



## Critical Thinking Skills and Ways to Improve Them

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**Abstract:** This article deals with the feasibility and desirability of integrating English language skills and critical thinking skills and examines the role of English language teachers in such a merger.

**Keywords:** Critical thinking skills, Language macro-skills, thinking skills, employability skills.

An English language teacher is always an English language teacher anywhere and everywhere. Learners acquire English language skills and critical thinking skills as one inseparable package. Acquisition of one without the other at a time is no longer sustainable. This article deals with the feasibility and desirability of integrating English language skills and critical thinking skills and examines the role of English language teachers in such a merger.

Thinking skills that consist of creative and critical skills should be seen as part of

language skills that consist of listening, speaking, reading, and writing for the simple reason that thinking is impossible without language and that language is of no use sans thinking. Ironically, all teaching methods, approaches, and theories have not emphasized the role of thinking skills as the contents of these language skills. Both sets of these skills cannot be acquired independent of each other

Critical thinking skill is one of the most desirable employability skills and survival skills in any democracy.

Critical thinking calls for a persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports it and the further conclusions to which it tends. It also generally requires ability to recognize problems, to find workable means for meeting those problems, to gather and marshal pertinent information, to recognize unstated assumptions and values, to comprehend and use language with accuracy, clarity, and discrimination, to interpret data, to appraise evidence and evaluate arguments, to recognize the existence (or non-existence) of logical relationships between propositions, to draw warranted conclusions and generalizations, to put to test the conclusions and generalizations at which one arrives, to reconstruct one's patterns of beliefs on the basis of wider experience, and to render accurate judgments about specific things and qualities in everyday.

Critical thinking skills involve analyzing something in order to form a judgement about it. A critical thinker does not take the assumptions of a topic for granted. Instead, the critical thinking involves 'critiquing' what you are viewing using your available intellectual knowledge. People who think critically can use three processes to develop critical insights on a topic: deduction, induction and abduction.

Deduction includes the critical thinking skills that involve drawing conclusions

Based on the facts at hand. You have all the facts available to you to come to a clear and unambiguous conclusion about a topic. For example, a doctor does blood tests to determine if



someone has a virus. The blood tests come back positive, so we can deduce that you definitely have that virus. Deduction is a great skill to use if you want to solve problems. Induction includes the critical thinking skills that involve drawing conclusions based on a generalization. You don't have all the exact information at hand.

However, you think critically and realize are aware of patterns, clues and a methodology that can help you induce the answer. For example, you come to the doctor exhibiting a fever, sneezing and coughing. The doctor doesn't do tests, but they induce that you probably have influenza because your symptoms are characteristic of someone with the flu. Abduction includes the critical thinking skills that involve coming to a conclusion that is the most likely or logical based on the small amount of knowledge that you have. You can't be sure of the answer, but you can think critically and make an educated guess. For example, you may see that a cat is on the roof. The most logical answer is that the cat got up there by climbing a nearby tree and jumping from it to the roof, but you can't be sure.

Creative thinking involves thinking about a topic in unusual, unconventional and alternative ways to generate new ideas about an established topic. A creative thinker will try to address an issue from a perspective that hasn't been used before.

While creative thinking may appear illogical, it is in fact a great driver of human development. Creative thinkers identify gaps in marketplaces or new, easier, faster and better ways of doing things. When a creative thinker comes up with a great new way of approaching an issue, their new method can become the new orthodoxy.

To become one takes time, practice, and patience. But something you can start doing *today* to improve your critical thinking skills is apply the 7 steps of critical thinking to every problem you tackle—either at work or in your everyday life.

Plus, there are some critical thinking questions to help you out at each of the steps.

#### Steps of Critical Thinking

1. Identify the problem or question.

Be as precise as possible: the narrower the issue, the easier it is to find solutions or answers.

2. Gather data, opinions, and arguments.

Try to find several sources that present different ideas and points of view.

3. Analyze and evaluate the data.

Are the sources reliable? Are their conclusions data-backed or just argumentative? Is there enough information or data to support given hypotheses?

4. Identify assumptions.

Are you sure the sources you found are unbiased? Are you sure you weren't biased in your search for answers?

#### **5. Establish significance.**

What piece of information is most important? Is the sample size sufficient? Are all opinions and arguments even relevant to the problem you're trying to solve?

#### **6. Make a decision/reach a conclusion.**

Identify various conclusions that are possible and decide which (if any) of them are sufficiently supported. Weigh strengths and limitations of all possible options.



## 7. Present or communicate.

Once you've reached a conclusion, present it to all stakeholders.

So, when you think critically, you'll constantly challenge what seems given. Say, in your job, even if something appears to be functioning properly, critical thinking will help you try and identify new, *better* solutions.

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