abilities of students and teacher – a teacher must consider the individual needs, age, interests and expectations of the students. S/he also takes into consideration his/her professional skills, experience and preparedness for using the specific method.
- 9) The class collective – number of students, gender proportion, relationships between the students
- 10) Climate of the school – pleasant environment, positive sense of security

It cannot be stated that an individual method is either only proper or improper for teaching. It is predominantly dependent on the way the teacher s/he uses it, organizes the content and meets the intended objectives. It is advisable to engage the students themselves into the choice of the method, they would then become aware of the learning process and knowingly responsible for their own learning and meeting the objectives.²⁶

Practical part

This brings us to the second part of our article on how to promote students critical thinking in the language classroom. M Kabilan suggests that the first step is for teachers to change their attitudes towards students. But what kinds of attitudes need to be changed? Usually, some language teachers look upon their students as empty vessels, which require to be filled with information. In fact these teachers disregard their students' qualities and ideas. In addition, they do not allow their students to come into their own and express themselves. In the case of passive learners, teacher is the only one who speaks. Such teachers expect their students to do as they are told and they do not allow them to ask "why" or "how". This kind of attitudes will destroy the opportunities for learning and critical thinking. The solution to this problem is that teachers should become

²⁶ <http://www.iba.muni.cz/esf/res/file/bimat-2009/vyucovaci-metody.pdf>, 9.4.2013

patient listeners to learners' opinions and questions. Teachers should do their best to avoid these attitudes and move to being open-minded in their attitudes and actions. In the following section some of the strategies which can help teachers reinforce critical thinking of their students are presented.

When discussing in the English language class

When the teacher answers questions or asks them, some challenging questions such as "why is it so? What do you think about...? what is your idea about...? etc. can help students think critically. These are mostly influential in verbal exchanges in the language class. R. Ennis proposes the three underlying strategies as "Reflection, Reason, and Alternatives." (RRA)

1. Encourage your students to be Reflective, to wait and think, instead of making impulsive judgments, or accepting the first thought that occurs in their mind, or promptly accepting whatever is manifested in the media. Many students accept whatever they are told especially if something is said by someone who they trust e.g. their friends or if something is written in books and newspapers. As such, students should be taught to wait after receiving ideas and think deeply and then accept them in case the information corresponds to logic and reasoning. This will lead to improvement in their critical thinking ability.

2. Kindly ask questions such as "How do you know"," what are the Reasons?" so as to make sure they have underlying reasons for their ideas and to search for rationales for others' views.

3. Highlight alertness for Alternatives, hypotheses, conclusions, explanations, points of views etc. Students should understand that there is no fixed idea and most of the times, there are some alternatives if the point be viewed from a different angle. This point can be taught to students and they should be sharp enough to devise new options. You can ask them e.g.

“Is it possible to solve this problem in another way?” or “Do you know any cheaper way for dealing with these costs?”

4. Give your students adequate time to ponder about questions and situations. In other words, provide "wait time". This is vital for deep thinking and logical reasoning.

5. In a debate, write down each student's statement on the board with the student's name, so that the student receives attention and assumes some responsibility, and invite other students to comment on it. This will also lead to improvement in students' self-esteem which consequently gives them impetus for thinking critically.

6. Ask students to formulate their own questions. They need to realize that it is not just the teacher who can ask questions, students also have the right to ask. The students' understanding of the roles which they have in the process of teaching/learning is one of the first steps in leading them toward critical thinking.

When reading English passages

Teach students some strategies which can encourage their critical thinking. For example, teach them how to concentrate on the texts in order to make out the importance of minute details for identifying patterns, such as order patterns and sequences, similarities and contrasts, guessing and predicting, and finding the relationships. When students can have these capabilities, they will be able to classify and group items into different classes, compare and contrast the ideas in the passages, evaluate new information and to predict possible consequences. When one can recognize different kinds of information, he/she will find that can classify parts of the text quickly as he/she reads. Similarly, the students must be able to go through the texts and find out main and peripheral ideas. If not, it can be helpful for them to use a pencil or a highlighter when they read their own books. Use these to underline or highlight the reasons and conclusions.

