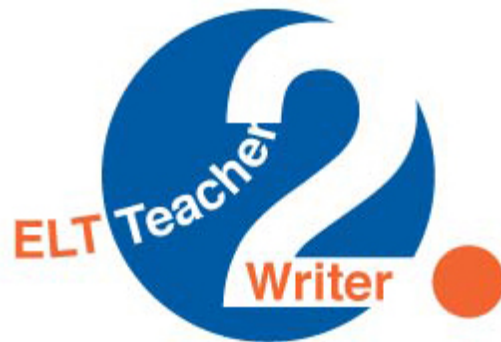


# ELT Teacher 2 Writer

***The What, Why and How of creating  
Critical Thinking activities***



# Critical thinking: definitions

- *“Thinking about one's thinking in a manner designed to organize and clarify, raise the efficiency of, and recognize errors and biases in one's own thinking.” (Carmichael, 1997)*
- *“The objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement.” (OED, online).*

# Reflective thinking

*“If the suggestion that occurs is at once accepted, we have uncritical thinking, the minimum of reflection. To turn the thing over in mind, to reflect, means to hunt for additional evidence, for new data, that will develop the suggestion and will either... bear it out or else make obvious its absurdity and irrelevance.” (Dewey, 1910)*

# Questions a critical thinker asks

- Why? What if? What else?

(Kourdi, Business Strategy, Bloomberg Press, 2009)

- 70 questions a critical thinker should ask

(Harris, 2012 [online])

# Rational (or reasoned) thinking

- *“Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe”* (HKU [online])
- Create thinkers who are *“appropriately moved by reasons”* and who *“grasp the relevance of various reasons for judgements and evaluate the weight of such reasons properly”*. (Seigel, 1985)

# A Reasonable approach

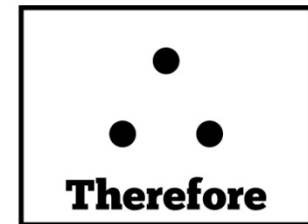
- Ask *“what are the facts, and what is the truth that the facts bear out. Never let yourself be diverted, either by what you wish to believe, or what you think could have beneficent social effects if it were believed; but look only and surely at what are the facts”* (Russell, 1959)
- *“reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do”* (Ennis, 1992)

# A critical mindset

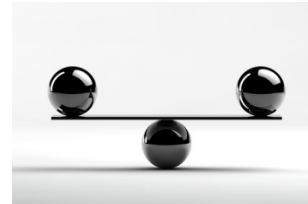
- Reflective thinking



- Rational or reasoned thinking



- Reasonable thinking



“A healthy scepticism” (Dewey, 1910)

# Awareness of a critical mindset

*‘ People spend so much time recording experiences on digital media, they forget to enjoy the experience itself.’*

*a) I’m not interested in this topic.*

*b) I agree. It’s true.*

*c) I disagree. It’s false.*

*d) I agree/disagree because ...*

*e) I’m not sure. I need to think more about it. Who said this, for example?*

*f) I agree/disagree because ... But, I’d like more evidence to see if my initial reaction is reasonable*



# Awareness of a critical mindset

- a) *I'm not interested in this topic* Uncritical
- b) *I agree. It's true.* Uncritical
- c) *I disagree. It's false.* Uncritical
- d) *I agree/disagree because ...* Semi-critical
- e) *I'm not sure. I need to think more about it.  
Who said this, for example?* Critical
- f) *I agree/disagree because ... But, I'd like more  
evidence to see if my initial reaction is  
reasonable* Critical

# Why Critical thinking?

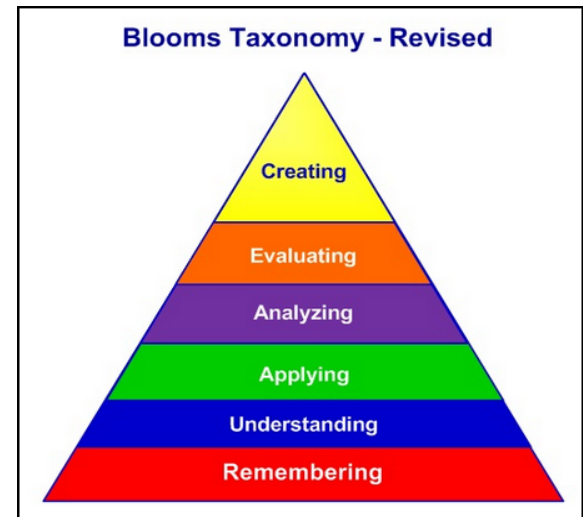
*‘We’re not teaching students how to learn and think for themselves; we’re just training them to pass tests!’*

