

Critical Thinking in ELT: A Working Model for the Classroom

Paul Dummett and John Hughes. National Geographic Learning: Boston, USA, 2019.

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Incorporating critical thinking in all different subject areas is highly recommended as an educational goal. In the field of English Language Teaching, Dummett and Hughes's (2019) *Critical Thinking in ELT: A Working Model for the Classroom* is a comprehensive introductory book with guidelines and models for integrating critical thinking activities in language skills. The book delivers ELT teachers step by step explanations from the operational definitions and concepts of critical thinking to the application of critical thinking activities in ELT materials in its seven chapters.

Chapter 1 explains readers why critical thinking has to be a central role in education. The increasing access of internet and information from digital media is the main reason that requires 21st century learners to evaluate and resonate the information before them. From the subject-specific perspective, there is a strong bond between critical thinking and language acquisition. Deeper processing and production of language is achieved by means of critical thinking. It is also stressed in this chapter that two types of critical thinking skills, higher order thinking skill and lower order thinking skill are neither inferior nor superior to each other. Having the balance of both thinking skills is crucial in effective language learning.

Chapter 2 states how critical thinking benefits learners in such factors as academia, business, early education, and everyday life and internet. Learners can get more engagement and learning autonomy by exercising thinking activities from ELT textbooks. Critical thinking activities can be added into various stages of lessons from the smallest unit of discourse like words and syllables to larger discourse texts like paragraphs and articles. Not only that, critical thinking activities can be applied to receptive skills as well as productive skills. Dummett and Hughes' innovative lesson planning ideas for inclusion of critical thinking into different language levels and skills can be learnt in Chapter 3, 4, and 5. Their examples of critical thinking activities are built on the language tasks and skills that ELT textbooks cover: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

Inductive reasoning, comparative analysis, rephrasing and reformulation, translation, rearranging word order, identifying word order, and identifying idiomatic usage are example

activities applicable in grammar teaching. For teaching vocabulary, comparing words, considering the word scope, understanding grammatical function of words, considering emotional, social, and cultural aspects of words, and understanding literal and figurative uses of words are critical thinking encouraging activities. Analyzing pronunciation patterns to see how they convey meaning, analyzing one's own pronunciation to remove areas of ambiguity, and conscious awareness of the pronunciation patterns of one's interlocutor are example activities for teaching pronunciation critically.

Another crucial idea the authors state is that critical thinking activities can be infused with both receptive and productive skills. Identifying authors' aims, examining the reliability of arguments, separating facts from opinions, and looking for bias from texts are critical thinking encouraging activities in teaching receptive skills. Three factors constitute critical language productive skills: generating ideas, setting criteria for language output, and evaluating the output. In setting up the criteria, learners need to pinpoint two sub-goals: identifying the goal of the text, and the perspective of their text readers.

Chapter 6 engages ELT teachers to the extensive need of critical thinking skills beyond classrooms, by suggesting activities learners should apply in confronting different types of literacy. Critical thinking is an essential armor for the learners to wear in exposing themselves to twenty-first century literacies such as visual literacy, information literacy, media literacy, and cultural literacy. The reason for an ELT teacher to focus on these literacies is that they appear as language input to the learners. Learners need to perceive the information judiciously to evaluate their factual accuracy.

The last chapter, chapter 7, motivates ELT syllabus writers and teachers for the balanced implication of lower-order and higher-order thinking skills because both of the skills involve in the working model of critical thinking in ELT presented by Dummett and Hughes. This concluding chapter gives readers acute discussion on three topics that are commonly addressed and asked by English language teachers around the world. These topics are evaluating lessons for critical thinking, teaching critical thinking at lower language levels, and promoting critical thinking.

Overall, the book *Critical Thinking in ELT: A Working Model for the Classroom* is a worth reading textbook and it bridges critical thinking and English language education. Having explained concepts and definitions of critical thinking activities followed by example lessons, the book is an evidence-based manual for the incorporation of critical thinking in ELT curriculum. At the end of the last chapter, there are suggested answers to sample exercises and ask yourself question. The book will surely stand as a successful course book in training ELT

teachers for increasing awareness to the application of critical thinking activities in their classrooms.

Bio data

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