

# Cultivation of College Students' Critical Thinking Ability in the Multi-modal Teaching Mode

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**Abstract:** *This paper delves deeply into the deficiencies in critical thinking abilities of college students within the multi-modal teaching framework. Amid the ongoing curriculum reforms, even though educators are increasingly recognizing the pivotal role of students in the classroom, the cultivation of critical thinking skills for many students is still overlooked in practical teaching. The article elaborates on the function and value of critical thinking in higher education and highlights the primary challenges faced in fostering this ability under the current teaching methodologies. Addressing these issues, the paper proposes a series of effective solutions to enhance teaching quality. Furthermore, through an analysis of the multi-modal teaching mode, this article underscores how to better utilize visual, auditory, and other senses to facilitate students' learning and reflection.*

**Keywords:** *critical thinking ability; multi-modal teaching mode; cultivation connotation; function; teaching quality*

## 1. Overview of multi-modal teaching

With the continuous advancement of the new curriculum reform, more and more college teachers are aware of the importance of students as the main body of the classroom. However, in actual teaching, teachers deliberately hand over the classroom to students and take a laissez-faire approach to students' learning, without creating conditions for the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability. Moreover, due to the lack of English learning environment, the cultivation of critical thinking ability in multi-modal teaching mode is weak. Moreover, most students can not actively find classmates to practice oral English, let alone have a deeper discussion on the topic, so that students' knowledge is relatively narrow and their critical thinking ability is limited. Once students graduate or take an interview to use English to communicate, many students often have unclear expression, lack of logic and other problems. All these show that college students does not have the ability of critical thinking in English learning [1].

Since the reform of college English teaching so far, college English teaching has indeed made great achievements, but at the same time, some significant problems have been exposed, which seriously affect the high efficiency of college English teaching. However, the lack of critical thinking ability has become the most fatal problem in college English teaching, which shows that the current situation of the cultivation of college students' critical thinking ability is not optimistic.

Multi-modal teaching which is based on social semiotic approach by Halliday started in the 90s. The theory integrates multiple sensory organs and multiple signs from the perspective of linguistics. The concept of multi-modal teaching was put forward by overseas scholar in 1996. The teaching model is the integration of multi-media and multi technologies to nurture students' comprehensive abilities.

The strengths of multi-modal teaching in English teaching are obvious. Students will encounter many spelling and pronunciation mistakes in non-native language learning, which deals a big blow to the enthusiasm and initiative of students learning. Multi-modal teaching injects fresh blood to English teaching. Teachers can set different teaching modules according to different teaching contents and add the elements that arouse students' interest in learning such as cartoons, audios and videos by the means of multi-media, which transformed the traditional textbooks into vivid teaching resources, creating a relaxing teaching ambiances and environment.

## 2. The connotation of multi-modal teaching mode

The multi-modal teaching mode refers to the theory of discourse analysis in teaching mode. This

teaching mode lays emphasis on the cultivation of students' diversified abilities. Every part of interaction in class is expected to be multi-modal, and teaching evaluation should be revolved around the characteristics of the surroundings. In other words, teachers are supposed to maximize different resources in classes, stimulating every sense of students to acquire, pass and receive knowledge. In the process of college English teaching, teachers have to encourage students' massive practice of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, aided by a series of concrete actions to master the contents of the knowledge concerned. Teachers ought to integrate videos, images and audios seamlessly, guaranteeing the practicability and interests and making a remarkable improvement of students' English level. The multi-modal teaching mode requires that teachers make full use of semiotics of the multi-modal, coordinate various mode and means of teaching methods, making students to be actively and voluntarily involved in the corresponding teaching activity. Through combining with every practice and consolidating learning outcomes, teaching effectiveness can be enormously improved. Three stages of multi-modal teaching mode are as follows, preparation before class, implementation in class, and assessment after class. Therefore, the multi-modal teaching mode highlights to provide an easy and relaxing learning environment, though videos, pictures, expressions, images, intonations, body language and power point to mobilize students' senses of listening, sight, taste, touch and smell.

Multi-modal teaching mode is a basic teaching theory combining people's multiple sense organs which serve the main purposes in English learning. Multi-modal teaching gives an analysis of active cooperation in listening, speaking, reading and writing from the perspective of sensory organs, whose main educational ideology maneuvers multiple sensory organs to facilitate students' acquisition of English knowledge, improves students' English autonomous learning ability significantly and boost students' application ability of English and communicative ability. Against the backdrop of information era, teachers' application of comprehensive information resources to creative English classes gives an incentive to efficient teaching and lives up to expected teaching objects.

