

## CULTIVATING GRADUATE STUDENT'S CRITICAL THINKING ABILITIES BY WRITING ACTIVITIES

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**Abstract.** This research mainly focused on how important critical thinking is for graduate students and how to act in developing it. In today's world, critical thinking is so important that teachers need to use a variety of methods to improve students' critical thinking skills, and understand the importance of writing in cultivating critical thinking and apply it correctly to enhance critical thinking. In addition, the research focused on which tasks and activities to use, and in particular, the importance of mind-mapping, feedback.

**Keywords:** critical thinking, cultivating, writing tasks, relevance of writing, setting writing tasks and activities.

### **Introduction**

It has been proven so far that critical thinking is very important for any graduate student. Especially in today's world, which requires a strong mental capacity and intellect, it is very important to think critically in order to understand any information we receive, to edit it, to prove it right or wrong, and to convey it to others concisely and clearly. If we take the example of the state of Uzbekistan, we all know that the interest in foreign languages is growing. Therefore, in order to develop the teaching of foreign languages in our country, especially English, teachers should pay more attention to the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability and skill.

I first came across the concept of critical thinking when I entered my master's degree, and the more I learned about it, the more I realized how important it is. I felt that the ability to think critically should be applied not only to graduate students, but also to elementary students who are just beginning to learn English. Of course, there are different ways to increase critical thinking, each of which has its own significance.

In this research, I focus on the importance of critical thinking skills in teaching graduate students, the relevance of writing in enhancing it, and exactly how writing activities cultivate critical thinking, and I want to cite previous work by other authors on this.

### **The importance of cultivating critical thinking skills in teaching English to graduate students.**

The reason for the late development of critical thinking is that most English learners simply memorize the rules of vocabulary and grammar without understanding them and do not apply them in real life. "Due to the longterm negative impact of traditional teaching concepts, many college English teachers only require students to memorize words unilaterally and infuse students with the desire to achieve good results" (Chenjie, 2019, p6). Chenjie (2019) claims that in order to develop and improve students' thinking skills, the teaching regime must first be reformed (p.7). Teachers can specialize in speculative exercise activities and perform a variety of tasks. In the real situation, there is often a phenomenon that does not reach the spoken word, and the ability to express is deeply lacking. This phenomenon leads to poor thinking ability of students after a long period of development and thus affects the overall teaching effect.

Teachers need to actively design the learning environment and content, encouraging students to take the initiative to seek collaboration and communication. It then summarizes the practical scheme in mutual evaluation and strategy adoption. Teachers should timely thank students for their active participation and encourage them to participate more in the classroom.

### **The relevance of writing in cultivating critical thinking**

The importance of writing in teaching English is that writing encourages the student to use his brain to the maximum, to think, and to write down the thoughts in his brain. In order to develop graduate students' critical thinking skills, they need to develop feedback on the concept of teaching, teaching content, teaching methods, and assessment, and under their guidance, they should teach aspects of a better use of analysis and feedback. In addition, it is important to evaluate high-level thinking modes, not only to write in-depth articles but also to help develop good thinking habits in the learning process and develop critical thinking skills while mastering language skills. We pay particular attention to written assignments for a number of reasons: writing down ideas that come to our minds can provide a unique opportunity to develop critical thinking skills; secondly, written assignments help us to search critically, to read a lot of material, to grasp the essence of the ideas in them and to summarize what we have learned from them, of course, to increase critical thinking. Writing and critical thinking are inextricably linked, and Rahmat (2020) argues that good writing requires proper planning, and that proper planning, firstly, involves looking for relevant material, then obtain required information. This reading phase uses critical thinking skills to decide on the content of an article, the usefulness of the content, as well as how it fits the needs of the writer. The writer knows that the first completed record is not the final stage. He should evaluate his project through critical reading to improve the final writing.

Wang (2015) reports that writing is a course that combines reading, debating, and debate, and is one of the most effective ways to develop graduate students' critical thinking skills (p.65). Incorporating critical thinking development into English writing is helpful in solving students' problems in a dialectical way, while developing critical thinking in the reverse direction effectively improves English writing skills, thereby expanding students' thinking scope and detailing content.

### **Setting writing tasks and activities to encourage graduate students to think critically**

Defining a useful writing task in an English writing course is the basis for developing students' writing skills. When assigning writing tasks, teachers should focus on helping students solve problems in life or topics related to students' daily lives, directing students to analyze the causes of the problem and thereby solving the problem. As for these written assignments related to students' daily lives, students will have "words to say" and encourage students' information resources to develop, facilitate the advancement and demonstration of their perspectives, in this way students are always ready to participate in written work.

An interesting view was expressed by Liu (2018) that "The following topics are always designed in the teaching experiences: "idol worship", "Your Opinion on Campus Loan?", "The advantages and disadvantages of micro-blog", "The effects of artificial technology on our lives", "The sharing bicycles" and so on." (p. 985). These topics are relevant to the student's personal life and experience, and students are more likely to express themselves enthusiastically in

writing and commenting on familiar topics, so that the content of the text they write is relatively complete and rich, and also the evidence will be sufficient and convincing. This step-by-step improves students' interest in writing, which helps students to actively build their knowledge system, overcome fear of difficulties, and thus focus on concept, reflection, and understanding. Once the assignment is set, teachers use a brainstorming or mental map to help students form ideas from their information resources. A mind map can help students show important words on a topic. Research-based teaching methods to develop students' analytical and thinking skills and problem-solving skills are commonly adopted in this process. Feedback can also improve students' critical thinking, as students can improve their analytical skills and see the work of themselves and their peers objectively. Graduate students can always trust each other, and they can express their opinions in the presence of each other, pointing out the pros and cons, discuss as intensely as possible, and reach agreement. Eventually, as they review their work, they begin to rewrite and improve their critical thinking skills. In addition to these, there are other tasks, but I tried to write that are mostly useful in this research, and the above types of writing tasks play an important role in developing critical thinking skills.

### **Conclusion**

From the above considerations, it can be concluded that the modern world requires young students with strong intellectual potential, knowledge of critical and clear thinking. Researches show that most students now have very low critical thinking skills. Because, even if we take the example of learning foreign languages, a student studying English pays more attention only to vocabulary and grammar, and is only engaged in memorization which in turn weakens their creativity, that is, their ability to think critically. Today's English teachers need to do their best to teach their students the language perfectly. That is, graduate students need to improve their critical thinking skills and use a variety of methods. Many studies have found that writing is very useful in enhancing critical thinking, and with it, the ability to think critically develops very strongly. Because writing requires students to do more research and reading. Not all writing tasks are useful, that is, tasks such as dictation or copying are absolutely useless. Therefore, the development of critical thinking requires the ability to use the correct tasks of writing.

It is the teacher's job to choose the right activity or task. Examples include the extensive use of mind maps and feedback. Students who develop critical thinking through writing tasks will be able to express their ideas and find solutions to any problems.

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