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An Investigation of the Use of Critical Thinking in EFL Students' Argumentative Writing

The Case of Third Year LMD Students of English at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia

Dissertation submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for Master Degree in Dedactics

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to:

my favorite 3 people in the world my mother Fouzia, my father Djamel and my brother Badis. To my mom and dad, you always told me that it's when things get hard that I must not quit, this advice guided me through the toughest situations so thank you. To my brother Badis as your older sister I tried to prove to you that the future belongs to those who believe in their dreams, that the Sky is the limit and that don't ever let fear stand in the way of your dreams. I really hope that I made you proud.

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Dina

Dedication

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

I dedicate this work to:

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Abstract

This study is a preliminary to the investigation of the use of critical thinking in students' argumentative writing. More specifically, this study aims at shedding lights on students' use of critical thinking when writing argumentative essays. To test the hypothesis that the majority of students do not have the adequate level of critical thinking that helps them to write effective argumentative essays, a written test is assigned to (30) third year students of English at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben-Yahya. Moreover, a questionnaire is administered to the subjects of the written test. Finally, an interview is conducted with four teachers of written expression at the department of English. The findings show that the majority of students do not think critically when writing their argumentative essays. Thus, the results of this investigation confirm the research hypothesis. Further, the results also show that the majority of the students neither know much about critical thinking nor receive training to develop this skill.

Key Words: Critical Thinking, Argumentation, Argumentative Writing.

List of Abbreviations and Symbols

CT: Critical Thinking

CTS: Critical Thinking Skills

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

Q: Question

N: Number

%: Percentage

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General Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

Critical thinking as a term intensely appears in higher education and language teaching alike. Educators support the former and its teaching, but the potential to achieve it remains questionable. As For the 21st century learner, it is considered to be one of the most significant skills to be acquired. Although the majority of EFL students express their thoughts when exposed to controversial issues at the university level, only few manage to think critically. This skill is of crucial significance in all disciplines, especially when coming to academic writing where students are asked to write essays. One of the most frequent written essays that students are required to write is the argumentative essay. This essay genre is very important for university students because it allows them to express their and others' viewpoints appropriately. However, some students fail to argue or provide effective arguments when they write argumentative essays.

2. Aim of the Study

The aim of this research project is to explore EFL students' use of the critical thinking skill when writing argumentative essays.

3. Research Question

This study seeks to answer the following question:

➢ Do EFL students think critically when writing argumentative essay?

4. Hypothesis

The current research is based on the following hypothesis:

➢ The majority of students do not have the adequate level of critical thinking skill that enables them to write effective argumentative essays.

5. Research Methodology

To collect data and check out the validity of this research hypothesis, three research tools will be designed. First, a written test will be assigned to a randomly-chosen sample of (30) third year students at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel. Next, a questionnaire will be administered to the subjects of the written test. Finally, an interview will be conducted with four written expression teachers at the department of English.

6. Structure of the Study

The dissertation comprises a general introduction, three chapters and a general conclusion. The first chapter gives an overview about the notion of critical thinking. Chapter two discusses the relationship between critical thinking and argumentation. Chapter three deals with the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire's answers, interview and analysis of the test results. Finally, the dissertation will end with a research conclusion.

Chapter One: Critical Thinking

Introduction

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Introduction

Critical thinking in particular, has been a subject of investigation for many decades. The main purpose of research conducted in this area is to highlight the importance of critical thinking in the teaching and learning process. In this study we aim at investigating the nature of critical thinking in EFL classrooms. In this chapter, the focus is on CT for it is without doubts a wide term that most learners and experts have different viewpoints upon its meaning and purpose. Therefore, the current chapter tackles several points. Firstly, a definition of the term critical thinking and its main key concepts was provided. Secondly, the standards of critical thinking were examined. Then, critical thinking skills and disposition were tackled. After that, the characteristics of a critical thinker were approached. There are some barriers that encounter critical thinkers, which are stated afterwards. The following point that was mentioned is concerned with the reasons behind teaching CT. Next, an insight was given to learner-centeredness and its relation with CT. Finally, ever since acquiring CT skills is of great importance for students in classrooms, some of the advantages of CT were tackled. All what has been previously said in this chapter was put in a nutshell.

1.1. Definition of Critical Thinking

Vyncke (2012) argued that although the term 'critical thinking' portrays a general idea of what it implies, it remains a concept over which there is much uncertainty and agreement about what it encompasses and how it is manifested. As Halanon (as cited in Razaei, Derakhshan & Bagherkazemi, 2001) pointed out, "critical thinking scholarship is in a mystified state, no single definition of critical thinking is widely accepted", the former as Vyncke stated is quiet evident by the numerous definitions scholars provided and their disagreement to acknowledge a precise and rigorous definition.

To begin with, Gormley (2017, p. 13) defined CT as "an intense mental activity, not a casual one. It requires alertness, patience, and a commitment to accuracy and precision". In other words, CT is the cognitive activity that is associated with using the mind (Cottrell, 2005) said .Moreover, Schafersman (1991) stated that thinking critically means thinking correctly in the pursuit of reliable knowledge about the world. That is, Ct is described as reasonable, reflective, responsible as well as skilful thinking that focuses on what to believe or do. Furthermore, Vyncke (2012) defined CT in broad terms as a wide range of cognitive skills relative to rational judgement.

1.2. Key Concepts in Critical Thinking

Scholars like Facione, Hutchinson and waters, Paul and Linda Elder have always had different views about the notion of critical thinking and have not provided its exact definition yet. In order for a better understanding of this skill, the following key concepts are needed.

1.2.1. Truth

The term truth is used for the quality of something based on facts or authentic statements. There are two kinds of truth that can be extracted from this term. First, objective truth is based on data and true information that have not been changed or manipulated.

Second, subjective truth which differs from one person to the other, it depends on the individuals' beliefs, personal experiences and their view points on different matters. Nothing beneficial comes out from arguing about subjective truth because two persons cannot agree on the same things all the time (Wood, 2002).

1.2.2. Opinion

Opinions are conclusions that any person shapes. The latter not only can be true or false but also impossible to detect. Furthermore, opinions can mostly predict the future, make judgments about strangers; most of the time when we have a saying in a certain matter, we do not have a base or at least a clear one. Although some opinions can be valid and others fallacies, all opinions should be taken into consideration. However, those erroneous opinions can be replaced by well-grounded ones when using critical thinking (Wood, 2002).

1.2.3. Logic

According to the Foundation for Critical Thinking (n.d.) Logic refers to the correct reasoning or its study and its foundations. All human thought and behaviour are based on logic when thinking, they tend to figure things out using ideas, meaning and thoughts (Wood, 2002).

1.2.4. Argument

Vaidya and Erickson (2006) maintained that an argument is not necessarily something that people agree or disagree with. An argument as defined by logic is a sequence of statements in which one statement is supported by other statements within the sequence. The supported statement is called conclusion, and the statements that support the conclusion are called premises. People's conclusions of arguments can be true or untrue. There are two types of arguments. Deductive arguments, they mostly have a value, evidence that supports the overall view of a certain matter in order to reach a result. If the structure and base of the argument is true, the results will most likely be true. Second, inductive arguments, which

provide some arguments but not full underprop, moreover a well inductive argument is supposed to be convincing and reasonable; if the previous stated matters are correct the conclusions will be correct as well (Wood, 2002).

1.2.5. Evidence

According to the Foundation for Critical Thinking (n.d.) evidence is the information by which proof might be founded or the conclusion and argument that might be based on. Unlike uncritical thinkers, critical thinkers distinguish the evidence upon which they base their interpretations from the assumptions that connect data to conclusions (Wood, 2002).

1.2.6. Error and Fallacy

Bassham, Wallace, Irwin, & Nardone (2011, p. 140) stated that "A logical fallacy is an argument that contains a mistake in reasoning" .According to Wood (2002) there are two types of fallacies which are deductive fallacy and inductive fallacy. To begin with, a deductive fallacy is a fallacy that is whether true or false when it comes to the results. A good example is having the idea that all cats are mammals; therefore all dogs are not mammals because they are not cats as well. The previous example is considered to be a fallacy due to denying the former predecessor. Second, inductive fallacy is a fallacy in which the arguments are not well supported and the land of the arguments is not strong enough. Another example of an inductive fallacy is thinking that all Siamese cats are quiet and friendly just because 'Purr' is a quiet and friendly Siamese cat. The latter example exhibits inductive fallacies through over generalizing and drawing conclusions based on a sample that it too small (Wood, 2002).

1.3. Critical Thinking Standards

Although true critical thinking is about asking questions, somewhat different it is as 'disciplined thinking'. Thus, critical thinking is governed by intellectual standards which must be applied to thinking in order to call a certain person a critical thinker. Amongst the most

significant of these intellectual standards are clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, consistency, logical correctness, completeness and fairness (Bassham et al., (2011).

1.3.1. Clarity

According to Bassham et al., (2011), one should clearly state his arguments so that the others can effectively evaluate them. Sadly, this can somewhat be difficult because people mainly do not succeed when coming to expressing themselves in a clear manner. This absence or deficiency of clarity is occasionally due to 'laziness, carelessness, or a lack of skill' (p, 12). Sometimes, however, it is quite the opposite and it is an intelligent attempt to misguide certain people so as one appears smart or deeply intellectual. Clarity of thoughts is what critical thinkers mostly seek as well as clarity of language, because if a statement is unclear, the others cannot ascertain whether it is accurate and relevant or not.

1.3.2. Precision

As precision is very important in specialized fields such as medicine and mathematics, it is also important for critical thinkers. They extremely insist on precise answers to precise questions in order to shortcut the confusions and dubieties they encounter when facing different problems and issues. Although a statement can be clear, it is not necessarily precise. Thus, precision is another must critical thinkers seek (Bassham et al., 2011).

1.2.3. Accuracy

Bassham et al., (2011) maintained that when decisions are based on incorrect information, bad decisions are going to be made no matter how much one is erroneous. This is how human thinking functions which is much the same with computer; whenever wrong information is put into it, wrong information is for sure what one gets out of it. In other words, a person should not give erroneous claim in order not to mistaken others.

1.3.4. Relevance

According to Bassham et al., (2011), relevance refers to the pertinent arguments used to the question at issue. That is to say, a person's information or arguments have to be related to the matter being discussed unless the person's intentions are ill-defined such as distracting others like politicians do.

1.3.5. Consistency

A person's beliefs should be consistent not contradictory. If not, one or both of those beliefs are logically false. According to Bassham et al., (2011), there are two types of inconsistencies which should be avoided. First, logical inconsistency which involves holding beliefs that cannot both or all be true about a certain matter. The second one is practical inconsistency, which involves contradicting what is done or to be done with what is said.

1.3.6. Logical Correctness

Bassham et al., (2011) argued that "To think logically is to reason correctly" (p. 5). In other words, well-grounded conclusions which characterize critical thinkers are the ones based on accurate, well-supported and logical beliefs.

1.3.7. Completeness

Thinking can both be shallow and deep depending on the context. Generally, however, deep and complete thinking is mostly favored over superficial thinking because treating an issue in depth and finding appropriate solutions for it require completeness of thinking (Bassham et al., 2011).

1.3. 8. Fairness

As Bashham et al., (2011) stated, it is not only a need but a must for critical thinkers to be " open minded, impartial, and free of distorting biases and preconceptions" (p, 6). Though,

it is somehow difficult to be free of bias on an account of certain factors such as egocentrism or sociocentrism, stereotyping, and prejudice.

1.4. Critical thinking skills

In order to avoid rote learning and memorization in education, Benjamin Bloom (1956) along with a committee of educators began working on developing a 'Thinking System' to encourage students to use a more sophisticated way of thinking. As a result, Bloom created a higher order taxonomy that was named after him; Bloom's Taxonomy is used as a reference for teachers to help students to be better critical thinkers. The concept of higher order (a concept of education reform based on learning taxonomies) has been refined by many scholars. This can be seen in the work of Anderson, Krathwol & Facione's 1990 "cognitive skills of a critical thinker''. Nevertheless, bloom's taxonomy was the most popular one. Moreover, in order to be considered as a good critical thinker, students must employ the six cognitive skills to make their learning more affective (Clarck, 2016).

Critical thinking skills are necessary in Bloom's both higher order and lower order thinking skills. The basic objective of CT is the ability to produce information; in Bloom's taxonomy this occurs in the lower order thinking level. Also, the aptitude to use previous acquired skills in achieving different tasks can be seen in Bloom's higher order thinking skills. In order to think critically, one has to go through the six cognitive levels of Bloom's taxonomy until the highest levels are reached. This interrelated relation between CT and Bloom's work is very important; it is nearly impossible for people to make decisions, seek the truth and facts or get satisfactory results in any field or profession if they do not reach the highest levels of the taxonomy. As a result, critical thinkers must then gradually move from one level to the other until they reach the highest level (Soullivan, 2001).

