

Critical Thinking (CT): Improving Speaking Skills in English Language Labs and Classrooms

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Abstract— Critical Thinking is a great concept for centuries together. It is a wide range of deep thinking and thought-provoking idea. It has been developing for the past 2,500 years. It is universally accepted that critical thinking has no particular scope to use its mammoth qualities in any field. It is applied and used in all fields. The Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle had started using Critical thinking in their teachings. Thinking is directly interlinked with speaking to be flawless and perfect speakers in English language, critical thinking hones, undoubtedly, speaking skills. It plays a significant and constructive role in education. Critical Thinking is not such an easy task; it is a meticulous and magnanimous task. Speaking plays, a prominent role in the defined four skills of English communication. Speaking is very indispensable in the modern and sophisticated world. Students do try to be good speakers in English language, but their analytical and evaluative skills are, unknowingly, paid deaf ear. Critical thinking makes students to speak effectively after analyzing and evaluating. English language labs are very good kind of arenas to develop their language abilities and traits. Critical thinking in language labs like CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) and ICS (Interactive Communicative Skills) will make students to observe meticulous ideology to speak freely and fluently. Critical thinking would create language platforms where learners imbibe sound vocabulary, flawless sentence constructions, understandability, interchangeability, effectiveness, analysis, elucidate and creative expressions. Critical thinking liberates learners from rote memorization learning. It does encourage students from routine questioning attitude to self-guided speaking attitude, which is very much needed for technical and non-technical students since they are going to be in the fast revolving world. One can be very good speaker in English language provided learners inculcate language skills through critical thinking. Over the language activities like Group Discussion (GD), Role-Plays, Just A Minute (JAM) sessions and Mock-Interviews, would vigorously focus and remain to be thinkers and Critical Thinking Speakers (CTS). When students think critically in language labs, they can easily know the background of history, psychology, science and technology of any topic. So, critical thinking-students can speak on any issue or topic easily by making out the basic concepts. Though my research focuses on speaking skills it also focuses other unmentioned skills in English language. This article asserts and emphatically stresses how learners learn perfectly the constructive mechanism of speaking in English language labs and classrooms through critical thinking.

Keywords—Critical thinking; language labs; self-guided; speaking skills; rote memorization.

I. INTRODUCTION

Many distinguished writers, philosophers, ideologists, rationalists and thinkers have clearly defined what thinking is. Thinking is a natural phenomenon of every creature in the universe. Every animal, bird, insect reptiles do think in the universe. But thinking critically is unique to solve any problem

in any situation. Critical Thinking, naturally, occurs as we face any problem or any unwanted situation. As long as we don't face or encounter any problem, our mind does not concentrate on critical aspects through thinking. Critical thinking in our daily life plays a prominent and pristine role in our life. Many definitions have been paved on the surface of the critical thinking over human critical thinking ideology.

Critical thinking has skills like observation, interpret, analysis, applying, anticipating, evaluation and explanation. We think critically when we have certain objects/aims/goals. Critical Thinking, significantly, is aiming to reach its constructive ideology. Human beings analyze the situation and interpret themselves as they live in the society, whereas animals, birds and other creatures don't exhibit much critical thinking as they face few problems. Human beings anticipate the situation, or another issue based on critical thinking. Their ability to guess to be free from untoward incidents, it makes to think differently and uniquely. Human beings live in society, every pace of their life journey makes them to think critically as they are not alone. Somewhere, somehow, they depend on others whereas animals and birds may not. Many critical thinkers points "I think therefore I am"

In fact, people have been using and thinking about the famous phrase 'Critical Thinking' and that has been researching together for about 100 years. No doubt Socrates, a great Greek Philosopher started beginning in a new and novel approach over 2000 years ago. Timely asserting and reiterating words on Critical Thinking plays significant roles not only learners' academic achievements but also in their dynamic life of workplace after graduation [1], [2]. Of all the four skills in English, speaking seems to be the most important skills required for communication [3]. Choosing topics, arguing thoughts, tailoring the messages, and adopting to the listener feedback. Education should speak to the whole person, in other words, not just a small language, learning facility in a humanist classroom, students are emotionally involved in the learning [4]. Rightly emphasizing about "the role of universities has been to develop independent and critical thinkers" [5]. Thinking should make a distinct feature fact from onions [6]. Critical thinking questions rote memorization of decontextualized information [7] deconstruction of pedagogical practices involved in teaching CT skills identified as main process:

- Analysis of complex matter to its simple elements.

