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FOSTERING CRITICAL INFORMATION ANALYSIS SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

In the contemporary educational landscape, the ability to critically evaluate and verify information has emerged as an indispensable competence. This need is acutely felt in contexts marred by conflict, where propaganda and disinformation pose significant threats to both individual discernment and collective well-being. The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war of aggression underscores the urgency of equipping learners with robust

analytical skills to navigate the deluge of often conflicting accounts, biased narratives, and manipulated data. In such a climate, the English language classroom, especially in technical universities, can serve as a pivotal venue for cultivating media literacy and critical thinking.

The global prevalence of English-language sources – from reputable news outlets to diverse online platforms – makes them a powerful tool for exposing students to authentic materials that reflect the world's multifaceted perspectives. When carefully selected and methodically integrated, these texts, videos, and articles can help learners hone their ability to discern credible content. They become familiar with the linguistic nuances of journalistic writing and learn how to parse subtle biases or rhetorical devices employed in contemporary media. In Ukraine, where the line between factual reporting and propaganda is often blurred by the realities of war, such training holds particular significance. By consciously drawing parallels between broader global events and the specific challenges faced by Ukrainian society, teachers can effectively illustrate how media literacy is neither abstract nor optional – it is vital for informed citizenship and professional competence.

At the heart of this investigation lies the pivotal role of the teacher. Whether guiding students through critical discussions on the trustworthiness of online platforms or demonstrating hands-on techniques for verifying digital content, educators stand as the first line of defence against manipulation and misinformation. This work explores practical pedagogical strategies for fostering critical information analysis skills in English language classrooms, with a special focus on technical students. Through an examination of classroom-based methods and the exploration of authentic materials, we highlight how structured instruction, grounded in a real-world context, can transform students into informed, discerning consumers – and producers – of information.

The core problem this article addresses is the urgent need to develop systematic approaches within English language education to teach students how to critically evaluate and verify sources of information. Although media literacy and source verification skills have long been recognized [4] as important in foreign language pedagogy, the heightened influence of propaganda and disinformation – exacerbated by the Russian-Ukrainian war of aggression – demands more focused, context-aware instructional strategies. When learners, especially those in technical disciplines, are consistently exposed to authentic English-language materials but are not equipped with the tools to critically analyse these materials, they become vulnerable to distorted narratives and potentially harmful misrepresentations of facts.

From a scientific standpoint, this problem aligns with a growing body of interdisciplinary research spanning linguistics, education, cognitive psychology, and media studies. Scholars in these fields emphasize that

teaching critical thinking and information assessment requires targeted interventions rather than incidental exposure. Specifically, there is a gap in the current literature concerning how best to implement such interventions in technical university settings, where language courses often prioritize domain-specific vocabulary and reading comprehension over critical media literacy. By addressing this gap, the study contributes to the scientific community's understanding of how to marry second language acquisition principles with the cultivation of discerning, socially responsible individuals.

Recent work by Hobbs in the *Journal of Media Literacy Education* underscores [2] the importance of empowering learners to scrutinize digital sources effectively. In a 2023 study by Nykyporets et al. in *Bulletin of Science and Education*, the authors highlight [3] how structured pedagogical interventions can foster critical thinking skills in technical university contexts. Similarly, Zrnc et al., writing in the *Information Processing & Management*, observed [6] that guided reflection on authentic materials significantly enhances students' ability to detect misinformation. Yet, as Cuppuleri notes [1] in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*, research focusing specifically on the integration of English language instruction with source verification in war-affected regions remains limited. This work aims to address this gap by proposing pedagogical frameworks that build on these foundational studies, while also reflecting the unique socio-political realities faced by modern Ukraine.

The purpose of this article is to propose and substantiate a systematic approach to developing critical information analysis skills among technical students in English language instruction by emphasizing the teacher's role in harnessing authentic materials to foster media literacy, particularly in the context of modern Ukraine's challenges with propaganda and disinformation.

In carrying out this study, we focused on practical classroom interventions [5] designed to hone critical information analysis skills among technical students in an English language learning context. The first example involved a comparative news analysis activity in which students read two English-language articles reporting on the same event: one published by a major Western outlet (e.g., *The New York Times*) and the other by a state-affiliated Russian source. Students were instructed to identify linguistic indicators of bias – such as emotive language, selective quotation, and context omission – and then discuss how these indicators might influence perception. The teacher's role here was crucial: through guided questioning, the instructor helped students pinpoint rhetorical devices or incomplete data and steered them toward more objective methods of evaluating the factual reliability of each text.

A second example centred on verifying online claims about the war in Ukraine using fact-checking platforms such as *StopFake.org*, which is dedicated to debunking disinformation concerning the Russian-Ukrainian

war of aggression. Over a series of lessons, learners collected specific claims (e.g., alleged military actions or humanitarian efforts) from social media posts written in English. Working collaboratively, they traced each claim back to primary sources, assessed its credibility, and practiced distinguishing professional reporting from propaganda. Throughout the process, the teacher modelled how to examine the provenance of online statements and guided students in evaluating the consistency of visual and textual evidence. These activities reinforced a habit of scepticism and verification, arming students with the confidence to engage critically with news circulating in and beyond their national information space.

In light of the classroom interventions and observed outcomes, it can be concluded that authentic English-language materials, when coupled with structured pedagogical guidance, significantly enhance technical students' ability to critically evaluate and verify information. By examining diverse news sources and applying fact-checking techniques to both general and specialized content, learners were able to identify subtle indicators of bias, question unsubstantiated claims, and employ evidence-based judgment. Notably, the teacher's role proved indispensable, acting as a facilitator who provides clarity, models investigative methods, and helps students draw connections between linguistic cues and the reliability of information. These findings indicate that combining language instruction with explicit critical thinking tasks not only refines learners' communication skills but also fosters the broader media literacy needed to navigate the complex realities of modern Ukraine, particularly in the face of propaganda and disinformation.

Building upon these insights, future research could explore more advanced training modules that merge language instruction with emerging digital tools, such as AI-driven fact-checking platforms or real-time data verification software. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable for measuring the retention of critical analysis skills over extended periods and determining whether students apply these competencies in their professional fields and everyday lives. Additionally, comparative investigations could examine how these strategies fare in different cultural or disciplinary contexts, shedding light on the potential for universal adaptation. Ultimately, by continuing to refine methodologies and sharing practical best practices, educators and researchers alike can contribute to a more informed, discerning generation of English-language users – one capable of confidently confronting the persistent challenges of misinformation and biased reporting.

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