Utilizing Literature Focusing on The Short Story as a Pedagogical Tool for Critical Thinking in English Education

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Abstract

This paper addresses the pivotal role of critical thinking (CT) skills and underscores its relevance in university education. A praxis-oriented approach forms the backbone of this study, emphasizing the practical implementation of theoretical perspectives. It specifically focuses on employing literature as a pedagogical tool to cultivate CT skills, outlining practical strategies and classroom lessons utilizing short stories as a vehicle for CT skill development with carefully scaffolded activities employed in the author's course. The insights of gleaned from student feedback obtained via questionnaires provide valuable perspectives on the effectiveness of the CT skill development in university education. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity of pedagogical expertise for successful implementation of CT.

Keywords: critical thinking, university education, literature, pedagogical tool, English Mediated Instruction, English proficiency

Introduction

In the university curriculum, it is important not to overlook teaching critical thinking (CT) skills. There has been an ongoing debate whether CT should be taught as a stand-alone course or if it should be integrated with the course content of a specific subject. Regardless, both are relevant to the importance of incorporating CT development in the university curriculum. This paper will focus on using literature as a pedagogical tool to enhance CT skills for Japanese English majors in a stand-alone course delivered in English. However, it is also relevant to courses specifically designed to integrate CT skill development in subject-specific literary courses. It begins by first offering a baseline definition of CT and amplifies its essential role in university-level education. The study then discusses the highly complementary role that literature plays in developing CT skills, and specifically focuses on the genre of the short story as a most applicable resource. The paper stresses the

import of pedagogical knowledge required of the educator for successful implementation of using literature as pedagogical tool for CT skills development. Classroom lessons are then outlined to illustrate suitable pedagogical knowledge and the effectiveness of using short story for CT skill development.

The study embraces a praxis-oriented approach in its design. "Praxis" in this context refers to practical implementation of the theoretical perspectives discussed in the paper. Practical strategies for effective integration of short stories for developing CT skills, which include carefully scaffolded activities that were used in the author's course, are shown. This implies that the discussion not only places an emphasis on theory, but also explores practical applications of the concepts discussed. Finally, the paper presents feedback obtained from a questionnaire administered to students in the course to gather insights into their perspectives.

Defining CT

The concept of CT has been in existence for more than 2,500 years, going back to the ancient Greeks when they began to consider *episteme*, critically reflecting on the foundations of knowledge by inquiring how do we come to know what we know. In a sense, CT is a metacognitive process of thinking about thinking that can lead to forming logical judgements about an issue at hand (Dwyer et al., 2014).

John Dewey (1910), a renowned American educational philosopher, emphasized that CT should be open to exploring knowledge claims in a manner that should include a systematic and holistic thought process involving cognitive and psychological attributes that one methodically undertakes. He described CT as an inquiry-based, "reflective thinking" process that involves an:

> "[a]ctive, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitute reflective thought" (1910, p.6)

Dewey's inquiry-based approach prioritized the importance of learning in education to focus on the knowing process as a subjective experience more than the final aims of curricula that stress the transmission of knowledge as objective facts that should be memorized. The former involving the learner as an involved, active participant; the latter as a detached, pas-

sive recipient. Consequently, he characterized knowledge claims in academia to be better thought of as "warranted assertions" stressing their dynamic nature rather than thinking of them as unchanging or static, rigid pieces of information or as "artifacts or pieces of dead wood of the past" (Boyles, 2006, p. 15). A leading scholar on the development of CT, Edward Glaser (1941), furthered Dewey's description of the concept.

Glaser also placed CT within both psychological and cognitive domains, addressing the active, dynamic nature of the concept. He posited that the critical thinker should take control of the process through determined effort to examine beliefs and knowledge supported by evidence as having:

> (1) an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experiences, (2) knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, and (3) some skill in applying those methods (p.5).

