

CRITICAL THINKING – THE MAIN KEY TO NEUTRALIZE FAKE NEWS

Critical thinking is the main key to recognize and neutralize untruth statements written with a special purpose. This article examines critical thinking as a component skill of analyzing arguments, making inferences using inductive or deductive reasoning, judging or evaluating, and decision making or problem-solving. Background knowledge is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for enabling critical thinking within a given subject. The article attempts to involve both cognitive skills and dispositions through critical thinking and present strategies and key points against fake news. Empirical research suggests that people began developing critical competencies at a very young age. Although adults often exhibit deficient reasoning, in theory, all people can be taught to think critically. Instructors are urged to provide explicit instruction in critical thinking, to teach how to transfer new contexts, and to use cooperative or collaborative learning methods and constructivist approaches that place students at the center of the learning process. Finally, such assessment tasks should make student reasoning visible by requiring students to provide evidence or logical arguments in support of judgments, choices, claims, or assertions.

INTRODUCTION

Since Gutenberg printed his first Bible the book industry has undergone such rapid and widespread change. Digital technology has revolutionized the industry and expanded the very definition of what a book is. Paper books, e-books, self-publishing, books promoted by social media and uploaded straight to our Kindles: all are viable options in publishing's brave new world.

We observed how the book industry divided into two layers: bookstores and the Internet. The traditional weapons of competition, such as pricing, advertising, and a number of stores, are still significant strategies – but priceless competition has been particularly elevated.

The news is available through an exponentially growing of digital and social media and this proliferation of sources, coupled with ease-to-access, like and share options has enabled fake news to spread at an unprecedented rate. So, it is important to ensure that today's society has the literacy skills they need to succeed and thrive in the digital environment. Creative and critical thinking are the key skills to identify untrusted sources and avoid them.

METHODOLOGY

The article presents critical thinking and abilities to apply a set of cognitive skills in the digital era that we all live in. The methodology for achieving the objective of the study and solving the set research tasks include the following specific methods and content analysis, comparative analysis; synthesis of the obtained information. An overview of the definitions of critical thinking and fake news is important to be done and to be clarified the use of the scientific concepts in the article.

RESULTS

Educators have long been aware of the importance of critical thinking skills as an outcome of student's learning. More recently, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has identified critical thinking as one of several learning and innovation skills necessary to prepare students for post-secondary education and the workforce. Also, the newly created Common Core State Standards reflect on critical thinking as a cross-disciplinary skill vital for college and employment. Despite widespread recognition of its importance, there is a notable lack of consensus regarding the definition of critical thinking. The purposes of this literature review are to (a) explore how critical thinking has been defined by researchers, (b) investigate how critical thinking develops (c) learn how teachers can encourage the development of critical thinking skills in their students, and (d) review best practices in assessing critical thinking skills. According to Diane F. Halpern (*Riggio and Halpern, 2006*):

Critical thinking is effortful, careful, consciously controlled processing that maximizes the use of all available evidence and cognitive strategies, and purposefully strives to overcome individual biases. It is purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed. Critical thinkers use these skills appropriately, without prompting, and usually with conscious intent, in a variety of settings. Critical thinking also involves evaluating the thinking process – the reasoning that went into the conclusion we've arrived at or the kinds of factors considered in making a decision.

One of the keys to help us become critical thinkers and spot fake news stories it's to understand how the news is made. National Literacy Trust (*Fake news*

and critical literacy, 2018) recommended media organizations and businesses to have an active role in building the critical skills of young people, supporting initiatives with schools and communities, and improving awareness of the methods and motivations. For example, you can search in Google if the media have a live stream of their work or interview with the reporters. On the other side, you can check the concrete news and theme that you interesting in on another world media (BBC, CNN, Bloomberg, etc.) and if the news is identical you can trust it.

It is also necessary to know what *Fake content* is: it is generated, disseminated and accumulated mostly for the purposes of religious and political propaganda, and its commercial use is mainly linked to the media sensations or commercial corporate aims (Hunt, *The Guardian*, 2016).

More often than not, fake content is generated and circulated involuntarily or for personal entertainment, so information is much more accessible, and therefore the diversity of information sources is increasing. Spatial and time constraints on information transmission are easily overcome. That's why families, public libraries, commercial, non-commercial, and media organizations, as well as children and young people themselves, must work together and share their viewpoints, insights, and expertise.

Critical thinking is not the only tool to neutralize fake news but it's the start of clearing our viewpoint and declaimed confident what we choose to read or watch online.

One of the proposals about dealing with fake news includes labeling bots, requiring that shared content reflect subsequent corrections or revisions, and permitting third party enforcement of platform terms of service regarding false speech.

But unfortunately, there is no quick, permanent, or easy fix to the problems associated with the various kinds of fake news. There are suggestions grouped into two categories: suggestions that focus on different players (content consumers, creators, and

distributors) and suggestions that focus on direct and indirect means of regulation (through social norms, technological design, markets, and law).

