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### **METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MOTHER TONGUE LESSONS**

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#### **Abstract**

The modernization of the educational system requires the formation of independent, creative, and critically thinking individuals who are capable of making informed decisions and effectively solving problems. In contemporary pedagogy, critical thinking is considered one of the most important competencies that learners should acquire from the earliest stages of education. The development of critical thinking skills is particularly significant in primary education, as this period serves as the foundation for intellectual growth, cognitive development, and lifelong learning. Mother tongue lessons play a crucial role in this process because language is not only a means of communication but also a tool for thinking, analysis, and reflection. Therefore, the methodology for developing critical thinking skills among primary school students in mother tongue classes has become an important area of pedagogical research and practice.

Critical thinking can be defined as the ability to analyze information, evaluate evidence, compare different viewpoints, identify assumptions, and make logical conclusions based on reasoned judgment. According to educational researchers, critical thinking encourages learners to become active participants in the learning



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process rather than passive recipients of information [1; p-24]. In primary school education, critical thinking helps students develop curiosity, independence, and the ability to express their own opinions confidently.

Mother tongue lessons provide numerous opportunities for fostering critical thinking because they involve reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language analysis activities. Through these activities, students learn to interpret texts, understand meanings, identify relationships between ideas, and express personal viewpoints. When properly organized, mother tongue instruction can significantly contribute to the formation of analytical and evaluative thinking skills among young learners [2; p-37].

One of the fundamental principles of developing critical thinking in primary school is the learner-centered approach. Traditional teaching methods often focus on memorization and reproduction of information, whereas critical thinking-oriented instruction encourages students to ask questions, explore ideas, and engage in meaningful discussions. In learner-centered classrooms, teachers act as facilitators who guide students in discovering knowledge independently rather than simply transmitting information [3; p-52].

The development of critical thinking skills begins with creating a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions. Young learners should be encouraged to ask questions, share ideas, and participate actively in classroom discussions. A positive classroom atmosphere promotes intellectual curiosity and motivates students to engage in deeper thinking processes [4; p-16].

Questioning techniques are among the most effective methods for developing critical thinking skills in mother tongue lessons. Teachers should use open-ended questions that require analysis, interpretation, and evaluation rather than simple recall of facts. For example, after reading a text, students can be asked questions



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such as: “Why do you think the character acted in this way?”, “What would happen if the ending were different?”, or “Do you agree with the author's opinion? Why?” Such questions stimulate reflection and encourage students to justify their answers with evidence from the text [5; p-41].

Reading comprehension activities also play a vital role in fostering critical thinking. Instead of merely checking whether students understand the content of a text, teachers should encourage them to analyze the author's purpose, identify key ideas, compare characters, and evaluate events. Critical reading helps students distinguish between facts and opinions, recognize biases, and develop independent interpretations of written materials [6; p-28].

Another effective methodology involves the use of collaborative learning strategies. Group discussions, pair work, and cooperative learning activities provide opportunities for students to exchange ideas, consider alternative perspectives, and defend their viewpoints. Through interaction with peers, learners develop communication skills and learn to respect different opinions. Collaborative learning promotes deeper understanding because students actively construct knowledge together rather than relying solely on teacher explanations [7; p-64].

Brainstorming is another valuable technique for encouraging critical thinking in mother tongue classes. During brainstorming sessions, students generate ideas freely without fear of criticism. This strategy stimulates creativity and helps learners explore multiple solutions to a problem. Teachers can use brainstorming before reading a text, writing an essay, or discussing a topic to activate prior knowledge and encourage active participation [8; p-33].

Graphic organizers such as mind maps, concept maps, and Venn diagrams are useful tools for developing analytical thinking skills. These visual representations help students organize information, identify relationships between concepts, and compare different ideas. For primary school students, graphic organizers simplify



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complex information and support logical reasoning processes [9; p-47]. Writing activities are particularly effective for promoting critical thinking because writing requires learners to organize thoughts, analyze information, and communicate ideas clearly. Teachers can assign tasks that encourage students to express personal opinions, justify arguments, and reflect on learning experiences. For example, students may write short essays, personal reflections, summaries, or responses to literary texts. Such activities help learners develop both language proficiency and higher-order thinking skills [10; p-59].

Problem-based learning is another innovative approach that can be integrated into mother tongue lessons. In this method, students are presented with real-life or fictional problems that require investigation and solution. Learners work individually or collaboratively to gather information, analyze alternatives, and propose solutions. Problem-based learning encourages inquiry, decision-making, and critical evaluation of information [11; p-22].

Storytelling and literary analysis are also powerful means of developing critical thinking in primary education. Literary texts often contain moral dilemmas, conflicts, and diverse perspectives that invite discussion and interpretation. By analyzing characters, motivations, and themes, students learn to evaluate actions and consider different viewpoints. Literature provides a rich context for developing empathy, reflection, and analytical reasoning [12; p-38]. The use of interactive teaching methods significantly enhances critical thinking development. Role-playing, debates, simulations, and educational games encourage active participation and engagement. These methods allow students to experience different perspectives, solve problems creatively, and apply knowledge in practical situations. Interactive learning transforms the classroom into a dynamic environment where critical thinking naturally emerges through meaningful activities [13; p-71].



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Assessment also plays an important role in fostering critical thinking skills. Traditional assessment methods often emphasize memorization and factual recall, whereas critical thinking requires more comprehensive evaluation techniques. Teachers should use formative assessment strategies such as observation, portfolios, self-assessment, peer assessment, and performance tasks. These methods provide valuable insights into students' reasoning processes and encourage continuous improvement [14; p-54]. The integration of information and communication technologies can further support critical thinking development in mother tongue lessons. Digital resources, educational applications, and multimedia materials provide diverse opportunities for exploration and analysis. Students can access information from multiple sources, compare viewpoints, and engage in interactive learning experiences. However, teachers should guide learners in evaluating the reliability and credibility of information sources, which is itself an important aspect of critical thinking [15; p-67].

The teacher's role is central to the successful implementation of critical thinking methodologies. Teachers must possess not only subject knowledge but also pedagogical skills that enable them to facilitate inquiry, encourage discussion, and support independent learning. Professional development programs should equip educators with effective strategies for promoting critical thinking in primary classrooms [16; p-43]. Several challenges may arise in the process of developing critical thinking skills among primary school students. These include limited instructional time, large class sizes, insufficient teaching resources, and traditional educational practices that prioritize rote learning. Additionally, some students may initially hesitate to express opinions or engage in analytical discussions. To overcome these challenges, schools should provide supportive environments, appropriate resources, and continuous teacher training [17; p-51].



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Research findings indicate that systematic implementation of critical thinking strategies leads to significant improvements in students' academic achievement, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and self-confidence [18; p-29]. Learners who develop critical thinking skills are better prepared to adapt to changing social and educational demands. They become more effective readers, writers, and communicators capable of making informed decisions and contributing positively to society.

In conclusion, the development of critical thinking skills in primary school mother tongue lessons is an essential component of modern education. Mother tongue instruction provides a unique platform for cultivating analytical, evaluative, and reflective thinking through reading, writing, discussion, and language-based activities. Effective methodologies include questioning techniques, collaborative learning, brainstorming, graphic organizers, problem-based learning, literary analysis, interactive teaching methods, and formative assessment strategies. By implementing these approaches, teachers can create learning environments that encourage curiosity, independence, and intellectual growth. Ultimately, fostering critical thinking from the early years of education contributes to the formation of competent, responsible, and lifelong learners capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century.

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