

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study was to critically analyze the effectiveness of critical thinking skills in teaching the English language at the university level to non-native speakers of English. The study further analyzed the performance measured by a test of two groups of English language learners that were independent and controlled groups.

Methodology: The study analyzed the performance measured by a test of two groups of English language learners that were independent and controlled groups. of BSII. For this purpose, an aptitude test was designed and served to sixty students grouped as group A and group B. Both groups have thirty students. According to the paradigm of the study, the independent samples t-test proved to be the most appropriate statistical test.

Main Findings: It was concluded that incorporating critical thinking skills would be able to improve English language learning among students at the tertiary level. It was recommended that teachers' training workshops should be arranged for English language teachers, so that they may enhance their knowledge about teaching critical thinking.

Applications of the study: Critical thinking skill is directly relevant to the instructional objectives and English language teaching. The purpose of this study was to critically analyze the effectiveness of critical thinking skills in teaching the English language at the university level.

Novelty/Originality of the study: Research in the field of English language learning in non-native English speakers' countries is always rewarding.

Keywords: *Critical Thinking Skill, Pedagogical Approaches, Instructional Objectives, English Language Teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning are as old as history itself; turn the pages of history and find the pages are full of eminent personalities who were teachers. Teaching is an art because it involves emotions. It is not like initiating a synthetic response, it is significantly more painting an image, making a bit of music, or one planting a nursery for enriching a jar or composing a well-disposed letter, that one should toss heart into it. A viable educator augments the accomplishments of understudies by acting per an express arrangement of rules that have a request, intelligibility, and pertinence in the specific instructional setting.

In countries where English is a non-native language, the students are afraid of speaking in and outside the classroom but if the teacher is wise enough to emphasize critical thinking, then guidance in English will be fun and pleasing activity. Students are no longer considering English language learning as a difficult task but an opportunity to learn fast. Instructional objectives of teaching and learning if handled wisely in the context of English language teaching accelerates learning.

Effective teachers with effective classroom practices have been shown to improve their intended learning outcomes. It will improve the learning of the students and prepare them to face many challenges in terms of English language speaking. Students are the major driving force in developing countries. Students are driving the economy and future of the country.

Harmer (2007) defined the teacher metaphorically as an actor playing many roles. It appears as if they are the actors on stage and performing their roles on the stage and just feel as if they are always on the stage. Then he gives an example of gardeners as they are planting the seeds and then watching them grow and it is the teacher who is not only imparting knowledge but also facilitating knowledge in the learning environment. She/he is also a friend and creates a harmonious environment so that language learning is it no more a difficult task, but becomes fun? It is the part of a teacher that / is turning teaching language into fun. She/he is a planner, and she organizes many language learning activities in the classroom. She/he is the leader and also a facilitator. He/ She is the controller. Teachers lead from the front, and they are transferring knowledge through charismatic character. First, he/she is inspiring and then igniting the thirst for knowledge in their students with a sense of leadership. She/he is also a prompter; he/she ignites in them a thirst for learning new words from the vocabulary. Because it is the language learning class, he/she is facilitating language learning keeping in view the objectives of instructions. She/he is also a participant in the classroom. She/he is a resource person and according to Harmer teacher is the best resource in the classroom. The teacher is performing many roles in the classroom; he/she engages them and instructs the students on how to speak and what to speak with the help of demonstration. He/she initiates

learning and then language learning. The teacher imbibes in their learners' autonomy. For example, he/ she is energetically performing an activity for teamwork as a game energetically. She/he is encouraging them clearly and fairly. Again he/she is playing the role of encouraging them and also supporting students.

This research aims to explore the insights that can inform teachers on issues of current concern, for example, the design of curriculum which has as a primary goal in the development of communicative ability in learners and designing classroom procedures for effective development of language skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultivation of language is a dynamic process. Method refers to the reasons for the course of action related to instruction. It instructs the way of teaching and manners of effective teaching. The most important factor for an instructor is to grasp the manners and strategies of teaching English. [Anthony \(1963\)](#) defined method as: The cycle of lesson planning, selection of the topic and preparation of instructional situation is regarded as method. He then added further definition of the method as the specific way of attaining the learning objective and the endeavours with a particular theory is regarded as a method.

[Mackey and Gass \(2011\)](#) have stated that: A method comprises four elements, the selection of content, the analysis of content, the way of demonstration and the practice.

