

## THE ROLE OF READING STRATEGIES AND LEARNING TASKS IN PROMOTING CRITICAL THINKING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

**Karimova Bibizaxroxon Ibrohimjon qizi**

*Mirzo Ulug'bek nomidagi O'zbekiston Milliy universiteti  
Xorijiy filologiya fakulteti 4-kurs talabasi karimovazakhro03@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** *The development of critical thinking skills has become an essential objective of modern foreign language education. In contemporary educational environments, learners are expected not only to acquire linguistic competence but also to develop the ability to analyze, interpret, and evaluate information presented in a foreign language. Reading instruction plays a particularly important role in achieving these objectives, as it provides opportunities for learners to engage with texts in a reflective and analytical manner.*

*This article examines the role of reading strategies and instructional tasks in promoting critical thinking in foreign language education. The study analyzes theoretical and methodological literature related to strategic reading instruction and task-based learning approaches. Special attention is given to reading strategies such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, and critical text analysis, which encourage learners to engage actively with textual information. In addition, the article explores the pedagogical value of instructional tasks, including discussion activities, problem-solving exercises, and collaborative text analysis, which stimulate higher-order thinking skills.*

*The findings suggest that the systematic integration of reading strategies and cognitively engaging tasks significantly contributes to the development of learners' analytical abilities and improves overall reading comprehension in a foreign language. The study concludes that strategic reading instruction combined with interactive learning tasks represents an effective pedagogical approach for fostering critical thinking skills in foreign language classrooms.*

**Keywords:** *foreign language education, reading strategies, critical thinking, reading comprehension, task-based learning, language pedagogy, higher-order thinking skills*

In modern foreign language instruction, the enhancement of critical thinking skills among language learners is recognized as an important objective in contemporary language pedagogy. With the rapid globalization of societies, the proliferation of information in the digital age, and the increasing need to develop critical thinking skills among language learners, it is not sufficient for learners to simply focus on linguistic knowledge. Instead, learners need to learn to interpret, evaluate, and even critically analyze the information provided in a foreign language. As such, it is not surprising that modern language pedagogies place an increasing focus on the integration of cognitive skills in language instruction methodologies [1].

Reading is recognized as an effective language skill that can help learners develop critical thinking skills. While traditional reading instruction focuses on the simple

decoding of texts, modern reading instruction has been recognized as an effective way to help learners develop higher-order cognitive skills. Through active engagement in reading activities, learners can learn to interpret texts, ask questions, and even evaluate the ideas provided in the texts. Studies have shown that learners can benefit from the enhancement of critical thinking skills by engaging in active reading practices. [2].

Reading strategies like predicting, questioning, summarizing, and evaluating arguments have a significant role in facilitating the reader in dealing with the complexities of the reading text. These reading strategies help the student in grasping the implicit meaning of the text, analyzing the point of view of the author, and creating connections with the knowledge base and the newly introduced information. According to educational researchers, the application of reading strategies in the context of the foreign language classroom helps the student in developing critical thinking skills while at the same time promoting linguistic competence [3].

Apart from reading strategies, well-constructed learning tasks have also played a significant role in the development of critical thinking skills. For example, discussion-based tasks, problem-solving tasks, comparative analysis of texts, and reflective writing tasks are effective in helping learners develop critical thinking skills. According to various authors, these tasks help learners transform the reading process from a passive cognitive activity into an interactive cognitive activity that encourages intellectual engagement with the text [4].

Moreover, the role of critical thinking in reading has become significant in the contemporary educational environment in which students are exposed to a huge volume of information from various sources. In this context, the role of language teachers is significant in helping students develop the necessary analysis skills required for the critical interpretation of the information and the formation of informed opinions. For this reason, contemporary reading strategies have emphasized the need for the integration of reading strategies with task-based learning [5].

In light of the above considerations, the present study aims to investigate the role of reading strategies and learning activities in fostering critical thinking skills in foreign language instruction. The present paper seeks to explore how strategic reading and learning activities could help develop students' critical thinking skills while improving their learning outcomes in foreign languages.

The link between the process of reading instruction and the development of critical thinking has been a widely discussed issue in the field of foreign language instruction. It has been highlighted that the process of reading is not simply the interpretation of symbols, but a complex mental process that involves interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of the information presented in the text. In this respect, the contemporary approach in the field of language instruction highlights the importance of the integration of critical thinking in the process of reading instruction using strategic learning [6].

Applied linguists emphasize that for students to be good readers, it is essential to use well-structured reading strategies. According to Anderson, these reading strategies

enable learners to monitor their comprehension, identify important ideas, and evaluate the author's arguments. By using these strategies, learners can better engage with the text and can develop their analytical skills while reading a foreign text. Furthermore, Grabe and Stoller emphasize that strategic reading can be vital for learners' academic success because it can provide them with the opportunity to interpret complex texts and synthesize information from various sources [7].

