

## CUBING TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING EFL

**Nadiia Grytsyk**

*PhD (Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences),  
Associate Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages,  
T. G. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" ,  
[nadiela7027@gmail.com](mailto:nadiela7027@gmail.com)*

"The important thing is not to stop questioning.  
Curiosity has its own reason for existing"  
Albert Einstein

**Summary.** The article presents one of the techniques in the teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) "cubing." Cubing is an instructional strategy that asks students to consider a concept from a variety of different perspectives. It was introduced by Elizabeth and Gregory Cowan. The six sides or perspectives of cubing are: Describe, Compare, Associate, Analyze, Apply, and Argue. This article is also based on the author's experience in applying the cubing technique in the teaching EFL. The author states that incorporation this techniques in practice develop students conceptual understanding of a topic, develop students activity, and develop students critical thinking skills.

**Keywords:** Cubing, cubing technique, the teaching EFL .

**Introduction.** There is no doubt that English has become vital for communication all over the world and it is used as a bridge between people around the world. Therefore, English has become a lingua franca even though it is not the language with the largest number of native speakers (Harmer, 2001).

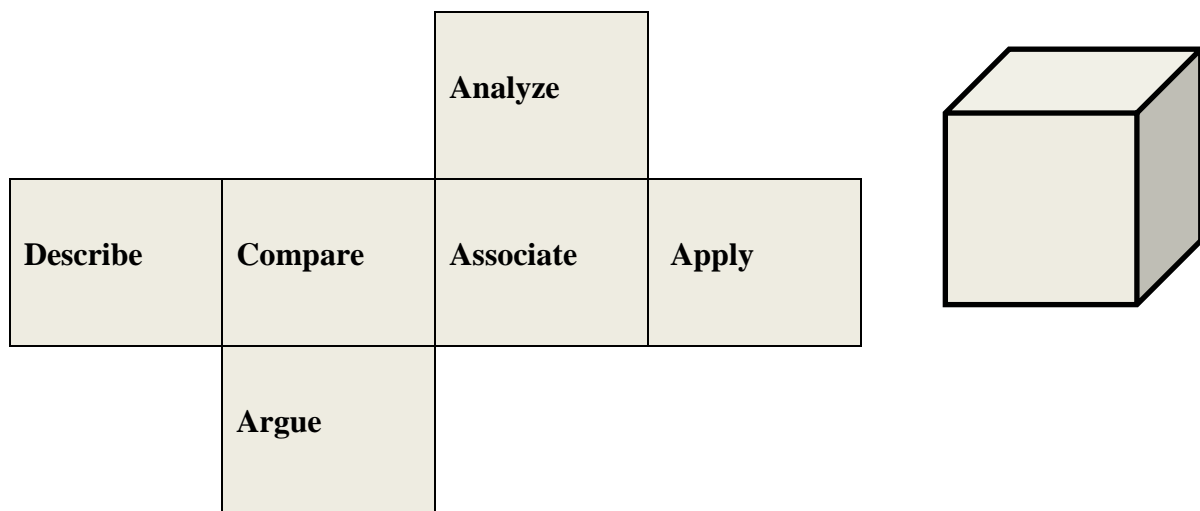
Having English language proficiency is vital and life changing for many learners as this language opens doors, creates new opportunities, provides access to education and to new types of employment and mobility.

But for many learners this is a challenging aspiration. To encourage the students and help them to succeed in the language learning a teacher should consider many factors and one of the most important is choice of the method, the tool which will effectively deliver knowledge and skills, which will motivate further language learning and improvement.

In the teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers can use various techniques to help the learners. Teaching means to help and share knowledge to others and also can give

information on how to do something. Brown (2007, p. 7) says that teaching may be defined as showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instruction, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand. Furthermore teaching is also to facilitate the students to be able in learning the material. Teaching EFL is very complex process which includes a number of processes (speaking, writing). This *article presents a study* designed to address this need by using cubing techniques in teaching EFL.

**Discussion.** Cubing is an instructional strategy that asks students to consider a concept from a variety of different perspectives. This technique was introduced by Elizabeth and Gregory Cowan in their textbook about teaching writing. It requires someone to see an object or a topic from six different perspectives. (*Figure 1. Six sides of a cube for the six perspectives.*) The six sides or perspectives of cubing are: Describe, Compare, Associate, Analyze, Apply and Argue for or against. (*Gregory Cowan and Elizabeth Cowan*). It means that, in applying cubing strategy students can develop their ideas about the topic.



*Figure 1. Six sides of a cube for the six perspectives.*

The purpose of the cubing technique is to move students beyond the simple description of something to get them interested in finding out more about a topic. This strategy can help the students to analyze the topic in depth and to prepare them in reading and writing. (Cowan, 1980).

Cubing works well when students are locked into a particular way of thinking. It allows students to look at an issue or topic from a variety of angles and to develop multidimensional perspectives. Cubes can be differentiated by readiness, interest or learning style in order to engage all students. It is an excellent exercise to illustrate how critical thinking techniques can be put into practice.

