



USING AUTHENTIC CONTENT EFFECTIVELY
AND
STRATEGIES TO HELP STUDENTS
IMPROVE CRITICAL THINKING

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UACEASTHSICT

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Part A Using Authentic Content Effectively

**Part B Strategies to Help Students
Improve Critical Thinking**

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Part A Using Authentic Content Effectively

**Part B Strategies to Help Students
Improve Critical Thinking**

Part A Using Authentic Content Effectively

A1 What Is Authentic Content?

A2 Why Is It Useful?

A3 How Can We Use It Effectively?

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Authentic Content is based on real ideas, real language, real information, and so on; it is often adapted for ELT classes.

Authentic Material is *not* adapted; it can be used in ELT classes, but it was not intended for that purpose.

A1 What Is Authentic Content?

Articles



Source: Pixabay

A1 What Is Authentic Content?



Online posts

Source: Pixabay

A1 What Is Authentic Content?

Podcasts



Source: Pixabay

A1 What Is Authentic Content?

Lectures



Source: Wikipedia

A1 What Is Authentic Content?

Music



Source: *Pathways*

A1 What Is Authentic Content?



The world's most active social media users
(average time spent on social media per day)



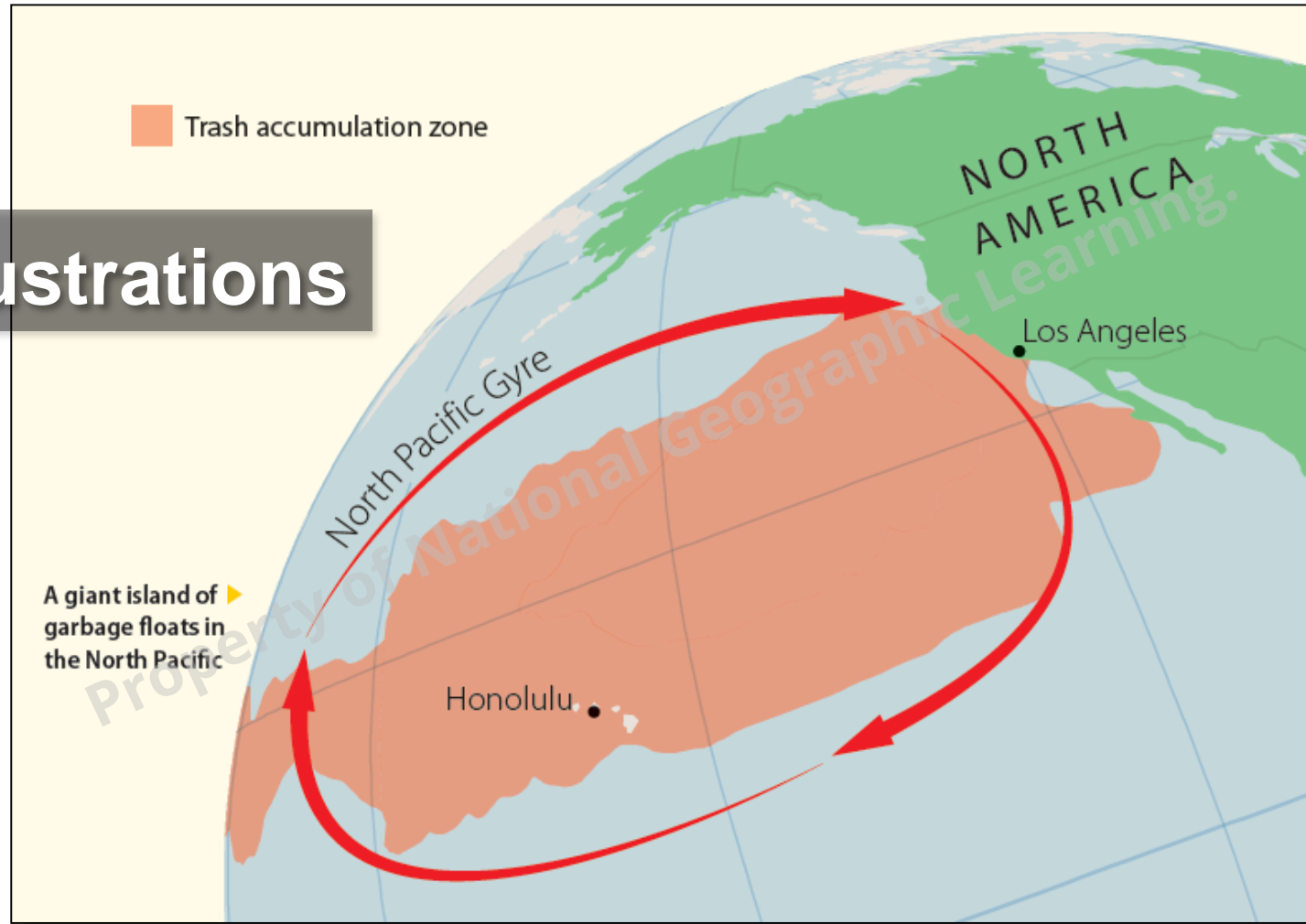
Most popular social media sites
(based on the number of users in 2017)



Infographics

A1 What Is Authentic Content?

