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**The Importance of Controversial-Topics Debates in Developing EFL Students
Critical Thinking
Case Study of First Year Master Students, Department of English
University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and
Culture**

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Dedication

To the woman I was, I love you To the woman I am, am proud of you To the woman am becoming, am excited for you

To my universe; the sun that warmed my winter and guided my soul;

My father

Who holded me when everything looked so dark and cold

To The moon that showed me the road,

To my mother the one that am not sure I was able to make it to the end without her uphold;

To my siblings the best one that anyone could ever have,

To my Alaa, my ride or die, the reason why I laugh and my angel guardian when I cry,

To my Awatif my dear and the apple of my eye, I will always have you by my side when I fall and when fly

To my kawther, my best one and every one through all the times

Finally, yet importantly to everyone who helped in keeping the game of life continued and make it even more joyful and somehow happy,

Thank you so much for your existence in my this work is dedicated to you

Amani

Dedications

Dear, me,

I am delighted to dedicate this work to you; it holds your spark and I say this as being
the one who witnessed how the light within you dimmed. However, deep down you
believed that God's plans would always end up being better than yours, you walked this
path

And here you are!

This journey sculptured you in fascinating ways and I cannot be but proud, glad and
thankful for everything, everyone and most importantly you after God of course, for the
person you become, and I cannot wait to meet the lady you aspire to be

To my father who scattered stars on my roadside to side with my mother whose prayers
blessed my soul, may this humble achievement make you proud, may it help me pay a
bit of my parents endless favor and love;

Sister and brothers, the little one grow enough to dedicate academic works for you;

My Family,

Mother Zina, Cheima, Roufi and Awatif, the friends God blessed me with throughout
my journey this little dedication cannot reflect how much I am grateful to have each
and everyone of you around me

Dear Amani, my polar star, you never failed me in terms of sisterhood and friendship,
then how about being my partner. No doubts, I enjoyed working on this dissertation
with you, the path was a bless despite everything we came through just because it was
you by my side and I am beyond proud of you

May this mark the beginning of a history full of art and achievements

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Abstract

Dealing with controversial topics in EFL classes provides students with academic context to think critically and communicate effectively. Nowadays, students are exposed to many issues that raise strong and diverse viewpoints. Those controversial topics need to be seen through the lenses of critical thinking; a cognitive ability through which those topics are analyzed, evaluated and rationally judged. However, EFL teachers usually tend to teach students what to think by focusing on transmitting the subject matter rather than giving the students the opportunity to actually think by encouraging them to be active participants. This study aims at investigating the role of controversial topics debates as a learning strategy in enhancing EFL students' linguistic, cognitive and communicative competences as well as pointing out its importance in ameliorating their critical thinking. Therefore, we hypothesize that students awareness of the effectiveness of engaging in controversial topics debates will assist in developing their critical thinking skills. To test the hypothesis a quantitative descriptive design is adopted through administering online students' questionnaire for first year Master students (N= 35 taken out from 160) at the Department of English, University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. Based on the collected data, it has been revealed that EFL students recognize the significance of enhancing their critical thinking skills and the immense benefits of discussing controversial topics; which should be facilitated by their teacher in a supportive and comfortable classroom environment. This will allow them to participate in deep, meaningful discourses that correspondingly develop their self- regulation, argumentation, assessing claims, reasoning, emotional understanding and adaptability.

Keywords: Controversial Topics, Critical Thinking, EFL, Debates, Discussion.

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List of Abbreviations

CT Critical Thinking

CTS Critical Thinking Skills

GCE Global Citizenship Education

GCG Global Citizenship Guide

EFL English Foreign Language

ELT English Language Teaching

FL Foreign Language

GE General Electronics

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General introduction

Critical thinking is the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue to form a judgment. In education, it is regarded as an important cognitive skill as it goes beyond memorization and basic language learning skills and extend to help students' question, evaluate, analyze and manage their own learning as it helps them become more autonomous, logical thinkers, and better problem solvers. In EFL classes, teachers should be agents who guide students to become critical thinkers through the use of various teaching strategies and classroom practices which align with creating a comfortable, motivating, and engaging learning environment. A strategy for creating an effective communicative learning environment is introducing controversial topics debates, which are thought-provoking, interesting topics that enable students to communicate their thoughts and opinions, engage in deeper nuanced analysis, question and analyze various viewpoints and arguments they encounter. Furthermore, Debates centered on controversial topics also give students an opportunity to reflect on and discuss issues that directly affect their lives and worldviews.

1. Statement of the Problem

Enabling students to think critically is regarded as a major aim in modern education. Debates is one of the many tools and strategies that allow students to engage in discussions, exchange ideas, and develop their abilities to argue and address information. However, in EFL classroom, it has been noticed that students do not engage in debates to an extent that requires them to use their critical thinking abilities. This may be due to the nature of topics discussed, or the strategies used in the classroom that focus more on transmitting the subject matter rather than encouraging students to be active participants. Teachers, tend more likely to teach students what to think rather than giving them the opportunity to actually think, which makes it challenging for teachers to create an effective

communicative environment where students use their cognitive skills such as critical thinking. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the role and the importance of engaging EFL students in controversial topics debates as a learning strategy to create an effective communicative environment where students' critical thinking skills can be ameliorated.

2. Purpose of the Study

Developing students' critical thinking skills can be a challenging task for the students and their instructors, which necessitates the use of different strategies to facilitate attaining it. On this matter, raising students' awareness about the importance of engaging in controversial topics debates in EFL classes would help in enhancing their linguistic, communicative skills, and subsequently their critical thinking skills. Therefore, the aims of this research are threefold:

- 1) To explore students' awareness of the critical thinking abilities they possess to fulfill language tasks in EFL classroom.
- 2) To figure out students' perspectives and attitudes towards engaging in controversial topics debates.
- 3) To raise students' awareness towards the importance of debating controversial topics in order to develop their critical thinking skills.

