

# D

## READING D: The Role of Critical Thinking in Adult ESOL Instruction

(Adapted from Betsy Parrish’s LINCS ESL Pro Issue Brief and *Meeting the Language Needs of Today’s Adult English Learner*, AIR 20015, available at [https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/ELL\\_Increasing\\_Rigor\\_508.pdf](https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/ELL_Increasing_Rigor_508.pdf).)

### The Role Of Critical Thinking In Today’s World.

Critical thinking is the process of questioning and reflection that allows us to understand, evaluate, solve problems and take informed action. Critical thinking skills are vital for adults to thrive in their communities, in postsecondary education, and at work. Adult ESL learners have plenty of practice with critical thinking skills; most have made complex decisions for themselves and their families about their lives in the United States, their jobs, and their children’s schooling

Expectations for critical thinking in educational and work contexts in the United States can differ greatly from what adult ELLs may be accustomed to from their own cultural experiences. Refugees may be in the United States because of the threat of speaking up or challenging authority in their home country. Prior formal school experiences may have rewarded regurgitation of facts and thwarted attempts to challenge assumptions or “experts” in a particular field of study. However, adult ELLs employ critical thinking skills in their daily lives. Adult ELLs need to engage in classroom tasks that promote critical thinking in school and work settings, such as recognizing and solving problems, analyzing relationships between ideas, evaluating evidence, or applying ideas to a new situation.

Two related considerations are the link between text complexity and critical thinking, and the development of language needed to express critical thinking in both speaking and writing. Adult ELLs need to learn the English phrases used to support ideas (*An illustration of this could be...; In the text it said that...*), or challenge others’ opinions (*Another way to look at this could be...*). . They need the language of--and practice with--critical thinking in new contexts. For example, when questioning an assumption in English, we use phrases like these: *That’s true, but I wonder about... Why do you think that is?*

Building these critical thinking skills as well as the language needed to engage in critical conversations gives adult ELLs tools for higher levels of independent decision making and analysis for success in today’s world.

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### Work with your partner. Check your understanding of the reading.

#### • Prepare to report what you learned to your “home team.”

1. Highlight the definition of critical thinking in the reading and explain its importance in your own words
2. Look at paragraph 2, what are two key ideas expressed in that paragraph? (Cite from the text.)
3. Based on what you read, complete the chart below with examples of language that facilitate learners ability to demonstrate their critical thinking.

SUPPORTING IDEAS	
CHALLENGE OPINIONS	
QUESTION AN ASSUMPTION	