The Application of Flipped Classroom Teaching Model in English Writing Course in Educational Informatization 2.0 Background

JIAO Li-xia

Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China

The absence or inadequacy of critical thinking is one of the prevalent problems in English teaching and learning in China, which gives rise to various problems in learners' writing: digression from the topic, unoriginal or uncreative ideas, loose logic, logical fallacies, and lack of real content. Under such circumstances, the present paper proposes the "teaching-learning-assessing-testing Four in One" flipped classroom mode in Educational Informatization 2.0 Background to develop learners' critical thinking ability relying on technical support provided by the researcher's school and the mode is then applied in English writing course. The application of the mode has achieved some effects. It is applauded by learners and may thus have some implications for the development of learners' critical thinking ability in writing courses.

Keywords: the absence or inadequacy of critical thinking, problems in writing, development of critical thinking skills, flipped classroom mode

Status Quo of Learners' Critical Thinking Ability

It is stipulated in *National Standard for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in Colleges and Universities* that critical thinking ability is a very important criterion of learners' foreign language competence. Sun Youzhong (2017) pointed out that one of the goals of English education is to solve the problem of the absence or inadequacy of learners' critical thinking ability and develop learners' critical thinking ability comprehensively.

However, for quite a long time, English teaching focuses on developing learners' linguistic skills and attaches little or even no importance to the systematic fostering of learners' critical thinking ability. Huang Yuanshen (2010) mentioned that English teaching in China lays too much emphasis on imitational memory and ignores the development of learners' critical thinking ability and their ability to analyze and solve problems.

English writing is a case in point. Various problems are identified in learners' writing: Some learners do not have a clear understanding of the topic and the content of their writings may divert from the topic, some may have problems in their logic and they cannot guarantee the logical connection between different sentences

JIAO Li-xia, Master, associate professor, School of Humanities, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China.

or paragraphs, some show little or no creativity and originality in their writing, and still others have no idea about what to cover in their writing so that the content lacks width and depth.

In order to solve these problems and enhance learners' critical thinking ability, the researcher tries to adopt the flipped classroom teaching model with the aid of information technology in the "Critical Reading and Writing" course.

Literature Review

Researches on Critical Thinking Ability Development in Writing

Many researchers home and abroad have done much research into the fostering of learners' critical thinking ability. Some researchers are strategically situated and propose the theoretical framework for critical thinking ability development. Sun Youzhong (2019) elaborated on the concept of humanistic English education, and puts forward the teaching mode of comprehensively improving learners' linguistic competence, critical thinking ability, cross-cultural competence. He also clarifies the teaching principles of the mode and clearly states that linguistic competence encompasses critical thinking ability and cross-cultural competence. Later, in 2019, he advances the "TERRIFIC" teaching principle in critical thinking ability development in English language teaching. Lin Xiao and He Lianzhen (2017) built up the overall framework for critical thinking ability development in college English teaching. Other researchers probe into the specific modes of developing learners' critical thinking ability in English writing courses. Jin Xiaohong (2018) discussed about how the teacher can help develop learners' critical thinking ability by teaching them to enrich the content and expand the thinking in argumentative writing. Li Shuying (2017) explored the creative way of teaching writing in the era of big data and maintains that in English teaching learners should be encouraged to practice thinking critically in brainstorming and apply critical thinking skills in the writing process.

Researches on Flipped Classroom Teaching Mode

Experts and researchers have done much theoretical or practical exploration into the flipped classroom teaching mode. Baker (2000) was one of the typical studies abroad. Among Chinese researchers, by analyzing the features of flipped classroom teaching mode, Zhao Na (2015) suggested the possible steps that can be taken in flipped classroom teaching of English; Wang Sumin (2016) established the flipping classroom teaching model and confirms its effectiveness for improving learners' comprehensive abilities in English; Ye Ling, Zhang Guoying, and Yao Yandan (2017) raised the concept of "Smart" flipped classroom teaching model and introduce its design ideas, practice process, and the progress of implementation; Shang Jinbin and Yu Li (2019) dealt with the possibility of applying the flipped classroom teaching model in English linguistics course.

