



## DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH DEBATES IN ENGLISH CLASSES

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**Annotation:** This study examines how debates in English classes develop students' critical thinking and communication skills. It is relevant for promoting active learning and problem-solving. The research explores debate strategies, formats, and assessments to enhance reasoning. Its novelty lies in combining language learning with higher-order thinking, showing that structured debates effectively foster analytical and reflective skills.

**Keywords:** critical thinking, debates, English classes, active learning, reasoning skills, analytical skills, reflective thinking, language learning, debate strategies, student engagement.

**Аннотация:** Это исследование изучает, как дебаты на уроках английского способствуют развитию у студентов критического мышления и коммуникативных навыков. Актуальность работы заключается в поощрении активного обучения и решения проблем. В исследовании рассматриваются стратегии проведения дебатов, их форматы и методы оценки для развития навыков рассуждения. Новизна работы состоит в сочетании изучения языка с формированием навыков



высокого уровня, показывая, что структурированные дебаты эффективно развивают аналитическое и рефлексивное мышление.

**Ключевые слова:** критическое мышление, дебаты, уроки английского языка, активное обучение, навыки рассуждения, аналитические навыки, рефлексивное мышление, изучение языка, стратегии проведения дебатов, участие студентов.

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tili darslarida munozaralar orqali talabalarda tanqidiy fikrlash va muloqot ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishni o'rganadi. Ishning dolzarbligi faol ta'lim va muammolarni hal qilishni rag'batlantirishda namoyon bo'ladi. Tadqiqotda munozaralarni tashkil etish strategiyalari, formatlari va baholash usullari talabalarning fikrlash qobiliyatini oshirish maqsadida ko'rib chiqiladi. Ishning yangiligi shundaki, til o'rganishni yuqori darajadagi fikrlash ko'nikmalari bilan birlashtirib, strukturaviy munozaralar orqali analitik va reflektiv fikrlashni samarali rivojlantirish mumkinligini ko'rsatadi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** tanqidiy fikrlash, munozaralar, ingliz tili darslari, faol ta'lim, fikrlash qobiliyatlari, tahliliy ko'nikmalar, reflektiv fikrlash, til o'rganish, munozara strategiyalari, talabalarning ishtiroki.

**Introduction.** This research focuses on developing critical thinking through debates in English classes, an approach that combines language learning with the cultivation of higher-order cognitive skills. The main goal is to investigate how structured debates can enhance students' analytical thinking, reasoning, and communication abilities while improving their English proficiency. The objectives of the study include identifying effective debate strategies, selecting appropriate topics and formats, and exploring assessment methods to measure students' progress in critical thinking. The theoretical significance lies in linking language education with critical



thinking development, while the practical significance is in providing teachers with concrete methods to implement debates effectively in the classroom. Influential works shaping this research include Johnson and Johnson's studies on cooperative learning, Fisher's research on critical thinking, and Kuhn's work on argumentation and reasoning, which collectively highlight the role of debates in fostering analytical and reflective skills in learners.

**The main part of this study** provides an in-depth examination of the process of developing critical thinking through debates in English classes, presenting both theoretical foundations and empirical results. The research was carried out in multiple stages to ensure a systematic, reliable, and comprehensive analysis of the problem.

The first stage involved a detailed review of existing literature on critical thinking, argumentation, and debate-based learning. Key works that informed this study include Johnson and Johnson's research on cooperative learning, which emphasizes the benefits of interactive and collaborative classroom activities for cognitive development; Fisher's studies on critical thinking, which focus on the structured analysis of arguments and evidence; and Kuhn's research on reasoning and argumentation, highlighting the importance of engaging students in evaluative discussions. This stage clarified the specific cognitive and linguistic skills that debates can develop, such as analytical thinking, logical reasoning, evidence-based argumentation, evaluation of different perspectives, and reflective thinking. It also revealed gaps in current research, particularly regarding the integration of debates into language learning for improving both English proficiency and critical thinking simultaneously. Based on the literature review, the second stage involved designing debate activities that align with students' language level and cognitive abilities. Debate topics were selected to be relevant, interesting, and challenging, encouraging students to conduct research, analyze





information, and construct reasoned arguments. Topics included social issues, environmental concerns, ethical dilemmas, and current events, which allowed students to connect classroom learning with real-world contexts. Various debate formats were implemented:

