

On the Cultivation of Critical Reading Ability in College English Teaching

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Abstract

The cultivation of critical reading ability is the result of the combination of critical thinking and college English teaching. This paper mainly studies how to integrate the cultivation of critical thinking into college English teaching so as to improve the critical reading ability of non-English majors. First of all, starting from the meaning of critical reading, this paper expounds the importance of critical reading mode and specific teaching cases of English critical reading teaching, so as to provide references and specific teaching support for the cultivation of college English critical reading ability.

Keywords

Critical reading, College English teaching, Training methods.

1. CRITICAL READING

Critical reading is the third level of reading which is higher than literal reading and explanatory reading. It is not only to understand the literal reading of the basic content of the article, nor to understand the main content, details and ideological connotation of the reading materials, or to understand the writing intention. It is a high-level understanding of the text, which includes the skills of interpretation and evaluation. It enables readers to distinguish important and non-important information, distinguish facts and opinions, and determine the purpose and mood of the author. At the same time, it is necessary to infer the meaning beyond the words through reasoning, fill in the blank part of information, and draw logical conclusions. Liu Siyuan defines critical reading as “a kind of reading activity in which readers judge the authenticity, validity and value of the reading materials according to certain principles and standards on the basis of understanding the text and make evaluation.”

Chen Lingjun (2010) believes that critical reading is to analyze and evaluate the representation of text information on the basis of understanding the text language and content, so as to form their own views and attitudes. That is to say, teachers should guide students to reveal the deep meaning behind the text through the analysis and interpretation of the language. According to the definitions of several researchers, critical reading can be basically divided into two levels. The first level is to understand the text, that is, to understand what the author wants to express. The second level is to evaluate the opinions and attitudes transmitted by the text and express the readers' own opinions and attitudes. The interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, explanation and self-regulation of critical thinking skills can be fully applied and trained in critical reading.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL READING MODE

The guide of college English teaching is teachers, and it is important to elevate teachers' critical reading awareness. How to balance the explanation of language knowledge and the training of critical reading ability in limited classroom time is a difficult problem for college English teachers. At this time, teachers need to learn more, be diligent in thinking, and apply new reading methods to practice. Only in this way can we provide methods and guidance for the improvement of students' critical reading ability.

Critical reading is the students' inferences about the meaning of the text, the purpose of writing and the author's intention of writing on the basis of literal understanding of the reading text, as well as their reflections on the deep meaning behind the text. In the process of teaching, teachers introduce critical thinking into every link to guide students to establish innovative consciousness. In reading practice, encouraging students to look at things with critical thinking and paying attention to students' feedback on reading content can make students realize the fun brought by critical reading in reading practice, which will have a positive impact on college English teaching, improve students' enthusiasm and initiative in learning, and then form a benign circle of English learning and improve the result of college English teaching. In order to improve the comprehensive ability of English, we should cultivate students' reading habits and expand their knowledge.

At present, College English teaching pays more and more attention to the cultural connotation of teaching materials. In order to understand the significance of teaching content for cultural exchange, it is undoubtedly helpful to improve students' critical reading ability. Because cultural knowledge includes literature, history, philosophy and other knowledge, it requires students to have multi-angle thinking and multi-level critical thinking skills.

3. TRAINING METHODS OF CRITICAL READING

3.1. The Selection of Rich Reading Materials to Guide Students to See Problems from Multiple Perspectives

Critical reading materials should not be limited to the teaching content of the text. Teachers can choose some news, advertisements and film reviews to enrich the classroom teaching content. These materials themselves contain elements of critical thinking, and it would be better if there were articles with different views on the same phenomenon. Students can analyze, refine and even comment on the views of the article through comparative reading, so as to gradually form their own thoughts and views.

For example, for an advertisement, students can comment on the advantages and disadvantages of the advertisement, whether it can catch the audience's eyes, cause the audience's resonance, and finally let students write a similar advertisement, which trains students' critical thinking ability in writing. For example, we can comment on the shaping of the hero and heroine, and discuss the plot development and the rationality of the ending of the story. We can also let students choose topics of interest for evaluation, and train students' multi-angle thinking ability.

3.2. Critical Reading Perspective Based on Dialogism

The text does not exist independently. In the process of reading, it needs the cooperation and participation of readers. Teachers should guide students to invest in the thinking and comments of the text, so as to form their own views. Although students' personal views are very important in the process of reading, in fact, critical reading also needs dialogue. It is difficult to reach the depth and height of critical reading only by individual independent inquiry, which requires dialogue and communication between teachers and students, so as to obtain reasonable answers to the questions. We can use the way of debate to further elaborate our own views,

through the dialogue of critical reading perspective for cooperative exploration, in order to obtain more reasonable reading results. Through equal dialogue and communication, we can finally achieve the best reading effect.

