



University of Isfahan
Faculty of Foreign Languages
Department of English

**The Effect of Online Group Problem-Solving Tasks on Critical Thinking,
Creativity and L2 Reading for Persian Undergraduates of Non-English
Majors**

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

Faculty of Foreign Languages
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Vice Chancellor for Research and Technology

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A thesis entitled

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was submitted by

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The degree, evaluated as "excellent, very good, good", was awarded on 30-08-2022

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Dedicated to my family with unending love

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the possible effects of online group problem-solving tasks on undergraduates' Critical Thinking (CT), creativity, and reading comprehension. To this end, a convenient sampling of Persian first-year students of non-English majors (finance) in Iran was selected as the participants. A homogeneous group of 60 Persian first-year students was randomly assigned into two groups of experimental (N=30) and control (N=30) (N Total= 60) based on the OPT test results. Due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, the data collection and the treatment were accomplished on the platforms of LMS, Google docs, email, and WhatsApp. The experimental group was instructed with online group problem-solving tasks for 12 sessions during the second academic semester of the educational year 2020-2021. The comparison between the results obtained from the pretest and posttest of the two groups uncovered that the experimental group outperformed the control group in CT, creativity, and L2 reading comprehension. Further, the experimental group reported a positive attitude toward online group problem-solving tasks. One of the major contributions of this research could be identified as filling the paucity of CT and creativity studies for non-English majors in L2 academic courses in Iran. This may also help signifying the crucial role of the 21st-century skills (i.e. CT and creativity) for a successful life in terms of educational aspects.

Keywords: Critical thinking, Creativity, L2 reading, Online group problem-solving.