Illustrations



Source: *Pathways*

A1 What Is Authentic Content?



Photographs

Source: *Pathways*

A1 What Is Authentic Content?

Videos

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Many language learners have experienced the “Real World Problem.”

The language they learn *inside* the classroom has been so carefully graded and explained that it may not help *outside* the classroom.

A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?



**Excuse me?
How much
this is,
please?**

**It's just been
marked down,
so one for two
or three for
five, OK?**



A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?



**Thank
you.**

**You're
welcome!**



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A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?



And if students mostly see non-real content, will they recognize **authentic content** when they see it?

This is especially important in the 21st century because technology makes it very easy for people to create non-real content.

A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?



Is this is an award-winning National Geographic photo?

Authentic content can help students learn language that is useful for *inside* and *outside* the classroom.

Authentic content can also improve students' ability to recognize what is real.

A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?

COOKING THE WORLD

10

A Award-winning food writer Sasha Martin started the popular *Global Table Adventure* blog in 2010. Her plan was simple: to prepare a meal from every country in the world. Over the next four years, she cooked over 650 dishes from 195 countries. In this interview, Martin describes her experience of cooking the world.

Was “cooking the world” a way to learn more about the world at home?

B That’s right. I think the idea that exploration is for everyone is really important. There are so many people who dream of travel. But I think that you really can go on adventures without leaving home.

C With food, if you have the right ingredients, you can create the flavor of another place. It’s like armchair travel, but it’s faster and easier. I call it “stovetop travel.”

What did you hope to teach your daughter by cooking the world?

D I wanted her to feel that she had a place in the world where she belonged. But I also feel it’s important for children to grow up knowing people from other countries—their global neighbors.

E I call them neighbors because the world is so small now. I remember going on Facebook in its early days. I noticed there were people from different parts of the world commenting on posts, even arguing with each other. I feel that in that environment, young people need to be able to respect and understand each other.

So food is a great way to create that common ground?

Yes. I wanted to share recipes that were bridges to other

more authentic language



A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?

more mature topics



The best professional photojournalists, says Griffin, “create a **visual narrative**.” That is, they know how to use pictures to tell a story. Here are some examples.

The 2007 photo above by Brent Stirton features a 225-kilogram silverback gorilla called Senkwekwe. Several gorillas were killed illegally that year. The photo shows villagers carrying Senkwekwe from Virunga Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to a special burial place.

The photo had a powerful impact around the world. People became more aware of the dangers facing wild animals. “This photograph changed everything for me,” Stirton said. “[It] got a much bigger response than anything that I’d shot before to do with people. The gorillas were seen as true innocents.”

A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?



factual not fictional

Life in a Day

▲ Skydiver
Vania Da Rui was one of thousands of contributors to the *Life in a Day* project.

In 2010, a team led by film maker Kevin Macdonald asked people around the world to send in their videos. The project received over 100,000 videos from 192 countries, from Australia to Zimbabwe. The team then produced a 90-minute movie.

The movie begins as most days begin. People wake up, get dressed, wash their faces, and brush their teeth. Parents take care of their children. People laugh

A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?



In addition, authentic content has some other advantages:

It is often interesting and motivating.
It practices key 21st century skills.
It focuses on real academic issues.

A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?

AT HOME ON MARS

12

Will humans someday live and work on Mars? Many scientists think so. In fact, they are already working on plans to turn Mars into a new Earth.

Humans need three basic things to live: water to drink, air to breathe, and food to eat. Because of the **lack** of these necessities, it isn't possible to live on Mars right now. For one thing, there is not enough oxygen. There is also no **liquid** water—just some ice. So how can we make Mars habitable?¹ The answer, scientists suggest, is a process called *terraforming*.

Terraforming means changing the **environment** of a planet so that it is similar to Earth's. On Mars, the **average** temperature is

about minus 60 degrees Celsius. So one goal of terraforming Mars is to warm it up. Most scientists agree that Earth is becoming warmer due to increased **levels** of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. We might be able to create similar conditions on Mars.

