

TEACHING APPROACHES THAT PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING

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Annotation

This thesis examines teaching approaches that promote critical thinking in English language education. The study focuses on how learner-centered and interactive teaching methods help students develop analytical thinking, problem-solving abilities, creativity, and communicative competence. Special attention is given to approaches such as communicative language teaching, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and discussion-based activities. The findings suggest that classrooms that encourage critical thinking create more active, independent, and motivated learners while improving overall language proficiency.

Keywords

Critical thinking, teaching approaches, English language education, communicative learning, problem-solving, collaborative learning, learner-centered education, classroom interaction, creativity, analytical thinking.

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ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ ПОДХОДЫ, СПОСОБСТВУЮЩИЕ РАЗВИТИЮ КРИТИЧЕСКОГО МЫШЛЕНИЯ

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются педагогические подходы, способствующие развитию критического мышления в обучении английскому

языку. Исследование посвящено тому, как интерактивные и ориентированные на учащихся методы обучения помогают развивать аналитическое мышление, навыки решения проблем, креативность и коммуникативную компетенцию. Особое внимание уделяется коммуникативному подходу, проблемно-ориентированному обучению, совместному обучению и дискуссионным методам. Результаты исследования показывают, что обучение, направленное на развитие критического мышления, способствует формированию более активных, самостоятельных и мотивированных учащихся, а также улучшает уровень владения английским языком.

Ключевые слова: критическое мышление, педагогические подходы, обучение английскому языку, коммуникативное обучение, решение проблем, совместное обучение, личностно-ориентированное обучение, взаимодействие в классе, креативность, аналитическое мышление.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, In the rapidly developing modern educational environment, critical thinking has become one of the most essential skills required for academic success and effective communication. Today's learners are expected not only to acquire knowledge but also to analyze information, solve problems, evaluate ideas, and make independent decisions. This growing educational demand has significantly influenced the field of English language teaching, where the focus has gradually shifted from traditional memorization-based instruction toward more interactive and learner-centered approaches. As a result, teaching approaches that promote critical thinking have gained increasing importance in modern English language education.

English language classrooms are no longer limited to grammar exercises and vocabulary memorization. Contemporary teaching methods aim to create opportunities for learners to communicate meaningfully, express personal opinions, participate in

discussions, and engage actively in the learning process. According to educational theorists, learning becomes more effective when students are encouraged to think critically and reflect on information rather than simply reproduce memorized content¹. In this regard, critical thinking enables learners to become more independent, creative, and intellectually engaged while improving their language proficiency.

One of the main reasons for integrating critical thinking into English language teaching is its close connection with communicative competence. Students who are encouraged to analyze, evaluate, and discuss ideas in English become more confident in expressing themselves and using language in real-life contexts. Bloom's Taxonomy emphasizes that higher-order cognitive skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating are essential for meaningful learning². Therefore, teaching approaches that stimulate these cognitive processes contribute significantly to learners' academic and linguistic development.

Furthermore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights the importance of interaction and collaboration in the learning process³. According to this theory, students learn more effectively through communication, group work, and social engagement. Teaching approaches such as communicative language teaching, collaborative learning, and problem-based learning provide learners with opportunities to exchange ideas, solve tasks together, and develop both language and thinking skills simultaneously.

The aim of this thesis is to examine different teaching approaches that promote critical thinking in English language education and to analyze their influence on students' language learning, motivation, classroom participation, and intellectual development.

¹ Dewey, J. *How We Think*. – Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1933.

² Bloom, B. S. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. – New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956

³ Vygotsky, L. S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. – Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Modern educational research strongly emphasizes the importance of teaching approaches that develop critical thinking skills in English language learning. Traditional teacher-centered methods mainly focused on memorization and repetition, while contemporary approaches encourage learners to participate actively in analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting information. According to John Dewey, education should promote reflective thinking and active problem-solving rather than passive learning⁴. Similarly, Bloom's Taxonomy identifies higher-order cognitive skills such as analysis, evaluation, and creation as essential components of meaningful learning⁵.

