

# Methodology Of Using Games That Foster Critical Thinking In Developing English Communication Among Preschool Children Aged 5–7

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**Abstract:** This article scientifically explores the issue of using games that foster critical thinking in the process of developing communication skills in English among preschool children aged 5–7. It analyzes the peculiarities of forming critical thinking at preschool age, the psychological and pedagogical significance of play activities, and the effectiveness of role-playing, question-and-answer, problem-based, and creative games in teaching English. Furthermore, based on international experience, the article highlights the role of games in enhancing children’s communicative activity and creative thinking. The conclusions emphasize that the use of games fostering critical thinking contributes to children’s ability to communicate freely in English, engage in question-and-answer-based reasoning, and develop independent thinking skills.

**Keywords:** Preschool education, English language, communication, critical thinking, play activity, role play, question-and-answer, problem situation, creative play, pedagogical conditions.

**Introduction:** In the era of globalization, teaching foreign languages, particularly English, from an early age has become an urgent issue. The preschool period is the most crucial stage for shaping children’s linguistic, cognitive, and social competencies. In this regard, developing not only vocabulary but also critical thinking while communicating in English with 5–7-year-old children is of special importance. Critical thinking strengthens children’s ability to ask questions, reason, and find logical explanations, thereby helping them use the language effectively in communication.

## Critical Thinking and Preschool Age

According to psychological research (J. Piaget, L. Vygotsky, D. Kluster, etc.), preschool years are the stage when children’s creative and analytical thinking develops. At this age, the use of question-and-answer, choice-based, and problem-solving games can foster elements of critical thinking. When combined with the communicative method in English language teaching, this approach becomes even more effective.

Preschool age (3–7 years) is considered the most important stage in children’s psychological and intellectual development. At this stage, children show strong curiosity, attentiveness, and a natural tendency

to ask questions. Therefore, gradually fostering critical thinking during preschool years ensures highly effective outcomes.

## The Concept of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is not merely memorizing information but the ability to analyze, compare, understand cause-and-effect relationships, draw conclusions, and justify one’s opinion. This skill is closely linked to speech development and does not emerge spontaneously—it develops through well-organized education and play activities.

## Psychological Foundations

Research by renowned scholars shows that:

-According to J. Piaget, 5–7-year-old children are in the “preoperational development” stage, where they understand the world primarily through play and experience. At this stage, it is essential to train them to ask questions and consider alternative solutions.

-L. S. Vygotsky’s concept of the “zone of proximal development” suggests that children can master complex knowledge and skills with adult guidance. Therefore, problem-based situations created by educators or adults foster critical thinking.

-According to D. Kluster and other methodologists, the most effective means of developing critical thinking are question-and-answer activities, problem-solving situations, and creative tasks.

### **Features of Critical Thinking in Preschoolers**

Among children aged 5–7, critical thinking manifests in the following forms:

1. Questioning ability. Children begin logical reasoning through questions such as “Why?”, “How?”, “Which one is better?”.
2. Comparison and differentiation. For instance, “Apple is red, banana is yellow” leads the child to draw logical conclusions.
3. Problem-solving. Children try to answer questions such as “What should we do if it rains?”.
4. Creative approach. Children invent stories, describe pictures, and practice free thinking.
5. Choosing multiple options. For example, when asked “Which food is healthy?”, children may offer several answers and explain their choices.

### **Significance in English Language Learning**

Developing critical thinking in the process of learning English provides the following advantages:

- not only memorizing vocabulary but applying it in real communication;
- using learned words in real-life situations, thus building practical speech skills;
- shaping independent thinking and question-based communication skills;
- enhancing a creative approach to language learning.

### **Relevance in the Context of Uzbekistan**

In Uzbekistan, great attention is given to early foreign language learning, particularly English, in preschool education. State curricula also emphasize the formation of critical thinking, independent decision-making, and creative reasoning in children. From this perspective, the use of games that foster critical thinking not only increases the effectiveness of the pedagogical process but also aligns with the goals set by state educational policies.

### **Play Activities in Teaching English**

Play is the primary activity for children. Therefore, in developing communication in English, the following types of games are considered effective:

1. Role-playing games – such as “Shop,” “Doctor–

Patient,” “Family,” where children engage in situational communication. These games require critical thinking as children must choose words appropriate to the situation.

2. Question-and-answer games – such as “What’s missing?”, “Who am I?”, “Guess the object,” which train observation, logical reasoning, and ingenuity.
3. Problem-based games – where children are given choices in English: “If it rains, what do we need?”, “Which food is healthy?” This develops both language and decision-making skills.
4. Creative games – such as “Storytelling circle” (children create a story together in English) or “Drawing and describing” (drawing a picture and describing it in English), which enhance critical thinking and communication skills.

### **Pedagogical Conditions**

To foster critical thinking, educators must provide the following conditions:

- creating opportunities for children to ask questions freely;
- accepting diverse answers (the reasoning process is more important than the correctness of the answer);
- encouraging and supporting children in English to boost their self-confidence;
- organizing games in groups and pairs to strengthen social interaction.