- Adaption of critical attitude by question and evaluating.
- Presentation of persuasive and reasoned argument.

"Ability to encourage to think critically [8]". "Thinking effectively for under graduating students [9]", "Problem based learning makes learners to think critically and analytically" [10], "Critical thinking is reasonable and reflective focused on deciding what to believe or to do [11]". "To think critically and to question without fear to seek out radically different solutions" [12]. "Not surprisingly, critical thinking not only for learners but also army personnel to take right decision in right time" [14]. "Deficient critical thinking leads to unfocused mind over the under graduating students" [15]. "There would be many solutions for problems, each strategy applies to have creative and critical thinking to imbibe amongst learners" [16]. "Operational conceptualization of development of closely aligned thinking and learning activities [17]". Emphasizing separating scientific claims from pseudoscientific assumptions and used real world assumptions [18].

II. CRITICAL THINKING AND CREATIVE THINKING

Every human being has skills of creative thinking. Creative thinking applies on the surface whereas critical thinking penetrates into topic/situation/incident. A student thinks creatively how best he puts on costumes/dresses, shoes and so on whereas his or her critical thinking makes them to have free thought beyond regular human attitudes/tasks.

A. *Critical Thinking in Education*

Off late critical thinking in education field has significantly enhanced due to lust for new technology. To be smart enough in the technology, critical thinking should be honed right from the basics and education's primary aim is to produce well and sophisticated human beings in any field. Critical thinking does shape students to be logical, innovators, creators, pathfinders, self-guided, self-esteemed, and new

thought-provoking learners. Education creates an indelible and watershed mark as students are taught critical thinking skills. English language laboratory and the classroom fetch students to be analytical, evaluative oriented as critical thinking is imbibed amongst them.

B. Outcomes of Critical thinking in English Language Labs

- The right attitude is improved.
- Self-confidence can be enhanced.
- Playful approaches are paved.
- Self-guided/ controlling.
- Sensibility and understandability comprehended.
- Logical constructions of sentences and words in language laboratories.
- Broad understanding framework.
- Rote learning will be shunned away.
- New horizons are stretched in English language laboratories.
- Reasoned and rational thinking capabilities enhanced.
- Language questioning pedagogy paves.

III. CRITICAL THINKING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LABORATORIES

Students will definitely improve language skills by having understood Critical Thinking in language laboratories. In language laboratories, students participate in different language activities to speak in English; in fact, it is a part of curriculum. Language acquisition would be so easy process for students, provided they think critically in language labs. There are two kinds of language labs in technical institution/universities like JNTU-H, JNTU-K, JNTU-A, KLU, GITAM, AU and OU, to name a few

- CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) Lab.
- ICS (Interactive Communication Skills) Lab.

A. Call Lab

While participating in CALL lab, students would require critical skills like Evaluate Listening Skills. While listening, students can have innovative thoughts and analytical skills to present effectively in language Labs. Critical thinking is a very much needed before giving presentations. Mere listening would not fetch language acquisition. Critical thinking would incorporate new dimension for listening skills. Unless students focus on critical thinking, speaking skills will definitely not improved. Critical thinking will never make students to be repetition/parrot speaking. Drilling of words/sentences would never be emerged over critical thinking. Critical thinking through active listening skills is highly possible in CALL Lab.

B. ICS Lab

Interactive Communicative Skills Laboratories (ICS) would engage students completely, evaluative and analytical skills through Critical Thinking. Speaking is honed perfectly by critical thinking. The main purpose of imbibing critical thinking amongst students is to make free thinkers, free speakers without any flaws. Students are usually given topics to think and speak. They are also given freedom to choose any topic to speak in labs. Critical Thinking makes them to understand what they want to speak.





