



## CRITICAL THINKING & INFORMATION LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### **Two Birds with one Stone: Critical thinking activities /English as a Second Language class**

The nature of ABE/ESL is based in teaching English within a context or content. ESL programs for immigrants and refugees are based in life skills and using English to survive. In the state of Washington, language is presented and practiced within the skills of speaking, listening/observing, reading and writing.

There are six levels described and the skills at each level are described with the Core Competencies.

Here is the first of the reading competencies for Level 5 students.

*Reading 1.0 Locate information in printed resource material (e.g. telephone book, newspaper, manuals, citizenship handbooks, files, indexes and catalogs, etc.)*

Looking at this competency piece by piece, an interesting list of discreet skills was generated and became part of a lesson module that added a third dimension to my standard, teacher-led get acquainted with the phone book unit - critical thinking practice.

The set of skills involved alphabetizing, use of headings, sub-headings, key words and indexes, question analysis - "What is my question?" and use of Boolean strategy - searching with **and/or**.

#### **The steps to information literacy:**

- Identify problem, question or need
- Identify source
- Use source
- Gather information
- Analyze information
- Synthesize information

The following lesson module doesn't fully practice or address all of the above, but it was a first step and provided a foundation for building other lessons.

## Step I

As a homework assignment, each student generated a list of places within a 10 mile radius of their home. This resulted in the most labor intensive piece of this module. The list was keyed in, printed on card stock and cut into small individual word cards. (7-8 sets)

## Step II

Groups of 3-4 students sorted the 75 places into sub-groups with headings. Rule: No groups with less than 2 places, i.e., graveyard or church could not stand alone. I planned 20 minutes for this and they had to be interrupted an hour later when class ended. The groups recorded their categories and brought them to the class. Each of the 6 groups had different categories with a few duplications. The activity was rich with question analysis, exercised the concept of keywords, and served as a transition into learning about Boolean search strategies.

## Step III

Introduced the Boolean concept of searching. For instance, the term **park** could fall under just one or more of the following **sports, family recreation or public places** depending on how you framed it. The class voted on a system that included pieces of each group's work.

## Step IV

Examined the Eastside DEX phone book. ( This could be any phone book that includes, white, gray, yellow, blue and green pages all in one. That is business - alpha, business-topic, personal, government and community listings.) We observed the phone book system of headings and sub-headings and cross-referencing as it compared to what we had discovered in our effort to categorize our community.

## Step V

Jigsaw activity for 5 groups. Each group had a work sheet that facilitated working with one section of the phone book. Next the groups re-divided so that there was one expert from each section in the new groups. Lastly, the expert taught the new group about his/her section.

## Step VI

In pairs students were presented a scenario: "Here is a scenario of people who are new to the area. Their only resource is the phone book. What 5 phone #'s, from which section, would you choose to help the people get situated and why?" After the pair decided on 5 (It took about 30-45 minutes), two pairs who had the same same scenario then compared their answers and had to come to consensus about the best 5 choices.

## Post Script

I haven't designed a final assessment task to determine how much was learned about locating information. As a subjective, narrative assessment, I had several comments in the end-of-quarter self-evaluations about what had been learned. "Now I use the phone book. I understand how to find something." "There is much informations in the phone book." It was the first time learning about the phone book has been on the end of quarter evaluations.

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### **Following are a few of the questions students worked on as exercises in using the phone book. Sample questions for experts in each phone book section - for Step V)**

In the government pages,

- Where should you look for Birth and Death certificates, voter registration, unemployment insurance?
- Put in order of listing in the phone book: Congress, senators, U.S. government offices, Maria Cantwell

From the yellow pages,

- List the name and address of a good Mexican restaurant in Seattle.
- How many Safeway stores are there in the Bellevue area?
- Put in alphabetical order: books-used, book dealers, books-new, bookkeeping service.

From the community pages, Organize the following groups from largest heading to smallest sub-heading.

- Bellevue Ballet, community listings, dance, performing arts
- pollen, information guide, allergy causes

From the residence listings,

- Find your name. Are there any others with the same name? How are the names listed?
  - What is the final name in the white pages?
  - What information can you get about a person, in the white pages?
- From the gray, alpha business pages,
- Which comes first? AAA-1 Pressure Washing Service Co OR A-1 Tree Service
  - What are three special departments of the Bon Marche?

Following are some scenarios that the students worked on. They picked out the keywords from each statement, combined keywords and responded to the need indicated in the statement. The response had to come from the terms in the jigsaw activity.

#### Scenario A

- You are a 26-year-old bachelor (single man).
- You want to live in a large apartment complex in the Crossroads area.
- Of course, you need a job. You are an accountant.
- For fun, you like to bowl, to swim and to work out.

#### Scenario B

- You are a single mom with a 12-year-old daughter.
- Your daughter needs to register for school right away.
- You want to find government housing in the Bellevue area.
- You have worked as a nursing assistant and would like to find the same kind of work here. You are thinking about applying with local nursing homes.
- In your free time, you and your daughter enjoy going to the library.

#### Scenario C

- You are a newly wed couple, John and Susie.
- John is a computer programmer who has just been hired by Microsoft.
- Susie wants to go to college to study Administrative Office Systems.
- You have just rented a small house on 148th street, in Bellevue but you have no furniture.
- You also need a car.
- Your favorite past time is going to movies.

#### Scenario D

- You are an elderly couple who has come to Bellevue because your daughter and her family are here.
- You would like to find a nice assisted living facility.
- You don't drive, but you are comfortable riding the bus.
- You really enjoy meeting others to play cards at a local senior center.
- You have to take it easy because you have heart problems. You need to find a good cardiologist.

#### Scenario E

- You are a single, professional woman. You are an attorney.
- You were a college classmate of Gerald Troy who is also an attorney. You want to contact him for a job reference.
- You want to buy a condominium in downtown Bellevue.
- You also need to buy a car.

- You enjoy walking and hiking for exercise.
- If you have free time, you want to volunteer for the Humane Society because you love animals.

#### Scenario F

- You are a young couple with a 3-year-old son.
- You have both been employed by Boeing.
- You want to buy a house but you don't know about good locations.
- You need daycare for your son.
- You often send money and packages home to your family.
- You are on a budget, but you enjoy doing things together as a family. You are excited to see the sights of Seattle.

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