

Development of critical thinking in English language with the help of images and pictures: A study

Shyamal Acharya
Ph.D Research Scholar
Seacom Skills University, West Bengal, India

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Abstract

In the present study, the researcher has tried to show how by using pictures and images critical skills can be inculcated among the students. This can be done simultaneously while teaching English language skills by using innovative methods. The researcher has also conducted a qualitative study to find out how the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing can be improved.

Key words: critical thinking, English Language, images and pictures

Introduction

Every English language teacher is concerned with the question how to teach the English language. Over the years, a lot of discussion has taken place and a number of methods and approaches have been suggested. These can be accessed through books and materials on English Language Teaching methodology.

Along with this, some teachers have also tried to find their own solutions. The researcher has also taken an initiative in this direction. To create proper environment for teaching English, language teachers use various teaching aids. Pictures and images are most frequently used. With the help of image and pictures, the teachers can get an excellent response from the students.

The teachers might go to the classroom equipped with pictures and images. However their use is somewhat problematic. It has been observed that teachers normally show pictures to students and ask information-based questions that are answered by the students. The researcher has tried to add one more aspect. It may not be sufficient to show pictures and ask merely factual questions. The students should rather be invited for sharing their own

experiences, points of views or comments thus promoting critical thinking among them. All this could be done through the use of the English language. It was the researcher's aim to find answers to the following questions:

- How do pictures and images enhance critical thinking?
- Does it bring any changes in the teaching of English language skills?
- How do students process pictures and images and deal with them?

Sample

The researcher is working at U.G. level college under Kalyani University, West Bengal, and the subjects of the study were students taken from the same college where he is working. The number of students were 38 (English Honours, 1st semester) in the year 2020-2021.

Methodology Used

The proposed study is qualitative in nature.

Design of the Study

The method followed the case study design. The research was conducted in one classroom consisting of the above subjects. The study was carried out in five steps.

Step 1

Firstly, the researcher determined the new comers at the college (U.G. Level).

Step 2

The researcher selected some pictures and images from the internet.

Step 3

For four weeks, each day, the subjects worked with a different set of pictures and images.

Step 4

The researcher observed classroom interaction with the help of daily notes.

Step 5

After collecting this data, the same was analysed.

Tools and Techniques

Student Profile

Student Profile was prepared by the researcher for each and every student of the class. The basic purpose of the profile was to know about the background of the students and to maintain the progress of the students during the activities conducted.

Observation

The observation was made by the researcher during the implementation of the strategies. The researcher observed all the activities as an 'observer-cum-participant'.

Field notes

Field notes were maintained by the researcher to record the data regarding what had been observed.

Interview

Interviews were conducted to find the problems faced by the teacher trainees, if any, and to know their opinion about the classroom strategies being adopted.

Data Collection

The data was collected using direct observation and written documentation methods. The observation was made at two levels: group level and individual level.

Data analysis

The data was organized and analyzed qualitatively through content analysis. The data was analyzed both, during data collection (ongoing analysis), and at the end of the data collection.

Findings

Question 1

How do pictures and images enhance critical thinking?

During observation, the researcher observed that teacher trainees were eager to give their own description of the given pictures and images, but they often struggled to use the desired words. They, however, helped each other to comprehend the images and pictures better. Thus along with critical thinking, they got a good amount of practice in speaking skills also.

Question 2

Does it bring any change in the teaching of English language skills?

With the help of pictures and images, the trainee's perception of the world was enhanced and the researcher observed a significant amount of improvement in their language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Question 3

How do students deal with picture and images?

When asked to describe what they saw in the picture presented to them, the trainees tried to assign a name or label to the illustration, and later there was a discussion on whether the identification was correct or not. Much of the identification process could be ascribed to prior knowledge and learning experiences of the subjects. After some orientation they got some idea of what should be done. There were initial hiccups; however they soon learnt the art of applying their minds to the problems presented and to come up with original ideas

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