

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN NON-PHILOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS

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Annotation. This article examines the role of critical thinking in English language teaching (ELT) within non-philological higher education institutions. Critical thinking plays a crucial role not only in language learning but also in professional education, where students need to analyze, evaluate, and apply knowledge effectively. The study explores methods such as inquiry-based learning, debates, problem-solving exercises, and the use of authentic materials to enhance students' analytical skills. Additionally, it highlights the challenges of integrating critical thinking into ELT and offers recommendations for overcoming these difficulties. The research emphasizes the effectiveness of interactive and modern teaching approaches in fostering both language proficiency and intellectual development.

Keywords: Critical thinking, English language teaching, non-philological education, inquiry-based learning, problem-solving, professional communication.

INTRODUCTION

In modern higher education, it is essential not only to acquire language proficiency but also to develop critical thinking skills. In non-philological institutions, English language teaching is often considered a supplementary course rather than an integral part of students' professional development. However, contemporary educational approaches emphasize that English is not just a means of communication but also a tool for fostering independent thinking, analytical skills, and logical reasoning. Integrating critical thinking into English language

teaching (ELT) helps students not only improve their linguistic competence but also prepares them for professional challenges, enabling them to analyze information, solve problems, and make well-reasoned decisions. This article explores the importance of critical thinking in ELT within non-philological institutions, discussing effective strategies, methods, and challenges in implementing this approach.

In modern education, critical thinking is considered one of the most essential skills for students across various disciplines. For students in non-philological institutions, where English serves as a tool for acquiring professional knowledge rather than the primary subject of study, developing critical thinking skills through English language teaching (ELT) is of great importance. Traditional methods of teaching English in such institutions often focus on grammar, vocabulary memorization, and basic communication skills, which may not be sufficient for fostering deep analytical abilities. However, incorporating critical thinking strategies into ELT can help students not only improve their language skills but also enhance their ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information critically.

The ability to think critically enables students to approach problems logically, assess different perspectives, and make well-reasoned decisions. In non-philological faculties such as engineering, medicine, business, and technology, where professionals need to engage in problem-solving and decision-making, developing critical thinking through ELT becomes even more relevant. English is not merely a subject but a means of accessing global knowledge, engaging in international communication, and participating in academic and professional discussions. Thus, integrating critical thinking into ELT should be a priority for educators in these institutions.

One effective method of fostering critical thinking in English language instruction is inquiry-based learning, which encourages students to ask questions, conduct research, and actively engage with content. Instead of simply memorizing vocabulary and grammatical structures, students are challenged to explore real-world issues, analyze data, and present their findings in English. This approach not only improves language proficiency but also trains students to approach information critically, consider multiple viewpoints, and develop well-supported arguments. For example, students in medical faculties can be given case studies in English, where they analyze symptoms, discuss potential diagnoses, and justify their treatment choices. Similarly, engineering students can engage in English-language discussions on sustainable development, weighing the pros and cons of different technological solutions.

Debates and argumentative discussions are another powerful tool for integrating critical thinking into ELT. By engaging in structured debates, students learn to formulate arguments, defend their opinions with evidence, and critically assess opposing viewpoints. This method not only enhances their English-speaking skills but also develops their ability to construct logical arguments, detect inconsistencies, and think on their feet. Educators can design debate topics relevant to students' fields, such as ethical issues in artificial intelligence for IT students or global economic policies for business students. Through these discussions, students gain confidence in expressing their ideas in English while simultaneously developing analytical and evaluative skills.

Problem-solving and decision-making activities in ELT help students connect language learning with real-world challenges. Instead of passively absorbing information, students actively engage with problems, evaluate possible solutions, and justify their decisions in English. This can be implemented through business simulations, role-playing exercises, and collaborative projects that require teamwork and critical analysis. For example, business students can be assigned a

simulation where they analyze market trends and propose strategic business plans, presenting their findings in English. Similarly, engineering students can work on hypothetical project proposals, discussing the feasibility of different materials and technologies in English. These activities help students see English as a practical tool for professional success rather than just an academic requirement.

Using authentic materials such as opinion articles, research papers, and TED Talks can further enhance critical thinking in ELT. Exposure to diverse perspectives and complex arguments challenges students to engage in deeper analysis and reflection. Instead of relying on simplified textbook dialogues, students can be encouraged to read real-world texts, summarize key points, identify biases, and form their own opinions. Watching and analyzing English-language documentaries or interviews with experts in their fields allows students to practice listening comprehension while engaging with meaningful content. These activities encourage students to question assumptions, recognize different viewpoints, and develop independent thinking skills while improving their English proficiency.

Despite the clear benefits, implementing critical thinking strategies in ELT within non-philological institutions comes with challenges. Many universities still adhere to traditional lecture-based teaching methods that prioritize rote learning over active engagement. Instructors may struggle with a lack of resources, limited time for language courses, or resistance from students who are accustomed to passive learning. Additionally, students who lack confidence in their English skills may hesitate to participate in discussions or express their opinions openly. Addressing these challenges requires a shift in teaching methodologies, greater access to authentic learning materials, and a more student-centered approach to ELT.

Integrating critical thinking into ELT has numerous advantages for students in non-philological faculties. It equips them with problem-solving abilities,

enhances their capacity for logical reasoning, and prepares them for professional communication in global contexts. By developing critical thinking skills, students become more effective decision-makers, adaptable professionals, and engaged global citizens. They learn to approach information critically, articulate their ideas clearly, and engage in meaningful academic and professional discussions. Furthermore, students who develop critical thinking skills through ELT are better prepared for lifelong learning, as they gain the ability to independently evaluate new information and adapt to changing professional demands.

In conclusion, developing critical thinking through English language teaching is essential for students in non-philological institutions. By incorporating inquiry-based learning, debates, problem-solving activities, and authentic materials into ELT, educators can create a more dynamic and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Overcoming the challenges of implementation requires innovative teaching strategies, greater institutional support, and a commitment to fostering higher-order thinking skills. Ultimately, by integrating critical thinking into English language instruction, universities can better prepare students for academic and professional success, equipping them with the cognitive and linguistic abilities needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

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