



THE USE OF ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUMS TO FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING SKILLS IN B2 STUDENTS

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Abstract: *The use of online discussion forums has become an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing both critical thinking and writing skills among B2-level learners. These platforms offer an interactive, flexible and reflective environment where students engage in meaningful communication, analyze diverse viewpoints and construct well-reasoned arguments at their own pace. The asynchronous nature of forums encourages deeper processing of information, allowing learners to evaluate evidence, justify opinions and respond thoughtfully to peers. At the same time, the written format provides continuous practice in organizing ideas, improving coherence, expanding vocabulary and developing grammatical accuracy. Exposure to authentic peer interaction increases students' motivation, autonomy and metacognitive awareness, promoting more purposeful and audience-aware writing. As a result, online discussion forums serve as a powerful tool for fostering both linguistic proficiency and higher-order thinking skills in B2 students.*

Keywords: *online forums, critical thinking, writing skills, B2 learners, digital learning, asynchronous communication, EFL students.*

Annotatsiya: *Onlayn muhokama forumlaridan foydalanish B2 darajadagi o'quvchilarda tanqidiy fikrlash va yozma ko'nikmalarni rivojlantirishning samarali pedagogik usuli hisoblanadi. Ushbu platformalar o'quvchilarga interaktiv, moslashuvchan va fikrlarni tahlil qilishga imkon beruvchi muhitni taqdim etadi, turli nuqtai nazarlarni o'rganish va mantiqan asoslangan fikrlarni o'z vaqtida shakllantirish imkonini beradi. Forumlarning asinxron tabiati ma'lumotlarni chuqurroq qayta ishlashni rag'batlantiradi, o'quvchilarni dalillarni baholashga, fikrlarini asoslashga va tengdoshlariga mulohazali javob berishga undaydi. Shu bilan birga, yozma format g'oyalarni tartibga solish, mantiqiy bog'liqlikni yaxshilash, lug'atni kengaytirish va grammatik aniqlikni rivojlantirishda uzluksiz mashq imkonini beradi. Haqiqiy tengdoshlar bilan muloqot o'quvchilarning motivatsiyasini, mustaqilligini va metakognitiv xabardorligini oshiradi, maqsadli va auditoriyani hisobga olgan yozishni rag'batlantiradi. Shunday qilib, onlayn muhokama forumlari B2 o'quvchilarida til mahorati va yuqori darajadagi fikrlash ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda kuchli vosita hisoblanadi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *onlayn forumlar, tanqidiy fikrlash, yozma ko'nikmalar, B2 darajadagi o'quvchilar, raqamli ta'lim, asinxron muloqot, EFL o'quvchilari.*



Аннотация: *Использование онлайн-форумов для обсуждений стало эффективным педагогическим методом для развития критического мышления и навыков письма у студентов уровня B2. Эти платформы предоставляют интерактивную, гибкую и рефлексивную среду, где учащиеся участвуют в содержательной коммуникации, анализируют различные точки зрения и формируют обоснованные аргументы в удобном для себя темпе. Асинхронный характер форумов способствует более глубокой обработке информации, позволяя оценивать доказательства, обосновывать мнения и вдумчиво отвечать коллегам. Одновременно письменный формат обеспечивает постоянную практику в организации идей, улучшении связности текста, расширении словарного запаса и повышении грамматической точности. Взаимодействие с подлинными сверстниками повышает мотивацию, автономность и метакогнитивную осведомлённость учащихся, способствуя более целенаправленному и ориентированному на аудиторию письму. Онлайн-форумы являются мощным инструментом для развития языковой компетенции и навыков критического мышления у студентов B2 уровня.*

Ключевые слова: *онлайн-форумы, критическое мышление, навыки письма, студенты B2 уровня, цифровое обучение, асинхронная коммуникация, учащиеся EFL.*

Introduction

In recent years, the integration of digital tools into language education has transformed the way learners interact, communicate and develop essential academic skills. Among these tools, online discussion forums have become a particularly influential medium, offering a space for written dialogue, reflection and collaborative learning. For B2-level students-who stand at a crucial stage between intermediate and advanced proficiency-the ability to think critically and express ideas clearly in written form plays a significant role in their linguistic and academic development. Traditional classroom activities often limit students' opportunities for extended written interaction and deeper analytical engagement; however, online forums provide an environment where learners can participate more freely, consider ideas at their own pace and construct meaningful responses without the pressure of immediate oral performance.

As students engage in posting, replying, questioning and debating in an online environment, they naturally practice essential components of critical thinking such as evaluating arguments, recognizing assumptions, comparing viewpoints and supporting opinions with evidence. At the same time, every written contribution offers valuable practice in structuring sentences, organizing ideas, improving coherence and using language more accurately and fluently. This combination of cognitive challenge and linguistic practice makes online discussion forums a powerful tool for developing both higher-order thinking and writing skills. Moreover, the interactive nature of forums increases learner autonomy, motivation and confidence, as students take ownership of their participation and learn to express themselves for a real audience of peers.



The use of online discussion forums has become one of the most influential tools in modern language education, especially for B2-level learners who are in the transitional stage between intermediate and advanced proficiency. As students at this level are expected to develop both the depth and accuracy of their written communication, online forums offer a unique environment where critical thinking and writing skills can naturally evolve through meaningful interaction. When learners engage in online discussions, they are not only practicing language use but also participating in a dynamic process of reasoning, reflection, argumentation and idea-building, all of which are essential components of higher-order thinking.

