

Activity Suggestions to Develop Critical Reading and Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT

In today's world, where reading is rare and media is trying to influence people in many ways, individuals encounter hundreds of propagandas or persuasive speeches, texts and presentations every day. Many topics such as questioning informative texts, interpreting ideas, and evaluating dialogues in daily life, require critical thinking skills. Developing our children's critical reading and writing skills is necessary in order to prevent them from being negatively affected by the persuasion and propaganda works that we encounter every day. In this study, activities, which can be used by educators to improve reading and writing skills of secondary school students, have been prepared. Expert opinions on critical reading and writing activities were retrieved and the activities were finalized in accordance with these opinions. The activities prepared have been presented to the review of three field experts. All three of these field experts had more than fifteen years of experience in teaching and work under the Ministry of National Education, the three teachers work in an educational institution and besides, they have a doctorate in Turkish education and have received critical thinking education, all three of them are specialized academicians in Turkish education. Experts examined the characteristics of critical readers and critical writers in the literature. In literature, it has been observed that studies in on activities the field of critical thinking are limited. Therefore, it is considered that the activities prepared to improve critical reading and writing skills of secondary school students will contribute to critical thinking education.

Key words: Critical Thinking, Reading, Writing, Education, Activities

INTRODUCTION

The language that exists everywhere we live, is the source of thinking (Esengül, 2006) and the key to consciousness (Vygotsky, 1998; as cited in Başoğlu & Mutlu, 2012). Thinking and language are in constant interaction (Cüceloğlu, 2016). The stronger this interaction, the better the communication. Effective communication, which takes place in the basis of social progress (Kaya, 2014), has also a significant role in education (Melanlıoğlu & Karakuş Tayşi, 2013). In recent years, the issue of critical thinking has been emphasized more and more in the discussions by educators, psychologists, content analysts, behaviorists and philosophers (Şenşekerçi & Bilgin, 2008). The word criticism; is often used in the sense of a negative judgmental evaluation or a classic critique towards a person or something. However, criticism, as well as all useful feedbacks, should indicate a solution to make up the problem deficiency. According to Walters (1984), critical thinking is solution-oriented and evaluation-oriented thinking. Ennis (1987), states that critical thinking is realistic and reflective thinking focused upon deciding what to believe or what to do. This definition of Ennis is one of the most frequently used definitions in literature (Şahinel, 2002; Zhou et al., 2013; Nosich, 2018).

Critical thinking; is the ability to analyze facts, generate ideas and organize them, defend opinions, make comparisons, make inferences, evaluate discussions, and solve emerging problems (Şahinel, 2002; Kaloç, 2005; Evren, 2012; Cihaner, 2007; Tosun, 2014; Deniz, 2009; Çıgırn Yıldırım, 2005; Karabacak, 2011; Yağcı, 2008).

According to Oflas (2009), critical thinking is the evaluation of the internal conflicts of the available data. Similarly, some researchers define the critical thinking as the process of evaluating the consistency of the information provided and measuring the adequacy of definitions and convenience of the results (Hotaman, 2008). Therefore, critical listeners can easily notice the inconsistencies in what they listen to and evaluate the case or problem they encounter according to their internal consistency first. Critical thinking is the disposition of thinking and deciding through thinking based on the researches or experiences (Yılmaz Özelçi, 2012). Our ability to observe life and make accurate inferences through experiences improves with critical thinking.

Critical thinking; is a way of thinking in which prejudices, assumptions, all kinds of information presented are evaluated; various aspects and results are discussed aiming to reach a decision at the end (Evren, 2012; Cihaner,

2007; Şentürk, 2009). It is to evaluate and complete the cases encountered in terms of accuracy and deficiency by establishing a cause-effect relationship.

Özden (2002; as cited in Kurnaz, 2013) stated the defining features of critical thinking as follows: Evaluating prejudice and consistency, Distinguishing primary and secondary sources, Evaluating inferences and their reasons, Distinguishing assumptions, ideas and claims, Seeing the shortcomings of the argument and the ambiguities in the explanations, Measuring the adequacy of definitions and convenience of the results.

The features that critical thinking education will contribute to students are as follows: it increases students' interests in the lesson and motivates them; creates an effective and collaborative learning environment with high participation and interest level; develops the ability to think and decide independently; creates awareness of democracy; regulates relationships with the social environment; develops mental skills; assists in keeping information permanent; enables being conscious and sensitive; enriches life; teaches discussion; reduces aggression and regulates social behavior; builds self-confidence; instills an investigative spirit; ensures the clarification of thoughts and concepts, the determination of goals, and the ability to judge clearly by taking different views into consideration; arises a desire to expand personal boundaries and develop abilities (Munzur, 1999; Akbıyık, 2002; Oflas, 2009; Kürüm, 2002).

