



**Developing Critical Thinking in EFL Classes (2018)**

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Springer

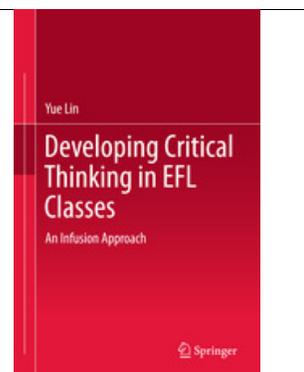
Pages: xix + 194

ISBN: 978-981-10-7783-8

Cost: \$99.99

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The book *Developing Critical Thinking in EFL Classes* is composed of eleven chapters and seven appendices. You may find author and subject index at the end of the 194 pages book. The book was largely dedicated to cognitive learning development mechanisms which aim to promote thinking skills in L2 classes. In order to achieve this, author proposes the use of infusion approach because he claims that it is helpful in integrating critical thinking (CT) into L2 classes. The author describes infusion method in ELT as a communication helper that merges direct instruction of thinking skills and specific methods that promote thinking, in which learners can verbalise and visualise their private speech in the process of learning a language (namely English in this book). In brief, the author elicits a link between CT and language learning under the framework of “infusion-thinking” lessons.

Chapter One provides theoretical knowledge with regard to CT. The whole chapter was devoted to emphasizing the importance of CT in L2 classes, whether it can be taught explicitly, and how it can be assessed. The writer provides numerous useful definitions of CT; however, he does not give the one of his own. It could be better if the author had explained what CT had meant for him because the whole book is based on this issue. For the author, it is clear that CT is a teachable skill if L2 students are offered a disposition in processes like problem-solving or decision-making. The chapter is good at establishing a background knowledge concerning CT and its role in L2 learning. Furthermore the chapter -through a literature review- garners myriad assessment methods that could be used to assess CT, yet it fails to provide an overt answer on how CT could be assessed in L2 classrooms. It seems that the author leaves the decision of which form of assessment should be used to readers, but because he is the one who is expertise in the field, the author could deliver his own suggestion.

Chapter Two aims to inform readers all about the infusion approach. The writer talks about how this approach facilitates to develop students’ cognitive and learning abilities on condition that explicit instructions are given during in-class interactions. The infusion approach should follow a path of orders in order to be successful. The first phase is the instructions provided by the teacher; in the second phase the teacher becomes a model for students, and then they are required to do some self-thinking skill activities; and finally the teacher creates opportunities or contexts in which students can apply or practise what they have learnt. The chapter ends with providing some activities that teachers may use as thinking tasks. The chapter is good at informing readers about what infusion approach is, and when and how to use it. However, the demerit of the chapter is insufficient number of critical thinking task activities suggested in the chapter. These activities could be expanded because there are much more available tasks that can be used in class (see Cottrell, 2017)

Chapter Three tells about the relationship between thinking and writing in order to prepare the readers for the next chapters. However, at first the chapter seems to be weird because the issue of writing together with infusing critical thinking is not mentioned till chapter five. Therefore, the chapter seems to be irrelevant until the chapter five has been read. The writer had better partly mention the relation between writing and infusion method in the previous chapters so that the reader could read the chapter in a more meaningful way. Similarly Chapter Four, the shortest chapter, deals with the effectiveness of teaching thinking skills. In the chapter, the author defends that instruction in thinking in L1 and L2 classes may enhance reasoning, creativity and academic achievement. Throughout the chapter, the author provides references supporting his view.

Hereon, the chapters 5-10 present a study which investigated whether high school L2 learners get benefit from being taught of critical thinking skills. The fifth chapter explains the rationale behind the study and provides information about the context of the study. The chapter also includes research questions and research design. The study has three research questions all of which are related to the implementation of infusion method in writing classes. The sixth chapter is all about data collection and data analysis. The writer compares and contrasts the experiment and the control groups. The experiment group represents for the infusion class (IC) that the infusion method was used while the control group is the traditional teaching class (TTC). In order to assess students' critical thinking skills, the author used what he called, the Chinese versions of California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI) and California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST). The data consists of students' written texts, a self-completion questionnaire, semi-structures group interviews and a self-evaluation questionnaire. Triangulation of collecting data is rather sufficient to validate ramification of the assessment. This longest chapter is presented decisively in an organized and systematic way that allows readers to track every bit of information needed to grasp methodological process; however, readers may get lost wading through piles of information when the longevity of the chapter is considered. Amidst this hefty but a well laid-out chapter, readers may need more clarification and conciseness in order not to miss the crowning touch.