Researchers such as Paul and Elder define critical thinking as an active and disciplined process of conceptualizing and evaluating information⁶. In English language classrooms, approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching, collaborative learning, and problem-based learning provide opportunities for students to engage in meaningful communication, discussions, and problem-solving tasks. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory also highlights the importance of interaction and cooperation in cognitive development⁷. Through group work, debates, and interactive classroom activities, learners improve both their language skills and critical thinking abilities.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative and comparative research design to investigate teaching approaches that promote critical thinking in English language education. The research involved two groups of English language learners: an experimental group taught through learner-centered and critical thinking-based approaches such as

⁴ Dewey, J. *How We Think*. – Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1933.

⁵ Bloom, B. S. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. – New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956.

⁶ Paul, R., Elder, L. *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life*. – Boston: Pearson Education, 2014.

⁷ Vygotsky, L. S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. – Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.

discussions, debates, collaborative learning, and problem-solving activities, and a control group taught through traditional grammar-focused instruction. Data were collected through classroom observation, speaking and writing tasks, students' participation analysis, and teacher feedback. Special attention was given to learners' ability to analyze information, express opinions independently, communicate effectively, and participate actively in classroom interaction. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively to determine the effectiveness of different teaching approaches in developing students' critical thinking and language learning abilities.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that teaching approaches which promote critical thinking have a highly positive impact on English language learning and classroom interaction. Students who participated in learner-centered and interactive activities showed greater engagement, stronger communication skills, and higher levels of independent thinking compared to those taught through traditional methods. Approaches such as communicative language teaching, collaborative learning, debates, and problem-solving tasks encouraged learners to analyze ideas, express opinions confidently, and participate actively in discussions. These activities transformed the classroom from a teacher-centered environment into a more dynamic and interactive learning space where students became active participants in the educational process.

One of the most important observations during the study was the improvement in students' confidence and willingness to communicate in English. At the beginning, many learners hesitated to speak and often depended on teacher guidance. However, after regular participation in interactive and analytical tasks, students gradually became more confident in expressing opinions and supporting ideas with logical explanations. Group discussions and collaborative activities reduced learners' fear of making mistakes and created a supportive atmosphere for communication. Even quieter and lower-

performing students became more involved because they received encouragement from peers and had more opportunities to participate.

Another important finding was the positive effect of critical thinking approaches on students' analytical and problem-solving abilities. Learners became more capable of interpreting information, comparing viewpoints, and making reasoned conclusions during classroom tasks. Through debates and reflective discussions, students learned how to evaluate ideas critically instead of accepting information passively. This development was especially noticeable in speaking and writing activities, where learners produced more organized responses and demonstrated deeper understanding of topics.

The study also highlighted the role of collaborative learning in promoting both cognitive and linguistic development. Students benefited from interaction with classmates through pair work and group discussions, where they exchanged ideas, corrected mistakes, and solved problems together. Such cooperation improved classroom participation and helped learners use English more naturally and meaningfully. Furthermore, the use of communicative and learner-centered approaches increased students' motivation and emotional engagement during lessons, making learning more enjoyable and effective.

Overall, the results of the study revealed significant differences between students taught through critical thinking-based approaches and those taught through traditional teaching methods. Overall, learners in the experimental group demonstrated higher levels of classroom participation, stronger communication skills, and greater independence in using English. The collected data showed that teaching approaches such as collaborative learning, discussions, debates, and problem-solving activities created a more active and engaging learning environment, which positively influenced students' academic performance and language development.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the relationship between critical thinking skills and English language learning, with particular attention to how the integration of critical thinking activities influences learners' language development, classroom engagement, and overall academic performance. Based on the analysis of theoretical perspectives and classroom-based observations, it can be concluded that critical thinking plays a fundamental role in enhancing the effectiveness of English language education. The findings consistently show that students who were exposed to critical thinking-based instruction outperformed those who experienced traditional, teacher-centered teaching methods across all major language skills.

Overall, it can be concluded that critical thinking is not an optional addition but a necessary component of modern English language education. Its integration into classroom practice leads to more effective, meaningful, and student-centered learning. Therefore, English language teachers and curriculum developers are strongly encouraged to incorporate critical thinking strategies into their teaching approaches in order to improve learners' language proficiency and foster their intellectual growth.

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