Topic: The Role of Shakespeare's Poetry in Developing Critical Thinking

In an era defined by an increasing reliance on generative artificial intelligence, the decline of critical thinking among students has become a pressing pedagogical concern. This study investigates the contemporary relevance of Shakespearean literature, specifically Sonnet 29, as an effective resource for improving critical thinking. While previous research has validated the use of Shakespearean drama in fostering analytical thinking, a significant gap remains regarding the efficacy of his poetry, which demands a unique level of abstract reasoning and linguistic decoding.

Guided by a deductive qualitative approach and inspired by a study that uses classic literary text in the Icelandic curriculum, this research investigates how Shakespearean sonnets can be repurposed as pedagogical tools. The study involved a pedagogical intervention at the University of Iceland, where thirteen undergraduate students were involved in a Socratic seminar focused on Sonnet 29. Data were collected through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, then analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.

The findings indicate the universal themes of the sonnet serve as an effective catalyst for high level thinking. Participants demonstrated high degrees of engagement, successfully navigating the text's complexities through inference-making, argumentative synthesis, and the deconstruction of complex emotional shifts. The results suggest that the pairing of Shakespeare's poetry with a Socratic instructional framework effectively reduces learner passivity and facilitates deep analytical decoding. Ultimately, this study argues that classic literature transcends historical boundaries and offers a robust framework for developing the deductive reasoning and evaluative skills necessary in modern society. By integrating these timeless resources into the curriculum, educators can provide students with the tools required to stimulate critical thinking.

Lykilorð:

Sókratísk kennsluaðferð – student engagement – classical litterature