ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

The Ways of Students' Language Learning: Preferably KSA EFL Learners

Fatemah Hamad Aldosari
Lecturer (Applied linguistics)
Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khaled University,K.S.A.

Abstract:

Language learning styles have aroused a great deal of attention. With the advent of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, the focus of language teaching theories has shifted from the teacher or instructor to the learners. Creative and Critical thinking is an approach to the teaching of EFL classrooms that emphasizes communication and interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. Rather than a gain, learning English (as a foreign language) can become a loss if learners are not motivated to think carefully about the cultural and political aspects of the language they are learning or those embedded in the syllabus, materials, methods, and testing the language. For this purpose, I took some students from my own College as the subjects of the study. Furthermore, this study also included few teachers who were teaching the subject students. Therefore, a closer cooperation between teachers and students in some instances is necessary.

Keywords:
communicative language, creative thinking, critical approach, individual learning, material design, syllabus planning

(Received: 15 September 2023; Revised: 07 October 2023; Accepted: 24 November 2023; Published: 29 December 2023)

Creativity improves self-esteem as learners can look at their own solutions to problems and their own products and see what they are able to achieve. Creative work in the language classroom can lead to genuine communication and co-operation. Learners use the language to do the creative task, so they use it as a tool, in its original function. This prepares learners for using the language instrumentally outside the classroom. Creative tasks enrich classroom work, and they make it more varied and more enjoyable by tapping into individual talents, ideas and thoughts - both the learners' and the teacher's. Creative thinking is an important skill in real life. It is part of our survival strategies and it is a force behind personal growth and the development of culture and society.

Language use is a creative act: we transform thoughts into language that can be heard or seen. We are capable of producing sentences and even long texts that we have never heard or seen before. By giving learners creative exercises, we get them to practice an important sub-skill of using a language: thinking creatively. Compensation strategies (methods used for making up for lack of language in a communicative situation e.g. miming, drawing, paraphrasing used for getting meaning across) use creative and often imaginative ways of expression. Our learners will

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

need these until they master the language. In my experience, some people cannot learn at all if they are not allowed to be creative. They do not understand the point in doing a language activity for its own sake, for only practicing the language without a real content, purpose, outcome or even a product. My experience also taught me that most people become more motivated, inspired or challenged if they can create something of value; if they feel that in some ways what they do and how they do it reflect who they are.

In KSA, education system still relies heavily on examinations because it considers education as nothing more than a tool for obtaining a certificate and then getting a good job or starting a business. For this reason, the true objective of education, i.e., the ability of an individual to think and decide about any issue or context, remains largely ignored. Our learners in KSA lack analytical skills when they enter universities, because very few of them learn to question and doubt. The lecture-centered teaching-learning limits the learners' ability to think and find additional information on the topic that the teacher covers in the class. The dead-end-questions where learners are required to find the answers from a reading text or the teacher's lecture are promoted, which does not encourage students, thinking or effective communication. When questions are discouraged, communication is one way. So, the students' creative ideas and their ability to think for themselves do not develop. The absence of training in critical thinking leads to the students performing activities without understanding the objectives or the benefits to their academic and personal lives. This is why; they are unable to apply their knowledge to new situations. Using thinking skills while learning the language can open the door for learners and to make sense of the world around them and the ability to choose better alternatives.

A mechanical attitude to language teaching on the part of the instructor can end up constricting the students' ability to learn. Moreover, if the students and the instructors are unable to detect the bias inherent in language and expressions, the objective of providing humane education will falter. A text Book like Headway or Open Forum has become the most used book in communicative language learning/teaching even though it is full of references to western subjects that the students cannot connect to their own lives. In short, it is culturally biased as it does not show sensitivity towards aspirations of other cultures. For instance, there is rarely mention of the minorities. So, different cultures are neglected. It is for this reason that not only EFL learners, but also EFL teachers need to learn how to use critical thinking when they use the English language. The objective of this paper is to demonstrate how to incorporate critical thinking in an EFL lesson plan. Besides, discussing what critical thinking is, this paper also outlines the objective and purpose of using critical thinking in EFL classrooms.

In the classroom, learners usually ask how to look for the inner meaning while reading, how to find contextual meaning of words, how to paraphrase using synonyms, and so on. At that time, many teachers ask them to read the same thing a few more times, or just avoid their questions. Since most of the teachers are not familiar with the strategies of critical thinking and close reading, they fail to guide their students properly. So, learners have vague ideas; and, they ask the same question in every class. Once they become aware of the strategies, learners will take charge of their own thinking and will be able to analyze and formulate ideas, arguments, and opinions. By using critical thinking skills, readers will interpret, see alternative meaning, and create new concepts. Without relying on the language skill only, learners will create

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

understandable and rational thoughts whereas speakers will have a comprehensible idea of what they want to say, and listeners will summarize what is being said. Instead of transmitting knowledge, teachers guide them through a procedure of finding out for themselves.