3. Research Questions

To enhance students' critical thinking abilities, teachers can make use of debates centered on controversial topics as a learning strategy. The present research addresses the following questions:

- 1) What are the students' views of the critical thinking skills they possess?

2) What are students' perspectives and attitudes towards engaging in controversial topics debates?

3) To what extent are students aware of the importance of debating controversial topics in developing students' critical thinking skills?

4. Research Hypotheses

To help accomplish the aim of fostering students' critical thinking in EFL classes, teachers need to choose the most effective teaching methods and strategies that encourage students' engagement and interaction while ensuring the development of their linguistic, communicative, and cognitive competencies. Thus, we hypothesize that:

The Null Hypothesis implies that no relation exists between the two variables:

(H0): If teachers engage EFL students in controversial topics debates, it would not raise students' awareness towards its effectiveness in enhancing critical thinking skills.

The Alternative Hypothesis suggests that there is a relationship between the two variables:

(H1): If teachers engage EFL students in controversial topics debates, it would raise students' awareness towards its effectiveness in enhancing critical thinking skills.

5. Research Methodology Design

This research employs a quantitative descriptive design to collect data on the researched subject.

5.1. Choice of the Method and Data Gathering

In order to understand the relationship between controversial topics debates and critical thinking, answer the research questions, and test the hypothesis, the study made use of a students' questionnaire. This aims to gain insights into the students' perspectives towards the importance of controversial topics debates in developing their critical thinking

abilities. The questionnaire was administered online during the second semester to First-year Master students, at the Department of English, University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. This research tool enables the collection of reliable data in terms of the students' perspectives and attitudes on the incorporation of controversial topics debates in EFL classes, and their attitudes towards engaging in these debates to develop their critical thinking skills.

5.2. Population and Sampling

The present research sample involves 35 informants (N = 35 taken from 160) that were selected randomly. Due to time constraints, the questionnaire was administered during the week when students had online classes prior spring. The reason behind choosing first-year Master students is that they are already familiar with the various classroom practices and teaching strategies used in EFL context where they deal with a variety of controversial topics, in diverse courses as in modules of ethics, literature, and civilization.

5.3. Data Analysis

The quantitative descriptive data obtained from the students' questionnaires were analyzed and interpreted. The findings were presented in text and tables, and the results were reported and summarized to formulate conclusions and provide recommendations.

6. Structure of the dissertation

The current study is organized into three chapters. The first chapter is entitled *Critical Thinking*. It tackles the development of critical thinking through definitions through time, its aspects and characteristics, its approaches, in addition to its importance in educational settings, and the challenges that students may face while developing this skill. The second chapter is entitled *Controversial Topics Debates* it provides an overview about in-class debates, its advantages and disadvantages, in addition to a historical overview of the views, challenges, and considerations for implementing controversial

topics in classes, and the impact of the relationship between controversial topics debates and critical thinking. The final chapter is the practical part and it is devoted for the field investigation, which is entitled *The Importance of Controversial Topics Debates in Developing EFL Students Critical Thinking*, this chapter presents a detailed description and administration of the used methodological approach that involves students' questionnaire, in which the gathered data is analyzed, interpreted and discussed. Finally, conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations, and future research goals were drawn based on the study results.

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Introduction

EFL students have access to the new advanced sciences that in particular provide them with numerous and distinct sources of information, this latter became available almost everywhere thanks to this modernity and new technologies. Additionally, the majority of these sources lack sufficient foundation and they are not considered authentic or even well grounded. Furthermore, some of the established opinions, arguments, ideas, etc, are not neutral, we find that sometimes researchers are biased by their own viewpoints and beliefs. Therefore, the reached findings need analysis, and evaluations, and most importantly, extra filtering. Thus, it is essential for students to master the critical thinking skills to be able to assess the authenticity of the received data, and closely analyze what is supposed to be adequate for their learning goals. This chapter aims to present in depth the basic definitions of critical thinking, simultaneously its aspects and approaches, then its importance in the educational field, in addition to the challenges that students may face during developing their critical thinking.

1.1. Historical overview

Paul et al (1997, p. 8) argued in their book, "California Teacher Preparation for Instruction in Critical Thinking: Research Findings and Policy Recommendations" that the concept of critical thinking is rooted back to ancient Greece's probing questioning method 2,500 years ago. It is called today the Socratic questioning. This latter is a method used for teaching critical thinking by asking intense questions before embracing or believing any concept. After Socrat, the Greek skeptics Plato and Aristotle made a big jump in the development of CT. They underlined that things are frequently quite different from what they seem to be and only the skilled mind, "those who use critical thinking skills" are able to distinguish between how things appear on the surface and how they really are under the surface, i.e., the deep truths. Such Greek tradition gave rise to the necessity for extensive and

in-depth analysis to completely comprehend and carefully select the appropriate responses for one's questions.

In the Middle Ages, the concept of critical thinking was seen from a different perspective, as Thomas Aquinas (1256). Thomas drew up a theory to ensure his thinking by stating, considering, and maintaining all the possible criticisms on his own thoughts as an essential phase in the way of developing them; he shed light on the necessity for reasoning. Furthermore, the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas shows that people who think critically do not always reject established beliefs, however; only those that lack a reasonable foundation.

In the 20th century, John Dewey, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Piaget, and others have all contributed to the understanding of human thought. Wittgenstein emphasized the significance of concepts and their examination, whereas Dewey's work (1933) emphasized the pragmatic foundation of human cognition. While Piaget's works from 1920 and continuing through the 1970s emphasized egocentric and sociocentric traits. Whereas the advanced sciences emphasized the need of obtaining knowledge properly and analytically, and depth psychology emphasized how the human mind can mislead oneself. Through history, these works underlined the need for developing critical thinking; and put in service all the needed materials and tools to develop this skill (as cited in Paul et al, 1997, p. 8-10).