1.4.1. Bloom's Taxonomy

According to Wilson (2001), Bloom's taxonomy is used as a system for defining different cognitive levels. In 1956, a group of psychologists from Chicago created a six classification level; this taxonomy of levels was named after the leader of the group Benjamin Bloom. When creating a curriculum, educators use Bloom's taxonomy as a way of defining the cognitive skills that students have to master. Further, Bloom's work is often graphically presented by a pyramid that exhibits the lower order thinking skills (knowledge, comprehension, application) and the higher order levels (analysis, synthesis and evaluation). The first level of the taxonomy is knowledge; recall and retrieval of information and facts. The second level is comprehension; in this level students must grasp a great deal of information and understand the materials given by the teacher. The third level in the lower thinking order is application, and here, the student should be able to implement the knowledge he/she acquired in accomplishing tasks. Equally important, CTS are defined by bloom as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Analysis is the capacity to construct, compare and to objectively make decisions. Second is synthesis; to synthesize means to put together and to construct something from a whole. The highest order of the taxonomy is evaluation; here the student will assess, make judgments and provide solid arguments. Finally, students must demonstrate a high level of the cognitive skills when thinking and trying to find solutions.

Figure 1.1. The original version of Bloom's taxonomy (1956)

1.4.1.1. Limitations of Bloom's Taxonomy

The system of cognitive skills is classified according to the level of complexity and moves from concrete objectives to abstract ones. However, Bloom's work has gone under fire and back lashes by several educational scholars that criticized his work. Their main concern was that Bloom's work was out of date and needs to be up dated because teaching and learning is different from what it was back in the days .Having said that, most of the criticism was in terms of invalidity, unreliability and impracticality (Sungrue, 2002).

1.4.1.1. Invalidity

It has been fifty years since Bloom's taxonomy was created. Back in the days, researchers had small knowledge in understanding how cognitive processes work and how to associate them in learning. Further, bloom's classification of levels were not based on any research on learning, i.e., Bloom's work was not supported by previous works and the only acknowledgment of levels that are supported by research was understanding and application (Sungrue, 2002).

1.4.1.2. Unreliability

The application and use of Bloom's taxonomy was different and versatile by developers, teachers and designers. Furthermore, when teachers try to classify the objectives they either get stuck by the lower objectives or by the higher skill levels. As a result, it will be best to separate the objectives and evaluation; measuring conceptual knowledge and procedural knowledge separately (Sungrue, 2002).

1.4.1.3. Impracticality

Apart from the 'knowledge' level, all the other levels are considered to be higher order thinking. Thus, there is no practicality in treating the learning performance gaps, and the four levels could be reduced into only two levels (Sungrue, 2002).

1.4.2. Revised Version of Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy has helped the teaching and instructional planning for almost fifty years. In 2001, Anderson and Krathwhol along with some experts in cognitive psychology and curriculum designers decided to revise Bloom's work taking into account Bloom's own concerns and the limitations of the previous taxonomy then create a new version. The changes they made were at the level of terminology where they changed nouns to action verbs and the structure by rearranging the levels and finally put emphasis on some levels on the expense of others. To sum up, the new version of the taxonomy is considered to both have a more active thinking and accuracy than Bloom's original version (Wilson, 2016).

1.4.2.1. Remembering

At the stage of remembering, the student will recall the information that was previously stored in the memory. The student will also retrieve a variety of information, facts, lists and concepts (Hughes, 2014)

1.4.2.2. Understanding

The ability to grasp, compare, interpret and summarize different information. Students at this stage start to explain what happened using their own words; it is different for a foreign language student to fully understand a text. As a result, the teacher has to make sure that the students understood the given text. Verbs like to compare, to restate and to predict are frequently used by the teacher (Hughes, 2014).

1.4.2.3. Applying

At this level students start to use previous acquired information and apply it to solve problems and complete a given task using the acquired information. Verbs such as to use, to classify, to solve, and to examine are frequently used by the teachers at this stage (Hughes, 2014).

1.4.2.4. Analyzing

Hughes (2014) stated that at this stage students will start to draw conclusions and question the presented information by the author. This can be seen when a text is given to a student, he will not fully accept the information instead as he will start to think critically about it. Some of the verbs that are frequently used by the teacher are to analyze and to identify.

1.4.2.5. Evaluating

After understanding and analysis comes evaluation. This latter is one of the higher-order critical thinking skills. It is considered to be the most complex stage for learners due to its requirement of possessing a good level of language skills. Furthermore, the student will start to form an opinion, separate the authors' views and try to evaluate its relevance and validity. Good examples of the verbs that teachers use at this level are to justify, to prioritize and to recommend (Hughes, 2014).

1.4.2.6. Creating

To create is on the top of the pyramid displaying the highest critical thinking skills. Students must create something of their own based on the knowledge they acquired. It is all about what students could do if they were in charge. This can be depicted through writing an essay, group presentations, supporting their work with arguments and making their own conclusions .At this level, to invent, to construct and to plan are frequently used by the teacher (Hughes, 2014,).

Figure1.2. the revised version by Anderson and Cratwohl (2001)

1.5. Critical Thinking Disposition and its Dimensions

Dispositional aspects of thinking are considered as "personal attributes (ac cited in P. A. Facione, Giancarlo & N. C. Facione, 2000, p. 6)". The use of the word 'disposition' is used to refer to human characteristics, motivation, and personal reaction toward certain things, events and subjects. Without disposition, critical thinking will not occur since the person does not have the attitude or state of mind to use it.

Facione defined critical thinking disposition as "internal motivations to act toward or respond to persons, events or circumstances in habitual, yet potentially malleable ways" (as cited in Broadbear, J., Guang, J. & Bierma, T. J. p. 64). Furthermore, certain people use CT while others do not use it even slightly because they lack dispositional skills. Disposition is all about the behavior and attitude towards a certain matter. In addition, there is a difference between the ability to think critically, which is the 'skill' and the attitude to do so, which can be referred to as 'disposition'. Consequently, critical thinking skills and disposition are separate entities (P. A. Facione, Sanchez, & Facione, N. C., 1995).

1.5.1. Analyticity

People with the characteristic of analyticity, have the tendency to foresee the consequences of events and ideas. Furthermore, analyticity disposes the person into

professional and academic practice to create an advantage for a client, researcher or student. To sum up, it is the use of proof and evidence in order to solve a problem and anticipate certain results and short-comings of the analyzed topic. Students with the ability to analyze have the tendency to say "People need reasons if they are going to disagree with others opinion" (P. A. Facione et al., 1995, N. C. Facione et al., 2000).

1.5.2. Inquisitiveness

In general, the person who has the characteristic of inquisitiveness tends to discuss and tackle any subject in order to know more about it. Having said that, it is all about the desire and eagerness to learn and try to apply knowledge even though the application of that knowledge is hard to implement. Usually a student will go with the caption of "Learn everything you can, you never know when it could come handy" (Both P. A. Facione et al., 1995 and N. C. Facione et al., 2000).

1.5.3. Open-Mindedness

Open-mindedness has relevance in multicultural societies, and thus, citizens have to accept one another and respect their life style. To say the least, it is the ability to accept, embrace other peoples' views and be sensitive toward certain opinions in order to avoid any prejudicial judgments. An open-minded person will go with the prompt of "it is important to me to understand what other people think about me" (Both P. A. Facione et al.,1995 and N. C. Facione et al., 2000).

1.5.4 Systematicity

Systematicity requires the ability to focus and concentrate with an attitude towards organization. Ordering things is an indispensible part of this characteristic, it does not matter how things are addressed or tacted as long as they are ordered. A systematic and ordered

person would agree with the caption "I always focus on the questions before I attempt to answer it" (Both P. A. Facione et al., 1995 and N. C. Facione et al., 2000).

1.5.5. Truth-Seeking

The person who inclines the characteristic of seeking the truth has to acknowledge and adjust his views and beliefs according to the new reasons that have been recently encountered. To sum up, truth seeking is the aptitude to extract knowledge in a given context and has guts when asking questions. Also, it is the capacity to be objective and pursue the information despite of its opposition to personal views and perceptions. A person who always in search to reveal the truth or look for it always disagrees with people when they say "Everyone always argues from their own self-interest, including me" (Both P. A. Facione et al., 1995 and N. C. Facione et al., 2000).

1.5.6. Cognitive Maturity

To acquire the dispositional cognitive maturity, students must have a higher level of CT and self-confidence. In addition, it is the aptness of believing in ones' conclusions, findings and the talent to reach a rational and logical resolution of the problem. Students who acquire cognitive maturity agree with the caption of "tests that require thinking, not memorization, are better for me" (Both P. A. Facione et al., 1995 and N. C. Facione et al., 2000).

1.5.7. Judiciousness

A good critical thinker must approach problems and make decisions based on standards and evidence. When a person tries to make up his mind about a certain problem or issue, the decisions must be made by a solid argument that is based on a fact and proof; the cleverness to approach a problem with a sense of standardized contexts and a well-constructed

judgment to prevent and exclude any uncertainties (Both P. A. Facione et al., 1995 and N. C. Facione et al., 2000).

1.6. Characteristics of a Critical Thinker

People are neither born critical thinkers nor do they master CT over night. There are several characteristics that characterise critical thinkers and distinguish them from others. Bassham et al., (2002), state that critical thinkers are very passionate about clarity, precision, and accuracy along with other critical thinking standards. As Barbara & Michelle (2005) pointed out in their power point "A well cultivated critical thinker raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely". Furthermore, critical thinkers as (cited in Barbara and Michelle, 2005), communicate effectively with the others so that they figure out solutions to complex issues. Moreover, they are skilled when coming to analysing, giving arguments, and evaluating others' points of view (Bassham et al., 2002).

Similarly, critical thinkers draw appropriate conclusions from evidence due to their logical reasoning. Correspondingly, they are open minded when listening to opposing points of view and welcome others 'criticism; critical thinkers are intellectually honest with themselves by acknowledging what they know and do not. Another critical thinkers' characteristic is that they are not biases, egocentrics or sociocentrics; they base their beliefs and arguments on facts and evidence not on personal preferences. Finally, critical thinkers are those who face the barriers that encounter them when trying to think critically by paying attention to details, facing what contradicts with their basic beliefs or fighting against the obstacles that get into their way (Bassham et al., 2002).

1.7. Barriers to Critical Thinking

Every person can be a critical thinker when acquiring CTS. However, these skills are definitely not enough because of certain barriers critical thinkers encounter. According to Cottrell (2005), barriers to critical thinking differ from one person to another. However, those

barriers can usually be overcome. Some of the key barriers to critical thinking are misunderstanding what criticism, over-estimating the reasoning abilities of oneself, lacking methods, strategies, or practice, unwillingness to criticise professionals, affective reasons, mistaking information for understanding, lack of focus and attention to details.

1.7.1. Misunderstanding Criticism

Despite the fact that critical evaluation means identifying positive as well as negative aspects, some people when hearing the term 'criticism' suppose it means making negative comments. Consequently, they allude only to negative aspects when analysing. On the contrary, engaging in criticism for others is not good for they think it is an essentially negative activity. Furthermore, some make only positive comments and avoid negative ones in order to be regarded as a pleasant person. Thus, not providing feedback on what to be enhanced is not what critical thinking advocates (Cottrell, 2005).

1.7.2. Over-estimating the Reasoning Abilities of Oneself

Being very confident about one's own beliefs and how those beliefs are the best is one of the factors that keep a person from thinking critically. Winning an argument does not necessarily mean a person is good, but perhaps his/her opponents are not interested in going further with the discussion, or they simply do not recognize the poor argument. In result, there is no escape from falling for the trap of poor thinking habits (Cottrell, 2005).

1.7.3. Lacking Methods, Strategies, or Practice

Some people are willing to be more critical and yet, knowing how to do it is the obstacle they encounter most. Others by the same token, as Cottrell (2005, p. 11) stated "are unaware that strategies used for study at school and in everyday situations are not sufficiently rigorous for higher-level academic thinking and professional work". In contrast, critical thinking skills can simply be developed by practice.

1.7.4. Unwillingness to criticise professionals

Cottrell (2005) said that some students can find offering criticism of experts rude or illogic. Moreover, it is somewhat peculiar for them to criticise those who are obviously more experienced. Nevertheless, critical analysis is a typical activity that students are required to do so that their thinking would be enhanced.

1.7.5 Affective Reasons

Emotions can play an essential part in critical thinking. In academic contexts to illustrate, students are sometimes challenged when being exposed to theories that contradict their normality. To rephrase it, holding beliefs and assumptions especially those which are long-held such as religious ones, make it difficult for students to change them or accept new ones. Although it is no lie that emotions may sometimes be of good help when thinking and result in powerful arguments, they keep students from thinking clearly in addition to weakening their arguments (Cottrell, 2005).

1.7.6 Mistaking Information for Understanding

According to Cottrell (2005), students misunderstand the activities that are set for them by the teacher. Thus, they end up doing the opposite of what they are supposed to. To rephrase it, they neglect learning the skills that should be learnt from those activities and give more importance to facts and answers.

1.7.7. Lack of focus and attention to details

Precision and accuracy are undoubtedly some of the major standards of critical thinking that need to be applied when thinking. In order for students to be precised and accurate, they have to pay good attention to details, focus only on the subject matter and not get distracted by other attractions (Cottrell, 2005).

