

THE INFLUENCE OF USING EXTENSIVE READING ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract. *Extensive reading is a language learning approach which encourages students to read large amounts of material at or slightly below their proficiency level, primarily for pleasure and general understanding rather than focused analysis. In this study the impact of extensive reading activities on the development of critical thinking skills in language education is investigated. Also, several extensive reading exercises are analyzed based on the literature review. Extensive reading not only advances language proficiency but also significantly enhances cognitive skills such as questioning and evaluating arguments. Incorporating extensive reading into language education fosters abilities in analysis, inference, and synthesis, establishing it as an effective pedagogical strategy for cognitive and linguistic development in EFL contexts.*

Key words: *extensive reading activities, language education, critical thinking, vocabulary acquisition, language proficiency, cognitive skills.*

Annotatsiya. *Ekstensiv o'qish talabalarni katta hajmdagi, o'z darajasiga mos yoki biroz osonroq matnlarni zavq olish va chuqur tahlilga emas, umumiy tushunish uchun o'qishga undaydigan til o'rganish uslubidir. Ushbu tadqiqotda til ta'limida tanqidiy fikrlash ko'nikmasini rivojlantirishda ekstensiv o'qish mashqlaridan foydalanishning ta'siri ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, adabiyotlar sharhi asosida bir qancha ekstensiv o'qish mashqlari tahlil qilinadi. Ekstensiv o'qish nafaqat til bilish darajasini oshiradi, balki savol berish va dalillarni baholash kabi kognitiv qobiliyatlarni sezilarli darajada oshiradi. Til ta'limida ekstensiv o'qishni tadbiq qilish tahlil qilish, xulosa chiqarish va sintez qilish qobiliyatlarini rivojlantiradi va uni EFL (ingliz tilini xorijiy til sifatida o'rganish) kontekstlarida kognitiv va lingvistik rivojlanish uchun samarali pedagogik strategiya sifatida e'tirof etiladi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *ekstensiv o'qish mashqlari, til ta'limi, tanqidiy fikrlash, so'z boyligini o'zlashtirish, til bilish darajasi, kognitiv qobiliyatlari.*

According to Day and Bamford, extensive reading is reading large quantities of material for pleasure and overall comprehension rather than detailed analysis. Reading materials should suit learners' language proficiency. This method allows learners to acquire language in a natural and meaningful context through reading various texts, including books, articles, and other authentic materials. Extensive

reading often involves self-selected materials that match learners' interests, which helps sustain motivation and promotes autonomy in language learning. It focuses on fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension, encouraging students to read freely without frequent interruptions for unfamiliar words or grammatical structures [2].

Extensive reading provides a rich context for developing critical thinking skills in language learners. By reading varied content, learners practice distinguishing facts from opinions. As students engage with texts, they will be able to make inferences about characters' motives, plot developments, or underlying themes, which enhances interpretive skills.

Extensive reading can involve comparing themes across multiple texts, allowing students to synthesize ideas, identify patterns, and evaluate how different authors approach similar topics. This synthesis process encourages learners to think critically about content, structure, and themes, which develops analytical skills [3].

Critical thinking is a cognitive process that involves analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information objectively to form reasoned judgments. It encompasses skills such as questioning assumptions, drawing inferences, recognizing biases, and considering alternative perspectives. Critical thinking is essential for problem-solving, decision-making, and effective communication. By fostering abilities in analysis, interpretation, and reflection, critical thinking helps individuals make well-reasoned conclusions and enhances their capacity for independent thought [6].

Extensive reading fosters a positive attitude toward reading in the target language, helping students develop a habit of reading. The primary goal is to improve reading fluency and comprehension rather than to focus on grammar, vocabulary, or intensive reading techniques.

Activities like literature circles or guided discussions encourage students to ask questions, compare viewpoints, and critique arguments presented in the text. These practices help them develop the ability to evaluate reasoning, weigh evidence, and construct well-supported responses. They are all essential critical thinking skills.

Indonesian scholar Nida Husna state that critical thinking skill is not developed unplanned. It needs practice and experience. The research compared the impact of extensive reading and writing reading logs on fostering critical thinking. Results showed that there is no huge difference between using extensive reading and writing reading logs. Findings show that implementing extensive reading in connection with

writing reading logs can function as a complementary approach, supporting the simultaneous development of reading comprehension and critical reflection skills [5].

Some core skills of CT like interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation, can be conducted in simplicity in Reading subjects [4]. Those skills can be taught and practiced from the very beginning level of study and in various subjects. Here are several extensive reading activities that promote critical thinking skills:

Literature circles with assigned roles such as summarizer and questioner promote collaborative critical thinking, allowing students to explore multiple perspectives and develop analytical skills through discussion [1].

In the classroom “Silent reading” can be applied. Dedicated time is allocated for independent reading during class sessions. The practice of silent reading significantly enhances reading speed, a critical component in fostering engagement in extensive reading.

Another effective activity is debates on various topics. Engaging students in debates on controversial topics derived from texts can serve as an effective strategy to foster critical thinking skills. Organizing students into small discussion groups to analyze shared readings and exchange diverse perspectives can enhance comprehension and critical thinking. This collaborative approach allows participants to explore multiple interpretations, challenge assumptions, and refine their understanding through peer interaction, which supports cognitive development and fosters an environment conducive to active learning and critical engagement with the text.

Assigning students with multimedia presentations or creative artwork based on readings encourages them to engage with the material on a deeper level by transforming textual information into visual or auditory formats. This approach promotes active learning and provides opportunities for students to interpret, personalize, and express their understanding in diverse formats. Through the process of creating multimedia or artistic representations, students enhance comprehension, build presentation skills, and exercise critical thinking by synthesizing and reinterpreting key concepts from the text in innovative ways. This method also accommodates various learning styles, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment.

Engaging students in book reviews and compare-and-contrast essays based on reading materials can serve as effective tools to develop critical thinking skills.

Writing a book review encourages students to evaluate the text comprehensively. Students also assess themes, structure, and authorial intent while synthesizing their own perspectives and critiques. This process requires analytical reasoning, as students must form well-supported evaluations. Meanwhile, compare-and-contrast essays foster critical thinking by requiring students to identify and analyze similarities and differences between two or more books or articles. This task promotes deeper engagement with the material, as students must dissect and contrast ideas, themes, or arguments. Drawing connections and discerning distinctions also sharpen their evaluative and interpretive abilities. Moreover, these writing exercises help cultivate essential cognitive skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and reflective judgment by strengthening the foundation for advanced critical thinking.

In conclusion, extensive reading serves as a powerful approach in language education by encouraging learners to read large amounts of material for enjoyment and general comprehension. Incorporating extensive reading activities, such as reading logs, debates on controversial topics, small group discussions, multimedia presentations, book reviews, and compare-and-contrast essays helps to fostering critical thinking skills. These varied methods encourage students to actively engage with texts, challenge and refine their understanding, and express their ideas in innovative formats. By engaging students in collaborative discussions and creative projects, students are offered multiple pathways to deepen comprehension, as well as, enhance interpretive, reflective and evaluative skills. As a result, they develop their critical thinking skills.

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