EFFECTS OF FACILITATION ON CRITICAL THINKING OF ADULT ESL LEARNERS ENGAGED IN SOLVING ILL-STRUCTURED PROBLEMS THROUGH ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE FORUMS

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By

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This quasi-experimental study examined the effects of using questions as facilitation to guide student exploration of ill-structured problems in asynchronous online forums on the critical thinking of adult ESL learners in a blended learning environment. A mixed methods approach was used to collect and analyse the data. In this pretest posttest control group format, twenty groups were randomly divided into the experimental and control groups where students worked on three different ill-structured problems consecutively. Only students in the experimental groups received facilitation as they worked through the problems.

Data were collected using the Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level X (CCTT Level X) and the online forum transcripts. The statistical analysis showed that students significantly improved from the pretest to posttest after treatment (p<0.05). Data from
the texts of online interaction showed that with facilitation, students were guided to identify the problem before providing solutions and to check the viability of suggested solutions before making decisions. The occurrence of critical thinking also greatly increased when students received facilitation during their discussion. The qualitative results not only substantiated the quantitative findings but also highlighted the accommodating features of asynchronous online forums that support the development of critical thinking. Both students and the facilitator had time to think and reflect on their thoughts, and the flexibility to respond at any time that was convenient for them. The asynchronous features seem favourable to adult learners.

The study provides evidence that facilitating student discussion of ill-structured problems using questions promotes and develops critical thinking. It offers alternative teaching practices that make effective use of the infusion of asynchronous networks and learning instructions as educational tools in online learning environments that support constructivist principles and collaborative learning in order to develop critical thinking. Based on the findings of the study, a model was suggested using the Nine Teacher Strategies listed by Udall and Daniels for better facilitation of discussion of ill-structured problems in online learning environments.
Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah.

KESAN SOKONGAN KE ATAS PEMIKIRAN KRITIS PELAJAR ESL DEWASA YANG BERBINCANG TENTANG PERMASALAHAN RAMBANG MENGGUNAKAN FORUM MAYA SECARA ASINKRONI

Oleh

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Kajian kuasi eksperimen ini bertujuan mengenalpasti kesan menggunakan soalan sebagai sokongan untuk membantu eksplorasi permasalahan rambang (ill-structured problems) di forum maya secara asinkroni ke atas pemikiran kritis pelajar ESL dewasa yang mengikuti pembelajaran separa maya. Pendekatan kaedah bercampur digunakan untuk mengumpul dan menganalisis data. Dengan menggunakan rekabentuk kumpulan kawalan pra-ujian pasca-ujian, dua puluh kumpulan diagihkan secara rawak kepada kumpulan eksperimen dan kawalan dimana pelajar membincangkan tiga permasalahan rambang yang berlainan satu persatu. Hanya para pelajar dalam kumpulan eksperimen diberikan sokongan berbentuk soalan semasa perbincangan.

Data dikumpulkan dari Ujian Pemikiran Kritis Cornell Tahap X (CCTT Level X) dan transkrip forum maya. Analisis statistik menunjukkan kenaikan yang signifikan dari
pra-ujian ke pasca-ujian selepas rawatan \( (p<0.05) \). Data dari teks interaksi maya menunjukkan bahawa dengan soalan bantuan, pelajar memperolehi panduan dalam mengenalpasti masalah sebelum memberikan penyelesaian dan memeriksa tahap kesesuaian cadangan penyelesaian sebelum membuat keputusan. Soalan bantuan juga menaikkan kekerapan penggunaan pemikiran kritis semasa pelajar membincangkan permasalahan rambang. Keputusan kualitatif bukan sahaja memperkukuh keputusan kuantitatif malah menonjolkan ciri asinkroni forum maya yang membantu perkembangan pemikiran kritis. Baik pelajar mahupun fasilitator mempunyai masa untuk berfikir dan mempertimbang pemikiran mereka, dan juga fleksibiliti untuk memberi respon pada masa yang bersesuaian dengan mereka. Ciri-ciri asinkroni nampaknya cenderung menyokong pelajar dewasa.