1.8. Teaching critical thinking

Critical thinking has been the focus of most scholars and researchers especially in the field of education. The question that should be asked is "why should we include critical thinking in the classroom?" in an attempt to answer this question, there are a lot of reasons to include this later to classroom teaching (Hughes, 2014).

1.8.1. Requirement of Critical Thinking in Communicative Tasks

When the focus is on rote learning, there is no need to include CT in listening and repeating tasks since the main focus is to build up vocabulary. Meanwhile, when doing tasks in the target language and enclose elements such as investigating a problem or solving it, CT is very needed. The affective use of language along with CT is indispensible in communicative tasks because students are engaged in authentic situations, which are a reflection to real life tasks. As a result, the learner must think critically to reach a success (Hughes, 2014, p. 5).

1.8.2. Authentic Texts

"An authentic text is usually taken to mean a text which was not written for the language classroom, and which hasn't been messed with-it retains its original vocabulary and grammar, and bits of the text have not been cut out. Preferably it is unprocessed" (De Chazal, 2014, para, 1). Authentic and real materials are both used in modern classroom. Teachers always adapt the texts that embody the writers' and speakers' prototyped meaning. Furthermore, students when they get access to a written or spoken text, they need to fully grasp the meaning, analyze opinion and finally express their own view point in response to a text, significantly, students must think critically about a given text (Hughes, 2014).

1.8.3. Critical literacy

When students read texts a verification of the source of the text is needed. People are living in a digital age, subsequently, not all information is true because some lack facts and validity. Most people specifically younger minds happily believe and embrace any information they receive or encounter even if most parts are untrue. Again, students must have the ability to assess and effectively evaluate a document. It is of great importance to ask critical questions and try to find original sources. Furthermore, teachers are required to have critical thinking skills in order to deal with critical literacy, and thereupon, teachers must be in a good position to teach youngsters critical thinking skills (Hughes, 2014).

1.8.4. Whole Brain function

Scientists that major in the nervous system like James E. Zull in (2002) in his book "the art of changing the brain", argued that the student must use the four parts of the brain interchangeably relating his work to Kolb's four stage learning cycle (1984). When people reflect, observe, or form a view or a hypothesis, the information will go to a specific part of the brain as a component of a learning cycle. As a consequence, the role of CT is decisive in this case; students when reading a text are going to memorize and collect some language from that text, the gathered information will be placed at the back of the brain. Accordingly, what students must do is to be creative, i.e., try to reflect on the required language, test and evaluate it using all four parts of the brain in the classroom (Hughes, 2014).

1.8.5. Critical Thinking and Exam Preparation

In the attempt of following a syllabus and examination requirements, teachers do not have much time to go beyond these demands and students must pass their exams as a final step of the educational journey. Good students often perform better in exams than their peers because their critical thinking skills are more developed. The tests taken in the exams could be either spoken or written. Subsequently, the answer requires to express opinions, give

reasons with good arguments, and in order to do so, it is important to display a good level of English and a higher mastery of critical thinking skills (Hughes, 2014).

1.8.6. Learner Centeredness and Critical Thinking

There has been a shift in the way of teaching previously. The focus of instruction was from teachers to students. Further, the teacher was the only source of knowledge, the sage on stage and the transmitter of information while students were passive receivers. However, since the emergence of the learner-centered approach, students began to construct their own knowledge through gathering information and started to integrate general skills in their learning process. One of the advantages of this approach is students' development of autonomy; the learner relies on himself and needs the teacher for guidance only. In addition, the students will solve problems, find answers, and examine their understanding and others (Diogenes, 2015).

Call Rogers and Maria Montessori's work contributed to student-centered learning and supported the self-directed learning, i.e., the learners will construct meaning and have the liberty to choose what they learn and how to learn it. Consequently, students become active participants and more involved in the learning process. Similarly, when improving students' autonomy, they will develop a sense of thinking critically instead of restituting the information to the teacher; the students will be able to shape their own understanding of things. Finally, both CT and learner-centered approach are self-directed, self-monitored and self-corrective and integrating them in the learning process will definitely add to the students' performance and ability to be mindedly independent (Ritchmond, 2014).

1.9. Advantages of critical thinking and its Skills in classroom

Critical thinking is of vital importance in all of the fields, particularly in the educational field. According to Gormley (2017), ever since CT is 'a solitary activity' that means combining CT with small group instruction, one on one instruction, or project based

learning, it permits useful give and take between both of the teachers and the student. Additionally, small groups' instructions and project based learning provide worthy opportunities for students to learn from each other (p. 17). In addition, Cottrell (2005) stated that good CTS bring several benefits such as developing more focused reading, improving attention and observation as well as the capacity to identify key points in a text rather than getting distracted by less important matters.

Furthermore, CT plays "a vital role throughout the college curriculum" (Bassham et al., 2011, p 7) next to improving students' performance in classroom through its skills, which not only include understanding both of the others' arguments and beliefs, but also critically evaluating those arguments and beliefs. Equally important, it includes developing well-supported and grounded arguments and beliefs coupled with defending them. Finally, critical thinking helps students to critically evaluate what they are learning in class as it teaches them a wide range of strategies that can greatly able them to engage in critical evaluation (Bassham et al., (2011).

Conclusion

Although Critical thinking is surrounded by many views, all scholars share the fact that it is without doubts a vital element in both of the teaching and learning process. Scholars put the stress on the need for critical thinking in the educational system due to its importance and advantages in academic fields and career wise. However, some teachers and students alike neglect critical thinking. While some teachers avoid integrating critical thinking because of the heavy syllabuses, others have some kind of fear when it comes to critical thinking for they are not critical thinkers themselves. Students alike, rely on rote learning and those who somewhat have critical thinking lack the adequate level to use it. To sum up, a better understanding of the notion of critical thinking and some of its key concepts is provided as well as its standards, skills and disposition, characteristics, barriers, teachability, and finally advantages. Critical thinking needed to be taken into consideration since the emergence of technology because the teaching and learning is different from what it was back in the days.

Chapter Two: The Argumentative Writing

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Introduction

Writing is of critical significance if not the most significant skill at the university level. The students at this level are required to be academic in their writings. Correspondingly, this type of writing is called academic writing, which in turn requires students to write essays. Among the different genres of essays, students are mainly asked to write argumentative essays, which are the focal point of the chapter in hand. First, this chapter intends to discuss a brief history of the emergence of English for Specific Purposes and English for Academic Purposes, examine the nature of academic writing through defining it, explains the approaches to teaching academic writing, its types and the essay as an academic text. Besides, it defines argumentation, highlights its types and theories, as it also examines the argumentative essays' structure. Moreover, it sheds light on the difficulties that students encounter in argumentative writing as well as the relationship between critical thinking and EFL argumentation. Finally, this chapter highlights the importance of argumentative writing in EFL classrooms.

2.1. Definition of Academic Writing

Writing is an important medium of communication and it is very essential in everyday life as well as in education. However, writing has to be academic when coming to education, particularly higher education. Students are consequently asked to generate academic texts whether in regular assignments or in exams to display their knowledge of a specific subject. Hence, Academic writing is indispensable in universities and "has become a thorn in the side of the academy" (Murray & Moore, 2006). It is regarded as "the means for students to explore and consolidate their understanding of the subject knowledge" (Vyncke, 2012, p. 19).

In broad terms, academic writing may be defined as "any writing completed to fulfill university or college requirement" (Shannon, 2011, p. 2). That is to say, it is the writing that is done by students or academics to be read by other scholars (Geyte, 2013). In like manner, Whitaker (2009) defines academic writing as the writing that students have to do for their university courses. On the other hand, Bailey (2006, para. 1) argues that "Academic Writing is for international students studying in colleges and universities where courses are taught in English", because academic writing as Oshima and Hogue (2007) state probably differs in English from academic writing in one's native language.

To conclude, the purpose of academic writing is to present information about a certain subject and demonstrate students' mastery of content (Shannon, 2011). In other words, it asks students to display both of knowledge and proficiency with specific disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting, as well as presenting (Irvin, 2010).

2.2. The Essay as an Academic Text

Warburton believed that essay writing is considered to be the heart of most academic studies (ac cited in Fahim & Hashtrodi, 2012). Essays are one of the most common forms of assessment, for instance in disciplines such as Law, History, Communication Studies and Education. They are written by students and are probably to be read by one person only which

is their tutor. The essay can be set as a task for a coursework in order to assess a student's understanding of a module, or as an exam question (Geyte, 2013). Similarly, Hammer (2017) stated that the academic essay has had a long-lasting place within higher education, particularly, assessment practices. Moreover, it continues to be a popular choice for higher education teachers.

Belmont and Sharkey (2011) said that an essay is made up of a group of paragraphs that focus on a certain topic. According to them, formal academic essays are usually persuasive and argumentative, and they require a careful consideration of a viewpoint, respond to an argument, or assess alternatives and proffer a conclusion that takes backup views of the issue into consideration. Equally important, they maintain that "Clear evidence for claims must be presented, and qualified statements should be used instead of sweeping assertions" (p. 263).

Accordingly, Vyncke (2012) maintained that students need to do more than acquiring and reproducing knowledge in higher education; they need to transform and renew knowledge by the rhetorical tool of argument. Similarly, Lee and Street (as cited in Wingate, 2012, 145) argued that although the nature of essay variegates significantly across and within disciplines, the development of argument is seen as a key feature of writing successfully by academics. Equally important, Wu (as cited in Wingate, 2012, p. 145) emphasized on how the 'argumentative essay' is the most popular genre that undergraduate students have to write.

2.3. Definition of Argumentation

Argumentation is a familiar and a widely used word in everyday life.The word argumentation originates in the fifteen century which means ''presentation of formal arguments'' and derived from the Latin root 'argumentationum' in the sense of ''bringing forth of a proof '' (Vocabulary, 2016). .Further, Blackburn (as cited in Asia Pacific Forum on Science Learning and Teaching, 2012) defined argumentation as "considerations designed to

support a conclusion. An argument is either the process of doing this...or the product...the pattern of inference and the conclusion reached...Logic is the study of valid and invalid forms of argument".

Moreover, the word argument is often related to analyzing, interpreting and evaluating a certain proposal or clarifying a point of view. In addition, argumentation is often taught in order students understand information and to construct the truth. Furthermore, argumentation uses reason, persuasion, logic and different tactics to reach a certain conclusion (Razaghi, 2014, p. 3).

Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004) defined argumentation as "a verbal, social and rational activity at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint''. To put it in another way, there are certain characteristics that arguments obtain; the argument is a verbal expression which the person uses to defend his standpoint, other people might disapprove and refute it and it is an attempt to convince others by using logic. As Wolfe, Britt Bulter (2009, p. 184) stated, " Argumentation is a recursive process, sometimes with multiple lines of argument, rather than one characterized by long chains such as geometry proofs".

According to McNeil & Pimental (2010), argumentation in the past had a limited scope to only use it for science because it played a monumental role in scientific theories, in research designs or in constructing a hypothesis However, due to the research study movement argumentation in education was discussed to be used not only in the field of science but also in the field of education. (as cited in APFSLT, 2012).

2.4. Types of Argumentation

In the professional world, argumentation is considered to be the most important part of communication. Besides, it is weighty to use solid arguments and ideas when communicating with different people. Both writers and readers should have standards and ethics, avoid bias and objectively criticize the opposition (Lumen-learning, n.d.).

According to Hillocks "Argument is at the heart of critical thinking and academic discourse, the kind of writing students need to know for success in college'' (as cited in Making the Standards Come Alive, 2015). Moreover, arguments can be classified into two categories, which are inductive arguments and deductive arguments. The former is considered to as 'bottom-up' and the latter as a 'top-down' (Cline, 2018).

However, there is another type of arguments which is abductive, it can produce incorrect results due to its formal system. Consequently, the inductive and deductive arguments are the most used (New World Encyclopedia, 2017).

2.4.1. Inductive Argument

Inductive argument is a form of reasoning and a person should use observation to reach conclusions or make generalizations. However, even if the results of the conclusion are true, it is still impossible to have the same results because not all observations can be made (Brighton, 2018). Moreover, the inductive argument is considered as a bottom-up in a sense that the evidence holds a strong support for the conclusion but not always; there is uncertainty that the results will likely to be as in the first time. Further, in using inductive argument words such as probably, likely, possibly and reasonably are used when forming inductive argument (Cline, 2018). Furthermore, to make generalizations about something perception and observation are required; the generalizations can be made by making claims about a certain population or even a small sample (Crossman, 2017). To add, there are other forms to draw conclusions and form a claim that is done by using evidence, arguments from an authority or analogy and causal argument (Brighton, 2018).