*‘80% of the jobs that today’s learners will be doing in 2030 haven’t been invented yet’*

(IFTF, 2017)

*‘The issue is no longer how to access information and knowledge but how to evaluate it.’*

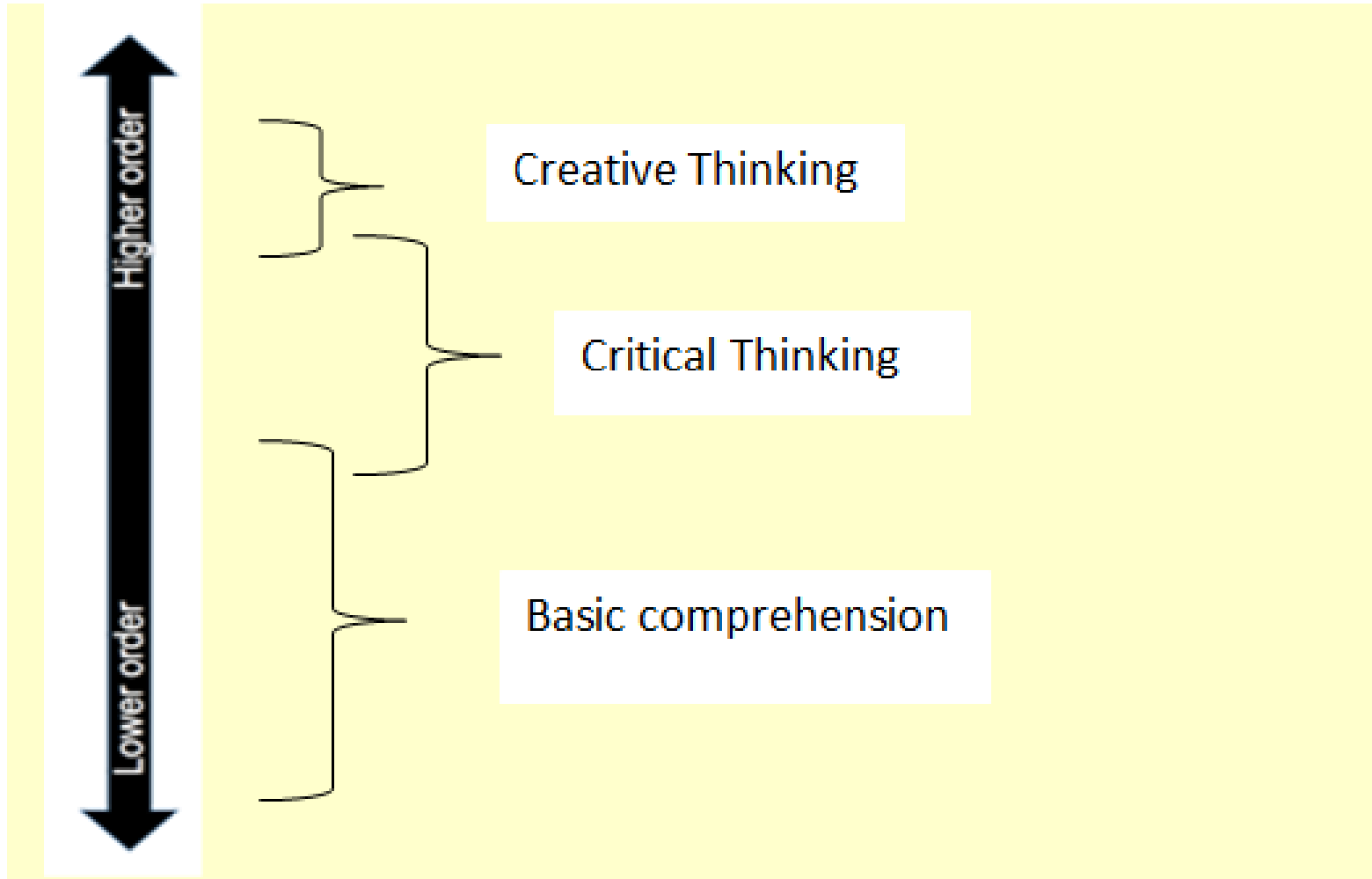
# A taxonomy of thinking skills



# The range of thinking skills

- **Remember:** ex-pat
- **Understand:** s.o. who moves from their native country to live and work in another
- **Apply:** there are a lot of British ex-pats in Spain
- **Analyze:** how and where is this term used?
- **Evaluate:** migrant vs ex-pat
- **Create:** write a letter to a newspaper about this

# A framework for CT in ELT



# Why Critical thinking in ELT?

Is our goal to guide students to think critically about the language?

