

Critical Thinking in an Academic Speaking Class for EFL Students

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This article illustrates the design of an academic speaking class for second-year students majoring in English Language at a university in Vietnam. The speaking topic focuses on Plastic Pollution, a current burning issue on the globe with the ultimate goals of enhancing academic language skills, particularly speaking, sharpening critical thinking and autonomy among students, as well as raising awareness of the youth about environmental issues. This paper aims to present a sequence of activities in an academic speaking class for EFL learners to develop their ability to think critically, integrated with speaking skills, which commences with scaffolding via analyzing the reading materials and culminates in the generation of spoken and written products. This model of the speaking classroom is expected to be beneficial to English language teachers to employ innovative methods in their classrooms for the purpose of optimizing the effectiveness of learning.

Introduction

Human civilization has witnessed myriad changes thanks to the intensive implementation of various innovations by Industry 4.0 in all aspects of life. When it comes to education, these ingenious transformations are reflected in the availability of knowledge and accessibility of information through an array of media, particularly the Internet. Thus, a challenge facing every educator is whether a curriculum reform should be implemented under the growth of this knowledge-based society; in other words, should students be encouraged to merely acquire facts and theories or focus on sharpening crucial skills?