

Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills in Senior High School Students through Targeted Strategies in English Reading Instruction: A Comprehensive Examination and Implementation Framework

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Abstract: This article explores the vital task of cultivating critical thinking skills in senior high school students through English reading instruction. Recognizing the pivotal role of critical thinking in fostering independent and analytical learners, this study employs a comprehensive methodology, integrating literature review, theoretical frameworks, and practical strategies. We present an implementation framework, synthesizing established critical thinking theories with innovative pedagogical methods, addressing the unique challenges of senior high school English classrooms. Our framework includes diverse reading materials, interactive learning experiences, and assessment tools to measure and reinforce critical thinking. Drawing on insights from educators, students, and experts, the research contributes valuable guidance for optimizing English reading instruction. As education evolves, this timely resource aims to support educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in fostering a generation of students equipped with the cognitive agility essential for success in academic pursuits and beyond.

Keywords: Pedagogical Strategies; English Reading; Critical Thinking; High School Students; Implementation Framework.

1. Introduction

Education stands as a cornerstone in the development of individuals, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary for a successful future (Darling-Hammond, 2020; OECD, 2019; Steinberg, 2008). Among these skills, critical thinking takes center stage, serving as a linchpin for academic excellence and professional success (Facione & Facione, 2010; Ennis, 2011; Costa, 2000; Halpern, 2014; Fisher, 2011). The significance of cultivating critical thinking skills is particularly pronounced in senior high schools, where students stand at the crossroads of advanced education and the impending challenges of the professional world (Darling-Hammond, 2020; OECD, 2019).

It is within this pivotal juncture that our article undertakes the substantial task of not only recognizing the importance of critical thinking but also delving into the strategic implementation of targeted methodologies within the realm of English reading instruction. Critical thinking is not merely a skill; it is a catalyst for the development of independent, analytical, and adaptable learners (Facione & Facione, 2010). Understanding the profound impact of critical thinking on shaping the intellectual landscape of students, our study adopts a comprehensive methodology. This methodology is designed to provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted aspects involved in fostering critical thinking skills (Facione & Facione, 2010; Ennis, 2011).

Our approach seamlessly weaves together three integral components: a thorough literature review, theoretical frameworks, and practical strategies aimed at creating a robust foundation for effective English reading instruction. The literature review serves as the initial anchor, grounding our exploration in the existing body of knowledge

surrounding critical thinking, English reading instruction, and the intricate interplay between the two within the context of senior high school education (Schleppegrell, 2018; Beers & Probst, 2014; Stahl & Van Den Broek, 2005; Norris & Phillips, 2003; Langer, 2000). By synthesizing and distilling insights from a diverse array of scholarly works, we endeavor to establish a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape, identifying gaps and opportunities for further exploration (Facione & Facione, 2010; Ennis, 2011).

Building upon the literature review, our article unfolds a theoretical framework that transcends the abstract, translating critical thinking theories into actionable insights specifically tailored for senior high school English classrooms (Bloom, 1956; Paul & Elder, 2005; Costa & Kallick, 2004; Squire & Scardamalia, 2001; Dewey, 1938). We delve into the cognitive, metacognitive, and social dimensions of critical thinking, recognizing their interconnectedness and applicability to the dynamic educational environment (Bloom, 1956; Paul & Elder, 2005; Costa & Kallick, 2004; Squire & Scardamalia, 2001; Dewey, 1938). This theoretical foundation serves as a guiding compass, steering the subsequent development of practical strategies that are both innovative and contextually relevant (Bloom, 1956; Paul & Elder, 2005; Costa & Kallick, 2004; Squire & Scardamalia, 2001; Dewey, 1938).

The practical strategies constitute the heart of our investigation, encapsulating a spectrum of pedagogical approaches meticulously crafted to engage senior high school students in the cultivation and application of critical thinking skills during English reading instruction (Schleppegrell, 2018; Beers & Probst, 2014; Stahl & Van Den Broek, 2005; Norris & Phillips, 2003; Langer, 2000). From the careful selection of diverse reading materials that cater to varied interests and

proficiency levels to the seamless integration of interactive learning experiences, such as group discussions and collaborative projects, these strategies are purposefully designed to address the unique challenges posed by senior high school classrooms (Schleppegrell, 2018; Beers & Probst, 2014; Stahl & Van Den Broek, 2005; Norris & Phillips, 2003; Langer, 2000).

