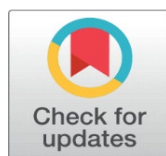
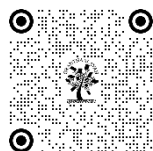


READING BOOKS: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

At most institutions of higher education, educating critical thinking is widely regarded as one of the central goals. Although a book of literature can be seen as a reproduction of our world within a single four-walled classroom, it has the potential to influence young minds and enhance critical analysis skills, particularly through language teachers. This paper emphasizes the importance of using literature as a medium to develop critical thinking competencies in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) learners.

Reading encourages cognitive development, fosters critical thinking, and expands problem-solving skills. Literary genres provide learners with unique ideas, complex characters, and plots filled with twists that leave a lasting impression. Students are compelled to think deeply, critically, and analytically while reading, which helps them master certain higher-order thinking skills. They develop inferential skills, make connections between texts, and cultivate the ability to think about, and beyond, what is stated in a text based on evidence.

Additionally, reading enhances creativity, imagination, and empathy, teaching students to see things from the perspectives of others and understand different traditions. Since the late 1950s or early 1960s, incorporating bookwork into language learning classrooms has been shown to foster not only language competence but also cognitive and metacognitive skills. Teachers guide students in shared conversations, reflective prompts, and cooperative efforts that require higher-order cognitive processing. This paper advocates for making extensive reading a key feature of English language instruction, highlighting its contributions to critical thinking, knowledge building, and the development of a reading habit that is essential for lifelong learning. Experimental in nature, this study uses a short story as a text to illustrate and explore the potential for critical thinking among English language learners. The research aims to demonstrate the quality of students' critical thinking by engaging them with a selected short story. In doing so, it seeks to reveal the insights, analyses, and interpretations that learners can produce as they interact with a narrative landscape. Specifically, the research aims to show that using short stories in English language learning encourages students' critical thinking.

Keywords: Critical thinking skills, reading literary texts, skills of creativity, and imagination, knowledge expansion etc

1. INTRODUCTION

While a single universally accepted definition of critical thinking remains elusive, its significance in various professional fields cannot be understated due to its association with problem-solving and decision-making abilities. John Dewey (1997) posits that critical thinking entails the cultivation of a thoughtful mind, emphasizing the importance of nurturing this cognitive habit in education. (6) Jennifer Moon (2008) advocates for a comprehensive study of the relationship between reading, critical thinking, and the educational process. She highlights that critical thinking is intrinsic to research assignments and is particularly crucial in higher education, serving as a foundational concept. She further

suggests that critical thinking fosters meaningful and contextually relevant learning, aligning it with the primary objective of education. (25)

Carroll (2005) states that critical thinking is the process of giving a text, a careful consideration and that self-evaluation is a key component of critical thinking. (8) The ability to reflect on one's reasoning, identify its flaws, and reform it in light of that analysis is what we mean when we talk about critical thinking which can be developed by enhancing one's reading skills. Simultaneously, teaching students how to think, as opposed to telling them what to think, is one of the primary purposes of teaching critical thinking. This is the antidote to thoughtlessness, and it is something that students studying in academic settings who speak English are required to do. Students, both native and non-native, need to have these skills taught to them to be able to meet these criteria and increase their chances of being successful in their professional lives. Brown (2001) asserts that an effective academic English program should encompass more than just linguistic elements. It should also prioritize the cultivation of critical thinking skills. Among the various skills needed for EFL/ESL learners, reading is highly regarded as a key avenue for nurturing critical thinking abilities. Combining reading with critical thinking has the potential to offer optimal benefits, particularly for children. (45) It is incumbent upon teachers to create opportunities for students to analyse, synthesize, and evaluate concepts, thereby fostering their critical thinking skills. Teachers thus play a crucial role in empowering students to think critically, equipping them with the tools to engage with academic material and develop a deeper understanding of the content.

