



Beyond Proficiency: Nurturing Critical Thinking in the English Language Classroom

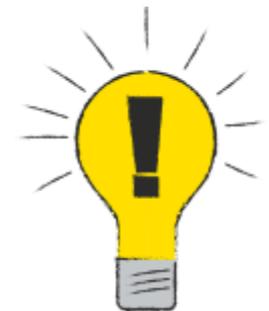
Heather Benucci
American English Webinar Series 6



+ Our mission today



- Better understand what it means to “think critically”
- Consider why we should teach critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom
- Examine how to build critical thinking skills
 - The teacher’s role
 - Practical ideas for the classroom



+ Stop and think

How do you define **critical thinking**?

Share your ideas in the chat box.



+ Pre-webinar discussion



“Strong critical thinkers....

- are keen observers who reflect and evaluate.”
- Arifa, Saudi Arabia
- are able to distinguish the pros and cons of each situation.”
- Natalia, Uruguay
- are able to develop reasonable conclusions using analysis, evaluation, inference, and deduction.”
- Luluk, Indonesia

+ Defining critical thinking

Critical thinking is....

- “... at a basic level, [it] is about finding out whether something is **true, partly true, or not true at all**”

- Hughes, 2014 p. 2



+ Defining critical thinking



Critical thinking is....

- “... at a basic level, [it] is about finding out whether something is true, partly true, or not true at all”

- Hughes, 2014 p. 2

- “... the pursuit of **relevant and reliable knowledge** about the world... [it is] **reasonable, reflective, responsible, and skillful thinking** ... **focused on what to believe or do**”

- Schafersman, 1991 p. 5

+

Critical thinking: A process

“Critical thinking can be described as the scientific method applied by ordinary people to the ordinary world.”

- Schaefersman, 1991 p. 3



Question or Issue

Hypothesis

Data and evidence collection

Analysis and evaluation

Conclusions and reflection



Bloom's Taxonomy, Revised

Anderson & Krathwohl (Eds) (2000)

