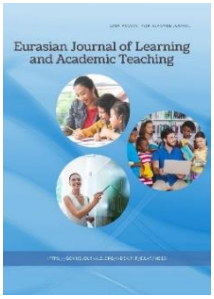

Developing critical thinking of children while teaching foreign languages using digital technologies

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ABSTRACT

As technology continues to play an increasingly vital role in our daily lives, it is essential to incorporate it into our educational systems to facilitate the development of essential skills, such as critical thinking in children. The English language is a crucial component of a child's education, and digital technologies can provide an effective means of developing critical thinking skills during English classes. In this article, we will explore the significance of critical thinking, discuss the challenges that arise when developing critical thinking skills in children, and explore how digital technologies can be leveraged to address these challenges.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, conservative educational ideology, the soft liberal position, critical and feminist pedagogy, risk-taking, interactive learning, collaborative learning, authentic learning, personalized learning.

Introduction

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze and evaluate information and arguments objectively and independently. It involves identifying biases and assumptions, considering multiple perspectives, and using logic and reasoning to make sound judgments. Developing critical thinking skills is vital in enabling children to navigate complex issues and make informed decisions. These skills are essential not only for academic success but also for personal and professional development. As I. Lenin (20019) states when students think critically, they are encouraged to think for themselves, to question hypotheses, to analyze and synthesize the events, to go one step further by developing new hypotheses and test them against the facts by which they will be able to develop their problem solving abilities.

The Challenges of Developing Critical Thinking in Children,

Developing critical thinking skills in children can be challenging. Children may lack the necessary cognitive abilities to analyze complex information, and they may struggle to think independently and objectively. Moreover, traditional teaching methods often focus on memorization and regurgitation of information, which does not encourage critical thinking. Additionally, there is often a disconnection between what children learn in the classroom and the real world, which can hinder their ability to apply critical thinking skills in practical settings.

John P. Portelll (1994) pointed out 5 challenges that teachers face when they aim at activating critical thinking in children. They are (i) the challenge of misunderstanding what is involved in being critical and teaching for critical thinking; (ii) the challenge of the conservative educational ideology; (iii) the challenge of "the soft liberal position"; (iv) the challenge of critical and feminist pedagogy; and (v) the challenge of risk-taking.

As far as the challenge of misunderstanding what critical thinking is concerned, one may assume that critical thinking means sense of finding a fault or a mistake in something. What it means is that one can not think critically unless one has found a mistake or weakness in

something. Actually, this is not the right assumption about critical thinking. As for Brookfield (1989) the opposite is really the case. "when we think critically we become aware of the diversity of values, behaviors, social structures, and artistic forms in the world. Through realizing this diversity, our commitments to our own values, actions, and social structures are informed by a sense of humility ... "(p.5). So it should be clearly understood the difference between finding fault with something and open-mindedness. Of course, the latter may at times involves identifying possible problems in a position. This is different from the negative though associated with being critical just for the sake of being critical.

Traditional educational ideology can be challenge as the attitudes, beliefs, and practices associated with a conservative or traditional position that are still influential today.

According to P. Portelll the challenge of “the soft liberal position” refers that the critical spirit cause for a respectful intervention or an attempt to increase one's awareness. Allowing an expression of differing views and respecting other's views is not the same as accepting any view whatsoever. Emphasizing the importance of the process does not imply that the process exists in separation from the content, or that any conclusion one arrives at is acceptable since what we should be concerned about is simply the process. Thinking is always about something, and what that something is makes a big difference.

Digital technologies can provide an effective means of developing critical thinking skills in children during English classes. Here are some ways in which digital technologies can be leveraged to enhance critical thinking skills development:

Interactive Learning

Digital technologies, such as educational apps, games, and videos, provide interactive learning experiences that engage children and encourage active participation. Interactive learning allows children to explore concepts and ideas independently, providing opportunities for critical thinking.

The use of the interactive learning tools on the
the digitally-native students can facilitate and enhance
teaching and learning. Reference [3] conjectured that
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Satrio Pradono (2013) at. all claims that the use of the interactive learning tools on the digitally-native students can facilitate and enhance teaching and learning for example, an interactive device such as Kinect can support kinesthetic pedagogical practices to benefit learners with strong bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Kinect can help teacher to teach aspect requiring multimedia manipulation and can make the teaching and learning process becoming more interactive; thus, the student can gain more motivation to learn.

Collaborative Learning

Digital technologies also facilitate collaborative learning, which encourages children to work

together to solve problems and generate ideas. Collaboration enhances critical thinking skills by providing opportunities for children to analyze different perspectives, identify biases, and evaluate arguments.

Collaborative learning represents a significant shift away from the typical teacher centered or lecture-centered milieu in college classrooms. In collaborative classrooms, the lecturing/ listening/note-taking process may not disappear entirely, but it lives alongside other processes that are based in students' discussion and active work with the course material. Teachers who use collaborative learning approaches tend to think of themselves less as expert transmitters of knowledge to students, and more as expert designers of intellectual experiences for students-as coaches or mid-wives of a more emergent learning process (Barbara Leigh Smith and Jean T. MacGregor, 1992).

Authentic Learning

Digital technologies can also provide opportunities for authentic learning, where children can apply critical thinking skills to real-world situations. For example, online forums, blogs, and social media platforms provide opportunities for children to engage with a broader audience and share their ideas.

Marilyn M. Lombardi (2007) explains that authentic learning typically focuses on real-world, complex problems and their solutions, using role-playing exercises, problem-based activities, case studies, and participation in virtual communities of practice. The learning environments are inherently multidisciplinary. They are "not constructed in order to teach geometry or to teach philosophy. A learning environment is similar to some 'real world' application or discipline: managing a city, building a house, flying an airplane, setting a budget, solving a crime, for example." Going beyond content, authentic learning intentionally brings into play multiple disciplines, multiple perspectives, ways of working, habits of mind, and community.

Personalized Learning

Digital technologies can also provide personalized learning experiences, where children can learn at their own pace and level. Personalized learning allows children to explore topics that interest them, providing opportunities for critical thinking and independent learning.

Multimedia Learning

Digital technologies also allow for multimedia learning, where children can learn through a combination of text, images, audio, and video. Multimedia learning engages multiple senses, providing opportunities for children to analyze information from different perspectives and identify biases.

Assessment

Digital technologies also provide effective means of assessing children's critical thinking skills. Online quizzes, tests, and games can provide immediate feedback, enabling children to identify areas of strength and weakness and adjust their learning accordingly.

Conclusion

Critical thinking is a vital skill that children need to develop to navigate the complexities of the world they live in. English classes provide an excellent opportunity for developing critical thinking skills, and digital technologies can provide effective means of enhancing this development. Through interactive, collaborative, authentic, personalized, multimedia learning experiences, and assessment, children can develop essential critical thinking skills that will enable them to succeed academically and in life. As educators, we must embrace digital technologies and leverage them to facilitate critical thinking skills development in our students.

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