A teacher's challenge is to lead learners step by step so that they are able to analyze, the verify information, check sources, and compare and contrast different versions of the same information in order to identify prejudice, if any. The ability to think on our own can help us do well both inside and outside the classroom. Asking questions about the content can help learners understand the material better and remember it longer. A text can help the students understand topic, but "deep questioning" can help them understand what they know about a topic and how to improve their thinking process. If a teacher shows an image of an advertisement for "Ponds fair glow" skin whitening cream, and asks "Do you like this advertisement?" Their answer to this question would be yes/ no, which will limit their thoughts. But if the teacher can ask: "In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a good advertisement? Explain with reference to this advertisement?" This will make them think, examine, and then come up with multiple perspectives. Therefore, it is vital to provide learners with activities and questions that foster and build a sense of responsibility for their action.

If we engage learners intellectually with clear, systematic, and relevant instruction, only then they will be able to transfer the knowledge and skills they gain from the English language classroom to the outside world. Students need to give their points of view to interact with the materials they encounter in different subject context areas. Teachers should encourage students to ask questions which create conflict and confusion. In both written and oral work, teachers need to emphasize logic and clear development of ideas. Students should be trained to think, discuss, debate, and learn so that there is more than one way to interpret an issue.

Learning a new language does not only mean that one has to learn the rules of that language, but one is also required to learn how to use that language and how to relate words with concepts. Since words and concepts are socially constructed, without a proper idea about the social relations of humans, one cannot successfully communicate either at an academic institution or at the work place.

For example, when I tell my students to introduce them to another, they approach directly and ask "What is your name?" instead of introducing themselves first.

It is also noticed that for speaking, they can't get proper words for their conversation how going on!

Once learners know some vocabulary and their using for their day to day life, practicing with friends or family members should be required.

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

Students are able to benefit from the use of technology in most subject areas within the curriculum to enhance overall engagement and understanding of content. Instructors can integrate technology into class lessons, after-school activities, assignments and assessment methods.

Here are some of the other ways Instructors' can control technology to improve student learning outcomes -

1. Flexible learning opportunities

With technology at the forefront, access to course material is no longer restricted to just the library or the classroom. With smart devices connected to the Internet, students can carry with them the learning resources and learn anywhere at any time.

2. Interactive Learning

Technology also provides opportunities to make learning more engaging and enjoyable in terms of teaching concepts in new and unique ways. For instance, using virtual field trips and leveraging other online learning resources allows educators to encourage active student participation in the learning process which can be difficult to achieve in a traditional learning setup.

3. Personalized education

Technology plays a key role in personalizing and individualizing education for higher education students. By limiting the need to deliver vast amounts of information, technology allows instructors to give more time to individual students.

As instructors get more time to understand students' individual needs and interact with them, adapting their teaching strategies to suit the interests and needs of the students becomes much easier.

Inventing activities can be done outside the classroom in such way:

Our learners' are mostly like to be oriented with traditional classroom learning.
To some extent, Instructors can take them out close to the nature for refreshing their mind to can make something creative.

Instructors' can open an Innovation Day for the learners.
Have a day in which students are able to create an invention with the help of a mentor.

Solve a Real-World Problem
Have students brainstorm problems within their community or facing the world. Then students can work in small groups to come up with ideas to solve that problem.

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

Have a roundtable discussion in which each student talks about what they wish someone would invent to make life easier.

Before the discussion, have students brainstorm problems they deal with daily or what irks them. They can work in pairs and create a mind map of these problems or bit them in a chart.

Critical Thinking is an important element in modern education as it teaches learners to systematically think about a specific subject. It also helps them interpret spoken, written, and graphic messages through explanation, interpretation, and comparison, and make judgments based on evidences. Schools, colleges, and Universities are the places to expand the students' knowledge, question facts, and analyze principles. To be successful in both in academic and personal life, one needs to think about an issue from different angles, examining probable alternatives, exchanging well thought out opinions, and making correct decisions. Learning a new language does not only mean that one has to learn the rules of that language, but one is also required to learn how to use that language and how to relate words with concepts. Since words and concepts are socially constructed, without a proper idea about the social relations of humans, one cannot successfully communicate either at an academic institution or at the workplace. For example, when I tell my students to introduce them to another, they approach directly and ask me "what is your name?" instead of introducing themselves first. It is also noticed that after two or three sentences personal questions are asked – "are you married?", or "how many children do you have?". The idea of creating reference goes back to Saussure's signifier where things are relational, but not absolutely determined. Interpretation may mean there are other possible ways of translating. So, meaning is in relation to other things and is not fixed.

