

IMPROVING CRITICAL READERS: THE IMPERATIVE OF HONING CRITICAL READING SKILLS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Abstract. Reading comprehension is now understood to involve a dynamic interaction between the reader and the text, rather than a passive process of text decoding. Critical reading abilities are now essential in the information era, as students must manage a sea of material. In order to promote deeper comprehension, critical thinking, and academic success, this research examines the value of critical reading skills in secondary education. It looks at evidence-based teaching practices for developing these abilities, analyzes the cognitive and academic advantages of critical reading, and recognizes the difficulties faced by teachers in secondary education.

Keywords: Critical reading, Reading comprehension, Critical thinking, Secondary education, Information literacy.

УЛУЧШЕНИЕ НАВЫКОВ КРИТИЧЕСКОГО ЧТЕНИЯ: НЕОБХОДИМОСТЬ ОТТАЧИВАНИЯ НАВЫКОВ КРИТИЧЕСКОГО ЧТЕНИЯ В СРЕДНЕЙ ШКОЛЕ

Аннотация. В настоящее время понимание прочитанного понимается как динамическое взаимодействие между читателем и текстом, а не пассивный процесс декодирования текста. Критические способности к чтению сейчас необходимы в информационную эпоху, поскольку учащимся приходится справляться с огромным количеством материала. Чтобы способствовать более глубокому пониманию, критическому мышлению и академическим успехам, в этом исследовании рассматривается ценность навыков критического чтения в среднем образовании. В нем рассматриваются научно обоснованные методы обучения развитию этих способностей, анализируются когнитивные и академические преимущества критического чтения и признаются трудности, с которыми сталкиваются учителя в системе среднего образования.

Ключевые слова: критическое чтение, понимание прочитанного, критическое мышление, среднее образование, информационная грамотность.

Introduction

Academic achievement continues to be largely dependent on one's capacity for reading comprehension, or deriving meaning from written material. But the needs of the twenty-first century go beyond simple word decoding, making critical reading skills, one of the most useful ones nowadays. A move toward critical reading—an active process that include dissecting, challenging, and assessing the text—is imperative given the exponential expansion of information.

Reading basically consists of deciphering, analyzing, and assessing a text that include textual symbols, signs, and visuals. Since reading is how most individuals gain knowledge throughout their lives. It is because that, reading has a big impact on people's life, according to Akin, F. et al. (2014). This is due to the fact that reading is essential for comprehension, meaning-making, information retrieval, and the application of recently learned knowledge to

communicative processes in written communication. Reading provides knowledge for self-improvement and helps people adapt to their existing surroundings. Critical readers evaluate the arguments' plausibility, pinpoint underlying presumptions, and interact with the author's goal.

With the help of this skill set, students can become astute information consumers who promote independent thought and lifelong learning. Because the reading process has tended to be characterized primarily as psychological, cognitive, and individual (Wallace, 2003).

A critical approach to education emphasizes helping students understand the reasoning behind the texts they study. Unfortunately, this is not often stressed in language curricula in secondary schools. Pupils lack comprehension of how has been applied vaguely, unclearly, or poorly. Their reading comprehension is consequently hampered by their incapacity to understand linguistic reasoning (Paul, R.W. 1990). McDonald (2004) defines that critical reading as an alternative reading method that transcends common reading strategies like information processing or an emotional response. Reading critically requires more time than the conventional reading strategy because throughout the information process, students may summarize the author's ideas or discussion and, in a personal response, they may draw a connection between the text's meaning and their own experiences. This is also reflected in the way the educational system has developed.

The cognitive method, on the other hand, focuses on improving critical reading abilities.

Researchers are currently working to make critical reading skills more widely known in educational settings ranging from kindergartens to universities, and as anticipated, the outcomes are excellent as students' interests in reading are strongly correlated with these activities. When teachers used some critical reading exercises in the classroom, students, especially the younger ones, became more engaged in the reading material (<http://oxelt.gl.oxfordshowandtell/>). Making comments and evaluating the text requires active communication, which is required while reading critically. When reading critically, the current text is the starting point for further readings, and previous readings are the starting point for the current text. Furthermore, the meaning of the text continues to be transferred long after the reading process is finished. In this century of information and production, these qualities of critical reading are more than sufficient (Akin, F. et al. 2014).