One solution is to build factories on Mars that **release** greenhouse gases. The gases will change the Martian atmosphere, resulting in warmer temperatures. Mars's polar regions will begin to melt, releasing more carbon dioxide **trapped** inside the ice. Rain will eventually fall. It may then be possible to grow **plants** outdoors for food. The plants will add oxygen to the air, making human colonies on Mars a real possibility.

¹If a place is habitable, you can live there.

interesting and motivating



A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?

SUMMARIZING B

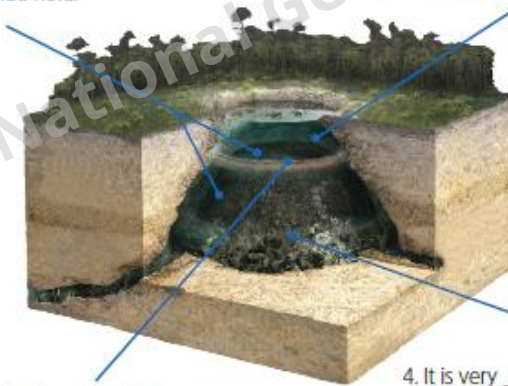
Circle the correct words to complete the summary about blue holes.

Blue holes are caves that are ¹ **underwater / high up in the mountains**. They were formed millions of years ago when ² **huge earthquakes happened / the land above them fell in** and water entered the space. Blue holes are located on land or in the sea. Many of them are very deep and the water inside the holes is usually very ³ **rough / calm**. Although exploring blue holes is dangerous, many scientists still risk their lives to dive into them. They think that blue holes can tell us a lot about ⁴ **ancient life forms / how the oceans were formed**.

UNDERSTANDING DETAILS C

Complete the labels with information about blue holes.

1. At the top of the blue hole is a layer of _____ water, while below it is a layer of _____ water. The top layer blocks _____ from entering the blue hole.
2. The gas near the top of the blue hole is _____, and breathing in too much of it can sometimes lead to _____.



3. _____ live in between the top and bottom layers.
4. It is very _____ in this part of a blue hole, so divers need to use a _____ when swimming.

CRITICAL THINKING: ANALYZING D

Look back at the reading passage on pages 132–133. Decide whether each piece of information is a fact (F) or speculation (S). Then discuss your ideas with a partner.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. how blue holes are formed | F | S |
| 2. the depth of Dean's Blue Hole | F | S |
| 3. what the remipedes looked like in the past | F | S |
| 4. the types of life that we can find on Europa | F | S |

key 21st century skills

A2 Why Is Authentic Content Useful?



real academic issues

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SUPERMARKETS

5

When we go shopping at a supermarket, we often buy more than we need. But it may not be our fault—supermarkets are **controlling** the way we shop. In fact, the whole experience of shopping for food is planned and arranged for us. Every detail of a supermarket has a purpose. The way the aisles are organized, the music, the lighting, the **product** advertising—all these things make us stay longer and spend more.

▲ Supermarkets are designed to make people spend more money.

Authentic content has benefits for language learning, but it also has some challenges:

It may be difficult for students.
It may be too long for teachers to use.
It may include controversial ideas.

Authentic content can be challenging, so ...

Text Inspector

www.textinspector.com

Readable.io

www.readable.io

Vocab Kitchen

www.vocabkitchen.com

**choose material
at the right level**

Authentic content can be challenging, so ...

Text Inspector
www.textinspector.com

textinspector.com

TOOLS ✕

- Statistics
- Lexical Diversity
- Tagger
- Errors
- Lexis: EVP
- Lexis: BNC
- Lexis: COCA
- Lexis: AWL
- Metadiscourse
- SCORECARD
- EXPORT

Lexical Profile - Writing

This is the overall Lexical Profile for your Writing. It is expressed as a percentage, with 100% indicating a high level native speaker Academic text.

NOTE: From October 2016 we have changed our Percentage calculator, to accommodate higher academic texts. Texts you analysed before this date will now show a lower score. We have NOT changed the CEFR levels.

If you have any questions about this, please email: textinspectorhelpteam@gmail.com

For WRITING we have also added 25 new improved metrics, based on recent research. This will give you a more accurate WRITING score.

For the meaning of A1-C2 please see [here](#).

