

## DEVELOPING CREATIVE & CRITICAL THINKING IN YOUNG LEARNERS

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**Abstract :** This paper argues for the teaching of thinking to young learners particularly in English language lessons. It begins by examining the need for the teaching of thinking skills in preparation of young learners as 21st century learners before identifying the spectrum of thinking skills for young learners. Using the theoretical construct of constructivism, the paper will demonstrate how thinking skills should be contextualised in authentic children’s literature as a means of modelling good thinking and thinking frames.

**Key words:** critical thinking, innovative education, teaching methods, fostering creativity

**Аннотация:** В статье обосновывается важность развития навыков мышления у младших школьников, особенно на уроках английского языка, как подготовки к требованиям XXI века. Рассматриваются основные мыслительные навыки и их развитие через детскую литературу на основе конструктивизма. Также показано, как применять эти навыки в изучении языка и речи учащихся. В конце даются рекомендации для учителей и вопросы для обсуждения.

**Ключевые слова:** критическое мышление, инновационное образование, методы обучения, развитие креативности

Critical thinking is one of the most valued skills in both the academic and professional fields. Developing this skill helps students face complex problems, make informed decisions, and evaluate different solutions. Critical thinking techniques focus on deep analysis, reflection, and objective evaluation—qualities essential for both academic and professional success. Critical thinking development becomes an indispensable tool for students, enabling them to stand out in any educational or work environment. Universities and companies are looking for individuals who are not only creative but also have the ability to reason logically and make well-grounded decisions.

Innovative teaching methods play a crucial role in preparing students for a world that demands creative and critical thinking skills. Innovations in education include the use of new technologies, pedagogical approaches, and teaching methodologies that challenge traditional methods. By integrating innovative teaching methods into the classroom, educators can offer students more dynamic, interactive, and engaging learning experiences. This not only fosters fostering creativity in education but also prepares students for the challenges of an interconnected and constantly evolving world.

Integrating creativity and critical thinking into the teaching process has a significant impact on student learning. By promoting these skills, educators can improve students' understanding, problem-solving abilities, and motivation to learn. Creative classroom activities allow students to actively engage with their learning, increasing retention and their ability to apply what they have learned in different contexts. As students develop their critical thinking skills, they become more competent and autonomous in their learning process, which benefits both their academic performance and their preparation for the future. Fostering creativity in education requires implementing strategies that stimulate students' imagination and free thinking. Some of the best creative classroom activities include:

#### **Interdisciplinary projects:**

These projects combine different subjects and areas of knowledge, encouraging students to apply their creativity to solve problems from various perspectives.

#### **Using innovative teaching methods:**

Integrating digital tools and technological resources into daily activities can enhance creativity in the classroom, allowing students to explore new ideas and forms of expression.

### **Open discussions and free idea-sharing:**

Creating an environment where students can share their ideas without fear of rejection promotes creative education and boosts their confidence. These strategies not only develop creativity in the classroom but also encourage students to think critically about the subjects they explore.

Critical thinking development in students is an ongoing process that requires the application of effective methods. Some of the best methods for teaching creativity and fostering critical thinking include:

### **Debates and discussions:**

Establishing spaces where students can debate different viewpoints helps them develop their ability to analyze and evaluate arguments logically.

### **Case studies:**

Analyzing real-life cases allows students to practice critical reasoning and decision-making in practical situations.

The teaching of thinking is a crucial set of skills that learners, and in particular young learners, must acquire in order to become effective learners. Constructivist, student-centred paradigms to learning situate the teaching of thinking deeply into instruction requiring teachers to effect learning as young learners experience it. The use of thinking skills at the input stage of lessons ensures that learners are provided with the best possible ways of “noticing” the input to be learnt. Framing tasks according to cognitive and content goals ensure that learners are mentally engaged in tasks. Introducing tasks that extend student thinking allows learners to see the relevance of what they are learning and how their learning can be used. Lastly, creating classrooms that signal the importance of being thinking and ethical trains them up to meet a much more complex world ahead.

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