



## FROM TEXT TO TALK: A CASE STUDY READING IN ENHANCING EFL STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING AND SPEAKING ABILITY ON THE ROLE OF ARTICLE

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### Abstract

In contemporary EFL instructional settings, the use of academic and opinion-based articles has gained growing attention as a means of bridging cognitive engagement and spoken communication. This qualitative case study investigates how structured article-reading activities influence students' critical thinking and speaking ability through direct classroom engagement. The study involved four undergraduate EFL students who participated in a series of reading to speak tasks over one academic term. Data were collected through classroom observations, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that article reading facilitates the development of analytical evaluative critical thinking, particularly in identifying arguments, evaluating evidence, and formulating reasoned opinions, which subsequently strengthens students' fluency, coherence, and confidence in speaking. This study highlights the pedagogical value of integrating article-based discussion as an authentic bridge between cognitive processing and spoken performance in EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** *Article reading, critical thinking, speaking ability*

### Introduction

In modern EFL teaching, speaking proficiency is regarded not solely as linguistic precision but as the ability to articulate ideas coherently, critically, and convincingly. To accomplish this, learners must participate in cognitive processes that extend beyond just memorizing, encompassing analysis, assessment, and reasoning. Consequently, critical thinking is essential for effective oral communication, especially in academic settings where students must analyze texts, formulate arguments, and substantiate their viewpoints. The utilization of article reading as a preparatory measure for speaking activities has garnered significant interest. Scholarly and opinion pieces provide students with genuine language, organized arguments, and varied viewpoints, fostering enhanced cognitive involvement. Nonetheless, numerous EFL courses continue to see reading and speaking as distinct skills, thereby constraining students' opportunities to convert textual comprehension into verbal discourse. This study investigates how article-reading activities facilitate the enhancement of critical thinking and speaking skills among EFL students through direct classroom engagement. This research used a qualitative case study methodology to investigate students' actual experiences transitioning from reading texts to verbal articulation of concepts.

A popular understanding of critical thinking in the context of language education is that it refers to the capacity to analyze information, assess arguments, and make judgments that are supported by reason.

In EFL learning, critical thinking is intricately linked to speaking performance, as students are required to structure ideas, evaluate the credibility of assertions, and address differing perspectives during oral discourse. This study concentrates on analytical evaluative critical thinking, which encompasses: (1) recognizing principal ideas and supporting arguments, (2) assessing the strength of evidence, and (3) expressing informed conclusions. This emphasis is especially relevant to speaking tasks that include discussion, argumentation, and explanation rather than basic descriptive responses.

Article reading provides learners with access to complex ideas and structured reasoning models. Unlike narrative texts, articles, especially academic and opinion-based texts present claims, evidence, and counterarguments that encourage readers to question, compare perspectives, and reflect critically. In EFL settings, articles also serve as linguistic input, offering discourse markers, argumentative structures, and academic vocabulary that can be transferred into spoken language.

Reading to speak activities emphasize the transformation of textual input into oral output. When students discuss, summarize, or respond to articles, they engage in higher order thinking processes while practicing spoken communication. Previous studies suggest that such integration enhances fluency, coherence, and confidence because learners speak with content-based support rather than relying solely on spontaneous language production.

Although the expanding research emphasizes the significance of integrating reading and speaking in EFL training, current studies have predominantly analyzed these skills as either parallel elements or as separately assessed results. Numerous studies concentrate on the impact of reading activities on comprehension or speaking tasks as discrete performance skills, with little emphasis on the cognitive processes that facilitate the shift from textual knowledge to verbal expression. Furthermore, although critical thinking is commonly recognized as an essential element of good EFL communication, it is generally regarded as a vague concept lacking precise definition of its practical application in speaking-focused classroom activities. Consequently, there is a deficiency of comprehensive qualitative research examining the manifestation of analytical-evaluative critical thinking as students convert article-based reading into verbal engagement. This study employs a qualitative case study methodology to investigate how structured article-reading activities promote the development of analytical-evaluative critical thinking and how this cognitive engagement enhances students' speaking proficiency in genuine classroom discussions.

This qualitative case study is directed by the following research questions: (1) How does article reading facilitate EFL students' analytical evaluative critical thinking? and (2) How does such critical engagement support students' speaking ability in classroom discussions? The purpose of these study questions is to investigate not only the cognitive processes that are engaged in reading articles but also the influence that these processes have on the speaking performance of students.

## Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how article reading influences EFL students' critical thinking and speaking ability in a real classroom context. A case study approach was chosen because it allows for detailed exploration of participants' cognitive and communicative processes over time.

The participants were four undergraduate students enrolled in an English Education program. They were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that the cases examined could provide rich, relevant, and information-intensive data aligned with the aims of the study. The selection was based on the following criteria:

*Active participation in classroom discussions.* This criterion was essential because the study focused on speaking ability as it naturally occurs in interactive classroom contexts. Students who actively participated in discussions were more likely to verbalize their thinking processes, respond to peers' arguments, and demonstrate how critical thinking was enacted through spoken interaction.

Selecting active participants allowed the researcher to closely observe how analytical–evaluative thinking emerged and developed during real-time discussions rather than in isolated or artificial speaking tasks.

*Adequate reading comprehension ability to engage with academic articles.* Participants were required to read and analyze academic and opinion-based articles, which contain complex ideas, arguments, and academic language. Adequate reading comprehension was therefore necessary to ensure that students could move beyond surface-level understanding and engage critically with the texts. This criterion helped ensure that any observed development in speaking ability was grounded in meaningful cognitive engagement with article content rather than difficulties in basic comprehension.

*Willingness to reflect on learning experiences through journals and interviews.* Reflection was a central component of data collection in this qualitative case study. Students who were willing to articulate their thoughts, challenges, and learning processes in reflective journals and interviews provided deeper insights into how article reading influenced their critical thinking and speaking development. This criterion supported the trustworthiness of the data by allowing triangulation between observed classroom behavior and students’ self-reported cognitive experiences.

The selection of four participants enabled intensive observation and in-depth analysis of individual learning trajectories. Rather than aiming for statistical generalization, this study prioritized analytical depth, allowing the researcher to explore how article-based reading activities facilitated the development of analytical evaluative critical thinking and speaking ability in specific EFL learners.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

To obtain rich and credible qualitative data, this study employed three complementary data collection techniques. Each instrument was deliberately selected to capture different dimensions of students’ critical thinking and speaking development and to allow data triangulation.

*Classroom observations.* Classroom observations focused on students’ speaking performance during article-based discussions and presentations. The observations examined how students articulated ideas, responded to peers’ arguments, justified opinions, and organized spoken discourse. Attention was also given to indicators of analytical–evaluative critical thinking, such as the use of evidence from articles, comparison of viewpoints, and clarification of reasoning. Observations enabled the researcher to document naturally occurring speaking behavior in an authentic instructional setting.

*Reflective journals.* Reflective journals were used to capture students’ internal cognitive processes that might not be fully observable during classroom interaction. In these journals, students documented their reading processes, emerging interpretations, evaluation of article content, and challenges encountered when expressing ideas orally. The journals provided longitudinal insights into how students’ analytical evaluative thinking evolved over time and how reading activities influenced their preparedness and confidence for speaking.

*Semi-structured interviews.* Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students’ perceptions of the role of article reading in shaping their thinking and speaking development. The interviews allowed participants to elaborate on their learning experiences, clarify observations and journal entries, and reflect on perceived changes in their ability to analyze texts and communicate ideas. This method offered in-depth explanatory data and supported the interpretation of findings by connecting observed behavior with students’ subjective experiences.

The use of multiple data sources strengthened the trustworthiness of the study by enabling triangulation across observed performance, written reflection, and verbal self-report.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Patterns related to critical thinking processes and speaking development were identified, coded, and interpreted to reveal relationships between reading activities and oral performance.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Results**

#### 1. Development of Analytical Evaluative Critical Thinking

All participants demonstrated improvement in analytical and evaluative thinking skills. Journal entries revealed that students became more aware of argument structures, learned to distinguish between main ideas and supporting details, and began questioning the credibility of information presented in articles. During discussions, students increasingly justified their opinions using evidence from the texts.

#### 2. Improvement in Speaking Ability

Article reading provided students with concrete content and language resources, which reduced hesitation and increased fluency. Observations showed clearer organization of ideas, more confident delivery, and improved responsiveness to peer questions. Students reported that speaking became easier because they “knew what to say” and felt more prepared.

#### 3. Reading to Speaking as a Cognitive Communicative Cycle

The integration of reading and speaking created a cycle in which comprehension supported critical analysis, which in turn enhanced spoken expression. Speaking activities reinforced understanding of the articles and strengthened students’ confidence in expressing complex ideas.

