



## **ACTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

***Muratova Nargiza Bakhramovna***

*Lecturer of USWLU*

**Abstract:** The development of critical thinking skills is a fundamental objective in contemporary education. This article examines the effectiveness of active learning techniques in fostering critical thinking among students. Active learning methods — including think-pair-share, case studies, structured debates, problem-based learning, and Socratic seminars — require students to engage analytically, reflectively, and collaboratively with complex material. The article outlines how these strategies promote higher-order cognitive skills such as inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. Additionally, it discusses practical considerations for implementing active learning approaches, including the importance of setting clear objectives, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, and providing timely, constructive feedback. The findings suggest that incorporating active learning strategies significantly enhances students' critical thinking abilities, preparing them for complex problem-solving and independent thought in academic and professional contexts.

### **Keywords:**

active learning; critical thinking; teaching methodology; higher-order thinking skills; inquiry-based education; collaborative learning; problem-based learning; Socratic method; educational strategies; student-centered learning. For many years, the main objective of higher education has been to help college students develop their critical thinking abilities and temperament. Implementing this goal to increase students' employability in the quickly evolving workplace has recently become more critical. This study looked into the effectiveness of reading literature to foster critical thinking. Pop quizzes on reading comprehension, learning logs, group presentations, facilitated in-class discussions using Socratic questioning techniques, and individual essay-question reports are some of the tools used into the course design and a self-assessed questionnaire and then scheduled an individual interview with the teacher. Finally, a few findings were located: 1) literature reading helped those who scored low in the pretest improve their overall critical thinking skills, particularly those in analysis; 2) students' English proficiency did not relate to their performance in both the pretest and posttest; 3) some students were assertive they tended to show more disposition toward critical thinking than ever but this needs a follow-up longitudinal study with a standardized measure to assess the efficacy in this respect; 4) Students found guided in-class discussion more effective than other student-directed activities in developing critical thinking.

Some scholars have argued the validity of teaching critical thinking skills in an



ESL/EFL context. However, “the world is flat” as Thomas L. Friedman proclaimed in one of his bestsellers. Regional or cultural boundaries have been dismantled due to the accelerating information exchanges and economic interactions in the global community. Any global citizen is obliged to cope with the international trends and prepare himself/herself with skills that help him/her learn how to learn. “Though there are certain aspects of critical thinking that may be „foreign” in non Western context, if students are not exposed to these skills, they will be denied the opportunities to complete in the global community”. The causes for such a problem are multiple and complex: 1) Students" prior learning habits and experiences are mostly reproduction-oriented while they were rarely given the chances to question, explain, or evaluate the “knowledge” instructed in the classroom; 2) the teaching faculty in the primary and secondary education received little guidance or assistance regarding critical thinking instruction and furthermore, their teaching load and time constraint deprive them of the chance to embed critical thinking into curricula.3) students are more attuned to a collectivist society where individuality in thought and action is not valued as that much as in a western society. Compared with their western counterparts, Taiwanese students are less expressive, less inquisitive, less confident and less mature in seeking truth. Generally speaking, they are immature in critical thinking.

Active learning is a dynamic instructional approach that actively engages students in the learning process, fostering the development of critical thinking skills. By moving beyond passive reception of information, students participate in activities that require analysis, evaluation, and creation, aligning with higher-order thinking skills.

**Active learning** encompasses instructional methods that involve students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing. This approach encourages students to engage with the material, participate in the learning process, and reflect on their learning. Techniques include discussions, problem-solving, case studies, role plays, and other methods that promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content.

### **How Active Learning Enhances Critical Thinking**

Critical thinking involves analyzing facts to form a judgment. Active learning strategies promote critical thinking by: Encouraging Inquiry: Students are prompted to ask questions and seek answers, fostering a deeper understanding. Promoting Analysis: Engaging with real-world problems requires students to analyze information and consider multiple perspectives.

Facilitating Reflection: Activities like reflective writing encourage students to think about their thinking processes.

Enhancing Problem-Solving Skills: By tackling complex problems, students develop the ability to evaluate solutions and make decisions.



**Think-Pair-Share:** Students think about a question individually, discuss their thoughts with a partner, and then share with the larger group. This technique encourages students to articulate their reasoning and consider others' perspectives.

**Case Studies:** Analyzing real-life scenarios allows students to apply theoretical knowledge, assess situations critically, and propose solutions. Structured debates require students to research topics, construct arguments, anticipate counterarguments, and engage in critical evaluation.

