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PROMOTING HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS THROUGH INTERACTIVE TEACHING IN MOTHER TONGUE AND LITERATURE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The modernization of modern education requires the formation of learners who possess not only disciplinary knowledge but also critical thinking, analytical abilities, and effective communication competencies. In this regard, mother tongue and literature education functions as a significant instrument for promoting intellectual development and reflective reasoning. This research examines the pedagogical value of interactive teaching methods in strengthening critical thinking skills among students studying mother tongue and literature. Using a mixed-method research design, the study was carried out with secondary school students and included classroom observations, achievement evaluations, and learner feedback. The results demonstrate that interactive methodologies considerably enhance students' capacity to analyze literary texts, develop arguments, assess different viewpoints, and articulate independent opinions. The study concludes that the incorporation of student-centered interactive approaches into mother tongue and literature instruction plays a substantial role in the development of higher-order thinking skills and supports the acquisition of competencies essential for the twenty-first century.

Key words: mother tongue education, literature instruction, critical thinking, interactive approaches, learner-centered education, educational methodology.

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of educational systems in the twenty-first century has generated increased attention toward the development of critical thinking as a key educational outcome. Modern societies demand individuals who can critically evaluate information, address complex challenges, communicate efficiently, and adapt to continuously changing social and technological conditions. Therefore, educational institutions are increasingly expected to extend beyond the delivery of factual knowledge and emphasize the cultivation of intellectual competencies that allow learners to participate actively in knowledge creation and decision-making processes.

Mother tongue and literature education holds a unique place within the curriculum because it offers students opportunities to strengthen linguistic competence, interpretative skills, and reflective thinking. Through engagement with literary works, learners encounter a variety of perspectives, cultural values, and human experiences that stimulate deeper analysis and personal interpretation. Nevertheless, in many educational settings, teaching practices continue to rely predominantly on traditional teacher-centered methods that restrict learner involvement and reduce opportunities for independent inquiry.

Recent pedagogical studies have emphasized the effectiveness of interactive teaching methods in encouraging active learning and intellectual participation. Interactive approaches motivate students to engage in discussions, collaborate with classmates, analyze information critically, and construct knowledge through meaningful social interaction. Such methods are particularly

applicable in mother tongue and literature classes, where interpretation, discussion, and personal response represent essential components of learning.

The present research aims to investigate the contribution of interactive teaching methods to the enhancement of critical thinking skills in mother tongue and literature education. By exploring both theoretical and practical aspects of interactive pedagogy, the study seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving instructional practices and strengthening student learning outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical thinking has long been recognized as one of the fundamental objectives of education. According to John Dewey (1933), meaningful learning occurs when learners engage in reflective inquiry and actively participate in the process of constructing knowledge rather than merely memorizing information. Similarly, critical thinking involves a range of cognitive processes such as analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and inference, enabling individuals to make reasoned judgments and solve problems effectively (Ennis, 2011).

The theoretical foundations of interactive learning are largely rooted in constructivist perspectives. Jean Piaget (1972) emphasized that cognitive development occurs through active interaction with the environment, while Lev Vygotsky (1978) highlighted the importance of social interaction and collaborative learning in intellectual growth. Their theories suggest that students develop higher-order thinking skills more effectively when they engage in meaningful dialogue and cooperative learning activities.

Modern educational research continues to stress the importance of learner-centered approaches in developing critical thinking competencies. According to Richard Paul and Linda Elder (2014), critical thinking is enhanced when students are encouraged to question assumptions, evaluate evidence, and reflect on their own reasoning processes. Interactive teaching methods provide opportunities for learners to practice these skills through discussion, debate, and collaborative problem-solving activities.

Recent studies have also demonstrated the growing significance of critical thinking in the digital era. Baxtiyorovna (2026) argues that modern learners must possess critical thinking competencies to effectively evaluate information and make informed decisions in technology-rich environments. This perspective reinforces the need for educational practices that promote analytical and reflective thinking.

Within language and literature education, interactive methodologies have gained considerable attention due to their ability to increase learner engagement and improve comprehension. Rashidova and Komilova (2024) emphasize that active participation and communication play an essential role in language learning, enabling students to develop both linguistic competence and interpretative skills. Such findings support the integration of interactive activities into mother tongue and literature instruction.