Skill categories

Create

- generate new products, thoughts, opinions, or solutions

Evaluate

- judge quality of arguments, information, and organization

Analyze

- identify parts and how they relate
- understand structure

Apply

- complete a task with information that has been understood

Understand

- explain ideas/concepts
- organize facts and ideas

Remember

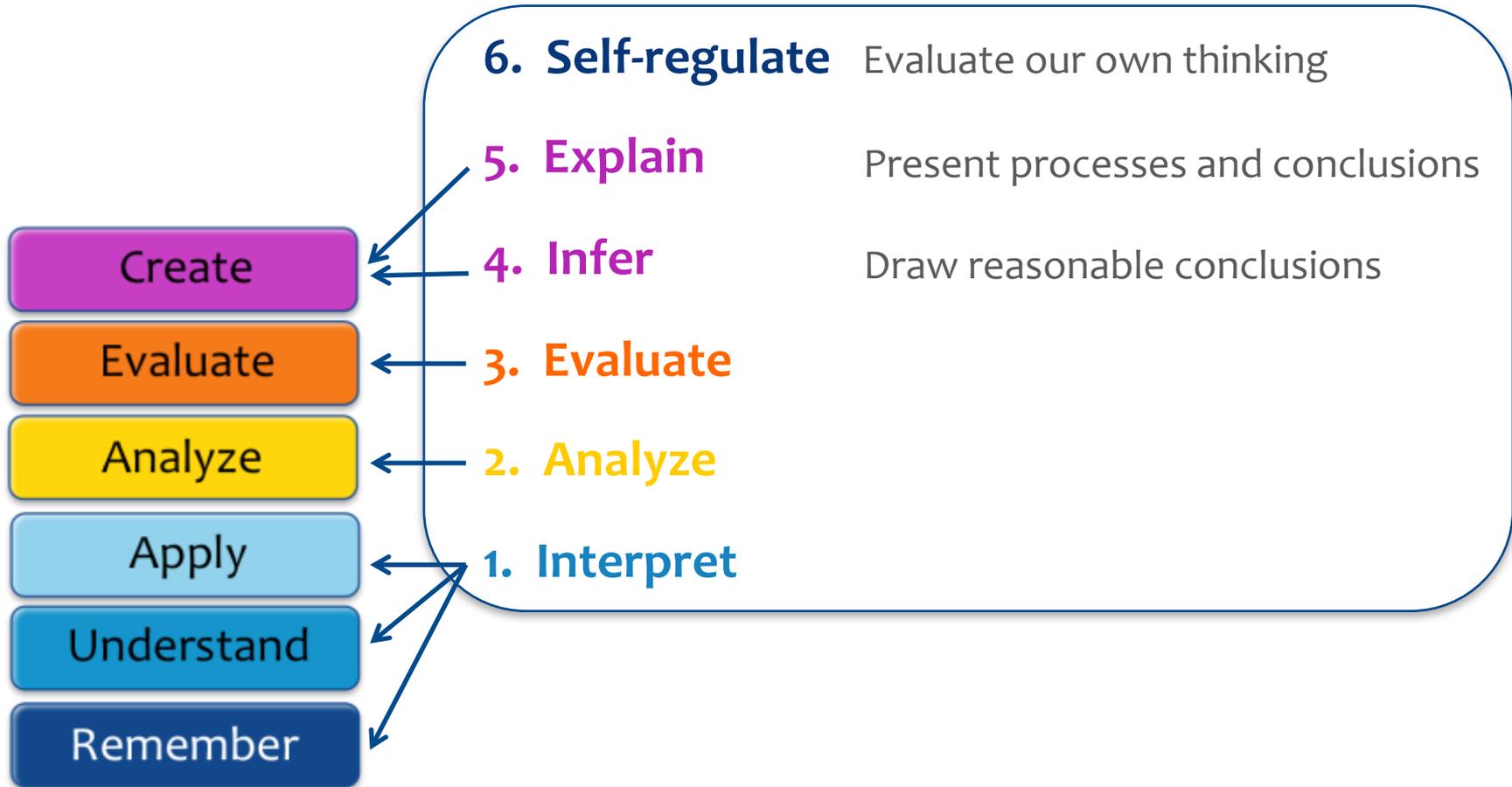
- recall details
- locate information





Six Cognitive Skills of Strong Critical Thinkers

Faccione, 2014



+ Stop and think

What are **challenges** to thinking critically?

What makes it hard to do?

Share your ideas in the chat box.



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Biases and Assumptions



A. Bias



1. a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment or inclination; prejudice

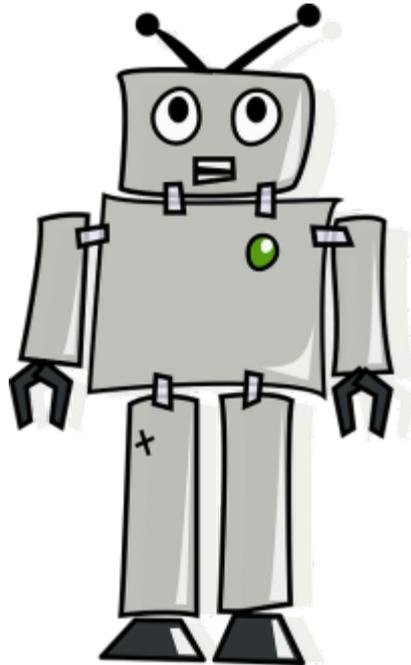
B. Assumption



2. information that is accepted as true or certain, often without proof



+ What shapes our assumptions
and biases?



(We are human, not robots.)

Let's take a poll!

+ What shapes our assumptions and biases?

- Our family and people we know
- Our cultures
- Our jobs
- Where we live
- Our past experiences
- Authority figures
- Preferred sources of information

As humans, we can't avoid these challenges to critical thinking, but we can be aware of them!



+ Defining critical thinking

To summarize, critical thinking....

- requires a questioning mindset
- is a systematic process to reach informed decisions and opinions based on evidence
- can be learned and practiced
- explores all sides of a problem or situation
- requires awareness of how we think and form opinions



+ Nurturing critical thinking in EFL classes

Why bother?



Digital Literacies

Information Literacy

Critical Literacy

(Dudeney, Hockly, and Pegram, 2014)

21st century skills

Overcoming information overload!