2.4.2. Deductive Argument

Deductive argument is a form of logic. It is considered as a top-down argument. The argumentation starts with a general principle referred to as premises (Crossman, 2018). Further, the person relates the major evidence with another premise to form a conclusion. In

addition, when the premise and inference are true, the logic is true then the conclusion is notably correct (Cline, 2018). Consequently, it is impossible for the results to be faulty (Internet Encyclopedia of Philoso0phy, 2017).Furthermore, accepted proof or ''an appropriate argument supported by valid reasoning'' (Hannah & de villliers, 2008, p. 329) is what deductive arguments are based on; if a person rejects the conclusions then he is automatically rejecting logic (as cited in Cline, 2018). Moreover, when the conclusion is guaranteed by the evidence the argument is said to be valid. Similarly, when the argument is not proved or not sure of, the argument is said to be deductively invalid. In brief, there are only valid and invalid deductive argument there is no such thing as being valid and invalid at the same time (Internet encyclopedia of philosophy, n.d).

2.5. Argumentative Theories

Argumentative theory is a multidisciplinary field of study and it investigates how arguments are used. Further, argumentation is used in the context to agree or refute. Hence, argumentation is a social process used in debates, in political disputes and in scientific fields. Moreover, argumentation theory does not only include traditional areas of study but modern areas such as communication. To add, argumentation theories mostly discuss how people argue, and the standards of a good argument (Lewinski & Mohammed, 2016). Besides, people when they argue tend to perform better in groups because of the availability of data (Mercier, 2011).

2.5 1. Sperber and Mercier's Theory

Sperber's argumentative theory has gained a positive review in the academic circle. Moreover, the argumentative theory came as an idea because of what was happening in the philosophy department; experts made assumptions that the mind produce fallacies and that the individual cannot understand logical problems. The argumentative theory then is set to change this way of thinking (Brockman, n. d.). The purpose of this study is to make individuals use

valid arguments, help people use logic and collect reliable premises. Sperber's main idea of reason is to persuade people and evaluate their arguments.

The field of applied linguistics gave huge importance to argumentative theory. The essential idea is to be for or against a statement by constructing proper and well selected arguments (Camirada & Amgoud, 2007). In addition, Sperber in his theory explained key principles of reason; some people when they argue they use sentiments to persuade rather than logic. Contradictory, people that use reason are more objective when they evaluate or convince others (Mercier, 2016). Argumentative theory helped in every area of study and it is important for scholars, philosophers, teachers and learners, this theory can be used in oral or writing communication (Communication Theory, 2010).

2.5.2. Perelman's Theory

Argumentation studies are shared by a variety of scholars that majored in different disciplines for instance in linguistics, communication, sociology and even philosophy. Argumentation theory is then multidisciplinary; it is not occupied by one field or restricted only in one context, rather it has various contributions in any enquiry (Ribeiro, 2013). Perelman along with Tyteca developed a theory about rhetoric and argumentation in 1958. The main idea of Perelman's argumentation theory is the ability to persuade a specific audience and convince them to accept a claim. In addition, argumentation theory is said to be personal; it is a person-centered activity that begins with a premise and ends with convincing the audience (MERGworks, 2017).

Even more, Perelman (as cited in Leff, 2009) talked about the audience; when the speaker makes a claim, the argument must be directed to a specific group or an individual. Henceforth, the speaker's work is to select suitable data and information to win the audience over (in this case the teacher). To put it in another words, the purpose of argumentation is not

only to make the audience (teacher) accept the argument but also to make them agree about a

conclusion.

Perelaman (as cited in Leff, 2009) emphasized the fact that argumentation is a social

phenomenon. In particular, the participants engage in groups or individually in order to

persuade the audience. He argues that ''argumentation does not unfold in a vacuum, but in a

socially and psychologically determined situation, that it engages practically those who

participate in it '' (page 78).

2.6. Toulmin's Model of Argumentation

Trent (2009) stated that a new argument model was proposed by Stephen Toulmin in

1958 to replace the syllogism for assessment of everyday argument. By mid 1968, his model

was introduced in several text books and articles. According to Changing Minds (n.d.),

Toulmin identified six elements of a persuasive element. The first element is claim; it is a

statement that includes information that people ask the others to accept and believe. Second,

grounds or data is made up of hard facts and the reasoning behind the claim. In other words, it

is the truth on which the claim is based. Grounds is the basis of real persuasion; the argument

may be built on it because it includes proof of expertise or basic premises. Third, a warrant

links both of data and other grounds to a claim. It legitimizes the claim by showing the ground

to be relevant. Forth, backing or support gives an argument additional support to the warrant;

this is done through answering different questions. Fifth, a qualifier shows the strength of the

leap from the data to the warrant. Qualifiers include words such as most, always, usually,

sometimes and often. Thus, the argument may range from a strong assertion to a weak and

vague statement. Finally, rebuttal refers to counter-arguments that can be used to oppose a

certain argument. It is an argument in itself, and hence, it may include a claim, warrant and

backing.

2.7. Difficulties in Writing an Argumentative Essay

One of the most important academic assignments in college is to write an argumentative essay. This style of writing requires the student to be for or against a certain topic. In addition, it can be challenging for students to write a persuasive essay; it is hard to convince the reader (teacher) to adopt a new view point. Having said that, in order to back up the claims, it is a must to look for evidence. Nippold & Ward-Lonergan (as cited in Kaur, 2014) argued that "Argumentative writing is a challenging communication task that needs sophisticated cognitive and linguistic abilities" (p. 238). Kaur (2014) also stated that writing an argumentative essay can be hard and challenging for foreign language students of English because this genre of writing demands a higher level of critical thinking

2.7.1. The Thesis Statement

One of the difficulties that students encounter in writing an argumentative essay is the thesis statement. A good argumentative essay is as good as its thesis. However, it is hard to construct a well-organized and logical thesis. In addition, the thesis statement should be specific and clear so that the reader will exactly know the main idea of the whole essay. Unfortunately, students fail to write a good thesis statement; it can be hard to summarize an idea or narrow it down in one sentence (Magher, n.d.). Moreover, the student must write an argument that shows how and why one intends to prove or refute a point in the thesis statement (Brozak, 2017).

2.7.2. Argument Support

The supporting arguments are another difficulty that students come across in argumentative essay writing. In order to understand an argument, it is necessary to have background information. Also, the argument must be supported by facts in order to be accepted. Moreover, students always encounter hardships in supporting the topic. In order to

support the arguments students must rely on an authority, the arguments must not be opinion-based for it is bias, hence, authentic sources are superlative (Instant Essay Writing, 2017).

2.7.3. Evidence

Another intricacy that students stumble upon during writing an argumentative essay is collecting evidence. Evidence is what an argumentative essay rely on to support an argument or a claim. Furthermore, in order to make a proposal more intriguing and persuasive to the reader, the student must carefully choose and select evidence that is reliable. Moreover, the premise should be as detailed as possible so that the essay will be more persuasive (Frantzen, n.d.). In order to back the argument, the evidence must be reliable. That is to say, it has to be retrieved from a source (Magher, n.d.).

2.7.4. Opposing Arguments

It can be hard for students to think about their side of the arguments and the opposing arguments as well. When students write an argumentative essay, they must take into account the counter-arguments. However, most students face challenges in doing so. Further, thinking about contradictory arguments is in itself a good way to dispel them (Magher, n.d.). In addition, students must use authentic sources that support the opponent arguments so that the essay will have credibility (Instant Essay Writing, 2017).

2.7.5. Subjectivity

There are certain topics that students are passionate about when writing an argumentative essay. One of the difficulties that students run into is to remain objective and not to include any personal feelings or emotions. Furthermore, the student must focus on the issue and not to get the emotions to over-look his judgment (IEW, 2017). In addition, students must be objective and neutral so that the delivered arguments will remain strong. Moreover, it is very important to keep personal opinions aside (Magher, n.d.).

2.8. EFL Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking

Writing argumentative essays is of great significance in higher education for EFL students. In order to write the latter successfully, one has to foster an adequate level of critical thinking competence. Pei, Zheng, Zhang & Liu (2017) believe that EFL argumentative writing is not merely an organised process of words, phrases and sentences but a complex process that includes grasping and developing a statement, organising a coherent discourse and writing ideas as well. To put it in another way, it necessitates intellectual capacity for thinking critically. Accordingly, a good piece of writing as they argue should somewhat reflect the aspects of CT. That is to say, a mind that is thinking should be reflected in writing (Robertson & Nunn, 2007, p. 119). Again, Kurlan (as cited in Robertson & Nunn, 2007) emphasises on how good writing should reflect the aspects of CT. Thus, the writer is required to generate some content, put forth assumptions, evidence, and arguments that he can afterwards defend and from which he can draw conclusions.

Additionally, Palmer, Stephan, Yeh and Ramage et al,. (as cited in Fulan, 2014) believe that both of CT and argumentative essays writing are closely connected. Thus, argumentative writing as Crammond and Walton (as cited in Fulan, 2014) state is considered a tool for critical thinking.

. 2.9. The Importance of Argumentative Writing

Writing is one of the most important skills that students must master at university. Furthermore, it is the students' nature to argue with their peers, family and even with teachers. However, argumentative essay writing demands logic, valid and reliable arguments. In addition, the key for a successful writing is to master argumentative essays; it is not easy to master the art of persuasion, to take a stand on a topic and remain confident about it (Nwaka, n.d.). In brief, argumentative writing is very important for EFL students in their studies, for research purposes, dissertation and even in real life situations (Thompson, 2017).

2.9.1. Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills

Argumentative writing has the chance to obtain the most important skill, which is thinking critically. The argumentative writing purpose is not only to argue about an idea or refute it; rather, it is a way to think with reason and dispel counter-arguments. In addition, argumentative writing assists students to get familiarized with faulty arguments and fallacies, to be able to recognize them and dissipate them (Nwaka, n.d.).

Moreover, the aim of argumentative writing is to enable students' to think critically, use logic and reach accurate conclusions. Argumentative writing aids students to look upon ordinary topics in a deep manner and to try to cover all the sides of the subject. This type of writing makes students master the skill of critical thinking (Little, 2017).

2.9.2. Improving Persuasion

The argumentative writing leads to master the art of persuasion. Further, when writing argumentative essay students of English will be able to write a convincing, logical and a clear paper. Moreover, the importance of argumentative writing for foreign language students of English is the aptitude to refute the reader and show the teacher the real level of the student. Argumentative writing is a space where students will have the capacity to see things from a different prospective and angle (Nwaka, n.d.).

2.9.3. Boosting Students' Research Skills

The research skill is acquired through any type of writing especially argumentative writing. In addition, the more students have knowledge and information about the topic the better writers they will become (Little, 2017).

One of the importance of argumentative writing is that students will know the structure of this genre of essays and how to summarize and collect valuable arguments through the research skill. Another importance of the argumentative writing is that it helps

students to enhance the research skill, to look for evidence, to find valid information and to be better writers (Thompson, 2017).

2.9.4. Learning Logic and Rhetoric

Argumentative writing helps students to use logic and rhetoric when writing an essay. In addition, logic and rhetoric are conceived to be a type of discourse that students use to express their viewpoint and a reason to support claims (Hitchcock, 2007, p. 3).

Moreover, students during essay writing or in exams must write logical, coherent and organized paragraphs. Because of logic, EFL students will follow reason, avoid any emotional appeals and will choose specific arguments that help their view rather than making generalization (Thompson, 2017).

2.9.5. Anticipating Rebuttal

Another significance of argumentative writing is that EFL students will master the art of anticipating objection; in order to expect the counter arguments, students must make an effort to put themselves in somebody's shoes, to try to guess how the opposition thinks and to anticipate the questions that the reader might have in mind (Moon, 2008). Further, by understanding the arguments of the opposition students will notably have a clear idea on how to convince the reader (in this case the teacher) or to at least make him re-consider their own view (Thompson, 2017). Argumentative writing helps students to enhance their writing and to be more convincing. This genre of writing gets students to have a broad thinking; the ability to integrate their own view with the contradictory view affectively (Nwaka, n.d).

Conclusion

Writing argumentative essays is highly important in higher education; yet, students encounter difficulties when they write this genre of essays. In other words, some students find it challenging when it comes to arguing or providing solid arguments when writing due to the fact that they lack the skill of thinking critically. Critical thinking and argumentation are interrelated; the requirement of both arguing and being critical demands objectivity, reaching a conclusion and avoiding bias. Thus, this chapter explores a brief history of the emergence of ESP as well as EAP, clarifies the nature of academic writing through some of its definitions and provides an overview of academic texts, particularly the essay. In addition, this chapter defines argumentation, shed lights on its theories, types and Toulmin's model of arguments. Furthermore, it raises the difficulties that students encounter in argumentative writing in addition to critical thinking and EFL argumentation. Finally, it highlights the importance of argumentative writing in EFL classrooms.

Chapter Three: Data Collection and Analysis

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Chapter Three: Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction

The aim of the present research is to investigate the use of critical thinking in EFL third year students' argumentative essays at the English Department University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel. In the previous theoretical chapters, both an overview of the notion of critical thinking as well as a framework of argumentative writing were presented. However, this chapter is devoted to the practical part of the research. That is to say, it aims at testing the hyppthesis of students not having the adequate level of critical thinking competence that enables them to write effective argumentative essays. To check the validity of the aforementioned, three main tools were used, which are an analysis of students' argumentative essays, students' questionnaire and a teachers' interview. The questionnaire aims at gathering data about students' use of critical thinking in argumentative essays on one hand. On the other hand, the interview aims to collect data about teachers' opinions, attitudes and perceptions about the latter Nonetheless, the analysis of the students' argumentative essays aims at assessing whether third year students use critical thinking when writing.