The history of Critical Thinking can be traced back to Socratic times. The Socratic Method is a school of thought that motivates people to correct cognitive processes that are inconsistent and unreasonable, such as confusing interpretations, insufficient pieces of evidence, contradictory ideas, and meaningless words. Paul and Elder (1997) emphasized the need for obtaining evidence, critically examining logic and assumptions, assessing core concepts, and tracing the repercussions of these ideas (34-35). The concept of critical thinking is difficult to pin down. Critical thinking is a topic that has been the subject of discussion and controversy in educational settings for decades. There are a lot of different ways to explain what critical thinking is. Many definitions stress that critical thinking is a process that involves introspection and reasoning and that it calls for certain abilities and attitudes (Ennis, 1987). Ennis identified a wide variety of characteristics that are present in every critical thinker. The ability to evaluate the validity of an argument, including its grounds, evidence, and reasons, an inquiring mind and forethought of alternative solutions, an effort to have sound knowledge, the ability to assess the validity of information, the identification of findings, objectives, and assumptions, and the capacity to evaluate the reliability of an argument are the characteristics that make up an open-minded person. In addition, he stated that people who are competent in critical thinking are likely to be able to create and defend an appropriate position, ask questions and get them clarified, establish convincing hypotheses, effectively arrange experiments, define language appropriately, and arrive at acceptable conclusions. (9-26)

Critical thinking is a reflective decision-making and intelligent problem-solving skill regarding what to believe and do (Facione & Facione 2007). They assert that the capability of thinkers to exercise control over their line of reasoning is the most important aspect of the critical thinking definition. To advance their level of critical thinking, individuals need to establish and consistently apply objective criteria and standards for analysing and assessing the quality of their thinking. (38-45)

Critical thinking, as highlighted by Chaffee (1994), plays a vital role in problem-solving and decision-making, relying on inference and argumentation. This definition emphasizes the critical evaluation of our thinking as well as that of others. Halpern (1998) further defines critical thinking as purposeful, reasonable, and goal-directed reasoning. It encompasses skills such as problem-solving, drawing conclusions, assessing probabilities, and making choices. Unlike a linear assessment method, critical thinking is a comprehensive set of skills that facilitates each stage of the problem-solving process.

These definitions suggest that critical thinking is a complex activity that often demands higher-order thinking and cognitive functioning. When individuals possess critical thinking skills, they can solve problems, make judgments, evaluate evidence, and draw informed conclusions. This highlights the need to harness our thoughts effectively to achieve our objectives. Ennis (1996) emphasizes that critical thinking is influenced by a combination of attitudes toward critical thinking and the necessary cognitive abilities.

Ennis (1996) suggests the following characteristics of critical reasoning:

1. finding a precise description of the topic
2. establishing cause
3. seeking to demonstrate expertise; and
4. attempting to keep relevance to the central issue. (20)

Learning theorists such as Facione (2000) have devised a wide variety of classification schemes for critical thinking. Bloom's Taxonomy, one of the most influential models of critical thinking, offers a valuable educational framework. It presents a hierarchical structure that outlines different levels of cognitive development. The six levels, from lowest to highest, are knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Each level represents a stage of learning, and appropriate scaffolding at each level can lead to improvement. By following Bloom's theory of Mastery Learning, instructors can guide students through progressively challenging tasks that require higher-order thinking skills. Recognizing the importance of critical thinking, it is beneficial for curriculum design to incorporate Bloom's Taxonomy and its six levels. This approach ensures that students receive comprehensive training in developing critical thinking skills, starting from foundational knowledge and moving towards advanced cognitive abilities.

2. NEED FOR CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The goal of improving one's critical thinking skills will inevitably require the participation of individuals who can engage in analytical thought. Many of those currently advocating for changes in the educational system support the idea that students should be taught to engage in critical thinking and to continue their education throughout their lives. It is hoped that one day the entire world will become more integrated into the curriculum of universities. Because of the widespread interest in this subject, the idea of critical thinking has given rise to not one but two distinct interpretations: the first is that of critical thinking as a concept to be possessed for one's management in one's life, and the second is that of Critical Thinking as an academic discipline. There has been a concerted effort made by educational institutions all over the world to incorporate critical thinking into their courses. Those who wish to pursue careers in education should place a premium on developing their critical thinking skills. Future English as a Foreign Language (EFL) graduates must incorporate critical thinking into their university studies if they are to fulfil their role as educators of younger generations in the art of critical thinking. Reading between the lines, coming up with arguments, and ultimately coming up with one's interpretation of a given book are the primary topics of this particular piece of writing. In other words, the purpose of this essay is to investigate the connection that English language learners have between reading and the ability to think critically.