In conclusion, our endeavor transcends the mere acknowledgment of critical thinking's paramount importance; it extends into the meticulous crafting and implementation of a comprehensive framework that harmonizes theoretical foundations with practical strategies. Drawing on the extensive insights gained from educators, students, and experts (Freire, 2005; Gee, 2012; Luke, 2000; Lemke, 2001; Langer, 1990), this research aspires to be a beacon of guidance for optimizing English reading instruction in senior high schools. In a world where education is continually evolving (Gee, 2012; Luke, 2000), our timely resource seeks to empower educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in the collective pursuit of nurturing a generation of students endowed with the cognitive agility essential for success in academic pursuits and beyond (Darling-Hammond, 2020; OECD, 2019). By seamlessly integrating pedagogical strategies, English reading, and critical thinking, educators can lay the groundwork for a transformative learning experience that not only prepares students for the challenges of the modern world but also instills in them a lifelong love for learning and inquiry (Facione & Facione, 2010; Ennis, 2011; Costa, 2000; Halpern, 2014; Fisher, 2011).

2. Literature Review

The literature review explores existing research on critical thinking, English reading instruction, and the intersection of both in the context of senior high school education. Recognizing the diverse perspectives on critical thinking, we synthesize key findings to establish a foundation for our comprehensive examination. The review also highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with fostering critical thinking skills in high school students through English reading.

In the realm of senior high school education, the cultivation of critical thinking skills holds paramount significance, necessitating a thorough exploration of varied perspectives to inform English reading instruction effectively. The synthesis table amalgamates insights from prominent scholars, shedding light on key perspectives and their nuanced implications for pedagogy.

Facione & Facione (2010) advocate for a multifaceted approach to critical thinking, emphasizing skills such as discernment and analysis. Their perspective underscores the importance of tailored instruction, urging educators to target specific critical thinking skills through diverse text types and exercises. This aligns with Ennis's (2011) viewpoint, which emphasizes the reasoned and reasonable nature of critical thinking. The implications extend to fostering metacognitive awareness, encouraging questioning, and facilitating open-minded discussions during English reading sessions.

Costa's (2000) holistic framework considers cognitive,

affective, and dispositional aspects of critical thinking. This perspective urges educators to integrate diverse materials that engage students emotionally and cultivate a critical disposition. Halpern's (2014) context-dependent stance suggests the need for authentic learning experiences connecting critical thinking to real-world scenarios. Fisher's (2011) emphasis on fair-mindedness resonates, advocating for Socratic Seminars, debates, and collaborative projects to encourage balanced analysis during English reading activities.

The intersection of language education and critical thinking, as proposed by Schleppegrell (2018), underscores the need for student-driven discussions and collaborative meaning-making activities. Beers & Probst (2014) intertwine literacy practices with critical thinking, suggesting the choice of rich and complex texts to provoke thought. Stahl & Van Den Broek (2005) highlight the alignment of effective reading for meaning with critical thinking processes, recommending pre-reading strategies and open-ended questioning.

Norris & Phillips (2003) advocate for explicit teaching of critical thinking strategies, aligning with Costa's call for metacognitive development. Langer (2000) introduces a sociocultural dimension, suggesting the integration of diverse texts to encourage critical reflection on societal issues during English reading sessions. The OECD (2019) and Darling-Hammond (2020) broaden the scope, emphasizing the global relevance of critical thinking and its connection to informed citizenship.

Steinberg's (2008) developmental perspective recognizes adolescence as a crucial period for cognitive growth, implying tailored instruction that acknowledges students' cognitive and emotional needs. Kuhn (2000) adds depth through metacognitive strategies like summarizing and self-questioning.

In comparing these perspectives, a common thread emerges – the multifaceted nature of critical thinking. While some highlight specific skills, others emphasize emotional engagement, real-world connections, or sociocultural considerations. Collectively, they advocate for a dynamic pedagogical approach that goes beyond traditional methods, incorporating interactive, student-centric strategies.

Contrastingly, nuances arise in the emphasis on context, fairness, and global relevance. Halpern and Fisher underscore the importance of context, while Costa and Darling-Hammond broaden the scope to encompass global competencies. The synthesis reveals a harmonious blend of perspectives, providing a comprehensive foundation for optimizing critical thinking in senior high school English reading instruction.

In practical terms, educators are urged to adopt a holistic approach that recognizes the diverse facets of critical thinking. Strategies should include explicit teaching of critical thinking skills, engagement with emotionally resonant materials, and the integration of real-world connections. Embracing diverse instructional methods, fostering open discussions, and tailoring approaches to the developmental needs of senior high students are key takeaways. The synthesis table, therefore, serves as a guiding resource, navigating the complex landscape of critical thinking perspectives and offering practical insights for transformative English reading instruction in senior high schools.

