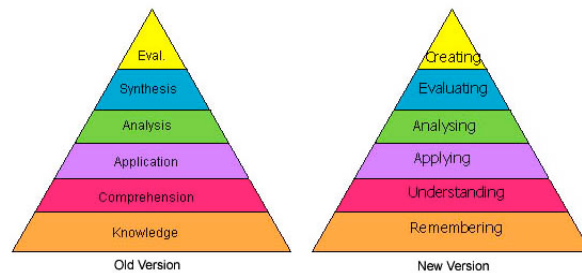


Critical Language Skills for Critical Thinkers

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Bloom's Taxonomy of Critical Thinking

It's unfortunate that foreign language education experiences a dramatic decrease in enrollment in most secondary schools at the upper levels of language study. How many of those students who choose to learn a foreign language as freshmen remain in the program in their senior year? If one examines the type of activities that are planned for many L2 classes, one would see an emphasis placed on knowledge and comprehension skills with the majority of activities consisting of low-level thinking skills activities such as question and answer, true/false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blanks, and conjugation drills. It is important that students be exposed to activities that increase their higher-level thinking skills such as applying the knowledge that they are learning to everyday situations, analyzing the information as to cause and effect, making associations, inferences, and generalizations. After asking students to conjugate a list of verbs in the conditional tense to see if they know the tense, it makes more sense to ask them "What would happen if" or "What would you do if" to see if they can use the tense in an appropriate context.

Self Evaluation (no right or wrong answers)

After checking if the students know the facts of a reading passage, do you ask them to isolate the important facts and to explain why in their own words?

When comparing their own culture to that of the target culture, do you ask them to evaluate both in terms of similarities or differences?

How often do you personalize the grammar drills in the textbook by transferring what the characters in the sentences do to what your students do?

When learning food vocabulary for example, do you also ask the students to classify them according to various categories, such as taste, shape, color, nutrition benefits, calories, cost, availability, etc.?

After reading a story, do you usually ask the who/what/where/when-type questions or do you ask questions such as why, how can you, what reason, what would happen if, can you give me another example of, how is that similar/different, etc?

Do your students usually demonstrate their knowledge through left-brain verbal activities or do you encourage them to use right-brain activities such as art, music, drama, etc?

TIP : After reading a short story, divide the class into small groups and engage their creativity by asking them to change the ending of the story.