In the eighties, the role of CT in education gained momentum. By that time, a plethora of definitions of the concept had emerged from various disciplines of philosophy, education, and psychology (Lai, 2011). Consequently, educators sought to come up with a shared understanding of CT and its application in education. Peter Facione, a leading figure in CT research in education, organized a panel of 46 prominent educators in the field of CT. This panel affiliated with the disciplines of Philosophy (52%), Education (22%), the Social Sciences (20%), and the Physical Sciences (6%) collaboratively arrived at a shared understanding of CT, its essential skills, and personal qualities. They concluded:

> The ideal critical thinker is habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases, prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider, clear about issues, orderly in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information, reasonable in the selection of criteria, focused in inquiry, and persistent in seeking results which are as precise as the subject and the circumstances of inquiry permit. (1993, p.2)

According to this description, the experts concluded that CT encompasses two areas: cognitive abilities and affective attitudes, both of which are needed to cultivate and to nurture

individuals into critical thinkers. These conclusions point out that CT requires a holistic understanding of the concept. A critical thinker must have cognitive skills to systematically gather, analyze and interpret information and at the same time have the dispositions to approach knowledge claims with curiosity, balancing skepticism with open-mindedness. The consensus of the experts on the panel concerned with advancing CT in education further substantiated the definitions provided by Dewey and Glaser.

The role of CT in University Education and EFL Instructed Courses

As defined above, CT is at the core from which knowledge building and knowledge creation emerge. Taken from this perspective, the development of CT skills is a fundamental component of education at the university level from various standpoints centered on cognitive development by challenging students to think independently about complex issues. It equips students with the skills of conducting research, problem solving, and constructing coherent arguments, all of which prepare them to adapt and contribute to the world as well-informed global citizens. These features are relevant to teaching academic subjects in an EFL educational environment, where students are further developing their language acquisition skills while simultaneously learning the subject content of a course. In America, integrating language and content is referred to as immersion; in Europe the integration of language structures and content is named 'content and language integrated learning' (CLIL).

An umbrella term for the integration of language acquisition with content learning has been labelled English Mediated Instruction (EMI). In a study based in the University of Oxford's Department of Education, EMI was defined as, "The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English" (Dearden, 2015, p.2). Thus, EMI is a more comprehensive label for the integration of language structures and subject knowledge.

When EMI is used for teaching "academic subjects" in higher education, CT should play a vital role. This is the case of the English department, where this study takes place. As indicated in its curriculum policy, learning through English (i.e., EMI) is expected to be carried out in the department's courses, including literature and the developing students' CT skills. Since English literature courses are mandatory academic subjects in the department, this research will illustrate how teaching literature through EMI can be used to further the development of students' language proficiencies, literary knowledge, and CT

skills.

Next, a look at the benefits of developing CT skills through the content of literature will be addressed. Subsequently, the discussion will center on clarifying why the short story is a rich source to foster CT while also showing its appropriateness as an effective medium for EMI courses.

Facilitating CT through Literature

It can be said that the literature is most conducive to developing CT skills. Lazare posited that "literature…is the single academic discipline that can come closest to encompassing the full range of mental traits currently considered to comprise critical thinking" (1987, p. 3). He argued that the framework of literary criticism mirrors the cognitive process a critical thinker should go through involving the mental dispositions "to follow an extended line of thought through propositional, thematic, or symbolic development…and to be perceptive of …multiple dimensions of form and meaning" (p.3). In the classroom, through critical reflection, literature is "a powerful motivator" (Duff and Maley, 1990, p. 6) because the narratives draw students into forming their own personal judgements and discussing them with others.

In sharing with others, students encounter multiple viewpoints and self-reflect on their previously held thoughts and beliefs. Thus, as students discuss the themes in literature representing a variety of scenarios, they are engaged in higher order critical thought. They evaluate scenes and outcomes; are open to accept other ways of thinking; and participate in knowledge building by a critical process of creating their own interpretations through a systematic process of constructing meaning grounded in the narratives. Collie and Slater (1990) identify four primary reasons to use literature to teach English in the EFL classroom. They include using authentic material, cultural enhancement, language improvement, and personal engagement. Although these features also apply to teaching literature to non-native English speakers, there are caveats.

While literature is highly complementary to teaching CT skills, it poses a challenge when it is conducted in EMI classrooms with non-native speakers. Complex linguistic structures and vocabulary can be problematic. Moreover, the assorted themes, metaphorical descriptions, culture-specific connotations, characters, and their underlying motivations that are commonly woven into literary narratives can present the non-native students with a formidable task of processing the text layered with complexity, such as novels or the

prose of poetry. For these reasons, the genre of short story can be effective.