Pirozzi (2003) critical reading the ability to have a good understanding of written materials, which requires the ability to identify the author's purpose and attitude, distinguish between facts and opinions in the text, distinguish important information from trivial, evaluate and interpret stated that.

The critical reader tries to distinguish between relevant and non-relevant information when the author presents a thesis on a topic, and takes care not to take into account what the author says outside the topic. In this way, the reader can evaluate the adequacy of what the author has said on the subject, and realizes his bias, unclear and contradictory aspects. People who make new connections between the information in the text and the existing information in their own mind are doing critical reading. In this context, it can be said that cognitive evaluations and analyzes are made in critical reading (Karabay, 2013).

Arıcı (2008), who also describes critical reading as "reading equipment", listed the characteristics of a good critical reader as follows: A critical reader should be able to

- separate the elements that make up the thought and emotion structure of the text,
- predict the purpose and attitude towards the subject,
- determine the font type of the read text, key concepts, sentences, paragraphs,
- search and find their relations with each other,
- establish cause-effect relationships between paragraphs and sentences in the text,
- take a critical attitude towards undetected thoughts, and
- determine the narration styles used by the author.

The development of an individual's critical writing skills depends on the development of critical thinking and

critical reading skills (Topçuoğlu Ünal & Tekin, 2013). Paul and Elder (2005) stated that students who use their critical thinking skills in writing improve their writing and reasoning skills, and their knowledge deepens, and a good writing should reflect a critical thinking perspective.

According to Kurland (2000), a critical writer, it creates a content to put forward evidence, assumptions and discussions and comes to a conclusion from this content (Karabay, 2012). Wallace and Wray (2008) stated the points to be considered while writing a critical article under the title of "Elements of Critical Writing" with ten items. When writing a text. Clearly articulate what you are trying to achieve as a writer, To assist the author in developing the forward thesis and to be easily followed by the author, constructing the logical structure of the report (study) to assist the reader, State the main claims clearly, Support claims with appropriate evidence to persuade critical readers, Avoiding (creating) generalizations with broad content, Identify and consistently use key terms to use in the report, Clarifying the values that will help in the article, Don't assume that readers are persuasive if enough claims are supported, By avoiding irrelevant and irrelevant words in the report and by including everything relevant to the subject the ability to maintain full attention. To ensure that the sources cited in the text and the bibliography are complete and inaccurate pay attention (Karabay, 2012). It is very important to know the features required for critical writing and to provide training in this field. In this regard, ways of developing thinking can also be used. It is very important to know the features required for critical writing and to provide training in this field.

In today's world, where reading is rare and media is trying to influence people in many ways, individuals encounter hundreds of propagandas or persuasive speeches, texts and presentations every day. Many topics such as questioning informative texts, interpreting ideas, evaluating dialogues in daily life, requires critical thinking skills. The more conscious the target group is, the less exploitation and waste of resources (Kemiksiz, 2015). With the development of critical thinking skills, students are expected to perform excellent skills such as sorting, classifying, questioning, associating and inferring what they read or watch/listen to. Developing our children's critical reading and writing skills is necessary in order to prevent them from being negatively affected by the persuasion and propaganda works that we encounter every day. Therefore, the education of critical thinking skills must be placed importance and studies must be conducted to improve this skill.

The purpose of this study is to propose activities that can be used by field experts in order to develop the critical reading and writing skills of secondary school students. It is thought that the prepared activities will contribute to critical reading and writing education.

Most of the published research papers are studies that contain theoretical information about this skill. The fact that individuals have acquired some theoretical information does not mean that they will use them effectively in their lives. In order for individuals to use the knowledge they have acquired effectively, it is necessary to carry out activities based on these mentioned skills with the studies prepared by the

experts in the subject area. Critical thinking activities have been proposed and implemented in very few of the studies.

Model of the Research

Qualitative research method was used in this study. Qualitative research is a modeling study that explains some previously unknown results in relation to each other based on the collected data. (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020). Qualitatively, they want the elderly to have a much broader perspective on research on a topic than how good they can be. They will be able to fix the English. They are trying to make this process better.

Data Collection Tools and Data Collection

In this study, document analysis was carried out. Objectives and achievements in the 2019 Turkish Curriculum, Turkish textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education for secondary school students in the 2020-2021 academic year, the fifth and sixth level competencies of the PISA exam, the educational goals and achievement of the first three countries that were successful in the PISA exam examined. The information and recommendations in the critical thinking studies were also effective in creating our data collection tools.