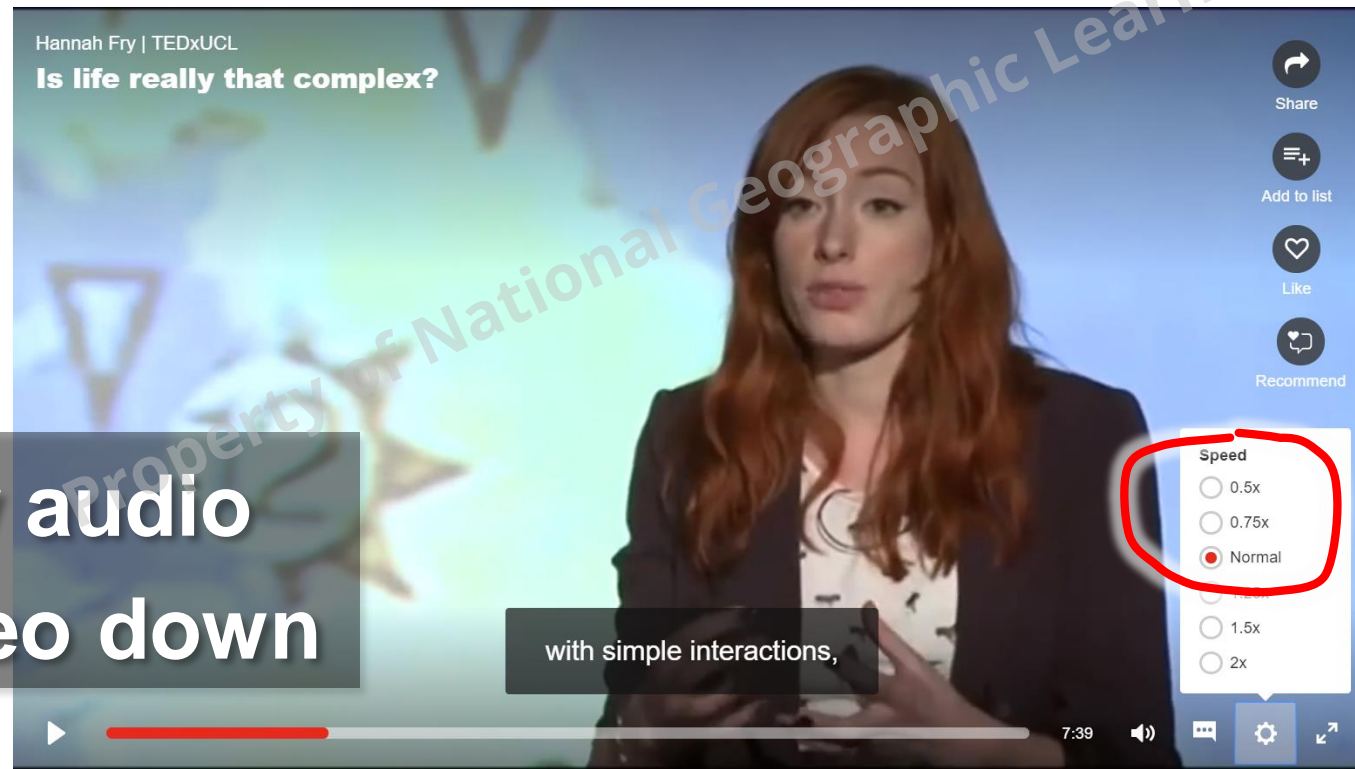
PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF METRICS USED	CEFR LEVEL
63%	28	C1+

choose material at the right level

A3 How Can We Use Authentic Content Effectively?

Authentic content can be challenging, so ...

slow audio
or video down



Authentic content may be too long, so ...

use it over a
longer period

break it
into chunks

The screenshot shows the TED website interface. At the top, the TED logo is followed by the tagline "Ideas worth spreading". Navigation links include WATCH, DISCOVER, ATTEND, PARTICIPATE, ABOUT, and LOG IN. A search icon is in the top right. The main heading reads "3000+ talks to stir your curiosity" with the subtext "Find just the right one". Below this is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon and a "Search talks..." placeholder. To the right of the search bar are filters for "Topics", "Languages", and "Duration", each with a dropdown arrow, and a "More" button. Below the filters is a "Sort by:" dropdown menu set to "Newest". The main content area displays a grid of talk thumbnails. Each thumbnail includes a video preview, a TED logo, and a duration timer. The first talk is by Iseult Gillespie, titled "Why should you read Sylvia Plath?", with a duration of 4:30. The second talk is by T. Morgan Dixon and Vanessa Garrison, titled "The most powerful woman you've never heard of", with a duration of 13:17. The third talk is by Dina Zielinski, titled "How we can store digital data in DNA", with a duration of 12:54. The fourth talk is by Damion Searls, titled "How does the Rorschach inkblot test work?", with a duration of 4:46. The fifth talk is by César Hidalgo, titled "Una idea osada para reemplazar a los políticos", with a duration of 14:58. All talks are listed as "Posted Mar 2019".