1.2. Critical Thinking Definition

There is an enormous amount of disagreement over the definition of critical thinking, where scholars tend to define it in different ways. This refers back to the critical thinking literature that established a connection between the word and three fields: psychology, philosophy, and education (Lewis and Smith, 1993; Sternberg, 1986).

Sternberg (1986) defined CT as what an individual needs from mental processes, strategies, and representations in order to solve issues, make judgment, and acquire new concepts. Almost all researchers affirmed that critical thinking is related to mental processes,

however; they differ on the degree to which critical thinking incorporates both cognitive abilities and dispositions (Facione, 1990). Ennis claimed that the skill to think critically is very different from acting critically (1993). In other words, some individuals tend to use their critical thinking ability without actually employing this skill and put it into practice.

Paul (1991) gave a preliminary definition of CT, it is the act of evaluating information gained via observation, experience, reasoning, or communication (pp.120-122). Moreover, Ennis (1995) supported the latter point by claiming that critical thinking is all about making decisions on what to believe or to do, rather than accepting things as they seem without question or examination. According to Ennis CT is a key factor that help individuals in the development of their capacity to assess circumstances and draw decisions based on the relevant information.

Hatcher (2000) stated that CT is one of the thinking types that involves making decisions based on thorough assessment of options, arguments, and relevant data (pp. 3–8). Furthermore, Grallo and Richard (2013) added that the critical thinking lies upon the importance of carefully and consistently constructing information based on the foundations that support subsequent conclusions (pp. 154–180).

According to Ennis (2011), the ideal critical thinker should have both the desire to consciously use these CT skills as well as appropriate talents for effectively assessing, clarifying, and drawing conclusions (pp. 5-19). MCPc's work continues the trend of characterizing CT in terms of cognitive abilities and affective dispositions; he defined CT as the intention and ability to practice reflective skepticism (1984). It encompasses both cognitive abilities and affective dispositions.

Boss (2012) defined critical thinking as a collection of abilities that are required in the daily life and essential for the mental growth, he emphasized that the term critical refers

to the Greek word "kritikos" that means "discernment" or "judgment" or "decision-making". In addition, he claimed that CT necessitate logic, and strong analytical abilities.

The American philosopher, psychologist, and educator John Dewey (1859-1952) is typically viewed as the source of the modern critical thinking tradition. He called critical thing "reflective thinking" and provided this definition: "active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed from of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends"(Dewey, 1909, p.9). In this definition, John explains that CT is an active process that entails close examination instead of accepting things on their surface form. Moreover, rather than learning passively from others, Dewy and some other researchers in this school considered CT as a productive procedure where people think about their ideas, ask questions, and acquire useful knowledge on their own (Alec, 1997).

1.3. Critical thinking skills (CTS)

Critical thinking skills according to bloom's taxonomy (1956) and Facione (1998), entails the following cognitive skills: knowledge, analysis, inference, interpretation, evaluation, reasoning, problem solving. Since students constantly store and retrieve new words when learning a second language, bloom's knowledge level is maintained for storage and recovery.

1.3.1. Knowledge

Knowledge is defined as the ability to recall suitable material while addressing an issue, which often involves memory and identification. It entails memorizing specialized vocabulary, facts, and customs in certain disciplines; classifying; categorizing; and using criteria to establish or assess facts (Clelia, 2004, p. 50).

1.3.2. Analysis

The analytical skill is classified at a higher level in Bloom's taxonomy (1956). According to Bloom, analysis is all about breaking things down into smaller components i.e. the ability to dissolve items into its constituent parts and learning how those components relate to one another to identify connections between them and comprehend the way they are classified. It is formed of three subcategories: examining ideas and recognizing non-explicit assumptions, detecting arguments and understanding relationships among ideas, analyzing arguments and evaluating the structure and organization of communication through inferences.

1.3.3. Inference

The cognitive ability of inference is the recognition and assurance of elements that permit rational outcomes, consequently, these findings form assumptions to investigate important data and help in deriving conclusions from judgments, facts, principles, and convictions.

1.3.4. Reasoning

Reasoning is one of the major skills of CT; it is defined as a conscious process that is essential for taking decision. Almost all theories of intelligence lay a strong focus on reasoning, considering it vital to daily activities and patterns of life (Wilhelm, 2004). Galotti demonstrates that components of reasoning are both thinking with a purpose in mind and generating conclusions from various data sets. He persists by saying that the judgments could be intended or accidental (1989, p. 333). In addition to the definition provided by Allen saying that reasoning is a complex weave of capacities that enable you grasp another person's point of view, explain a subject that is complex, produce explanations for your opinions, analyze the reasons offered by others, determine what information to accept or reject, perceive both the benefits and negatives, and so forth (2004, p. 3).

Earlier, Philosophers classified reasoning into two categories: deductive and inductive reasoning. Subsequently, the concept of abduction was established, it was recognized that three forms of reasoning exist (Allan, 2006). However, Roediger & Rushton (1987) in their book “Psychology” stated that there is more than three forms, and mentioned some types of reasoning, like inductive and deductive, conditional, analogical and linear reasoning. Nevertheless, the two main ones are still deductive and inductive reasoning; Deductive reasoning is the process of making conclusions based on facts and logic, this type of reasoning allows one to infer logical conclusions from recognized data or evidence. In addition, Schechter (2013) defined Deductive reasoning as the kind of reasoning where the conclusion is logically guaranteed by the almost-validity of the assumptions (p. 226). Whereas, Inductive reasoning is the process of thinking that the reasoner in particular uses broad concepts to ultimately arrives at a specific conclusion.

1.3.5. Problem solving

Problem solving refers to the capacity to identify the basic factors of a problem or circumstance, develop potential solutions, and select the best one. Solving problems refers also to a difficult mental process that arises when someone is unable to transfer their original level of awareness to the desired state (Vlahavas, 2008, p. 151). This process goes through various steps according to the General Electric (GE) Foundation Workplace Skills Program (2006, pp. 25-29), they are as following:

1.3.5.1. Stages of solving problem

- a. Define the Problem:** The first crucial stage involves identifying the problem, determining its discovery method, starting date, duration, and available data. If sufficient data is available, the problem can be contained and prevented from progressing to the next process step, ensuring its safety.