Evidently, no research has been done into the application of the flipped classroom teaching model in English writing courses. Critical thinking ability, an advanced level of ability, is hard to be developed if learners only rely on the teacher's elaboration in class. It is thus of great importance for learners to acquire relevant knowledge outside of the class and internalize the knowledge in class under the teacher's guidance.

Critical Thinking Development Model and Its Application in Writing Course

Critical thinking development model is a complicated process. The researcher raised the "Teaching-learning-assessing-testing Four in One" model, as is shown in the following figure.
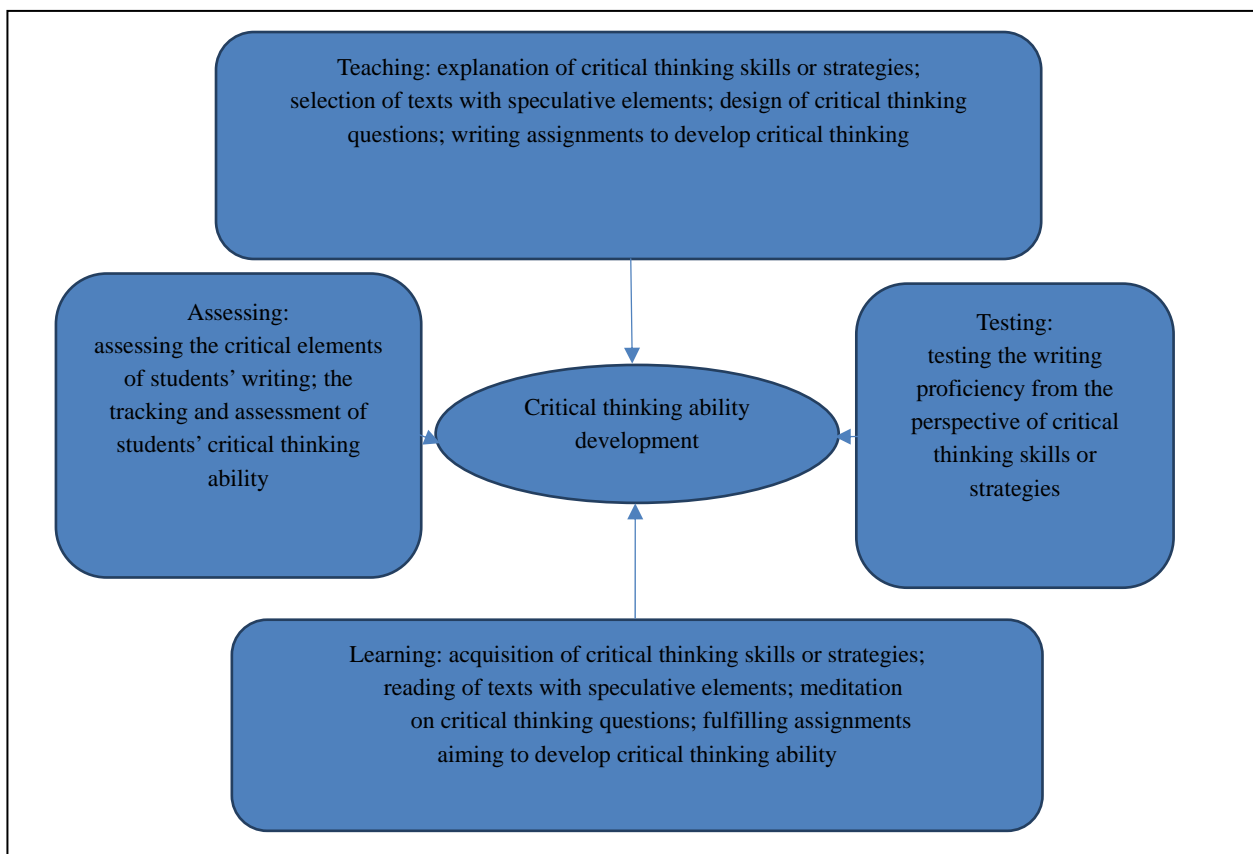
Figure 1. Critical thinking development model in English writing course.