Authentic content may be too long, so ...

The collage consists of several overlapping elements:

- A snippet from *The Washington Post* with the headline "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."
- A snippet from *Business* with the headline "How cars indu".
- A *Blinkist* advertisement with the text "Big ideas packages" and "Get access to key insight bestselling nonfiction bo powerful packs you can r".
- A blue call-to-action box with the text "Ever read 4 books in one day?".
- A grey box on the right with the text "use shorter content".
- A smartphone screen in the background showing a "Listen" button.

- **Authentic content may be controversial, so ...**



make your class
a “sandbox”

Authentic content may be controversial, so ...

The screenshot shows the TED website interface. At the top, the TED logo and the tagline "Ideas worth spreading" are visible. Navigation links include WATCH, DISCOVER, ATTEND, PARTICIPATE, ABOUT, and LOG IN. A search bar is present. The main heading reads "3000+ talks to stir your curiosity" with "3000+ talks" circled in red. Below this is a search bar with "Search talks..." and a magnifying glass icon. Filter options include "Topics", "Languages", and "Duration". A "Sort by:" dropdown menu is set to "Newest". A large grey box with the text "Find different content!" is overlaid on the right side of the page. Below the filters, a grid of six talk thumbnails is displayed, each with a title, speaker name, and duration.

Speaker	Title	Duration
Eugenia Cheng	An unexpected tool for understanding inequality: abstract math	11:19
Iseult Gillespie	Why should you read Sylvia Plath?	4:30
T. Morgan Dixon and Vanessa Garrison	The most powerful woman you've never heard of	13:17
Dina Zielinski	How we can store digital data in DNA	12:54
Damion Searls	How does the Rorschach inkblot test work?	4:46
César Hidalgo	Una idea osada para reemplazar a los políticos	14:58

**Any questions about
Using Authentic Content Effectively?**

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Part A Using Authentic Content Effectively

**Part B Strategies to Help Students
Improve Critical Thinking**

Part B Strategies to Help Students Improve Critical Thinking

B1 What Is Critical Thinking?

B2 Why Can It Be Challenging?

B3 How Can We Help Students Do It?

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B1 What is Critical Thinking?

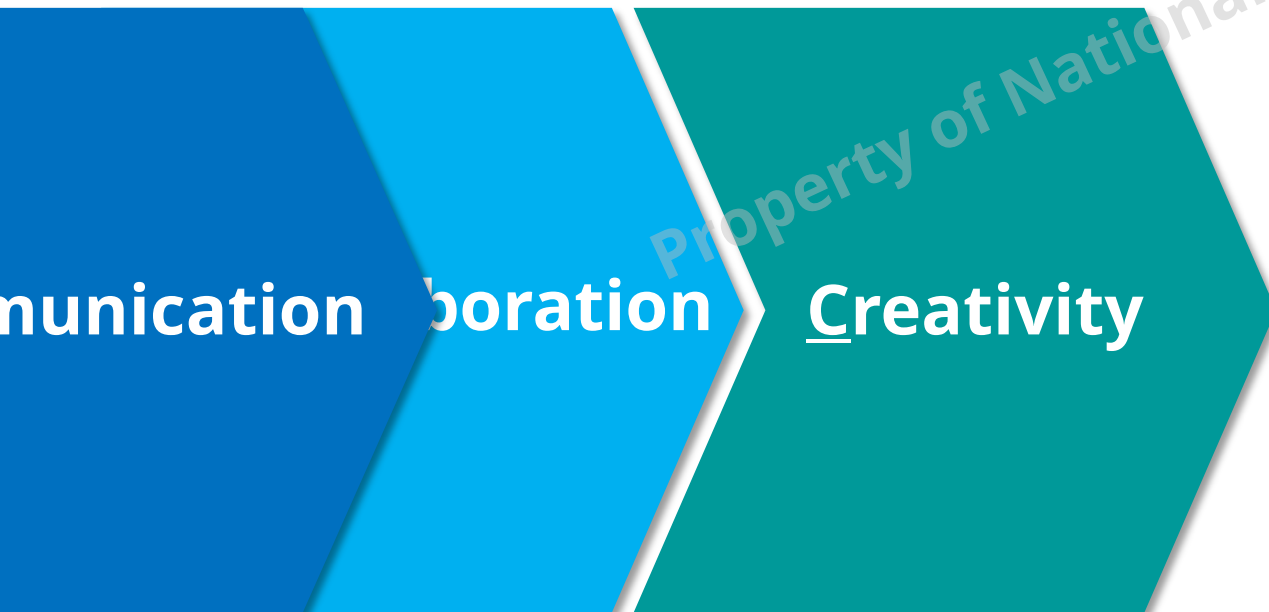
"Critical thinking is thinking that is clear, logical, open-minded, and based on evidence."

"Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly about what to do, say, or believe."

"Critical thinking is thinking about an idea in a way that helps to understand, analyze, or judge it so that effective action can be taken."

B1 What is Critical Thinking?

Critical Thinking is one of four key 21st century skills (**C21**) for English language learners:



B1 What is Critical Thinking?

Twenty-first century (**21C**) skills are the skills needed for success in the modern world according to:



B1 What is Critical Thinking?

- Key competences of Chinese students' development

中国学生发展
核心素养

The Chinese government
that C21 skills like

- All-around development are very important



B1 What is Critical Thinking?




B1 What is Critical Thinking?

A THINK CRITICALLY Synthesize. Work in a small group. Read the idea worth spreading from Cukier's TED Talk below. Then discuss the questions.

Kenneth Cukier's idea worth spreading is that having more data allows us to see things more accurately and will help us solve the world's biggest problems.

1. What examples does Cukier give that illustrate how having more data allows us to see things more accurately?
2. What examples does Cukier give that illustrate how having more data might help us solve the world's biggest problems?
3. Does Cukier's idea worth spreading also apply to the main idea of the lecture in Part 1? If not, what is the lecture's main idea and how does it relate to big data?

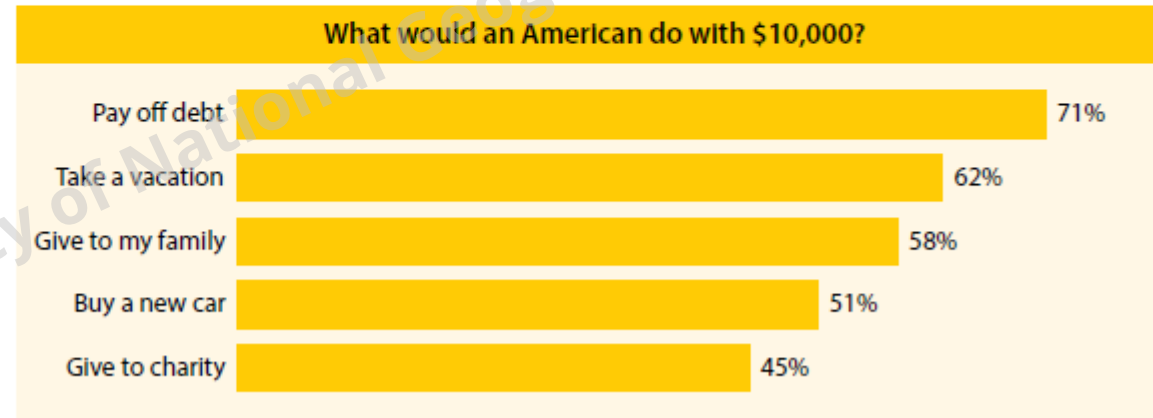
B  **1.1 THINK CRITICALLY Predict.** Work in a small group. Cukier begins his talk by discussing "America's favorite pie." Discuss what type of pie you think this is and why he might have chosen to start his talk in this way. Then watch segment 1 of the edited TED Talk to confirm your ideas.

B1 What is Critical Thinking?

CRITICAL THINKING:
ANALYZING

B Work with a partner. Look at the chart and complete the steps.

1. Imagine that you receive \$10,000. How would you use the money? On what three things would you spend the money?
2. How are your ideas similar to or different from the information in the chart below?
3. Ask other students in the class what they would do with the money. Then share what you learned and create a chart showing the most popular ideas.



B1 What is Critical Thinking?

CRITICAL THINKING Deciding on Criteria

When evaluating or deciding something, it is helpful to consider the most important aspects. These are called *criteria* (singular: *criterion*). For example, to choose the winning documentary, the speakers' three criteria were the quality of the camerawork, filmmaking, and music.

E Work with a partner. Follow the steps below. Take notes in your notebook.

1. Think of a situation you might need to make a decision about. It could be a major or minor decision such as choosing which movie to see with friends, where to attend college, or whom to marry.
2. Brainstorm some criteria you would use to make a decision about it.
3. Decide on the top five criteria, and rank them from most to least important.