- Evaluating through critical questioning
- Assessing credibility
- Comparing sources
- Tracking origins of information

“... the world we live in is getting more complicated... and how we process information has become more important than [remembering] specific facts.” Evrim Üstünlüoğlu, 2004

+ Nurturing critical thinking in EFL classes

Why bother?

Affective and interpersonal skills

Critical thinkers are usually...

- Curious
- Intellectually humble
- Persistent
- Confident
- Tolerant
- Open-minded



“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.” Albert Einstein

+ Nurturing critical thinking in EFL classes

Why bother?

Academic and language skills



- Authentic communication involves real-life situations and cooperation
- Language skills are needed to express opinions and make logical arguments
- Students must recognize how language can persuade or mislead
- Assessed by standardized exams
- Essential for university success



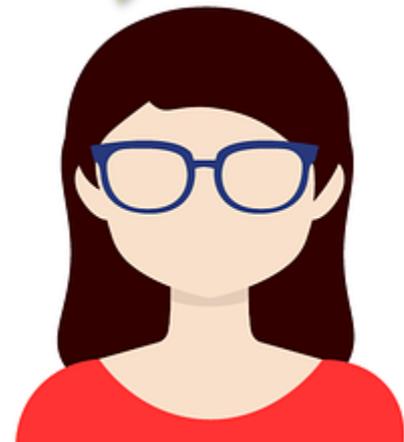
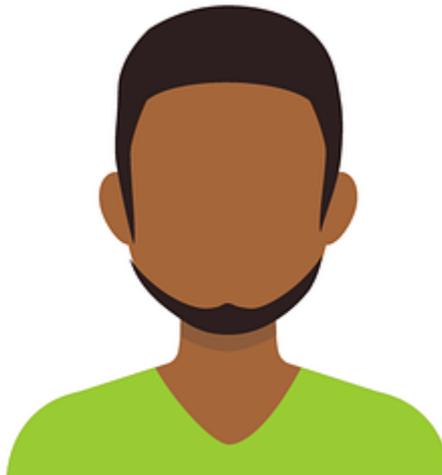
+ What does it all mean for teachers?



That's interesting information, but my students aren't great critical thinkers.

Wait... critical thinking skills can't be learned and practiced, right?

What can *I* do to help my students become better critical thinkers?



+ The teacher's role



- Learning more about critical thinking
- Creating an encouraging environment
- Planning courses and lessons to include critical thinking



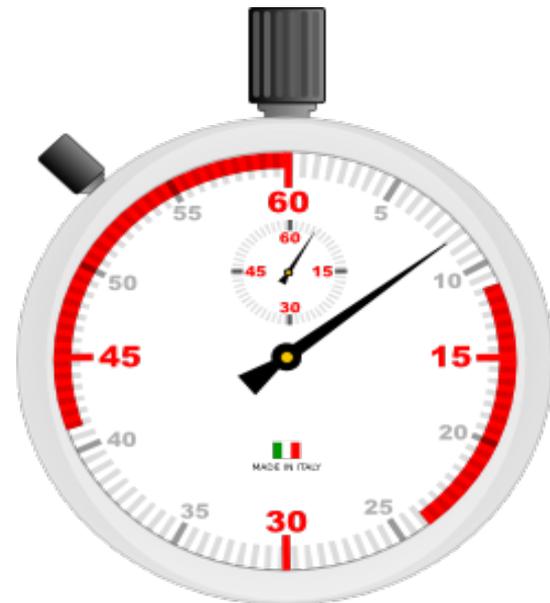
The classroom environment

Teacher attitude and class community building



Do I give students a chance to think deeply?

- * Increase teacher wait time
- * Avoid unfortunate habits
 - The Interrupter
 - The Self-Answerer
 - The Fast Talker





The classroom environment

Teacher attitude and class community building



Do I encourage questions, debate, different views, and curiosity?