Kajian ini membuktikan bahawa membantu pelajar membincangkan permasalahan rambang dengan sokongan berbentuk soalan mampu menggalak dan memperkembangkan pemikiran kritis. Ia menawarkan alternatif kepada penyediaan pengajaran yang menggabung secara efektif sesawang asinkroni dan arahan pembelajaran sebagai peralatan belajar dalam persekitaran pembelajaran maya yang menyokong prinsip konstruktivis dan pembelajaran berkumpulan dengan tujuan memperkembangkan pemikiran kritis. Berdasarkan kepada dapatan kajian, dicadangkan sebuah model yang menggunakan Sembilan Strategi Pengajaran yang digariskan oleh Udall dan Daniels untuk menambah baik proses sokongan bagi pelajar yang mengadakan diskusi permasalahan rambang dalam persekitaran pembelajaran maya.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>xx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION
   1.1 Background to the Study
      1.1.1 Critical Thinking in Malaysian Educational System
      1.1.2 Critical Thinking and E-Learning
      1.1.3 Critical Thinking and ESL
   1.2 Problem Statement
   1.3 Purpose of the Study
   1.4 Research Questions
   1.5 Theoretical Framework for the Study
   1.6 Significance of the Study
   1.7 Scope of the Study
   1.8 Definition of Terms

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
   2.1 Introduction
   2.2 Definition of Critical Thinking
   2.3 Models of Critical Thinking
   2.4 Factors that Influence Thinking
   2.5 Critical Thinking and Language
      2.5.1 The Interactionist Theories and Second Language Acquisition
      2.5.2 Studies on ESL and Critical Thinking
   2.6 Constructivism as a Learning Theory
   2.7 Language Task and Ill-Structured Problems
      2.7.1 Use of Ill-Structured Problems
      2.7.2 Processes Involved in Solving Ill-Structured Problems
2.8 The Role of Facilitation in Developing Critical Thinking 68
  2.8.1 Facilitation of Ill-Structured Problems 69
  2.8.2 The Role of Facilitator 72
  2.8.3 The Facilitation Matrix 77
  2.8.4 Studies on Facilitation and Ill-Structured Problems 80
2.9 Online Learning 82
  2.9.1 Forms of E-Learning 84
  2.9.2 Types of Online Learners 85
  2.9.3 Modes of Online Communication 87
  2.9.4 Online Learning and ESL 96
  2.9.5 Studies on Online Learning and Critical Thinking 98
2.10 Adult Learners in Online Learning 101
  2.10.1 Andragogy and Adult Learning 102
  2.10.2 Pedagogical Considerations in Adult Learning 103
  2.10.3 Studies on Adult Learners 107
2.11 Summary 109

3 METHODOLOGY 113
  3.1 Introduction 113
  3.2 Research Design 113
    3.2.1 The Quasi-Experimental Design 114
    3.2.2 Design of Ill-Structured Problems 118
    3.2.3 The Online Forum 120
  3.3 Participants 122
  3.4 Instruments 123
    3.4.1 Demographic Questionnaire 123
    3.4.2 Cornell Critical Thinking Test 124
    3.4.3 Content Analysis Method 125
    3.4.4 Online Forum Transcripts 131
  3.5 Data Collection Procedures 131
  3.6 Reliability 134
    3.6.1 Selection of Coders 135
    3.6.2 Steps to Interrater Reliability 135
    3.6.3 Reliability of Data in the Study 137
  3.7 Validity 139
    3.7.1 Threats to Internal Validity 139
    3.7.2 Threats to External Validity 140
  3.8 Data Analysis 140
  3.9 Summary 143

4 RESULTS 144
  4.1 Introduction 144
  4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants 145
  4.3 Effects of Facilitation 148
4.3.1 Level of Critical Thinking among Students 149
4.3.2 Use of Skills of Critical Thinking 151
4.3.3 Student Performance in Pretest and Posttest 154
4.4 How Facilitation Affects Student Thinking 156
4.4.1 Use of Facilitation and the Thinking Process 157
4.4.2 Thinking Behaviors in Discussion of Ill-Structured Problems 159
4.4.3 Proportion of Use According to Provinces and Skills 185
4.4.4 Frequency of Use According to Skills 193
4.5 Facilitation and Development of Critical Thinking 198
4.5.1 Facilitation and Occurrence of Critical Thinking 198
4.5.2 Facilitation and Scores for Critical Thinking 200
4.6 Summary 202

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
5.1 Introduction 204
5.2 Summary of Findings 204
5.3 Effects of Facilitation 205
5.3.1 Level of Critical Thinking among Students 206
5.3.2 Use of Skills of Critical Thinking 208
5.3.3 Student Performance in Pretest and Posttest 210
5.4 How Facilitation Affects Student Thinking 212
5.4.1 Process of Student Thinking with Facilitation 213
5.4.2 Process of Student Thinking without Facilitation 219
5.4.3 Model for Facilitating Discussion of Ill-Structured Problems in Asynchronous Online Environments 222
5.5 Facilitation and Development of Critical Thinking 225
5.6 Observed Behaviors in Asynchronous Online Forums 226
5.7 Implications of the Study 229
5.7.1 Implications for Teaching and Learning 230
5.7.2 Implications for Policy Makers 233
5.8 Limitations of the Study 236
5.9 Recommendations for Future Research 237
5.10 Conclusion 239

REFERENCES 241
APPENDICES 270
BIO DATA OF STUDENT 292
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS 293