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ENHANCING CRITICAL READING AND THINKING SKILLS THROUGH ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFESSIONAL AND NEWS TEXTS

In an increasingly information-rich global landscape, the ability to critically evaluate and synthesize textual information is paramount for both academic and professional success. This necessitates a sophisticated capacity for critical reading, which involves more than surface-level comprehension, demanding deep analysis and questioning of a text's content, purpose, and underlying perspectives. This analytical process is intrinsically linked with critical thinking, enabling learners to develop independent perspectives, evaluate information, and engage in profound levels of understanding. Specifically, critical reading encompasses identifying main ideas and supporting details, comparing information across various sources, making inferences, and effectively summarizing the text in one's own words. This symbiotic relationship between critical reading and thinking is particularly salient in English language learning environments, where Content-Based Instruction has emerged as a robust pedagogical framework for fostering both linguistic proficiency and advanced cognitive skills [3]. This approach integrates subject matter content with English language acquisition, providing a rich context for developing analytical abilities. Empirical research has demonstrated that such task-based frameworks, when implemented in English reading courses, effectively engage students in analysis, evaluation, inference, observation, reflection, and reasoning, leading to superior critical thinking development compared to traditional instructional methods. This integration fosters a dynamic learning environment where students not only acquire language but also refine their ability to deconstruct complex information and form reasoned judgments. Furthermore, this constructivist approach has been shown to enhance learners' critical thinking and reading abilities, while also positively influencing their receptiveness to such pedagogical strategies.

By focusing on authentic materials, learners can develop the necessary skills to critically engage with diverse texts, ultimately fostering deeper comprehension and more nuanced analytical capabilities. This process is further enhanced by specific pedagogical strategies that target the cultivation of critical thinking skills, moving beyond traditional

instruction to incorporate more interactive and analytical tasks [2]. These strategies often involve a cyclical process of investigation, framework drafting, revision, and finalization, ensuring a robust and empirically validated approach to critical thinking enhancement.

The strategic integration of authentic materials serves to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world application, equipping students with transferable skills for navigating information-rich environments. Moreover, this cultivates a disposition towards lifelong learning, as students become adept at independently seeking, evaluating, and synthesizing information from various sources. This pedagogical gap necessitates innovative approaches that foster independent thought and facilitate learners' active contribution to the knowledge economy, particularly through the lens of their unique experiences. Therefore, pedagogical strategies must actively promote the second language learners' critical thinking skills within reading classrooms, moving beyond traditional methods to foster deep engagement with diverse texts [4]. This approach, integrating subject matter content with English language learning, provides a rich context for fostering analytical abilities along with language acquisition. Such frameworks often involve a multi-stage empirical research process, incorporating investigation, framework drafting, revision, and finalization, to ensure their adaptability and effectiveness in diverse educational settings. This robust methodological approach, validated through teacher observation, student feedback, and assignment performance, demonstrates that task-based learning significantly outperforms traditional instruction in fostering critical thinking development. These findings collectively underscore the transformative potential of strategically designed English reading instruction, particularly when leveraging authentic texts and task-based learning, to cultivate advanced critical thinking competencies essential for academic and professional success.

This refined pedagogical approach, integrating task-based instruction with authentic materials, has demonstrated significant improvements not only in students' practical language skills but also in their critical thinking abilities within university English instruction. This is achieved by employing a comprehensive methodology that combines quantitative analysis of language proficiency improvements with qualitative exploration of student learning experiences and perceptions. This dual approach allows for a thorough assessment of the impact of such methodologies, confirming their efficacy in fostering both linguistic competence and higher-order cognitive skills. Furthermore, combining Task-Based Learning with Project-Based Learning within university English teaching models can address communicative competence, collaborative skills, and project management abilities, as evidenced by significant enhancements in students' communicative skills and engagement. This integrated model demonstrates a more holistic approach to language acquisition, fostering a deeper, more engaged learning experience than conventional teaching methods. Such a transformation of the classroom into a dynamic "workshop," adopting elements of modern translation project management, enables instructors to design meaningful tasks and assign specific roles within task groups, providing students with autonomy and incentive to collaborate on "translation projects".

This approach not only enhances students' disposition to think critically but also

significantly improves their critical thinking skills. It transforms students from passive recipients into active learners, fostering collaborative knowledge construction and increasing learner engagement in the educational process. This paradigm shift, incorporating task-based and project-based methodologies, demonstrably enhances language proficiency, critical thinking, and collaborative skills, preparing students for complex academic and professional challenges. In an increasingly globalized academic and professional landscape, these enhanced skills are vital for navigating the complexities of modern communication and information.

Effective implementation of these strategies requires addressing challenges such as time constraints, assessment issues, and adequate instructor readiness. To mitigate these barriers, recommendations include comprehensive teacher training in Project-Based Learning methodologies, and the development of appropriate assessment strategies aligned with Project-Based Learning objectives, ensuring seamless integration and maximal educational impact. Therefore, future research should focus on developing standardized training programs and scalable assessment tools that accommodate the dynamic nature of project-based learning within diverse English language teaching contexts. Such research would further solidify the pedagogical framework for fostering critical reading and thinking skills through English-language professional and news texts, preparing students for the analytical demands of 21st-century careers [1].

This comprehensive understanding of the implementation and assessment of Task-Based Learning and Project-Based Learning in English language teaching will enable educators to cultivate an environment conducive to deep learning and skill transference. This approach not only supports language acquisition but also prepares students to critically engage with and produce sophisticated discourse, a crucial asset in an information-dense world. Ultimately, the integration of Task-Based Learning and Project-Based Learning methodologies cultivates a robust educational framework that extends beyond mere linguistic proficiency, equipping students with the indispensable cognitive tools required for analytical thought and effective communication in both academic and professional domains. The long-term impact of such pedagogical innovations merits longitudinal studies to ascertain sustained improvements in critical thinking and reading abilities over students' academic and professional trajectories.

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