- *Great question! I bet a lot people are curious about that.*
- *Good point. Tell me more about....*
- *Interesting. I hadn't thought of it that way. What do others think?*
- *Would anyone like to respond to Nuri's comment?*
- *I'm not sure. How can we find out...? Where can we look for evidence?*



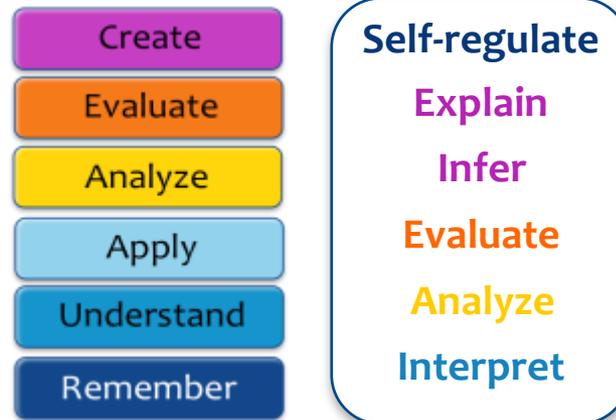
The classroom environment

Planning for critical thinking



Do I design objectives and activities to encourage critical thought?

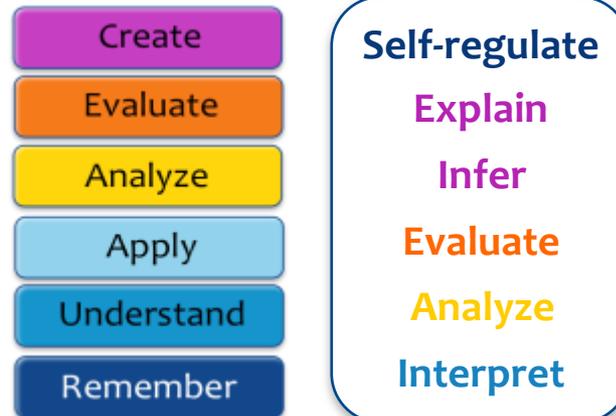
- Build critical thinking into objectives
 - Bloom's taxonomy (revised)
 - Six Cognitive Skills of Strong Critical Thinkers



+ Critical thinking objectives

Students will be able to:

- Use a graphic organizer to identify main ideas and supporting details....
- Identify how the author uses adjectives and adverbs to....
- Provide evidence to support their response to....
- Identify two biases and assumptions they have in relation to...





The classroom environment

Planning for critical thinking



Do I design objectives and activities to encourage critical thought?

- Build critical thinking into objectives
 - Bloom's taxonomy (revised)
 - Cognitive Skills of Strong Critical Thinkers
- Use question starters

Higher Order Thinking Skills Question Template



Analysis

How does _____ work?
What caused _____?
What is another possible cause of _____?
In what sequence did _____ happen?
Break _____ down into its component parts.
Give an example of _____.
What literary form or device is being used in these lines?
What technique is being used?
Into what groups can you organize these?
What does _____ symbolize?
Find examples of [a literary device] in your readings.
Analyze the _____ in _____.
Classify these _____ according to _____
Separate the _____ from the _____.
Translate _____.
Analyze how _____.
Explain how _____ works.
What was the author's point of view?
How did the author convey _____?
What words does the author use to paint an image of _____ in your mind?
How were _____ used to _____?
What kind of a _____ is this?
What is the function of _____?
What is the purpose of _____?
What is the relationship between _____ and _____?
What is the pattern?
Of what is _____ a symbol?
(These questions also ask *why* and *how*.)

Comparison

Give and justify your opinion on _____.
How is _____ like _____?
How are _____ and _____ different?
Compare the _____ before and after _____.
Compare the character _____ at the beginning of the story and at the end.

On what dimensions might you compare _____ and _____?
Which one is the biggest/shortest/tallest?
What other piece of literature, historical event or person is similar to this novel?

Inference

Hypothesize what will happen if _____.
What is the main idea of the story _____?
What is the overall theme of _____?
What is the moral of the story?
Based on your readings, what can you conclude about _____?
What was the author's point of view?
What if _____?
What rule applies here?
What generalization can you make from this novel?
Propose a solution to the problem of _____

Evaluation

Was _____ worth the costs? Explain your answer.
Was the argument convincing? What makes you think so?
Did _____ behave appropriately? Why?
What would you have done in this situation? Why?
Write a critique of _____.
Judge which is the best solution to the problem of _____? Why do you think so?
How well are the conclusions supported by the data/ facts/evidence? Explain.
Did _____ choose a wise course of action? Give reasons.
What would you have done in this situation? Why?
Which _____ is the best? Why do you think so?
Whose arguments/evidence was more convincing? Why?
If you were the judge, what would your decision



+ The classroom environment

Planning for critical thinking



Do I design objectives and activities to encourage critical thought?

