



Module 9

Critical & Creative Thinking

Approaches to Language Teaching: Extension

Video Length: Approximately 11 Minutes
Notes to the Trainer

For best results, have participants go through the reading for this module prior to viewing the video. As you work through this module, use pairs or groups whenever you think it might be effective. After each group activity, debrief the answers and use them for further discussion of various points. Refer back to the main points when appropriate. It is important that teachers apply the concepts in the module to their own classrooms and situations. The goals for this module are to create an understanding of the need for critical and creative thinking and to suggest ideas for practicing these skills in the language classroom.

See Appendix A for additional handouts that can be used for general observation and discussion tasks with any of the modules.

Before Viewing

Ask participants to consider themselves in a different role. For example, you can suggest that they are managers of a new company that relies on keeping up with changing global information and technology in order to be competitive enough to survive. They need to hire some new employees, mainly technology specialists and business representatives.

In groups, they are to make a list of characteristics and skills they will look for when they do the hiring. After they have a list, they should prioritize the characteristics in the order of importance.

Debrief

The groups will then re-form (jigsaw style) so that each group has representatives from at least three different groups. They can compare lists and discuss what they consider the most important skills and characteristics to be.

Next, guide the group into thinking about the need for creative and critical thinking in today's global world of rapid change. Some example issues for consideration for the future of our learners:

- People are living longer and can expect to have more than one career in their lifetimes.
- Jobs are less static; people need to constantly educate themselves to update their skills and knowledge base.
- The kinds of connections we can expect to see among schools, places of work, and community.

Extension Ideas

For ideas on other kinds of “thinking outside the box” activities, see the following:

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Cool Optical Illusions (How many legs does the elephant have?)
 Web site: <http://www.coolopticalillusions.com/elephantlegs.htm>

Role Playing Games and Activities Rules and Tips
 Web site: <http://www.businessballs.com/roleplayinggames.htm>

Six Thinking Hats
 Web site: <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/english/sixhats.htm>

What is higher order thinking? Griny grollers grangled in the granchy gak...
 Web site: <http://www.selu.edu/Academics/Education/TEC/think.htm>

Preview Vocabulary

Terms	Definitions
Analyze	To examine something methodically by separating it into parts and studying their interrelations.
Attributes	Characteristics or features.
Content-based instruction	The use of content to structure curriculum or lessons around central themes or topics.
Creative thinking	New, alternative ways of looking at things that would be different from the expected.
Critical thinking	The cognitive process of using reasoning skills to question and analyze the accuracy and /or worth of ideas, statements, new information, etc.
Inquiry-based learning	An approach in which students learn about something or explore an issue through a series of open-ended questions.
Look at things with a fresh eye; think outside the box	Look at things from a new perspective (idioms).
Mass media	Television shows, radio programs, movies, etc. that are popular with large numbers of people.
Medium; media (pl.)	The means through which something is published or broadcast (e.g. TV, radio, video, print.)
On the fly (adv.)	Quickly, spontaneously (idiom).
Pros and cons	Advantages and disadvantages; pluses and minuses.
Role-play	To act out a small drama with specific characters and tasks
Simulation	To act in a reproduction or pretend version of a set of events.
Skit	Short dramatic performance.
Synthesize	To take information or objects and combine into a new form.

Now start the video. Listen to the introduction. Complete the guided observation and reflection tasks for each of the video segments. The next part of the manual is for trainees and is available on separate pages for ease of copying.

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Module 9, Critical and Creative Thinking

Introduction, Expanded Narrative

Learning to think analytically or “critically” is a lifelong skill with broad applications both inside and outside the language classroom. Likewise, the ability to look at a problem or a task with a fresh eye or with “creativity” has far-reaching implications for learning both inside and outside of formal education systems. These are attributes we hope to awaken and nurture in our learners, wherever they may be going in life.

Critical thinking, in a general education context, draws heavily on literature and pedagogy from:

- Bloom’s Taxonomy.
- Socratic questioning.
- Inquiry-based learning.

