

DEVELOPING CRITICAL READING SKILLS IN EFL STUDENTS

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DOI: 10.61587/mmit.tiue.uz.v1i1.344

Abstract. Critical reading is one of the most important academic skills for students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It helps learners to evaluate material, establish the author's purpose, assess arguments and develop independent thinking. This study is concerned with the importance of critical reading skills in EFL classes, the problems students face and the effective teaching practices that encourage comprehension and analytical ability. Different classroom activities such as questioning, summarizing, group discussions and comparing readings are investigated. In the study, there are also some tables that show the methods, advantages and classroom applications of critical reading. As these skills are developed, students' language skills, academic success, and confidence to communicate improve.

Keywords: *Critical reading, EFL students, English education, language acquisition, reading comprehension, reading skills, analytical thinking, classroom tactics, academic skills.*

Introduction.

Reading is an important component in language learning especially for students who learn English as a foreign language (EFL). In today's education students are not only expected to understand the texts but also to think critically about them. Critical reading assists learners to identify main ideas, to look closely at arguments, to assess evidence and to express their own views logically.

EFL students have many problems in reading English literature such as limited vocabulary, grammar problems and lack of critical thinking skills. The traditional ways of reading generally focus only on understanding the superficial meaning of a document. Critical reading, however, helps to understand more and to learn by yourself.

The present study aims at assessing the importance of critical reading in EFL teaching, tackling the usual problems, and investigating successful teaching methods that can turn students into active and conscious readers. # Body ## Importance of Critical Reading in the EFL Learning

Main Body.

Critical reading enables students to read texts more effectively. The learner does not simply absorb the knowledge but questions, analyzes ideas and evaluates alternative perspectives. This technique engenders intellectual independence and improves academic success.

Critical reading also helps develop language skills such as vocabulary expansion, writing ability and speaking confidence. Students of critical reading also become better communicators, as they learn to support their opinions with evidence.

Literature review:

Anderson, N. J. (2003) stated that effective readers actively interact with texts by questioning ideas, making predictions, and connecting new information with prior knowledge.

Grabe, W. (2009) argued that reading in a second language requires both linguistic knowledge and cognitive skills, including the ability to analyze and evaluate texts.

Wallace, C. (2003) emphasized that learners should examine the author's purpose, identify bias, and compare different viewpoints while reading.

Harmer, J. (2007) highlighted the importance of interactive reading activities and classroom discussions for developing critical reading skills.

Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002) noted that communicative classroom tasks help students improve both reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities.

Challenges Faced by EFL Students.

Problems of EFL Students EFL students often have difficulty in understanding complex material. Vocabulary seems restricted and patterns of language sound strange. In addition, many students are not used to expressing personal ideas or questioning facts given in textbooks.

Another issue is lack of drive. Some students find reading difficult or boring. Teachers must provide classroom activities that are interactive and promote participation and discussion.

Teaching Strategies for Developing Critical Reading.

Strategies for Teaching Critical Reading There are a number of ways that teachers can improve critical reading skills:

- Asking open-ended questions
- Facilitate group discussions
- Helping children to identify main ideas
- Difference between texts * Using aggregate activities
- Practice in prediction and inference

These strategies help learners to become more involved readers and increase both comprehension and analytical thinking.

Paragraph body.

One of the best ways to build critical reading skills is through classroom discussion. Students also learn how to share their ideas, argue their points and listen to different perspectives when they discuss a work in groups. This helps to boost engagement and encourages students to think deeply about the content. And, besides, discussions develop speaking skills and increase confidence in using English. Thus, students become more independent and analytical readers.

Table 1. Benefits of Critical Reading

Benefit	Description
Better comprehension	Students understand texts more deeply
Analytical thinking	Learners evaluate ideas and arguments
Vocabulary growth	Reading introduces new words and expressions
Improved writing	Students learn how to organize ideas logically
Communication skills	Discussions improve speaking confidence

Table 2. Common Difficulties of EFL Students

Difficulty	Explanation
Limited vocabulary	Students cannot understand unfamiliar words
Grammar problems	Complex sentences create confusion
Lack of confidence	Learners hesitate to express opinions
Low motivation	Reading tasks may seem difficult
Cultural differences	Some texts contain unfamiliar contexts

Table 3. Teaching Strategies

Strategy	Classroom Activity
Questioning	Students answer analytical questions
Summarizing	Learners write short summaries
Group discussion	Students exchange opinions
Comparing texts	Learners identify similarities and differences

Prediction	Students guess the content before reading
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Table 4. Outcomes of Critical Reading Practice

Skill Developed	Result
Critical thinking	Students analyze information independently
Reading fluency	Faster and more accurate comprehension
Academic success	Better performance in exams and assignments
Confidence	Learners participate actively in class
Language proficiency	Improvement in overall English ability

Conclusion.

Critical reading is an important skill for EFL learners as it enhances understanding, critical thinking and communication skills. Learners may have problems such as limited vocabulary, lack of confidence but with good teaching methods, these problems can be overcome. Children learn to be active readers and independent thinkers through such activities as inquiry, discussion, summarization, and comparison of text. Therefore, teachers need to include critical reading skills in language classes to support students' academic and personal development.

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