

PROSPECTS FOR ACHIEVING THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENT THINKING IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO 7TH GRADERS

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Abstract: This article explores the potential for fostering independent thinking among 7th-grade learners within the framework of English language instruction, highlighting the pedagogical benefits of the case study method. The research underscores that independent thinking is a vital cognitive skill for contemporary learners, who must be able to analyze information critically, generate original ideas, and make informed decisions. The case studies developed for this study were rooted in real-life educational and communicative scenarios, prompting students to identify problems, discuss possible solutions, evaluate alternatives, and justify their conclusions. These activities not only activated analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills but also encouraged meaningful communication, confident expression of viewpoints, and effective collaboration among learners. The study indicated that the case study method significantly contributes to the development of learner autonomy and enhances motivation by linking classroom activities with real-world contexts. The article offers methodological recommendations for integrating case studies into English lessons for 7th graders and discusses the potential benefits of this approach in enhancing higher-order thinking skills.

Keywords: Independent thinking; case study; analytical thinking; critical thinking; creative thinking; 7th graders; English language teaching; problem-solving; learner autonomy.

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются перспективы развития самостоятельного мышления у учащихся 7-х классов в процессе обучения английскому языку, с особым вниманием к педагогическим возможностям метода Case study. Автор подчёркивает, что формирование самостоятельного мышления является важнейшим условием современной образовательной практики, поскольку учащиеся должны уметь анализировать информацию, критически её оценивать, выдвигать собственные идеи и принимать аргументированные решения. Кейсы, использованные в исследовании, были основаны на реальных жизненных и учебных ситуациях, требующих от школьников выявления проблемы, обсуждения вариантов её решения, сравнения альтернатив и обоснования выбранной позиции. Результаты показали, что данный метод эффективно активизирует аналитическое, критическое и творческое мышление, способствует развитию коммуникативных навыков, уверенности в выражении собственного мнения и повышенной мотивации. В статье приводятся практические рекомендации по использованию метода Case study на уроках английского языка в 7-х классах, а

также раскрываются перспективы дальнейшего применения подхода для формирования мыслительных навыков высокого уровня.

Ключевые слова: Самостоятельное мышление; метод case study; аналитическое мышление; критическое мышление; творческое мышление; учащиеся 7-х классов; обучение английскому языку; решение проблем; учебная автономия.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada 7-sinf o'quvchilariga ingliz tilini o'qitish jarayonida mustaqil fikrlashni rivojlantirish imkoniyatlari yoritilib, ayniqsa case study (vaziyatli tahlil) metodining didaktik ahamiyati chuqur tahlil qilingan. Mustaqil fikrlash bugungi ta'lim jarayonida o'quvchilarning axborotni tahlil qilish, tanqidiy baholash, yangicha yondashuvlar ishlab chiqish va asosli qarorlar qabul qilish qobiliyatlarini shakllantirishda muhim omil hisoblanadi. Tadqiqot davomida o'quvchilarga real hayotiy, kommunikativ va o'quv jarayoniga oid vaziyatlardan iborat case materiallar taqdim etildi. Ushbu topshiriqlar o'quvchilardan muammoni aniqlash, ehtimoliy echimlarni ishlab chiqish, alternativ variantlarni taqqoslash va o'z fikrini asoslashni talab qildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatdiki, case study metodi o'quvchilarning analitik, tanqidiy va ijodiy fikrlash ko'nikmalarini faollashtiradi, ularning muloqotga kirisha olishi va fikrini himoya qilishda ishonchini oshiradi. Maqolada 7-sinf ingliz tili darslarida case study metodini qo'llash bo'yicha uslubiy tavsiyalar va kelgusida qo'llash istiqbollari keltirilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: Mustaqil fikrlash; case study metodi; analitik fikrlash; tanqidiy fikrlash; ijodiy fikrlash; 7-sinf o'quvchilari; ingliz tili o'qitish; muammo yechish; o'quvchi avtonomiyasi.