Thinking critically differs from being critical in that thinking critically is the ability to make a fair and unbiased judgment while being critical is the ability to make inferences, looking for shreds of evidence and arguments, probe into statements and explanations, and search for any kind of material relevant to a particular aspect Paul and Elder (2007) assert that much of our thinking, when left to its own devices, is biased, skewed, partial, uninformed, or outright biased. Yet the quality of life of an individual and the things that are produced, created, and constructed are dependent on the quality of the thoughts. This assertion asserts that critical thinking is the cornerstone of an effective education. In Socratic instruction, the emphasis is on posing queries to students without providing answers. Instead, the instructor continually encourages the student, allowing him to look deeply into the subject. The instructor enables the student to develop skills in critical thinking, reasoning, and logical reasoning. The disciplined practice of attentive inquiry thus aids the scholar/student in assessing ideas and determining their validity.

The important challenge for the educational sector is trying to work on how critical thinking skills can be developed among young learners. Bloom's Taxonomy provides a structure for instructors to use to differentiate between low-level and high-level questions and goals. Lower-level questions are purely focused on memorization and recall, but higher-level questions foster critical thinking, the generation of new ideas, and the evaluation of previously presented information. There are a total of six different levels of thought, beginning with the most fundamental and working one's way up to the most advanced. Higher-level questions require students to explore the happenings in a text, to compare, evaluate, and arrive at conclusions; lower-level skills involve memorization of the information through practising, rewriting, and rereading. These include skills like analysis, judgement, the ability to recognise differences, information gathering, being objective when coming to conclusions, and having foresight when making forecasts (Tabačková 2014). All of these approaches qualify as active learning approaches based on the notion that students remember more information when they are actively engaged in class and encouraged to think critically about the issues at hand and examine how they may be applied to real-world settings.

3. READING LITERARY TEXTS FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Literary texts are an excellent means by which to bridge the gap between the educational setting that occurs anywhere, be it a classroom or the real-world requirement. Windows onto the world can be found in every type of written expression, including prose, poetry, and theatre. It is a single text that may be used in a variety of different ways

throughout a large range of classes, and in this regard, it corresponds to the real world. At the same time, the reader of a literary work is challenged by the requirement of applying critical thinking skills to make sense of the text through activities such as analysis, evaluation, and creation. This places the readers in a position where they are required to put their critical thinking skills to the test. There are several interpretations of a single piece of writing that can be read and comprehended, and some of them may appear to be very different from one another. Hence, the learner is instructed to maintain an open mind towards many points of view. As a result, not only is the ability to think critically put to use, but the virtue of open-mindedness is as well.

Roland Barthes (1967) in his article "The Death of the Author", asserted that the death of the author offers freedom for the reader to interpret the text. This idea is credited with having a significant impact on the field of critical thinking skills (Tabačková 2014). It can be understood that the responsibility of deciphering the text lies in the reader and his interpretation of the text. He further adds that given that reading is an interpretive and analytical process in and of itself, one could argue that Barthes was testing the analytical prowess of his readers when he puts the responsibility of interpretation on the reader. The burden of developing an original interpretation of the text falls on the reader, who is tasked with differentiating between the denotative and connotative senses, making connections between the many narrative parts, assigning significance to particular words, and so on.

Richards (1998) emphasizes the relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehension. He asserts that the reflective mind enhances its thoughts by contemplating them. Similarly, it enhances its reading through self-reflection. Facione (2007) claims that critical thinking and reading comprehension are highly interrelated. Throughout the early phases of comprehension, readers develop literal knowledge of the text. Both recalling information and summarizing the text are required skills. At this juncture, the reader is only minimally engaged in critical thought. When the reader begins to generate interpretations and inferences, critical reading begins. Next, readers must analyse the text using hints and cues to make meaning of concepts that are implied but not explicitly stated. Next, readers must continue to concentrate on understanding the author's message. At the highest levels of comprehension and reasoning, readers analyse the text's concepts, evaluating the accuracy of the information and the logical sequence of the text's evidence.

It is important to make a distinction between critical reading and critical thinking; the former refers to an active reading strategy that helps the reader locate specific information in a text, while the latter encourages introspection about the experience of reading. The techniques and strategies of critical reading include determining the main ideas of the text, reading for specific information, recognising the organisation of the text, verifying understanding, making inferences, dealing with unfamiliar words, connecting ideas, and many more. The language instructor can make his students practice improving critical thinking in a literature class by encouraging the Socratic Questioning strategy. Using Bloom's taxonomy as an illustration, the researcher here argues that a teacher's questioning should be carefully sequenced from that which focuses on content concerns to that which aims at interpretative issues to promote critical thinking. This is done to encourage students to think critically about what they are reading. The first thing they should do is discuss the facts of the text's content such as the author's details, the period it was written, who the narrator is and so on; the second thing is to analyse the text to identify the essential components of the text; and the third thing is to create their interpretation of the text by eliciting inferences between the text and the real world. As a consequence of this, students will progress beyond the stage of obtaining knowledge and apply what they have learned to more difficult activities such as analysing, synthesising, and assessing. Students start with critical reading, then move on to critical thinking using Bloom's notion of low levels and high levels of thought as a guide.

