

Fostering Critical Thinking and Information Literacy in English as a Second Language Classes_

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ABSTRACT

The importance of fostering critical thinking at all levels of education will be discussed initially, with emphasis on current research in the area of critical thinking in the context of English as a Second Language education. The special case of learners who are enrolled in ESL programs will be addressed in terms of both cultural and practical issues, based on the experience of the presenter who has served for five years abroad as an ESL educator. Audience feedback, questions, and suggestions will be elicited, particularly concerning specific issues of implementation which may be of concern. Such discussions may involve curriculum design limitations, concerns about the availability of resources, learner fluency, and instructor training issues.

Following a review of the relevant literature and the development of a rationale for integrating critical thinking into ESL classes, examples of activities for fostering critical thinking will be presented, based on a pilot study currently underway in Taiwan. Observations and feedback from the instructor, researchers, and participants will be provided in order to gauge the success of the pilot project. Participants will be given the opportunity to take the perspective of the ESL learner, sampling the materials and activities which were designed during the developmental stage of the research project. In addition, several sample projects and student work will be exhibited, highlighting areas wherein critical thinking skills were demonstrated. Participant feedback and suggestions for improvement will be warmly welcomed during the final Q&A session.