In the classroom, learners usually ask how to look for the inner meaning while reading, how to find contextual meaning of words, how to paraphrase using synonyms, and so on. At that time, many teachers ask them to read the same thing a few more times, or just avoid their questions. Since most of the teachers are not familiar with the strategies of critical thinking and close reading, they fail to guide their students properly. So, learners have vague ideas; and, they ask the same question in every class. Once they become aware of the strategies, learners will take charge of their own thinking and will be able to analyze and formulate ideas, arguments, and opinions. By using critical thinking skills, readers will interpret, see alternative meaning, and create new concepts. Without relying on the language skill only, learners will create understandable and rational thoughts whereas speakers will have a comprehensible idea of what they want to say, and listeners will summarize what is being said. Instead of transmitting knowledge, teachers guide them through a procedure of finding out for themselves.

Critical thinking is a vital part of teaching learners how to analyze, and then speak and write in the academic programs and also in practical life. Developing this skill is important because it is a life-long skill. At the freshmen level, most of the learners are poor thinkers, not because they are incapable of thinking well, but because they have never been taught to think before. They go to the university without developing the habit of thinking for themselves. Teachers need to help

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

learners develop thinking skills and hence better them to accomplish their objectives in the world.

Critical thinking is a way of thinking which helps one to think critically and also allows one to share a kind of common way of thinking globally. So, then one can agree or make better decisions for the whole world. Teachers need to be aware of the objectives of critical thinking so that learners can know about the culturally different approaches to knowledge acquisition and also point out why and how critical thinking is useful for their university level study. Without critical thinking, people can be easily exploited both politically and economically. If language lessons can help develop problem-solving skills among learners, it can prepare them for real world challenges. Therefore, the goal for language learning should be to help learners understand the practical aspects, but also to inspire learners to broaden their knowledge. Thus, we as teachers can teach a life-long process of learning, which should be the goal of all types of education.

Researchers have started working on the learning preferences over the past three decades. A number of researchers have taken interest and worked to find out the language learning modalities by the means of self-reporting questionnaires, where students select their preferred learning styles.

Reid (1987), for example, based on the findings of a survey, distinguished four perceptual learning modalities. These perpetual learning modalities include:

1. Visual learning (for example, reading and studying charts)
2. Auditory learning (for example, listening to lectures or audiotapes)
3. Kinesthetic learning (involving physical responses?)
4. Tactile learning (hands-on learning, as in building models)

According to the findings of Reid's study, ESL students strongly prefer Kinesthetic and tactile learning styles. Group learning is marked as a negative preference by most of the learners. Reid comes to the conclusion that ESL students from different language backgrounds sometimes differ from one another in their learning style preferences, and that variables such as sex, field of study, level of education, TOEFL score, and age are related to differences in learning styles.

Lesson Plan: Part I & II

Instructor:	Title of Course: Speaking and Comprehension Skills	Grade Level: University, Upper-Intermediate
Title of Lesson: Interpretation of Advertisement Language	Number of Students: 35	Time Allowed: 1 hour
I. Overarching goal of the lesson:		

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

Students will be able to:

- Give opinions and examples through discussion, in which they can use knowledge to perform effectively and creatively.
- Practice and develop speaking skills
- Think deeply about their own activities and lifestyles
- Develop critical thinking skills by getting them involved in discussions and become autonomous thinkers.

II. Prerequisites. Assumptions:

Learners are expected to:

- Have control of oral language for involvement in discussion
- Give opinions with reasons instead of yes / no
- Speak using full sentences instead of points
- Have personal experience and knowledge about the topic
- Be able to follow instructions

III. Instructional Objectives:	CT Strategy	Bloom's domain and level
1. Students will be able to recall and share their ideas on the discussion questions and relate the ideas into schematic knowledge.	S-2 Developing insight into Egocentricity or Sociocentricity	Cognitive, Application Level
2. Students will be able to express and apply their views, constructing an answer out of old and new knowledge	S-11 Comparing Analogues Situations: Transferring Insights to New contexts	Cognitive, Application Level
3. Students will be able to interpret the hidden meaning of adverts in finding out how they help construct cultural	S-4 Exploring thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts	Cognitive, Comprehension Level