3.1 The Students' Questionnaire

According to Karim Abawi (2013), a questionnaire is a data collection instrument consistent of a series of questions and prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. The questionnaire in this dissertation is used as a tool for data collection. According to McLeod (2018), "Questionnaires provide a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people. Data can be collected relatively quickly because the researcher would not need to be present when the questionnaires were completed" (para. 2). The purpose behind using the questionnaire is to take a closer look at the perception of the students towards critical thinking and their view about argumentative writing.

3.1.1. The Administration of the Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire of the present research was administered to third year English students at the Department of English at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia. In an attempt to gather valuable information for the study, a representative sample was randomly selected from the population. The questionnaire has been distributed to thirty participants whom were asked to answer the questions honestly for the answers will be anonymous and will only be used for the purpose of research. Some of the questions were not understood by students due to not knowing much about critical thinking, thus, an explanation was provided to those students.

3.1.2. Population and Sample:

In the present study, our population centres mainly on third year students of English Department at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel. The latter consists of 289 students divided into 8 groups. As a sample, a group of thirty students was randomly chosen from the populations due to the difficulty of conducting the research within the whole population.

3.1.3. Description of the Students' Questionnaire:

This questionnaire is made up of twelve (12) questions that are not divided into sections because of the interrelatedness of the questions. The questions seek information about students' use of critical thinking when writing argumentative essays. Question one (Q1) seeks information about students' level of writing performance in English. (Q2) is designed to see whether critical thinking enhances the former. In (Q3), the learners are required to describe the level of their critical thinking. (Q4) is made up for checking whether students received any training geared specifically towards developing their thinking skills. (Q5) aims at finding out whether writing teachers raise their students' awareness of the importance of the skill of critical thinking. In (Q6), students are requested to say whether their teachers use classroom activities to foster critical thinking skill. (Q7-Q8) investigate which type of essays

do students particularly find difficult and whether this difficulty is, at least, due to the lack of an adequate level of critical thinking. (Q9-Q10) also investigate the obstacles students encounter when writing the argumentative essay and which part in it is most problematic for them. (Q11) requests students to list some of the topics assigned as far as argumentative essays are concerned. Finally (Q12), the learners are asked if they find adopting a stance vis-à-vis a controversial issue particularly difficult to them.

3.1.4. Analysis and Discussion:

Q1: How would you describe the level of your writing performance in English?

Table 1: Students' description of their level of writing

Options	N	%
a- Very good	2	6.67
b- Good	15	60
c- Average	13	43.33
d- Bad	0	0
Total	30	100
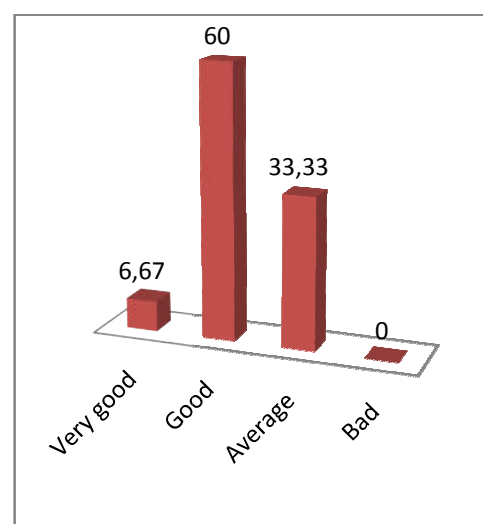
Figure 3.1: Students' description of their level of writing

As Table 1 and Figure 3.1 show, more than half of the students (60%) described their level of writing performance in English as good, ten students or (43.33%) considered themselves average and only (6.67%) of the students believed to have a very good level. However, no student considered himself bad when coming to his level of writing performance in English.

Q2: Do you think that critical thinking enhances your writing performance?

2: Critical thinking enhancement in writing

Options	N	%
Yes	28	93.33
No	2	6.67
Total	30	100
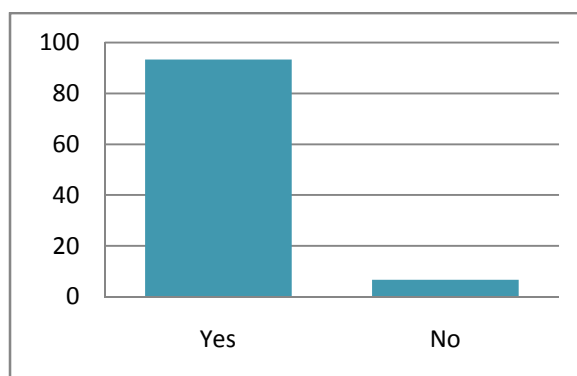
Figure 3.2: Critical thinking enhancement in

writing

According to the data in Table 2 and Figure 3.2, almost all learners (93.33%) believed that critical thinking enhances their writing performance. On the other hand, only two students (6.67%) did not. First and foremost, light should be shed on those who chose yes as an answer and whose justifications are listed in percentage terms as follow:

➢ "Because critical thinking encourages learners to think and choose their words carefully" (16.67%).

➢ "It helps us to think objectively" (13.33%).

➢ "Because critical thinking helps us to be logical and produce grammatical sentences" (13.33%).

➢ "Because it includes persuasion and giving viewpoints" (16.67%).

➢ "Critical thinking is very important when writing, it improves writing and the reader will understand very well" (33.33%).

However, (6.67) of students claimed that critical thinking has nothing to do with enhancing writing performance.

Q3: How would you describe your level of Critical thinking?

In this question, the thirty students were asked to describe their level of critical thinking. It is very important to note that students were free to describe the latter rather than tick a precised answer. Thus, their answers are presented as follow:

➢ "Good" (13.33%).

➢ "Average" (46.67%).

➢ "Since our teachers did not teach us how to think critically, I do not consider myself a good critical thinker" (13.33%).

➢ "I would say I am a very good critical thinker" (6.67%).

➢ "I am neither sure what does critical thinking mean nor I know its level" (20%).

Q4: Did you receive any training geared specifically towards developing your thinking skills?

Table 3: Critical thinking training

Options	N	%
Yes	6	20
No	24	80
Total	30	100
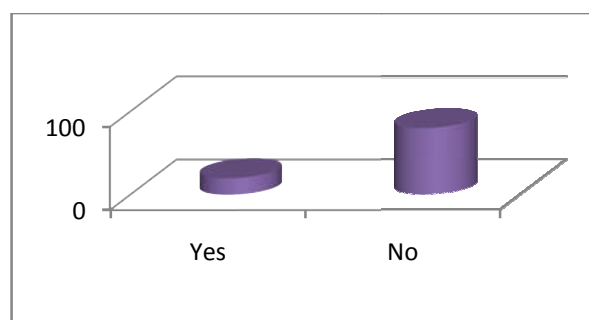
Figure 3.3: Critical thinking training

The results from Table 3 and Figure 3.3 clearly show that the majority of students (80%) did not receive any training geared specifically towards developing their thinking

skills. However, six students (20%) stated that they did. Three of the six students did not

specify, but the other three claimed to have received training in oral expression.

Q5: Do your writing teachers raise your awareness of the importance of critical thinking?

Table 4: Students' awareness of the Importance of Critical Thinking

Options	N	%
Yes	12	40
No	18	60
Total	30	100
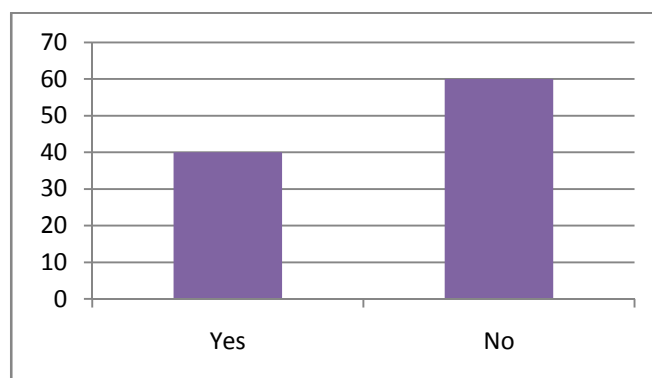
Figure 3.4: Students' Awareness of importance of critical thinking

As it is stated in Table 4 and Figure 3.4, more than half percent of the students (60%)

confessed that their teachers did not raise their awareness of the importance of critical

thinking. In contrast, (40%) of students admitted that their teachers did not raise their

awareness of its importance.

Q6: Do your writing teachers use any classroom activities to foster critical thinking?

Table 5: Fostering critical thinking

Options	N	%
Yes	4	13.33
No	26	86.67
Total	30	100
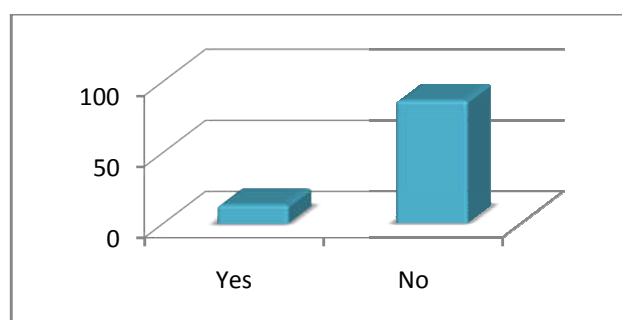
Figure 3.5**:** Fostering Critical Thinking

As it is clearly shown in Table 5 and Figure 3.5, the informants were asked whether their teachers used any classroom activities to foster their critical thinking or not. The majority of students' answers were yes, estimated as (86.67%) and the rest of the students' answers (13.33) were no. However, as far as the students who said yes were concerned, they maintained that their teachers foster their critical thinking through debates and written tasks that required thinking critically.

Q7: Which type of essays do you consider to be the most difficult to write?

Table 6: Most difficult essay type for students

Options	N	%
a- Expository essays	6	20
b- Argumentative essays	20	66.67
c- Narrative	0	0
d- other	4	13.33
Total	30	100
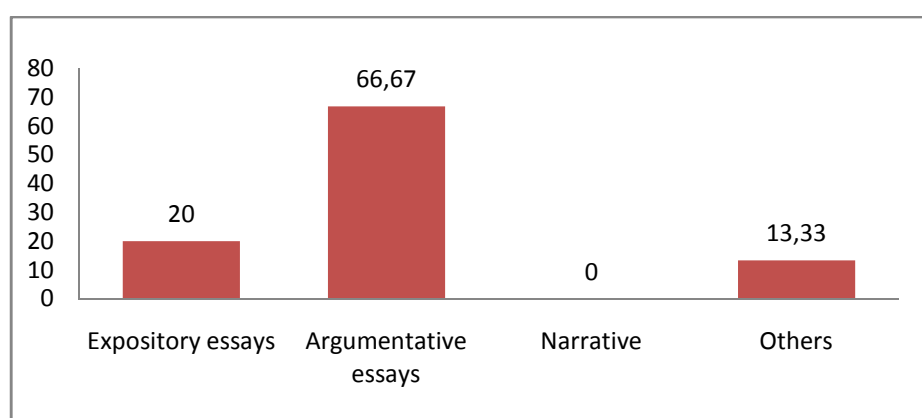
Figure 3.6: Most difficult essay type for students

From the data provided in Table 6 and Figure 3.6, and as the majority of the students (66.67%) stated, it is very clear that the argumentative essay is the most difficult type of

essays in terms of writing for students. On the contrary, (20%) of students opted for

expository essay, (13.33%) chose other types which were cause and effect and process essays,

but no one selected narrative essay.

Q8: Do you think that the lack of an adequate level of critical thinking affect is, at least,

one of the causes of the difficulty described above?

Table 7: Critical thinking and argumentative essays

Options	N	%
Yes	27	90
No	3	10
Total	100	100
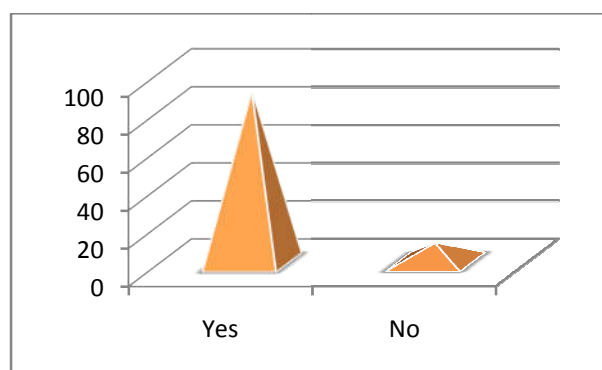
Figure   3.7:   Critical   thinking   and

argumentative essays

According to Table 07 and Figure 3.7, the vast majority of students (90%) did believe

that the lack of an adequate level of critical thinking affect is, at least, one of the causes of the

difficulty of writing an argumentative essay. On the other hand, (10%) of the participants did

not advocate the idea. The twenty seven students who said yes were asked to justify their

answers. Accordingly, the students' justifications were expressed in percentage terms in what

follows:

➢ "Critical thinking goes hand in hand with the argumentative essay" (22.22%).