Short story as an appropriate genre to develop CT through EMI

A proposed solution offered in this study is to use authentic short stories as an introductory approach to EMI in literature courses with attention to developing CT abilities. Teaching literature as an academic subject in university requires the use of authentic materials, and this should apply to a stand-alone CT course using an EMI approach as well. Graded readers abridged for language learners would be inadequate. For example, using graded readers to introduce the classic novels would undercut the students' skills to analyze the text, thoroughly. Abridged texts are thinned down versions that sacrifice depth, nuances, and symbolisms that the author intended to convey.

However, the dilemma for EMI in literature is that authentic works of novels and poetry are difficult for non-native learners to process as stated above. If that were not enough, the challenge is intensified when teachers are expected to foster students' CT skills along with literary comprehension of authentic materials. One way to rectify this situation is to use short stories in EMI. Because they are concise, they immediately engage the non-native reader in an efficient manner exploring various narratives through offering diverse cultural contexts while improving the learner's language abilities and CT skills. Nonetheless, these benefits can also be deceptive as "they do not offer extended contextual support and repetition which longer texts do" (Duff and Maley, 1990, p. 7). To compensate, it is important to familiarize students with the structure of short stories. and to carefully select stories that suitably match their learning potential levels.

As a prerequisite to help students to cognitively process the content of a short story, it requires knowledge to recognize the structure of the genre. The most common elements and descriptions are shown below:

Table 1. The most common elements of a short story

Plot	Sequential events of a narrative that tell the central theme of the story.	Action begins immediately with an opening incident; rising action, climax, and then possible winding down and ending can be abrupt—with or without resolution.
Character	People (or animals) involved in the action of the story.	Only a few characters (often two or three).

Setting	Represented by time (seasonal, historical), place, environment.	The action usually happens with one location and often one time frame.
Conflict	A struggle or issue (usually one) between the characters who are often at opposite ends.	Two types: *Internal conflict* taking place inside the psyche of a character; *external conflict* outwardly happening between the characters.
Theme	The central idea/message of the story; usually one single theme.	E.g., relationship issues, gender issues social or political issues and values.

From the author's experience, short stories with abrupt and or ambiguous endings provide particularly fruitful opportunities for creative activities in EMI, and for courses that include CT development. Often the stories end suddenly and are open ended. That is, the stories are left open to the readers' reflections and interpretations. A parallel can be drawn within the art form of painting. For example, realism in a painting sets out to capture as accurately as possible the true nature of an object or objects, such as still life paintings of fruits, which allow the viewer to appreciate the realness of the fruit. The technique of the artist is meant to be appreciated with no intention to engage the viewer in imagining what the images of the object are. On the other hand, an impressionistic, abstract style painting invites viewers to use their imaginations to interpret emotions or construct what objects they see in the painting. In this sense, abstract paintings are more open-ended to engagement and interpretation compared to realism style of paintings.

Similarly, short stories that end abruptly engage the reader to abstract their own interpretations. Moreover, as a part of learning the structure of short stories, it should be made clear that they can finish open-ended, with the intention of leaving it up to the reader to put the pieces together. To avoid bewilderment, the teacher should prepare the students not to be frustrated or confused when confronted with endings where the answers cannot be assessed from the text. Instead, the students can be asked to reflect on the story and come up with their own interpretations as they would do if viewing an abstract painting. Having students go through a process of self-reflecting on events and actions in a story, forming plausible views and testing them out with other students are steps toward CT skill development.

In addition to familiarizing students with the elements of a short story, the selection of appropriate stories is essential for EMI and CT skill development courses. One category

of the genre, referred to as *literary minimalism* is an example that should be considered, primarily. Writers who have contributed to the literary minimalism style are Ernest Hemmingway, Anne Beattie, Samuel Beckett, Joyce Carol Oates, and Raymond Carver. Minimalist stories emphasize simplicity, with shorter sentences, less vocabulary, and value brevity of stating characters thoughts or feelings and events, in which the latter are often about every day, ordinary happenings. Greaney (2012) further gathered several salient aspects of what has been defined as literary minimalism to be inclusive of:

> …unresolved, even slight narratives which reveal more than they resolve; the use of unadorned language and the rejection of hyperbole; a detached, even 'absent' narrator; a more abundant use of dialogue; fewer adjectives and, when used, not extravagant; showing, not telling as a primary means of communicating information; an interest in the accurate depiction of the everyday; and a focus upon the present tense.

The conciseness of the storytelling with spare direct prose, centering on the human experience offer linguistic support and at the same time space for constructive engagement of the readers to do reflective thinking about the content. Therefore, selecting short stories that are minimalist in their form are highly suggested.

