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High Order Thinking Skills in CEI Remote Teaching

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Introduction

The paradigm of education has definitely changed. Learners who learn concepts by heart and then just repeat them are no longer considered an example of successful learning. On the contrary, learners who infer, discover, make connections, analyze and solve things on their own are learners who will later be able to apply new concepts in different situations and contexts. Remote teaching education is not an exception to this change in paradigm. In this article, I will deal with fostering learners' critical thinking in remote teaching by applying tasks that promote high order thinking skills.

Remote Teaching and Ceibal en Ingles

Remote teaching refers to synchronous lessons through videoconference combined with the use of a platform (blended learning) that can be used synchronously as well as asynchronously. A perfect example of that is Ceibal-en-ingles (CEI), an education program launched in Uruguay many years ago aimed at training primary state school kids to learn English as a foreign language. At one end, a remote teacher (RT), at the other end, a group of 4th, 5th or 6th form learners accompanied by a classroom teacher (CT). Both parties interact synchronously for 45 minutes once a week. That teaching-learning process is complemented with the use of a carefully designed online platform, called CREA2, which contains the necessary tools to enhance learning (videos, songs, visual aid, activities, games and forums to connect RTs, learners and CTs). This platform articulates pedagogical contents in a progressive linear way according to the groups' levels: 1, 2 or 3 (from beginner level to A1/A2 level on the Common European Framework). It is also fundamental to help learners and RTs connect, interact and bond using the second language within a safe online learning environment.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom (1956) is well-known for having designed a six-level taxonomy to promote thinking. The six levels are divided into the low-order thinking skills (LOTS) that consist of **remembering, understanding and applying**; and the high-order thinking skills (HOTS) that imply **analyzing, revising and creating**. The lower levels involve mere memorization while the higher-order thinking levels imply applying that knowledge.

HOTS in CEI remote lessons

Ceibal en ingles is a program that intends to reach all learners in different contexts and provide them with the same learning opportunities. As a successful education program, it intends to go the extra mile and not only remain a project where learners memorize concepts. It intends to provide all learners with tools for successful learning that can be applied in different areas along their whole lives. It intends to foster learners' autonomy and critical thinking. As a result, the CEI curricula is based on the guided discovery approach (see article on [Guided Discovery approach in CEI remote teaching](#)); an inductive approach where learners connect prior knowledge to new one, infer rules on their own and apply them in meaningful contexts through cognitively challenging tasks. Those tasks are carefully chosen to promote high order thinking skills.

Examples of High Order Thinking tasks in remote teaching

When planning a lesson, remote teachers should include tasks to promote learners' analysis, evaluation and creation of new content.

Analysis: learners are expected to draw connections among ideas (prior and new knowledge)

Examples:

- **Comparing and contrasting:** learners are expected to use the target language learned not only to describe but also to find similarities and differences in different items. To achieve that, learners need to examine items, relate them and organize them according to their characteristics to finally be able to compare/ contrast them.
- **Using riddles:** generating learners' curiosity and motivation is crucial to foster their critical thinking. By presenting them with riddles, remote teachers generate learners' need to communicate and try to solve them. Asking questions is a perfect means to do so in a meaningful context.

Evaluation: learners are expected to justify an answer or choice.

Examples:

- **Giving reasons:** encouraging learners to expand their answers is the way to make them go beyond a simple choice. Remote teachers should make learners relate their answers to their personal life (background, likes, preferences, experiences, etc.).

Creation: learners are expected to produce new work

Examples:

- **Project presentation:** after learners have been presented with new target language and practiced it in a controlled way, it's time for them to use all that knowledge to create new content relevant for them. Learners can be given the opportunity to design digital posters (using canvas, be funky, etc.) to support their oral presentations on a topic of their interest. This way they will feel the need to investigate and show their findings later on.

All this can be encouraged during synchronous lessons as well as asynchronously by using the CREA2 platform. Learners can create digital posters and post them in the platform for all learners to see them and ask questions about it. When using riddles, all learners interact and create a conversation thread trying to solve them. This way all learners get involved and use the target language for meaningful communication.

Conclusion

Ceibal en ingles is a project that intends to go the extra mile by presenting learners with tasks carefully designed to include high order thinking skills. In this project, learners develop their critical thinking, judgement and autonomy and remote teachers make wise use of the digital tools to help learners achieve that.

References

Bloom, Benjamin S. & David R. Krathwohl. (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: the classification of educational goals, by a committee of college and university examiners. Handbook 1: Cognitive domain. New York. Longman.

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