### **3. The function of the cultivation of college students' critical thinking ability in the multi-modal teaching mode**

#### ***3.1 Improving language expression capability***

Poor oral English is a big problem faced with Students learning English. Students can spell a difficult word but cannot read it out. The phenomenon is deteriorating with students aging. Oral English teaching is a little special compared with other English courses. Limiting to textbooks is far from enough. The nurturing of students' oral ability is long and tough process. Under penetration and influence of the Multi-modal teaching, teachers can diversify oral English practice.

Differing from traditional teaching mode, the multi-modal teaching mode focuses on integrating many contents of signification to improve the communicative ability and language ability of students. In daily life, students need talking and communication to deliver messages. In this process, students are required to possess good language expression ability. If not, it will be held that students do not have enough knowledge. Hence, good language expression ability plays a pivotal role in their daily life. Through the cultivation of college students' critical thinking ability in the multi-modal teaching mode, it is crucial to consolidate language expression ability, strengthen their theory knowledge, simultaneously, improving language expression ability will be of great help to their daily activities.

#### ***3.2 Upgrading students' writing ability***

In teaching of English writing, which is an approach of testing students' comprehensive ability. Under the influence of examination-oriented education, teachers do not have a fixed method in teaching, they cram students with some omnipotent sentences, which are repeated in their examination. A small number of teachers will elaborate on writing skills and directions. They are lack of clarity of students' mastery in writing. Multi-modal teaching can mobilize students' multiple sensory organs to associate writing with their daily lives. Teachers can pick out some hot topics for discussion and debate among students, encouraging their own views and improving their writing ability.

#### ***3.3 Cultivating students' culture awareness***

How to acquaint students with foreign culture? The easiest and most efficient way is to see more foreign videos such as foreign movies, TV series and short videos. Some movies disseminate their

main stream cultures such as their individualism and heroism while their short life videos overflowing with colloquial expressions are very helpful for students to learn authentic language. Teachers can devise culture links concerning with foreign cultures such as greetings, customs and holidays. Teachers can set up all-around multi-modal teaching modes of videos, audios and performances to imitate and experience foreigner' body languages and interactions between people. By the means of marinating students with foreign cultures, they can have more understanding to the cultural connotations behind the language. This is an important teaching stage of foreign language learning, which cultivates students' output and application of language acquired, culture awareness and affections and values into new communicative contexts. Cultures awareness can facilitate and make cross-culture communication more smooth and avoid sensitive questions and gain more respect from each other.

### ***3.4 Enhancing students' mindset***

Generally speaking, people's way of thinking has a close relationship with their education level. Different modes of education shape different mindsets. Adopting the multi-modal teaching mode plays an active role in not only improving students' expression ability, but also enhancing students' mindset, cultivating their ability to distinguish things, making better performances and adapting to the development of society [2].

## **4. The problems of cultivation of college students' critical thinking ability in the multi-modal teaching mode**

### ***4.1 Improper teaching method***

Compared with foreign college students' critical thinking ability, the ability of Chinese college students is in slow progress, there are many problems during the cultivation process, and improper teaching method is one of the main culprit. As a guider for students' learning, teachers plays an important role in inspiring, correcting and cultivating students' mindset. Therefore, teachers' teaching methods exert a great effect on students' acquisition and absorption of knowledge, which is much significant[3]. In reality, a brilliant and knowledgeable teacher does not necessarily facilitate students' satisfactory performance in learning, which can be resulted from improper teaching method, and it causes students' poor learning outcome, directly adversely affects students' development. In the process of college English teaching, teachers do one-man show in podium, lead and dominate the class from beginning to the end. This teaching method is not fit for the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability. English, as a subject of foreign languages, demands much practice and environment for college students to master it, however, most domestic students have no environment and opportunity to practice their language. Only though practice in English classes can they improve their English level. If teachers only concentrate themselves on studying textbooks and do not arrange situational conversations, field exercises and argument expounding, students' critical abilities cannot be raised. Therefore, the current teaching method is a great obstacle for the development of multi-modal teaching mode.

### ***4.2 Students' insufficient confidence***

In the past teaching, exam-oriented education takes up a great proportion. This teaching method indeed boosts students' scores, but results in the students' lack of critical spirit and poor confidence. In the process of college English teaching, a large number of students are not confident enough to express themselves when faced with the questions in classes [4]. So, it's very tough to carry out English communication, oral practice and English activities. In addition, a small number of students are lack of confidence and get cold feet when faced with difficulties and challenges. They are easy to abandon their aims, afraid of emerging things and activities. When they encounter conflicts with others in opinions, they have no capabilities to retain their own views and solve them due to getting no ideas of their own. In most cases, the problem-solving are at the mercy of others. Poor communicative ability and reliance on others more often than not bring about the ignorance of others. Therefore, students' insufficient confidence is a big hurdle for the implementation of the multi-modal teaching mode [5].