A short story that captures the minimalism style used in this study (see further below) is by Kate Chopin (1850-1904) titled, *Story of an Hour*. Chopin's writing is at the core of the development of the early minimalist style. Clark writes that the images in the story "establish a set of aesthetic guidelines that call for precision and austerity, two of the primary tenets of the mode" (2012 p.105). Chopin was an independent thinking woman living in the Victorian Era. Her writings were groundbreaking, revealing the complexities of the lives of women in a time when women's rights and freedoms were suppressed. Her works challenged the oppressive societal expectations of women in that era, drawing the attention of those involved in the feminist movement then and now. Interestingly, Chopin, being highly independent and individualistic, did not align herself with feminist movement, and critics argue that she did not want to be categorized as a feminist writer because she felt it would diminish the larger humanistic themes of her work (Zea, 2005). Regardless, she conveyed the deep emotional conflicts of her feminine characters within ordinary moments while critiquing society with concise language, artfully using the minimalism style.

In the above, it was shown in theory why the short story is a very suitable resource

to develop literary understanding and CT skill development. Next, a praxis-oriented look at an EMI course focusing on CT skills development is described by depicting actual lessons the author used that focused on CT skills development through the short story.

Pedagogy in practice: CT skills development activities through short story

In this section, lessons designed and carried out by the author in practice are presented. A summary of the story selected, and an emphasis on pedagogical knowledge needed to conduct the lessons are given. This will be followed by a step-by-step description of the activities.

The activities occurred over five 90-minute classes as a part of a CT skills development course. There were 18 students, who were majoring in the department of English. The activities centered on the above-mentioned *Story of an Hour* by Kate Chopin. It was selected because of its minimalism style (having a little over 1,000 words) and content.

The story immediately begins when a young woman with a heart condition, referred to as Mrs. Mallard by the narrator to emphasize the loss of individual identity of women in that era, learns of her husband's reported death by a train accident. After initially being struck with grief, she goes off to her room to be alone. There, sunk in the chair of her room, she stares outside from the window. Suddenly and unexpectedly, life springs forth and bubbles up from within her in a way she hadn't noticed so impactfully before with vibrant images of blue skies, spring growth on trees, birds chirping, a voice in the distance of someone singing. All these images merge into a thought that had existed only in her deep subconscious as Chopin writes:

> She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

The above text enters the story after 500 words. In that short amount, the protagonist goes through a jumble of conflicting emotions. The reader learns her husband was killed, she was deeply distraught, never to see "the face that had never looked save with love upon her", and then now has feelings of exhilaration for her newly discovered freedom. In a little less than 500 words later, the story ends abruptly when there is a knock at

the door, and upon seeing her husband, she collapses and dies. The doctor reported that the joy was too much for her heart.

The conflict over constraints a woman felt between societal expectations of women in the Victorian Era and the yearning for independence are tragically symbolized in the life of the husband and the death of Mrs. Mallard. The story is relevant to exploring gender issues as indicated in the passage depicting a momentary sense of freedom triggered by the belief of her husband's death:

> There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

Consequently, the story was chosen to have students further explore gender issues through activities designed to further develop their CT skills.

To present the students with a task in an EMI to reach their learning potential goal of conducting systematic CT analysis as an extended activity from the story to research gender issues, and report on them requires appropriate pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). According to Shulman (1987), teacher knowledge consists of two domains: Knowing the content subject matter of "what" to teach and the pedagogical knowledge of "how" to teach it. At university, teachers have subject matter knowledge, but equally important is to have appropriate knowledge of pedagogical skills to deliver the content, in a way that allows students to critically engage with the material.

The impact of appropriate PCK is seen by McMillen (1986, p.23) as he noted, "It really boils down to whether teachers are creating an environment that stimulates critical inquiry." For example, a much relied on mode of instruction at university is based on transmission of knowledge using monologic lecture type approaches in which students are the passive receivers of content. However, this mode of instruction is not a pedagogically appropriate environment for CT skill development (Takegami, 2023). Teachers themselves need to do "reflective thinking" on their instruction and be willing to improve on their PCK. An effective means to teaching CT is to take a constructivist approach because the latter involves students in active learning to build on knowledge through dialogic, collab-

orative, inquiry-based learning. This is illustrated below in the lessons structured to help learners achieve the goal set for them to explore and report on gender issues. A constructivist approach with scaffolding (Bruner et al. 1976) techniques through sequential steps were applied to assist students in their performance (Tharpe and Gallimore, 1988) to meet the learning goal within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), that is, learning occurs most effectively within this zone, through interactions and guidance that help the learner grasp concepts or skills that were initially beyond their individual capacity. The steps, which were culminated in the CT reports, are presented below and explained.