➢ "Because we were not trained to think critically, so when it comes to writing we have

to double the efforts" (18.52%).

➢ "Definitely, if we are not exposed to this kind of thinking, we will never be able to give arguments when writing an argumentative essay" (22.22%).

➢ "Because lacking information and ideas affect writing negatively" (7.41%).

➢ "Because we lack the skills of critical thinking. Thus, it is difficult to provide good and logical arguments" (18.52%).

➢ "Because of the inability to defend one's viewpoints" (11.11%).

Q9: What are the obstacles that you encounter when writing argumentative essays?

This question sought to find out what are the obstacles that students encounter when writing argumentative essays. Indeed, all the respondents reported that they mainly encounter four obstacles when writing argumentative essays.

To begin with, eleven students agreed on how troublesome lacking information as well as providing strong arguments can be, whether when persuading the others or opposing themselves, which lead to falling in the trap of repeating the same arguments. Additionally, four students stated that they encountered difficulties when it comes to persuading the reader; they said that they lack the skill of how to do it adequately. Moreover, seven students said that they are unable to write contradictory arguments because they find it problematic to be objective towards certain topics. Furthermore, six students admitted how it was difficult for them to remain objective when writing arguments and not to be bias. Finally, two students stated that forgetting the structure of the argumentative essay was very problematic for them. They argued that the main reason behind this obstacle was not having the chance to often practise writing argumentative essays in the classroom or somewhere else.

Q10: Which of the following is the most problematic part in argumentative essays for you?

Table 8: Students' most problematic part in argumentative essays

Options	N	%
a- Introduction	7	23.33
b- Body	21	70
c- Conclusion	2	6.67
Total	30	100
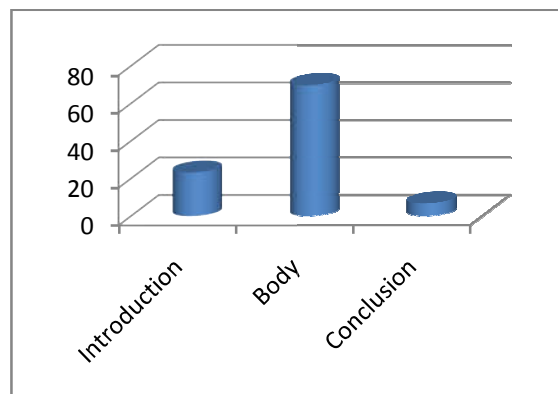
Figure 3.8**:** Students' most problematic in argumentative essay

As illustrated in Table 08 and Figure 3.8, the majority of students (70%) stated that the most problematic part in argumentative essays for them is the body. While two students did not justify their answers, nineteen students argued as follow:

➤ "Because of the refutation paragraph" (26.67%).

➤ "It takes a lot of time and more organization" (6.67%).

➤ "Because you need more information and strong arguments" (16.67%).

➤ "Because it is where you try to convince the reader of your point of view" (13.33%).

However, (23.33%) of students disagreed and stated that the introduction is the most problematic part in argumentative essays for them. They agreed on how it was difficult to write the introduction because of the thesis statement. For them, the thesis statement of the

argumentative essay is quite complicated. However, (6.67) students believed that the

conclusion is the most problematic part for two reasons. They argued that students are obliged

to restate what has been mentioned in the introduction in a very good way as well as

providing a conclusion for the arguments that have been discussed before.

Q11: Please list some topics that are you usually assigned to you as far as argumentative essays are concerned

Table 9: Topics of argumentative essays

Listed topics	N	%
Death penalty	10	50
Arranged marriage	12	60
Equality between men and women	14	70
Women's right	11	55
Globalization	5	25
Home schooling	7	35
Child labour	8	40

First and foremost, only (20) students out of (30) furnished the research with their

answers to this question. As it is shown in table 9, (50%) of students were assigned to write

about death penalty, (60%) about arranged marriage, (70%) about equality between men and

women and (55%) about women's right. Moreover, (25%) of students were assigned to write

about globalization, (35%) about home schooling and (40(%) about child labour. The topics

that are usually assigned to the students as far as argumentative essays are concerned are quite

controversial where they have to argue and convince the reader with their viewpoints. The topics as the students stated vary between social, political and educational topics.

Q12: Do you find that adopting a stance vis-à-vis a controversial issue particularly difficult to you?

Table 10: The difficulty of adopting a stance vis-à-vis

Options	N	%
Yes	20	66.67
No	10	33.33
Total	30	100
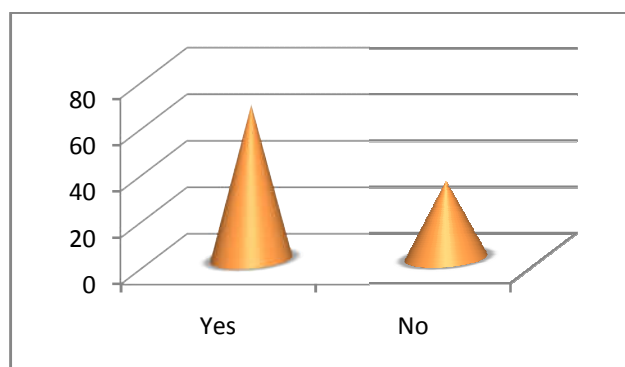
Figure 2.9**:** The difficulty of adopting a stance

vis-à-vis

According to the data in Table 10 and Figure 3.9, the majority of students (66.67%) found that adapting a stance vis-à-vis a controversial issue is particularly difficult to them. The rest of the students (33.33%) did not seem to find the latter a difficulty in particular. The students whose answers were yes were asked to provide an explanation. However, only (15) students gave explanations and agreed on three reasons for not finding adopting a stance vis-à-vis easy. To begin with, they argued that providing opposing arguments and defending the two sides at the same time was quite difficult for them. In addition, the students state how it was difficult for them to strongly defend their points of view with high persuasive arguments then provide counter arguments. Furthermore, objectivity was another in common reason for finding adopting a stance vis-à-vis controversial topic difficult. They argued that it is not easy to be objective when coming to opposing what they believe in.

3.1.5. Discussion of the Results

The findings from the analysis of students' questionnaire revealed that:

➢ Some students are neither familiarized with the concept of critical thinking nor have much information about it.

➢ . Students do not receive training to foster the skill of critical thinking.

➢ The majority of students' awareness about the importance of critical thinking is not raised by the teachers.

➢ Although students are aware of the importance of critical thinking, especially in writing, they do not succeed to think critically when writing.

➢ The most difficult writing genre that students struggle with is the argumentative writing.

➢ Students find it difficult to argue and oppose themselves at the same time when writing.

➢ Students relate the inability to write argumentative essays to the lack of the skill of critical thinking

➢ Students admit not to have the adequate level of critical thinking competence that enables them to write successful argumentative essays.

3.2. Teachers' Interview:

3.2.1. Description of the Teachers' Interview:

This interview attempts to get a closer look into the teachers' thoughts and views about critical thinking. The interview is a qualitative research tool which aims at, according to the research questions, investigating the teachers' perceptions of the use of critical thinking of third year students of English argumentative essays at the university of Mohamed Sedick Ben Yehia -Jijel-.

The teachers' interview consists of thirteen questions. The interview is semi-structured. That is, the researcher prepared the question in advance. These questions were asked to elicit teachers' justifications and clarifications about their perceptions of the use of critical thinking in students argumentative essay writing. The interview was administered to four teachers at M.S.B.Y. University.

3.2.2. Administration of the Teachers' Interview:

The interviews have been implemented on the 9th, 13th, 14th and the 16th of May at the head of department's office room at the department of English_ University of Mohamed Sedick Ben Yahia, Jijel. Each one took an average of ten minutes. The interviewees were type-recorded except for two of them where the interviewer resorted to note taking.

3.2.3. The sample:

The interview was conducted with four teachers. The fact behind selecting written expression teachers is that the nature of this module requires critical thinking in writing argumentative essays. As a result, a closer insight on the teachers' perceptions of the latter is taken.

3.2.4. The Analyses of the Interview:

Q1: How long have you been teaching?

One teacher had thirteen years work of experience in teaching the written expression module. Also, a teacher said that he has been teaching the foregoing subject for five years. Another teacher had six years of working experience. Equally important, another teacher stated that she started teaching writing this year so she has a one year experience in this field.

Q2: Does critical thinking play any role in enhancing students' writing performance?

"Yes definitely" as one teacher maintained. Most teachers answered positively that critical thinking certainly enhances the students' writing performance. One teacher said that critical thinking is not restricted only to the written expression module; it rather enhances students' performance in other modules, he said ''Yes of course, not only in written expression but in all language skills''.

They added that critical thinking is indispensible in academic writing and that this skill must be acquired by students in order for them to reach a high level of performance '' Critical thinking is an important skill that every student should acquire because this latter develops the quality of their writing, helps students to perform well when writing academic essays'' as a teacher noted.

Another teacher said that when it comes to argumentative essays, students are supposed to analyze different views in order to be able to rebut the opposition as well as provide solid counter-arguments, he emphasized ''Of course, especially with argumentative essays were students are supposed to critically analyze the opposing view''.

Q3: Are there any classroom tasks that you implement in order to foster this skill?

The respondents' answers were approximately the same. They all tried to implement tasks that foster the learning and acquirement of the critical thinking skill by asking students to work together and analyze each others' work. This strategy leads to develop the critical

thinking skill among students. A teacher stated '' yes I do, especially with argumentative writing. I do ask the students to work into two opposing groups where they are supposed to critically analyze each others' views, here, they discuss and analyze each others' stance, this helps them develop their critical thinking and how to respond to the opponents''. Another teacher shared the same opinion concerning the tasks and activities that are implemented in the class, which their purpose is to enhance the critical thinking skill. He said ''Yes, I do implement to foster this skill, students are supposed to critically analyze each others' views and stance, this helps to develop critical thinking to students, to think carefully and appropriately how to respond to the opponent''.

However, another teacher confessed that her attempt to foster the critical thinking skill among students is only restricted to the argumentative essay, and that the tasks are set to try to persuade, relate the arguments to the topic and take a stand about a certain issue or view during argumentative essay writing. She said ''to be honest, I did not apply this skill in other types but only in argumentative essays. I tried to teach students to analyze and relate to the topic, to defend a stand''.

Another teacher emphasized the use of such activities that push students to use their minds, express their thoughts and try to share different views. She said "…In fact, all the tasks and activities implemented in the class are meant in developing such kind of skill. When you ask students to write an essay, they have to follow certain steps and stages and the fact that being able to be aware of the steps is meant to develop critical thinking''.

In addition, another kind of tasks was suggested by a teacher that involves the use of vocabulary activities which promote students to be more persuasive using adequate choice of words she stated ''…Synonyms, Antonyms, modifiers…etc''.

Q4: Is there any type of essays that your students do find particularly difficult?

In the forth question, teachers were asked if there is a particular type of essays which students find most difficult, the best example is when a teacher said ''It has to be the argumentative essay, it is the hardest one from the six other types that I taught''. All four teachers agreed that the argumentative essay is the most challenging among other types, one teacher stated ''the one that students find rather difficult is the argumentative essay''.

Also, the teachers added that most students encounter hardship when dealing with this genre of writing ''they encounter difficulties with the argumentative essay'' because the argumentative essay requires thinking critically, providing ones' arguments as well as counter-arguments with an attempt to convince the opposition ''Yes, the argumentative essay is probably the most challenging when students are supposed to provide opposing view and their own also''.

Q5: What is/ are the problem(s) that your students encounter when writing argumentative essays?

The responses of the teachers when were asked about the problems that students encounter when writing argumentative essays were almost the same. That is, students either do not have enough ideas about the topic or writing the refutation paragraph which is a very hard task to accomplish, a teacher stated **''**One of the major problems that they encounter is that they do not know how to critically refute the opposing view**''.** A teacher responded that her students find it difficult to provide contradictory arguments and to critically analyze them. Another teacher added that what students mostly lack is the ability to logically establish a connection between the reasons provided, he said **''**they find it difficult to establish a logical relationship of the reasons they provided**''.** Furthermore, one teacher particularly made an interesting comment when she said that students take it slightly when they provide the

counter-arguments and that they are not serious in providing the opposing arguments since they are the ones who provided them in the first place.

Students assumed that rebutting themselves is completely absurd and that it is the reason behind neglecting the rebuttal paragraph, a teacher responded ''the first problem is providing arguments that defend a stand and develop them. The second problem is concerned with the refutation paragraph, they do not know how to write it so they neglect it completely''. Critical thinking is not a matter of just listing reasons or arguments, rather, students must relate the reasons to each other also, the arguments are ought to be solid, logical and convincing in order for the opposition to reconsider their own view and adopt a new one. The forth teacher summarized the problems by saying that "they encounter problems in terms of generating ideas and organizing them properly. Also, they don't know how to attract the reader to the point examined''.

Q6: To what extent can these difficulties be attributed to a lack of adequate level in critical thinking?

There has been a variety of answers when it comes to the sixth question. One teacher said that the absence of critical thinking is caused by the lack of motivation and interest about the topic, she claimed '' It depends on the students' motivation and interest of the topic as such''.

