

A Review on Critical Thinking and CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning

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Abstract

In the fast-changing complex world of advancement and technology, the need for critical thinking in the development of mental ability is a disused part. In this paper, an attempt is made to showcase the need for the review on the enhancement of Critical Thinking (CT) through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). In addition, the paper investigates the articles which are published in international journals for tracing the importance given to the aspects of critical thinking and CLIL. It aims to identify the various dimension of this approach in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT).

Keywords: critical thinking, mental ability, content learning, language learning, integrated learning

Introduction

John Dewey defined, 'Education is a social process. Education is growth. Education is, not a preparation for life; education is life itself.' Education plays a pivotal role in everyone's life as it accelerates our knowledge, learning ability and skill. It transforms our mentality and personality to attain the positive attitudes. The whole education may be divided into primary education, secondary education, and higher secondary education, but the real goal of all these divisions is 'Transformation'. A transformation of the nutritious process which makes us strong in all the aspects of life. Dewey has stated that human experiences- past, present, and future- influence the capacity to learn. He stated that: "Education is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities". Education provides the ability to think and analyse a situation which moves from abstract thinking to concrete thinking and removes the hostile problems and cynical outlook. According to John Adams, "Education is conscious and deliberate process in which one personality acts upon another in order to modify the development of that other by the communication and manipulation of knowledge".

Critical Thinking (CT) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Critical thinking in education is the need of the hour. Though the field has many theories, approaches, methods and strategies to inculcate critical thinking, it has become the far cry to celebrate the complete success. Critical thinking requires mental ability to evaluate a situation. They think open-mindedly and communicate effectively with the world. Critical

thinking has been defined by various scholars. Ennis (1989) defines critical thinking as a "reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do".

Similarly, Schafersman (1991) states that "critical thinking means correct thinking in the pursuit of relevant and reliable knowledge about the world. Another way to describe it is reasonable, reflective, responsible, and skillful thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do. A person who thinks critically can ask appropriate questions, gather relevant information, efficiently and creatively sort through this information, reason logically from this information, and come to reliable and trustworthy conclusions about the world that enable one to live and act successfully in it". Likewise, Elder (2007) defines "Critical thinking is self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way. People who think critically consistently attempt to live rationally, reasonably, empathically. They are keenly aware of the inherently flawed nature of human thinking when left unchecked." These definitions highlight the importance of critical thinking in education. To sharpen the view, the critical thinking in ELT classroom is yet another task to be accomplished by the educators. Researchers of the American Foundation for Critical Thinking argue that critical thinking is not as a natural skill as speaking or running, it is deliberately developed complex set of skills and features which take years to acquire.

Similarly, foreign language acquisition needs years of persistent training. So, practicing both simultaneously saves time and provides a synergy effect: developing the former we improve the latter and vice versa. Cook (1991), who regards reading primarily as a thinking process, emphasized the importance of engaging students in talking about the text they read. Elder and Paul (2004), 'to learn well, one must read well', which they mean that the real critical thinking been stimulated, when the learner starts to read the text well. Paul (2005) states that 'a critical mind improves reading by reflectively thinking about what and how it reads'. They added that the revision of the learners written drafts of their cognitive and meta-cognitive thinking process would enhance their critical thinking.

In the article titled, "12 Strategies for Teaching Critical Thinking Skills the Right Way" by Lee Watanabe Crockett (2016) suggested the following strategies to teach critical thinking in the class for the effective learning and thinking such as:

- Begin with a Question
- Create a Foundation
- Consult the Classics
- Creating a Country
- Use Information Fluency
- Utilize Peer Groups
- Try One Sentence
- Problem-Solving
- Return to Roleplaying
- Speaking with Sketch
- Prioritize It
- Change Their Misconception

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:6 June 2018

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Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a boom to ELT. It is a language learning approach where the content of the subject and language learning are imbibed in a single framework. Hence CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach, because an additional language is used for teaching and learning of the content.

David Marsh (1994) says "CLIL refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language". He added that by "integrating language and subject teaching, various forms of educational success can be achieved where classrooms comprise learners with diverse levels of linguistic competence" (Marsh 2006). Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010) believed that CLIL creates "innovative fusion of non-language subject with and through a foreign language". CLIL reportedly enables one "to learn as you use and use as you learn" (Marsh 2002). According to Coyle (2010), CLIL is a post-method pedagogy model, which has been influenced by different theories that have traditionally had an enormous impact on education. CLIL is able to get two mangoes by throwing a single stone, which is using language to learn and learning to use language. Peeter Mehisto, Maria-Jesus Frigols, and David Marsh mentioned in the book titled, "Uncovering CLIL" as a flexible approach, its methodologies, and techniques which designed for all the students not only clever students.