- Build critical thinking into objectives
 - Bloom's taxonomy (revised)
 - Cognitive Skills of Strong Critical Thinkers
- Use question starters
- Incorporate topics students care about



+ Building critical thinking skills



Ask open-ended questions



Let's take a poll!

+

Building critical thinking skills

Ask for examples, evidence, and predictions



Matthew likes to ice skate in the winter.



Building critical thinking skills



Ask for examples, evidence, and predictions



*Is it hot or cold in this picture?
What do you see?
How do you know?*

*What will the boy do next?
Why do you think that?
What do you see? How do you know?*



Building critical thinking skills

Ask for examples, predictions, and reflection



K I <u>k</u> now....	W I <u>w</u> ant to know....	L I <u>l</u> earned...

+

Building critical thinking skills

Ask for examples, predictions, reflection, and evidence



K <i>I <u>k</u>now....</i>	W <i>I <u>w</u>ant to know....</i>	L <i>I <u>l</u>earned....</i>	E <i>I found these <u>e</u>xamples....</i>



+

Building critical thinking skills

Ask for examples, predictions, reflection, and evidence



K <i>I <u>k</u>now....</i>	W <i>I <u>w</u>ant to know....</i>	L <i>I <u>l</u>earned....</i>	H <i><u>H</u>ow I know....</i>





Building critical thinking skills



Ask for examples, predictions, reflection, evidence, and self-evaluation

K <i>I <u>k</u>now....</i>	W <i>I <u>w</u>ant to know....</i>	L <i>I <u>l</u>earned....</i>	E <i>I found these <u>e</u>xamples....</i>

Review the information in your chart.

What assumptions did you make before you read the article?





Building critical thinking skills

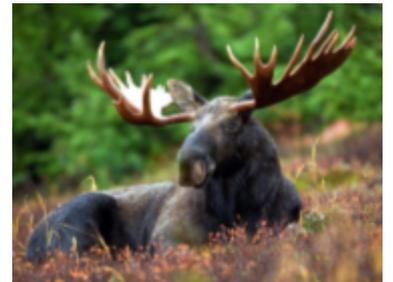
Fact versus opinion

Anchorage, Alaska's largest city, has the best food in the state and everyone will love its cultural activities. Cultural sites include the Alaska Center for Performing Arts, the Anchorage Museum, the Alaska Native Heritage Center, and more!

Anchorage is near several national parks and it has the most beautiful local parks and trails. Tourists can fish, hike, bike, ski, kayak, and ice skate.

Did you know?

- Anchorage has more espresso stands per capita than any other U.S. city. The coffee roasted in Anchorage is delicious!
- According to the Department of Wildlife, Anchorage is home to about 1,900 moose, 250 black bears, and 60 grizzlies.





Building critical thinking skills

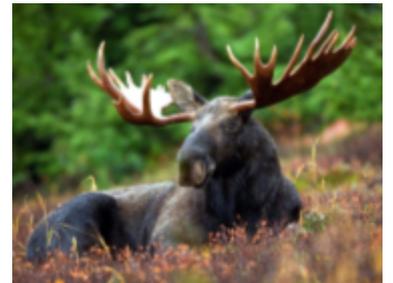
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+ The Great Mini-Debate

English Teaching Forum – Try This

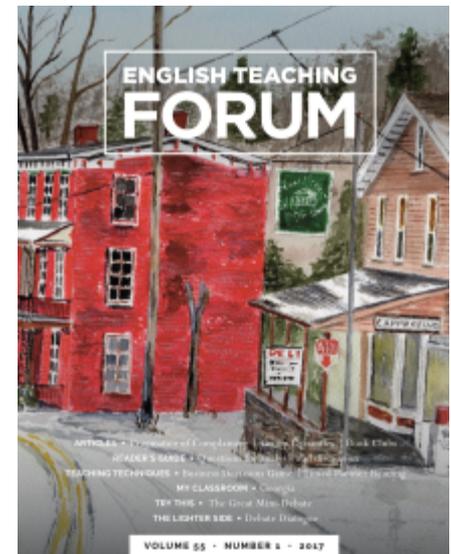
■ **Level:** Upper Intermediate

■ **Goals:**

- To present an oral argument using evidence
- To use functional language related to agreeing, disagreeing, and showing contrasting opinions