- b. Looking for possible solutions:** The problem solver in this stage focuses on generating potential solutions to the issue by identifying available data, prioritizing the problem, and determining the need for additional resources. ensure the problem is contained before moving on to the next process step
- c. Define the Goals:** The problem solver evaluates various solutions, considering their benefits and drawbacks, after that choosing the most suitable one. They should consider the end goal, desired outcome, and desired timeline for solving the problem.
- d. Acting on solutions:** To put the answer into practice, the issue solver must create an action plan in the last stage. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen solution, s/he must also monitor the process's execution.

1.3.6. Interpretation

Facione (1990) stated that interpretation Involves understanding the qualities of information through translation, interpretation, and extrapolation. It entails paraphrasing using one's own words and capturing the content of a given context. Furthermore, understanding different types of texts, distinguishing between legitimate and contradictory conclusions, and interpreting different types of texts.

1.3.7. Evaluation

Evaluation is the process that involves assessing the value of ideas, methods, and Materials using solid criteria to establish their validity. Facione (1998) and Bloom (1956) defined evaluation as the process of judging statements, events, convictions, expressions, opinions, facts, and regulations using solid criteria and estimating the rational fortitude of current and future deductive relationships among different representation forms.

1.4. Approaches to critical thinking

There are several methods for applying critical thinking, these approaches are provided based on numerous viewpoints to the position of critical thinking, Glaser (1941) for example doubted that if there are components of critical thinking that are appropriately considered to be skill-based, are these skills context-bound or do they represent general attributes and skills. The question is still open, and it was even reinforced by Ennis (1989) in which he claimed that there isn't much agreement on whether teaching critical thinking depends on the topic area and context, or if it's a set of general skills that apply to all subject areas. The approaches are as the following:

1.4.1. Generic/ general/ enrichment approach

The enrichment approach is a teaching method that involves designing lessons and teaching them parallel to the existing curriculum to develop general thinking skills. It is one of the oldest and most experienced approaches; this approach focuses on teaching critical thinking that involves mastering discrete skills like interpreting, predicting, analyzing, and evaluating (Sedaghat and Rahmani, 2011). Critical thinking as a higher order thinking necessitates consciously applying abstract knowledge or acquired procedures in one setting to some new circumstances or situations (Woolfolk, 1998).

1.4.2. Infusion approach

Content is an essential component in the infusion strategy. The infusion course explicitly aims to foster critical thinking skills, and to achieve this goal, students must receive thorough and clear subject matter education that encourages critical thinking. Furthermore, broad concepts of critical thinking abilities and dispositions are stated explicitly (Abrami et al., 2014). The concept of critical thinking requires students to be encouraged to think critically in each subject area, with clear formulation of general concepts (as cited in Al-Ghadouni, 2021, p. 242)

1.4.3. Dispositions approach

Good thinkers require more than just skills, including critical thinking and creative abilities. They also need motivation, attitude, values, and habits (Tishman and Andread, 1995). Since each class has a culture that influences student's actions and learning and in this case, it is the English culture, it becomes a need to teach them dispositions to fit their environment. Enculturation is a suitable pattern to improve student-thinking dispositions (Perkins, 1992). There for learners have to understand the value of critical thinking. The same way skills can be taught, dispositions need to be modelled and nurtured to foster an identity as critical thinkers, students can be better motivated to participate in critical thinking on topics they can relate to and receive adequate to experience the intrinsic reward of CT.

1.4.4. Immersion approach

Abrami et al. (2014) claimed that the immersion approach emphasizes content and critical thinking, allowing students to immerse themselves in the subject matter through thought-provoking instruction, unlike the infusion approach where general CT principles are not explicitly stated (2014). This approach ignores student's previous training in CT by teaching them concepts without providing explicit instruction.

1.4.5. Holistic approach

Behar- horenstein and Niu (2011) stated that the entire academic degree program is a holistic approach that studies the effects of entire degree programs on the development of critical thinking skills these programs typically last at least one year, use pretest, and posttest measures to measure their effectiveness, However; the length of the programmatic intervention in critical thinking development. However, many studies fail to determine factors leading to these changes or establish causality; future studies should consider this framework (pp. 25-42).

Critical thinking/ thinker characteristics

Ruggiero (2012) defined critical thinkers by those who possess the ability to think beyond typical models, and toward topics that are more sophisticated. Compared to weak thinkers, critical thinkers generate more and better ideas. They develop their thinking skills through utilizing a range of probing strategies. More precisely, critical thinkers, while making decision they generally evaluate a wide range of inquiry techniques, generate a large number of ideas, and view the issue from multiple angles. Furthermore, they have a greater tendency towards intellectual risk-taking, adventure, consideration of unconventional ideas, and utilization of imagination in problem solving and issue-analysis.

Critical thinkers examine their very first assumptions, detect significant differences between options, and ground their conclusion in facts rather than sentiment. Being aware of their own limitations and desires, they evaluate the reasoning behind their ideas and the feasibility of their solutions, spotting flaws and problems, bracing for criticism, and overall improving their concepts.

Critical thinkers acquire focus. They just handle destruction faster and more skillfully than inefficient thinkers do, not because they are less vulnerable to them than others are. The actions of efficient minds are not magical. Like any learned talent, they exercise their abilities.

Ruggiero (2012) argued that critical thinkers are able to acknowledge their own limitations, see problems as challenges, strive for understanding, base their decisions on evidence, are curious about other's opinions, skeptical of extreme views, think before taking any act, avoid emotionalism, keep an open mind, and practice active listening.