Another important aspect discussed in the literature is the role of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension and critical thinking development. Metacognitive strategies allow learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading processes, thereby enhancing their awareness of how meaning is constructed during reading. According to Paris and Jacobs, students who actively employ metacognitive reading strategies demonstrate stronger analytical abilities and are better able to question assumptions and evaluate arguments presented in texts [8].

Besides reading strategies, other aspects of learning that scholars have highlighted as effective in developing critical thinking skills among foreign language learners include task-based learning. Task-based language learning is a method of learning that involves learners interacting with materials in a foreign language in a way that involves solving problems. Richards and Rodgers argue that when learners are involved in tasks that require interpretation, comparison, and discussion, it enhances their thinking skills, enabling them to understand content in a better way [9]. This enables learners to go beyond simple understanding to critical thinking about information.

In addition to this, various studies emphasize the significance of interactive learning strategies in fostering critical thinking skills in reading. For example, Wallace suggests that "critical reading activities such as questioning the author's intention, analyzing rhetorical structures, and evaluating evidence prompt learners to take an investigative approach to their reading." Not just reading skills are improved with such activities, but students are also better equipped to analyze and evaluate information received from a foreign source [10].

Recent studies in language education have shown that incorporating critical thinking into reading classes can lead to better learning outcomes in terms of learners' overall academic literacy. According to Facione, critical thinking is defined as interpretation, analysis, inference, and evaluation. All these processes can be successfully promoted in learners if reading instruction is well-structured. If learners learn to ask questions, make interpretations, and justify their opinions, it is apparent that they will learn to be independent language users [11].

In summary, it is apparent that the existing literature has emphasized the significance of reading strategies and task-based learning in the promotion of critical thinking skills in foreign language learning. It is argued that the integration of reading strategies and cognitively demanding learning activities would help learners process information in a more profound manner.

The acquisition of critical thinking skills in the education of foreign languages is heavily dependent on the application of effective reading strategies and cognitively

engaging learning tasks. Modern pedagogy in the teaching of foreign languages has acknowledged the fact that reading is not a passive cognitive activity, as the learner interacts cognitively with the text and makes independent judgments and evaluations. Thus, the application of reading strategies can be effective in the acquisition of critical thinking skills by the learner [12].

One of the most significant aspects of strategic reading is the incorporation of pre-reading strategies. These strategies are effective in activating the learners' prior knowledge and evoking their interest in the subject matter. Predicting the content based on the title, brainstorming the key words used in the text, and discussing their prior knowledge are some strategies used in pre-reading. According to Grabe, activating the learners' prior knowledge before the actual reading enables them to analyze the information better and enables them to grasp the main arguments presented in the text effectively [13]. Therefore, pre-reading strategies not only help the learners to understand the text but also help them develop their thinking skills.

Another significant group of strategies is those of while-reading strategies, which help learners in dealing with the interpretation and analysis of text information. The strategies in this group encourage learners to engage in a process of monitoring their understanding, identifying main ideas, and even questioning author purposes. For instance, learners may be encouraged to highlight main ideas, evidence, or even question aspects of text information that they do not understand. Researchers argue that questioning strategies play a significant role in developing critical thinking skills in learners, as it involves learners in analyzing the meaning of text information [14].

In addition to questions, summarizing, as well as note-taking strategies, also play an important role in developing higher-order thinking skills. While summarizing a text in one's own words, learners must be able to distinguish between main ideas and supporting details. This involves analytical thinking skills. Anderson states, "Summarizing is seen as encouraging learners to synthesize information, reconstructing it in their own way as a message, thereby developing their comprehension as well as their critical evaluation skills" [15]. This enables learners to become active participants in the learning process, as opposed to being mere recipients of information.

Additionally, post-reading exercises offer learners opportunities to analyze, evaluate, and discuss the information presented in the text. The post-reading exercises could include group discussion, debate, writing, or analysis of different texts. The exercises encourage learners to express their views, support their views with evidence, and evaluate different views. Some scholars argue that discussion is one of the best ways of developing critical thinking skills in learners, as it exposes learners to different views and enables them to use logical thinking to support their views [16].

Task-based learning methodologies have also highlighted the need for problem-solving activities in which the student is required to apply the information gained from the reading materials. For example, the student may be required to analyze a problem in the real world, as described in the reading materials, and provide suggestions for the solution of the problem. Richards and Rodgers have stated that problem-solving

activities help the student develop his/her analytical skills and enhance his/her linguistic and cognitive abilities [17].

Another effective way to foster critical thinking skills in students through reading is the practice of critical text analysis. Wallace argues that “critical reading activities help learners develop an investigative attitude towards text: to question assumptions and evaluate the reliability of information is an essential skill in an information-rich world and is particularly important in modern educational contexts where students are required to deal with information from many different sources” [18].

