

Critical Thinking and the Language Factor: The Case for the English Language Learner

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Abstract

Critical thinking is considered an essential ingredient for academic success; however, there is a tendency at times to equate the non-native speaking students' lack of language proficiency with a lack of cognitive ability and critical thinking skills. The goal of this paper is to make a case for NNS students and demonstrate that they are capable of critical thinking, reflection, and scientific skepticism, just like their NS counterparts. The paper argues that NNS students may not initially display critical thinking because their main objective is to gain linguistic accuracy and fluency. In this process, critical thinking takes the back seat temporarily. The paper also questions the proposition that critical thinking ought to be taught as a separate skill and argues that students must instead be exposed to sustained academic content in order to develop in-depth knowledge about the issues before they are able to evaluate them.

Keywords: critical thinking, second language learners, Bridge programs, ESL, EFL.