F With your partner, present your criteria to the class, but do not mention what situation you are making a decision about. Your classmates will try to infer the situation from your criteria.

CRITICAL THINKING:
DECIDING ON
CRITERIA

B1 What is Critical Thinking?

D Work in a small group. Discuss these questions.

1. After listening to the conversation, how would you explain what ecotourism is to somebody who has never heard of it?
2. What information would you need to understand the concept of ecotourism better?
3. How could you find out the information you discussed in question 2?

CRITICAL THINKING:
REFLECTING

CRITICAL THINKING:
CATEGORIZING

A Make a list of five adjectives, such as *fascinating* or *exhausting*, that might describe the work of archaeologists like Matthew Piscitelli. Then share your list with two partners. Categorize the words in your lists as either positive or negative.

Students might

- lack training in thinking critically
- lack language, knowledge, or confidence
- find critical thinking tasks challenging
- find tasks boring or demotivating
- complete tasks without thinking critically





Instructors might

- lack time or resources
- feel critical thinking tasks are unsuitable
- have a limiting classroom context
- lack knowledge about the topic
- lack training in teaching critical thinking

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Here are some practical approaches to helping students think critically that I have used during my teaching career:

- Explicitly teach **critical thinking** as a process
- Explicitly teach strategies related to **critical thinking**
- Set “micro” challenges that require **critical thinking**

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach critical thinking as a process

Introduction

- It is common to teach skills, such as writing or reading, as a process.
- Why not teach critical thinking and other **C21** skills as a process, too?

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach critical thinking as a process

Example - Critical Thinking: Predicting



B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach critical thinking as a process

Benefits

- Tasks that require **critical thinking** become easier because they become a series of clear steps.
- Instructors can control the difficulty level of **any** task because they can control the number of steps.
- Students get a confidence boost when they complete each step in the process.

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach strategies related to critical thinking

Introduction

- A strategy is a plan or method for achieving a goal, especially one that helps increase effectiveness.
- We use strategies in almost every part of life, such as cooking, parenting, working, driving, and so on.
- Why not teach students strategies to allow them to **think critically** more easily and effectively?

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach strategies related to critical thinking

What is a strategy?

- A good strategy should be ...

Simple

Effective

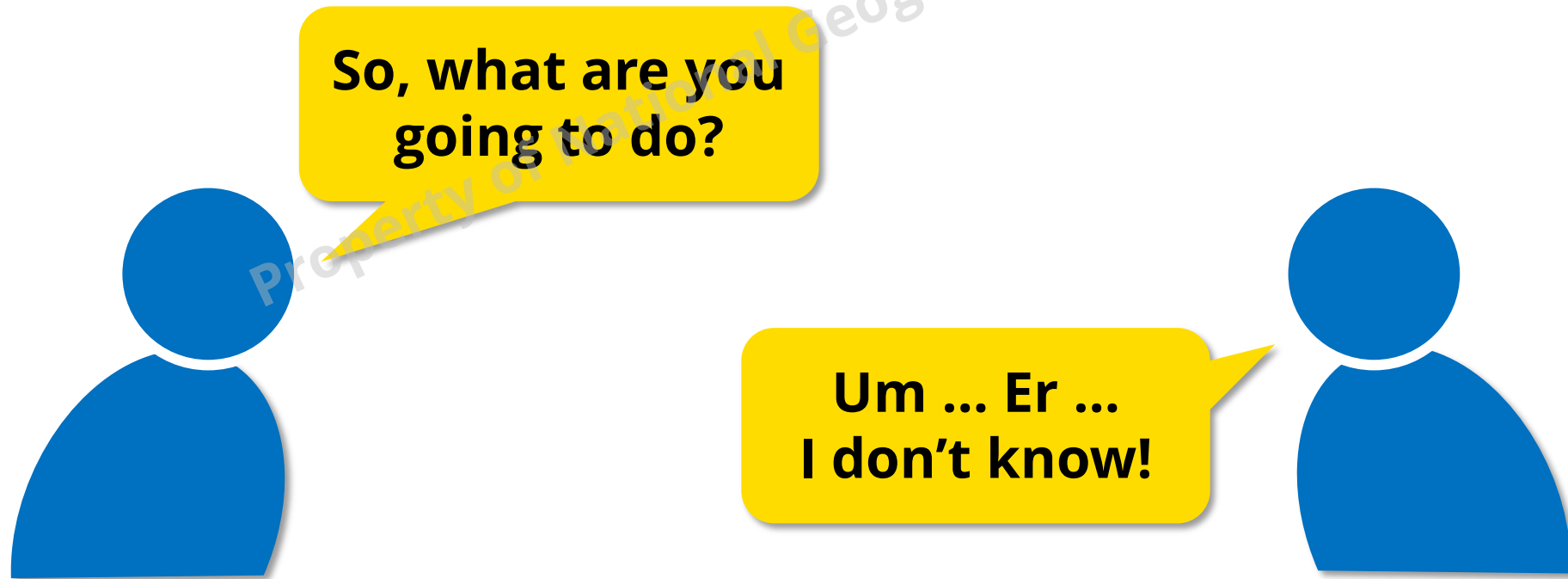
Actionable

SEA

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach strategies related to critical thinking