Here is the further explanation of the model.

1. In the writing course, both the teacher and learners have to get involved. And all the four links, teaching, learning, assessing, and testing are very important in the whole process. What the teacher teaches and how he/she teaches, what learners learn and how they learn, what and how to assess and test will all exert great impact on learners' critical thinking ability development. Critical thinking ability development in writing largely depends on its development in reading. Only with large amounts of reading can learners cultivate the awareness of critical thinking, enhance their critical thinking ability, and then develop their ability of critical writing.

2. The teacher should try to develop learners' critical thinking ability in several aspects. Many students have no idea about critical thinking skills or strategies and the teacher needs to elaborate on them. For example, the teacher should teach students how to interpret the meaning of words or sentences in certain contexts, how to identify the conclusion, how to detect the main arguments, how to raise counterarguments, and how to support one's standpoint by citing examples, facts, and statistics. The teacher is to select texts of different topics (such as the aim of education, environmental protection, global warming and charity) containing speculative elements (purpose, point of view, implications and consequences, assumptions, concepts, interpretation and inference, information and question at issue). On this basis, the teacher gives students writing assignments related to the texts they have read. For instance, the teacher may require learners to write about whether global warming is natural or man-made or what should be the aim of education. Learners are expected to write critically.

3. Learners should realize the importance of critical thinking ability development, consciously and actively acquire critical thinking strategies and read texts with speculative elements, and wholeheartedly get involved in the process of problem analysis and solution as well as meticulously finish the assignments given by the teacher aiming to improve their overall critical thinking ability.

4. Critical thinking ability development should be one dimension from which the teacher gives evaluation to learners. The evaluation should combine the formative and summative assessment and apply the 10 criteria in the course of assessment, namely, clarity, precision, accuracy, significance, relevance, completeness, logicalness, fairness, breadth, and depth.

5. Tests and exams play a guiding role in the teaching content and methods. The teacher is supposed to devise items that can really test learners' critical thinking ability, so that the critical thinking ability can be validly assessed.

The emergence and advance of information technology facilitates the application of the flipped classroom teaching model in developing learners' critical thinking ability, as be seen in the following figure.
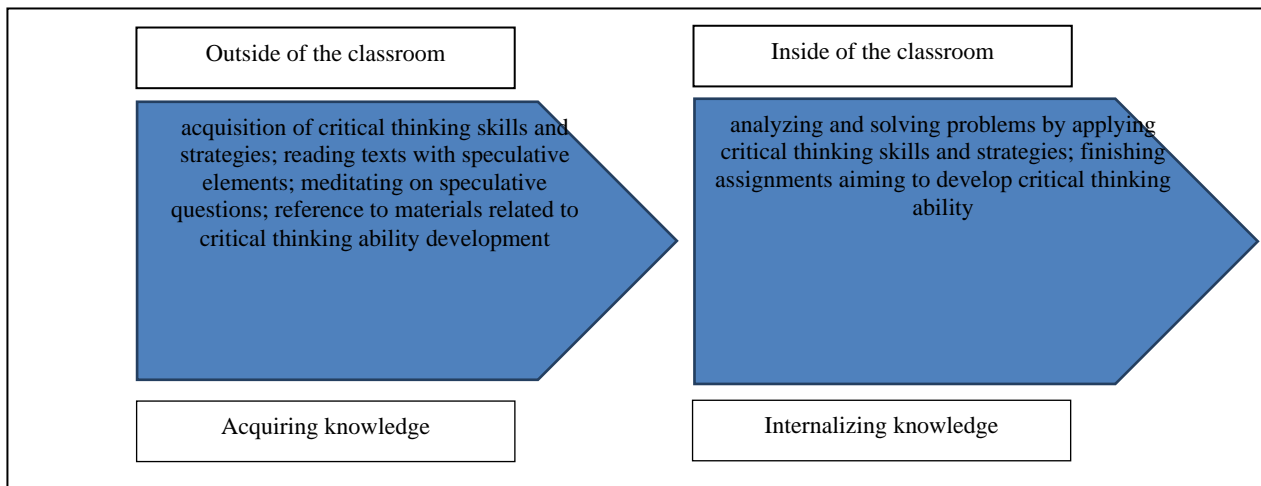

