

# On Cultivation of Critical Reading Skills in English Teaching: Application of Taxonomy in College English Intensive Reading

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**Abstract:** The cultivation of critical reading ability is one of the aims of higher education reform, and it is also the trend of the times to enhance the cultivation of critical thinking in college English as a compulsory course. Based on Bloom's Taxonomy, this paper is designed to explore the importance of critical reading and its effects on students' cognitive ability and learning outcomes, then try to put forward suggestions about how to integrate critical reading and English teaching with the taxonomy, and how to assess students' understanding and analytic competence.

**Keywords:** Taxonomy; Critical reading; Integration; English intensive reading

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## 1. Introduction to taxonomy

### 1.1. Definition and function of taxonomy

In education, taxonomy refers to the systematic classification of learning objectives guiding curriculum design and instructional practices. In this direction, it provides an organized framework where educators can define, classify, and assess the learning outcomes of students effectively. Using a taxonomy allows educators to set clear goals for learning, which helps make instruction purposeful and intentionally directed toward desired educational outcomes. This systematic process allows educators to acquire insight into the cognitive process of their students and, thus, cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving skills among them.

Taxonomy has, over the years, influenced educational theory and practice in many ways. This has taken place in the planning of curricula, assessment, and teaching methodologies within many fields. Because educators can share a common language through Taxonomy, collaboration and consistency in educational goals become possible. Moreover, the application of Taxonomy has been instrumental in stimulating learners to become more engaged and to foster critical thinking among them. As educational environments keep evolving, the principles of Taxonomy remain relevant, guiding educators in their quest to craft effective and meaningful learning experiences <sup>[1]</sup>.

## **1.2. Development of taxonomy**

Perhaps the most well-recognized taxonomy was created by Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues in the 1950s and is known as Bloom's Taxonomy. Bloom's Taxonomy classifies cognitive skills into six hierarchical levels: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Each level reflects a different type of cognitive engagement, ranging from basic recall of information to higher-order thinking skills that require synthesis and evaluation. This taxonomy is commonly used in educational contexts to identify learning objectives, frame assessments, and design instructional strategies--in other words, it gives educators a roadmap in their pursuit of promoting deeper learning.

The historical development of Taxonomy finds its genesis in the mid-20th century when Bloom tried to work out a classification system that would help educators rethink and refine their teaching methods. Although originally developed for discussing cognitive skills, over time, it evolved by including affective and psychomotor domains, each with its own set of subcategories. It is now an important framework in describing learning processes. In 2001, Anderson and Krathwohl published a revised edition of Bloom's Taxonomy, where major changes, such as renaming and reordering of the levels, took place. This later version points out that creating and evaluating are higher-order thinking skills. This recent focus and shift reflect modern educational objectives to motivate creativity and critical analysis <sup>[2]</sup>.

## **2. Introduction to critical reading**

### **2.1. Definition of critical reading**

Critical reading may be defined as an active and reflective process whereby readers are engaged with a text through deep analysis of its content, structure, and embedded assumptions. While passive reading involves only the absorption of information without necessarily questioning it, critical reading scrutinizes the material for its credibility, relevance, and biases. This will involve framing pertinent questions, establishing a relationship with other texts or ideas, and making private judgments about arguments and evidence in texts. In this way, a critical reader develops a disposition when approaching texts that questions the conventional interpretation and seeks to arrive at an in-depth understanding of the author's intention and the background in which the work was created.

### **2.2. Significance of critical reading in college English teaching**

Critical reading plays a crucial role in college English teaching, enabling students to handle complex texts, communicate meaningfully, and write better. In the course of reading various literary genres, academic articles, and multimedia resources, the ability to read critically helps students assess the quality of an argument and the effectiveness of different rhetorical strategies. As teachers cultivate critical reading skills, they assist their students in developing a profound knowledge of the text and considering various interpretations to form their independent opinions. Further, the attributes of critical reading have a considerable bearing on academic life. Most courses require students to analyze and critique all manner of materials. Mastery of critical reading skills enhances comprehension as well as prepares them for higher coursework and research. In light of increasing misinformation and biased narratives, critical reading becomes a valuable skill in informed decision-making and good citizenship. Therefore, incorporating critical reading into English curricula is important for preparing students for challenges within and outside academia.

### **2.3. Impact of critical reading on students' cognitive abilities and learning outcomes**

The impact of critical reading on the cognitive skills of students is immense. Critical reading helps to enhance higher-order thinking, analytical skills, synthesis, and evaluation. As students dissect texts, they learn to identify key arguments, assess the validity of evidence, and differentiate between fact and opinion. These cognitive processes support better comprehension of the material, at the same time nurturing skills that are transferable across disciplines.