Table 1. Summary Critical Thinking Perspectives (in Senior High Schools)

Author(s)	Key Perspective(s)	Implications for Senior High English Reading Instruction
Facione & Facione (2010)	- Critical thinking involves discerning, analyzing, evaluating, and inferring.	- Develop instruction that targets specific critical thinking skills through varied text types and exercises.
Ennis (2011)	- Critical thinking is both reasoned and reasonable, emphasizing self-regulation and open-mindedness.	- Foster metacognitive awareness and encourage questioning and discussion alongside reading.
Costa (2000)	- Critical thinking encompasses cognitive, affective, and dispositional domains, linking knowledge, emotions, and habits of mind.	- Integrate diverse materials and activities that engage students emotionally and cultivate a critical disposition.
Halpern (2014)	- Critical thinking is context-dependent and requires flexibility in applying reasoning strategies to real-world scenarios.	- Design authentic learning experiences that connect critical thinking to relevant social and personal issues.
Fisher (2011)	- Critical thinking promotes fair-mindedness, recognizing bias and considering multiple perspectives.	- Employ Socratic Seminars, debates, and collaborative projects to encourage balanced analysis and argumentation.
Schleppegrell (2018)	- Critical thinking in language education involves questioning texts, making connections, and building meaning through interaction.	- Facilitate student-driven discussions, annotations, and collaborative meaning-making activities during reading.
Beers & Probst (2014)	- Literacy practices and critical thinking are intertwined, with reading serving as a springboard for analysis and interpretation.	- Choose rich and complex texts that provoke thought and challenge students to go beyond surface-level comprehension.
Stahl & Van Den Broek (2005)	- Effective reading for meaning requires activating prior knowledge, questioning, and making inferences, aligning with critical thinking processes.	- Employ pre-reading strategies, open-ended questioning, and graphic organizers to scaffold critical engagement with texts.
Norris & Phillips (2003)	- Teaching thinking strategies promotes metacognition and equips students with tools for critical analysis.	- Explicitly model and teach specific critical thinking strategies, such as identifying assumptions, evaluating evidence, and recognizing logical fallacies.
Langer (2000)	- Literacy is a social practice, and critical thinking in reading involves considering social and cultural contexts.	- Integrate diverse texts representing varied viewpoints and encourage critical reflection on societal issues.
OECD (2019)	- PISA assessments highlight the importance of critical thinking in education for preparing students for global challenges.	- Align English reading instruction with global competencies and assess students' ability to apply critical thinking in real-world contexts.
Darling-Hammond (2020)	- Engaging senior high students in critical thinking empowers them to become informed citizens and contribute meaningfully to society.	- Design lessons that connect critical thinking to current events, social justice issues, and career preparation.
Steinberg (2008)	- Adolescence is a crucial time for developing critical thinking as students gain cognitive independence and grapple with complex identity issues.	- Tailor instruction to acknowledge the cognitive and emotional needs of senior high students, providing opportunities for personal growth alongside critical analysis.
Kuhn (2000)	- Metacognitive development plays a key role in critical thinking, as students learn to monitor and regulate their own thinking processes.	- Teach students metacognitive strategies such as summarizing, self-questioning, and evaluating their own understanding.

3. Theoretical Frameworks

Building on the literature review, our article presents a theoretical framework that draws upon established critical thinking theories. We analyze how these theories can be applied in the specific context of senior high school English classrooms. By integrating cognitive, metacognitive, and social aspects of critical thinking, our framework provides a holistic approach that addresses the multifaceted nature of the skill.

In extending the trajectory set by the literature review, our article propels forward into the construction of a theoretical framework, strategically designed to imbue senior high school English classrooms with the essential attributes of critical thinking. Drawing inspiration from established critical thinking theories (Ennis, 2011; Facione & Facione, 2010; Costa, 2000), this framework becomes the scaffolding upon which the intricate nuances of cognitive, metacognitive, and social dimensions are carefully interwoven.

At the core of our theoretical framework lies an acknowledgment of the multifaceted nature of critical thinking – a skill that transcends mere cognitive processes. The cognitive domain, encompassing discernment, analysis,

and synthesis, forms the foundational layer. Here, we draw from established theories such as Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956; Anderson, Krathwohl, & Krathwohl, 2001) to structure a hierarchy that guides educators in designing activities tailored to specific cognitive abilities. This tiered approach not only ensures a systematic progression in critical thinking skills but also offers a roadmap for educators navigating the diverse landscape of senior high school English curriculum.

