



 Research Article

EXERCISES FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL AND DIGITAL THINKING IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the interplay between critical thinking and digital literacy in today's technology-driven society. This article explores various exercises designed to enhance critical and digital thinking skills in the context of teaching foreign languages. It emphasizes the integration of language learning with digital literacy, presenting activities for developing critical thinking such as source evaluation, comparative analysis, digital footprint assessment, online discussion evaluation, ethical considerations, digital content analysis, online research and presentation tools to produce their project, reflective blogging, virtual debate. Additionally, it highlights the importance of engaging in digital scavenger hunt, evaluating online language tools, creating digital content, online discussion forums, web-based language projects, analyzing digital media, digital storytelling, online forums for better digital communication and project-based learning for collaboration based on digital thinking.

KEYWORDS

Critical thinking, digital thinking, multiple intelligences, digital intelligence, digital literacies, digital world, digital citizenship, digital content, exercise, digital scavenger hunt, online language tools, online discussion forums, web-based language projects, digital media, digital storytelling.

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking plays a crucial role in the digital world, where vast amounts of information are readily available at our fingertips. Humans have become prisoners of technology, which has evolved into a companion in every aspect of their lives and activities undertaken. It is in this context that demands in the workplace have surpassed limits. In other words, individuals are expected to possess skills that exceed what machines can achieve, particularly in reasoning and critical thinking. [1] There are several scholars and researchers who have contributed to the study of digital thinking and related areas. Here are a few notable scholars in this field:

Howard Gardner is best known for his theory of multiple intelligences, Howard Gardner has also explored the concept of "digital intelligence" in the context of understanding and effectively utilizing digital technologies. [2] Doug Belshaw is an educator and researcher who has focused on digital literacy and 21st-century skills. He has developed the "Eight Essential Elements of Digital

Literacies" framework, which encompasses various aspects of digital thinking. "Problems around digital literacies are not dry, academic problems but real-world, everyday issues affecting individuals, organizations and communities worldwide." [3] David White has conducted extensive research on digital engagement and the concept of "visitors" and "residents" in online spaces. His work explores how individuals navigate, engage with, and think about digital environments. [4] Jonathan Zittrain is a professor of computer science and law at Harvard University. His research focuses on the impact of digital technologies on society, including issues of privacy, intellectual property, and digital rights. [5]

These scholars have made significant contributions to the understanding of digital thinking, digital literacy, and the impact of digital technologies on individuals and society. Their research provides valuable insights into how we

can navigate and critically engage with the digital world effectively and responsibly.

In this new era, the ability to think critically allows us to navigate and make sense of the constant flow of information we encounter online. Here are a few key ways that critical thinking is essential in the digital world: a) critical thinking helps us assess the reliability, credibility, and accuracy of the information we encounter online. Critical thinking plays a crucial role in navigating the digital world by helping individuals differentiate between fact and fiction amidst fake news and misinformation. It enables the analysis and evaluation of diverse perspectives, reducing the risk of echo chambers and confirmation bias. Critical thinking also aids in solving complex digital challenges by encouraging creative problem-solving and strategic thinking. It promotes responsible digital citizenship by fostering awareness of the consequences of online actions and supports media literacy by empowering individuals to critically consume and create digital content responsibly, considering ethical implications.

In essence, critical thinking is indispensable in the digital world as it equips us with the skills and mindset needed to navigate the vast digital

landscape consciously. Whether it is evaluating information, problem-solving, analyzing perspectives, or promoting responsible digital citizenship, critical thinking enables us to make informed decisions and engage with the digital world in a thoughtful and impactful manner.

Developing critical thinking skills in foreign language learners is essential for effectively using digital resources. Here are some exercises that can help foster critical thinking in the context of using digital resources:

Task 1. Source Evaluation. Provide learners with a variety of digital sources (articles, blog posts, videos, websites) on a particular topic. Have them evaluate the credibility, reliability, and bias of each source using criteria such as author credentials, source reputation, evidence provided, and potential conflicts of interest. This exercise helps learners develop a discerning approach to selecting and trusting digital resources.

Task 2. Fact-Checking. Choose some news articles or social media posts and ask learners to fact-check the information presented. Encourage them to verify information using reliable fact-checking websites or by cross-referencing

multiple sources. This activity encourages learners to question and scrutinize information, distinguishing between facts and opinions.

Task 3. Comparative Analysis: Introduce learners to different digital resources presenting opposing views on a specific issue. Ask them to analyze the arguments presented in each resource, identify logical fallacies or biases, and assess the evidence provided. This exercise helps learners develop the ability to see multiple perspectives, challenge assumptions, and form well-rounded opinions.

Task 4. Digital Footprint Assessment. Guide learners to reflect on their own digital footprints by examining the information they share, their online interactions, and the potential implications of their digital presence. Encourage them to think critically about the long-term consequences of their online activities and discuss privacy, security, and ethical considerations.

Task 5. Online Discussion Evaluation. Facilitate online discussions within a controlled environment, such as a class forum or chat platform, where learners engage with each other's ideas. Encourage them to critically evaluate and respond to their peers' arguments, analyzing the validity of claims, supporting

evidence, and logical reasoning. This exercise fosters critical thinking through constructive dialogue and helps learners develop respectful online communication skills.

