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Abstract: This article explores the development of critical thinking skills in modern English teaching environments, highlighting the importance of cooperative learning, digital educational contexts, media literacy, intercultural competence, and blended learning approaches. Drawing on recent studies, the article illustrates effective strategies for fostering critical thinking among students, emphasizing the need for educators to adapt to contemporary educational demands. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of critical thinking development and its relevance in preparing students for the complexities of the 21st century.

Keywords: Critical thinking, English language teaching, cooperative learning, digital education, media literacy, intercultural competence, blended learning.

Introduction. In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the ability to think critically has become an indispensable skill for learners across disciplines, particularly in English language teaching (ELT). With the proliferation of information and the rise of digital communication, students are bombarded with diverse viewpoints and conflicting narratives. As English serves as a global lingua franca, the need for learners to engage thoughtfully and analytically with content is more crucial than ever.

Critical thinking involves not only the ability to analyze and evaluate information but also the capacity to question assumptions, make reasoned arguments, and navigate complex social dynamics. This skill set empowers students to become active participants in their learning and equips them with the tools necessary for effective communication in an increasingly interconnected world.

Moreover, the integration of technology and multimedia resources in the classroom presents unique opportunities and challenges for critical thinking development. As educators strive to foster these essential skills, they must adapt to the diverse needs of their students and the demands of modern society.

This article synthesizes findings from key studies to explore effective strategies for developing critical thinking in the English teaching context, focusing on cooperative learning, digital environments, media literacy, intercultural competence, and blended learning approaches. By embracing these strategies, educators can cultivate critical thinkers who are not only proficient in English but also equipped to tackle the complexities of the 21st century.

Developing Critical Thinking in Modern English Teaching

Critical thinking is an essential skill in modern education, particularly in English language teaching (ELT). Various studies have explored methods to enhance critical thinking skills among students, focusing on cooperative learning, digital environments, and media literacy. This article synthesizes findings from several key studies to highlight effective strategies for developing critical thinking in the English teaching context.

Cooperative Learning

Klimovienė, Urbonienė, and Barzdžiukienė (2006) emphasize the importance of cooperative learning as a means to foster critical thinking. Their research indicates that collaborative activities encourage students to engage with each other's ideas, challenge assumptions, and develop reasoned arguments. By working in groups, students can share diverse perspectives, which enhances their analytical skills and promotes deeper understanding of the material.

Digital Educational Environments

The integration of digital tools in education has transformed how critical thinking is developed. Varenina et al. (2021) discuss the potential of digital environments to facilitate critical thinking skills. They argue that online platforms provide opportunities for students to engage in discussions, analyze information critically, and collaborate on projects, thus preparing them for the complexities of the digital age.

Media Literacy

Alekseeva (2021) explores the role of media in developing critical thinking skills among students. In a media-saturated world, the ability to critically evaluate information is crucial. Alekseeva suggests that incorporating media literacy into the curriculum enables students to discern credible sources, understand bias, and engage with content thoughtfully. This approach not only enhances critical thinking but also equips students with skills necessary for navigating the modern information landscape.

Intercultural Competence

Esen (2021) highlights the connection between critical thinking and intercultural competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. The study reviews various 21st-century skills and emphasizes that critical thinking is essential for effective communication in diverse cultural contexts. By fostering critical thinking, educators can prepare students to engage meaningfully with peers from different backgrounds, enhancing their overall communicative competence.

Blended Learning Approaches

Zaitseva et al. (2022) present a blended English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course designed to develop critical thinking skills among computer science students. Their findings suggest that combining traditional teaching methods with online resources creates a dynamic learning environment that encourages students to think critically about their field. This blended approach allows for flexibility and caters to different learning styles, making critical thinking development more accessible.

Conclusion. The development of critical thinking skills in modern English teaching is multifaceted, involving cooperative learning, digital environments, media literacy, intercultural competence, and blended learning approaches. By integrating these strategies into the curriculum, educators can enhance students' analytical abilities, preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century.

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