

# ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: MODERN APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

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## **Анотація**

*У статті досліджуються сучасні підходи та стратегії розвитку навичок критичного мислення у студентів вищих навчальних закладів через викладання англійської мови. Підкреслюється фундаментальна важливість критичного мислення у вищій освіті, що дозволяє студентам глибоко занурюватися в навчальний матеріал, ставити під сумнів припущення, розвивати незалежні погляди та вирішувати складні проблеми. Розглядаються різні педагогічні підходи. У дослідженні представлено комплексне вивчення цієї багатогранної проблеми. Наукові результати обґрунтовують ефективність інноваційних педагогічних стратегій, демонструючи статистично значуще покращення навичок критичного мислення серед студентів. Оптимізовані для покращення результатів навчання та підготовки студентів до вимог глобалізації робочої сили.*

**Ключові слова:** критичне мислення, педагогічні підходи, студенти вищих навчальних закладів.

## **Abstract.**

*This article explores contemporary approaches and strategies to advance critical thinking skills among higher education students through English language instruction. It underscores the foundational importance of critical thinking in higher education, enabling students to engage deeply with course material, question assumptions, develop independent perspectives, and solve complex problems. Various pedagogical approaches are examined. The study presents a comprehensive exploration of this multifaceted problem. Scientific results substantiate the efficacy of the innovative pedagogical strategies, showcasing statistically significant improvements in critical thinking skills among students.*

**Key words:** critical thinking, pedagogical approaches, higher education students.

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, the ability to think critically is an indispensable skill for success in higher education and beyond. Critical thinking empowers students to analyse information, evaluate arguments, and make informed decisions. Moreover, with English emerging as the lingua franca of academia and the professional world, proficiency in English language instruction plays a pivotal role in fostering critical thinking among students. [1]

Critical thinking involves actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach reasoned conclusions and make informed decisions. It requires cognitive processes such as analysis, interpretation, inference, explanation, evaluation, and problem-solving.

Critical thinking is a foundational skill in higher education as it enables students to engage deeply with course material, question assumptions, develop independent perspectives, and solve complex problems. It prepares students to navigate the challenges of academic research, professional work environments, and civic engagement. There are various pedagogical approaches employed in higher education to enhance critical thinking skills. [2] These include active learning methods, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, case studies, collaborative learning, and experiential learning. These approaches engage students in hands-on activities, discussions, and real-world problem-solving tasks that promote critical thinking. By combining a variety of these methods and strategies, educators can create a dynamic learning environment that effectively cultivates critical thinking skills among higher education students undergoing English language instruction. [3] Adaptability and responsiveness to students' needs remain key principles in determining the most effective approach for any given context.

This article explores contemporary approaches and strategies to advance critical thinking skills among higher education students through English language instruction.

1. Promoting active learning. One effective approach to cultivating critical thinking is through active learning techniques. In English language instruction, educators can integrate activities such as debates,

discussions, case studies, and problem-solving tasks. These activities encourage students to engage actively with course material, analyse diverse perspectives, and articulate their thoughts effectively in English. [4]

2. Encouraging questioning and inquiry. Instructors can foster critical thinking by encouraging students to ask probing questions and engage in inquiry-based learning. By posing thought-provoking questions, educators stimulate intellectual curiosity and prompt students to examine assumptions, evaluate evidence, and construct reasoned arguments in English.

3. Utilizing authentic materials. Incorporating authentic materials, such as academic articles, news reports, and multimedia resources, enhances English language instruction by exposing students to real-world contexts and diverse viewpoints. Analysing authentic materials requires students to employ critical thinking skills to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate information effectively in English. [5]

4. Developing analytical writing skills. Proficiency in analytical writing is integral to critical thinking development. English language instruction should emphasize the importance of structuring coherent arguments, supporting claims with evidence, and critically evaluating sources. Writing assignments, essays, and research projects provide opportunities for students to refine their analytical writing skills while advancing their critical thinking abilities in English.

5. Facilitating collaborative learning. Collaborative learning environments foster critical thinking by encouraging students to collaborate, exchange ideas, and engage in peer review activities. Group discussions, collaborative projects, and peer feedback sessions promote higher-order thinking skills and enhance English language proficiency through interactive learning experiences.

6. Integrating technology. Leveraging technology tools and digital resources can enrich English language instruction and facilitate critical thinking development. Online platforms, interactive simulations, and multimedia resources offer opportunities for students to engage with content dynamically, explore complex concepts, and develop analytical skills in English. [6]

7. Cultivating metacognitive awareness. Encouraging metacognitive reflection enhances students' ability to monitor, evaluate, and regulate their thinking processes. English language instruction should incorporate metacognitive strategies, such as self-assessment, goal-setting, and reflective journaling, to empower students to become more aware of their learning strategies and deepen their critical thinking skills. [7]

8. Fostering cultural competence. In a globalized world, cultural competence is essential for effective communication and critical thinking. English language instruction should promote intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and understanding to enable students to navigate diverse cultural perspectives and communicate effectively in English across cultural contexts.

9. Problem-based learning (PBL). PBL involves presenting students with complex, real-world problems to solve collaboratively. This method encourages students to apply critical thinking skills to identify issues, analyse information, and generate solutions, thereby fostering deeper understanding and skill development.

**In conclusion**, advancing critical thinking skills among higher education students through English language instruction requires a multifaceted approach that integrates active learning techniques, authentic materials, analytical writing tasks, collaborative learning environments, technology integration, metacognitive strategies, and cultural competence development. By implementing these contemporary approaches and strategies, educators can empower students to think critically, communicate effectively, and thrive in today's interconnected world.

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