4. INTENSIVE AND EXTENSIVE READING FOR IMPROVING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH READING

While reading, English language learners must exercise their critical thinking skills. During reading a text, many questions arise in the minds of the readers, and the learners must focus on these questions to strengthen their critical thinking skills. The following are some queries that readers might have.

Evaluate the meaning by asking what the main point is. How is the meaning communicated? What are the points of support?

Assess the authority by determining if the author is an authority. Are the evidence's sources credible? Are the facts convincing? Is the evidence's application reasonable?

Evaluate the argument by asking, "Do I agree?" If not, are I able to refute it? Do I find any excellent examples?

It is essential for teachers trying to incorporate reading skills into the minds of the learners, to select the reading strategy that they will utilise to accomplish the goal that they have set for themselves. There is a difference between reading a lot and reading a lot of different things. Reading extensively while being guided by a tutor is one strategy that has been shown to hasten the learning of a language. Students acquire their reading skills at their own pace and according to their aptitude throughout their schooling. The idea that children's reading abilities will develop if they read a wide number of books to gain a general understanding is the foundation of an all-encompassing approach to the instruction of reading. Brown (2001) suggests that extensive reading is necessary for in-depth comprehension of substantial content. The vast majority of significant reading takes place outside of the classroom, and the primary motivation for this reading is pleasure. Focused reading refers to a concentrated approach to reading, where students engage in intensive reading of specific topics or texts under the close supervision of the instructor. This method enables students to develop a deeper comprehension of the material, enhance their reading skills, and improve their vocabulary and grammar. As noted by Brown (2001), focused reading is commonly practised in classrooms as a content-based approach, where students concentrate on the linguistic and semantic intricacies of the text. Readers have the freedom to choose what they read based on their needs or interests. (45) They may dedicate ample time to thoroughly review information or, when pressed for time, opt for skimming to quickly locate specific details. Skimming involves rapidly identifying the main ideas in a paragraph, while scanning entails swiftly scanning lines and pages to locate specific information. Proficient reading skills, including the ability to discern the primary focus of a phrase, are crucial in developing overall reading proficiency. Mastery of these skills contributes significantly to becoming an effective reader.

In addition, Rivers (1981) differentiates between motivated readers and those who are merely observant. During observational reading, the reader pays close attention to almost every word and makes educated guesses about how new ideas may emerge. This illustration represents a reader who is in the early stages of their reading education. When looking for something to read, a reader will swiftly look over the surface of printed items to find specific characteristics. Reading can be approached from a variety of perspectives, such as the Bottom-up, Top-down, and Interactive models. Reading, like other cognitive activities, is believed to involve two distinct processing types, as described by researchers. Bottom-up processing refers to the analysis of external inputs, such as letters and words, with minimal reliance on higher-level knowledge. It focuses on the initial reception and decoding of information, making letter and word reading an example of a bottom-up process. In contrast, top-down processing acknowledges the influence of prior knowledge on comprehension. The extent of one's existing knowledge can impact how well one understands new information. Rivers (1981) also highlighted the significance of interactive techniques, wherein readers reconstruct the text's meaning by integrating information from the text and their prior knowledge. These interactive techniques contribute to the development of critical thinking skills in learners. Together, these processing types and interactive techniques highlight the potential for learners to enhance their critical thinking abilities through reading.

The present study includes the following research objectives and research questions that enable us to find the techniques of scaffolding to create interest among English language learners and improve their reading skills as well.

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the impact of reading literary texts, specifically short stories, on the development of critical thinking skills among English language learners.
2. To identify specific aspects of critical thinking that can be elicited from learners through their involvement with thought-provoking literary content.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of integrating literary texts into the English language learning curriculum in enhancing learners' problem-solving abilities and higher-order thinking skills.
4. To assess the role of teachers in fostering an environment that promotes meaningful discussions and activities aimed at enhancing critical thinking through reading.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does reading short stories impact the critical thinking skills of English language learners?
2. What specific aspects of critical thinking can be stimulated in learners through their involvement with thought-provoking literary texts?
3. To what extent does the integration of literary texts into the English language curriculum enhance learners' problem-solving abilities and higher-order thinking skills?