According to research, students who practice critical reading are likely to be better performers academically. They attain higher grades and exhibit better writing skills. The reason is that critical reading pushes a student to organize their

thoughts in a coherent manner and present their analyses in the best possible way. More than this, the skills learned through critical reading transfer out of the classroom: they prepare the individual for lifelong learning by inculcating a habit of inquiry and skepticism. They learn to approach information critically, which helps them to navigate more competently an increasingly complex, and often contradictory, information landscape <sup>[3]</sup>.

### **3. Integration of critical reading and intensive reading teaching with taxonomy**

In integrating critical reading effectively within the English teaching curriculum, educators can use the Taxonomy as a guiding framework. This orderly approach enhances not only students' engagement with the texts but also fosters higher-order thinking skills. By aligning learning activities across levels, teachers can create a comprehensive, effective curriculum that promotes critical reading.

#### **3.1. Designing course activities and tasks**

In designing course activities and tasks that include critical reading, instructors can begin by brainstorming objectives that match the different levels of Taxonomy. For example, at the "remembering" level, students would be asked to summarize important concepts from a reading. This foundational activity serves to ensure that students have grasped the essential information.

At the "understanding" level, instructors can design activities in which students engage in a discussion about the key ideas and themes of the text in small groups. This encourages peer interaction and allows for deeper comprehension to take place. Now, at the "applying" level, students may be asked to apply concepts learned from the reading to real-life situations or case studies to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

For the "analyzing" level, activities could involve students breaking down the arguments in a text by specifying the author's claims and the supporting evidence. Educators might ask students to examine the effectiveness of the arguments by considering some counterargument or another point of view.

At the "evaluating" level, students can be challenged to critically appraise the credibility of the sources and the reliability of the evidence presented. At the "creating" level, students could synthesize knowledge from multiple texts to develop their persuasive essays, integrating different perspectives to support their claims with well-founded arguments.

#### **3.2. Students' understanding and analytical skills assessment**

One important element of incorporating Taxonomy into a reading class is assessment. Instructors can create various assessment tools that reflect the many different cognitive levels within Taxonomy. For example, formative assessments like quizzes or reflective journals can be used to measure students' understanding of the texts read. Such assessments can center around basic recall and deeper understanding, and thus provide instructors with an opportunity to determine those areas where students might need further assistance.

In complicated tasks, rubrics can be used to assess student performance. For instance, the critical analysis essay could have a rubric that includes criteria appropriate for levels of Taxonomy: clarity of the thesis statement as part of understanding, depth of analysis as part of analyzing, and effectiveness of argument as part of evaluating. This kind of structured assessment makes expectations not only clearer for students but also provides constructive feedback that guides improvement.

Self-assessment and peer assessment can also be included in the ways of assessment. This helps students reflect on their own understanding and critique their peers' analyses, thus enhancing metacognitive skills and reinforcing the use of critical reading principles. This multi-faceted assessment approach allows educators to measure students' critical reading skills effectively and support their development <sup>[4]</sup>.

### **3.3. Classroom examples: specific activity demonstrating effective critical reading instruction**

A specific classroom activity that demonstrates how Taxonomy integrates with critical reading is a debate format. Students, for this activity, are placed in small groups and assigned different positions on a controversial topic related to the material they have read. Each of these groups needs to prepare arguments supporting their assigned position, needing them to analyze the text for relevant evidence and counterarguments.

In the “analyzing” level, students are to pick out major arguments given in the text and then state them in their component parts. They will assess strengths and weaknesses of those arguments by considering evidence used by the author and rhetorical strategies. This not only reinforces their analytical skills but also gets them ready for the debate format.

During the debate itself, students employ higher-level thinking as they work to defend their positions and respond to counterarguments from classmates. The activity targets the “evaluating” level since students need to analyze the validity of other views and challenge the arguments of others. Finally, after the debate, students can be asked to do a reflective writing assignment that would synthesize their learning and state their own viewpoint, thereby addressing the “creating” level of Taxonomy.

In essence, the combination of Taxonomy with critical reading instruction enables educators to provide structured, engaging, and meaningful learning. By designing activities that outline different cognitive levels, assessing students’ understanding, and putting into place certain strategies within the classroom, educators can effectively build critical reading skills in their students, thus better equipping them for academic success and informed citizenship.

## **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the integration of Bloom’s Taxonomy into college English teaching significantly enhances pedagogical practices and supports the development of critical reading skills. Understanding the definition and importance of critical reading will help educators create engaging curricula for students to meet the challenges of the modern world. In this way, students will not only be developing their analytical skills but also acquire ways of orienting themselves in the structural complexity of the modern information environment.

Moving forward, the exploration of new approaches to integrating Taxonomy in a variety of educational settings remains particularly relevant. As such, we can be assured that critical reading will remain one of the cornerstones of academic excellence. Ultimately, critical reading encouraged within the context of Taxonomy will empower students to read texts thoughtfully and to contribute meaningfully toward their chosen studies and to society in the end.

## **Disclosure statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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