A teacher can use the strategy with the whole class, as small group work, and/or on a one-on-one basis. Almost any topic can be cubed. Cubing requires students to apply information they have been studying in new ways. The cubing method can also be modified to allow the teacher to create his or her own parameters or perspectives.

This technique can be used for virtually any topic. It works for all types of topics and side of the cube will provide a prompt that addresses one aspect of the topic. Students may be given a worksheet to fill in while thinking about the subject. Teacher begins by modeling the cubing process with a familiar topic. To examine the given subject students do the following instructions (*Figure 2. Cubing Instructions*):

<b>Describe</b>	Students will describe the topic as thoroughly as possible in words, including as many details as they can think of.
<b>Compare</b>	Students will compare and contrast the topic to something else, finding similarities and differences.
<b>Associate</b>	Using free association, students will list things that this topic brings to mind.
<b>Analyze</b>	Students will break the topic down into its component parts and materials, or analyze it in terms of causes, effects, or relationships.
<b>Apply</b>	Students will think of some of the ways this topic is used or what its affect has been in the world or everyday life.
<b>Argue for or against</b>	Students will come up with positive and negative attributes of the topic, and defend their argument.

*Figure 2. Cubing Instructions*

As an example, let's dwell on cubing technique on the topic "Beauty Contests" written by one of the students, her style is preserved.

Describe it. (Examine the topic closely and describe what you see.) A beauty contest is a contest when women show the beauty of their body, sometimes almost naked, their ability to

walk nicely, their talents and a little bit their ability to answer “tricky” questions to show if they are smart enough.

Compare it. (What is it similar to? Different from?) To some extent it is similar to fashion show. It can be compared with a zoo: people come to look at you. It is like brides’ market: you show your beauty to the whole country, world and maybe believe that millionaire will notice you and then marry you.

Associate it. (What does the subject make you think of?) As the cocktail dress walk is my favorite part of beauty contests I associate it with gorgeous dresses I can only dream about. The bad things I associate beauty competitions with are jealousy, blackmailing, betrayal. Also, I can’t but think that most of those women are not very clever, as most of their lives they try to look their best and don’t have enough time to study.

Analyze it (Break the subjects into parts; tell how it is made.) First of all, if you are a participant you have to be on a diet all your life and look carefully after yourself, to find a good hobby to impress the viewers. Then you attend different beauty competitions. If you are lucky you can get to the world level one. There are several ways to get to the Olympus: to be enormously beautiful, but often it doesn’t work as most of victories are prepaid; to have rich parents or a rich sponsors who are ready to invest in you in such way. Afterwards you have to be ready to sell yourself for some time till the moment when you are 23 and you are too old to have demand. So, you have to have plan B.

Apply it (Describe the subject’s uses.) To form sense of beauty, to show your daughter the dark side to motivate her to study, to look at dresses, to kill the evening, to break with you boyfriend (as you are not so beautiful), to sell your daughter to an oligarch, to make yourself try to be closer to the ideal.

Argue for or against it (Use any kind of reasoning, silly or rational, to take a stand for or against the subject.) To be honest I was not a huge enemy of beauty contests: I watched them a few years ago. However right now I realize they have more drawbacks than advantages and, in my opinion, it could be reasonable even to prohibit them.

As you see, some of the ideas are quite unexpected, but they offer fresh perspectives on the topic and can be further elaborated. Teacher’s job is to point to the ideas which are worth delving deeper.

The mentioned above algorithm of work on the strategy of cubing does not cover all its possibilities of using it in EFL classroom. However, own experience of using the strategy of

cubing for teaching EFL gives the opportunity to identify and list the benefits of its application. Let's enumerate some of the most important advantages of using cubing techniques in EFL:

- 1) The method makes students apply higher and higher levels of thinking based on Bloom's Taxonomy, as they proceed with their tasks;
- 2) It encourages critical thinking and intense exploration of a topic.
- 3) The strategy is very useful for collecting ideas before a writing assignment.
- 4) The activity is a more structured version of brainstorming.
- 5) Different dice can be designed to diversify the instruction.
- 6) This technique is especially enjoyable and effective for kinesthetic learners.
- 7) It can be used for virtually any topic.
- 8) This technique motivates students for learning, makes it's process interesting, fun and effective.

**Conclusion.** Taking everything into account, we conclude that using cubing is an engaging teaching strategy that encourages critical thinking and in-depth exploration of a topic. It can be used either as a writing strategy for brainstorming and generating ideas, or as a way to promote deeper understanding of the main ideas of a story or a topic in the content areas. Students use a six-sided cube as a visual aid to provide writing prompts and create a three-dimensional interpretation that addresses many different aspects of a topic. Cubing can be done as a group or individual project. In teaching EFL it can diversify traditional higher education, as well as transform students' learning into an interesting, effective, creative, dynamic process.

### **References**

- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles an interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge .
- Cowan, G. & Cowan, E. (1980). *Writing*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Jeremy Harmer. The Future of English: Rewiew// IATEFL Newsletter.-1998.-Issue141.
- Tompkins, Gail. *Literacy for the 21st Century*, 3rd Edition. Pearson Education, 2003.