Figure 2. Application of flipped classroom teaching model to develop critical thinking ability in English writing course.

As is shown in Figure 2, with the aid of information technology, the teacher can apply the flipped classroom teaching model in English writing course. Learners are expected to learn something autonomously outside of the classroom setting, including the videos shared by the teacher lecturing on critical thinking skills and strategies and the texts with speculative elements selected by the teacher. Learners are also supposed to raise thought-provoking questions and meditate on those questions. In contrast, inside of the classroom setting, learners are to finish the assignments, work collaboratively with their partners and the teacher, and work out solutions to the problems. In the long run, learners will hopefully develop such qualities as modesty, independence, integrity, courage, persistence, belief in rationality, empathy, and impartiality.

By making needs analysis on the sides of both the teacher and learners, the teacher may choose diversified information technologies to try the flipped classroom teaching model, as is listed in the following Table 1.

It can be found in Table 1 that the application of the flipped classroom teaching model entails adequate technological support. In the researching process, the researcher screencasts 16 types of critical thinking strategies by using Keynote software; then the 16 five-six minute videos are then shared to students via QQ

group. The self-study requirements are clarified to the students, critical thinking questions are put forward and the students are expected to take these questions into consideration in their autonomous study.

Table 1

Technological Support for the Application of Flipped Classroom Teaching Model

Tasks	Recording and editing of videos and audios	Sharing of teaching resources	Collection of writing assignments	Live broadcast
Technological support	Office screencast software; Adobe Audition sound recorder; Keynote Camtasia; quicktime player; Premiere	Iclass platform; Rain classroom platform; QQ or WeChat group	Iwrite platform; Pigai platform; Iclass platform; Tencent Documents	Rain classroom; Tencent classroom; Zoom; Tencent Meeting

In the classroom setting, the teacher and learners, learners and their partners are to solve together the problems the learners have encountered in their autonomous study. And then they are requested to finish the written or oral assignments. The oral assignments are completed by face-to-face interaction (in time of the pandemic, they interact via QQ group); the written assignments, such as short answer questions and paragraph or passage writing, are either completed in class or after class (in time of the pandemic, paragraph or passage writing is shared on the Iwrite platform). After learners finish their assignments, the teacher is to make comments or evaluations by direct face-to-face interaction with learners or via QQ group.

Summary

The researcher tried to apply the flipped classroom teaching model in English writing course, which practice lasted for five months. The researcher came up with the steps that can be taken in applying the teaching model. The survey conducted among some of the learners revealed that most learners approve of the model by making such comments: "The videos lecturing on critical thinking strategies are of great help to me. I used not to have much idea about the components of critical thinking ability and there are such different methods of developing my critical thinking ability", "Despite its difficulty, the course is very useful. I may have problems in understanding some of the content covered in the videos, but the teacher's explanation brings the points to home", "The texts selected by the teacher broaden my horizon and expand my viewpoints. The writing topics are also related to the reading materials, which enables me to gain some insight into the topics", and "I think paragraph writing is of great use. After the teacher gives some feedback, I am suddenly enlightened and realize the problem with the content in my writing".

Nevertheless, the present research is only the initial attempt to apply the flipped classroom teaching model. How effective the model is in fostering learners' critical thinking ability is to be further investigated. Longer time and more samples are needed; the research content needs specifying and research methods require diversification. In addition to surveys, the teacher may combine qualitative study and quantitative study by encompassing questionnaires, case studies, large-scales tests, and individual interviews.

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