OR

Are we using the language classroom to promote critical thinking in general?

# Applying critical thinking in ELT

Area of focus	Critical Thinking at level of .....
Grammar & Vocabulary	Words and sentences
Receptive skills	Understanding discourse and ideas
Productive skills	Student output (creating discourse)
21 <sup>st</sup> century literacies (visual, media, ...)	How ideas are communicated in the modern world

# CT tasks in language learning

Will basic comprehension and application of this language be sufficient to learn it?

Or is there value (both for learning and memory) to be added by asking students to consider it more deeply?



# Basic comprehension and Critical thinking

*(Good) morning*      *Hello*      *Hi*

*(Good) afternoon*      *(Good) evening*

*(Good) night*      *Goodbye*

*Bye*      *See you later.*

# CT and receptive skills

- What is the real meaning and purpose of this text? What is the speaker or writer trying to say and do?
- Are they successful in this and if so, how did they achieve success? If not, how and why did they fall short of their target?



*The*  
ENIGMA *of* BEAUTY

Define beauty? Some say you might as well analyse a soap bubble; that beauty is relative. Yet it does seem there are some universal characteristics. According to a German study (Braun et al, 2001), people find certain features - a narrow face, full lips, long eyelashes - more attractive than their opposites. Psychologists have also tested the attractiveness of different faces on children and found that we prefer faces that are symmetrical and features that are average or not extreme.

But does any of this really matter? Beauty, after all, is a superficial quality. Ultimately, it does not matter what we look like, but how we act. As the writer, Dorothy Parker, said, “Beauty is only skin deep, ....”.

# Basic Comprehension

*Remember: Can you remember any of the universal characteristics of beauty?*

*Understand: What does the author think about the importance of beauty?*

*Apply: How else do we judge people in a 'superficial' way?*

# Critical thinking

## Analyse:

What are the sources for the following statements?

*A We find certain features, e.g. full lips, attractive.*

*B We prefer average features.*

*C It is how we act, not look, that is important.*

*D Beauty is only skin deep.*

## Evaluate:

Which statement is most reliable?

Which had the most impact on you? Why?

# CT and productive skills

**THE BRIDGE OF  
SAN LUIS REY**  
by Thornton  
Wilder



*What is the speaker or writer trying to do? Are they successful? If so, how? If not, why not?*

# Basic comprehension and CT

## Basic comprehension

What kind of book is being reviewed?

What is the book about?

What does the reviewer like/dislike about it?

## Critical thinking

What's the author of the review trying to do?

What techniques does he use to achieve this?

Does he succeed or fail? How?



# Setting criteria

- Q What am I trying to do?
- describe what the book is about
  - describe how it is written
  - recommend it or not

- Q How am I going to do this?
- give an overview
  - tell part of the story
  - use persuasive language or be objective

- Q How will I know if I've been successful?
- read it back or give it to someone else to read

# CT in grammar and vocabulary

*“Even the quickest learner needs time for reflection. She must let her [brain] do its thing. If she doesn’t, her ideas and memories will be disconnected and shallow.”*

(Prof. James E Zull, 2002)

# CT and grammar

- **Inductive reasoning** (see grammar in context and work out the meaning and/or rules of use)
- **Contrastive analysis** (work out the differences in meaning between, say, two tenses)
- **Rephrasing** (ask sts to express the same idea using a different grammatical form)
- **Questioning syntax** (ask sts if it's possible to rearrange grammatical components with or without a change in meaning)
- **Error correction** (analysing why a particular form is incorrect)

# CT and grammar

*Hi Liz,*

*Next Saturday we're having a party. I'm going back to Colombia on the 12<sup>th</sup> June and I really want to see all my friends before I will go. Marta is coming and she said she's going to bring her guitar. Did you hear her play? She's amazing. Anyway, I hope you can come. It'll be a lot of fun, I think.*

*Juliana x*

# CT and vocabulary

*get on (with)      take to      make up      look up to*  
*fall out (with)    get together (with)    hang out with*

1 See verbs in context

2 Match to definitions

3 Gap-fill exercise

4 Talk about friends and family

**Presentation**



**Practice**



**Production**

# CT questions with vocabulary

- How does it work grammatically?

