

On Cultivating College Students' Critical Thinking Ability in Intensive Reading Course

Xiaoyan Li*

Sichuan Minzu College, Sichuan, China, 626001

Khams Research Institute of Translation on Minority Cultures

**Corresponding author. Email: 616266001@qq.com*

ABSTRACT

Contemporary college students are living in a rapidly changing society. How to make themselves better adapt to this society and promote its development has become an unavoidable proposition. Cultivating Contemporary College Students' critical thinking ability for professional knowledge and social problems is helpful to deepen their understanding and rational use of professional knowledge and promote themselves to adapt to the society faster and better.

Keywords: *College students, Critical thinking ability, Intensive reading course.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking ability refers to the ability of thinking, analyzing, distinguishing, persuading and explaining, including both logical thinking ability and language expression ability. Critical thinking ability is a very rational and systematic analyzing ability. Some people say that there is no wisdom without thinking ability. Whether a person's critical thinking ability is strong or not can be seen from whether he has wisdom, that is, whether he has the ability to solve problems in a breakthrough way.[1]Cultivating Contemporary College Students' critical thinking ability for professional knowledge is helpful to deepen their understanding and rational use of professional knowledge; Cultivating Contemporary College Students' critical thinking ability for social problems is helpful to deepen their thinking about social problems, and promote themselves to adapt to the society faster and better, integrate into the society and build the society.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING CONTEMPORARY COLLEGE STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING ABILITY

Contemporary college students are living in a rapidly changing society. How to make themselves better adapt to this society and promote its development has become an unavoidable proposition for

contemporary college students. The ability to think critically is the ability to quickly refute any problem, relying on a deep and better understanding of the problem. To achieve this, we must first understand and classify the problem, then find out the contradiction between the problem and our own point of view, and finally find out more profound ideas from our own point of view to refute. It is obviously wrong to simply understand critical thinking ability as saying no to all viewpoints and theories.[2]We cannot ignore the process of understanding, classification before refuting and finding the contradiction between our own theory and the others' theory. In this paper, the critical thinking ability of college students is divided into two aspects, one is the critical thinking ability towards professional knowledge and the other is the critical thinking ability towards social problems, because for the current college students, "Two ears cannot hear outside the world. Read books by Saints only." is obviously far from enough. Cultivating Contemporary College Students' critical thinking ability for professional knowledge is helpful to deepen their understanding and rational use of professional knowledge; Cultivating Contemporary College Students' critical thinking ability for social problems is helpful to deepen their thinking about social problems, and promote themselves to adapt to the society faster and better, integrate into the society and build the society.

3. THE POSSIBILITY OF CULTIVATING CRITICAL THINKING ABILITY IN INTENSIVE READING COURSE

For language learners, the cultivation of developing the ability of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation cannot be less. Among them, "reading" is divided into extensive reading and intensive reading. Extensive reading, as the name suggests, is extensive reading, which mainly emphasizes the breadth of reading, while intensive reading mainly focuses on the depth of reading. Modern college English, edited by Yang Limin and published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and used by many college English majors, offers the possibility of cultivating students' critical thinking ability in intensive reading course.

3.1 Carefully-selected Themes

There are 16 units in each volume of the textbook, including 14 units in addition to the two small test units in the middle and final period. There are 14 themes in 14 units, which include history, politics, philosophy, humanities and other aspects. Although these topics cover quite a wide range, they will not make students have a sense of distance and strangeness. These themes can arouse students to think about their own society or thinking limitations to a certain extent. For example, in the article "Another School Year – What For?", the editor puts it in the first unit of one of the sub- volumes, hoping that students can make clear of the goal and importance of learning through the study of this article after a long relaxing and enjoyable holiday before they enter the tense new semester again. For another example, in the two articles "Cord" and "In My Day", the author describes the relationship between mother and daughter in the former and the relationship between mother and son plus father and son in the latter to arouse readers' thinking about the common social problem --generation gap. In the article "Thinking as a Hobby", through the three division of thinking levels, it guides students to think about what kind of thinker they are, and encourages students to break through the limitations of their own thinking and strive to become higher-level thinkers. In the article "Say Yes", the author describes the most common quarrel between a couple. In this way, the author succeeds in causing students to think about serious social problems such as marriage and family, and even racial discrimination. These carefully selected topics can free language learning from the boring language learning itself, so that language learners should not only pay attention to the language learning itself, but also go deeper and further -- pay attention to the content conveyed by the language. The organic combination of language learning and content learning makes it possible to cultivate the critical thinking ability

of language learners' professional knowledge and social problems.

