

TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

English language teachers are trained to teach language skills, but they do not always learn how to teach the critical thinking skills that help guide learning. Critical thinking skills are part of many curriculum guidelines, but some teachers may be unsure how to teach these skills. For example, an academic reading curriculum might have the following objective: “Learners will analyze a variety of academic writing samples in an effort to determine the components, organization, and structure of academic writing texts.” Although English language teachers can think of any number of ways to teach and support reading as a skill, they may find it more difficult to achieve the first part of this objective—how to teach learners to analyze.

Critical thinking involves reflection and the analysis of ideas. Good critical thinkers are able to break a broad idea into many parts. They can examine each part, question biases, and come to a reasonable conclusion. This task is difficult for anyone and requires practice. Thinking critically is even more challenging when done in a second language.

This month’s Teacher’s Corner looks at the critical thinking skills that shape learning goals and outcomes. Each week presents a new activity that targets critical thinking skills while also encouraging language use and development. Some of the activities and tasks may seem familiar as they are based on long-established language teaching techniques. The activities are designed to support authentic language use while also encouraging critical thinking.

References

Brown, H. D. and Lee, H. (2015). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.

Additional Resources

For additional information about critical thinking, check out the resource below and many others available on the American English website:

- [A Questionnaire Project: Integrating the Four Macro Skills with Critical Thinking](#)