*We got on. We got on well. I got on well with her.*

- How does it work semantically?

*I looked up to her     I looked up to her decision.*

- How do I use it with the correct register?

*We used to hang out together a lot.*

*The President hangs out a lot with her advisers.*

# CT and vocabulary

## 1 look up to = admire

He has always looked up to his older brother. ✓

I looked up to her decision. ✗

## 2 hang out with = to spend time with

She hangs out with her friends at weekends. ✓

The president hangs out a lot with with her advisors ✗

## 3 take to = develop a liking for

I didn't take to him. ✓

She really took to skiing. ✓

He's never really taken to English as I have. ✓

# CT and lower levels

Level: B1 reading text

## **GLOBAL OBJECTS**

*The Mini was a traditional British car until 2000. Now BMW, a German company, is the producer of the Mini, but the car factory for the Mini is still in Oxford, England. This is where they put all the parts of the car together.*

*There are 2,500 parts in the Mini and they come from countries and continents all over the world, including the Americas, Asia and Europe. So, what nationality is a car from a German company, with international parts, put together in a factory in Britain? It is a global product. But why do car producers make their car parts in many different countries? The answer is simple: money.*



## **Critical Thinking: Inferring meaning (C1)**

What conclusions can you draw from this text about:

- The importance of Mini's heritage to BMW
- The practices of other car producers
- The main factors in the cost of car part production

## **Critical Thinking: Reading between the lines (B1)**

- Why did BMW want to make Minis in Britain?
- Do other car producers make 'global products'?
- Is it cheaper or more expensive to make all the car parts in one country?

# CT task 1

For this extract, write:

- 1) a basic comprehension question
- 2) A critical thinking question (e.g. about bias or assumptions)

*Speaker A: "It's not difficult to give your children a proper diet: meat, fish, fresh vegetables and fruit and so on. We just need to educate people about what kinds of foods are good for them and what aren't."*

# CT task 1

*Speaker A: "It's not difficult to give your children a proper diet: meat, fish, fresh vegetables and fruit and so on. We just need to educate people about what kinds of foods are good for them and what aren't."*

**Which of these things are probably true about Speaker A?**

- a) She is well-educated
- b) She has enough money to buy the food she wants
- c) She thinks people don't understand what a good diet is

# CT task 2: make criteria for a short talk

*What do you think is your nationality's greatest characteristic? Why do you admire this?*

Think about aims, methods, audience and result

# Criteria for a short talk

*What do you think is your nationality's greatest characteristic? Why do you admire this?*

- What is my main **message**?
- What is my **aim**: to entertain, inform, challenge stereotypes?
- What do my **audience** know about this subject already?
- What **evidence** do I have to support my claims?
- What's the best way to **illustrate** my points: with visuals humour?
- How will I evaluate the **result** i.e. know if I've been successful?

# CT task 3

## 1 Look at these mistakes from your discussion.

- 1 I don't read much books.
- 2 I like very much travelling.
- 3 Which music do you like?
- 4 I hope I am a skiing teacher one day.

# CT task 3

**1 Correct the mistakes. Then explain the rule to your partner.**

1 I don't read much books. *Wrong word*

2 I like very much travelling. *Word order*

3 Which music do you like? *Wrong word*

4 I hope I am a skiing teacher one day. *Wrong tense*

**2 Write **new** sentences using these words**

I don't .... much .....

I like ..... very much

Which ..... do you .....?

I hope I ..... one day.