For effective use of games that foster critical thinking in the process of developing English communication among 5–7-year-old preschoolers, the following pedagogical conditions are essential:

1. Creating a language environment. Children should be constantly surrounded by English elements—posters with words, colorful pictures, labeled objects (e.g., “table,” “chair,” “door”), and daily greetings or commands in English.
2. Ensuring freedom and choice in play. Children should not be limited to rote memorization but should explain their choices, compare alternatives, and express opinions.
3. Organizing learning based on questions. Educators should ask more open-ended questions during play: “Why?”, “What if...?”, “Which one is better?” to stimulate reasoning and speech.
4. Building a motivational atmosphere. Each successful answer or active participation should be rewarded with praise (“Good job!”, “Well done!”), encouragement, small gifts, or symbols to strengthen positive attitudes toward language learning.

5. Working in small groups and pairs. Games are more effective when children collaborate, as they learn from one another and develop social and communication skills through teamwork.

6. Educator's methodological mastery. The teacher should act not only as a leader but also as a participant, engaging children in communication. The use of tone, intonation, and gestures enhances children's comprehension and memory.

7. Use of information and communication technologies. Multimedia game programs, interactive presentations, and English cartoons increase children's interest. For example, interactive board games such as "matching game" (matching words with pictures) can be used.

8. Collaboration with parents. Educators should recommend that parents support learning at home through simple activities: naming objects in English, singing short songs, or practicing with pictures. This ensures continuity between preschool and home learning.

9. Creating a positive psychological climate. Children should feel free and unafraid of mistakes. Critical thinking develops best when children are allowed to express themselves openly.

10. Incorporating national and cultural values. By integrating national fairy tales, folklore, and traditional Uzbek games into English-language activities, lessons can become more engaging and culturally enriching.

### **International Experience**

In international practice (Cambridge Early Years, Montessori, Reggio Emilia approaches), play is used as the primary method for teaching English from an early age. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the concept of "learning through play" widely employs question-and-answer and role-playing games that foster critical thinking. In Finland, preschool English lessons are conducted through constant problem-based situations to encourage children's independent thinking.

In many countries worldwide, play is recognized as the main method for teaching foreign languages, especially English, to children aged 5–7. International educational experience shows that developing critical thinking through games not only facilitates language learning but also strengthens independent decision-making, problem-solving skills, and social adaptability in children.

### **United Kingdom Experience**

In the UK, the "learning through play" concept is extensively applied in preschool education. English lessons involve games that encourage children to ask

questions, make choices, and reason independently. For example, games such as "Guess Who?", "Role Play in the Shop", and "Storytelling Circle" enable children to communicate in English while practicing problem-solving. This approach fosters both creative thinking and free communication skills.

### **United States Experience**

In the US, preschool English teaching prioritizes a communicative approach. Games based on problem-solving situations are used to develop children's critical thinking skills. For instance, educators ask questions such as "If it rains, what do we need?" or "Which food is healthy?" to encourage children to find solutions. This method not only helps children learn the language but also enhances logical reasoning.

### **Finland Experience**

Finland's preschool education system is considered advanced worldwide. Here, play is regarded as the main form of learning. English lessons are conducted mainly through creative games. For example, children draw pictures and describe them in English or collaboratively create stories. Finnish educators believe that when children are given freedom and encouraged to express their ideas in various forms, critical thinking develops naturally.

### **Singapore Experience**

In Singapore, teaching foreign languages from preschool is a key aspect of state policy. English lessons make extensive use of interactive technologies. For example, multimedia game programs, word-placement games on interactive boards, and "digital storytelling" increase children's engagement. Simultaneously, working in small groups to solve problems helps children develop both language skills and critical thinking.

### **Japan Experience**

In Japan, teaching English in preschool often incorporates elements of national games. For instance, "origami storytelling" (creating stories with folded paper), guessing games, or role-play dialogues foster creativity. Japanese experience emphasizes the didactic principle of allowing children to ask questions freely and find their own answers.

### **Overall Analysis**

International experiences demonstrate the following approaches:

- United Kingdom – learning through play and fostering critical thinking;
- United States – problem-based and question-and-answer approaches;
- Finland – creative games and a free communication

environment;

- Singapore – use of information and communication technologies;
- Japan – integrating national cultural elements into English learning.

These experiences indicate that games fostering critical thinking are among the most effective methods worldwide for engaging children in foreign language communication.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of games that develop critical thinking in the process of forming English communication skills among children aged 5–7 leads to the following outcomes:

- increased interest in language learning;
- children learn to ask questions and seek answers;
- speech communication becomes natural and free;
- social and cultural skills are strengthened.

Therefore, it is recommended that educators incorporate more problem-based, question-and-answer, and creative games in English lessons.

Scientific analyses indicate that using games to foster critical thinking is particularly important in developing English communication skills in preschool children aged 5–7. Play is the primary activity at this age and not only expands vocabulary but also develops skills in independent decision-making, analyzing problems, and justifying opinions.

Role-playing games help children express real-life situations in English, while question-and-answer games enhance observation and logical reasoning. Problem-based games teach children to compare, choose, and explain events, and creative games expand free speech activity and imagination. This approach contributes not only to effective English learning but also positively influences children's personal development.

International experience also demonstrates that games promoting critical thinking help children develop independent thinking, free communication, and social competencies from an early age. Moreover, the educator's pedagogical approach, methods of encouragement, and proper organization of lessons are key factors determining the effectiveness of the teaching process.

In summary, using games that foster critical thinking in developing English communication skills among children aged 5–7 is a highly effective, innovative pedagogical approach aligned with modern educational requirements and international

experience. Therefore, preschool institutions are advised to employ more problem-based, question-and-answer, and creative games in English lessons and to enhance educators' methodological preparedness.

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