

English for Contemporary Topics: Students' Gains from News-Sharing Activities

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The study explores how the use of news-sharing activities promotes the development of content knowledge, multi-language skills and critical thinking skills for first-year English-majored students. The study focused on the course 'English for Contemporary Topics', which involved employing news related to six current topics to reach expected learning outcomes. Each news-sharing session consists of three stages: preparation, in-class performance and reflection. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected from survey questionnaires and class observations were analyzed. Data showed that students could assess the reliability of Internet sources and the authenticity of news articles, identify main ideas and supporting details, produce an oral and written summary, and write a critical reflection. In addition, students could gain insights into such contemporary topics as Education, Media and Communication, Environment, Science and Technology, Culture and Lifestyles, and Global Issues. However, it was also found that most students had a tendency to use their mother tongue and read aloud the news rather than share it orally. The findings also suggest that besides the well-designed tasks, the instructor's clearer guidance and stricter monitoring are needed to encourage students' natural English-speaking abilities.

Key words: News-Sharing Activities, Content knowledge, Critical Thinking Skills, Language Skills

Online Profile

Biography

Primary author: Ms THỊ ÁNH DƯƠNG, Bùi (University of Languages and International Studies, VNU)

Co-author: Ms THUỶ LINH, Cấn (University of Languages and International Studies, VNU)

Presenter: Ms THỊ ÁNH DƯƠNG, Bùi (University of Languages and International Studies, VNU)

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