# Summary

## Critical thinking:

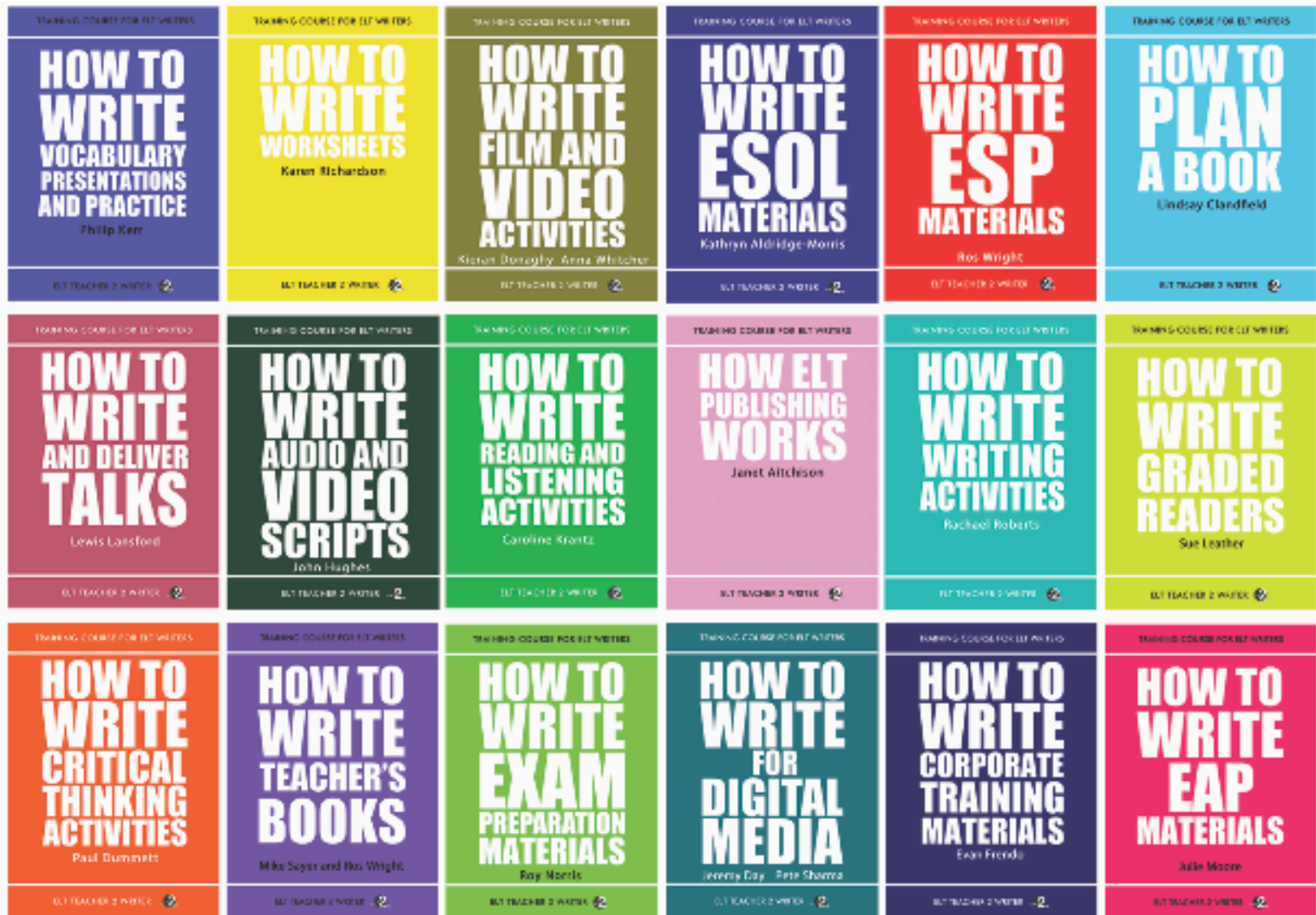
- 1 is reflective, reasoned and reasonable thinking.
- 2 encourages independent thinking
- 3 promotes deeper processing of language and greater engagement with ideas
- 4 applies to all levels, all 4 skills and grammar & vocab
- 5 is essential for **balanced thinking** in your lessons



*Doesn't critical thinking just mean getting people to stop and think?*



*"It sort of makes you stop and think, doesn't it."*



<http://www.elteacher2writer.co.uk/modules/modules-available-now>

# Why use CT tasks

- allows for deeper processing of language
- throws light on sts own thinking processes (learner autonomy)
- creates ‘**balanced-thinking**’ lessons
- helps learners to fully understand texts (increasingly ‘content-based’)
- increases engagement with texts & interest in language (e.g. in relation to L1)