

Language Teaching Matters

Papers in Honour of
Z.N. Patil

Edited by

K. Venkat Reddy
Sudhakar Marathé

EMESCO

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Orienting ESL/EFL Students towards Critical Thinking A Fruitful Approach through Pictorial Inferences and Elucidation

Vijay Singh Thakur

Department of Languages and Translation
Dhofar University, Sultanate of Oman

Abstract

The concept of Critical Thinking (CT) and the idea of Lifelong Learning (LL) are so closely inter-related that it is impossible to separate one from the other. Critical thinking is one of the vital competencies required to live, survive and flourish in today's knowledge-based world of competition. Critical thinking as an important life skill in modern societies is of particular importance in academic settings where students need to be able to analyse ideas to get at clear understanding. A fundamental aspect of critical thinking is the meta-cognitive activity that brings to reflect on the thinking itself, to evaluate one's own thinking practice and to learn from the same learning experience. However, unlike ordinary thinking, which is an inborn human endowment, critical thinking seems to require implicit or explicit instruction. In view of this, we need to orient our ESL/EFL students towards critical thinking along with the teaching of four language skills, i.e., Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Against the backdrop of the importance of critical thinking in developing information-based societies and the benefits of using visuals in teaching, this paper aims to demonstrate how schematic pictorial presentations can be exploited as stimuli to orient ESL/EFL learners towards critical thinking.

Introduction

The need to build knowledge-based society has been considered and emphasized a global challenge for the new millennium. The representatives of many nations, in the Geneva World Summit on Information Society (2003) declared the common desire and commitment to build "[...] a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life". In order to help people to share information and knowledge, and each individual to make a personal contribution to public life, education has a fundamental role to play. Making a personal