■ **Materials:**

- Blackboard and chalk, or whiteboard and markers
- Paper and pencils or pens
- A timing device



+ The Great Mini-Debate



Preparation:

- Choose a debate theme
- Create a debate topic set related to the theme
- Select topics that people will have strong but differing opinions about

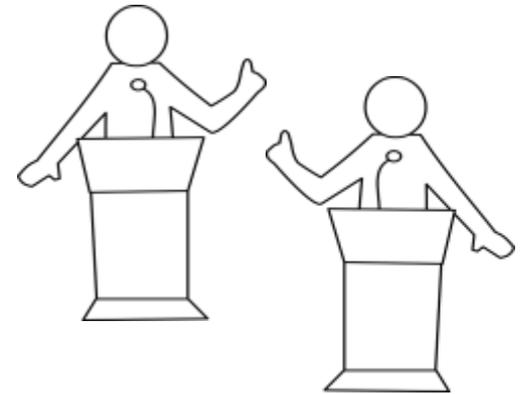
Debate Theme: Digital Communication
and Social Media



+ The Great Mini-Debate



- Activate background knowledge about debates
 - Brainstorm qualities of a strong debater
 - Write ideas on board
- Mention essential skills: agreeing, disagreeing, contrasting opinions
 - Elicit language related to these functions
 - Capture ideas in a Functional Language Chart



+ The Great Mini-Debate



Functional Language Chart

Agreeing	Disagreeing 	Contrasting opinions

+ because...

+ The Great Mini-Debate

Debate Theme: Digital Communication and Social Media

Topic Set

- Social media platforms are mostly used for trivial (unimportant) purposes.
- Texting is better than email or handwritten letters.
- The benefit of easily sharing information via social media outweighs the potential damage to personal privacy.
- Social media should be used in educational settings and can contribute to learning.

★ Our reliance on texting has damaged our ability to have important face-to-face conversations (e.g., making apologies, congratulating someone, saying thank you).

- Tell students they are going to prepare for a debate
- Put students into groups
 - Select a group leader
- Groups vote on topic
- Ask group members to line up according to their opinion

+ The Great Mini-Debate



I agree completely



I disagree completely

Team "For"



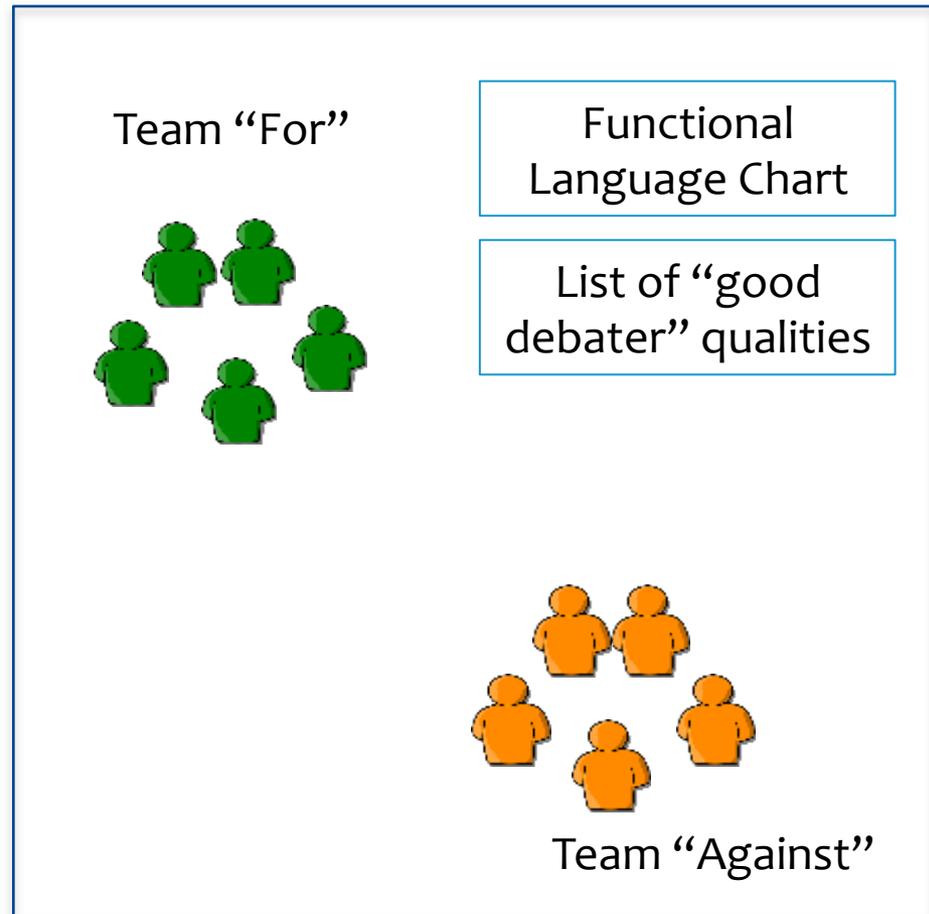
Team "Against"

