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**Supporting International PGT students'
critical thinking skills with situated and
authentic materials.**

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Background to the project

Internationalisation = high number of EAL students studying in UK.

Critical thinking a core component of HE.

Easy to attribute poor CT skills to cultural or educational background (e.g. Lee et al 2015).

Look beyond sociocultural explanations and understand student needs.

(Iyanage, Walker & Shokohui 2021)



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Although culture might influence approaches to critical thinking, we should avoid assigning homogenous characteristics to groups of students.

(Pu & Evans 2019)



Critical thinking:

- Encompasses metacognitive knowledge and regulation (Dwyer et al 2014).
- Has a motivational component (Iyanage, Walker & Shokohui 2021).
- Is teachable (e.g. Abrami et al 2015)



one of the truly unique characteristics of human memory: its knowledge of its own knowledge

(Tulving & Madigan 1970)



Our
project

Student identity

Pu & Evans (2019)

Authenticity of materials

Abrami et al (2015)

Situated relevance

Lave & Wenger (1991)

Language proficiency

Moeiniasl et al (2022)



Peer Support



Sustainability

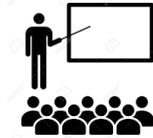


Student



Wanted to be taught.
Academic staff were
holders of
knowledge.

Practitioner



The end goal was to
gain an award to
pursue a career

Researcher

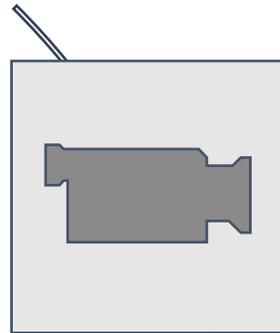


Viewed themselves as
responsible for
knowledge acquisition

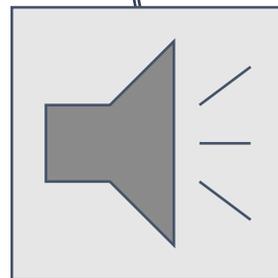
Positioning might influence the approach to critical thinking



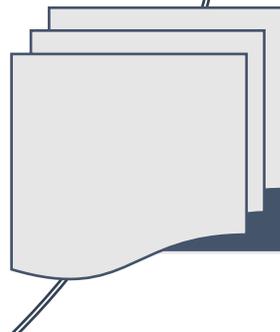
Novel
approach



Authentic videos created to show different positionings in relation to critical thinking.



Four weeks of workshop materials (1 hour each).
Covering positioning & critical thinking, critical reading, critical writing and application to dissertation.



Use of situated materials to learn and then transfer to standard academic texts.



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How did you
choose to study
at the University
of Edinburgh?



4 x 1-hour sessions, independent learning and peer-led discussion:

- 1 • Activities posted on Teams for students to complete independently.
- 2 • One-hour online meeting each week to discuss with peers.
- 3 • After the meeting, students complete reflective questionnaire.

Approximately
95
students



Did the authentic video materials support students with their critical thinking skills?

Could students identify the positionings in the video and their own positioning?

5 group
interviews
15 students in
total



Did the authentic video materials support students with their critical thinking skills?

Students identified everyday situations where they could/would apply CT skills. They agreed that these skills were enhanced after taking part in the retreat.

I live with two of my friends in a flat ... sometimes I will question their decisions. Like why we should go to a Tesco instead of Sainsbury's. ... But I need, also, I always need to identify the reason why they feel this way [to shop at one supermarket rather than another] , and I always give my logical justification for their behaviour

I think, for me, sometimes I need to judge the advantages and disadvantages for making a decision.. Maybe ... for example, ... to buy a book... Sometimes I need to just weighten [sic] the pros and cons to make a decision for that.



Could students identify the positionings in the video and their own positioning?

All students apart from one identified as 'student' positioning at start of Master's – wanting to be 'taught', but over the year they could identify a development toward a desired researcher positioning.

Even when I first began my study... I define myself as a learner. But now, I found that... I have my own thinking and others can have theirs...there is no right...



Challenges of developing critical thinking skills:

- **Contrasting contexts** The West vs. China
- **Risks on personal relationships**
- **Language and culture:** negative cultural-linguistic connotations of the term 'critical thinking': *pipan* (criticising) and *pipanxing siwei* (critical thinking)

I think critical thinking is a really good thing for me but, on the other hand, I also notice there is some negative impact on my daily life. Because in the past, whenever my friends complain something or say something bad of something or someone else to me, I would definitely 100% support them, saying what they want to hear. But after I become more conscious about critical thinking, I start to become more [judging?]



Final thoughts and further analysis:

Do we have a duty to support our International students with the unexpected consequence of CT on personal relationships?

How useful were the situated papers for learning and transferring CT skills?

Can this approach be sustainable (are materials relevant across disciplines/time)?



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Thank you for listening

Please ask me a question



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