

EXPLORING CRITICAL THINKING OF EFL STUDENTS THROUGH INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to elaborate the use of ICT in exploring critical thinking of EFL students. Critical thinking is a crucial aspect in teaching and learning process. It is the skill which help to think deeply about problems in order to find problem solving. By the rapid growth in Information Communication Technology (ICT), it may effect to the ability of EFL students to think critically. The finding of studies which applied ICT to explore critical thinking revealed that ICT is an effective aid in teaching and learning. By using ICT to facilitate EFL students to think critically, students are expected to be able to develop their ability to solve a complex problem in order to survive and compete in the rapid technological changes. Furthermore, it indicates that the enhancement of students' critical thinking has positive implications in terms of the application of innovative teaching strategies.

Keywords : *Critical Thinking, ICT, EFL Students*

Critical thinking is an important aspect in learning process. It can lead students to learn deeply to get content mastery. It also can help them to think more about problems in order to find problem solving. Those aspects are important for students in learning process in order to support them to find their own understanding about concepts. This is in line with the basic concept of critical thinking by Elder and Paul (2005) who state that critical thinking can teaches students to think their way to conclusions, defend positions on complex issues, consider a wide variety of view points, analyze concepts, theories, and explanations, clarify issues and conclusions, and solve problems. It can be said that critical thinking help students to think about any concept based on their own understanding. Moreover it also can facilitate students to be able to transfer ideas to new contexts, examine assumptions, assess alleged facts, explore implications and consequences, and increasingly come to terms with the contradictions and inconsistencies in their own thought and experience (Elder and Paul, 2005). Furthermore, Helpert (2014) states that critical thinking is used to describe thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions, when the thinker is using skills that are thoughtful and effective for the particular context and type of thinking task. Those statement can support and prove that critical thinking is important for students in the process of learning. Besides that, when the learning process is not guided by the existance of students ability to think critically, students will forget about teory easily. It is because the important thing in learning is not only remember the teory but also understanding the concept.

By knowing the importance of critical thinking, students ability to think critically should be explored as well. To explore the students ability to think critically, the rapid growth of technology is giving the chance by introducing Information Communication Technology (ICT). Khine (2003) states that lecturers could use ICT to facilitate learning, critical thinking and peer discussions. Pratt (2002) suggested that it is possible for ICT to facilitate both teaching and learning. Those statements such a big support on the implementation of ICT to explore students ability in critical thinking. Through ICT, learning process can anywhere and anytime. It also can be used to expand the access to material for learning. Students can search a lot of information about the concept that they learn and the material for learning is no longer depend on printed material. It can be a soft file which can be saved instantly and can be brought anywhere easily. By getting as much as information through ICT, It can support them to construct their own understanding about any concept as well as possible.

There are some studies which were conducted on students critical thinking and the use of ICT for teaching and learning process. Wang, Woo, and Zhao (2007) found that writing online reflections had potential to promote critical thinking but, not all students thought critically. This result implied that the nature of discussion topics greatly influenced the depth of online discussions and knowledge construction. Rumpagaporn (2007) also conducted a study on the integration of ICT to students critical thinking, the result showed that the students improved their level of critical thinking and developed positive attitude to ICT. Those studies revealed that the implementation of ICT for teaching and learning process has positive impact for students. In line with those finding, McMahon (2009) found that there were statistically significant correlations between studying within a technology-rich learning environment and the development of students' critical thinking skills. In this study has proven that ICT has an impact to the development of student ability in critical thinking. Moreover Darmawan and Rumpagaporn (2007) also proved the positive impact in the implementation of ICT for students. They revealed that students could be assisted to learn critical thinking skills through integrating ICT into teaching and learning processes. Furthermore, Diem and Novitasari (2012) also show the use of ICT highlighted the Online Resources Strategy (ORS) at the elementary school to cultivate the students' English learning habits. The experimental study found that ORS significantly affected the students' listening and reading skills which then followed by speaking and writing. It is assumed that ICT improve in both listening and reading skills through online resources.

However the positive impacts of using ICT have revealed in some studies, there is still few studies which mentions the benefit of using ICT in exploring students' critical thinking in a detail explanation. It becomes the reason to construct a paper to elaborate the use and the benefit of ICT in Exploring EFL students ability in critical thinking.

Discussion

1. The use of ICT in Exploring Critical Thinking of EFL Students

Nowadays, the use of ICT in learning English has been regarded as one of the potential ways to be used to help students in exploring their critical thinking. It plays the role as a facilitator and a guider, while the students take responsibility of their own learning. Kramsch & Thorne (2002) state that the use of technologies provide learners with unprecedented opportunities to practice English and involve themselves in authentic environments of language use. Moreover, Collis and Moonen (2001) categorized the applications of ICT into three groups, namely "learning resources" including educational software, online resources, and video resources, "instructional organization of learning" referring to software and technology tools for lecturing in the classroom, the course management system like *Moodle*, and the computer-based testing system like *Hot Potatoes* and "communication" consisting of email systems, and websites offering communication options. For instance, the students can use video which is taken from YouTube to learn about the language. Furthermore they can automatically get the chance to explore their critical thinking in learning language.