Wade (1995), defined eight features of critical thinking, and they included describing issues, avoiding emotional reasoning, evaluating alternative interpretations, assessing

assumptions and biases, evaluating evidence, asking questions, and accepting ambiguity. Another characteristic is mentioned by several authors is metacognition, or the awareness of one's own thoughts; in simpler terms, metacognition is the ability to control one's actions by being aware of one's thoughts while performing specific tasks (Zayabalaradjane, 2016, p.10).

Beyer (1995) elaborated on the essential aspects of critical thinking, including dispositions, criteria, arguments, reasoning, and point of view. Critical thinkers are skeptic, open-minded, value fair-mindedness, respect evidence and reasoning, and will change positions when reason leads them to do so. Criteria are necessary for critical thinking, and arguments are statements or propositions with supporting evidence. Reasoning involves inferring conclusions from premises, while point of view shapes one's construction of meaning. Critical thinking uses various procedures, such as asking questions, making judgments, and identifying assumptions. These procedures help critical thinkers view the world from various perspectives and gain a deeper understanding of the world.

1.5. Standards to Critical Thinking

The Paul-Elder model also referred to by the Paulian Approach to Critical Thinking; decompose Critical thinking into Standards, Elements, and Intellectual Traits; standards are applied to the elements as students learn to acquire the intellectual traits (James, June 2014) (figure 1.1).

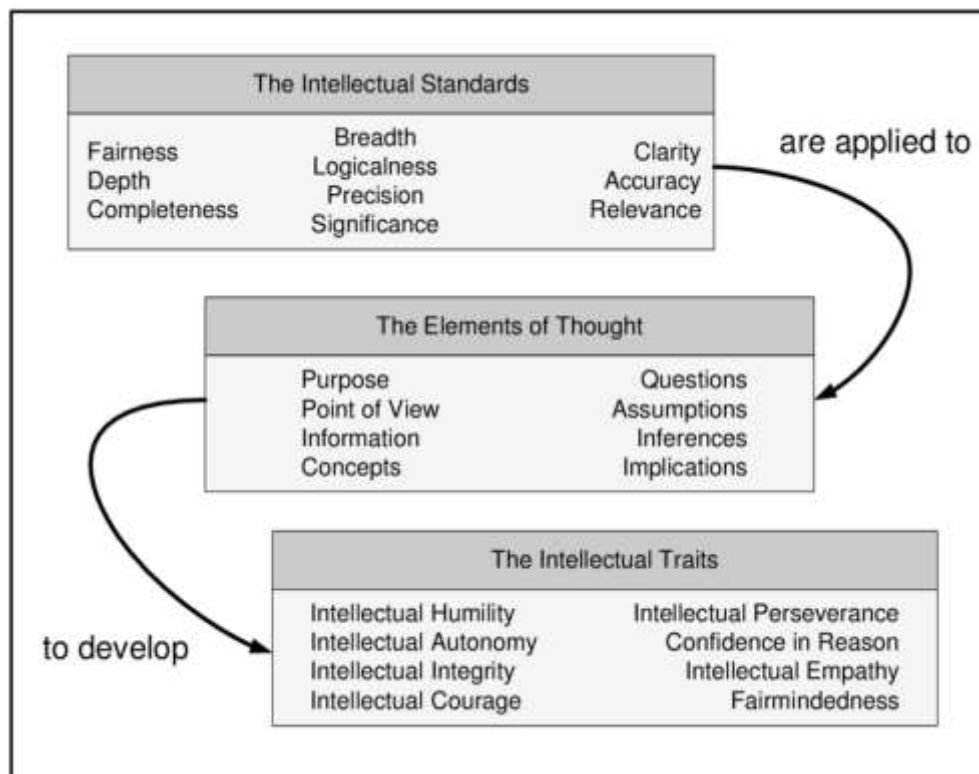


Figure 1.1 The Paul-Elder model of critical thinking

The model illustrated in figure 1.1 defines eight elements of critical thinking, including purpose, point of view, assumptions, implications, information needs, inferences, fundamental concepts, and question answering. It evaluates the quality of critical thinking using intellectual standards and identifies intellectual traits as characteristics of mature critical thinkers (James, June 2014).

Richard Paul and Linda Elder (2013, p. 32) proved that intellectual Standards help students develop intellectual norms. They also proposed nine intellectual standards for skilled reasoning in everyday life: clarity, accuracy, precision, depth, breadth, logicalness, significance, fairness, and relevance. Clarity is the explanation of the thinking that should be in a clear and understandable manner; when the thinking is easy to comprehend, it possesses clarity. Whereas Accuracy is the aim to ensure that all information are accurate and devoid of any mistakes; if the thoughts are reliable, then they possess accuracy. In contrast; Precision takes Accuracy to the next level by requiring precise words and data; if no additional

information can be provided, then Precision is achieved. Furthermore, Depth explains the case in-depth; it drives the learner to investigate the nuances, and an argument has depth if it covers all the details required to convey its point. Breadth requires that other perspectives are taken into account, so breadth is discovered when all sides of a debate are addressed. Next is Logicalness, Something is logical when it makes sense in steps, in other words; it means that an argument is reasonable, the arguments are coherent, and the conclusions flow naturally from the data. Afterword Significance; significance forces the learners to include the most crucial concepts; it is achieved when all that is necessary is included. Additionally, Fairness that in particular indicate: there is no bias and the argument is fair, it forces the learner to treat opposing viewpoints with objectivity and fairness. Fairness exists in an objective argument. Finally, Relevance; it is achieved when every important information is included, making each part distinct and focusing on what needs to be said.