Critical thinking goes beyond the selection of the topic whether it is good or bad, rather, critical thinking is the ability to objectively analyze a stand and provide solid arguments for both sides with the effort to convince the contrasting view. One teacher believed that the lack of critical thinking and providing the arguments is maybe due to students' failure to understand the subject matter, she stated ''Most of them don't have the knowledge to convince or understand the topic''. Equally important, two teachers claimed that ''College syllabi do not encourage students to develop the critical thinking skill, I think it's one of the

major problems that hamper students' in becoming critical thinkers.'' They both agreed on the point that the syllabus does not encourage students to develop the critical thinking skill and that this skill is better to be taught at an early stage; in high school for example. Unfortunately, this issue deprives students from becoming critical thinkers. Another teacher insisted that students do not have enough information on how to persuade or to objectively speak about the reasons and arguments in an affective persuasive manner. Moreover, a teacher made a comment that the reasons behind the lack of students' critical thinking can cause a problem not only in the performance of students in university but outside as well, he stated "I believe that students lack critical thinking skill not only at the level of university…I believe that the problem is more complicated than this''.

Q7: Which part (s) of the argumentative essay appears to be the most problematic to students?

Generally, the teachers' response to the question revealed that most students find the body and the refutation paragraph problematic. Students find difficulties to provide opposing arguments; since their main focus is on the part where they agree about a certain phenomenon, one teacher said "the refutation paragraph is the most challenging part of the argumentative essay". It is hard for them to think about the rebuttal arguments according to this teacher, "the refutation paragraph and the body paragraph are the most problematic for students''.

Two teachers said that students tend to provide weak arguments when they refute, then added that they do it on purpose thinking that it will make their side of the argument more convincing. However, most students fall into this trap of subjectivity in their essays as they include their sentiments. Thus, their arguments are completely unreliable and invalid. Another teacher said that the problem is either with the form itself or in providing the arguments. Moreover, the forth teacher discussed the issue of the introductory paragraph since this latter

summarizes the whole idea and their stand in the thesis statement. He believes that "the body paragraph together with introductory paragraph, simply because this latter includes a thesis statement that suppose to summarize the ideas of the essay''. For him, students are unsuccessful to produce an appropriate thesis for the reason that they do not know how to organize ideas or information properly.

Commonly, all teachers' answers were the same; the vast majority of students face the same difficulties in writing argumentative essays at the level of the introductory paragraph and the refutation paragraph as they require details, a summary of the main idea and logical arguments to be provided.

Q8: What are some of the topics that you assign for argumentative essays are concerned?

Most of the proposed topics by teachers varied between social, political butt rarely any economic ones, to quote ''Topics that are usually social, political but rarely about economics… basically any issue that raises opposition, it would be good for any argumentative writing''. All teachers agreed that the topics assigned should be debatable and result in opposite views. For any given task in writing an argumentative essay, the teachers' choice of the subject matter has to be arguable and that the topic must provoke the students and urge them to think and provide solid arguments for the essay to be conclusive, a teacher said ''I assign topics that are debatable''.

All teachers gave suggestions on the topics they usually allocate to students such as death penalty, whether the earth is flat or round, should a foreign language be taught at an early age...etc. A teacher maintained "I do give controversial topics… like legalizing alcohol in Algeria, working women....etc'. One teacher confessed that choosing the right topic that suits the argumentative genre is actually challenging because a teacher takes into account

certain circumstances and limits that must not be crossed; he/she is restricted to only give familiar topics that are common knowledge to students.

Q9: What are the criteria that you use in order to select these topics?

All the interviewees have different criteria during the selection of topics. The surveyed teachers provided a variety of criteria. A teacher said ''the basic criteria is objective criticism''. One teacher said that the topics chosen should not cause boredom to students as a result the teacher should select new topics that intrigue the students, to quote'' I try to be different… give them new topics that they never dealt with''. Another teacher indicated that the topic must be known to the students so they can have a saying about the matter, he stated ''I make sure that this topics are understandable and that any student is able to tackle them''. Another respondent replied that it is necessary to take into account the students' style and the topics they favor to discuss in order to motivate them to think and express their viewpoint , he said ''I make an effort to know what students' interests, preferences and learning styles are''. One teacher said that it is preferable to choose new topics that have never been talked before because students tend to rely on previous arguments that teachers have already provided rather than trying to produce their own points of view.

To sum up, all teachers have particular criteria that they take into consideration during the selection of topics, these criteria help teachers to choose suitable topics that students will most likely be intrigued to tackle and that each students is pleased with the choices.

Q10: Do you think that taking a clear stance vis-à-vis a controversial issue represents the most difficult aspect of argumentative writing for your students?

The respondents' answers were among those who see that having a clear stance on providing ones' arguments and the contradictory ones' represent a problem for students. A teacher, however, precised the difficulty at the level of the rebuttal paragraph, she argued that ''… the most challenging issue when writing an argumentative essay is that students' fail to

refute… they find difficulties when it comes to refutation''. That is, students tend to criticize themselves as well as they do not know how to defend their own point. As one teacher stressed ''I do hold such an opinion, they find it difficult to convince the audience since they lack arguments… it's about trying to hold a given opinion it's very problematic''. Another teacher shared the same view that students forget themselves when they write and that is it clear that they are the ones who wrote the counter-arguments, she maintained "They don't know where to put the arguments because they provide their arguments and the counter-arguments immediately after that''. One teacher added a new point saying "students are more subjective than they are objective''; you can tell that students include their prejudice when they refute instead, they must select valid reliable arguments for the opposition not that they are good at defending their own view, but they seriously find it troublesome to rebut. Further, students are not aware that providing solid counter-arguments actually help their own standing point however, they tend to purposefully deliver poor arguments.

Overall, consistent with the interviewees' answers, it is inevitable that students are weak when coming to giving vis-à-vis arguments for most fail to provide valid and logical premises for both sides. Most of the learners fall into the trap of subjectivity when they include preconception and sentiments. However, they should be objective and neutral and critically analyze the topic.

Q11: Do you think that finding the adequate information to support a thesis represents a source of difficulty for your students?

Three of the teachers responded positively that students encounter difficulties to support the thesis statement with suitable information, one teacher strongly argued she said "yes, naturally, it is very difficult for them to select an appropriate argument of information to support the thesis''. Another teacher shared the same opinion she stated "totally, I do agree with this problem is faced by many students' finding the adequate information is a bit

difficult''. The third teacher believed that it is hard to select suitable arguments to support the thesis statement, he concluded saying ''this is another challenging task for students… I do believe so, many students fail to understand the unity and cohesion of the essay''.

Only one teacher had a different view, she said ''not necessarily, I don't think finding a source of information problematic for my students''. This teacher believed that the students of hers do not confront any hardness in supporting the thesis with arguments because they have been given the help and the guidance to succeed.

Almost all teachers had the same view that students come up with arguments or piece of evidence that is not supportive of the thesis, the reason behind the former is that they do not know how to select the information adequately. To put it I a nutshell, students not only encounter difficulties in writing but also fail to understand the unity and cohesion of the whole essay.

Generally speaking, the respondents' answers affirmatively agree to the fact that students have problems with finding convenient arguments to support the thesis statement. The reason behind this failure is caused by the lack of information and knowledge about the topic and the incompetence to select arguments that add to the thesis and supports it.

Q12: What is the most important criterion that you take into consideration when correcting your students' argumentative essays?

All teachers had some criteria that they consider in order to correct students' argumentative essays. A teacher stated ''the most important criteria are analysis and persuasion'', her main focus is whether the learner tries to convince and persuade the reader (in this case the teacher) as a result the student must provide good, solid and convincing arguments.

The second teacher strongly argued that ''Whether the arguments are related to the topic, whether they are clear at defending their stand or not…the quality of the

evidence…etc''; the teachers' quote reveal that it is a must to read every sentence of every paragraph in great details to check the relevance of the students' ideas, whether the ideas are related to each other and verify the quality of the rebuttal paragraph.

The argumentative genre requires objectivity in providing the arguments to the teacher then makes sure that students properly defended their standing point because the arguments provided are usually based on a previous agenda, on the one hand. On the other hand, a teacher said that opinion, division, format, logical relationship, correctness, content, coherence, cohesion and unity are the criteria taken to correct the students' argumentative writing she added that if students fail to fulfill that they will have a bad evaluation mark.

Additionally, the forth teacher said that the most important thing for him is coherence, cohesion and unity. He stated '' I have to make sure that the things in the essay and the arguments discussed are relevant to the main thesis statement''.

Concerning the criteria taken to correct the students' writing, a teacher said ''There is a list of criteria. Since I'm a writing skill teacher, the most important thing is cohesion, coherence along with unity and I do take into account the arguments they provided''. It seemed that all four teachers have certain criteria to correct the students' argumentative essays. However, this criteria are only restricted to the form, spelling mistakes and punctuation, not that they are not important but because these criteria should take a second stage rather than to be their main focus. To clarify, teachers should mainly focus on the arguments provided by the students since it is an argumentative essay. Even more, teachers should make sure that the learner has a critical background especially when dealing with this genre of writing or at least try to enhance that skill and train students to acquire it. The teachers neglected that the students should objectively defend a stand and refute the opposition in a logical way. This may be the cause behind students' failure to think logically

and critically in their writing as well as the teachers' main focus which is the format instead of the content together with the format.

Q13: Is there something else you would like to add regarding the issues evoked in this interview?

Concerning the last question, it was to see the teachers' reaction and view point towards the theme of critical thinking and its use in argumentative writing. All of the teachers handed guidance and recommendations toward this topic. A teacher said that since there is a study skills module, it would be great if teachers pay attention to critical thinking, she stated "Since you raised the topic of critical thinking, I suggest to include some kind of input or lessons to students... they have a module entitled study skills where they have to deal with critical thinking, to pave the way for students to school well in all skills''.

One teacher made a very important suggestion when she stated ''We have to find some ways in order to teach students' to think in a critical way''. Critical thinking is in need thought in order to have a successful learning in all the modules not only in writing. One teacher made a statement when she said "There is always something missing when students write... whether in the quality of the words and the arguments provided... because they lack the critical thinking skill''. This teacher said that whenever a written assignment or test is assigned to students there is a lack of the critical thinking skill in which students unfortunately do not know how to objectively give their viewpoint or assess another opinion or issue.One teacher praised the variable of critical thinking by saying ''I am very happy that somebody is working on critical thinking, I think it is very important especially in the argumentative writing, I liked it so much''. Based on this quote, the forth teacher was very pleased that the issue of critical thinking was tackled at the the English Department University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, and added that it is interesting that a connection was made with the argumentative writing specifically.

3.2.5. Interpretation of the Results

The analysis of the teachers' interview has revealed many facts about their perceptions of the use of critical thinking in students' argumentative writing. On the basis of the analysis of the interview provided to teachers at the department of English-Mohamed Sedick Ben Yahia, Jijel, the analysis discloses the following notes:

➢ All teachers agreed that critical thinking enhances students' writing performance.

➢ Through the analysis of the teachers' responses, they all somehow implement tasks in order to foster the CT skill.

➢ All teachers stated that the majority of students find the argumentative essay to be the most difficult type of essays.

➢ The findings show that the difficulties attributed to the lack of critical thinking are due to the absence of motivation, dearth of knowledge and information about the topic, hardship to express the reasons behind having such a stand in addition to the fact that the syllabus does not encourage the critical thinking skill which deprives them from acquiring the former.

➢ According to the analysis of teachers' answers, all of them believe that generating ideas, providing arguments, attempting to refute and trying to persuade are some of the problems that students encounter when writing the argumentative essay.

➢ All teachers agreed that the introductory paragraph along with the body (the rebuttal paragraph especially) appear to be most problematic for students to write because while the introductory paragraph includes the thesis statement which supposes to summarize the main points that should be discussed later on, the body demands details, examples, logical and valid ideas.

➢ The teachers gave examples on the kind of topics they assign to students. Some of them are social, political, educational but rarely economical. The teachers maintained that they assign the topics that students can relate to and at least have common knowledge about.

➢ It was found that teachers have different criteria in the selection of topics. Some teachers said that they must be new and never been tackled before. According to them, the topics should be controversial and debatable and suppose to raise opposition. Also, some teachers take into consideration the students learning style, interests and preferences.

➢ The findings show that students find it problematic to have a clear vis-à-vis stance. All teachers agree that it is hard to provide ones' arguments that are as valid and logical as counter-arguments.

➢ All teachers gave a variety of answers when coming to the hardship students encounter to support the thesis statement. While some agreed that it is challenging to select adequate information, another teacher stated that her students find it easy to provide good arguments.

➢ There are certain criteria that teachers consider before correcting their students' argumentative essay writing. These criteria varied between the format, content, punctuation, cohesion, coherence, and unity.

➢ Finally, through the analysis of the teachers' responses, it was found that students do not have the critical thinking skill and for those who have it, they do not know how to use it properly and along with how to enhance it.

