#TEACHING CHANGES LIVES

HOW TEACHING ENGLISH CHANGES MY STUDENT'S LIFE
INTRODUCTION

Hi. My name is Ratchanok Uicheng. I had six-year experience teaching English in public schools in Thailand. Now I am an educator at SESAO 14, a governmental organization that looks after secondary schools in Andaman coastal provinces. My main responsibilities are conducting researches, organizing educational events for students and teach English in various occasions.

I strongly believe that English and critical thinking are complementary in helping a person to thrive as a logical and fair-minded English user.

So I develop a critical reading course to promote both English and critical thinking.
My Critical Reading Course

In addition to reading for main ideas and reading between the lines, my critical reading course guides students on how to analyze and evaluate what they read in order to find what to believe. Its ultimate goal is to develop sensible and self-aware readers who know 1) why to read 2) what to believe 3) how to react to the reading reasonably and fair-mindedly.
My story focuses on an individual student because my observation of her development is the closest and the longest.

My student is an eighth grader who likes to study but still needs, in her words, more meaningful reasons to read English beyond what is given or expected.

“I can handle reading assignments in the classroom but when it comes to reading English in real life, I don’t know where to start.”

(Based on the Interview on March 23, 2015)
Believing that what my student needed was an inquisitive mind and critical thinking was a key to it, I designed many extra activities for her and introduced her to three kinds of thinkers.

Naive Nancy

She does not care about her thinking.

Selfish Sam

He is good at thinking but he is not fair to others.

Fair-minded Fran

She is good at thinking and she is fair to others.

Three Kinds of Thinkers by the Foundation for Critical Thinking

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLgi444Ghww
After knowing what a critical thinker was like and wasn’t like, my student got to practice thinking by reading about rumors and controversial issues in Thai society. She was guided on how to ask questions out of the stories and how to use those questions in gathering information. Once she had all the information needed, I provided her guidance on how to come up with logical and unbiased analysis.

“This was how I provided an entry point for my student to read English in her real life. Reading meaningful stories could be very beneficial.”
In this picture, my student was explaining how this tsunami-like cloud occurred and how an actual tsunami was formed in order to convince that this was not a bad omen. My student’s presentation was based on several trustworthy sources of information.
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EXAMPLE 2

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT ANGEL DOLLS?

Do I agree with the news?

Am I biased?
Example 2 was her presentation about angel dolls. The fad was so controversial that it was published in many international newspapers. I encouraged my student to make the most of this controversy by reading related editorials and online readers’ comments in order to practice considering things from many different perspectives. She finally came up with some reasonable ideas to believe and was successful at delivering an unbiased presentation.

In terms of English development, I taught her several reading techniques and introduced her to some helpful online dictionaries such as Oxford, Cambridge, Longman and Macmillan. Through doing the activities, my student discovered many good websites and she started to see that the more she thinks, the more she reads. English makes it possible for her to gain access to knowledge from all over in the world.
Other than reading thought-provoking non-fiction, my student was also advocated to read famous novels like *The Little Prince* and *Harry Potter*. The protagonists in these two masterpieces were great examples of critical thinkers and self-evaluators. My students learnt from them a lot.
“I enjoy all the reading because it keeps me thinking.”
Based on my observation and my student’s reflection, my course has helped her change from an indifferent reader to a critical reader who is determined to become logical and fair. The course develops important skills and motivation in her, so now she is full of life to study and go beyond expectation.
1. REASONS
- to be an autonomous reader and learner of English
- to grow up as a fair-minded person

2. TOOLS
- English
- Critical Thinking

“It is great to read something and be well aware of your own thinking at the same time. I’m now changing from Naive Nancy to Fair-minded Fran and I’m grateful to be equipped with two important things.”

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“Although my teaching leads to just a small change in my student’s life, I’m fully encouraged to try harder and help larger group of students in the future. Now that my lovely learner possesses better English skills and critical thinking skills, I believe that she will try to do more and grow up to be a logical and fair-minded English user. I wish her with all my heart.”

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR READING MY STORY.

RATCHANOK UICHENG