3.3. Cultivate Critical Reading Ability in Reflection

The reflection of critical reading is the students' rethinking and regulation of their own reading behavior, reading process, reading strategy and the achievement degree of reading objectives in critical reading activities. It is also the students' examination of the rationality of their own critical reading activities. The purpose of reflection is to review and summarize the past reading activities, find out the problems, explore the improvement measures, make up for the deficiencies, correct the mistakes and draw the final conclusion.

On the one hand, based on the part, it reflects on each stage of critical reading. One is to reflect on the process of questioning. If you don't find a problem, reflect on the reason: why can't you find a problem? How can we find the problem? Is there a strong sense of problem finding? If a problem is found, we should reflect on the value of the problem. Second, reflect on the process of problem solving: is the arrangement of each link reasonable? Is the method scientific and effective? Is resource integration optimized? Is participation in interactive communication active? What are the benefits of interaction? The third is the result of reflection, that is, the situation of problem solving, has the preset goal been achieved? If not, how far is the gap? How to achieve it? On the other hand, based on the overall situation, the whole process of critical reading is reflected, what are the experiences and lessons?

In the process of reading, if students can carry out self monitoring, self examination and self correction for each reading behavior, and at the same time critically absorb the opinions and suggestions of others, the reading quality will undoubtedly be greatly improved. It can be said that reflection is an essential part of improving critical reading ability.

4. A CASE STUDY OF CRITICAL READING TEACHING IN COLLEGE ENGLISH

Unit Two Loving Memory: Elephant Reunion

Step1 Get started.

Ask students a question: What should we do to protect wild animals?

(The purpose of teaching is to raise questions and activate students' opinions on "protecting wild animal".)

Step2 Read and understand the text.

Let students read an article "Loving Memory: Elephant Reunion" by Andy Simmons

Ask students to find out the three necessary items for a happy elephant the author mentioned.

Q: What are the three necessary items for a happy elephant?

Analyze the structure of the passage. Could you divide the whole passage into a few parts? Then tell us the main ideas of each part.

The author of this article described a loving story of elephant reunion to tell people that elephants are intelligent animals for whom the family unit is everything.

No matter how many parts the students divide, the structure should include these contents: the brief introduction to Elephant Sanctuary in Hohenwald, the remarkable story of Jenny and Shirley's reunion after 23 years, the author's feeling after visiting the Elephant Sanctuary.

Let the students retell the story with some key words in each part, which will make them more familiar with the content of the article.

Analyze this sentence: Elephants wear their hearts on their trunks. This sentence comes from "wear one's heart on one's sleeve", means make one's intimate feelings or personal affairs known to all. This is a very vivid expression, comes from Shakespeare's Othello, which means

that the knights in Middle Ages wears the flowers which are given by their lovers on their sleeves. The understanding towards foreign masterpiece strengthen the understanding of author's cultural background, which is beneficial to deepen the ideological content of critical reading.

(Teaching objectives: to help students analyze the structure of the article and the author's writing style by means of analysis, classification and summary)

Step3 Analyze some sentences in the article. Work in pairs. Read the sentences from the article and answer the questions.

- a. "We created a system where dominance does not exist at all" says Buckley, "We give them the option to say no."(Para 4) Q: How to understand what Buckley said about the sanctuary?
- b. Elephants wear their hearts on their trunks, at it were, so it was easy to tell that Shirley was not dealing well with Jenny's death.(Para 14) Q:What does the sentence mean?
- c. Luckily for them, there's a place in Tennessee that hasn't.(Para 16) Q:What is omitted after "hasn't"?

(Teaching objective: to guide students to infer the implied meaning of text information by using the context of text, which is more conducive for students to grasp the deep meaning of sentences and understand the author's views, attitudes and emotions)

Step4 Critical reading and discussion.

The topic for us to discuss today is "Raising a Pet". You are required to complete the following tasks in groups. You may have three students for each group.

- a. Brainstorm and list words and expressions related to the topic
- b. Guided discussion. Each group number will be given a card. You are supposed to give a brief description according to the card.

(Teaching purpose: to focus on the teaching of critical reading strategies, to discuss the content of the text in groups, to enhance students' critical awareness and improve their appreciation ability.)

Step5 Writing Assignment.

Watch the video clip and write a composition on the topic Saving the Wild Animals.

Base your composition on the outline below:

- a. Many wild animals are facing the danger of extinction.
- b. The underlying factors cause animal extinction.
- c. People should take measures to preserve the wild animals.

(Teaching purpose: to cultivate writing ability and improve critical thinking consciousness.)

5. CONCLUSION

In college English teaching in China, critical reading has not been carried out for a short time. Many college English teachers are thinking about the meaning and specific implementation methods of College English critical reading, which is very necessary, but in addition, teachers should first cultivate their own critical awareness and innovative awareness, and master the latest research results of critical reading. The improvement of their own teaching level helps students to elevate their critical thinking ability. Students should also cooperate with teachers to read more English newspapers and magazines, and use questioning and other critical ways of thinking to develop their own critical reading ability.

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