(See Module 9 Readings A and B plus the List of Additional Readings and Resources for in *Shaping the Way We Teach English: Readings and Resources* more information on these topics.)

In short, it is a way of introducing open-ended learning and thinking into our classes. It can mean accepting more than one “right” answer. It can even lead to cases where students become knowledge “experts” and end up knowing more than the teachers do about topics they have researched or explored.

The good news is that teaching and learning techniques for critical thinking apply as well to language studies as they do to content areas such as social studies or science. You can even combine all three (critical thinking + content + language). It means, that we, as teachers, open the way for students to put their curiosity to work and to pursue lines of questioning to which we may not always have the answers. It is the exploration together of knowledge frontiers, in a quest for the answers to questions that often begin as *What if....?* and *Why do you suppose that....?* and with statements that start as *Imagine that X.....* and *Let’s try Y....*

Module Focus

In this module, we’ll take a look at what one teacher is doing to bring critical and creative thinking into her classes. Her students are learning to take a “think locally and act globally” approach to problem-solving and to investigating new areas of inquiry in their learning as they develop their language skills. This is the first week in a large class of young adults. The teacher is using a content-based approach with a mass media theme as a basis for the day’s activities. She is assessing students’ skills as they participate in and complete a series of tasks. Observe the sequence of activities that she has students do over the course of the class. Ask yourself, *In what ways are critical and creative thinking involved?*

For each of the Module 9 video segments (classroom examples), you can use the following *Observation Guide* to gather information and discuss what you observe. You can use this guide for other modules as well.

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Observation Guide

This observation guide itself functions as a critical and creative thinking activity. Note that the *Description* section yields mostly factual information. In contrast, the *Prediction, Reflection / Opinion* (based on analysis and synthesis), and *Extension* sections elicit higher order thinking (Bloom's Taxonomy) or "critical thinking." The factual answers are more likely to be right vs. wrong in nature, while the open-ended questions will result in many "right" answers.

Prediction

Given the title of this module and any readings you may have done on this topic, what do you think the class activities in the video might be like? (What do you expect to see?)

Description

1. Give as detailed description as possible of the:
 - Classroom (physical space)
 - Students
 - Teacher
2. Describe the steps (sequence of activities) of the activity or lesson.
3. What kind of "teacher talk" did you hear or observe (e.g. instructions, clarification, corrections, explanations, etc.)?
4. What student behaviors (language, social, etc.) did you see?

Reflection, Opinion

1. Tell what you liked most about the class.
2. Tell what you liked least about the class.
3. Did you see what you expected? Any surprises? Anything more you wish you could have seen?

Extension

1. What do you think took place in the class(es) prior to this? Afterwards?
2. If you were this teacher, would you considered some or all of the activities a success? Explain.
3. Did you learn anything from observing this class that you might transfer to your own teaching setting? Explain.

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Video Segment #1, Mass Media Activity #1: Observation Guide **[Read before viewing.]**

Use the *Observation Guide* for Module 9.

Reflection **[Read and answer after viewing.]**

Students began the class with a warm-up and “getting to know you” activity. They had to synthesize the information that they collected and report on it. Analysis and synthesis are good examples of higher order or critical thinking skills. Note also that this activity used integrated language skills, plus a variety of self-management and communication strategies.

1. What was the purpose of the background music?
2. How was the topic of mass media connected to the getting-to-know-you questions that students asked each other?
3. For what other topics would this activity be a good match?

Video Segment #2, Mass Media Activity #2: Observation Guide **[Read before viewing.]**

Use the *Observation Guide* for Module 9.

Reflection **[Read and answer after viewing.]**

Students worked in groups to create and perform skits that addressed a current issue or problem related to Mass Media. Students used both critical and creative thinking skills as they analyzed the problem or task, wrote the script, and then performed it together.

1. Do you think the students got their message across? Why or why not?
2. What was the purpose of giving student groups different problems to address, instead of giving all the groups the same issue?
3. What kinds of strategies would you use in order to form groups for activities like this one?

Video Segment #3, Mass Media Activity #3: Observation Guide **[Read before viewing.]**

Use the *Observation Guide* for Module 9.

