

American English

Developing Your Students' Vocabulary and Grammar for Critical Thinking

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Pre-Webinar Poll Questions

1. My students are too low in their language skills to practice Critical Thinking in English.
2. My students have the language skills to practice Critical Thinking in English but are not accustomed to doing it.
3. My students have the language skills and the habit of practicing Critical Thinking in English.
4. Visual materials like pictures are generally more informative than written text.
5. Written text is generally more informative than a picture.

Webinar Goals:

- Demonstrate a sequence of Critical Thinking tasks, from easy to difficult, that can be done in the classroom.
- Highlight vocabulary and grammar that we use specifically in the practice of Critical Thinking.



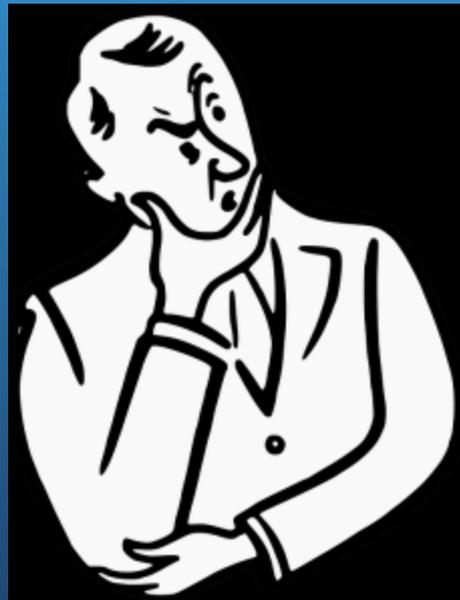
Critical

The dictionary (*American Heritage*) offers...

- “judging severely and finding fault”
- “reflecting careful analysis and judgment”

Let's add....

- Getting closer to the truth
- Distinguishing between knowing and guessing



A simple sequence for Critical Thinking:

- Observing
- Understanding
- Analyzing
- Synthesizing



Observing

Let students look closely at the photo **BEFORE** you show them any written text!

- Look at the whole picture. What is it about? What is going on?
- Zoom in on details. What do they tell us?



Understanding

Understand the limits of our certainty about visual information.

- What is missing from the picture?
- What do we NOT know about what is happening?
- Why did someone take this picture?
Imagine the photographer's purpose.



Matt Dunham/Associated Press

Analyzing - Part 1

1 - Break the photo into subject parts:

- location
- time
- people
- objects
- activities



2 - Compare and contrast the photo with a different photo

Analyzing - Part 2

Questions for Critical thinking

Do we know....?

How do we know?

Is it possible that....?

Any other ideas?

Any hypotheses?

Why do you think that?

Why do you say that?



Synthesizing

- Put parts together to form a “big picture”
- Make connections between multiple photos

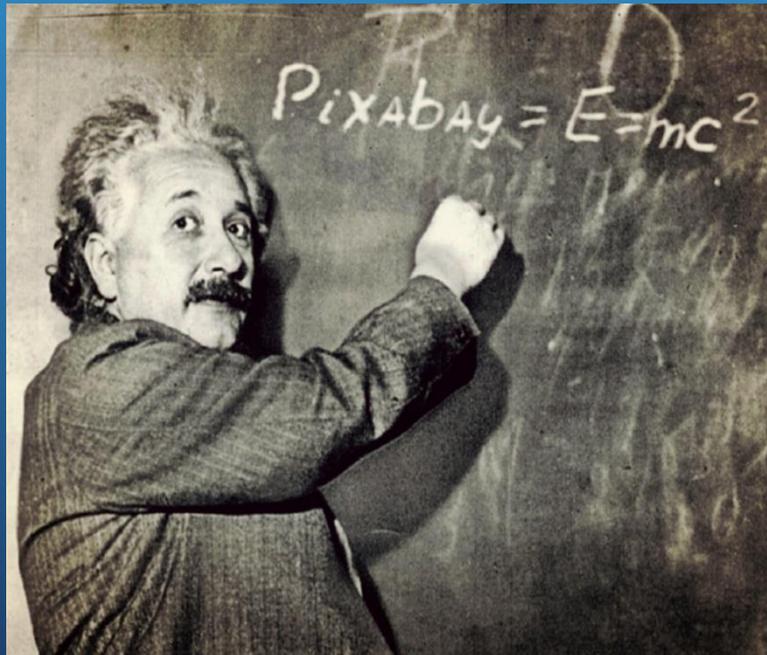


Critical Thinking goals with a photo:

- Ask simple but revealing questions.
- Answer with simple responses that show what we really know about what is happening in the picture... and what we're not sure about.
- Generate hypotheses like a scientist or a detective.