Validity and Reliability

The activities prepared have been presented to the review of three field experts. All three of these field experts have more than fifteen years of experience in teaching and work under the Ministry of National Education, the three teachers work in an educational institution and besides, they have a doctorate in Turkish education and have received critical thinking education, all three of them are specialized academicians in Turkish education.

ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Doctor At Home

Implementation of the Activity: Students read the information below. They are asked to imagine they are doctors and treat their patients using natural methods. Then, it is asked which patient should eat which fruit and the students are asked to write prescriptions for these patients.

Orange: Thanks to vitamin C and folic acid, protects against cold, reduces throat infection and cough. However, those with stomach problems should not consume it.

Sour Cherry: Sour cherry, a powerful enemy against inflammatory diseases, contains vitamin A and potassium. Reducing fever and quenching thirst, sour cherry juice also helps to cleanse blood after fever. It is good for skin problems. Prevents the development of cancer cells. It might force the kidneys.

Pomegranate: Protects heart health. Also prevents the development of cancer cells. Besides, it is effective in stopping diarrhea and reducing parasites in the intestines. Pomegranate juice has also diuretic effects. However, pomegranate consumption is not recommended for those who had intestinal surgery.

Apricot: Thanks to vitamins A, B3, calcium, magnesium, potassium and phosphate, apricot strengthens the immune system, it is curative for anemia and constipation, helps blood production and eases sleep by relaxing the nerves. But it might trigger diarrhea.

Apple: Strengthening the immune system, apple keeps blood sugar under control, and is curative for headaches. It also cleanses the kidneys and intestinal parasites, and reduces cholesterol. It might cause gas pains and trigger diarrhea.

Kiwi: Kiwi is a source of vitamin C. It is beneficial for fighting against common colds and infections and getting rid of skin problems. Might cause allergies in some people.

Banana: Protects heart health, facilitates digestion, is curative for anemia and diarrhea. But, it might cause constipation and increase blood sugar level.

Example Patient: There are signs of common cold and infection. The patient has constipation and stomach upset.

Prescription: kiwi and apricot

Accordingly, write the other prescriptions yourself.

1. Patient: The patient has complaints of anemia and diarrhea. S/he has had an intestinal surgery. Also folic acid deficiency has been detected.
Prescription:.....
2. Patient: The patient has skin blemishes. Also has kidney disease and vitamin A deficiency.
Prescription:.....
3. Patient: The patient has a headache, high fever and vitamin C deficiency. Also has an allergic nature.
Prescription :.....

LOGICAL ERRORS

Implementation of the Activity: The example sentence below is read to the students. Then, they are asked to read other sentences critically and write down the logical errors.

Example Sentence: People who do not want to make mistakes, should hear the experiences of the future.

Logical Error: The word "Experience" is related to the past, the future cannot have an experience.

Accordingly, find the logical errors in the following sentences.

- 1) When the king died, the people went to the polls to elect the new king.
Logical Error:
- 2) In the last lap, the athlete passed the racer behind in one move.
Logical Error:
- 3) S/he gave her/his condolences to those who lost their lives in the traffic accident.
Logical Error:
- 4) When we went downstairs, we found our car stolen.
Logical Error:

WHO, SAID TO WHO, WHERE?

Implementation of the Activity: The sentences below are read to the students. The students are asked to write down who might have said the sentences to who and where.

Example Sentence: Be easy son! Be careful sliding down the slide, don't get your trousers dirty. Your mother is so tired of washing my shirts. Don't make more trouble for her.

Who, said to who, where? A father, to his son, at a playground.

Accordingly, examine the following sentences.

1. Sentence: Open your notebook dear. (...) You didn't do your homework again. I need to talk to your parent tomorrow, let them know.
Who, said to who, where?
2. Sentence: Listen sir, your father's illness has progressed. He should take the medicines I prescribed as soon as possible and rest.
Who, said to who, where?
3. Sentence: Oh dear, I breastfed your brother at home, but it seems he is not satiated. I can't feed him on my lap. Come on big sister, ask the waiter to bring a baby feeding chair.
Who, said to who, where?
4. Sentence: Teacher, I see a real tiger for the first time in my life. Wow! There is also a giraffe over there. It is nice to see them all up close, but caging them in places like that we actually enslave them.
Who, said to who, where?

MISSING STORY

Implementation of the Activity: The following text is printed out and distributed to the students. Students complete the missing parts of the story they read disjointedly and tell the story to their friends.

Example Sentence: A man planted thorns (on the side of the road) he passes every day.

Accordingly, complete the rest of the story.

