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INTEGRATING CRITICAL, CREATIVE AND DESIGN THINKING IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LESSON

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Abstract.
The paper presents a practical approach to integrating critical, creative and design thinking into an English language lesson. The proposed approach is illustrated through a lesson devoted to the familiar problem of being late. Instead of beginning with theoretical explanations, students first collect evidence from general and personal experience, then generate possible explanations for the problem, and finally develop a practical solution in the form of a poster containing a set of rules. The paper describes the stages of the lesson and demonstrates how a real-life problem can provide opportunities for speaking practice, reasoning, idea generation and collaborative work. The approach is intended to help English language teachers incorporate thinking skills into everyday classroom activities without requiring complicated equipment or lengthy theoretical preparation.
Keywords: critical thinking, creative thinking, design thinking, English language teaching, problem-solving, speaking skills, poster design.

Developing students' thinking skills is an important objective of contemporary education. Language learning, in particular, offers opportunities not only to acquire vocabulary and grammar but also to express opinions, analyze situations, explain ideas and propose solutions. However, classroom speaking activities may remain limited when students are asked only to answer questions or reproduce information. Vincent-Lancrin et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of fostering creativity and critical thinking through everyday teaching and learning. These skills do not necessarily require separate lessons devoted entirely to theory. They can also be developed through tasks connected with the subject being studied. A practical way to achieve this is to introduce a familiar real-life problem and guide students through several stages of thinking. In an English language lesson, students can discuss the problem, support their opinions with examples, generate possible explanations and develop a practical response. In this process, English becomes a means of thinking and communication rather than merely an object of study. The purpose of this paper is to present a practical lesson model that integrates critical, creative and design thinking through the topic of being late. The model focuses on the sequence of classroom activities and offers teachers an example of how to connect speaking practice with problem-solving.

Creative thinking involves generating and considering different ideas. The OECD framework highlights the importance of producing diverse ideas and evaluating and improving them (OECD, 2023). In a language lesson, students can practice creative thinking by exploring several possible explanations for a problem and considering alternatives.

Design thinking connects the exploration of a problem with the development of a practical response. Yu et al. (2024), in their meta-analysis of design thinking and student learning, discuss its application to problem-solving and creative work in educational settings. For the purposes of the present lesson, design thinking is approached as a practical process in which students use their understanding of a problem to create a tangible product. The three approaches are connected but have different functions.

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Critical thinking helps students examine the problem; creative thinking helps them generate possibilities; and design thinking guides them towards producing a practical solution. The lesson follows this sequence: Collecting evidence → Generating possible explanations → Designing a practical solution.
This sequence provides a simple methodological framework that teachers can adapt to other topics and learning contexts. The topic Being Late was selected because it represents a familiar situation that students can discuss using their own experiences. It does not require extensive background knowledge, and it allows students to move from personal observations to possible explanations and practical action..
An important feature of the lesson is that students are not given theoretical definitions of the three types of thinking at the beginning. Instead, they engage in activities that allow them to experience the different ways of thinking through a concrete problem. The lesson begins with the issue of being late. Students are encouraged to identify situations in which lateness occurs and provide examples demonstrating that it is a real problem. Their examples include both general situations and personal experiences. General examples concern students arriving late for lessons, missing meetings and submitting homework after deadlines. Personal examples relate to their own experiences, including particular lessons and situations following the lunch break. This stage is important because students do not immediately move towards proposing solutions. First, they collect and share examples that help them examine the problem. Their contributions provide material for discussion and encourage them to connect their opinions with observable situations.