Teach students how to take out these and write them down in their own words. Asking students about the explicit ideas of the texts which are mentioned directly can not help students improve their critical thinking ability to a large extent. However, engaging students in indirect sense of the text i.e. ideas which are not cited directly can influence their critical thinking skills greatly. As such, try to give some texts which are challenging and thought provoking.

Sample activities

When you want to give some directions for reading activities or tests, you can use the following sample statements. It must be noted that the passages are not given because the focus is on the directions and the style of questioning students to read a text. In other words, these directions show to the students which parts must be paid more attention when reading the passages.

Activity 1

For the following passages, make a judgment about whether the argument is likely to be based on sound or false premises. Give reasons for your answers.

Activity 2

Read the passages, and identify whether each is an example of an argument, a summary, an explanation or a description. How do you know?

Activity 3

Read the following passages. For each, consider:

Is the author's position clear?

What makes the author's position clear or unclear?

Activity 4

Read through the passages. Decide whether each is logically consistent or not. Give your reasons.

Activity 5

For each of the passages below, identify:

The denoted meaning (dictionary meaning)

The connoted meaning (associative or implied meaning)

The use of association to create a latent message

Then read the commentary opposite

Activity 6

The following passage is not ordered logically. This makes it difficult to follow its line of reasoning. You do not need to be a specialist the subject to identify how the argument could be better constructed. Write a short list of the ways the passage is poorly organized-then order the sentences into a more logical sequence yourself. The sentences are numbered to help you write out a preferable order.

Conclusion

This qualification paper presented Critical Thinking and the methods which can be used in the teaching process at school of any levels. Critical Thinking is a new way of looking at the events happening in the class. Teaching by Critical Thinking methods is very effective. The students become the centre of the teaching process. They work both individually and in the groups or pairs. The Critical Thinking methods develop many skills and abilities. Among the most important ones, there are ability to formulate one's own opinion, ability to communicate, give reasonable arguments and ability to respect other people's opinions or dissimilarities. Students who come through the learning process using Critical Thinking methods are able to remember more facts for longer time. They are able to see the wider connection of the various facts. They are also motivated to further life-long education. They cannot be easily manipulated because they can analyse and think independently and critically.

Critical thinking is not new. It is about using thinking ability as well as having dispositions for critical thinking. This chapter gave reasons why learners need to think critically in language learning and it described what critical thinking means in this study. Critical thinking is considered to have three major aspects: communication, reasoning and self-reflection.

The teacher's role changes with using critical thinking methods. S/he is no more the person who dictates the students what to learn or to remember. S/he is not a "main character" of her/his film – lesson, but s/he becomes a "film director", who only gives advice, presents new facts and monitors course of the lesson. The teacher's task is to create a stress free, stimulating and thought-provoking environment. The process of thinking often becomes more important than the result, then.

The aim of this qualification paper was to present critical thinking, the programme Reading and Writing for critical thinking and to demonstrate that methods of Critical Thinking applied in the English language teaching positively influenced the learning results and the approach of the students.

In the theoretical part, critical thinking and its general ideas were introduced. Theoretical basis of critical thinking – Constructivism, Cognitivism and Cooperative Learning together with the role of writing were explained. Then, the project reading and writing for critical thinking was presented.

The description of the environment supporting the Critical Thinking was mentioned. The inseparable component of Critical Thinking – the E-U-R model of learning was elaborated there, too. The theoretical part was closed by a list of the most known Critical Thinking methods and their short description.

The practical part described the course book Project 4 by Tom Hutchinson. Then the characterisation of the research group followed. The teacher's diary with twenty entries illuminated the used methods that were to influence the learning results. The practical part was closed by the research and the thorough analysis of the data. In the focus of the research, there was a presumption that learning would be more effective and at the same time, more attractive for the students in the lessons taught by Critical Thinking methods. The RWCT methods were taught in every lesson from September 2012 to January 2013, so there were forty-five lessons with RWCT activity. The analysis of the results was embodied as the last part of this thesis. It proved that Critical Thinking methods worked in practise.

This qualification paper presented an interesting and attractive trend in the teaching and learning process. It could be a new way for the teachers who seek the unconventional approaches to the young modern generation

of students but with respect to the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education.

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