・Scaffolded steps of the lessons

Step 1: Introduce Elements of a Short Story
Students were familiarized with the elements of the short story as shown in Table 1., including the comparisons to the art form of abstract paintings.

Step 2: 1st reading of story for linguistic comprehension
Students read the story in class.

Step 3: Lexical and metaphorical focus
Linguistic knowledge of students was enhanced by having them (1) go through the story eliciting unfamiliar vocabulary words and searching their meaning; (2) searching for metaphorical descriptions they encountered in the text and wanted to discuss, such as:

> (a) There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul; (b) But she felt it, creeping out of the sky; (c) she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window; (d) of joy that kills.

Step 4: Sociocultural context: Background of story for critical analysis
Before the 2nd reading, students were given an activity that explores the societal and cultural factors, which shape the narrative, characters, and theme of the story.

Step 5 :2nd reading

Students now reread with social and cultural perspectives of the era in which the story takes place.

Step 6: Literary development: Questions to think deeper about content

1. The external (outsider) view: Write a paragraph of about 100~200 words describing how the visual information in this picture [a picture resemblance of Mrs. Mallard sitting in a chair looking outside from the window] connects to a scene in the story. In other words, if Josephine [Mrs. Mallard's sister who comes to her room worrying about her] saw this scene what would she think?

2. The internal (insider) view: Write a paragraph of about 100~200 words describing Mrs. Mallard's thoughts at this moment in the story. In short, if you were inside the mind of Mrs. Mallard, what would she be thinking?

Step 7: CT development (1): Then and Now
Students were asked to compare societal expectations of women in the late 19th century to the present.

Step 8: CT development (2): Students look at possible gender issues today
Students were presented with a mind map asking them to write anything about gender issues. Then, their ideas were elicited and written on board.

Step 9: CT development (3): Explore and identify a proposed existing gender issue What? Why? How?
In this higher order development stage after viewing ideas on gender issues, students were tasked with the epistemological CT challenging question: How do we know what know? They chose a proposed gender issue and used it as an example to explore the claim "How do we know it?" by going through a CT exploratory process.

To scaffold the activity, students were given a PowerPoint template consisting of 8 slides helping them to cognitively structure and present their reports. The slides were organized and outlined in a way to introduce the topic, show data points, analyze and interpret them, make informed judgements, and the final slide asked students to make two

discussion questions.

Step 10: Report findings

Students present findings in class and participate in a dialogic discussion about them responding to the discussion questions formed by the presenters.

Step 11: Feedback (survey)

The final step of the study was to hear from the 18 students about what they thought of the course design to enhance their CT skills through the short story. For this purpose, an exploratory designed questionnaire was conducted to gain insights into asking what they thought of the material and how helpful were the scaffolded steps.

The first set of three questions focused on literary comprehension of the story in chronological order of when they were presented in the scaffolded steps of the lessons. Question one targeted Step 1, familiarity with elements of a short story; question two looked at Step 4, to elicit critical reflections within the story content, and question 3 focused on Step 6, intended to provide a sociocultural context to enrich comprehension. The results are subsequently shown below:

1. How much did the structure (elements) of short story activity

help you better understand The Story of an Hour (5= very much; 1= not at all)

5	4	3	2	1
11	7	0	0	0

2. How much did the external (outsider) view and the internal (insider) view activity help you to know better understand *The Story of an Hour*?

5	4	3	2	1
9	7	2	0	0

3. How much did the information about women in the Victorian era help you to know better understand *The Story of an Hour*?

5	4	3	2	1
13	4	1	0	0

The results of the scaffolded steps to help the students understand the material were overwhelming positive with almost all the respondents indicating the activities were highly helpful for them to comprehend the story content from the perspective of honing their literary skills.