### ***4.3 Absence of the idea of multi-modal teaching mode***

Traditional and ingrained teaching method leads to teachers' short of critical thinking, causing great difficulties for the cultivation of students' critical thinking and also the development of the multi-modal

teaching mode. In the actual college English teaching, traditional teaching ideologies are prevalent. In the class, teachers adopt traditional teaching method which highlights theoretical knowledge, ignoring the training of other skills, which gives rise to the lack of presentation of students' self-ability to demonstrate themselves. The boring class atmosphere fails to make students immerse themselves in the class activities and deprives them of learning motivation. In addition, the teaching activities to cultivate students' critical thinking in the multi-modal teaching mode are so scarce, which is also a main culprit[6-7].

## **5. Cultivation of college students' critical thinking ability in the multi-modal teaching mode**

The cultivation of college students' critical thinking ability is the focus of modern teaching, which is closely related with students' all-round development. However, there exist a lot of challenges and hurdles in the process of cultivation of students' critical thinking ability, not enough attention has been paid to critical thinking [6]. My summarized strategies for promoting college students' critical thinking ability are as follows[8].

### ***5.1 Introducing the advanced teaching equipment***

Modern scientific technology provides fast development and convenience for the cause of education, making the teaching contents rich and colorful. Because of technological limitations and traditional teaching methods, teaching methods, contents and means are comparatively singular. The teaching contents are passed to students through text books, making the classes dreary and dull and students lose their interest in learning. The multi-modal teaching mode aims to avail itself of all the resources accessible, which requires teachers to introduce multi-media teaching modal to make students to be soaked in teaching environment with lively and excellent texts and pictures. For example, teachers can download some audios to facilitate students' pronunciation and immerse students in real and authentic English. A good English expression is based on fluent and standard input. Active teaching environment with lively and excellent audios can be greatly helpful in mobilizing student's initiative and boosting their achievements. So, in the multi-modal teaching mode, advanced teaching equipment is indispensable [9-10].

### ***5.2 Changing the traditional teaching concept***

Promoting multi-modal teaching mode to cultivate students' critical thinking ability requires teachers to change their traditional teaching concept. In the traditional teaching, acquiring knowledge takes up a large part of students' time. Relaxing activities are scarce, which is the limitation of the development and initiative of students' critical thinking and adversely affects students' comprehensive quality improvement. Moreover, outdated and obsolescent conceptions and ingrained ideologies have negative impact on the application of the multi-modal teaching mode and the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability. Therefore, in the modern multi-modal teaching mode, teachers are supposed to prioritize the cultivation of students' interest in learning and class activities, making them get more listening, speaking and imitating. For example, in college English teaching, the teaching of reading comprehension is generally boring and dull, teachers can pick out a related music background to match the content of the reading text contents. Some group work and role-play can enhance students' interest in learning, making them achieve wonderful learning performance [11].

### ***5.3 Improving teaching quality***

Teachers are guides in the process of students' learning. Teacher play an essential role in every aspect of students' learning. Teachers should not only possess good teaching ability, but also have practical operation ability. In the application of the multi-modal teaching mode, teacher are so important, and they can make full use of their knowledge to teach vividly. They should not only completely pass the teaching level, but also entirely pass the language skills, mandarin level, dancing, music, painting, body movements, etc. Therefore, Chinese government or schools can invest funds for teachers to go abroad for further study, learn professional knowledge and practical operation ability, learn knowledge in other fields other than their major, master advanced foreign teaching methods, and improve teachers' teaching quality. Teachers themselves can also benefit from the development of new media, usually watch more online teaching videos to improve themselves, and then students' critical thinking ability can be cultivated by the multi-modal teaching mode.

#### 5.4 Creation of harmonious teaching environment

Teachers are supposed to give students' dominant place in teaching activities in order to further exert the value of multi-modal teaching in English classes of universities and colleges. Through active and pleasant communication and interaction, teachers can maneuver all the sensory organs of students to focus on their inattentiveness in English learning. Teachers and students both participate in discussion and interaction, airing their views freely. In the interactive process, Students' listening and oral abilities are nurtured effectively, which plays a significant role in students' English comprehensive qualities.

#### 6. Summary

To sum up, cultivating college students' critical thinking ability in multi-modal teaching mode is a feasible measure to achieve the goal of cultivating innovative talents. Based on the significance of critical thinking ability to students' learning and development, teachers should constantly exert their own subjective initiative, use a variety of teaching methods to stimulate students' desire for critical thinking and stimulate the formation of students' critical thinking. However, cultivating students' critical thinking ability is a long-term and arduous task, which cannot be accomplished overnight, and requires English teachers to make unremitting efforts and practice step by step.

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