What is a hypothesis?

A possible explanation that needs testing or more evidence before we can say it's true







You can also say...

Maybe they are happy and healthy.

They are **probably** happy and healthy.

They **might be** happy and healthy.

I [**think/feel/believe**] **that** they are happy and healthy.

It is possible that they are happy and healthy.

The photo **suggests that** they are happy and healthy.

Fill in the blank:

- Their laughter **suggest(s)** that _____.
- Their table **suggest(s)** that _____.
- Their house **suggest(s)** that _____.



Other opportunities for normal language practice:

Objects

- There is/there are
- Prepositions of location

Activities

- Present continuous tense



Fill in the blank:

1. Objects: *there is or there are*

There is a _____ .

There are _____ .

2. Activities: present continuous

They are _____ .

The boy is _____ .



May 1940. "Mrs. Hansen, wife of a farmer in Utah, has dinner with her three children. On the table are home-produced milk, homemade bread, home-canned peaches, home-churned butter, and fish caught by the three children the day this picture was taken. Homemade dill pickles provided a relish."



Critical Thinking Assignment - Reading a Photograph

1. Have each student choose a photograph (not an advertisement).
2. Ask the student to lead a class discussion about the photo without revealing any written information.
3. Require the student to write a brief report about the photo incorporating the same approach.
4. Make sure the student includes a copy of the photo so that you can refer to it.



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Making Comparisons, Noting Similarities

X is **ADJ + er** than Y.

X is **cheaper** than Y.

Y is **more + ADJ** than X.

Y is **more expensive** than X.

X is cheaper than Y, but **both** are expensive.



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QUANTIFIERS AND FREQUENCY ADVERBS (Part 1)

- **Quantifiers**

Avoid: all, none, everyone, no one

Use: most, many, some, a few

- **Frequency adverbs**

Avoid: always, never

Use: usually, often, sometimes, occasionally, rarely



always
100%

A 3D graphic featuring the word "always" in a red, italicized font above the text "100%" in a bold, red font. Both elements have a blue and white gradient shadow effect, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

QUANTIFIERS AND FREQUENCY ADVERBS (Part 2)

- All families have children.
- All families eat together at a table.
- All families live in a house.

- Most families have children.
- Many families eat together at a table.
- Some families live in a house.



What **must** be true?

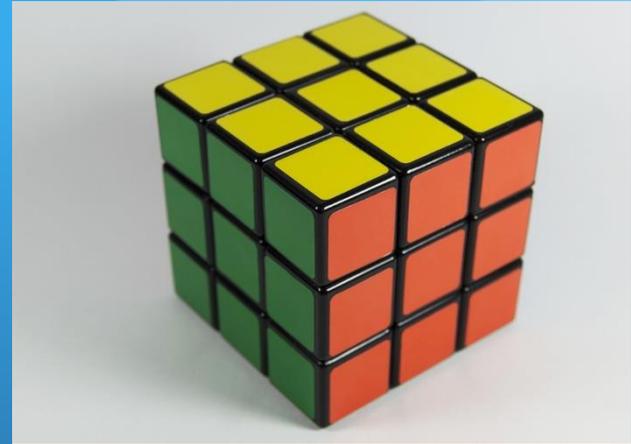
1. $A = B$ A equals B.
2. $B = C$ B equals C.

Therefore...

3. $A = C$ A **must** equal C.

This is an **inference**.

The writer or speaker **implies** $A = C$,
and the reader or the listener **infers** it.



What can you infer? Use **must**.

1. I haven't eaten all day.

Expected response: You must be hungry.

2. She didn't sleep last night.

3. He finally passed the test.

4. This restaurant is always crowded.

What does this statement mean?

Nine out of ten doctors responding to a survey said they recommend our product to their patients if they recommend anything.



Nine out of ten doctors **responding** to a survey....

Nine out of ten doctors **who responded** to a survey...

... recommend our product **if** they
recommend anything.

Practice, Consolidation, Expansion

- We believe that the data will prove we are right.
- We think that the data will prove we are right.
- We feel that the data will prove we are right.
- We have data that probably proves we are right.
- We have data that might prove we are right.
- It's possible that the data will prove we are right.
- We have data that suggests we are right.
- We have data that proves we are right.

Summary

1. Critical thinking is much harder in a second language because the learner encounters unclear language in reading and listening AND must be clear and exact in writing and speaking.
2. Whether critical thinking is the main focus of a lesson or a side story in a grammar or vocabulary lesson, it can deepen student engagement in the material.
3. Critical thinking can be practiced at all English proficiency levels.