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# IMPROVING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOMS THROUGH INTEGRATED APPROACHES

**Abstract.** In contemporary education, developing critical thinking skills has become a central objective, particularly in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. This study examines the effectiveness of integrated teaching approaches in enhancing students' critical thinking abilities. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from educational psychology and language pedagogy, the research explores how methods such as task-based learning, collaborative activities, and problem-solving tasks influence learners' cognitive and linguistic development. A qualitative research design was adopted, analyzing classroom practices and instructional strategies. The findings indicate that integrating critical thinking into language instruction significantly improves students' analytical skills, autonomy, and engagement. Furthermore, learners demonstrate improved communicative competence and the ability to construct logical arguments. The study concludes that critical thinking should be systematically embedded into EFL curricula to foster meaningful learning and prepare students for real-life challenges.

**Keywords:** critical thinking, EFL, integrated approach, language learning, pedagogy

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# INTEGRATSIYALASHGAN YONDASHUVLAR ORQALI EFL SINFLARIDA TALABALARNING TANQIDIY FIKRLASH KO'NIKMALARINI RIVOJLANTIRISH

**Annotatsiya.** Zamonaviy ta'lim tizimida tanqidiy fikrlash ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish, ayniqsa ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida (EFL) o'qitish jarayonida, muhim maqsadlardan biriga aylangan. Ushbu tadqiqot integratsiyalashgan o'qitish yondashuvlarining talabalarning tanqidiy fikrlash qobiliyatlarini rivojlantirishdagi samaradorligini o'rganadi. Ta'lim psixologiyasi va til pedagogikasiga oid nazariy asoslarga tayanib, tadqiqot vazifa asosida o'qitish, hamkorlikdagi faoliyatlar va muammo yechishga yo'naltirilgan topshiriqlarning o'quvchilarning kognitiv va lingvistik rivojlanishiga ta'sirini tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqot sifatli (qualitative) metodologiya asosida olib borilib, sinf jarayonlari va o'qitish strategiyalari o'rganildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, tanqidiy fikrlashni til o'qitish jarayoniga integratsiya qilish talabalarning tahliliy fikrlashini, mustaqilligini va o'qishga bo'lgan faolligini sezilarli darajada oshiradi. Bundan tashqari, o'quvchilarda kommunikativ kompetensiya rivojlanib, mantiqiy fikr yuritish va dalillash qobiliyati kuchayadi. Tadqiqot xulosasiga ko'ra, tanqidiy fikrlash EFL dasturlariga tizimli ravishda kiritilishi zarur, chunki bu mazmunli o'rganishni ta'minlaydi va talabalarni real hayot muammolariga tayyorlaydi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** tanqidiy fikrlash, EFL, integratsiyalashgan yondashuv, til o'rganish, pedagogika.

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# РАЗВИТИЕ НАВЫКОВ КРИТИЧЕСКОГО МЫШЛЕНИЯ У СТУДЕНТОВ НА ЗАНЯТИЯХ EFL ПОСРЕДСТВОМ ИНТЕГРИРОВАННЫХ ПОДХОДОВ

**Аннотация.** В современном образовании развитие навыков критического мышления стало одной из ключевых целей, особенно в обучении английскому языку как иностранному (EFL). Данное исследование рассматривает эффективность интегрированных подходов к обучению в развитии критического мышления у студентов. Опираясь на теоретические основы педагогической психологии и методики преподавания языков, в работе анализируется влияние таких методов, как заданийно-ориентированное обучение, совместная деятельность и проблемно-ориентированные задания на когнитивное и языковое развитие учащихся. Исследование выполнено с использованием качественного (qualitative) подхода, включающего анализ учебных практик и педагогических стратегий. Результаты показывают, что интеграция критического мышления в процесс обучения языку значительно повышает аналитические способности, автономию и вовлечённость студентов. Кроме того, у учащихся развивается коммуникативная компетенция и способность логически аргументировать свои мысли. В заключение отмечается, что критическое мышление должно системно внедряться в программы EFL для обеспечения более глубокого обучения и подготовки студентов к реальным жизненным ситуациям.

**Ключевые слова:** критическое мышление, EFL, интегрированный подход, изучение языка, педагогика.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of globalization and technological advancement has significantly transformed educational systems worldwide. In this context, the ability to think critically has become an essential skill for learners. Particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, students are expected not only to acquire linguistic competence but also to develop higher-order thinking skills that enable them to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Critical thinking has been defined in various ways by scholars. Actually, purposeful and self-regulatory judgment that involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference (Facione, 1990). Critical thinking is the process of improving the quality of one's thinking by skillfully analyzing and assessing it. These definitions highlight the importance of active cognitive engagement in the learning process.