4. What role do teachers play in creating an environment that encourages meaningful discussions and activities to foster critical thinking through reading?

7. ACTIVITY FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TO ENHANCE THEIR CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

In alignment with the research questions and objectives, the researcher implemented an experimental design to assess the effectiveness of enhancing critical thinking skills among the learners. This approach was structured to systematically evaluate how the targeted interventions impacted the development of critical thinking abilities, providing measurable outcomes to support the study's aims. The sample population were ten undergrad students, both boys and girls randomly selected from a university.

To enhance the critical thinking skills of English Language Learners, an activity involving a short story by Hemingway was employed, aligning with Benjamin Bloom's Theory of Mastery Learning. Before the activity, learners were provided with copies of the selected short story and were encouraged to identify and mark unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases.

The activity began with a discussion on the story's basic plot and characters, ensuring clear comprehension of the narrative. Subsequently, learners were divided into small groups or pairs and were given a series of predetermined critical thinking questions based on Bloom's taxonomy. The questions progressively increased in complexity, enabling students to engage in higher-order thinking. The collaborative nature of group work fostered communication skills, while the utilization of Bloom's taxonomy promoted structured thinking and comprehensive exploration of the short story. The present task successfully trained the sample learners in critical thinking and collaborative skills.

The hypotheses outlined for this activity were designed to foster comprehensive language development and critical thinking skills in English language learners by engaging them with a short story. Drawing on Benjamin Bloom's Theory of Mastery Learning, the activity aims to create an immersive learning experience where students not only comprehend and analyse literary texts but also develop higher-order thinking skills, expand their vocabulary, and improve their communication abilities. By incorporating collaborative learning, reflective practices, and creative writing, the objectives emphasize a holistic approach to language acquisition that also promotes cultural awareness and metacognitive reflection. These goals work together to build a deeper understanding of literature while enhancing learners' critical, creative, and collaborative skills.

HYPOTHESIS 1: COMPREHENSION AND ANALYSIS

By engaging in the activity centred around a short story, English language learners will demonstrate improved comprehension skills by accurately summarizing the story's plot, identifying key themes, and analysing the characters' motivations.

HYPOTHESIS 2: CRITICAL THINKING AND EVALUATION

Through the application of Benjamin Bloom's Theory of Mastery Learning, English language learners will develop critical thinking skills as they evaluate the story's events, make connections to their own experiences, and form and defend opinions about the characters' decisions and the story's resolution.

HYPOTHESIS 3: VOCABULARY EXPANSION AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

As part of the activity, English language learners will expand their vocabulary by identifying and understanding unfamiliar words and phrases within the short story. They will also improve their overall language acquisition by engaging in discussions, debates, and written reflections related to the story.

HYPOTHESIS 4: COLLABORATIVE SKILLS AND COMMUNICATION

By working in small groups or pairs, English language learners will enhance their collaborative skills and communication abilities. They will engage in meaningful discussions, actively listen to their peers' perspectives, and articulate their thoughts and opinions using appropriate language and vocabulary.

HYPOTHESIS 5: CREATIVITY AND EXPRESSIVE WRITING

Through the activity, English language learners will exercise their creative thinking skills by imagining and writing an alternative ending to the story. This objective will allow them to demonstrate their understanding of the narrative, while also encouraging their expression and written language skills.

HYPOTHESIS 6: METACOGNITIVE REFLECTION

Throughout the activity, English language learners will engage in metacognitive reflection, considering their learning process, strategies used to understand the story, and areas of improvement. They will develop self-awareness and the ability to monitor their thinking and learning, fostering a growth mindset.

These hypotheses aim to enhance critical thinking skills, language acquisition, collaboration, and self-reflection among English language learners through the use of a short story and Benjamin Bloom's Theory of Mastery Learning.