INTRODUCTION

Developing independent thinking in English lessons is a key objective of modern education in Uzbekistan, as outlined in the State Education Standard for Foreign Language Teaching (2021) [1]. Achieving this competence involves more than just memorization; it requires learners to reason, evaluate, and reflect critically. The “*Prepare*” Student’s Book and Workbook, designed for 7th-grade learners, provides a communicative and learner-centered approach that supports this goal [2]. They integrate meaningful topics, authentic tasks, and collaborative learning, which can be enhanced further through the Case Study method.

We represent effective technologies to encourage independent thinking, building on the methods for 7th-grade learners.

Term I for 7th graders includes Unit 1: “*Sports and Games*,” Unit 2: “*This is My Day*,” and Unit 3: “*Great Sounds*.” These units introduce themes related to sports, daily routines, and music. These themes are ideal for cultivating linguistic competence and higher-order thinking skills. By providing real-life contexts, these approaches help students develop analytical, critical, and creative thinking alongside their language proficiency. This article provides an overview of Unit 1, titled “*Sports and Games*,” while incorporating a case study method to enhance the learning experience.

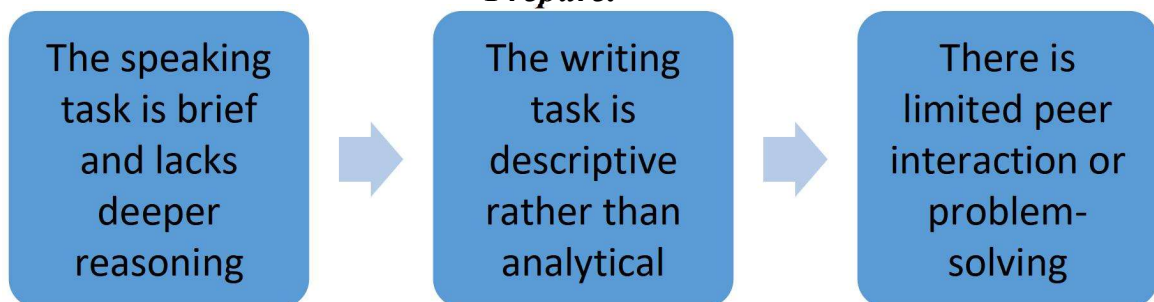
Unit 1, titled “*Sports and Games*” in the Students’ Book on pages 14-17 and Workbook on pages 8-11 of the *Prepare textbook* for 7th graders, introduces students to the theme of sports and physical activity. This unit covers vocabulary related to various sports, such as football, tennis, volleyball, and cycling. It also includes readings about famous athletes and traditional games. Additionally, the unit focuses on grammar related to the Present Simple tense, particularly with frequency adverbs such as always, usually, often, and never. The primary objective of this unit is to help students discuss their favorite sports, describe their habits, and talk about teamwork and competition. Furthermore, this unit provides valuable opportunities for developing independent thinking through Case Study methods.

METHODS

The first lesson “*Sport*” of Unit 1, “*Sports and Games*,” found in the Students’ Book on page 14 and the Workbook on page 8 of the *Prepare textbook*, aims to improve vocabulary by matching sports with pictures in Exercise 1 of the Students’ Book on page 14. In the Students’ Book, it also includes a speaking activity, specifically exercise 2 on page 14, where students discuss the sports they like and dislike. The second lesson, “*How often do you go snowboarding?*”, given the grammar exercise 1 on page 15 of the Students’ Book, focuses on using adverbs of frequency to describe how often students play sports. The writing exercise 4 on page 11 of the Workbook asks students to write a few sentences about their favorite sport. These exercises promote personal expression, encouraging students to talk about their interests while practicing all four language skills—reading, speaking, listening, and writing—using familiar and engaging topics relevant to teenagers’ lives. However, there are some disadvantages to these exercises: (see diagram 2.2 below)

Diagram 2.2

The Drawbacks of some exercises in Unit 1 of the students’ book of “*Prepare.*”



According to John Dewey, reflective thinking begins when learners face a problematic situation that requires justification and reasoning. Simply describing sports does not trigger reflection. Students must make decisions, compare options, or justify their choices [3]. Stephen Brookfield assumed that the collaborative nature of projects and case analyses demands active listening, as students interpret their peers’ ideas, identify key arguments, and respond critically, thereby developing higher-order comprehension skills [4].