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

values and present a sense of what is normal or ideal.		
4. Students give oral presentation on the implicit and explicit messages to make connections between the influences of commercials and their own lifestyles by logical deduction.	S-22 Listening critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue	Cognitive, Analysis Level
5. Students are able to design an advertisement with emphasis on creating a new meaning.	S-9 Developing confidence in reason	Cognitive, Synthesis Level
IV. Instructional Procedures:		
1. What is / are the model's age, dress, ethnicity, and social status? 2. What is your advert copy? Copy means the words or phrase that will appear in the advertisement. Usually the copy consists of short memorable slogan. 3. What is the background? People? Animal? Objects? 4. Where will the name of the product appear? 5. How large will it be? 6. What colors will you use and how do layout and color function?		
V. Assessments: Description of determining the extent to which students have attained the instructional objectives	Instructional Objectives	
1. While having discussion on the questions, students are required to simply recall and apply knowledge to help improve their thinking. Express opinions about new topics.	The students will be able to use words and concepts which are appropriate for the knowledge and give some examples S -14 Clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases.	
2. Students are required to construct their answers out of old and new knowledge so that there is no exact answer to these questions.	Students will be able to provide details of the specific knowledge and experience and add explanation as necessary S -11 Comparing analogues situations: Transferring insights to new contexts.	

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

3. Through images, students are required to find out how meaning is constructed and how people are exploited.	The students will be able to use arguments which are adapted to the values S -4 Exploring thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts
4. Students are required to do a 5 minute presentation in which they reveal the manipulative power of commercials that dominate human minds	Students use delivery to emphasize and enhance the meaning of the message S -22 Listening critically: The art of silent dialogue.
5. Students are required to construct new knowledge to see that their thinking is revealed.	S-9 Developing confidence in reason

VI. Follow-up Activities:

The teacher describes the activities that will be used to extend/ reinforce the critical thinking components of this lesson (e.g: homework, reviews, activities done in subsequent lessons, etc.) and which critical thinking strategies will these fo;;ow-ups target?

A mini project work on the product: Devise an advertisement where students construct a substantial, tangible product that reveals their understanding of certain skills and concepts to apply and synthesize. Students construct new knowledge.

VII. Evaluation:

The information used to appraise the strength and weaknesses of this lesson are:

- Observe and make notes on students' responses while they make judgments about the value of ideas on the advertisement during the discussion, and oral presentation.

This information will be gathered:

- At the end of the class, the teacher asks students to write a 2 minute paper on what they have learned and what was difficult to understand.

VIII. Self-Assessment (assessment of my teaching):

The process/technique for reflecting on teaching of this lesson will be:

- After every instruction, I carefully notice whether my students complete the tasks in proper direction. The major reason behind students' good performance is the proper instruction provided by the teacher. If students cannot perform the task properly, the instruction will be modified.

The following question will be asked:

- Is the objective attained at the end of the lesson?
- Did I give enough time for students to think over the discussion questions?
- To what extent, did the questions foster critical and creative thinking?

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

- What can be done to improve the situation next time?

Conclusion

The study provides some major implications which can be summarized through the following points:

Exploring and analyzing a learner's individual particular learning style can be very helpful and beneficial to the learner by aiding them in becoming a more focused and attentive learner, which ultimately can argument educational success.

Students did not favour the types of learning activities which emphasize receptive skills, thus only leaving the students passive during the learning program. They did not like to remain passive in the classroom, but wished to participate actively in classroom activities.

"Learning about culture" caught the interest of both students and teachers. This fact shows that they were aware of the crucial importance of developing cultural competence in the process of language learning and teaching.

Finally, students got a sense of satisfaction not only by getting high grades, but also by seeing that they were more successful than before in using the language to communicate.

References

Bean, J. C. (2001). *Engaging ideas*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass

Foundation for Critical Thinking. (2009). *A Brief History of the Idea of Critical Thinking*. 27 Jun. 2011

http://www.criticalthinking.org/about CT/briefHistoryCT.cfm

http://www.criticalthinking.org/resources/k12/the-art-of-redesigning-in.

Fowler, Barbara. (2008). Critical Thinking Definitions. Critical Thinking across the Curriculum Project. 8 Oct. 2008

Paul, R. & Elder, L. (2005). *The Nature and Functions of Creative and Critical Thinking*.

California: The Foundation for Critical Thinking

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:12, Issue:4, December 2023

Ramage, J.D. Bean, J.C. & Johnson, J. (2006). *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing.* NY:Pearson Longman

Shahidullah, M. (2002). *Developments in Learning Theories and the concept of Appropriate ELT Pedagogy.*

Clark, D.R.(2008). Learning Domains or Bloom's Taxonomy. 19 Oct. 2008

http://nwlink.com