

METHODS FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

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Abstract. *This article examines the theoretical foundations, pedagogical opportunities, and effective methods for developing critical thinking skills in English language classes. The importance of critical thinking in the formation of communicative competence is highlighted, and the use of modern pedagogical approaches such as problem-based learning, discussions, debates, project-based learning, case studies, and reflective activities is justified.*

The findings indicate that lessons focused on critical thinking significantly contribute to the development of students' language competence, logical reasoning, creativity, and independent decision-making abilities.

Keywords: *critical thinking, English language teaching, communicative competence, interactive methods, problem-based learning, project-based learning, debate, reflection, 21st-century skills.*

Introduction

The rapid development of globalization and information technologies has created new demands on modern education systems. One of the primary goals of contemporary education is to prepare learners who can think independently, analyze information critically, solve problems effectively, and make well-reasoned decisions. Therefore, the development of critical thinking skills has become a key priority in educational practice worldwide.

In the context of foreign language education, particularly English language teaching, critical thinking plays a vital role. English has become the global language of communication, science, technology, and international cooperation. Consequently, language learning should not be limited to the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar; it should also foster learners' ability to express opinions, evaluate information, construct arguments, and participate in meaningful discussions. Modern educational standards emphasize learner-centered approaches that encourage students to become active participants in the learning process. Critical thinking enables learners to question assumptions, evaluate evidence, and develop their own perspectives. In English language classrooms, students are exposed to authentic texts, real-life situations, and communicative activities that naturally create opportunities for critical analysis and reflective thinking.

Furthermore, the integration of critical thinking into English language instruction contributes to the development of communicative competence, which includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. Learners who possess strong critical thinking skills are better equipped to interpret information, engage in discussions, and communicate effectively in diverse social and academic contexts. For these reasons, the development of critical thinking skills in English language classes has become an essential component of modern language education.

The present study explores the theoretical foundations of critical thinking, its significance in English language teaching, and effective pedagogical methods that can be used to foster these skills among learners.

Theoretical Foundations of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is generally defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate, interpret, and synthesize information in order to make reasoned judgments and informed decisions. It is a complex cognitive process that involves questioning assumptions, examining evidence, identifying biases, and drawing logical conclusions. According to educational researchers, critical thinking consists of several interconnected skills, including:

- Analysis;
- Interpretation;
- Evaluation;
- Inference;
- Explanation;
- Self-regulation.

These components enable learners to process information systematically and develop independent judgments based on evidence rather than assumptions. Educational theorists such as Richard Paul and Linda Elder emphasize that critical thinking is not merely a set of intellectual skills but also a habit of mind that encourages curiosity, open-mindedness, and reflective thinking.

Similarly, Facione identifies critical thinking as a purposeful and self-regulatory process that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference. In the context of English language teaching, critical thinking supports learners in understanding texts more deeply, evaluating different viewpoints, constructing arguments, and expressing ideas effectively. As a result, it enhances both language proficiency and higher-order thinking skills.

The Importance of Critical Thinking in English Language Education

Critical thinking is considered one of the most important competencies of the twenty-first century. In English language classrooms, it helps students move beyond memorization and develop the ability to use language meaningfully and purposefully.

The development of critical thinking contributes to:

- improved reading comprehension;
- enhanced speaking and writing skills;
- greater learner autonomy;
- effective problem-solving abilities;
- improved decision-making skills;
- stronger communicative competence;
- increased creativity and innovation.

Students who are encouraged to think critically become active learners capable of evaluating information, defending their viewpoints, and engaging in productive communication.

As a result, English language education becomes more meaningful, interactive, and relevant to real-life situations.

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