Fig. 1 Students participating in ICS lab after having understood Critical Thinking

C. For Instance

Students are given thought provoking topics to speak freely in language, they would analyze the topic. Critical Thinking will make students to think logically while participating in ICS Labs. They usually explore thoughts and ideas, as a topic called **Demonetization** is given to students. The scope is so wide to analyze. Students would think firstly what the word **monetization** and the prefix **de-** is. When the topic is analyzed, the following thoughts are usually generated as the student think in a critical thinking.

- Why should India move towards Demonization?
- The purpose of demonetization and its effects on Indian economy.
- Will there be any advantage in it? If so, what are they?
- Would it be only solution to control black money?
- Is there any benefit of it even after 2 years? If so, how and why?

When a student critically analyzes the above said queries in the mind, students can deliver the topic very freely. They not only deliver freely but also comprehend the topic's background. Before speaking in English labs, critical thinking motivates students to think beyond the horizons. Critical Thinking traits will

help students to speak freely by analyzing them properly what the concept and ideology is.



Fig. 2 Students participating in Group Discussion – Demonitizaion

IV. OTHER TRAITS THAT WILL BE INCULCATED THROUGH CRITICAL THINKING

- Amalgamation of new and old ideas.
- Framing literary views.
- Knowing about personal, societal, national and global attitudes.
- Product perspective view of ethical Moral Science and Technology.
- Thinking freely and meticulously.
- Identification of oneself in the broader perspective view of society.

- Expedite thought processing without any mistakes or flaws.
- Penetrate any topic.
- Meeting international standardized panorama.
- Absorption of world literary values.

V. IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH CRITICAL THINKING

Students have to be taught critical thinking skills for their ability to speak freely and fluently because thinking in English will definitely active students' mindsets to be rational, unique, creative, logical thinking. Language plays a very crucial role in the present days. Critical Thinking strategies would inculcate language thinking abilities among students. Teachers should give/teach thought provoking questions. Students should be created a kind of mindset to have unique questing ideology. Their unique ability will make to speak in English clearly and freely. In language laboratories, students should have a solid arena on which they think and able to speak freely with their pear groups, friends and others. Language acquisition would be very easy by looking back at epics and old generations' ideology. Students should be given epics 'central themes/gist or summary. Students can easily talk/deliver in ELCS (English Language and Communication Skills Lab) or any other platforms. Imagination is the best sources to think in English languages labs. Students should be given free mind to think freely and imagine them. For instance, a beautiful imaginary story is given; the story starts with a few selected persons are ready to be sent to new planet to create a new world. There are different persons are to be sent like a student, a scientist, a doctor, a cricketer, a lawyer, an orthodox Brahmin, a lover, a beautiful girl, a preacher, a cine actor, a comedian, a teacher, and a parent etc. Now, the critical thinking questions are to be asked to use student's beautiful imagination. Whom do you want to send first and why? If students /learners select a person from the given data to send to the new planet, they should be asked why they choose a particular person,

why not another one from the same data. Critical thinking will definitely help them to choose the best and talk about



Fig. 3 Students participate in critical thinking activities

VI. CONCLUSIONS

No doubt, critical thinking in English language labs and classrooms will enhance speaking skills and also expertise learners on speaking domain. The prime issue is majority teachers don't play a constructive role to give free hand to think and speak. Even after decades passed away, old and outdated language teaching methods are still practiced. In the modern society (Computer Yuga), new and innovative teaching methods have paved, but Teacher Centered Teaching (TCT) is practiced in English labs and classrooms. A teacher is supposed to be a felicitator and guide to execute learners' intentions and thoughts. Language labs would be workshops where students think uniquely and critically to become flawless speakers and should wax the wings to students' thoughts beyond regular language labs and classrooms.

Acronyms

CALL- Computer Assisted Language Learning.

CT- Critical Thinking.

CTS- Critical Thinking Speakers.

ELCS- English Language and Communication Skills Lab.

GD- Group Discussion.

ICS- Interactive Communicative Skills.

JAM- Just A Minute.

TCT- Teacher Centered Teaching

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