Reflection **[Read and answer after viewing.]**

This activity was an all-class role play or simulation using a TV talk show format. Students took on the roles of talk show participants and members of the audience. Students engaged, once again, in both critical and creative thinking as they prepared for and then engaged in the simulation. Some of the thinking and the language used was structured, as when students were planning the role play. Some of it was unstructured or “on the fly,” as when students communicated back and forth during the simulation itself.

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1. Why did the teacher make the students pretend to be characters other than themselves?
2. In a large class like this one, what are some strategies for making sure that as many students as possible get to use the language and have their voices heard (talk show hosts / guests and audience member alike)?
3. What other topics or themes in your curriculum might work well with this type of all-class simulation or enactment?

Summary Discussion

1. In what ways were the three activities related or linked to each other?
2. Why do you think the teacher chose to do them in this sequence?
3. What language skills were involved in these activities? What kinds of critical thinking skills (see the readings for information on Bloom's Taxonomy)?
4. Using Bloom's Taxonomy, what aspects of the activities were cognitive or "thinking" in nature? Affective or "feeling" in nature?
5. Which aspects of the activities were strictly factual in nature (they ended with true / false or yes / no answers; or one correct "right or wrong" answer)? In what ways did the activities foster higher order thinking skills? What percentage of the class time seem to be devoted to each?

Now You Try It—An Action Plan

Step 1

You can read some of the articles on the topic of critical and creative thinking (see Module 9 Readings plus the List of Additional Readings and Resources in *Shaping the Way We Teach English: Readings and Resources*). Using the video, you have seen a few examples and ideas from other teachers' classes.

Now, identify a topic in your curriculum or an upcoming lesson that you would like to improve or enrich with critical thinking skills for your students. This need not take up a whole class period. You can start small and experiment with this.

Step 2

Using the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) project templates from the <http://sbci.cps.k12.il.us/HOTS_templates.pdf> web site, or example questions from one of the sources on Socratic question techniques (see *Additional Readings and Resources below* for this module), develop a set of extended questions to go with your existing resources.

Step 3

In what direction do you think students will go with the questions? How will they apply the information or results that they achieve (in a skit or role play, a re-enactment, a mystery story or spooky story, a collage, a poem, a dance, a bulletin board...)? Give them options and plan for different students or student groups to make different choices.

Step 4

Now try the questions in class. You can give all the students the same questions, give different questions to different students, or even let students choose their own questions. What happened? What do you think worked well, and why? What do students think worked well, and why? What might you do differently next time?

If you are not teaching, ask the trainer or another experienced teacher for feedback.

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Answer Key to Module 9, Critical and Creative Thinking

Module 9, Video Segment #1, Mass Media Activity #1

1. The purpose of the background music was to set the pace, keep students on task, and signal when to start / stop. Note that it was music the students enjoyed. They seemed to be having fun.
2. The getting-to-know-you questions that students asked each other were about mass media (television viewing habits, likes and dislikes, opinions, etc.).
3. Other topics ... anything you can think of, as the sky is the limit!

Module 9, Video Segment #2, Mass Media Activity #2

1. Students effectively portrayed the issues they were supposed to address. They drew on personal experiences as a guide.
2. Student groups addressed different problems to keep everyone motivated and interested. It was also a way of sharing information and raising awareness across groups (students were, in effect, teaching each other).
3. Strategies for forming groups:
 - Group students with stronger and weaker language proficiency together.
 - Make sure students who like to lead also give chances to other students in the group to contribute.
 - If there are any students who are behaving inappropriately or who have difficulty self-managing, place them in different groups (not together).

Module 9, Video Segment #3, Mass Media Activity #3

1. By pretending to be characters other than themselves, students can take on roles and present information in new ways. Plus, it encourages creativity, and it's fun.
2. Carefully structuring groups and tasks can help ensure that as many students as possible get to use the language and have their voices heard. See Module 4 for more on managing groups.
3. Other topics....again, anything you can think of, as the sky is the limit!