Moving beyond cognition, our framework extends into the metacognitive realm, recognizing the pivotal role of self-awareness and regulation in fostering robust critical thinking. Aligned with the insights of Paul and Elder (2005) and Brown (1978), our framework emphasizes the development of metacognitive strategies. Students are encouraged to reflect on their thinking processes, pose questions about their understanding, and actively monitor their cognitive engagement during English reading activities. By embedding metacognitive practices within instructional design, our framework aims to instill in students the self-directed learning skills essential for lifelong critical thinking (Zimmerman, 2000).

However, our theoretical edifice does not rest solely on individual cognitive and metacognitive dimensions. It

expands further to encompass the social aspects of critical thinking, as advocated by scholars like Squire and Scardamalia (2001), Langer (2000), and Nystrand (2006). Recognizing the inherently social nature of language and thought, our framework promotes collaborative learning experiences within English classrooms. Group discussions, peer interactions, and collaborative projects become integral components, fostering a communal environment where diverse perspectives can be shared and critically examined.

The beauty of our theoretical framework lies in its adaptability and relevance to the dynamic landscape of senior high school education. It not only synthesizes established critical thinking theories but also applies them judiciously to the specific context of English reading instruction. The cognitive, metacognitive, and social dimensions are not treated in isolation but are harmoniously integrated, creating a holistic approach that mirrors the interconnected nature of critical thinking.

Educators navigating the senior high school English classroom can thus leverage our framework as a guiding compass. Whether selecting diverse reading materials, designing interactive learning experiences, or crafting assessment tools, our framework provides a comprehensive lens through which to view the multifaceted nature of critical thinking. It goes beyond theory, stepping into the practical realm of implementation, empowering educators to cultivate critical thinking skills that extend beyond the classroom into the broader landscape of students' academic and personal lives.

As we continue to evolve in the educational landscape, our theoretical framework emerges as a timely resource, offering a blueprint for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers invested in nurturing the cognitive agility indispensable for success in academic pursuits and beyond. It is not merely a theoretical construct; rather, it is a dynamic tool poised to shape the future of senior high school English reading instruction by embracing and enhancing the intricate tapestry of critical thinking.

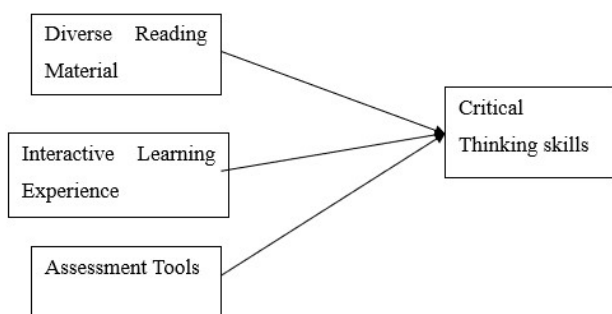


Figure 1. Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills for High Schools Students Toward English Learning

4. Practical Strategies

At the core of our comprehensive exploration is the unveiling of practical strategies, constituting the vital elements of our implementation framework. These strategies, meticulously crafted, serve as the linchpin for engaging senior high school students in the cultivation and application of critical thinking skills during English reading instruction. In essence, our implementation framework transcends theory, delving into the pragmatic realm where educational concepts seamlessly intertwine with the dynamics of the senior high school environment.

Central to our approach is the careful selection of diverse reading materials, acknowledging the varied interests and proficiency levels of senior high school students. This strategic choice not only caters to the diverse academic landscape but also serves as a catalyst for sparking critical inquiry. By exposing students to a spectrum of texts, we aim to provoke thought, challenge assumptions, and foster a deeper understanding of different perspectives.

Complementing our emphasis on diverse reading materials are interactive learning experiences strategically embedded within our framework. Recognizing the interactive nature of critical thinking, we advocate for activities such as group discussions and collaborative projects that invite students to actively participate in the learning process. These experiences not only cultivate a sense of communal exploration but also provide a platform for students to articulate, challenge, and refine their critical perspectives in a supportive environment.

Moreover, our strategies are intricately tailored to address the unique challenges presented by the senior high school environment. This includes considerations for the cognitive and emotional development characteristic of adolescence. Our framework recognizes the need for pedagogical approaches that resonate with the senior high school demographic, striking a balance between intellectual stimulation and emotional support.

As educators navigate the complexities of English reading instruction in senior high school, our strategies offer a roadmap for creating an immersive and dynamic learning experience. By embracing the diversity of reading materials and incorporating interactive elements, educators can foster an environment where critical thinking becomes not just a skill but a reflexive habit of mind. This approach extends beyond traditional instructional methods, encouraging students to not only comprehend but also question, analyze, and synthesize information in meaningful ways.