- Experts have done a series of surveys on the usefulness of this dual-focused educational approach. In the research article, "The impact of CLIL on affective factors and vocabulary learning" by Arantxa Heras and David Lasagabaster they have found that CLIL approach had a positive outcome in due course of teaching-learning process. Learners were tested on various grounds, namely, vocabulary test, pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-test which revealed that CLIL approach helped learners to learn vocabulary and reduced gender differences in self-esteem and motivation in them. Similarly, José Igor Prieto-Arranz, Lucrecia Rallo Fabra, Caterina Calafat-Ripoll and Magdalena Catrain-González's published an article entitled "Testing Progress on Receptive skills in CLIL and Non-CLIL Contexts" in which they have discussed on how they tested the progress of receptive skills between CLIL participants and Non-CLIL participants. In the reading comprehension and listening comprehension, CLIL participants outperformed the Non-CLIL participants on most tests. It was proved that not only in receptive skills but also CLIL learners excel in the cognitively demanding tasks. In this regard, we can say that CLIL is interwoven with critical thinking.
- The Science Report prepared by David Marsh, "The Contribution of Multilingualism to Creativity (2009)" states that multilingualism is an added value in learning languages, where it benefits us through the subconscious. Firstly, the learners' learning capacity, CLIL shows a preference for following linguistic routines when it comes to developing memory skills, especially in early learning classrooms. This is especially beneficial to young learners due to the malleability of their brains (2009). Secondly, learners' immense mental flexibility, "knowledge of more than one language leads to added value which goes beyond language itself, and which enables the development of special multi-competences. This may be significant for developing certain types of skills in thinking and communication (digital literacy) in the Information Age."(2009). Thirdly, learners' capacity to "identify, understand and solve", this results from the fact that CLIL in the

classroom largely promotes, encourages and develops skills associated with risk-taking, problem-solving, autonomous learning, creative thinking and higher level abstract thinking, all of which they will be asked to address and tackle later on in real life situations (2009). According to David Marsh's study, a "key skill" in problem-solving can be the ability to remain focused, undistracted and discriminatory. Fourthly, learns how to be responsive and sensitive to various situations. Fifthly, it immerses the learner into different universes (2009) are the contributions of multilingualism to the human brain which was evidently enhanced through CLIL.

- Ana Maria Cendoya and Veronica Adibin, Argentina jointly published a research article entitled, "A CLIL experience based on the use of tasks and different genre types" which aimed to show the methodology of CLIL to work task and genre-based pedagogy. According to Ellis (2003), a task "is a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed". Learners ultimately learn the language and use the language to learn it. According to Swales (1990), a genre is a dynamic social practice susceptible of change. He says that the receivers' expectations and their schematic structure of a genre are as important as or even more important than accuracy or form as these do not necessarily lead to effective communication. Swales refers to genres as the products of social structures that generate them; in other words, texts are the final product of social interactions realized by genres. For this integrated learning in the teaching-learning process, CLIL has appeared as a dual approach to gratify this twin process.
- In the research article, "Development of critical and creative thinking skills in CLIL" by Dana Hanesová, University of Matej Bel, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, introduced teaching techniques to enhance the critical thinking skills in CLIL. He had taken revised Bloom's Taxonomy, De Bono's six thinking hats, SCAMMPERR technique and Lotus blossom technique to prove that critical thinking skills in CLIL learners achieved effectively and vibrantly with action research at higher educational institution and at primary school. According to A. Z. Chamot and J. M. O'Malley (1994), in CLIL due to the integration of academic content with language, the development of critical thinking skills seems to be associated with the development of language functions. They say that the activities which require critical and creative thinking skills, again it resulted in the requirement of complex language and richer vocabulary. Hence it must be channelized properly with the cognitive importance, if not focused on learners, then CLIL becomes a dry methodology in teaching-learning process.
- K. Taylor (2006) offers a whole range of ideas supporting the construction of knowledge in CLIL lessons including energizers; problem solving techniques; presentation of meta-cognitive strategies to improve the memory and information retrieval; visualization(mnemonics, peg words, music, discussion, pictures, mind maps, graphic organizers, posters); peer teaching, cooperative work, interrupted and repeated solution seeking; episodic strategies (changes in location, circumstances, use of emotions, movement, novel classroom position (field trips), music, guest speakers, journal writing, projects, peer teaching; quizzes, small group presentations, structured timed tests, real life studies); procedural strategies

integrating movement; or reflexive strategies. These tests, tools, and techniques do not fully assure the development of critical thinking skills in CLIL but rather it help in CLIL interaction in the classroom.

Conclusion

Critical thinking has become an avoidable skill to be inculcated in the learning process. In order to help the learners with critical thinking skills, CLIL takes the lead role to play in the educational field. CLIL makes the learners create interest in the content and think critically about the subject, finally they use the language as the medium to express their critical thinking. In spite of having many approaches to learn, CLIL has the maximum number of outcomes. Experts in the field found that CLIL possess the demanding factors which ignite the cognitive flame of the learners in the teaching-learning process. Hence CLIL is a reliable approach especially language learning approach with integrated goals in learning. CLIL helps critical thinking and in the same way, critical thinking helps CLIL. In short, 'Critical Thinking and CLIL are two sides of the same coin'.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:6 June 2018

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