The teacher's role is to facilitate the discussion and help students distinguish concrete examples from unsupported general statements. Rather than supplying ready-made answers, the teacher encourages students to contribute their own observations. Possible guiding prompts include: What situations demonstrate that being late is a problem? Have you experienced this problem yourself? What are the consequences of arriving late? Through this activity, students practice describing situations, giving examples and explaining their opinions in English. The critical-thinking component lies in examining the problem and supporting claims with evidence from experience. After establishing that lateness is a problem, students move to generating its possible causes. The purpose of this stage is to explore different possibilities before deciding which explanations are most convincing. Students draw on their personal experiences, their observations of other people and situations encountered in films or stories. They consider why people might be late and identify different circumstances that could contribute to the problem. Last-minute habits and the influence of one's surroundings can also provide starting points for discussion. At this stage, the teacher encourages students to suggest different ideas rather than immediately judging or rejecting their contributions. The aim is to broaden their understanding of the problem and avoid relying on a single explanation. Useful prompts include: What might make a student arrive late? Can different people be late for different reasons? Which explanations can you suggest based on your observations? Students practice expressing possibilities, explaining their ideas and responding to their peers. Useful language includes might be caused by, one possible reason is, another explanation could be and in my experience. Creative thinking is therefore developed through the generation of alternative explanations. The activity also provides a bridge between students' personal experiences and the final problem-solving stage. In the final stage, students move from discussing the problem to developing a practical response. They prepare a poster containing a set of rules intended to help students arrive on time. The poster serves as a tangible product through which students

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transform their ideas into clear and practical recommendations. To prepare it, they must decide which rules to include, express them concisely and organize the information so that the intended message is easy to understand. Prepare everything you need for class the evening before. Check your timetable and the time of your first lesson. Plan your journey in advance. Leave home early enough to allow for possible delays. Set a reminder if you tend to lose track of time. Be ready to enter the classroom before the lesson begins. These examples illustrate the type of content that a poster could contain; the final set of rules should reflect the students' actual work. The poster is not simply a decorative classroom activity. It represents the practical outcome of the preceding stages. Students have first identified the problem through evidence, then considered possible explanations, and finally produced a resource intended to address it**.** The teacher guides students in making their recommendations understandable, realistic and relevant to the problem. Students can present their posters, explain their choices and discuss how the proposed rules might help. This stage combines language production with practical decision-making. Students use English to formulate instructions, organize information and communicate a solution to an audience. The lesson demonstrates how critical, creative and design thinking can be integrated into an ordinary English language lesson without treating them as three unrelated theoretical topics.

First, the familiar nature of the problem gives students an accessible starting point. They do not need specialized knowledge to participate, and their own experiences provide material for speaking. Second, the sequence of activities gives students a clear direction. They begin by examining a problem, move towards generating possible explanations and finish by creating a practical product. Each stage prepares them for the next.

Third, the approach creates opportunities for meaningful language use. Students describe experiences, give examples, express possibilities, explain their choices and formulate rules. The teacher can support this process by providing useful vocabulary and sentence structures when necessary, without replacing students' own contributions with prepared answers.

Finally, the approach is relatively easy to adapt. Teachers can use the same sequence with other familiar problems, such as ineffective time management, excessive smartphone use, difficulties with group work or problems with classroom communication. The final product may be a poster, a checklist, a set of recommendations or another suitable resource. The model is consistent with the broader emphasis on integrating critical and creative thinking into subject teaching described by Vincent-Lancrin et al. (2019). Nevertheless, the lesson presented here should be understood as a practical methodological example rather than evidence of experimentally established effectiveness. Evaluating its impact would require systematic observation or assessment of students' performance.

Integrating critical, creative and design thinking into English language teaching can be approached through familiar problems and purposeful classroom activities. The lesson on being late illustrates how students can progress from collecting evidence to generating possible explanations and designing a practical solution in the form of a poster containing a set of rules. The central methodological principle is to begin with a problem rather than with abstract definitions. Students explore the issue through their experiences, consider different possibilities and use their language skills to develop and communicate a practical response. For teachers, this approach offers a manageable way to combine speaking practice with thinking skills. It requires careful task sequencing and teacher facilitation rather than complicated equipment. Most importantly, it positions students as active participants who contribute examples, develop ideas and create a product with a clear purpose.

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