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Methods of Teaching

"Developing Students Critical Thinking Through English Pragmatic Activities"

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1. Introduction

Critical thinking is a crucial skill that enables individuals to analyze information, solve problems, and make informed decisions. In language learning, pragmatic activities play a key role in developing this skill by encouraging students to engage in real-world communication and context-based language use (Fromkin et al., 1999). Unlike traditional grammar-focused exercises, pragmatic activities require learners to interpret meanings, assess social situations, and respond appropriately (Crystal, 2008). Activities such as role-play, dialogue completion, and problem-solving tasks promote higher-order thinking skills, aligning with Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). Through these activities, students enhance both their linguistic competence and critical thinking abilities (Brown, 1995). By integrating pragmatic activities into language education, teachers can create a learning environment that supports effective communication, problem-solving, and deeper cognitive engagement (Achmad & Yusuf, 2014).

2. Bloom's Taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom (1956) developed a classification of levels of intellectual behavior in learning. This taxonomy contained three overlapping domains:

1- The cognitive

2- Psychomotor

2- Affective. Within the cognitive domain, he identified six levels:
   1- Knowledge,
   2- Comprehension,
   3- Application,
   4- Analysis,
   5- Synthesis
   6- Evaluation.

   These domains and levels are still useful today as you develop the critical thinking skills of your students. Critical thinking involves logical thinking and reasoning including skills such as comparison, classification, sequencing, cause/effect, patterning, webbing, analogies, deductive and inductive reasoning, forecasting, planning, hypothesizing, and critiquing. " When we talk about HOTS "higher-order thinking skills" we're concentrating on the top

three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Bloom's Taxonomy, created by educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom in 1953, is a six-tier pyramid of learning levels beginning with knowledge as the basis of learning. Knowledge is built upon by comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, with each skill increasing a student's conceptual understanding of a topic or field of study and experience.

3. Concept of Critical Thinking

- Edward Glaser (1941) defined critical thinking as "the ability to think critically"
- Critical thinking is the active and skillful process of analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information to make reasoned judgments (Facione, 1990). It involves questioning assumptions, assessing evidence, and applying logic in decision-making.
- Paul and Elder (2006) define critical thinking as an intellectually disciplined process that guides belief and action through careful reasoning. Components of Critical Thinking Critical thinking consists of several essential components that guide analytical and logical reasoning.

According to Facione (1990) and Paul & Elder (2006), the components include:
1. Interpretation – Understanding and explaining meaning from data, experiences, or situations.
2. Analysis – Identifying relationships, patterns, and logical connections in arguments.
3. Evaluation – Assessing credibility, strengths, and weaknesses of arguments and evidence.
4. Inference – Drawing logical conclusions from given facts and evidence.
5. Explanation – Communicating reasoning and justifying decisions clearly.
6. Self-Regulation – Reflecting on one's thinking process and adjusting it to improve clarity and accuracy .

4 . Concept of Pragmatics
Chomsky defines pragmatics as the study of how language is used depending on the situation. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, making the right pragmatic choices requires an understanding of different linguistic and strategic options, which may be influenced by their cultural background (Blum-Kulka, 1984).

In many ways, pragmatics is the study of "invisible" meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it is not actually said or written. In order for that to happen, speakers (or writers) must be able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectations when they try to communicate. The investigation of those assumptions and expectations provides us with some insights into how we understand more than just the linguistic content of utterances. From the perspective of pragmatics, more is always being communicated than is said.

5 . Aspects of Pragmatics

1. Speech Acts

Speech acts are actions performed via utterances. We perform speech acts when we offer an apology, greeting, request, complaint, invitation, compliment, or refusal. For example, when your boss at work says, "You are fired," such an utterance is not only a statement; it ends your employment. Speech acts might contain only one word, as in "Sorry!" to perform an apology, or more than one word or sentence(s), as in "I am sorry, I forgot your birthday." When an interrogative structure such as Did you … ?, Is she … ? or Can you … ? is used with the function of a question, it is described as a direct speech act. If we really don't know something and we ask for the information (e.g. about ability), we normally use a direct speech act, as in Can you ride a bicycle?. Compare that utterance with Can you pass the salt?. In this second example, we are not really asking a question about someone's ability. We are using an interrogative structure to make a request. This is an example of an indirect speech act.

2. Conversational Maxims

English conversation can be described as an activity in which, for the most part, two or more people take turns at speaking. Typically, only one person speaks at a time and there tends to be an avoidance of silence between speaking turns in most conversational exchanges is that the participants are cooperating with each other. This principle, plus four elements, or "maxims," were first described by the philosopher Paul Grice (1975: 45), The Co-operative Principle:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. The Quantity maxim: Make your contribution as informative as is required, but not more, or less, than is required. The Quality maxim: Do not say that which you believe to be false or for which you lack adequate evidence. The Relation maxim: Be relevant. The Manner maxim: Be clear, brief and orderly.

3. Implicature

An additional meaning conveyed by a speaker adhering to the Co-operative Principle . - C A R O L : Are you coming to the party tonight? - L A R A : I've got an exam tomorrow. On the face of it, Lara's statement is not an answer to Carol's question. Lara doesn't say Yes or No. Yet Carol will interpret the statement as meaning "No" or "Probably not." How can we account for this ability to grasp one meaning from a sentence that, in a literal sense, means something else? It seems to depend on the assumption that Lara is being relevant (Relation) and informative (Quantity). Given that Lara's original answer contains relevant information, Carol can work out that "exam tomorrow" involves "study tonight," and "study tonight" precludes "party tonight." Thus, Lara's answer is not just a statement about tomorrow's activities, it contains an implicature (an additional conveyed meaning) concerning tonight's activities .

4. Deixis

Means "pointing" via language. We use deixis to point to people (us, them), places (here, over there) and times (now, last week). All these deictic expressions are interpreted in terms of which person, place or time the speaker has in mind. We also make a broad distinction between what is close to the speaker (this, here, now) and what is distant or not close to the speaker (that, there, then). 5. Presupposition What a speaker (or writer) assumes is true or known by a listener (or reader) can be described as a presupposition .when a speaker says: Your brother is waiting outside; she/he presupposes that the listener has a brother and the speaker knows that the listener has a brother.