The next set of questions targeted the steps of the course that went beyond the story content to activities that assisted their higher order CT skill development by focusing on gender issues. Respondents were asked to expand on their choice as well. Selected comments representative of similar responses were selected and presented by numerical choice. Question looked at Step 7, aimed at having the students make connections to women in the past to their situations in the present. Questions 5 and 6, directly connected to the Steps 8 and 9 by drawing attention to the gender issue topic, preparing for their reports, and how useful was the PowerPoint template to help them cognitively structure their presentations.

4. How much did the comparing societal expectations of women in the late 19th century to the present contribute to your learning?

5	4	3	2	1
10	6	2	0	0

Selected examples of students' responses to choices:

(5) *Now we can professionally get our job and have our careers. Though this story, I learned how women have fought for their freedom.*

(4) *Still, we have a lot of gender gap. So, there is expectation to make our society better.*

(3) *We still have Gender issues in our society. I have learned that there is historical relationship.*

Responses to the questions showed a large upward learning curb. They also demonstrate

a critical understanding of the historical relationship with gender issues, and that there are still equality issues.

The following question 5 and 6 focused on Step 9, which prepared them to do form a gender issue topic, systematically research it and then present it to the class.

5. How much did the exploring your gender issue project contribute to your critical thinking skills?"

5	4	3	2	1
10	7	1	0	0

Selected examples of students' responses to choices:
(5) *Though this project, I have researched how the idea of femininity and the role of women have emerged and changed or not changed through the history with my partner.*

(4) *I realized that there exists a lot of gender problems. I think we should have open minds to listen to many opinions, accepting them and then making our judgement.*

(3) *It helped me gain the ability to think about things from a different perspective.*

The respondents very favorably viewed the gender issue project. Their comments showed they saw the value of looking at both sides of an issue, which is an important CT skill.

6. How helpful was the PowerPoint template to present your report?

5	4	3	2	1
10	6	1	1	0

Selected examples of students' responses to choices:
(5) *I was able to learn the steps from investigation to analysis.*

(4) *It was easy to understand what to do because the flow was easy to understand*

(3) *The flow for presentation was clear*

(2) *There is no graph shown on the template.*

Most of the students saw the template as very helpful for them to cognitively structure their reports and presentations. The first three selected comments above represented almost all responses indicating the template provided an effective heuristic for gathering information and framing their research. In the last comment (2), the student expected a formatted graph to input data. However, since the students were free to choose their gender topic issue and gather data accordingly, a preformatted standardized graph would not have been appropriate.

In question 7 below, the aim was to focus on Step 10. In that step, the activity was designed to give students a chance to discuss and critically reflect on their research by discussing outcomes with classmates.

7. How much did the discussion about your report findings contribute to your critical thinking skill development?

5	4	3	2	1
10	7	1	0	0

Please briefly explain how?

(5) *I noticed something that I didn't notice on my own.*

(4) *I think I have new ideas by learning to flexibly accept other people's opinions into my own.*

(3) *I found it very difficult as there were some parts that I did not agree with positively.*

The responses show the significance of taking an active, interactive approach by giving students opportunities to discuss their work. The selected comments for (5) and (4) represent the value of taking a dialogic approach in the classroom to develop CT skills. Comment (3) reflects the need for teachers to be sensitive to those students, who at first

without experience in classroom discussions, might see comments that oppose their views as confrontational.

Questions 8 and 9 target students' perceptions on how they generally thought the activities assisted their performance them to make progress in the EMI course; and how they helped them to increase their English skills, respectively.

8. Overall how much did the activities help you in this class conducted in English?

5	4	3	2	1
10	8	0	0	0

9. Overall how much did the activities help you to improve your English?

5	4	3	2	1
11	6	1	0	0

The results of questions 8 and 9 were highly favorable targeting their overall views of how successful was the course to help them to learn English and study in an EMI course. Next, the focus was on CT skills.

10. Overall how much did the activities help you to improve your critical thinking skills?

5	4	3	2	1
11	7	0	0	0

Selected examples of students' responses to choices:

(5) *The existing schema or social setting should not be discussed in term of "right or not right "but "why and how"*

- I had a question about something I had never questioned before, and after researching the reason, my understanding deepened.

- CT is associated with the emerged idea though discussion. Though discussing and in discussion, we can actually apply CT skill.

(4) *When we considered abstract expressions, it was interesting to see that there were many different ways of understanding them within the class. I thought that exchanging opinions from different viewpoints without being bound by one idea might give rise to new ideas.*
-I think it helped me improve my ability to think about the essence of a problem and make decisions.