3.2 Reasonably-arranged Speaking Tasks

Language is not only a tool of communication, but also a carrier of culture. Therefore, while learning a language, it is far from enough to pay attention to the language level only, such as the formation of words, the collocation of phrases, the use of sentence patterns, etc. we should also pay attention to the content, i.e. the author's intention in writing this article. Through intensive reading and deep interpretation of the content of the article, we can separate it out and then make clear of it. This process is not only the deep interpretation of the article, but also the cultivation of learners' own critical thinking ability. The Speaking part after each article creates favorable conditions for the cultivation and improvement of students' critical thinking ability. In this part, the arrangement for the questions is reasonable, and the level is from easy to difficult. First, ask questions about the details of the reading article itself, then list some famous sayings closely related to the content of each unit, and then ask students to give their own comments on these statements, after some group discussion or their own thinking. The content of the discussion is also closely related to what they have learned in this article. The arrangement is quite clear-cut. First, ask questions about the content of an article to test the students' reading comprehension. Then require them to give some comments and discussions later on. To arrive at this, the students should have a deep understanding of the article, have their own understanding, form their own views, and find out whether there are contradictions between their own views and those of others. It is not a simple yes or no answer, but a statement of one's point of view. The process of stating one's own ideas and expressing oneself is the process of cultivating learners' critical thinking ability.

3.3. Highly- compatible Writing Tasks

Writing ability is an indispensable ability for language learners too. The process of writing is the process of internalizing and applying the knowledge we have learned, which can greatly improve the learners' language ability, logical thinking ability and analyzing ability. In order to write a good article, we must first be good at gathering, sorting out and processing materials, find the best writing materials, then organize the materials, make a well-structured outline for the article, and finally pay attention to the careful choice of words and sentences to show our point of view. The last task of the exercises after each text is the writing part. The topic of the writing comes from the content of the text itself, but higher than the learning content. It is highly related to the learning of the text. It can not only test the

learners' mastery of the learning content, but also provide the learners the enough space and possibility to play. The language learners can keep improving their own critical thinking ability in the process of writing.

4. STRATEGIES OF CULTIVATING CRITICAL THINKING ABILITY IN INTENSIVE READING COURSE

The importance of critical thinking ability is self-evident. The carefully selected topics, speaking and writing parts of intensive reading also make it possible to cultivate students' critical thinking ability. [3] But how to cultivate learners' critical thinking ability?

4.1 Developing the Ability of Language Learners to Observe--be Good at Observing

Being good at observation and cultivating the ability of association can expand the breadth of thinking. In the process of observing the author's choice of words and sentences, the structure of the article, the theme of the article, and associating the theme of the article with one's own reality or social reality, we constantly expand the breadth of thinking, so as to cultivate the ability of critical thinking ability. We should develop a good habit of making good observation, be good at associating the past with the present, putting ourselves into others' shoes, and turn the process of observation and association into the process of improving our own thinking ability. Take the article "Message of the Land" for example. From the choice of the words, phrases and the sentence patterns, we can see this article is pretty easy to understand, for it is an interview between the author and the couple of farmers. The language is colloquial. It is their everyday language so it is easy for us to understand it. Then how about the theme? The same piece of cake? The answer is negative. After reading this article, we may find that the theme is not stated but implied by the author. To understand it better, to make the theme visible, we need to figure it out between the lines, because details count. Sharpen our eyes and find the clues, just like doing a treasure hunt to see what the theme is. First, the choice of words. Take the first paragraph for example in this article for example. In this para. We got words like "our", "my", "as", "jeans" and so on. All these words are just some simple words. But there are some deeper meaning in them. By digging out the deeper meaning, we can get to the theme of the text. And we'll deal with them one by one. By using the words "our" and "my", we can feel the wife is very proud of being the owner of the land. Then it's the word "as" in the sentence—"My husband moved into our house as is the way with us in Esarn." [4] We may feel surprised after reading it because of culture shock. But for the wife, she took it as something ordinary, and there was no need to make a fuss. Here, something refers to their belief, their custom, their

