THINKING CONFERENCE 2007

ABSTRACT

Title: The Position Paper: Marrying Writing and Thinking

This paper discusses the pedagogical approaches in a thinking and writing module offered to first year Engineering students at the National University of Singapore. In particular, it examines the teaching strategies adopted in the course which teaches learners the basics of argumentation as the foundation of an academic, research-based paper aimed at solving a problem. The discussion will centre on how, through focusing thinking on claims, evidence, assumptions, counter-argument, etc, learners learn to produce a paper that moves from an analysis of a problem to gathering supporting research to prove a thesis, to building an argument based on a problem and potential solutions. It also discusses the contribution of such a course in engendering a consciousness of social responsibility engineers-to-be ought to have, and in providing practice in problem solving, a needed skill in many thinking courses. Further, a study on learner perceptions of the skills learned in this module will give some perspectives on the relevance of such a course.

In all, the paper hopes to show how critical thinking is fostered especially well through persuasive writing because this genre requires learners to formulate reasons, analyze them, and finally synthesize them into new ideas and conclusions.