**Problem-Based Learning (PBL):** Students learn by solving complex, real-world problems, which enhances their analytical and decision-making skills. **Socratic Seminars:** Through guided questioning, students explore complex ideas, challenge assumptions, and develop critical thinking by engaging in dialogue. **Implementing Active Learning in the Classroom**

To effectively incorporate active learning strategies:

**Set Clear Objectives:** Define what critical thinking skills you aim to develop.

**Choose Appropriate Techniques:** Select strategies that align with your objectives and subject matter.

**Create a Supportive Environment:** Encourage open dialogue and respect for diverse opinions.

**Provide Feedback:** Offer constructive feedback to guide students' critical thinking processes.

**Reflect and Adjust:** Continuously assess the effectiveness of strategies and make necessary adjustments. ---

Active learning strategies are instrumental in cultivating critical thinking skills among students. By engaging learners in meaningful activities that require analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, educators can foster an environment that promotes deep understanding and lifelong learning. During the semester, students were required to write three essay-question reports on fiction, poetry and drama. They could choose any two study questions assigned for each literary work to write a report but the questions had to be pertinent to one genre. In these reports, teacher would focus on individual student's critical thinking ability and the construct of meanings. Sentence-level errors would be ignored. Students were encouraged to consult the teacher for any language problems when drafting the reports. Once the reports were graded, commented and returned, students could rewrite or revise the reports to make the ideas more explicit, supported or better organized. Then they could re-submit the reports within one week upon receipt of the comments. If they felt they could present their thoughts better in the third or fourth rewrites, they were free to do so but had to abide by the re-submission-in-one-week policy. This was in hope that students could have more opportunities to practice and reinforce their critical thinking and nurture their critical thinking disposition. Despite being distinctly aware of the importance



of reading, there is still a vast group of people who would prefer to watch rather than read. If you're not the biggest fan of reading or of books, trust me you are not alone, but do not push aside your newspaper, or shut down those books your friend gifted to you. However much you try to deny it, reading plays quite an essential role in one's life. Reading truly helps in providing information that helps in expanding your mind, broadening your horizons, increasing your creativity skills, and overall helps in providing a great perspective. Among the several benefits that one gains from reading, one of the major advantages is the development of your critical thinking skill. How many times have you been taken by surprise or been left confused or in a dilemma during your exam paper, or a job interview, or simply while interacting with someone senior? You might have comprehended correctly or understood the issue or the current status, but what is truly required is your presence of mind when it comes to analyzing. Constantly reading helps in evaluating, understanding, and presenting reasoned arguments. Due to reading all of these traits are slowly imbibed within us, and play a huge part in developing one's critical thinking. As reading is thinking, readers need to connect what they know and what is in the text, and they also need to think inferentially to figure out the meaning in the absence of explicit information. In L2 reading classrooms, learners often struggle to understand a text for a variety of reasons, including lack of engagement, weak decoding and fluency skills, inadequate vocabulary and background knowledge, and ineffective strategies for setting a purpose for reading. In order to be effective readers, the learners have to monitor their understanding, and when they lose the meaning of what they are reading, they have to select and use a reading strategy "that will help them reconnect with the meaning of the text". In helping ESL/EFL learners to think critically, it is believed that RSI helps the learners to build "on their already-established cognitive abilities and background knowledge». The benefits of applying RSI in L2 reading classes are, among others, it helps the learners to achieve higher scores, it motivates the struggling students, it improves students' reading comprehension, and it raises their metacognitive awareness. In traditional ESL/EFL classes, a teacher is usually the dominant figure. He/she does not give enough opportunity to the students to share their knowledge and the culture they bring to the second language classroom. To date, the paradigms of teaching have shifted from teachercentred to student-centred. RSI does not focus on the activities of the teachers, but it should help L2 to understand the text as well think critically about what they have read. The teachers' job is to encourage their students to experience the world's richness, to empower them by asking them to create their own questions and answer the questions, and then challenge them to understand the world's complexities (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). In the context of this study, based on my personal observation the language teachers seldom give a chance to the students to ask questions and reflect what they have read in their reading classroom. This made me realize that there is a need to help second language learners in their reading classroom so that to their comprehension and critical thinking skills will improve. It is my wish that the appropriate reading strategy instruction that I proposed in conducting a reading class



will help the students to improve their critical thinking skills and achieve the highest comprehension.

**The list of used references**

1. Abrami, P. C., et al. (2015). Strategies for Teaching Students to Think Critically: A Meta-Analysis. Review of Educational Research, 85(2), 275–314. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654314551063>
2. Bonwell, C. C., & Eison, J. A. (1991). Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No1
3. Brookfield, S. D. (2012). Teaching for Critical Thinking: Tools and Techniques to Help Students Question Their Assumptions. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
4. Freeman, S., Eddy, S. L., McDonough, M., Smith, M. K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., & Wenderoth, M. P. (2014). Active Learning Increases.
5. Prince, M. (2004). Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research. Journal of Engineering Education, 93(3), 223–231.