Furthermore, the historical development of pedagogical training demonstrates a continuous shift toward innovative and student-centered educational approaches. Abdramanov et al. (2025) note that contemporary pedagogical practices increasingly prioritize active learning, collaboration, and competency-based instruction, which contribute to the development of critical and independent thinking among learners.

Although numerous studies have highlighted the benefits of interactive learning, effective implementation remains dependent on factors such as teacher preparedness, curriculum design, and assessment strategies. Therefore, further empirical research is necessary to explore how interactive

teaching methods can most effectively enhance critical thinking skills within mother tongue and literature education.

METHODS

This study adopted a mixed-method research design that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of interactive teaching methods on students' critical thinking skills. The research was conducted in four secondary schools and involved a total of 120 students enrolled in grades eight and nine. Participants were assigned to an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of sixty students.

Data collection took place over a twelve-week period. Students in the experimental group participated in lessons that integrated interactive teaching methods, including classroom discussions, brainstorming sessions, collaborative learning activities, role-playing tasks, and structured debates. These instructional strategies were intended to foster active participation, analytical reasoning, and reflective thinking. Meanwhile, students in the control group continued to receive instruction through conventional teacher-centered approaches.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, critical thinking assessments were administered before and after the experimental period. Additional data were gathered through classroom observations, student questionnaires, and interviews with participating teachers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and comparative statistical techniques, whereas qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis to identify recurring trends and perceptions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis of quantitative data revealed a significant improvement in the critical thinking performance of students who participated in interactive learning activities. The experimental group demonstrated notable progress in analytical reasoning, literary text interpretation, and argumentation skills compared with the control group. Post-intervention assessment results showed that students exposed to interactive methodologies achieved substantially higher scores than those who experienced traditional instructional methods.

Classroom observations provided additional evidence regarding the effectiveness of interactive teaching approaches. Students in the experimental group exhibited higher levels of engagement, participated actively in discussions, and showed a greater willingness to express and defend their viewpoints. Their responses to literary texts reflected deeper analytical thinking and a stronger ability to support interpretations with relevant evidence.

Questionnaire findings indicated positive student perceptions of interactive learning experiences. Most participants reported that collaborative activities and classroom discussions improved their understanding of literary content and enhanced their motivation to learn. Students also noted that interactive tasks helped them consider alternative perspectives and increased their confidence in communicating ideas.

Teacher interviews further supported these findings by highlighting noticeable improvements in student participation, communication abilities, and intellectual independence. Educators observed that interactive approaches created a more dynamic learning atmosphere and encouraged learners to engage more actively with both language and literature content.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study validate the important role of interactive teaching methods in fostering critical thinking within mother tongue and literature education. The improvements observed in student performance indicate that active involvement in learning activities supports the development of higher-order cognitive skills. By engaging in discussions, debates, and

collaborative analytical tasks, students gain opportunities to evaluate information critically, justify their viewpoints, and refine their understanding through interaction with peers.

These findings are consistent with constructivist theories that emphasize the significance of social interaction in cognitive development. Interactive learning environments encourage students to become active contributors to the educational process rather than passive recipients of information. Consequently, learners develop greater autonomy, intellectual curiosity, and confidence in their capacity to solve problems and construct meaning.

The study also emphasizes the particular relevance of literature education in promoting critical thinking. Literary texts often present complex themes and multiple interpretations that require students to analyze evidence, recognize ambiguity, and consider diverse perspectives. Interactive pedagogical strategies enable learners to explore these dimensions more effectively by providing opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and reflection.

Moreover, the research highlights the changing role of teachers in contemporary education. Instead of functioning solely as providers of knowledge, educators increasingly serve as facilitators who guide discussions, support inquiry, and establish conditions that encourage intellectual growth. This shift corresponds with current educational priorities that stress learner-centered instruction and competency-based learning.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that interactive teaching methods represent an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing critical thinking skills in mother tongue and literature education. Students who participated in interactive learning activities displayed stronger analytical abilities, improved interpretative competencies, and greater confidence in expressing independent judgments. The findings indicate that the systematic integration of discussion-based learning, collaborative activities, and problem-oriented tasks can significantly improve educational outcomes.

Considering the demands of contemporary education, it is essential for teachers to implement methodologies that encourage active learning and intellectual engagement. Interactive approaches not only enhance academic performance but also contribute to the development of competencies required for lifelong learning and effective participation in modern society. Therefore, the integration of interactive teaching methods into mother tongue and literature instruction should be regarded as a priority by educators, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers seeking to improve the quality and effectiveness of language education.

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