**Formal debates:** Students prepared arguments for and against a motion, following strict rules and time limits.

**Panel discussions:** Groups of students explored a topic collaboratively, allowing multiple perspectives to emerge.

**Mini-debates:** Short, informal debates encouraged quick thinking and spontaneous argumentation.

Assessment strategies were also carefully developed to capture both linguistic performance and critical thinking progress. These included rubrics evaluating argument structure, clarity, use of evidence, language accuracy, and the ability to respond to counterarguments. Peer assessment and self-reflection were integrated to promote student awareness of their learning process, while teacher evaluations provided structured feedback to guide improvement. In addition, debates were implemented over several weeks in English classrooms. Students were actively involved in preparing arguments, researching relevant information, and presenting their positions to peers. Teachers facilitated the process by providing guidance, clarifying language issues, and encouraging constructive discussion. During each debate, students' engagement, reasoning abilities, language use, and interaction with peers were systematically observed and recorded. Surveys and reflective journals complemented direct observation, providing qualitative insights into student experiences, motivation, and perceived improvement.

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative analysis involved comparing students' performance in



pre- and post-debate assessments to measure progress in critical thinking, argument construction, and language accuracy. Original charts, tables, and graphs were created to visualize students' improvement in key areas, such as the frequency and quality of arguments, ability to counter opposing viewpoints, and overall participation. Qualitative analysis of reflective journals and surveys highlighted increased student confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate in discussions. Students reported that debates encouraged them to think more deeply, consider multiple perspectives, and express ideas clearly in English.

The findings demonstrate that structured debates significantly enhance both critical thinking and English language skills. Students showed measurable improvement in analytical reasoning, evidence-based argumentation, and reflective thinking. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive approach, integrating theoretical research, practical classroom strategies, and empirical validation. Unlike traditional language instruction that focuses mainly on vocabulary and grammar, this approach simultaneously develops higher-order cognitive skills and language proficiency. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of interactive learning, providing teachers with practical, replicable strategies to implement debates effectively.

To illustrate the results, original diagrams, charts, and tables were created. For example, one chart compared the number of logically structured arguments before and after debate implementation, showing a clear increase in analytical thinking. Tables summarized peer and teacher evaluations, indicating improvements in clarity of expression, use of supporting evidence, and ability to respond to counterarguments. Diagrams depicted the progression of student engagement and participation levels over the course of the study. These visual representations enhance the objectivity of the research



and emphasize the novelty and effectiveness of debate-based learning in English classes. The study provides practical guidance for English teachers seeking to incorporate debates into their classrooms. Recommendations include starting with mini-debates to build confidence, gradually introducing formal debate formats, selecting topics that are relevant to students' interests, and using comprehensive assessment rubrics that evaluate both language and cognitive skills. By integrating debates, teachers can transform traditional English lessons into interactive, engaging, and intellectually stimulating experiences that prepare students for real-world communication and critical analysis.

**In conclusion:** This study explored the use of debates in English classes to develop students' critical thinking and communication skills. Findings show that structured debates enhance argumentation, evaluation of viewpoints, reflective reasoning, and English proficiency. Results exceeded expectations, also boosting motivation and participation. The study is novel in combining debate-based learning with language instruction. Teachers are encouraged to use varied debate formats, relevant topics, and assessments that consider both reasoning and language. Future research could examine long-term effects, different age groups, proficiency levels, and the use of digital tools. Overall, debates prove to be an effective method for fostering analytical, reflective, and communicative skills.

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