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## **CRITICAL THINKING AS AN ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILL FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

The modern world is a world of information that is rapidly expanding and is becoming obsolete. The modern world is governed by the modern information society, which puts forward new demands on education. One of these requirements is to train people who can make critical decisions, find their way into a new environment, and quickly establish new relationships in reality. Thus, the development of critical thinking is a vital necessity at the present stage of the state's development, in the period of democratic values formation and intense social changes.

Educational priorities shift from the amount of information learned to the ability to operate and use this information in real life, and therefore the role of critical thinking in the educational process is increasing.

The theoretical basis of technology for the development of critical thinking are considered in the works of famous foreign scientists M.Lipman, A. Crawford, S. Mathews, R. Sternberg, D. Dewey, who characterize the process of critical thinking learning as the acquisition of competence and its implementation with regard to the system of higher individual and social values and ideals. The founder of the Institute of Critical Thinking, Matthew Lipman, considers the approaches to solving this problem broad enough, defining critical thinking as scientific thinking, the essence of which is to make carefully considered decisions about the credibility of any statement whether we must accept it or reject it and the degree of confidence with which we do it.

Critical thinking is a process in which a person can characterize the phenomenon or object, express his/her attitude to it through controversy or argumentation of his/her own opinion, find a way out of any situation. It is the process of analyzing, synthesizing and justifying the evaluation reliability (value) of information; the ability to perceive the situation globally, find causes and alternatives; the ability to generate or to change their position on the basis of facts and arguments and make informed decisions. Critical thinking is the ability to perceive information actively, creatively and individually, apply the right kind of mental activity, analyze information comprehensively, have a personal, independent opinion and be able to uphold it correctly.

There are different reasons to say that critical thinking skill is so important. Firstly, it helps students to observe an object from different points of view, discovering new things at each new angle. It also helps them to challenge their preconceptions about the object and create new and better-informed ones.

Secondly, critical thinking also has an influence on students' interpersonal skills. By thinking critically and seeing things from different angles, students become more open-minded and empathetic, better communicators, they collaborate with their peers more successfully and discuss their ideas. Critical thinking helps them to develop their creative side by allowing their thinking process to run more freely, and explore more possibilities. It will make them better decision-makers, and with practice, also help them save time to make those decisions.

The main task of the teacher is to organize productive educational and cognitive activity of the students to ensure the realization of their personal cognitive and creative potential, which gives the opportunity to master the strategies of educational activities and gain effective independent experience in learning and using English in different situations.

The technique of forming critical thinking can be applied by teacher daily. Its key steps are the following:

1. **The challenge.** The purpose of this step is to generate personal interest to receive information. Students should think and tell others (with the help individual, paired, group work; brainstorming; common forecasts; voicing issues, etc.) about what they know from the chosen topic for discussion - the previously acquired knowledge are aware of and become the basis for learning new ones. The Teacher's Task at this stage is to summarize the knowledge of students and help each of them to determine "their knowledge "and the main goals for getting new ones.

2. **Comprehension.** New information is introduced to the students. They should find out what they understood and record what they did not understand in the form of questions to fill the "gaps" later. After that each student should tell which benchmarks / phrases / words helped them to understand the information, and which, on the contrary, got confused. The main principle of the thinking stage is that the teacher should provide guidance on students' individual searches for information which will be discussed and analyzed in group later.

3. **Reflection.** Students should consider what they have learned and how to include new concepts in their minds; discuss how this information changed their thoughts, visions, behavior.

To apply this technique teacher has to do the following:

- Define the purpose of the lesson (what we want to learn).
- Find out what you have already known about it.
- Ask the questions: What training resources do you have? How much time do you have for training?
- Gather information: try to be as open as possible and impartial to new information
- Arrange collected information, look for new connections among key concepts and between the topic and everyday life as well.
- Ask the question again: Is something unclear?

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