HEMINGWAY'S THE OLD MAN AT THE BRIDGE (SHORT STORY - ADAPTED)

The narrator, a Republican soldier, travels by pontoon bridge on Easter Sunday across the Ebro Delta to learn something more about the situation facing the Fascist enemy. The narrator comes back to the bridge and runs into the old man who left town right before he did. According to the 76-year-old man, he had to leave behind his pets — two goats, one cat and four pairs of pigeons — when he moved. The old man is always preoccupied with his animals. The voice tells him to hitch a ride into Tortosa and then a truck to Barcelona. The old man is too tired to run and too difficult for him to resist being apprehended. He, too, is among those planning to bide their time on the bridge with his animals. The old man is neither for nor against the Fascists. He loves his pets a lot, and he also loves his community. The pigeons, throughout the story, have transformed into doves a symbol of peace compared to whatever violence was happening around the narrator and the old man. This old sage is kind of like the good shepherd who just wants what is best for his flock. That the old man watches for the same animals shows us how he cannot separate past and present. To heighten the drama more, it can be guessed at this point one of the two lead performances is under threat of dying.

8. THE STUDENTS WERE GIVEN APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONS BASED ON BLOOM'S THINKING LEVELS, OF BOTH LOWER ORDER AND HIGHER ORDER.

LEVEL 1 – RECOLLECTING FACTS FROM THE BOOK OR POSSESSING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

- a. Recollect the setting of the story, the time, and place, name the characters and describe them.

LEVEL 2 – UNDERSTANDING OR COMPREHENDING WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE NARRATION.

- a. Why do certain characters act in certain ways?/ What makes the character do what he or she does?
- b. What do you think is going to happen next?
- c. Can you identify what the main conflict is all about? (Man vs. man, man vs. nature, man vs. self)
- d. What is the climax of the story?
- e. What is the central idea of the story?
- f. What does the author want to get across? Or, what does the story teach us?
- g. Can you summarize the story in your own words?
- h. How would you describe the motivations of the characters?

LEVEL 3: USE TO USE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED: PUT WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED INTO PRACTICE. USE THE BOOK TO HELP YOU IN YOUR OWN LIFE.

- a. Sketch the characters or map of the setting based on what the book says about them.
- b. Which character do you like the most? Why?
- c. What would you do in a certain situation if you were a character in the book?
- d. How would the story change if the setting were different?
- e. What advice would you give to one of the characters if you were in their position?

LEVEL 4: LOOK INTO IT (ANALYSE THE LITERARY ASPECTS ETC.)

- a. What are the various techniques of writing that you see such as similes, metaphors, alliteration, irony, imagery symbolism etc., Identify in what context are they used.
- b. Compare and contrast the chief characters of the story to other characters in the book or to characters of other books with a similar narration.
- c. Mention some good and bad traits of the main characters with pieces of evidence.
- d. Compare and contrast the story with another work of the same author or another work from a similar genre, time, or theme.
- e. What are the key themes or messages conveyed in the story?
- f. How does Hemingway use symbolism to enhance the story?

LEVEL 5: SYNTHESIS (MAKE USE OF THE FACTS IN THE STORY AND COME UP WITH INNOVATIVE IDEAS, OR THOUGHTS, SUGGESTING NEW SOLUTIONS ETC.,)

- a. How would you change the story's ending if you were the author?
- b. Write a short narration that comes before or after the story. Try to focus on literary techniques used in the story. It is great fun to reframe the story in your way!

- c. Write a letter to one of the characters in the book to praise him for something brave he did, give him advice and encouragement, or tell him off.
- d. What are your personal opinions about the decisions made by the characters?
- e. Do you agree with the resolution of the story? Why or why not?

LEVEL 6 – EVALUATION (CRITIQUE THE STORY BASED ON SPECIFIC ASPECTS GIVING REASONS FOR YOUR EVALUATION.)

- a. Think about how the author writes. Does it appear interesting? Justify your answer with evidence.
 - b. How well do the characters help bring the story to life?
 - c. Does this story matter to you? Do you find such people today? What's the deal?
 - d. Do you think people should read it? If so, who do you think it would be good for? What is the deal?
 - e. What do you think made the book a classic, if it is one? (Classic in the sense that it has been read by many people for many years.)
 - f. Can you write an alternate ending to the story? How would it change the overall message?
- When these aspects are talked of in the classroom to the students about a literary text, it more likely enhances the critical thinking skills of the learners of a particular age group.