Teaching methods are divided as:

In the Grammar Translation Method rules of grammar are explained with the help of sentences. The sentences by follow the principles of grammar are translated from the native language to English. GTM starts with the translation of words and sentences. But the translation method kills spontaneity. GTM gives mastery over vocabulary but does not emphasise skills. GTM is insufficient for the mastery of language skills.

Audio lingual relied heavily on practices. The purpose of Audio lingual teaching is to reduce the speaking mistakes of English language learners by repetition. But this reinforcement of constant repetition encourages speaking and improves listening skills, but there is no emphasis on reading skills and writing practices.

In the middle of the 1970's, Asian countries were worried about the economic change and the position of English in the global market. It has only been concluded that the enhancement of English language instruction and understanding takes place mainly at tertiary level. The universities must encourage the use of language and the improvement of language among students.

Moreover, Lectures remain an effective approach for classroom teaching. It has been confirmed that lectures are more interesting and develop the involvement of students in the classroom.

[Thomson \(2012\)](#) has identified the techniques and strategies to be used by the teacher to make the students' learning effectively. He concluded that teachers should be aware of the techniques and strategies to implement them in the classroom and make the relationship between teacher and student more powerful.

Furthermore, [Awan and Shafi \(2016\)](#) have explored the interest of students and concluded that they prefer native language rather than English language teaching. They usually like to communicate in Urdu instead of English. They have favoured GTM rather than the Direct Method (DM). Moreover, they have stated that through GTM teaching English is easier and more demanding. Students are satisfied to be taught and learned through this method of teaching language. From this point of view of students, researchers have found this method effective. However, [Hussain et al., \(2009\)](#) have mentioned in their research that the direct method is a more effective teaching methodology rather than GTM. DM has been found more worthwhile for lower level students as it provides them more opportunities to communicate and interact socially in the English language.

[Chien \(2014\)](#) as performed a study on the analysis of instructional methods of university students. He has collected the data from teachers and students through observing classes and interviews. It has been concluded that teaching English in the classroom is not related to one method, and the methods should be used according to the necessity of the students.

Moreover, [Toralunga \(2006\)](#) has conducted research on the concepts of teaching methodology in language concerning instructional methods and concluded that understanding through different approaches is more valuable, Students' learning must take place according to the requirements in the classroom. According to [Anil \(2017\)](#), the practice of new strategies through creative teaching techniques is important. To enhance the level of students' learning, teachers must focus on different activities for students' development of language learning skills. Teachers should create a comfortable environment in which students feel easy to become a part of any uplifting of knowledge. Teachers should provide incentives to the students and give space to every student to think critically and creatively, through using innovative methodologies, strategies and techniques in teaching English in the classroom. Teachers should use effective teaching methods in the learning classroom because students can easily participate in the classroom with full confidence.

Most of the research has been conducted intentionally on techniques of teaching the English language, strategies, analysis of students' perceptions, the importance of grammar-translation method GTM and DM and many more methods like cooperative approach (CL), communicative language teaching (CLT), lecture approach, group discussion approach etc. and to find out the effective teaching methodology for teaching English, at the tertiary level in Karachi.

The eclectic approach is used for teaching a language in which the teacher teaches students with different methods and techniques for the development of students' learning abilities according to their needs. As [Tare \(2016\)](#) has stated that teaching and learning require creativity and innovation in learning strategies and techniques and there are lots of different methods that can be applied in the classroom for better learning of the students.

[Ellis \(2012\)](#) pointed out that there are various strategies for guiding the English language. Each method contradicts and negates the previous methodology. Each of these has merits and demerits. There are various circumstances in educational institutes in which a language teacher can't follow one methodology or the others. As there are overcrowded classrooms and time is another important hindrance for language teachers. None of the methods is perfect in every respect and thus it is the mastery of the teacher and analysis of the situation that shapes the learning experience. [Killen \(2009\)](#) suggested that quality teaching depends upon the effectiveness of the teacher and teaching objectives. According to [Hattie \(2012\)](#), it is much more important to encourage students to think critically. [Arif et al., \(2021\)](#) suggested the characteristics of effective teachers and elaborated that the essential element in classroom is learning of the students through uplifting of reasoning skill. The efficient teachers follow effective methodology for teaching that is critical thinking skill.