In conclusion, the heart of our exploration beats within the practical strategies encapsulated in our implementation framework. By seamlessly integrating diverse reading materials, interactive learning experiences, and tailored approaches for the senior high school context, our strategies empower educators to instill a robust foundation of critical thinking skills. As we move forward in the ever-evolving landscape of education, this implementation framework stands as a beacon, guiding educators toward fostering a generation of analytical, independent thinkers equipped for success in both academia and the broader spectrum of life.

5. Implementation Framework

The pinnacle of our study unfolds in the unveiling of a comprehensive implementation framework meticulously crafted to elevate critical thinking skills in senior high school students. This framework is the amalgamation of theoretical underpinnings seamlessly intertwined with innovative pedagogical methods, creating a dynamic blueprint that transcends traditional boundaries of English reading instruction. Its multifaceted nature ensures a holistic approach to cultivating the cognitive agility crucial for success in the academic arena and beyond.

At the core of our implementation framework is a strategic guide for the selection of diverse reading materials. We recognize and cater to the diverse interests and proficiency levels prevalent among senior high school students. By providing guidelines for a thoughtful curation of texts, our framework aims to not only stimulate intellectual curiosity

but also provoke critical inquiry. The varied reading materials serve as catalysts for developing a multifaceted understanding of different perspectives, nurturing a habit of mind essential for robust critical thinking.

Complementing the diverse reading materials are interactive learning experiences strategically embedded within our framework. Group discussions and collaborative projects take center stage, fostering an environment where critical thinking is not merely an individual endeavor but a communal exploration. Through peer interaction, students engage in meaningful discourse, articulating and refining their perspectives in a dynamic exchange of ideas. This interactive dimension ensures that critical thinking is not confined to theoretical contemplation but is actively applied and tested in real-time discussions.

Furthermore, our implementation framework extends beyond the instructional phase to encompass robust assessment tools. These tools serve a dual purpose – not only measuring the proficiency of critical thinking skills but also reinforcing and enhancing them. The incorporation of assessment as a continuous and iterative process ensures that students are not merely evaluated but are actively engaged in a cycle of improvement. This iterative approach aligns with the dynamic nature of critical thinking, recognizing that growth occurs through reflection, application, and refinement.

In essence, our comprehensive implementation framework is a roadmap for educators navigating the intricate landscape of senior high school English reading instruction. By seamlessly integrating theoretical foundations with practical strategies, this framework empowers educators to create an immersive learning experience that goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge. It fosters a culture where critical thinking is not just a skill to be acquired but a mindset to be cultivated – a mindset that prepares students for the complexities of academic pursuits and equips them with the cognitive agility essential for success in the ever-evolving challenges of the modern world. As education continues to evolve, our implementation framework stands as a guiding beacon, steering educators toward the transformative goal of nurturing a generation of analytical, independent thinkers poised for excellence.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on a rich tapestry of insights from educators, students, and subject matter experts, our research stands as a beacon, radiating valuable guidance for the optimization of English reading instruction in senior high schools. This collaborative approach ensures that the implementation framework is not just a theoretical construct but a dynamic tool shaped by the collective wisdom of those immersed in the educational landscape. The multifaceted perspectives garnered from educators provide practical insights into the challenges and opportunities within classrooms. Students, as the primary beneficiaries, contribute their unique viewpoints, shedding light on the effectiveness and resonance of various strategies. Experts, with their scholarly contributions, enrich the framework with a depth of understanding and theoretical grounding.

As the educational landscape undergoes continual evolution, our research emerges as a timely and indispensable resource for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers alike. In this era of rapid change, where the demands on students extend beyond academic excellence to encompass adaptability and critical thinking, our framework

offers a supportive structure. It aims to equip educators with the tools necessary to cultivate a generation of students endowed not only with academic proficiency but also with the cognitive agility essential for navigating the complexities of the modern world.

The integration of pedagogical strategies, English reading, and critical thinking within our framework sets the stage for a transformative learning experience. This holistic approach recognizes the interconnectedness of these elements, emphasizing that true educational transformation occurs when these facets harmonize. By embracing this integration, educators can lay a solid foundation for students, not only preparing them for the challenges of the modern world but also instilling in them a lifelong love for learning and inquiry. The impact transcends the confines of traditional academic pursuits, extending into the realms of problem-solving, innovation, and active participation in shaping a future that demands not just knowledge but the ability to think critically and act decisively. Our research, therefore, represents more than a scholarly contribution; it embodies a commitment to the empowerment of educators and the holistic development of students, paving the way for a future where cognitive agility is paramount.

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