One of the goals of education is to facilitate a student's ability to think clearly about a wide range of topics encountered in academic settings as well as everyday events. Daily issues arising from our increasing dependence on science and technology as well as the pressures of competing for social and cultural influences require the use of data analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. There seems to be unanimous agreement that we need to promote critical thinking to students. Yet, there are still many universities that do not have enough explicit programs in critical skills instruction (Raschke, *The digital revolution*, 2003).

Very important is that content creators and content distributors need to adapt their professional norms to new technologies of distribution, better explain these norms to the public, and protect them from erosion (Kalett, *Think Smarter*, 2014). They should also engage in practices that increase the possibility of producing trustworthy, high-quality information because any given article can be erroneous or sloppy, but mainstream media gains its authority from voluntary compliance with certain norms, including using headlines that accurately reflect the content of a piece, identifying double or multiple-source factual assertions, highlighting reliance on unnamed sources, including photos of reporters and links to their bios, and acknowledging and publicizing inaccuracies and correcting them. Editors often play a critical role in enforcing these norms.

Fact-checking by itself accomplishes little: when a statement is fact-checked and found to be false, a person holding an underlying opinion shaped by the false information rarely changes that opinion. In some cases, fact-checking may have the counterintuitive effect of strengthening a false claim, as it is repeated and human beings' belief in a claim tends to increase the more they hear it. Instead of another fact-checked article, content creators could focus on providing

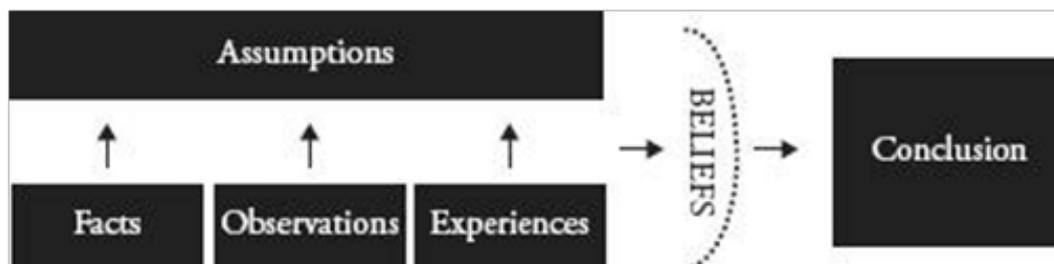


Figure 1. The Conclusion Process (author Professor Howard Gabennesch)

counter-narratives, stories that debunk the claim without explicitly restating it (*Saunders, Future of Journalism, 2017*). To the extent statements are labeled as false, it is preferable for content distributors to present fact checks as the product of the organization (like an unattributed editorial), rather than relying on individual journalists, speaking in their capacities, to do so. When a fact-checking piece is presented as the work of an individual journalist, it dilutes the power of the fact check. It is especially important to differentiate between objectivity (“given everything we know, this is wrong”) and neutrality (not taking a side).

As can be seen from *Figure 1* we make our conclusion on the base of facts, observation, experiences, and suggestions. All together build a belief about everything we read offline and online. The advice from Professor Howard Gabennesch is that we should evaluate the information and be as much as we can competently in the spheres (*Gabennesch, CSI, 30(2), 2006*). That’s why critical skills and critical thinking are of big importance for us to understand and be safe from a high prevalence of fake news, misinformation, and dishonesty in the digital environment.

CONCLUSION

In this research, we examined how critical thinking plays the key role of conceptualizing the information, applying the information when problems, analyzing the information and synthesizing it before making a final evaluation. It is only after all this that a logical conclusion can be made.

There is a great need to enhance critical thinking, especially among students and the working class so that they can have quality and factual information as well as improve their mental ability to solve problems. The biggest problem with many researchers is relying on the first source they bump into as their core informational base. Whenever there is a problem that requires answers, it is essential that solutions are sought from at least three different sources. In-depth research also helps improve critical evaluation and comprehension. Critical thinking helps us to think through problems and apply the right information when developing solutions. It is important that the digital age learns to differentiate factual and fake information. Moreover, it is good that information comes from various online and offline (TV, newspapers, Internet) sources so that it is accurate and has enough facts. In addition, the authors from University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia, Bulgaria, participate and submit a report “Critical thinking as a Crucial skill in the Digital Era” at the

librarian conference BOBCATSSS 2020 (European Association for Library and Information Education and Research) which 28th edition took place in French capital – Paris (*Parijkova, Yancheva, Buchova, Dimitrova, Critical thinking, 2020*). The theme of the seminar was *Information management, fake news, and disinformation*. The discussions about neutralize fake news and disinformation will never stop. We should be more able than ever to achieve critical tools in our daily life and neutralize fake news and fake content.

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Lubomira Parijkova

l.parizhkova@unibit.bg

Associate Professor, PhD at “Library Management and Archival” Department, University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia, Bulgaria

Anelia Buchova

aneliabuchova13@gmail.com

Student at “Public Communications” Department, University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia, Bulgaria