Chapter Seven introduces the findings of the study. This chapter aims to persuade readers that infusion lessons have positive impacts on the students' thinking. The results are organized to show the impact of infusion lessons on critical thinking from three aspects: students' perceptions of the effects on thinking, impacts on critical thinking dispositions and critical thinking performance. The author allocates a title for each aspect, and the results are explicitly presented through tables and coloured figures. The chapter also includes authentic examples cited from student conversations. At the end of the chapter -as in every chapter- a summary is provided, which is useful for readers who may get confused due to numerous statistical results and numbers in the tables.

Chapter Eight was devoted to provide a window on how infusion lessons positively affect students' writing. Pre- and post-test results regarding overall proficiency, accuracy, syntactic complexity and fluency of writing are given under separate sub-titles. The author only uses coloured figures in this chapter. The results show that infusion lessons have a key role in developing students' writing flair thanks to their contribution to the improvement of overall proficiency. The only category that was negatively affected by infusion lessons is accuracy which decreased by 3.5%. The author attributes this fall to the use of more sophisticated words and more complex sentence structures, and accordingly the results show an increase in grammatical complexity, but the question is that whether there is a negative correlation between grammatical complexity and writing accuracy. The study context of the book is composed of Chinese students, and a similar study conducted on Chinese students' writing skill proves independency of grammatical complexity and writing accuracy (c.f. Larsen-Freeman, 2006). Putting this minor shortcoming aside, the chapter legibly puts the results in order with clarity.

Emotional factors regarding students' perceptions and attitudes towards infusion lessons are embedded in Chapter Nine. The emotional factors are processed from four aspects, namely, enjoyment, worries, activeness and difficulties. The chapter provides valuable suggestions concerning future lesson that were collected from students. Similar to previous chapters, coloured figures help readers understand the overhaul findings concisely. The author assessed students' perceptions and attitudes based on two questionnaires (self-evaluation and post-intervention) and interviews though it seems that interview questions are not available for readers. The former questionnaire is a six-point likert type scale with 18 questions while the latter includes ten semi-structured interview questions. Data collection methods are enough to reach a reliable result.

Discussion and conclusion are presented in Chapters Ten and Eleven, respectively. Author supports his idea with a great many of references from different perspective; however, under the title of Active Thinker and Active Learners he argues that his results contradict Fox (1994) and Atkinson (1997) in that they are suspicious of the effectiveness of critical thinking in Asian EFL classrooms. This suspicion is not easy to weather only with a few words because it touches to the base of the book. The author should have explained in what way his results saved from Atkinson and Fox's reservations. In the last chapter, pedagogical implications, limitations and suggestions for future studies are presented.

Taken together, the book broadly falls into two categories: theoretical and applied. The first four chapters provide theoretical bases while the rest provide some window on the relationship of CT on EFL classes through applied studies. *Developing Critical Thinking in EFL Classes* has many merits. The strong point of it is that it merges both theoretical information and practical implementations. It also deserves praise with its data collection tools. Triangulation of data collection is rather myriad in order to reach reliable results. However, there is still room for minor critical remarks. One demerit of the book is the language it used. In some parts of the book the author use redundant boosters with no convincing proof or reference. The author applied pre- and post-tests, but I would recommend him to have a delayed post-test following post-test so that the readers may see long-term effect of infusion-method on the improvement of students' critical thinking. Long-term efficiency of infusion method may be important for some readers. Another thing that the readers should be alert is that the book has a Chinese-based context as the author frequently stressed throughout chapters. Students' socio-cultural background or other culture-based features may have a positive or negative effect on the success of the method; therefore, those who are planning to apply the infusion method in different contexts may need to create their own lesson schedules taking context variations into consideration. I hope the author will regard my reservations as a welcome addition for the next editions of the book.

These minor shortcomings should not detract from the positive contribution that this book makes to the cognitive linguistics. Teachers of language courses and instructors at universities may get benefit of this book in order to promote students' critical thinking thanks to its empirical thinking activities and techniques. The book may also be helpful with its benchmarks in assessing and evaluating the improvement of students' critical thinking levels or how far the teaching has become successful. Finally, the suggestions in Chapter Nine may be of utmost importance for instructors who plan to deliver infusion lessons for their students.

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