The Advantages of Fostering Critical Thinkers

Several studies have been conducted that highlight the numerous advantages of critical reading proficiency for secondary school students. Understanding words on a page is only one aspect of critical reading; other aspects include actively participating with the text, challenging presumptions, evaluating arguments, and critically thinking about the data being provided. The capacity to read and analyze texts critically is an essential talent in today's information-rich environment, as it can have a favorable impact on comprehension, critical thinking, problem-solving, and academic success. Readers can improve the cognitive skills required to manage complex information, assess differing viewpoints, and participate in meaningful intellectual discourse by practicing critical reading. This article examines the connections between critical reading and academic success, problem-solving, critical thinking, and understanding. It also offers tips on how people can effectively improve their critical reading abilities. Effective problem-solving requires critical reading abilities because they allow people to evaluate information critically, recognize important problems, and formulate well-informed solutions.

This ability necessitates critical thinking, which can be forceful without being opinionated, resolute without being stubborn, and analyzing without being judgmental (Facione, 2011).

As was previously mentioned, critical reading and critical thinking are closely related because both require information analysis and evaluation, logical inference, and questioning of presumptions. People can improve their critical thinking abilities by analyzing arguments, spotting bias, and combining data from various sources by practicing critical reading. Through challenging the presumptions, prejudices, and logical fallacies in the text, students refine their critical thinking abilities. Students who fully absorb the variety of critical thinking skills will develop into more independent, disciplined, and self-aware thinkers (Paul, R. & Elder, L., 2007).

By encouraging readers to actively interact with the text, assess the author's arguments, and draw connections between concepts, critical reading fosters deep comprehension. Through critical analysis, readers can identify underlying themes, gain a sophisticated knowledge of complex subjects, and come to insightful conclusions. People can improve their understanding of texts, hone their analytical thinking, and hone their interpretative ability by developing their critical reading skills. The present objective of reading teaching is to help children develop critical literacy, which entails getting them involved in creating and negotiating meanings as well as commenting on and making connections (Wilhelm, Jeffrey D., 2002)

Academic success is largely dependent on critical reading since it helps students become more adept at interacting critically with the subject, analyzing difficult texts, and formulating well-reasoned arguments. Strong critical reading abilities help students evaluate information critically, synthesize different viewpoints, and build well-supported arguments, all of which are necessary for academic success. Students can apply science critical reading strategies to hone their advanced skills (Boran, D. & Koray, O. 2023).

Developing Critical Reading Capabilities in Secondary Schools

During the course of a session, secondary school students can acquire critical reading abilities through a variety of evidence-based teaching tactics that are used in the pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities. Predicting and expanding vocabulary are the most successful pre-reading techniques, and they work well for both secondary school pupils and those at higher levels. Students are given a number of questions to answer during the reading process, such as "What is the main idea?" "How does the author support their argument?" "What evidence is provided?". This can enhance students' comprehension and help them interact critically with the literature. Even though annotations can be a useful tool for reading assignments, younger students could find it challenging to annotate important passages and write notes in the margins. Finally, it can be more fruitful and durable to leave comments and initiate a discussion after reading. By enabling debates regarding the text, teachers can inspire students to express their opinions, ask questions, and provide textual evidence to support their claims. This may lead to an increase in the comprehension and critical thinking skills of the students.

Conclusion

In secondary education, critical reading abilities are no longer a secondary issue. They are vital resources for encouraging critical thinking, advancing academic achievement, and navigating the intricacies of the information era. Teachers may develop critical readers who actively engage with material, gain knowledge, and become empowered learners by putting evidence-based

teaching practices into practice. Students who want to use English for academic purposes in situations relevant to their future education need to develop their critical thinking skills and broaden their understanding of what it means to read and write critically in English. There are studies on the nature and use of critical thinking in academic writing and reading, but few examine the process of reading and writing critically from the perspectives of authors and readers. Once a qualified candidate has been chosen for the process, they can teach intellectual knowledge to the students, especially by using critical reading and writing skills. This is important because the primary goal of education today is to create qualified teachers for the next generation. In this case, the younger generation can use what they learn to their advantage and use it to support their future academic pursuits.

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