1.6. Critical Thinking In Relation To Education

Linda and Richard stated in their article *Critical Thinking; Competency Standards Essential for the Cultivation of Intellectual Skills, Part 1* (2010, p. 38-39). Learning is a process that relies on critical thinking, which is the only capacity we can use to learn. Learning a discipline is equivalent to learning to think within this discipline. Students need to think critically at every level, even if it is elementary. For instance, to internalize understanding, one needs to state, elaborate, and provide examples from real-life situations. Without critical thinking, rote memorization becomes the primary recourse, leading to forgetting and rarely internalizing powerful ideas. Critical thinking allows for the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, insights, and skills in any given body of content. It is essential to think analytically and critically within that content, providing tools for both internalizing content and assessing its quality. It facilitates constructing the system within the mind, internalizing it, and using it through actual problems and issues. Education alters student's

minds, enabling them to empathize with alternative perspectives, change their minds when necessary, and internalize important concepts. To become educated individuals, teachers must place thinking at the heart of the curriculum and encourage active use of their thinking.

1.6.1. Classroom Techniques That Encourage Critical Thinking

Michael et al (2005, p. 24-25), in their handbook, *A Handbook for Using Historical Documents to Improve Student's Thinking Skills in the Secondary Grades*; explained several strategies for teaching critical thinking in a classroom setting. These include commencing classes with thought-provoking questions, cultivating anticipation and curiosity among students. Additionally, assigning reflective questions related to their readings, such as elucidating the reasoning behind certain concepts, encourages deeper comprehension. Make students figure things out in class (combine them into small groups to discuss solutions). Incorporating brief quizzes at the outset of sessions maintains student involvement, while visual aids like charts to diverse learning preferences. Furthermore, assigning roles for students to embody, such as delivering a speech from the perspective of a document's author, enhances understanding through experiential learning. Encouraging students to analyze premises, assumptions, and conclusions in current newspaper articles promotes real-world application of critical thinking. Moreover, facilitating peer interaction through activities like interviewing and restating viewpoints fosters collaborative learning and communication skills. Emphasizing self-reflection through tasks like documenting personal progress and paraphrasing arguments reinforces metacognitive awareness. By integrating these multifaceted strategies, educators can design dynamic learning settings that promote overall intellectual growth and active student engagement.

1.7.2. Encouraging Critical Thinking During Discussion

Robert H. Ennis (1996) declared that implementing effective teaching strategies is essential for promoting student engagement and critical thinking skills in the classroom, and

discussion is one of these strategies that can be enhanced or encouraged by asking some designed open-ended questions. They cover various aspects such as:

- **seeking clarification:** like:
 - could you elaborate a little bit on that?
 - For what reason did you say that?
 - understanding main points by saying for example I'll check to see if I got this properly, Is this what you want to say?
 - I understand, your primary claim should be....What specifically is your thesis?
- **exploring reasons behind beliefs:** asking questions such as:
 - could you elaborate a little bit on the reasoning for your belief?
 - Maybe you could explain your reasons a little further?
 - For what reason did you say that?
 - Why do you think that?
 - Why did you get to that conclusion, or those conclusions?
- **Examining the relevance between reasons and conclusions:** by asking:
 - I am trying to comprehend you, could you explain how the conclusion and the cause are related ?
 - Do you have an assumption?
 - I am not clear how this issue is related to your conclusion. Would additional proof be beneficial?
 - How would one reach it?
 - In what way does this support the conclusion?
 - What relevance does that have?

Students are able to explain their ideas more thoroughly, consider different perspectives, and clarify their arguments, leading to deeper understanding and engagement in the discussion; the teacher can ask questions like:

- I have no idea how you are interpreting this word; could you provide an example of...?
- Could you offer a negative one...?
- Is this an illustration of...?
- Do we have the same definition for this word? What do you mean by...?

1.8. Significance of Critical Thinking in EFL Classes

Browne and Keeley (2013) stated two types of thinking styles, the sponge thinking style and the panning for gold thinking style. The Sponge is the term for the first way of thinking since it is based on the idea of passively taking in information without applying critical thinking, This type of thinking is generally fast and effortless, but it demands concentration and the capacity to remember an extensive amount of information. Despite these advantages, the Sponge thinking style has a serious and catastrophic disadvantage in that it provides no reliable method for deciding which facts and ideas to reject and which ones to believe (Browne & Keeley, 2013).

The second type of thinking style is called Panning for Gold because it requires the reader to actively participate and approach research by question-asking; in other words the panning for gold thinking is the one that uses critical thinking as the main base; When it comes to actively reading and listening. The act of panning for gold offers a framework for determining the worth of the information they come across (Browne & Keeley, 2013). The process of critical thinking is important for EFL learners, for not only the reasons contained herein, but also for the reason bellow:

Critical thinking abilities are crucial because they help students handle social, scientific, and practical problems effectively (Shakirova 2007, p.42). Similarly, Ku (2009) said that the enhancement of critical thinking abilities are the main foundation for educational reform, it would provide students the required capacity to reason about social events in a world that is changing quickly (Ku 2009, p.70). Shirkhani and Fahim (2011) also highlighted the significance of integrating critical thinking in EFL classes, by stating that Improving student's critical thinking is increasingly regarded as one of the responsibilities of foreign language instructors, as critical thinking has lately gained popularity and a high standing (Shirkhani and Fahim, 2011, pp.111).

All these scholars justified the reasons they gave. First, language learners can control and assess their own learning processes more effectively if they are able to take control of their own thought processes. Second, Critical thinking increases learners perspectives and enhances their understanding of the language. Thirdly, critical thinking and student's accomplishments are highly correlated (Shirkhani and Fahim, 2011, p. 112). Therefore, it is essential to incorporate critical thinking in EFL classes; as it allows the learners to think critically, apply logic to create and assess arguments, and continue studying beyond the classroom.