3.3. The Students' Test:

3.3.1. Description of the Test:

The written test is used as the best mean to elicit data about the students' use of critical thinking in argumentative essay writing. The students were asked to write an argumentative essay where they discuss whether men and women are equal. Thirty essays were written in completely classroom setting. Their teacher did not tell them that we could analyze their essays or that the essays are for a dissertation purpose. All these essays are hand written; they were about two pages long each. The purpose of this analysis is to examine the use of critical thinking in argumentative writing. Therefore, the main focus of this analysis is to discern if students have the skill of critical thinking. The criteria taken into account when analyzing are based on an authority; the Toulmin's model of arguments which stands out as a practical and an accurate model. According to Toulmin (1958), a good piece of argument consists of six elements: claim, data, warrant, qualifiers, backing and rebuttal. These are the main aspects upon which the test is evaluated. It is necessary to include these evaluative criteria to evaluate students' argumentative essay writing.

3.3.2. Administration of the Students' test:

The test has been implemented on the 15th of May, at one of the classes in the department of English_ University of Mohamed Sedick Ben Yahia, Jijel. The test took an hour and a half for the essay to be written. Not all students' completed the task.

3.3.3. Description of the Sample:

In this study, the research focuses on third year students of English at Mohamed Sedick Ben Yahia, jijel, where learners' have been taught the written expression module for three years. The participants were thirty students from the department of English year 2017

2018. The population has been chosen because they learnt how to write the essays argumentative essay.

3.3.4. The Analysis of the Essay:

Table 11: number of students' Use of Toulmin's model of arguments

Criteria	Used	Not Used	Total
Claim	21	9	30
Grounds (data)	17	13	30
Warrant	12	18	30
Qualifiers	10	20	30
Backing	12	18	30
Rebuttal	10	20	30

Table 10 and 11 present the students' use of Toulmin's model of arguments. Out of. From the analysis of each student's essay, the focus was only on the criteria that most students failed to achieve. The common criteria that were tackled in this test are categorized into six categories; claim, data, warrant, qualifiers, backing, and rebuttal. Out of (30) essays, (70%) of the students made claims in their argumentative essays, to quote:

➢ "Thus, the subject of equality between men and women has been debatable for a long time".

➢ As a matter of a fact, men and women are unequal in terms of…".

However, (30) of them did not make a claim. Moreover, (56.67) of students used second criterion (Grounds).

➤ "However, we are living in a society that shows no respect for the rights of women"

➤ "It is obvious that they are not equal, especially from the religious side"

As for warrant, more than half of the students (60%) did not utilize it and (40) did. To quote:

➤ "…men and women are not equal in forms of jobs".

➤ "As our religion says so, men and women are unequal".

When more than half of the students (66.67) did not use qualifiers, only (33.33) did. To exemplify:

➤ "women are generally…".

➤ "women are not mostly treated equally to men".

When coming to the fifth criterion (Backing), only (40) students backed their warrant and (60) did not. To quote:

➤ "it is known that women are not selected to fulfill the jobs done by men because of their physical and psychological difference".

➤ "Women by nature are very sensitive, but men are very strong".

Finally, the majority of students (70%) did not rebut, only (30%) students were able to provide rebuttals. To exemplify:

> ➤ "there are many people against the idea that women and men are unequal".

> ➤ "Some opponents believe that men and women are equal".

3.3. 5. Discussion of the Results

The participants of this study have studied argumentative writing. Yet, the results of the study have shown that more than half of 3rd year EFL learners do not have the adequate level of critical thinking that enables them to write a proper argumentative essay. The (30) students' essays were analyzed based on Toulmin's Model of Arguments. The analysis based on his model displayed some students' inability to provide claims for their topic as well as data. Moreover, the majority were not successful to establish a link between the claim and data, which is known as warrant. Although some of them were able to use qualifiers and back their arguments, the majority of students did not write the refutation paragraph.

3.3.4. Limitations of the Study:

The limitations of the study are presented in the following   points:

➤ The essay analysis should be more detailed and could have been analyzed better if time was sufficient.

➤ Some t(of students did not comprehend the notion of critical thinking when the questionnaire was distributed until it was explained for them, and those who had, admit n²ot to have much information about it.

3.2.5. Suggestions and recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions of the present study, some recommendations are suggested:

➢ While Students should read more about critical thinking and try to improve their critical thinking skills, Teachers should integrate critical thinking when teaching such as in the study skills module whether explicitly or implicitly and implement more activities and tasks that foster this skill.

➢ Teachers should raise students' awareness about the importance of critical thi$$$$king in all language skills not only writing.

➢ The role of the teachers should be changed from being the main source of providing the topics and giving suggestions to that of a guide and encourage students to express their thoughts freely with no strings attached.

➢ Teachers should let students get into debates with each other without setting any limits so that students will have the freedom to share their real thoughts and not the things they are supposed to say.

➢ Teachers should focus more on the content of the essay rather than punctuation and spelling mistakes since they are third year students and are supposed to be above making such mistakes and focus more on the arguments and the style of writing.

➢ The enhancement of the students' performance in writing argumentation is both the responsibility of the teacher and the learner, thus, the two must work hand in hand to foster this skill and not rely on rote learning, previous opinions or just delivering the ideas.

Conclusion

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of the data collected in the investigation of the use of critical thinking in EFL students' argumentative writing. Thus, the present chapter has presented, scrutinized as well as discussed the results yielded by the research instruments used. In the light of the previous results, the hypothesis on which the present research is grounded was confirmed. That is, the majority of students do not have the adequate level of

critical thinking competence that enables them to write effective argumentative essays, and

hence, the majority of the learners do not think critically when writing argumentative essays.

General Conclusion

Thinking critically when writing is not an easy task for students to accomplish. This research study seeks to investigate whether third year students of the university of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel use critical thinking in their argumentative writing based on the assumption that the majority of third year students do not think critically in their argumentative essays, and that critical thinking has positive effects on their writing. The present research work comprises three chapters, two of which are devoted to the theoretical parts which concern the literature review of critical thinking and argumentative writing. The third chapter is the practical part where three tools are used; a questionnaire is administered to (30) third year students, and an interview with (4) teachers of written expression is conducted and a written test is assigned to the same sample who answered to questionnaire. The three tools aim at investigating EFL students' use of critical thinking when writing their argumentative essays as well as the possibility of any effect of critical thinking on their argumentative writing.

The findings reveal that the majority of students lack an adequate level of critical thinking competence when writing argumentative essays, which prevent them from performing well. To begin with, some students are not familiar with the conception of critical thinking and most of them believe that they teachers do not implement activities that foster this skill, and only few students are truly critical thinkers. When writing argumentative essays, most of students encounter difficulties; when providing solid arguments and supporting them, defending a viewpoint and most importantly writing the refutation paragraph. These difficulties as maintained by both of the teachers and students along with the results from the analysis are attributed the lack of the critical thinking skill. Thus, it is confirmed that the majority of students do not have the adequate level of critical thinking that enables them to write effective argumentative essays.

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Appendix 01

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

   This interview aims at gauging your perceptions of the use of critical thinking in students' argumentative writing. Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used to achieve the aims of our master dissertation in didactics. We would be very grateful if you would   provide sincere answers the questions of this interview.

                                   Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Questions: Would you please tick (X) your answer (s) in the corresponding box (es), and make a full statement whenever necessary.

1) How would you describe the level of your writing performance in English?

      a- Very good   ☐

      b- Good   ☐

      c- Average   ☐

      d- Bad   ☐

2) Do you think that critical thinking enhances your writing performance?

      a- Yes   ☐

      b- No   ☐

   Would you, please, explain

…………………………………………………………………………………………

……….…………………………………………………………………………………

3) How would you describe your level of critical thinking?

…………..………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

4) Did you receive any training geared specifically towards developing your critical

thinking skill?

    a- Yes   ☐

    b- No   ☐

    If 'yes', please specify ……………………………………………

5) Do your writing teachers raise your awareness of the importance of critical

thinking?

    a- Yes   ☐

    b- No   ☐

6) Do your writing teachers use any classroom activities to foster critical thinking?

    a- Yes   ☐

    b- No   ☐

    If yes, illustrate

…………………………………………………………………..…………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

7) Which type of essays do you consider to be the most difficult to write?

    a- Expository essays   ☐

    b- Argumentative essays   ☐

    c- Narrative   ☐

    d- Other: please specify…………………………………..

8) Do you think that the lack of an adequate level of critical thinking affect is, at least, one of the causes of the difficulty described above?

     a- Yes   ☐

     b- No   ☐

If yes, please justify your answer

…………………………………………………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………..…………………………

………………………………………………………………………………..…………………

9) What are the obstacles that you encounter when writing argumentative essays?

…………………………………………………………………..……………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………….…………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………….…………………

10) Which of the following is the most problematic part in argumentative essays for you?

     a- Introduction   ☐

     b- Body   ☐

     d- Conclusion   ☐

Explain

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…………………………………………………………………………………………………

11) Please list some topics that are you usually assigned to you as far writing argumentative essays is concerned?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

12) Do you find that adopting a stance vis-à-vis a controversial issue particularly difficult to you?

       a- Yes ☐

       b- No ☐

       If yes, explain

       ………………………………………………………………………………

       ………………………………………………………………………………

       ………………………………………………………………………..

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix 02

Teachers' Interview

Dear Madam/Sir,

This interview aims at gauging your perceptions of the use of critical thinking in students' argumentative writing. Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used to achieve the aims of our master dissertation in didactics. We would be very grateful if you would   provide sincere answers the questions of this interview.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

1) How long have you been teaching writing?

....

2) Does critical thinking play any role in enhancing students' writing performance?

....

....

3) Are there any classroom tasks that you implement in order to foster this skill?

....

....

4) Is there any type of essays that your students do find particularly difficult?

....

....

6) What is/are the problem(s) that your students encounter when writing

argumentative essays?

....

....

....

5) To what extent can these difficulties be attributed to a lack of adequate level in critical thinking?

....

....

....

7) Which part (s) of the argumentative essay appears to be most problematic to students?

....

....

....

8) What are some of the topics that you assign as far as argumentative essays are concerned?

....

....

9) What are the criteria that you use in order to select these topics?

....

....

....

10) Do you think that taking a clear stance vis-à-vis a controversial issue represents the most difficult aspect of argumentative writing for your students?

....

....

....

11) Do you think that finding the adequate information to support a thesis represents a source of difficulty for your students?

....

....

....

12) What is the most important criterion that you take into consideration when correcting your students' argumentative essays?

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....

13) Is there something else you would like to add regarding the issues evoked in this interview?

....

....

....

Thank you for your Cooperation

Résumé

On avait beaucoup écrit sur les concepts de la pensée critique et de l'argumentation à cause de leur importance dans l'éducation moderne. La présente étude est une première tentative d'explorer l'utilisation de la pensée critique en anglais comme les essais argumentatifs pour les étudiants en langues étrangères. Cette étude vise à mettre en évidence l'utilisation de la pensée critique par les étudiants lors de la rédaction de leurs essais argumentatifs et comment ils affectent leur écriture. Dans ce sens, il convient de mentionner que ce concept n'a pas encore été étudié à l'Université de Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahya . Cette recherche est basée sur le fait que les étudiants n'expriment pas leurs opinions critiquement lorsqu'ils rédigent des essais argumentatifs. Pour tester cette hypothèse, un test et un questionnaire ont été menés sur une trentaine d'étudiants en troisième année d'anglais à la même université. Enfin, un interview a été donnée à quatre professeurs d'expression écrite. La majorité des étudiants n'ont pas réfléchi critiquement en rédigeant des essais argumentatifs et ont donc confirmé le résultat de l'hypothèse étudiée, montrant que la plupart des étudiants ne connaissaient pas le concept de la pensée critique ou n'étaient jamais exposés .

ملخص

أما عن كل من مفهومي التفكير النقدي والحجاج فقد كتب عنهما الكثير نظرا لأهميتهما في التعليم الحديث. في ما يتعلق بالدراسة الحالية فهي محاولة مبدئية لإستقصاء توظيف التفكير النقدي في الإنجليزية كالمقالات الجدلية لطلاب اللغة الأجنبية. بطريقة مفصلة تهدف هذه الدراسة لتسليط الضوء حول إسخدام التفكير النقدي من طرف الطلاب عند كتابة مقالات جدلية و مدى تأثيرها على أسلوبهم الكتابي. في هذا السياق من الجدير بالذكر أنه لم يتم دراسة هذا المفهوم بعد بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى بجيجل. هذا البحث مبني على أساس أن الطلبة لا يبدون آراءهم بطريقة نقدية عند كتابة مقالات جدلية و لتجربة هذه الفرضية أجري إمتحان و إستبيان على ثلاثين طالبا في السنة الثالثة إنجليزية في نفس الجامعة. و أخيرا أجريت مقابلة لأربعة أساتذة مكلفين بتدريس التعبير الكتابي. بالتطرق للنتائج تبين أن أغلبية الطلاب لا يفكرون بشكل نقدي عند كتابة المقالات الجدلية و بالتالي أكدت نتيجة الفرضية المدروسة كما أنه تبين عدم تعود معظم الطلاب على مفهوم التفكير النقدي أو بالأحرى عدم التطرق إليه من قبل .