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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL EFL READING INSTRUCTION VS. CRITICAL THINKING-BASED APPROACH FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Shernazarova Sabohat Saparkulovna

Annotation

This comparative analysis explores the effectiveness of traditional EFL reading instruction versus a critical thinking-based approach for university students. It assesses their impact on reading comprehension, language proficiency, transferable skills, and student engagement in the context of language education. The study offers insights into the benefits and considerations of adopting a critical thinking-oriented approach in university-level EFL reading instruction.

Keywords

EFL reading instruction, critical thinking, university students, reading comprehension, language proficiency, transferable skills, student engagement.

This thesis conducts a comprehensive comparative analysis of traditional EFL (English as a Foreign Language) reading instruction and a critical thinking-based approach for university students, examining their respective impacts on reading comprehension, language proficiency, transferable skills, and student engagement. Through this analysis, we aim to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of these approaches and their implications for modern language education at the university level.

English language proficiency and reading comprehension are pivotal skills for university students, particularly in an increasingly globalized world. Traditional EFL reading instruction has long been the standard in language education, focusing on language acquisition, vocabulary building, and comprehension exercises. However, a growing body of research advocates for a critical thinking-based approach that emphasizes active engagement, analytical skills, and the application of knowledge. This thesis explores the comparative merits of these two approaches, shedding light on their respective strengths and weaknesses. By examining their impact on reading comprehension, language proficiency, transferable skills, and student engagement, we seek to inform language educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers about the potential benefits of adopting a critical thinking-based approach in university-level EFL reading instruction.

Section 1: Reading Comprehension. Traditional EFL reading instruction often results in students who can comprehend texts on a basic level, identifying keywords, main ideas, and details. However, this approach may falter when it comes to fostering a deeper understanding and critical analysis of the material. In contrast, a critical thinking-based approach encourages students to delve deeper into the text, asking questions, making predictions, and engaging in discussions. This active approach results in a more profound comprehension of the material, enabling students to critically analyze the text's content, context, and author's intent.

Section 2: Language Proficiency. Both traditional and critical thinking-based approaches contribute to language proficiency. Traditional methods excel at teaching vocabulary and grammar, which form the foundation of language skills. However, a critical thinking-based approach

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complements language proficiency by encouraging students to actively use language in meaningful ways. This approach promotes not only language acquisition but also language application. Thus, students gain not only a solid linguistic foundation but also the ability to use language effectively in complex contexts, enhancing their overall language proficiency.

Section 3: Transferable Skills. A significant advantage of the critical thinking-based approach lies in the development of transferable skills. Traditional EFL reading instruction primarily focuses on language-related skills, whereas the critical thinking-based approach goes beyond language acquisition. It equips students with transferable skills such as critical analysis, problem-solving, and effective communication. These skills are valuable not only in language learning but also in various academic disciplines and real-world scenarios. Therefore, a critical thinking-based approach enhances students' ability to apply their knowledge and skills beyond the confines of language education.

To effectively implement a critical thinking-based approach in university-level EFL reading instruction, educators need to consider practical strategies and methodologies. This includes selecting appropriate reading materials that stimulate critical thinking, designing engaging discussion activities, and providing guidance on analytical skills development. Instructors should also be trained to facilitate critical discussions effectively and guide students in applying critical thinking tools to diverse texts. Furthermore, the integration of technology and online resources can enhance the implementation of this approach, allowing for collaborative discussions and access to a wide range of reading materials.

The adoption of a critical thinking-based approach signals a shift in the role of language educators. Beyond imparting language skills, educators become facilitators of critical thinking and active learning. They must create a supportive classroom environment that encourages open dialogue, diverse perspectives, and respectful debate. This evolving role empowers educators to cultivate a community of learners who are not only proficient in English but also capable of thinking critically, adapting to new challenges, and contributing meaningfully to their academic and professional environments.

Section 4: Student Engagement. Critical thinking-based instruction typically leads to higher levels of student engagement. Students become active participants in their learning process, prompting increased motivation and interest in the subject matter. In contrast, traditional EFL reading instruction, which often involves passive reading and comprehension exercises, may not elicit the same level of student engagement. The critical thinking-based approach fosters a sense of ownership over one's learning, encouraging students to take a more proactive role in their education.

In conclusion, this comparative analysis of traditional EFL reading instruction and a critical thinking-based approach for university students highlights the multifaceted nature of language education. While traditional methods excel in vocabulary and grammar instruction, the critical thinking-based approach shines in developing deeper reading comprehension, enhancing language proficiency, fostering transferable skills, and promoting student engagement. The choice between these approaches should be guided by the specific goals and priorities of language educators and institutions. It is crucial to recognize that these approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be integrated to create a comprehensive language education program that addresses various aspects of

language learning. Ultimately, the adoption of a critical thinking-based approach in university-level EFL reading instruction offers a promising path forward in preparing students for the challenges of a globalized and information-driven world.

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