culture, their tradition. They have it, then they follow it, just that simple. And the word "jeans", we see it several times in the text. Here, it is a symbol of being modern, which the wife doesn't like. Then let's see the choice of phrases. In para. 1, we got phrases like "belonged to my parents and forefathers", "more than three centuries old". The first word coming to our minds is history and then inheritance. And in para.4, we got the phrase "in my day". If a parent tells the children something about his or her past, it often turns out to be a moral lesson about how hard life was for him or her. And it usually begins with "in my day"—generation gap. Here it reminds us the changes happened in their village between the two generations. Finally, we come to the choice of sentences. "I'm the only daughter in our family and it was I who stayed with my parents till they died." From the sentence, we get to know their different culture again, and from its emphatic form, we get to know that the wife is pretty proud of their tradition. "All of them remain my children in spite of their long absence." From the sentence, we get their "love of family". "These rough fingers and toes are for working in the mud of our rice fields, not for looking pretty." We got their "love of thrift and simplicity". "We should offer food to monks every day, go to the temple regularly." [5] We got their "worship of gods"... Still, we can get some other words like "kindness and generosity", "self-reliance", "love of nature" and so on from some other sentences in the text. These words are their belief, their custom, their culture, their tradition. From the choice of words, phrases and sentences, we find that the old couple want to pass on the land to their children because they want their children to remember their roots and inherit everything symbolized by the land: hard work, simplicity, thrift, self-reliance, kindness and generosity, love of nature, love of family, worship of gods... To put it simple, it is their history, their culture, their tradition. Take a lead for them, helping them develop their critical thinking ability by developing their ability of careful observation.

4.2 Cultivating the Ability of Language Learners to Think Hard--be Diligent at Thinking Hard

The students should be diligent in thinking, and they should keep doing it constantly. [6] It is better for them to develop their ability of "saying no". There is no good for them to "say yes" all the time, so that they can break the limitations set by themselves to expand the depth of thinking. For example, while learning the article "a dill pickle", we can try to make the following thinking. Learners can assume that this nameless man is a completely self-centered and worthless perpetrator, or that Vera is a complete victim and she is totally innocent. Then we can begin to find the corresponding evidence between the lines of the article to deny this view, and then come to our own conclusions. Develop this way of

thinking in to a habit and keep doing it. We can improve our critical thinking ability in this process.

4.3 Cultivating the Ability of Independent Thinking of Language Learners--be Independent at Thinking

The ability to think independently is the ability to dig out of one's own potential. Cultivating learners' independent thinking ability can cultivate learners' ability to adapt to any circumstances, and improve learners' self-confidence to show and express themselves. [7] In the process of independent thinking, there are a lot of things to take into consideration. If you want to make it, you will constantly improve your spiritual strength, that is, the ability to think, so that you will not blindly follow others. And the speaking part for each unit make it possible as we mentioned it beforehand.

4.4 Developing the Ability of Language Learners to Express Themselves Well--be Good at Expressing Themselves

In essence, language learning is outputting, that is, expressing oneself. It is not enough to be good at observing and thinking, but also good at expressing. The process of expressing oneself is not only the process of comprehensively using the knowledge we have already learned, but also the process of cultivating one's own critical ability. The speaking part and writing part in the course of intensive reading make it possible. The former is oral expression, the latter is written expression, but the thinking process is the same, and the critical thinking ability cultivated in this process of thinking is the same. The process of cultivating language learners' expressing ability is the process of improving their critical thinking ability.

5. CONCLUSION

With the development of science and technology, today's society has already entered a society of rapid development in all aspects. How to quickly adapt to this society has become an unavoidable problem for everyone. As college students who are still on campus but are about to enter the society, this is an unavoidable problem. To adapt to this society needs to have a strong adaptability, then critical thinking ability is essential for that. With certain critical thinking ability, we can be good at observing, diligent in independent thinking and good at expressing, and we will not blindly follow others. We can well adapt to this society, build this society, promote the progress of this society, and realize both personal value and social value.

REFERENCES

- [1] Scrivener, J. Learning Teaching[M]. SHANGHAI: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. 2002
- [2] Nunan, D. Second Language Teaching and Learning [M]. BEIJING: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. 2001
- [3] Grellet, F. Developing Reading Skills[M]. BEIJING: People Education Press. 2000
- [4] Limin Yang. Contemporary College English[M]. BEIJING: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. 2012
- [5] Limin Yang. Teachers' Reference Book for Contemporary College English[M]. BEIJING: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. 2012
- [6] Anderson, N.J. Exploring Second Language Reading[M]. BEIJING: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. 2003
- [7] Jeremy Harmer. How to Teach English[M]. BEIJING: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. 2000