

# Research on the Cultivation of Critical Thinking Ability in College English Teaching under the Background of New Liberal Arts

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**Abstract:** *Under the background of new liberal arts, the traditional college English teaching model which is mainly based on knowledge input can no longer meet the goal of talent cultivation. In the new liberal arts pattern, taking the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability as the entry point and exploring a three-dimensional and comprehensive teaching system for college English critical thinking ability not only conforms to the teaching laws of language classes but also can cultivate students' comprehensive English application ability, effectively promote the construction of a new college English curriculum system, and improve students' comprehensive qualities and abilities.*

**Keywords:** Critical Thinking, College English Teaching.

## 1. Introduction

"New liberal arts" is to meet the new requirements for the development of philosophy and social sciences in the new era, promote the cross-integration of philosophy and social sciences and the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, form interdisciplinary disciplines, and establish a new type of liberal arts with cross-integrated disciplines. The cultivation of critical thinking ability is an important part of higher education and one of the important guarantees and implementation means for cultivating innovative talents. Its purpose is to cultivate students' ability to "think carefully" and "distinguish clearly". Based on the background of the new liberal arts era and guided by the cultivation of critical thinking ability, this paper intends to start from three aspects: the construction of critical thinking ability cultivation in classroom teaching, the construction of critical thinking ability cultivation in the curriculum system, and the integration and practice of critical thinking ability in the evaluation system, and explore an innovative way for college English teaching models in colleges and universities.

## 2. Overview of Critical Thinking Ability

Critical thinking ability, as the name suggests, is the ability to think and analyze. It has been widely valued by the academic community since ancient times. In ancient times, there was Confucius' famous saying, "Learning without thinking leads to confusion." This sentence directly points out that learning cannot be separated from critical thinking ability. In the past 20 years, Western countries have attached great importance to the research on college students' critical thinking ability. The research can be roughly divided into three categories: the definition of sub-abilities of critical thinking ability, the construction of critical thinking ability measurement tools, and the cultivation of critical thinking ability.

## 3. The Necessity of Cultivating Critical Thinking Ability in College English Teaching

At present, many universities in China take cultivating students' critical thinking ability as one of the educational goals. However, since English is a highly practical discipline, teachers often overly emphasize the language itself and ignore the cultivation of critical thinking ability in classroom teaching, so there is a situation of "absence of critical thinking". In many colleges and universities, from the perspective of curriculum setting, college English teaching is mainly based on two courses of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The teaching process and evaluation of this course still focus on language ability as the main object of concern. Most of the teaching process is dominated by teachers' lectures, there are very few group discussions among students, and students are not good at asking questions and dare not question. From the perspective of teachers, some teachers' critical thinking consciousness is relatively vague, and in teaching, they seldom reflect on how to combine teaching content to cultivate students' critical thinking ability. From the perspective of students, many students will have resistance when learning non-native languages, and the learning passivity is more obvious. Once students lack enthusiasm and initiative, it will create obstacles for the cultivation of their critical thinking ability. If teachers want to break the rigid situation of traditional English teaching, they must increase the intensity of cultivating critical thinking ability. The value generated by the improvement of critical thinking ability for students' improvement of English proficiency and comprehensive quality development is immeasurable.

## 4. Cultivation of Critical Thinking Ability in College English Teaching under the Background of New Liberal Arts

Based on "new liberal arts", constructing a relatively comprehensive framework for cultivating critical thinking ability in college English teaching is one of the important ways to comprehensively improve the quality of college English teaching. This project plans to start from the construction of the cultivation of critical thinking ability in college English classroom teaching, the construction of the cultivation of critical thinking ability in the college English

curriculum system, and the integration and practice of critical thinking ability in the college English evaluation system to construct a brand-new framework for cultivating critical thinking ability in college English teaching with "new liberal arts" as the background.

Firstly, construct the cultivation of critical thinking ability in college English classroom teaching. In college English classroom teaching, we use textbook articles as carriers and are guided by "new liberal arts" to guide students to learn to think from both cognitive and emotional aspects. In terms of cognitive cultivation, first of all, we should let students learn to understand the text and clarify the meaning. This is the basis of critical thinking. In terms of text understanding, we should take guiding students to gradually learn specific critical thinking methods such as defining, comparing, interpreting, and writing summaries as breakthroughs for understanding. Secondly, on the basis of understanding, we should pay attention to guiding students to analyze and evaluate the text. This requires teachers to provide some articles with different viewpoints on the same topic as much as possible before class to expand the breadth of students' thinking. Only with sufficient information input can students be guided to think about problems from multiple angles and levels and finally form their own viewpoints.

Secondly, construct the cultivation of critical thinking ability in the college English curriculum system.

In the setting of the curriculum system, taking college English only as a compulsory course has been difficult to meet the development of curriculum reform and the needs of students. Appropriate compression of the class hours of compulsory college English courses and adding some general elective courses are helpful for the cultivation of critical thinking ability. Especially after students complete the basic stage of learning, they have already had a considerable reserve of language knowledge, which has laid a good foundation for the offering of elective courses. Therefore, according to students' needs and interests, some professional elective courses such as English for various majors and general elective courses such as appreciation of famous Chinese and foreign works, reviews of Chinese and foreign history, debates, and speeches are offered on the online learning platform as an extension of classroom teaching. This will greatly expand the breadth of college English courses and change the current situation where the relatively single curriculum setting is not conducive to the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability. Through effective interaction between elective courses and basic courses, the mode of cultivating critical thinking ability can be enriched and the ways of cultivating critical thinking ability can be broadened.

Thirdly, integrate and practise of critical thinking ability in the college English evaluation system. To change the current situation of the absence of critical thinking in college English teaching, the proportion of summative assessment should be reduced and the proportion of formative assessment should be increased. In specific practice, the methods of speculative testing can be flexible and diverse. In addition to the test methods that students are more recognized such as group discussions, brainstorming, and debates that we mentioned earlier, research projects are also a form that is conducive to

stimulating students' thinking ability and research projects. In translation tests, we can change the current model of directly asking students to translate. Provide students with different translations and let them compare different translations and make evaluations, and analyze the reasons for the differences in different translations. All these require students to think deeply to complete. Increasing the proportion of subjective tests is not only beneficial to cultivating students' good cognitive abilities but also helps to stimulate students' enthusiasm for continuous exploration, cultivate students' good emotional traits, and thus comprehensively improve students' critical thinking abilities.

## 5. Conclusion

Under the current domestic and international situation, the cultivation of critical thinking ability is the top priority in talent cultivation in colleges and universities. The cultivation of critical thinking ability is one of the important ways to promote the realization of the instrumental and humanistic goals of college English. Today's college students should not only have excellent language skills but also cultivate a relatively rich humanistic vision, good cultural perception, and innovative thinking ability. By constructing reasonable teaching modes, curriculum systems, and evaluation systems and other modalities to broaden the channels for cultivating critical thinking ability, integrating critical thinking ability with the learning of knowledge and language, promoting each other, comprehensively improving college students' language learning effects, improving the quality of college English teaching, and improving the quality of talent cultivation in colleges and universities, cultivating a group of high-quality talents who adapt to the background of "new liberal arts" and the needs of modern economic and social development for the country.

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