

How Q incorporates critical thinking and student learning outcomes

Interested in how to incorporate critical thinking (CT) and student learning outcomes (SLOs) into language learning? Then you may be interested in *Q Skills for Success*, the new dual-strand English course from Oxford University Press that connects critical thinking, language skills, and student learning outcomes.

All extracts from *Q Level 1 Reading & Writing Student's Book*.

Each unit in Oxford's *Q Skills for Success* series builds around a thought-provoking question related to that unit's unique SLO. In one unit, students are asked to think about and discuss what makes them laugh. Each reading, set of vocabulary words, and skill activity in the unit builds on that theme and provides new language to discuss it. By the end of the unit, students complete a practical project built around the SLO—for example, students are asked to write a paragraph about what makes someone laugh. Clear assessments allow both teachers and students to comment on and measure progress.

The Best Medicine Is Laughter

Reasons to Laugh

- 1 Laughter is good exercise. It makes you **breathe** quickly. Laughter makes your heart **rate** go up, and it can turn your face red. Laughter can even make you **cry**! Ten to fifteen minutes of laughing burns 50 calories¹. It exercises your whole body.
- 2 Laughter has a positive **effect** on your health. It reduces high blood pressure² and can **prevent** some illnesses. Also, laughter reduces **pain**, and it **increases** your ability to fight other illnesses. Laughter is good for you.
- 3 Laughter helps your brain. When you laugh often, you can remember information better. It improves your ability to think.
- 4 Laughter also changes how you feel. We often keep bad feelings inside. Feelings such as anger, sadness, and **fear** can cause stress. When we laugh, we let go of stress and bad feelings.

International Laughter Clubs

- 5 At International Laughter Clubs, we learn to laugh well. Our teachers show us how to laugh together. We learn to laugh with our whole body. We learn to breathe deeply when we laugh.
- 6 We practice laughter. In one laughter exercise, we stand in a circle. We put our hands on our face, chest, or stomach. Then we make "ha ha" or "hee hee" sounds until we laugh. Everyone in the circle starts laughing because laughter is so contagious!
- 7 We have 4,000 laughter clubs in 50 different countries all around the world. Our clubs are open to everyone. We have clubs in hospitals, schools, colleges, businesses, and nursing homes³. Laughter is a gift. Use it, and you can be healthy and happy.

¹ calorie: a unit for measuring the energy value of food
² blood pressure: the rate at which your blood pushes through your body
³ nursing home: a place where very old people live to get special care they need

Q² WHAT DO YOU THINK?

A. Complete the activities in a group.

1. What happens to you when you laugh for a long time? How do you feel after you laugh? Use ideas from the box or your own ideas.

breathe deeply	cry	heart rate increases
breathe quickly	face turns red	stomach hurts

Reading Skill Identifying the topic sentence in a paragraph



The **topic sentence** explains the main idea of a paragraph. Other sentences in a paragraph support the topic sentence. Often, the topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph, but sometimes it is the second or third sentence. Finding the topic sentence helps you quickly understand what the paragraph is about.

Robert Provine studied people and laughter. **He discovered that people laugh when they want to be friendly.** He watched people in the city walking and shopping. He found that 80 to 90 percent of laughter came after sentences like *I know* or *I'll see you later*. People didn't laugh because someone said something funny. People laughed because they wanted to be friendly with each other.

Q unit structure

Following the introduction of the unit question, reading and listening passages provide vocabulary and information students use to discuss the unit question more deeply. (The *Q Skills for Success* series falls into two sequences of five books each: Listening/Speaking and Reading/Writing.) Related activities ask students to think critically about what they've just read or heard. As each unit unfolds, students are given ample practice to understand, analyze, apply, synthesize, and evaluate new language through these activities and projects.

Q language and skills practice

Starting with the unit question, students learn vocabulary they use to answer the unit question; consider new information on the unit's theme that utilizes this vocabulary; use this information to think critically about a series of new questions; and use those answers to practice new listening, grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills they need to complete the unit's SLO. Each aspect of the learning process in the *Q* series links and builds toward the same goal: completing the SLO. This interconnected process of considering new information is at the heart of the CT approach and forms the basis of the students' work in each unit of the *Q* series.

For example, in a unit that asks "How is health care changing?" students hear two listenings that discuss the positive and negative effects of medical tourism—a new health care phenomenon. After learning vocabulary to aid their discussions and practicing their new skills as described earlier, students have to plan and conduct an interview with students on both side of the medical tourism debate. Students work through the unit, engage their CT skills, and aim at the SLO in order to complete this meaningful project. Learning in the *Q* series is made real through the SLOs and made lasting through the students' CT processes.

If you're interested in the important roles CT and SLOs can play in language learning, ask your local OUP consultant about *Q Skills for Success*.



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