

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving While Teaching English for Special Purposes

Varabyeva T. A.
Belarusian State University

Critical thinking and Problem Solving are one of the most important skills in education across subjects to develop students' ability to reason, to solve problems, and to make judgments. These skills are especially true for the XXI century because students have access to a variety of sources for information, and it might be necessary for them to analyze and evaluate information and integrate different sources of information in their problem solving. This article will consider only several forms and stages of students' developing critical thinking in the conditions of learning English language for special purposes.

In teaching English as the language for special purposes critical thinking can take different forms. They are the following: asking students to justify their ideas; asking students to work out patterns of language usage (sometimes it can be referred to an inductive approach); encouraging students to notice exceptions to 'rules'; encouraging students to notice patterns in language; being open to questions from students about language; evaluating sources of knowledge; encouraging students to do their own research about language.

There are some stages in developing critical thinking:

a) Elicitation. Every teacher should try to elicit all background information on the topic being discussed in the class from the students.

b) New knowledge. Presenting a new piece of information should involve asking different questions, engaging students to use old language patterns (learnt earlier) while learning new ones and encouraging participation and increasing understanding.

c) Collaborative work. The teaching should give a chance to every student to think creatively, to work in a group, to work out their own ideas and to fulfill their own project work on the topic provided, to present their project and explain their points of view.

d) Reflection. Every student should be taught how to analyze any solution, idea, project; to express positive and negative points and have skills to explain their choice; to provide a solution to change, to implement, to move on in case of neglecting some parts of the project.

To make a conclusion it should be mentioned that as teachers, we should also incorporate critical thinking into our professional practice. Thinking critically about why and what we do, and approaching new activities and methods with a critical mind is part of reflective practice.