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Lesson 3 “*Unusual Sports*” found in the Students’ Book on page 16 and the Workbook on page 10 of the Prepare textbook includes exercises for developing language skills:

- **Reading:** Exercise 2 of the Students’ Book on page 16, given the descriptions of unusual sports like Cycle Ball, Gilli-Danda, and Octopus.
- **Speaking:** In the speaking activity on page 16, “Talking Points, students compare traditional and modern sports.
- **Writing:** In the writing exercise 4 on page 11 in the workbook, students write about their favorite sport by using the present simple and adverbs of frequency. This helps students to reinforce the learned materials and use them in practice.

These exercises enhance cultural knowledge and curiosity, encourage comparison and evaluation, and combine reading comprehension with creative thinking. However, they have some drawbacks. They lack opportunities for inquiry and group collaboration, both of which are essential for fostering independent thinking. Additionally, these exercises do not promote reflection on broader social meanings.

Lev Vygotsky argued that higher thinking develops through social interaction and cultural mediation [5]. Comparing traditional and modern sports enables students to reflect on how culture shapes human behavior.

RESULT

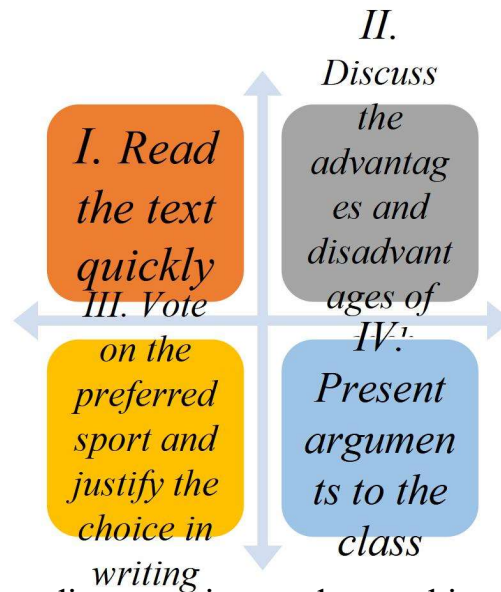
In the reading exercise from 1-3 in lesson 3, “*Unusual sports*” on page 16 of the Students’ Book, there is a text titled “*Try These Sports*”, which provides brief information about different types of sports like Cycle Ball, Gilli-Danda, and Octopus. Instead of solely reading and completing tasks for this exercise, we propose a Case Study Exercise to enhance the independent thinking of 7th-grade learners: (look at the procedure 2.3 below:)

Procedure 2.3

Case Title: “Choosing the Best Sport for Our School”

Scenario: The principal wants to open a new sports club. Students analyze options like Cycle Ball, Gilli-Danda, and Octopus. Decide which sport is best based on safety, cost, and teamwork.

Procedure of Case Study



By implementing this reading exercise, students achieve the desired outcomes:

- increased interest and motivation
- enhanced analytical reasoning
- evidence-based decision-making
- improved public speaking skills

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our analysis of the Prepare textbook for 7th-grade learners is an interactive resource that develops all four language skills and grammar. However, the book has certain limitations, particularly when promoting students' abilities to analyze real-world problems, generate creative solutions, and use language for meaningful communication. We believe that the technologies discussed in this paragraph can help address these shortcomings. By integrating the exercises proposed with those in the Prepare textbook, we can effectively enhance learners' independent thinking skills.

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