Critical thinking is the most significant technique to follow for language instruction in the 21st century. These skills are not new as they were included in the taxonomy of objectives studied by Literature is crammed full of the fact that teaching effectiveness is directly related to the uplifting of the critical thinking of the learners ([Stahl & Murray, 1994](#)). Language is our social device. We use it to share understanding and thus to all things considered, mutually, comprehend it. Language is a method by which people create innovative ideas and share experiences in society ([Gibbons, 2016](#)). [Niazi & Lodhi \(2020\)](#) discussed the significance of Bloom's Taxonomy in their study, they argued that Bloom's taxonomy is based on the levels of reasoning skills. English language teaching could be facilitated by the emphasis on the levels of critical thinking skill.

It is the teacher who is guiding the English language. That is why the course is known as ELT, English Language Teaching. According to J.F. Kerr Curriculum is the learning which is planned and guided by the school whether it is carried out individually or in a group, inside or outside the school. Johnson suggested the "curriculum is a structural series of intended learning outcomes."

[Niazi et al., \(2021\)](#) presented a study on the curriculum development, elaborated that in the language teaching classrooms instruction should be based on critical thinking skill. The study focused the fact that the best teachers are critical thinkers and they imbibe their reasoning skill among the students in the classroom and uplift their metacognition. As teachers are in a commanding situation in an educational institute. The most dominant role is played by the teacher. There are four important components of a curriculum:

- 1) Objective
- 2) Content
- 3) Learning experiences/methodology
- 4) Evaluation

These components are important in a process-oriented curriculum

In the formulation of learning objectives, the intended learning outcome is the change in the behaviour of learners.

The Critical Thinking Skill: Critical thinking is the reasoning ability that language learners have attained after evaluating the objective analysis of facts. At the zenith of critical thinking, the learner can analyze the issues at the stage of cognitive processes, they can synthesize and conceptualize the knowledge. It is then produced in the form of creativity. Reasoning faculty is the ability to solve issues and form a sensitive and sensible social community. Critical thinking stimulates the cognitive processes of the mind which creates the form of organized and well-managed systems of life. The styles that are produced after critical thinking are based on peace and serenity. The uplifting of critical thinking embodies a purposeful and planned society. [Vdovina and Gaibisso \(2013\)](#) examined students at Serbia University, and they emphasized the incorporation of instructional objectives and critical thinking while learning English. As per her investigations, basic speculation assists with building up people's capacity to think and settle on the right choices. It can affect students' capacity to learn the English language rapidly and viably. The basic reasoning is a pointer to the imagination. [Ugli and Qizi \(2020\)](#) played out an examination on language rehearses in Uzbekistan and she scrutinized that basic reasoning is the most significant expertise for instructing and learning the English language. Qizi explained the idea she said that when we get familiar with an unknown dialect we are from an alternate social area. The process of thinking that is based on critical cognition of the mind is beneficial in all areas of life; it is necessary for all endeavours of human existence whether education, trade, commerce, scientific research and so on. To critically analyze the procedures and form the results based on thought processes are the demand of all fields of life. Critical thinking is useful in academics and research, as research is based on an analysis of facts which critically formulates the conclusions. Critical analysis of the procedures plays a pivotal role in the dissemination of research. Critical reasoning faculty accelerates communication, as it is a cognitive process. Critical thinking promotes problem-solving abilities which lead to collaboration for which communication is the most important factor, so we can prove that critical thinking leads to a communicative society.

[Davidson \(1998\)](#) pointed out that Critical Thinking enhances language and presentation skills. A person with higher

cognitive skills is the most beneficial for society. Acquiring a second language is difficult, as it requires language learners to work with different structures of sentences and different rules and principles of grammar. The acquisition of the English language needs different cognitive models. Learning different cognitive models of language or the syntax of English is difficult and different from Urdu. The most important factor for a language learner, while acquiring a language, is the critical ability to analyze the principles and rules of a language is essential to learn.

[Rahman and Manaf \(2017\)](#) suggested the importance of critical reasoning and language learning as the most important factor for language learning which is why critical thinking or cognitive reasoning ability accelerates the language learning process. The difference between the syntax in the English language and other languages makes English language learning a highly cognitive process, which needs higher levels of critical thinking and reflective practices. There is a huge difference between sentence construction in English and Urdu a place of the subject, verb and predicate; and the organization of sentences; the use of adjectives and nouns. Hence language learning and communication of a language needs critical thinking ability, and instructional objectives of teaching are based on the series and different steps of critical thinking. Then we can prove that there is a direct relationship between language learning critical thinking and instructional objectives, as it is based on hierarchical order.