Task 6. Ethical Considerations. Present learners with ethical dilemmas related to digital technology, such as online privacy, cyberbullying, or intellectual property rights. Engage them in discussions about the ethical implications and encourage them to think critically about potential solutions or alternative approaches. This exercise promotes ethical reasoning and decision-making skills in the digital world.

Task 7. Digital Content Analysis. Select a video, podcast, or social media post in the target language. Have students analyze the content, identifying the main message, target audience, and any persuasive techniques used. Encourage them to discuss the effectiveness and reliability of the content.

Task 8. Online Research and Presentation. Assign a research topic related to the culture or current events of a country where the target language is spoken. Students use digital resources to gather information, critically evaluate their sources, and

present their findings using digital presentation tools.

Task 9. Collaborative Digital Projects. Organize students into groups to create a digital project, such as a blog or video series, on a chosen topic. They must research using digital resources, critically evaluate the information, and collaborate using digital tools to produce their project.

Task 10. Reflective Blogging. Have students maintain a blog in the target language where they reflect on their experiences using digital resources for language learning. They should discuss challenges, strategies, and insights gained, promoting self-awareness and critical evaluation.

Task 11. Virtual Debate. Host a virtual debate on a controversial topic related to the target language culture. Students research their positions using digital resources, ensuring they critically evaluate the information they find. The debate is conducted using video conferencing tools.

These exercises aim to improve students' ability to critically evaluate and effectively use digital

resources in the target language and enhance language proficiency through engaging with diverse digital content. By engaging in these activities, foreign language learners will become more adept at using digital tools to support their language acquisition and develop essential critical thinking skills for the digital age.

Alongside with critical thinking nowadays focus is given to digital thinking. It is also known as digital literacy or digital intelligence, refers to the ability to critically analyze, understand, and navigate the digital world. It involves the capacity to effectively utilize digital tools, technology, and resources, as well as the skills necessary for responsible and ethical engagement in online environments. Digital thinking encompasses competencies such as technological proficiency for effective use of digital tools, information literacy for evaluating digital content, media literacy for interpreting media messages, critical thinking for analyzing and synthesizing information, digital citizenship for ethical online behavior, and adaptability to keep pace with technological advancements.

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, digital thinking is a fundamental skillset. It empowers individuals to effectively engage, navigate, and

thrive in the digital age, enabling them to make informed decisions, critically evaluate information, and ethically participate in online environments.

Developing digital thinking skills in foreign language learners involves integrating language learning with the ability to navigate, evaluate, and utilize digital resources effectively. Here are some exercises designed to enhance digital thinking skills:

Task 1. Digital Scavenger Hunt for enhancing digital navigation and research skills. Create a scavenger hunt where students must find specific information or resources online in the target language. Provide clues or questions that require them to search websites, databases, or digital archives, encouraging efficient and effective online searching.

Task 2. Evaluating Online Language Tools for developing critical evaluation skills for digital tools. Introduce students to various online language tools (e.g., translation apps, language learning platforms). Have them test and evaluate these tools based on criteria like accuracy, user-friendliness, and usefulness. Students present their evaluations and recommendations.

Task 3. Creating Digital Content for fostering creativity and digital production skills. Assign students to create digital content, such as a vlog, podcast, or infographic, in the target language. They must research their topic using digital resources and use digital tools for production, enhancing both language and digital skills.

Task 4. Online Discussion Forums for promoting digital communication and critical discourse. Set up an online discussion forum where students discuss topics related to the target language culture. Encourage them to use digital resources to support their arguments and engage critically with peers' contributions.

Task 5. Web-Based Language Projects for integrating digital collaboration and project management. Organize students into groups to work on a web-based project, such as a collaborative website or digital newsletter. They must use digital tools to plan, research, and create content, learning to manage projects in a digital environment.

Task 6. Analyzing Digital Media for developing analytical skills through media literacy. Select digital media content, such as advertisements or social media posts, in the target language. Have

students analyze the content's message, purpose, and audience, discussing the impact of digital media on language and culture.

Task 7. Digital Storytelling for encouraging narrative skills and digital creativity. Activity: Have students create a digital story in the target language using tools like storyboarding apps or video editing software. They should incorporate digital resources for research and multimedia elements, enhancing their storytelling and technical skills.

These exercises aim to improve students' ability to effectively use digital resources in the target language and enhance digital literacy and critical thinking skills. By participating in these activities, foreign language learners will become more proficient in using digital tools and resources, equipping them with essential skills for both language learning and navigating the digital world.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, integrating critical and digital thinking exercises into foreign language teaching not only enhances language proficiency but also equips learners with essential 21st-century skills.

By engaging students in activities such as digital treasure hunts, content creation, and online discussions, educators can foster a more interactive and dynamic learning environment. These exercises encourage students to critically evaluate digital content, collaborate effectively, and communicate responsibly in a digital context. As digital technology continues to evolve, incorporating these skills into language education prepares learners to navigate and thrive in a digitally interconnected world, making them more competent and confident global citizens.

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