### **Discussion**

This study was directed by two research questions that examine the impact of article reading on the development of analytical evaluative critical thinking and its influence on students' speaking proficiency. The following elaboration elucidates the intellectual trajectory of the paper, fully detailing the facet of critical thinking under examination and its manifestation in students' speaking performance.

#### 1. Analytical Evaluative Critical Thinking as the Focus of the Study

This study specifically concentrates on analytical evaluative critical thinking, a characteristic of critical thinking that is most readily visible in EFL speaking activities, despite the construct's vast and varied nature. This study defines analytical evaluative critical thinking as students' ability to (1) identify main claims and supporting arguments in texts, (2) evaluate the relevance and credibility of evidence, and (3) formulate reasoned conclusions that can be articulated verbally. This emphasis is pedagogically justified, as classroom speaking tasks, like conversations and responses to readings, need that students assess information critically rather than simply recalling it. The results indicate that article reading enhanced students' engagement with texts beyond just surface comprehension by encouraging them to analyze concepts, compare viewpoints, and assess their alignment or opposition to the author's position. These procedures illustrate analytical evaluative thinking rather than creative or problem-solving critical thinking, which were not the primary aims of this study.

#### 2. Article Reading as a Scaffold for Critical Thinking Development

The results show that reading articles served as a cognitive framework for analytical–evaluative critical thinking in response to Research Question 1. The articles presented organized arguments that exemplified the development and substantiation of concepts. With repeated exposure, students grew increasingly attentive to argumentation structures, including assertions, reasons, and instances. Reflective journals indicated that students evolved from summarizing readings to critically evaluating them. This transition signifies that article reading promoted

heightened cognitive engagement, allowing students to advance from understanding the content to assessing the presentation of concepts and their foundational reasoning. This engagement aligns with modern views that critical thinking in EFL contexts is cultivated through sustained interaction with meaningful content rather than through disjointed instruction of thinking skills.

### 3. Critical Engagement and Its Impact on Speaking Ability

Regarding the second research question, the data indicate that students' speaking skill was positively influenced by their involvement with analytical and evaluative content provided in articles. Students who engaged in discussions with prior analysis exhibited enhanced organization of ideas, more logical arguments, and less hesitancy. The speaking performance enhanced not only in fluency but also in the logical arrangement of ideas and the application of justification. Significantly, discourse in this setting was regarded not as spontaneous language generation but as a deliberate communicative endeavor. Students articulated their viewpoints with intent, having established perspectives through textual analysis. This discovery underscores the relationship between cognition and verbal expression, indicating that enhanced speaking proficiency in EFL classrooms is intricately linked to the depth of learners' cognitive function with the material.

### 4. Reading to Speaking as an Integrated Cognitive Communicative Process

Through the combination of reading articles and giving presentations, a cognitive communicative cycle was established. This cycle consisted of reading helping to shape thinking, thinking helping to shape speaking, and speaking helping to reinforce understanding. Classroom observations indicated that students enhanced their concepts through verbal interaction, frequently modifying initial interpretations following peer discussions. The purpose of this cycle is to make the direction of the article clearer: rather than focusing on reading or speaking as separate skills, the research emphasizes the transition of textual comprehension into spoken articulation through analytical evaluative thinking. The results substantiate the assertion that EFL training ought to emphasize content-rich, discussion-based activities to enhance critical thinking and speaking skills.

Future research may encompass a wider range of participants across various EFL situations to investigate whether analogous patterns of analytical-evaluative critical thinking and speaking development manifest. Longitudinal studies are advisable to investigate the enduring effects of reading-to-speak practices throughout time. Moreover, additional research might analyze diverse text kinds to examine how differing textual attributes affect students' critical engagement and oral performance in EFL classrooms.

## Conclusion

This qualitative case study illustrates that reading articles significantly enhances EFL students' analytical evaluative critical thinking and speaking skills when conducted through planned classroom activities. Article based conversations foster cognitive depth and enhance oral communication skills by involving students in the identification of arguments, evaluation of evidence, and articulation of reasoned conclusions. The results indicate that EFL instructors ought to incorporate reading-to-speak activities that explicitly foster critical interaction with texts. These techniques not only equip pupils for academic speaking requirements but also cultivate confidence and coherence in verbal speech. Subsequent research may enhance this study by using bigger participant cohorts, varied educational settings, or longitudinal methodologies to investigate enduring effects on critical thinking and speaking proficiency.

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