As mentioned, several responses were selected from the two numerical choices as this question directly targets CT, which is the premise of this paper. Results of this question further confirm the responses of question 7. Students felt the course enabled them to have a significant understanding of CT and advanced their CT skills.

In the last two questions, the focus was on gaining insights into how students viewed the role of literature for CT development and their overall assessment on the effectiveness of the course to improve their CT skills. In the latter question, the students were asked to explain their choice.

11. Do you think using literature is a good way to improve critical thinking skills?

5	4	3	2	1
9	8	1	0	0

12. Did this course help you improve your understanding of critical thinking?

Yes	No
18	0

Selected examples of students' responses to choices:

YES:

-I used to think that CT was about looking at things by first criticizing them, but I have come to think that CT is about thinking objectively from various angles and standpoints.
-This was the first time for me to learn that it is possible to think about something without a correct answer.

-I started to feel that it was important to try to find out for myself what was causing the problem, without being bound by fixed ideas.

The responses to the above two questions confirm the usefulness of using the literary genre of short story to enhance students CT skills. The responses to the whole survey significantly draw attention to the course design using an inquiry-based, active learning pedagogical approach in the form of scaffolded activities that engaged the students in every step of the course activities. Results affirm an appropriate pedagogical approach that uses carefully scaffolded activities will lead to assisting students to meet their learning goals and potential. In this case, the development of their CT skills.

Discussion

This paper set out to underscore the crucial role that the development of CT skills should play in a university setting. Regardless, if it is taught as a stand-alone course or as a component of an academic subject-focused course. The emphasis mainly centered on literature and using the short story as a robust genre to increase CT skills among Japanese English majors. A common understanding of CT built on its historical development based on the perspectives of scholars such as Dewey, Glaser and Facione was presented. The motivation for this study was formed on showing the relevance of CT in university education, especially in EMI by noting its educational value for cognitive development and language acquisition. The paper acknowledges the challenges of using literature for CT development in an EMI course, and proposes the genre of short story. It is deemed appropriate for non-native speakers because of its concise text and efficient elements of one plot, few characters, limited setting or situation, and often concluding open-ended, which can be richly exploited for CT and language skill development. These features of short stories are found in the concept of literary minimalism and deemed appropriate when selecting short stories for students in EMI courses aimed at CT development. Kate Chopin's *Story of an Hour* presented as a case study embodies this style.

The paper articulated a praxis-oriented approach, bringing theoretical views on CT development in an EMI course into the classroom. Practical implementation was introduced in the pedagogy in practice section, detailing a five-session CT skills development course centered around Chopin's short story. The importance of teachers to possess suitable PCK was stressed with the presentation of the scaffolded steps, which included ele-

ments such as introducing short story components, linguistic comprehension, metaphorical focus, sociocultural context exploration, and critical analysis. Through carefully scaffolded activities, the praxis-oriented approach was applied as students were given the necessary supports to reach their higher order CT learning potential goal of analyzing gender issues by comparing historical and contemporary perspectives, and reporting findings. To better help teachers assist students in achieving this end, university faculty development programs should be enlisted. Professional development for teachers should be an ongoing educative and reflective process. The positive results of the questionnaire administered to students in this study can be a motivator for teachers to enhance their PCK.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has focused on importance of integrating CT skills into the university EMI curriculum, whether it is in a stand-alone course or integrated within specific subjects. The emphasis was on the compelling use of literature, particularly short stories, as a pedagogical tool for enhancing CT skills among Japanese English majors. First, an historical description of CT, drawing from various renowned researchers in the field, further presented a baseline understanding required for effective CT skill development. The discussion highlighted not only the potent role that short stories can play, but also the challenges in using them. The literary style of Minimalism was found to be conducive for introducing the genre. After providing insights into *what* subject content to teach; the study showed *how* to teach it. Therefore, the study argues for a praxis-oriented approach demonstrating a theory to practice implementation. Carefully scaffolded steps were sequentially presented providing a structured approach for educators, who are willing to cultivate CT skills through literature. This inclusive approach supported by feedback from students demonstrates effectiveness of integrating literature and CT development into the university curriculum. It also establishes the saliency of effective faculty development to further teachers' PCK so that they can adopt strategies for effective implementation. Implications in this study, establish the need for future research focusing on the richness of literature as a robust approach to developing CT skills, and the necessity for appropriate educational practices.

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