PEER AND PAIR WORK IN THE PRESENT STUDY (TASK-BASED COLLABORATIVE WORK)

- a. Encouraged students to discuss and debate their answers within their groups or pairs, supporting their viewpoints with evidence from the text.
- b. Reconvened as a class and had each group or pair share their responses to the critical thinking questions. Facilitate a discussion, encouraging students to provide reasoning and engage in respectful debate.
- c. Promoted critical thinking skills among English language learners, allowing them to analyse, evaluate, and apply their understanding of the selected Hemingway short story.
- d. Taught to adjust the level of difficulty and support as needed to ensure all students can participate and thrive in the activity.

Student Number	Gender	Remember (Lower-order)	Understand (Lower-order)	Apply (Lower-order)	Analyse (Higher-order)	Evaluate (Higher-order)	Create (Higher-order)
1	Boy	8	7	6	7	6	8
2	Girl	9	8	7	8	7	9
3	Boy	6	7	6	7	6	7
4	Girl	7	7	7	6	6	8
5	Boy	8	8	7	7	8	9
6	Girl	9	8	9	8	8	9
7	Boy	7	6	6	6	7	7
8	Girl	8	9	8	8	9	9
9	Boy	7	7	6	6	6	7
10	Girl	9	8	7	8	7	9

9. EXPLANATION OF SCORES:

1. Remember (Knowledge): Students scored based on recalling key information from the text.
2. Understand (Comprehension): Scores were given for summarizing and explaining the story's key points.
3. Apply (Application): Reflects students' ability to apply vocabulary and concepts to other contexts.
4. Analyze (Analysis): This shows how well students broke down and examined the text's elements.
5. Evaluate (Evaluation): Scores based on students' judgment of the text's meaning or decisions made by characters.
6. Create (Synthesis): Reflects creative thinking, such as writing new endings or imagining alternative scenarios.

The performance scores of ten students across Bloom's six levels of cognitive skills highlight their critical thinking abilities.

For lower-order thinking skills, the first-level scores ranged from 6 to 9, indicating a solid foundation in recalling information. In the second category, students demonstrated their ability to explain concepts and summarize information effectively, with scores reflecting a good grasp of key ideas. The final scores showed that students can use their knowledge in practical situations, although there is a slight decline, with the highest score being 9 and the lowest at 6. For higher-order thinking skills, the first-level scores indicated students' capability to break down information and explore relationships among elements within the material, with most students scoring between 6 and 8. In the second category, students showed their ability to assess arguments and make informed judgments, with scores primarily in the range of 6 to 7. Finally, the scores revealed a strong performance in generating original ideas and solutions, with several students achieving top scores of 9.

Thus, the data highlights the students' varying levels of critical thinking skills across all six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. While they demonstrate solid abilities in remembering and understanding, there is a notable strength in higher-order thinking, particularly in creativity and evaluation. This analysis suggests that further development in analysis and application could enhance their overall critical thinking skills.

10. CONCLUSION

Thus, a literary work, in many respects, acts as a miniature depiction of the wider universe that exists outside of the confines of a book or a piece of paper. A classroom, just like any other type of "microcosm," ought to be a reflection of the "macrocosm" that exists outside of its four walls. The contemporary world, regardless of whether it is referred to as a Melting Pot, a salad bowl, or a global village, calls for citizens who can make decisions, recognise and explain differences, and tolerate and even appreciate various points of view. These individuals need to have an understanding of how they think to be competitive in the job market (Tabačková 2014). There are still a great number of educational establishments that continue to exist and operate solely within the constraints of their tiny bubble. They continue to place an excessive amount of emphasis on rote learning and not nearly enough on preparing youngsters to address the challenges that they will confront in the real world. People who are engaged in important work and are capable of critical thought are what the actual world seeks, not individuals who are content to merely adhere mindlessly to pre-existing ideas and beliefs.

Because it is a reflection of the world beyond the classroom, literature is a wonderful vehicle for bringing concepts from the outside world into the classroom and sharing them with the students inside. The people who populate a book are analogous to real-life individuals; their viewpoints and philosophies can be understood; the language that the characters use is similar to that which is spoken on the street; and the ambiguities that are typically found in literary texts are analogous to those which are found in real-world situations. So, thinking about a piece of literature is similar to thinking about things that have happened in real life. Literature can be considered as an instrument that motivates the readers to make their responses. Hence, critical thinking should be incorporated into a lecture on literature whenever higher-order thinking and reasoning are being utilised. Reading literature can assist in the development of not only reasoning abilities and subject-matter expertise but also the dispositions and moral attitudes necessary to embrace opposing worldviews, which are important to survival in the modern world.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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