1.9. Critical Thinking Challenges

A critical thinker has to be aware of the obstacles to critical thinking, because as stated in Denis Korn's essay "Barriers to Critical Thinking" (2011). If these obstacles are acknowledged, critical thinking may become an ability, the two obstacles that most effect learner's ability to think critically are:

1.9.1. Fear of being wrong

The mental disorder known as "fear of being wrong" manifests itself each time the learners are about to take a risk, go outside of their comfort zone, or face other unknown situations that might potentially affect their entire life. This because fear is an intense emotion that is inborn in everybody. Although its main function is protection, it frequently gets in the way of a learner's ability to reach their full potential by standing in the way of achieving their goals (Tsaousides, 2017). Furthermore, the fear of being wrong may also be linked to the type of culture they live in and not merely be justified by dread. It might be challenging to voice their viewpoint on a certain topic.

Alina Tugend asserts that having a fear of being wrong is natural, on line with making mistakes. Error prevention is unavoidable. Experiments reveal that those who are extremely concerned about making mistakes are known as ultra-perfectionists. These learners are worse than those who make mistakes regularly because those who make mistakes are able to grow from them. When it comes to accepting risks and changes, they are also more courageous. Most significantly, compared to "ultra-perfectionists" who are entirely focused on their beliefs and ideologies, those who make errors are more dynamic and educated because they are exposed to diverse points of view.

1.9.2. Ignorance

Robert Carroll (2009) described in a written article ignorance as having inadequate prior knowledge about the topic. Ignorance typically shows itself in conversations between two people who are talking about a subject that neither of them is very knowledgeable in. Students in this case are unaware that reading one article is insufficient or that understanding a topic's surface definition is sufficient to claim knowledge of it, because information is so easily accessible. Therefore, in order to claim ignorance about a particular topic, a learner must research it further, reading more than five credible articles, weighing the advantages and

disadvantages, and taking into account all relevant information, from the issue's historical context to its potential long-term effects. Naturally, if learners lack the necessary prior information, it is challenging to make a more thoughtful and sensible conclusion about any issue. Likewise, it is hard to pass judgment or offer a reasoned viewpoint on the matter without having a solid knowledge of the fundamentals. If EFL learners are educated how to be competent researchers and analysts, ignorance can entirely be eradicated.

Those are known as the most two barriers for students, but as shown in the researches all the challenges can be eliminated and even can be turned into ability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted the importance of critical thinking for EFL learners and every day decision making. Through an exploration of diverse conceptual frameworks, methodological approaches, and instructional strategies to develop critical thinking skills among EFL learners, it is evident that such competencies play an important role in their cognitive development and linguistic proficiency. Moreover, this chapter underscore the significance of incorporating pedagogical interventions tailored to the specific needs and linguistic backgrounds of EFL students. The integration of critical thinking pedagogy promises to not only enrich the educational experiences of EFL learners but also equip them with the requisite cognitive tools to deal with multifaceted socio-cultural contexts with discernment and efficacy.

Chapter Two: Controversial Topics Debates

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Introduction

Since the dawn of humanity, debating has been considered a secure space for expression, interaction, and influence. It has proven to have a wide range of potential and advantages in a multitude of disciplines, including education, where it is thought to be a useful teaching tool. The multifariousness of human experiences in every aspect of life continues to expand over generations and over time. Simultaneously, in the field of education, which is one of the society foundations that prepares individuals to face and handle different challenges in the world around them, the need to discuss disputed topics in classes has grown significantly; particularly in Foreign Language (FL) teaching where cultures meet through language learning. The classroom serves as a setting where students engage in many topics, encounter a variety of issues, and develop their language and communicative skills. This chapter is organized into two sections. The first section aims to provide an overview of classroom debates, their advantages and disadvantages for students, and their classroom engagement. The second section deals with the history of controversial topics, the views, challenges, and considerations for implementing controversial topics in classes, and their relationship with education overall. Moreover, it includes the importance and the impact of controversial topics debates on students' critical thinking abilities development.

2.1. Overview on Classroom Debates

Debating, also known as "The Art of Argumentation", has a long history dating back to ancient Greece. Socrates used it as an educational tool in his philosophy classes at the Academy in Athens. "So safe to say, we have been debating for thousands of years" (Cronin, 2023). Tracing their way through time till the 18th century, debates have gained significant attention again in recent times, with many different disciplines successfully using debates. These fields include sociology, history, psychology, biotechnology, math, health, dentistry, nursing, marketing, and social work (Jugdev et al., 2004).

Debate is an area of interest for many theorists and scholars who have elaborated numerous definitions, features, and significance in various fields. Overall, debate can be defined as an argument or a discussion about specific issues that can spark disagreements. (Akerman & Neale, 2011; Darby, 2007; Jackson, 2009; Kennedy, 2007).

According to Glover (2014), a debate is a conversation in which two or more persons present different viewpoints on a subject or issue to persuade the audience or the other proponents to agree with them.

Debate refers to the process of considering multiple viewpoints and arriving at a judgement, and its application ranges. For instance, an individual uses debate to convince others to agree with them (Freeley and Steinberg, 2005).

Moreover, according to Lustigova (2011) debate embodies the values of reasoned argument, tolerance for differing points of view, and rigorous self-examination. Hence, it is more than just a linguistic or performance talent. One of the main characteristics of debate is that it rarely results in agreement and instead permits an in-depth analysis of the issue at hand. Above all, debate provides a venue for people with different opinions to discuss contentious topics without resorting to personal attacks, emotive appeals, or insults.

Debate as a teaching strategy flourished throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1981, according to George W. Fluharty and Harold Raymond Ross in their book "Public Speaking and Other Forms of Speech Communication" defined debates as a vintage teaching-learning technique that holds an established position, either pro or con, on a topic, assertion, proposition, or problem-solving approach.

In this regard, Tumposky (2004) in her essay entitled "The Debate Debate" asserted that debate is an active learning technique that encourages students to be interested in the teaching-learning process, while significantly benefiting the students in terms of speaking ability, specifically measurable verbal communication, and critical thinking skills (p. 54).

Furthermore, students learn more effectively by actively analyzing, discussing, and applying content in meaningful ways rather than passively absorbing information (Bonwell & Eison, 1991 in Kennedy 2007). Kennedy also asserted that debate as an active instructional strategy enhances learning particularly in the areas of mastering the content as well as developing critical thinking skills, oral communication skills, and empathy.