METHODOLOGY

The reason for the study is to critically analyze the effectiveness of critical thinking on English language learning at the tertiary level. [Dornyei \(2011\)](#) the quantitative study was applied in nature and in to collect the data an experiment has been designed.

Independent-samples t-test was for research design where the researcher was comparing the results of two groups that were independent of each other for example in the study, the teaching strategy of group A was independent of that of group B. group A was following instructional objectives of teaching and learning methodology whereas group B was not following instructional objectives of teaching and learning methodology. One variable in this study involved marks obtained by the students in the English language test and the grouping variable was teaching methodology.

Theoretical Framework: The variables in teaching methodology and achieved marks were implemented to analyze the relevance of instructional objectives in the teaching of the English language among students at the university level. The Teaching methodology was an independent variable, whereas marks were a dependent variable.

The research was quantitative. To compare the means of two groups of English language learners' an independent t-test was applied using SPSS. The participants included two English language teachers who were teaching two groups of English language learners. Group A was taught as per instructional objectives of teaching whereas the methodology of group B's language teacher was not focused on instructional objectives.

Data Analysis Technique: According to the paradigm of the study, the independent samples t-test proved to be the most appropriate statistical test to highlight the difference between the teaching methodologies of two groups, groups A and B. The study contained two groups: the treatment or experimental group and the controlled group. The Experimental group was labelled as group A, whereas the controlled group was labelled as Group B. For group A, the teaching strategy was based on the instructional objectives of teaching and critical thinking skills methodology, whereas group B's teaching methodology was not based on the instructional objective of teaching and the teacher following the lecture method. After the teaching of three months, the progress of both groups was measured by a test. The test was pre-formulated by the researcher and it carried twenty-five marks. The marks obtained by the students indicated their learning progress. Validity, reliability and ethical considerations were considered. The comparison of the two groups was carried out by applying the Independent-samples t-test. The obtained data were computed by SPSS version 20 applying independent samples t-test.

Results: Analysis of questions:

Question#1: Is the instructional objective of teaching and critical thinking relevant to be the basis of teaching the English language? Based on the learning outcome of language learning.

The marks achieved by group A were rewarding and the results of group A indicated the quality of teaching by the teacher, because of the implication of instructional objectives of teaching.

From the tabulated value of the means of group A and group B it was evident the results of group A were rewarding whereas group B which was taught by a teacher who was not following the objectives were less effective and less fruitful.

As interpreted by the means: the mean of group A was 24 and that of group B was 19. Being aware of Bloom's objectives of teaching an effective teacher presented the strategies clearly and enhanced the English language learning among the students at the university level.

Question#2: Why is it important to incorporate the instructional objectives of teaching and critical thinking while teaching the English language?

The results interpreted that the following instructional objectives of teaching and critical thinking objective of teaching were proved to be more influential in learning the English language.

The marks achieved by the groups indicated the difference between the performance and cognition of the two groups

The cognition of group A was enhanced and uplifted whereas the cognition of group B was less.

Question#3: Is it important to analyze the instructional objectives of teaching and critical thinking, and study its relevance to the teaching of English?

Being the second language in Pakistan, the English language requires higher cognitive abilities while learning.

Instructional objectives of teaching were based on stages of critical thinking and stages of cognitive abilities. It is important to incorporate the instructional objectives of teaching in language teaching.

Question#4: Would adopting the instructional objectives of teaching and critical thinking be rewarding and would the findings be helpful in curriculum development and helpful for the teachers to attain the desired objectives of the course?

It was evident from the concrete findings that incorporating instructional objectives of teaching would be very rewarding.

It was very helpful in attaining desired learning outcome of language learning it was very efficient and productive while incorporating language learning.

Data Analysis: Results were interpreted following Levene's test. The decision of Levene's test indicated that if p was less than 0.05 the variances were significantly different. Following was the analysis and the interpretation of the independent samples t-test:

The mean was interpreted as follows; the mean of group A is 24 and group B was 19. The difference between the two means was significantly low.

The mean was 24 and for group A and the mean of group B which was the group not following the objectives of instructional taxonomy was 19, the difference between the two means was five.