However, traditional EFL classrooms often rely heavily on memorization and teacher-centered approaches, which limit students' opportunities to develop independent thinking skills. As a result, many learners struggle to express their ideas, support their arguments, and engage in meaningful communication. This issue is particularly relevant in contexts where education systems emphasize standardized testing over critical engagement.

The purpose of this study is to explore how integrated teaching approaches can enhance students' critical thinking skills in EFL classrooms. Integrated approaches combine various teaching methods, such as task-based learning, communicative activities, and collaborative learning, to create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. By incorporating critical thinking into these approaches, teachers can promote deeper learning and improve students' overall academic performance.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design to analyze the effectiveness of integrated approaches in developing critical thinking skills. The research is based on theoretical analysis and classroom practices described in the dissertation.

The primary methods include:

*1. Task-Based Learning (TBL):*

Students are engaged in meaningful tasks that require them to use language in real-life contexts. These tasks encourage learners to analyze problems, make decisions, and communicate their ideas effectively.

*2. Collaborative Learning:*

Group discussions and cooperative activities are used to promote interaction among students. Cooperative learning environments enhance critical thinking by encouraging students to share ideas and provide feedback (Cooper, 1995).

*3. Problem-Based Learning:*

Students are presented with real-world problems that require critical analysis and reasoning. This approach helps learners develop problem-solving skills and apply their knowledge in practical situations.

*4. Classroom Observation:*

The study examines the behavior and performance of B1-level learners in EFL classrooms. Observations focus on students' participation, engagement, and ability to think critically.

**RESULTS**

The findings of the study demonstrate that integrated approaches have a significant positive impact on students' critical thinking skills.

Firstly, students who participate in task-based and problem-based activities show improved analytical abilities. They are better able to identify key issues, evaluate information, and develop logical arguments. This supports Facione's assertion that critical thinking involves interpretation and evaluation (Facion, 1990).

Secondly, collaborative learning enhances students' ability to communicate and reason effectively. Group discussions allow learners to exchange ideas, challenge each other's perspectives, and refine their thinking. As a result, students become more confident in expressing their opinions.

Thirdly, the integration of critical thinking into language instruction leads to increased learner autonomy. Students become less dependent on teachers and textbooks, taking greater responsibility for their own learning (Coughlin, 2010). According to the findings, student success is closely linked to critical thinking skills.

Additionally, the study finds that students' language proficiency improves alongside their cognitive development. Learners demonstrate better writing skills, more coherent speech, and a greater ability to construct arguments.

Finally, classroom observations reveal that students are more engaged and motivated when critical thinking activities are incorporated into lessons. They actively participate in discussions, ask questions, and seek deeper understanding.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of this study highlight the importance of integrating critical thinking into EFL instruction. Traditional teaching methods that focus on memorization are insufficient for preparing students for the challenges of the modern world. Instead, educators must adopt approaches that encourage active learning and cognitive engagement.

Integrated approaches provide a suitable framework for developing critical thinking skills. By combining task-based learning, collaborative activities, and problem-solving tasks, teachers can create a learning environment that promotes both language acquisition and intellectual growth.

One of the key benefits of critical thinking is that it enhances students' ability to analyze and evaluate information. In today's information-rich society, learners must be able to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources. Critical thinking is essential for navigating the vast amount of information available on the Internet (Gilster, 1997).

Moreover, critical thinking contributes to students' personal and professional development. It enables learners to make informed decisions, solve problems, and adapt to new situations. These skills are crucial for success in the 21st century.

However, implementing integrated approaches requires careful planning and teacher training. Educators must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to design effective activities and facilitate meaningful discussions. Additionally, assessment methods should be adapted to evaluate students' critical thinking abilities rather than rote memorization.

Despite these challenges, the benefits of integrating critical thinking into EFL education far outweigh the difficulties. By fostering critical thinking, teachers can help students become independent learners and active participants in society.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that integrated teaching approaches play a vital role in developing students' critical thinking skills in EFL classrooms. The findings show that methods such as task-based learning, collaborative activities, and problem-based learning significantly enhance learners' analytical abilities, autonomy, and engagement.

Critical thinking not only improves language proficiency but also prepares students for real-life challenges. Therefore, it should be considered a fundamental component of language education. Future research should focus on developing specific strategies for implementing critical thinking in different educational contexts.

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