+ The Great Mini-Debate

* 20 minutes to prepare and take notes *

Group leaders facilitate:

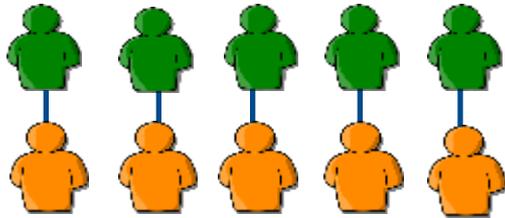
- **10 minutes** - brainstorm evidence and examples
- **5 minutes** – discuss and identify strongest evidence
- **5 minutes** - discuss possible arguments from the other team and how to respond



+ The Great Mini-Debate



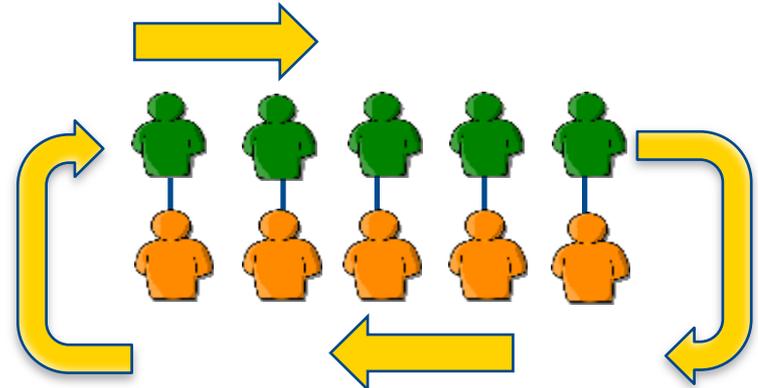
Team "For"



Team "Against"

Debate for 1-2 minutes with partner

Team "For"



Team "Against"

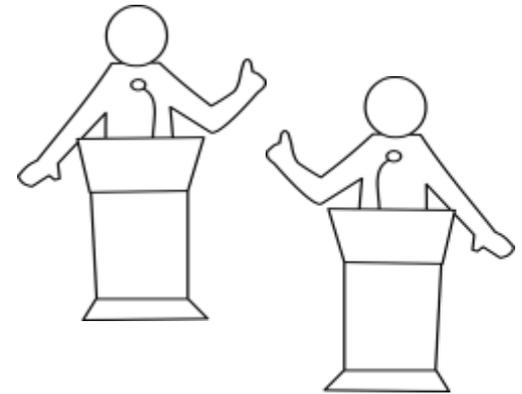
"Team For" members shift one place
Repeat mini-debate