The selection of available videos on YouTube comes up as a meaningful way to foreign language learning. Additionally, students can access the video on YouTube whenever and wherever they want. They can use their smartphones, laptops, and the others electronic devices that can be connected to the internet. Moreover, students also can explore their critical thinking by watching video on YouTube because they can comment relate to the content of the video and they can create their own video then upload it to YouTube. Gentry (2008) states that using YouTube for performance-communication courses is a simple three-step process: (1) create video, (2) upload video, and (3) discuss video. Besides that, in teaching and learning process, teacher can use technological sources like, PPT, video, and interactive virtual. From those discussion above, it can be said that the students critical thinking can be explored by utilizing the YouTube. In addition, when the students critical thinking is being explored, automatically their four basic English skills can be developed.

2. The Benefit of ICT in Exploring Critical Thinking of EFL Students

By looking at the use of ICT in exploring critical thinking of EFL students, Fu (2013) reveals some benefits which can be drawn as follow :

- a. Assist students in accessing digital information efficiently and effectively.
- b. Support student-centered and self-directed learning
- c. Produce a creative learning environment
- d. Promote collaborative learning in a distance-learning environment
- e. Offer more opportunities to develop critical (higher-order) thinking skills
- f. Improve teaching and learning quality
- g. Support teaching by facilitating access to course content

In the other hand, Darasawang and Reinders (2010) stated that an online language support system helps promote learner autonomy. Another contributing factor of ICT is motivation. Kuo (2009) mention that the growth of multimedia technology including visual aids, sounds, video clips, animations, and so on motivates learners, “attracts their attention and elevates their interest in learning”. In line with those results, Azmi (2017) reveals the benefits of ICT for exploring EFL students critical thinking, he states that the use of information technology in the language classroom boosts autonomous learning, maximises targeted outcomes, motivates learners and helps them improve their performance in the EFL classroom.

Arkorful and Abaidoo (2014) also added some advantages of using E-learning in the classroom. The advantages are :

1. It is flexible when issues of time and place are taken into consideration. Every student has the luxury of choosing the place and time that suits him/her.
2. E-learning enhances the efficiency of knowledge and qualifications via ease of access to a huge amount of information.
3. It is able to provide opportunities for relations between learners by the use of discussion forums. Through this, E-learning helps eliminate barriers that have the potential of hindering participation including the fear of talking to other learners. It motivates student to interact with other, as well as exchange and respect different point of views.
4. E-learning is cost effective in the sense that there is no need for the students or learners to travel. It is also cost effective in the sense that it offers opportunities for learning for maximum number of learners with no need for many buildings.
5. E-learning always takes into consideration the individual learners differences. Some learners for instance prefer to concentrate on certain parts of the course, while others are prepared to review the entire course.
6. E-learning helps compensate for scarcities of academic staff, including instructors or teachers as well as facilitators, lab technicians, etc.
7. The use of E-learning allows self-pacing. For instance, the asynchronous way permits each student to study at his or her own pace and speed whether slow or quick. It therefore increases satisfaction and decreases stress.

From the result of the studies which are mentioned above, it can prove that ICT has a lot of benefits for EFL students to explore their critical thinking. Therefore, ICT need to be integrated in the process of learning in order to help EFL students to create an environment that support them to think critically. This is in line with Selwyn (2003), ICT is currently being used in education to assist students to learn more effectively and help teachers to do administrative tasks more efficiently. Furthermore, Biancarosa and Griffiths (2012) state, "these technological advances have created high hopes among many teachers, administrators, researchers, and policy makers, who believe that the digital devices offer great promise as instructional tools for literacy education".

Conclusion

This paper has explained the use and the benefit of ICT to explore EFL students critical thinking. It shows that ICT has some important role in the process of teaching and learning language. By integrating ICT in the learning process, the teachers' center can be minimized and the students' center can be developed as well. Thus, the students can be more active because they are facilitated to explore their critical thinking. ICT usages encourage students by motivating them to

be more active and engage them to involve completely in classroom interaction. Such as giving comment relate to the topic which is discussed in the learning process. They can also share their ideas easier through the integration of ICT. In the other words, ICT is important to be implemented in the learning process of EFL students in order to make them to be able to compete and face the rapid of technology changes. It is hoped that the teachers can maximize the use of ICT in the learning process to achieve those benefits.

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