

Quadrant II - Notes

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Module Name: Thinking Skills for the English Language Teacher- Using Lateral Thinking.

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Thinking Skills for the English Language Teacher- Using Lateral Thinking .

Thinking skills refer to a set of basic and advanced skills and sub skills that govern a person's mental process. Teaching knowledge is not enough in today's times. In order to survive and thrive in a complex world, every youngster leaving school needs to be equipped with basic thinking skills. Just being good at argument and critical thinking is not enough. Six core skills, also called the 21st Century skills, are Critical thinking and problem solving, Creativity and Imagination, Digital literacy, Students leadership and personal development, citizenship.

What is Thinking?

'Thinking is the deliberate exploration of experience for a purpose. That purpose may be understanding, decision making, planning, problem solving, judgment, action and so on' ,De Bono (1991, p. 33).

Teaching Thinking – thinking as a skill.

De Bono opines that, “Thinking is a skill that can be improved by training, practice and through learning how to do it better. Thinking is learning how to do it better. Thinking is no different from any other skill and we can get better at the skill of thinking if we have the will to do so”

- Thinking needs to be a part of the curriculum.
- The inclusion of thinking = Transforming teaching and learning
- Teachers can think and can teach thinking.
- Teachers have the responsibility to kindle student's minds and thoughts and let them think for themselves.

What is Lateral Thinking ?

Edward de Bono coined the term Lateral Thinking in 1973 and it is now officially a part of the Oxford Dictionary. Lateral Thinking is essential. Instead of linear or vertical thinking, which relies solely on logic, Lateral Thinking is a deliberate, systematic process of using your ability to think in a different way. The proven methods and techniques of using lateral thinking, make insight, creativity, and innovation happen.

Lateral Thinking is:

- Lateral thinking is solving problems through an indirect and creative approach, using reasoning that is not immediately obvious and involving ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step by step logic.
- Lateral thinking is deliberate creativity. It entails creating tools to become more creative.
- Lateral Thinking is the step by step approach to creativity. It is the process of using information to bring about creativity and insight restructuring.
- It is a set of processes that provides deliberate systematic way of thinking creatively that results in innovative thinking in repeatable manner
- ‘Stepping Sideways approach’ - It is looking at a problem from a variety of angles and offering up solutions that are as ingenious as they are effective.
- Seeking to solve problems by using unique methods
- A process and willingness to look at things in a different way
- Thinking that complements analytical and critical thinking
- A fast, effective tool used to help individuals, teams, and organizations solve tough problems and create new products, processes, and services.

Lateral Thinking and Creativity-

According to Edward de Bono, in his own words, “Lateral thinking is closely related to creativity, but whereas creativity is too often only the description of a result, lateral thinking is the description of a process. One can only admire a result but one can learn to use a process. There is about creativity a mystique of talent and intangibles. In order to be able to use creativity one must rid it of this aura of mystique and regard it as a way of using the

mind – a way of handling information. This is what lateral thinking is about.”

Need of Lateral Thinking in ELT .

Lateral thinking is a usable, learner skill, essential to generate ideas deliberately. It is a fast and effective tool which can be used to help individual teachers, learners and organizations to solve tough problems, tackle challenges and create new processes, products and services to enhance the teaching learning process.

Learning to think deliberately ‘outside the box’ pays off. Lateral thinking proves beneficial for the Continuous Professional development of a teacher. Teachers use it in research when evaluating evidence or interpreting sources. It comes handy for inventions and innovations in daily teaching learning processes.

From strategic academic planning to solutions for everyday classroom issues, teachers can use this method of thinking to create and innovate breakthroughs.

Lateral Thinking in ELT Classroom.

Teachers have the responsibility to rekindle student’s minds and thoughts through innovative and effective teaching strategies. They need to create opportunities for students to think creatively and critically. To motivate students to think, teachers need to;

- Teachers need to reassure students that their thinking is fine, logical in hindsight.
- Thinking for creating value needs to be developed instead of thinking to merely find the absolute truth.
- Thinking for Design and Creativity- teachers need to deliberately teach and introduce Design Product. We need to add the ability to design and to create products that are useful
- Lateral thinking can be incorporated within the curriculum either as discrete activities or could be included within a discussion simply in the form of questions.

Lateral Thinking in ELT Classroom .

Description, problem solving and design are three practical situations that encourage lateral thinking. It develops thinking tools that will generate solutions to intractable problems and areas of growth through unorthodox methods.

- Few proven methods and techniques suggested by Edward de Bono to make insight, creativity and innovations happen are ; use of Humour , Challenge, Concept extraction, Provocation , Random Entry, Argument and Developing Alternative solutions .
- Classic tales or stories could be integrated in a way wherein the teacher could narrate the initial part/ problem of the story and ask students to predict what may happen later... e.g- Tale of two Pebbles.
- Puzzles, Riddles, Language Games could be a great resource for developing thinking skills. Strange situations that require solution are solved through dialogue between the teacher and the students. Puzzles generally won't contain sufficient information so key part is asking questions. Questions receive three answers, yes/ No/irrelevant. *Example of a game* could be Enigma. *Example of a classic riddle* could be the story of the Man and the Elevator, wherein there is a man who lives on the top floor of a very tall building. Every day he gets the elevator down to the ground floor to leave the building to go to work. Upon returning from work though, he can only travel half way up in the lift and has to walk the rest of the way unless it's raining! Why? *Example of a puzzle* could be asking the learners, "Why is it better to have round manhole covers than square ones?" This is logical rather than lateral, but it is a good puzzle that can be solved by lateral thinking techniques. It is supposedly used by a very well-known software company as an interview question for prospective employees.
- Problem solving to discover alternative ways of defining the problem, thinking of unusual creative solutions boosts thinking skills. Innovative solutions to everyday problems that students face in life can be sought, for example Parking Issue in the city space.
- Incorporating Questions to induce higher order thinking skills in regular classroom discussions and debates , certainly proves helpful to trigger thinking

To conclude;

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