+ The Great Mini-Debate



Bring the class back together

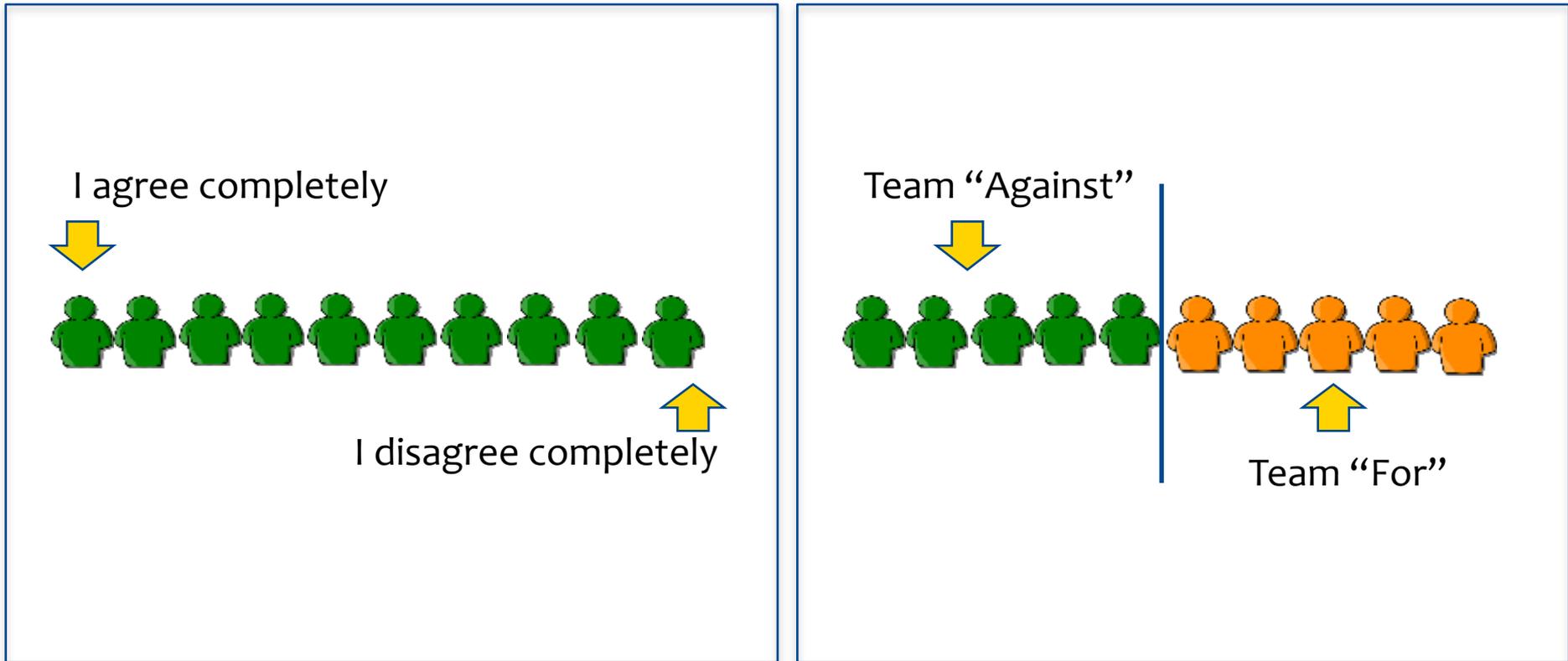
- Evaluate strength of arguments and evidence
- Review any observed language issues
- Ask students if debates became easier or more difficult after each round. Why?



+

The Great Mini-Debate

Critical Thinking Extension #1



It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it. – Aristotle

+ The Great Mini-Debate

Critical Thinking Extension #2

Students complete a “mingle” role-play

- Identify relevant roles related to the topic
- Conduct further research (optional)
- Evaluate and synthesize arguments
- Reflect on insights gained



Let's take a poll!

+ Objectives review



- Better understand what it means to “think critically”
- Consider why we should teach critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom
- Examine how to build critical thinking skills
 - The teacher’s role
 - Practical ideas for the classroom



+ The Goal = Nurture Lifelong Learners

Teach so that students think their ideas matter.

*Ask them to make connections and
recognize patterns.*

*They will experience a responsibility for their own
education and think about what they learn and read.*

***Students will be involved with their own
learning, will feel deeply about it, and learn to
value and trust their own thoughts and ideas.***



Schafersman (1991), p. 8
summarizing ideas from Dr. Dennis Hutton

+ Sources

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Thank you!

I look forward to
learning with you on
the Ning.

Heather Benucci
American English Webinar Series 6