In addition, other cooperative learning strategies such as peer discussion and group analysis have the potential to reinforce the development of critical thinking skills. Through cooperative learning strategies such as peer discussion and group analysis, learners are able to acquire different perspectives that challenge their thinking and promote deeper thinking. According to Facione, interaction and dialogue have an impact in reinforcing reasoning skills since learners are required to justify their positions and respond to different interpretations from their peers [19].

Overall, it is apparent that the interplay of reading strategies and interactive learning techniques offers a dynamic learning model in which students become actively involved in learning text-based information. By predicting, questioning, summarizing, analyzing, and discussing text, learners do not only improve their reading comprehension skills but also acquire appropriate skills in analysis and evaluation, which are essential in thinking critically. Therefore, strategic reading techniques, in association with task-based learning techniques, offer an appropriate pedagogical model in foreign language education.

The analysis of the relevant literature in the area of theory and methodology of teaching critical thinking skills has shown that the development of critical thinking skills is a primary goal of contemporary education in the area of foreign language acquisition. Indeed, in the contemporary educational environment, the acquisition of knowledge in the area of a foreign language is not limited only to the acquisition of grammatical and vocabulary knowledge; rather, the ability to interpret and analyze the information provided in the foreign language is required [20].

The results of the present study reveal that reading strategies play an important role in fostering critical thinking skills in foreign language classes. It is suggested that the application of reading strategies like making predictions, asking questions, summarizing, and analyzing the information in texts is effective in encouraging learners not to receive information passively but to interact actively with the texts. It is suggested that the application of reading strategies not only improves learners' comprehension skills but also improves the cognitive processes that underlie analytical and reflective thinking skills [21].

Besides the use of various reading strategies, the incorporation of well-designed instructional tasks also plays a vital role in the acquisition of critical thinking skills. The use of task-based activities such as group discussions, problem-solving, comparative text reading, and reflective writing enables learners to investigate various opinions,

defend their views, and assess the authenticity of the presented information. The use of such activities makes the process of reading an interactive and intellectually stimulating activity for learners to use their target language while applying analytical thinking skills [22].

Additionally, the incorporation of collaborative learning strategies in reading education offers another chance for the development of thinking skills. For instance, when students discuss reading materials among themselves, they are exposed to different viewpoints, which might change their perspectives. Other researchers argue that interaction, as well as dialogue, is a significant aspect in developing thinking skills. They assert that it is through interaction that one is able to present his/her views with logic, as well as respond to different views presented by others [23].

Conclusively, the research validates that the integration of effective reading strategies and task-based learning activities promotes the development of a favorable learning environment for the cultivation of critical thinking skills in foreign language education. This is particularly due to the fact that the promotion of critical thinking skills enables the educator to effectively enhance the student's comprehension and critical thinking skills. It is in this regard that the integration of strategic reading and task-based learning is considered a fundamental foreign language teaching methodology for the modern educator. Future research could be directed towards the exploration of the practical application of the methodology in various learning environments, including the internet.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Ennis, R. H. (2011). *Critical Thinking: Reflection and Perspective. Part I. Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines.*
2. Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. (2013). *Teaching and Researching Reading.* Routledge.
3. Anderson, N. J. (2008). *Practical English Language Teaching: Reading.* McGraw-Hill.
4. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching.* Cambridge University Press.
5. Facione, P. A. (2015). *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts. Insight Assessment.*
6. Koda, K. (2005). *Insights into Second Language Reading: A Cross-Linguistic Approach.* Cambridge University Press.
7. Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. (2013). *Teaching and Researching Reading.* Routledge.
8. Paris, S. G., & Jacobs, J. E. (1984). *The Benefits of Informed Instruction for Children's Reading Awareness and Comprehension Skills.* *Child Development.*
9. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching.* Cambridge University Press.
10. Wallace, C. (2003). *Critical Reading in Language Education.* Palgrave Macmillan.

11. Facione, P. A. (2015). *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts*. Insight Assessment.
12. Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing Reading*. Cambridge University Press.
13. Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a Second Language: Moving from Theory to Practice*. Cambridge University Press.
14. Duke, N. K., & Pearson, P. D. (2002). *Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension*. *Journal of Education*.
15. Anderson, N. J. (2008). *Practical English Language Teaching: Reading*. McGraw-Hill.
16. Brookfield, S. D. (2012). *Teaching for Critical Thinking*. Jossey-Bass.
17. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
18. Wallace, C. (2003). *Critical Reading in Language Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
19. Facione, P. A. (2015). *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts*. Insight Assessment.
20. Ennis, R. H. (2011). *Critical Thinking: Reflection and Perspective*. *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*.
21. Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. (2013). *Teaching and Researching Reading*. Routledge.
22. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
23. Facione, P. A. (2015). *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts*. Insight Assessment.