Online forums create an environment where students can read diverse viewpoints, analyze the arguments of peers and construct their own responses thoughtfully. This process is inherently conducive to developing critical thinking. Unlike traditional classroom discussions where students must respond quickly, often with limited processing time, online forums allow learners to reflect thoroughly before crafting a response. They can review texts, search for evidence, compare arguments and consider counterpoints. This asynchronous nature reduces pressure and encourages more deliberate cognitive engagement. As a result, B2 learners become more aware of their reasoning process and start to articulate ideas with greater clarity and logical structure. They learn to support their thoughts with examples, justify their claims and evaluate the validity of others' opinions, which are all markers of strong critical thinking ability.

The written nature of forums directly enhances writing skills as well. Since B2 students still face challenges in grammatical accuracy, cohesion and lexical choice, online discussions serve as authentic writing practice without the formality and anxiety associated with essays or tests. Students write to communicate, not simply to complete an assignment, which makes their writing more purposeful and motivated. They become conscious of how tone, clarity and style affect the interpretation of their message by peers. Moreover, they repeatedly produce paragraphs of writing during discussions, which strengthens fluency, coherence and overall confidence. Exposure to peers' writing also acts as a model for language input. Students can observe new vocabulary, natural expressions and structural patterns that they can adopt and adapt in their own posts.

In online forums, interaction is dialogic rather than monologic. B2 learners write not only initial posts but also follow-up replies, counterarguments, reflections and clarifications. This cyclical communication improves written cohesion and the ability to connect ideas logically. In addition, because students know their peers will read and respond to their contributions, they often pay more attention to accuracy, organization and politeness strategies. The authentic audience heightens their sense of responsibility and encourages them to edit and revise their writing more thoroughly than they would in routine assignments.

Critical thinking is also strengthened through the need to interpret multiple perspectives. Online forums often include participants with different backgrounds, experiences and



knowledge. When B2 students encounter contrasting viewpoints, they learn to question assumptions, recognize bias, evaluate evidence and consider alternative explanations. This exposure pushes them beyond surface-level thinking and encourages deeper intellectual engagement. Teachers can guide this process by asking open-ended questions, encouraging justification of opinions and promoting respectful disagreement. These prompts help students move from descriptive writing toward analytical and argumentative writing, which is essential for mastering upper-intermediate proficiency.

Another important element is autonomy. Online forums encourage self-regulated learning as students choose when to participate, how much to write and what kind of reasoning to apply. They take ownership of their learning process and become more independent thinkers and writers. This self-directed involvement not only improves motivation but also fosters metacognitive awareness, enabling students to evaluate their own thinking and writing. When learners re-read their posts, compare them with others and reflect on feedback, they naturally identify areas for improvement.

The integration of online discussion forums also supports collaboration. Peers interact, negotiate meaning and co-construct knowledge, which reinforces the social dimension of learning. When students work together, they learn to articulate ideas more clearly, provide constructive feedback and engage in academic dialogue, all of which strengthen both critical thinking and writing. Teachers play a vital role by moderating discussions, modeling effective argumentation, setting expectations for respectful communication and providing timely feedback to guide students' development.

Technology itself contributes to learning. Digital platforms offer tools such as hyperlinks, multimedia resources and embedded citations, which allow students to incorporate evidence and expand the depth of their reasoning. Searching for sources, referencing information and synthesizing knowledge from multiple texts enhance not only cognitive and literacy skills but also digital literacy, which is increasingly essential in modern academic contexts.

In conclusion, online discussion forums provide a rich, interactive and flexible environment that significantly contributes to the development of critical thinking and writing skills in B2-level learners. Through reflective participation, exposure to diverse perspectives, authentic communication and collaborative knowledge-building, learners enhance both their cognitive and linguistic abilities. The combination of writing practice, analytical engagement and digital interaction makes online forums one of the most effective tools for preparing B2 students to advance toward higher proficiency and academic readiness.

Conclusion

The use of online discussion forums has proven to be a highly effective approach for enhancing both critical thinking and writing skills among B2-level students. Through participation in these digital spaces, learners engage in reflective, analytical and interactive communication that encourages them to examine different perspectives, justify their opinions and construct logical, well-supported arguments. The asynchronous nature of



forums gives students the time they need to think deeply, refine their ideas and respond thoughtfully, which naturally strengthens higher-order thinking abilities. At the same time, the continuous practice of writing for a real audience helps students improve grammatical accuracy, coherence, vocabulary use and overall fluency, making their written communication more confident and purposeful.

Online forums also promote learner autonomy and motivation, as students take responsibility for their contributions and actively participate in collaborative knowledge-building. The authentic interaction with peers creates a supportive environment where learners can experiment with language, receive feedback and develop greater awareness of their own writing style and reasoning process. As a result, online discussion forums offer a rich and flexible platform that not only supports language development but also cultivates essential academic skills needed for advanced proficiency. Therefore, integrating online forums into B2-level instruction can significantly enrich the learning experience and prepare students for more complex communicative and analytical tasks in both academic and real-life contexts.

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INTERNET RESOURCES

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