Group Statistics

	INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
RESULT	FOLLOWING	30	24.2333	.89763	.16388
	NOT FOLLOWING	30	19.8333	2.90164	.52977

Table 1: Means

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
RESULT	Equal variances assumed	15.552	.000	7.935	58	.000	4.40000	.55454	3.28998	5.51002
	Equal variances not assumed			7.935	34.500	.000	4.40000	.55454	3.27365	5.52635

FINDINGS/ RESULTS

The findings revealed that students indicated effective language learning if teaching would incorporate instructional objectives of teaching based on critical thinking skills. As instructional objectives of teaching levels were classified from lower order of thinking skills to higher order of thinking skills, teachers uplifted students' critical thinking skills and accelerated language learning. Teaching strategy while teaching the English language involves awareness of the "how" of the language that is directly linked with critical thinking. It was much more important to encourage students to think critically in English language classrooms. The findings showed that the instructions based on Critical thinking skills are more effective.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The researchers undertook this study because the critical thinking skill among students in Pakistan is poor. The issue is related to the developments in Pakistani society. Students' effective language learning at the tertiary level is relevant to the instructional strategies. Unfortunately, instructors do not realize the significance of critical thinking skills. As mentioned in the literature review an ideal classroom instructional strategy must emphasize the uplifting of critical thinking. This study is in line with some other researchers such as [Harizaj and Hajrulla \(2017\)](#). As they believed that critical thinking is the

most important skill for twenty-first-century learners. As [Lam \(2020\)](#) has stated that teaching and learning require creativity and innovation in learning strategies and techniques and there are lots of different methods that can be applied in the classroom for better learning of the students. Since it is clear from the above-mentioned findings that an attempt to teach the English language by incorporating critical thinking was very effective in building effective communication skills that further improved the collaboration of the language learner and ultimately generated sensible and sensitive social citizens.

CONCLUSION

It was revealed through the study that teachers played the most vital role in language learning. Therefore, it could be concluded that teaching effectively in a language classroom plays a major role in improving the critical thinking and language learning of students. English language teaching has enhanced English communication skills through focused teaching strategies.

Learning through incorporating instructional objectives of teaching in language classrooms was very efficient. A Cognitive process which was also known as the thinking process was divided into two broad classes: A lower level of thinking and a higher level of thinking. Higher-order thinking was the type of cognitive processing that broadened students' minds and wider their thinking ability. Higher-order of thinking processes and described by the upper levels of hierarchies of thinking presented by instructional. The Scientific classification gave the continuum of psychological procedures beginning with recollecting and advancing through comprehension, applying, breaking down and assessing to making. The subjective procedures in the upper portion of scientific categorization of instructional were alluded to as a higher request of reasoning since they included English language students participating in complex, contextualized language learning procedures to alter both information and unique thoughts in manners that portrayed their significance, It included students to settle on choices about basic issues, and to apply numerous measures to utilize those choices. When English language learners were engaged in higher-order thinking skills they would typically be required to explain, generalize, synthesize, interpret and construct innovative ideas. The results were predictable as students were thinking critically and it could be predicted what students might create if they were thinking critically. To promote English language learning, teachers must promote a higher phase of thinking. Higher-order of thinking skills was directly relevant to the teaching strategies. It was important that the teaching methodology must follow the instructional objectives of teaching. So, to achieve the goal of desired language learning it was ideal to focus on the instructional objectives of teaching. In English language classrooms it was the errand of an educator to give and guide them towards greatness in the language yet language learning required significantly more than only recognition of the jargon and syntax of the language. It likewise included familiarity with how language worked to impact thinking, feelings and comprehension. It was the obligation of a language instructor to assist students with understanding how sentence structures affected significance, how important were passed on, why various types of writings were utilized in a specific circumstance and the job of correspondence. The attempt to teach the English language by incorporating critical thinking was very effective in building effective communication skills that further improved the collaboration of the language learner and ultimately generated sensible and sensitive social citizens.

LIMITATIONANDSTUDYFORWARD

English is a widely spoken and widely taught language. The experimental research was carried out at the university level with the help of two groups, but English is the most important component in achieving academic excellence as well as achieving professional excellence. The research is restricted to the university level.

CONFLICTOFINTERESTANDETHICALSTANDARDS

Validity concerned the overall quality of the research project and it was the meaningfulness of the interpretations that researchers make based on their observations, [Dornyei & Ushioda \(2011\)](#). In this study, the extent of the interpretations was based on validity and reliability. It did not generalize beyond the research study. In the research study, validity and reliability were carefully measured through pre-testing procedures. The variables measured in the study were not manipulated. The findings of the study were valid, as they have not been affected by factors other than those thought to have caused them.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

All authors share their contributions regarding the collaborative study in the paper and the aspects of finance.

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