A man planted thorns (.....) he passes every day. As the thorns grew (.....), they began to (.....) those who pass the road. Everyone warned the man by saying (.....) but the man was delaying it by saying (.....). Because he was someone who always did (.....).

One day, a good hearted (.....) told him: "(.....) as soon as possible. Thorns are just like

bad habits of people. They grow more aggressive day by day. You always get the work (.....) but every day (.....) stronger, and you who is supposed to cut the thorns, lose (.....). Soon, you (.....) the thorns even if you want to."

The man thought it was right and immediately (.....)

As the results in Table 1 show, the researcher invited three experts to examine the clarity and usefulness of each activity. Based on the characteristics of critical readers and writers in the literature, field experts determined nine items and evaluated the activities according to these items. These items enable the reader to grasp the purpose of the article, analyze what they read, establish a cause-effect relationship, reach a logical conclusion based on the information given, write their evaluations clearly, support them with appropriate evidence, use key concepts consistently in their writing, focus their attention on the information, These are the items that aim to determine the activities that allow questioning.

In the sixth article, it is seen that the activity named "Logic Errors" received the approval of two experts and the other activities received the approval of an expert, and in general, all of the activities fully met all the criteria except the sixth item. Accordingly, it was concluded that all suggested activities could serve to develop students' critical reading and writing skills.

DISCUSSION

In many studies in literature, the need for critical thinking activities is mentioned. According to Akyol (2016), in our era where the influence of the media is increasing, propaganda tools deceive people by using smoothed words. Emphasizing the importance of critical thinking at this point, Akyol recommends performing critical thinking activities in the classroom. The stronger the basis of critical thinking skill is built, the more one's knowledge and success will increase, and use and protection of democratic rights will be ensured. The strength of this basis depends on the importance to be given to critical thinking skills in educational institutions.

In the history of education, it has been stated that the ability is not sufficient on critical thinking, and critical

Table 1. Expert Opinions for Activity Suggestions

Review Items	Events Inspected			
	Doctor at Home	Logical Errors	Who, Said to Who, Where?	Missing Story
1. It allows the reader to comprehend the purpose of the text.	XXX*	XXX	XXX	XXX
2. It allows the reader to make analysis.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
3. It allows the reader to establish the cause-effect relationship.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
4. It allows the reader to reach a logical conclusion based on the information given.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
5. It allows the reader to clearly write down her/his evaluations based on the information given.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
6. It allows the reader to support the claims in the reviews with appropriate evidence.	X	XX	X	X
7. Allows the reader to use key concepts consistently in their writing.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
8. It allows the reader to concentrate her/his attention.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
9. It allows the reader to question the given information.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

* Each 'X' signifies 'approved by an expert'

thinking recommendations are needed for developing this skill (Dewey, 1930; Resnick, 1987; Norris & Ennis, 1989; Paul, 1990; McPeck, 1991; Facione & Facione, 1992; Norris, 1992; Perkins et al., 1993; Taube, 1995). In this study, useful critical thinking activities were designed by the researcher and assessed by field experts. In the literature, due to the limited number of studies recommending activities, it is considered that this study, which is prepared on the purpose of developing students' critical reading and writing skills, will contribute to critical thinking education.

CONCLUSION

The number of acquisitions aimed at improving students' critical reading and writing skills should be increased in curricula. The activities in the textbooks, which are the most used course material by the teachers, should be of a quality that can improve the students' critical reading and writing skills in connection with the achievements. Critical reading and writing should also be included in the end-of-theme evaluation questions in the textbooks. Instead of just asking multiple-choice questions, students should be given tasks where they can research and present, develop their ideas in a discussion environment, and produce new products. Critical reading and writing activities in textbooks should be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the age and by following the developments in the outside world. Textbooks should include forms for evaluating students' critical reading and writing skills, and teachers should be informed about how to use these forms. Studies to develop critical reading and writing skills should not be limited to the courses taught in the language, and environments and activities should be prepared in other branches where this skill can be developed. All educators should accept that critical reading and writing is a skill that can be developed, measured and evaluated, and they should develop their studies in this direction. The number of critical reading and writing activity suggestions that teachers can use should be increased.

All the parents who have children at primary and secondary school, particularly parents who have per-school children must be provided with guidance on critical thinking education. Besides increasing the academic interest and the number and quality of experts, opening courses both compulsory and elective on critical thinking at undergraduate, graduate and doctoral (PhD) degrees, especially in the faculties of education for teacher education, will make significant contributions. However, an extensive education process for teachers in this regard, emerges as an important requirement. For the quality of this educational process, the teachers should be trained for a qualified in-service training on critical thinking education and provided with right examples.

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