Example - Strategy for Critical Thinking



B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach strategies related to critical thinking

Example - Strategy for Critical Thinking

- When you have to make a decision, ask yourself what another person would do in the same situation

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B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach strategies related to critical thinking

Example - Strategy for Critical Thinking



B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach strategies related to critical thinking

Example - Strategy for Critical Thinking

- When you have to make a decision, ask yourself what another person would do in the same situation

Simple

Effective

Actionable

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Explicitly teach strategies related to critical thinking

Benefits

- Strategies give students the feeling that they have a tool to help them deal with challenging tasks.
- It is possible to come up with (or find) strategies for *any* task that requires **critical thinking**.
- Instructors look intelligent when they give helpful strategies to their students!

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Set “micro” challenges that practice critical thinking

Introduction

- ELT textbooks often explicitly label a task as being a “Critical Thinking” activity.
- In real life, **critical thinking** is generally *part* of every task, not a task itself.
- Why not give students more practice with **critical thinking** by setting “micro” critical thinking challenges?

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Set “micro” challenges that practice critical thinking

Example - Add “Micro” Challenges to Common Tasks

- Check your answers with a partner.
 - ➔ **Check your answers with a partner without communicating directly with that person.**

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Set “micro” challenges that practice critical thinking

Example – Add “Micro” Challenges to Common Tasks

- Write a summary of the text.
 - ➔ **Write a 20-word summary of the text.**
 - ➔ **Produce a summary of the text *for a child*.**

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Set “micro” challenges that practice critical thinking

Example - Add “Micro” Challenges to Common Tasks

- Why is answer B incorrect?
 - ➔ **Change answer B so that it becomes correct.**
 - ➔ **Change the passage so that B becomes correct.**

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Set “micro” challenges that practice critical thinking

Example - Add “Micro” Challenges to Common Tasks

- Listen and answer the questions.
 - ➔ **Predict the answers *before* you listen. Then listen and check your ideas.**
 - ➔ **Predict some words the speaker(s) will say based on the questions. Then listen to check your ideas.**

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Set “micro” challenges that practice critical thinking

Example - Add “Micro” Challenges to Common Tasks

- Work in a group. Discuss your opinions about the topic.
 - ➔ **Discuss your opinions about the topic. Then imagine that you are 20 years older. Would your opinions change? Why or why not?**
 - ➔ **Discuss your opinions about the topic. Would people from 100 years ago agree with your views?**

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Set “micro” challenges that practice critical thinking

Benefits

- Students get more practice with **critical thinking**, so they quickly become better at it.
- Students are constantly being challenged at a good level, so the class feels interesting and fresh.
- Instructors can add “micro” challenges to **any** task.

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

Set “micro” challenges that practice critical thinking

Final Point

- The idea of adding “micro” challenges is similar to **“demand high teaching”**.
- This is the name for a way of giving students challenges in order to help them learn more in the classroom.
- Demand high teaching was popularized by Jim Scrivener and Adrian Underhill.

B3 How Can We Help Students Think Critically?

TED Talks Ernesto Sirolli



Suggested Lesson Plan - Before Watching

- Have students communicate in groups to share what they know about hippos.
- Ask students to **think critically** and discuss why you have just asked them to share what they know about hippos.
- Elicit from students some strategies to use in order to recognize when somebody finds something funny.

Suggested Lesson Plan - While Watching

- Have students watch the video without sound and raise their hands when they think the audience is laughing. Turn the sound on for a few seconds to check. Then turn it off again.
- Have students watch again (this time with sound) and then answer some comprehension questions:

e.g., When did Ernesto Sirolli first go to Africa?

Suggested Lesson Plan - After Watching

- Have students **brainstorm** some ways the people in Zambia could have stopped the hippos *without hurting them*.
- Have students **think critically** to come up with some things people from Zambia might have said to Sirolli and the Italians.

**Any questions about
Strategies to Help Students
Improve Critical Thinking?**

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Thank you!

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