According to Rodie Akerman and Ian Neale (2010) debate has a significant and useful impact on young people's achievement from variety of backgrounds, especially when it comes to the development of literacy abilities. This is reflected by the improvements in academic achievement, student engagement, critical thinking development, confidence building, cultural awareness, and educational aspirations.

In this regard, Brown (2015) suggested that when using in-class debates as a learning strategy in the aim of increasing higher education students critical thinking and collaborative learning skills, debates should have a clear 'for and against' structure and providing initial support for students who are uncertain. Additional support should be provided for those lacking confidence in the debate format. Debates should encourage students to present evidence and express their perspectives. Peer-assessment should be designed to maximize learning effectiveness. Debates should be considered mandatory for module assessment and the relationship between debates and summative assessment resources should be reviewed.

In summary, the reviewed literature emphasizes the benefits of debate as a teaching method. It promotes critical thinking, analytical abilities, teamwork, and communication skills.

2.1.1. In-class Debates Advantages and Disadvantages

As with any teaching method, debates have been examined from a variety of angles regarding their efficacy and advantages for enhancing students' diverse competencies. However, despite these advantages, debates are also plagued by drawbacks.

2.1.1.1. In-class Debates Advantages

Vo and Morris (2006) found that students stated that in a short time they learned and understood the course material better thanks to the debate format which increased the benefits of the traditional lecture by engaging the learner in the material. Additionally, debate is effective in helping students learn discipline and demonstrate the ability to read and write critically (Osborne, 2005 cited in Doody & Condon, 2012).

Debates as a pedagogical method are used to improve critical thinking skills and oral communication skills and are currently being used in various programs to foster student learning, critical thinking and learner-centered education (Roy and Macchiette, 2005).

According to Darby (2007) debate allows students to move beyond technique, rote learning of facts and theories (p. 1) and provides an opportunity to use role-playing to implement knowledge while expressing their beliefs, values, and attitudes. Additionally, it may enhance one's capacity for reasoning, communication, and innovative thinking.

Kennedy (2007) stated that debates enhance students' oral critical communication, as a means of self-expression, social interaction, and working in a team. Similarly, Scotece (2012) asserted that it gives students the opportunity to practice applying reasoning, logic, and argumentation to make critical decisions and judgements regarding contentious matters as a teaching and learning tool. Moreover, it has the potential to improve creative thinking along with reasoning and communication abilities. It can encourage social activities outside the classroom (Darby, 2007).

Hall (2011) emphasized that “debates do not merely rely on memorization and superficial application of techniques and theories but also apply and integrate materials under an array of situations” (p. 3).

In this regard, Doody & Condon (2012) affirmed that debates as a pedagogical method are used to improve critical thinking skills and oral communication skills and are currently being used in various programs to foster student learning, critical thinking and learner-

centered education. Moreover, debates can be tailored to increase student learning and understanding of difficult topics by encouraging student dialogue and research of the debate topics.

Zare and Othman (2013) reported that besides learning how to utilize the library, students also learn how to reason, analyze, clarify, and present arguments. Students who participate in debate are more likely to learn the material since they are actively, broadly, deeply, and individually involved in it. Along with critical thinking abilities, it teaches learners how to evaluate the data they encounter on a regular basis. Furthermore, debating offers an excellent chance for students to improve their speaking skills (p. 1507).

Debates are a particularly useful tool for developing student writing, encouraging and boosting involvement, and enhancing students' comprehension of political concepts and their applications. In addition, debates on any subject improve students' general openmindedness, curiosity, analyticity, systematicity, and reasoning confidence. Students' ability to be open-minded has improved, enabling them to consider and, if necessary, embrace alternative viewpoints (Tawil, 2016). Furthermore, students that experience debating in their classrooms rated their classroom experience higher (Oros, 2007; Scott 2008; Tawil, 2016).

The most notable advantages of debates as a teaching tool are as follows:

(1) increased comprehension shaped by a range of viewpoints and the anticipation of opposing arguments; (2) improved higher order thinking and reasoning, organizational abilities, and perceptions; (3) enhanced research skills combined with creative and frequently impromptu argumentation; and (4) metacognition (people learn about their own mind and how it works). (Alghamdi & Al Dossari, 2021; Doody & Condon, 2012; Lustigova, 2011; Najafi et al., 2016; Puchot, 2002; UNESCO, 2012; Williams, 2010) cited in Khalaf Hamdan Alghamdi (2022).

Lastly, Khalaf Hamdan Alghamdi (2022) affirmed that through debating, teachers and students can evaluate the multiple perspectives that one story can be told and reinterpreted

through, this fosters interest about the nuances of language, rhetoric, politics, and persuasion as well as empathy and compassion for opposing viewpoints. In addition, she concluded that debates offer numerous benefits as a learning strategy, including deeper understanding, enhanced higher-order thinking, organizational skills, and improved research skills through innovative and spontaneous approaches.

To sum up, in-class debates enhance students' critical thinking, communication, and social interaction skills, promote learner-centered education, creativity, and openmindedness. It also maintains students' library usage, reason, constructivism, and improves comprehension, and foster interest in language, rhetoric, and politics.

2.1.1.2. In-class Debates Disadvantages

Tumposky (2004) highlights cultural issues in raising objections to the confrontational nature of debate with its “yes or no” outcome or judgment and suggests that debates' structure, such as in-class debate, might encourage students to “oversimplify and misrepresent” information to reinforce an assigned argumentative position (p. 54).

Debate is also criticized for promoting a dualism-biased viewpoint. This is since most discussions focus on contrasting just two points of view, even though the issue at hand is typically more complicated (Tumposky, 2004, cited in Kennedy, 2007).

Tumposky also noted that debates can ultimately undermine and distort the learning process, for instance; students may try to be persuasive in influencing others' opinions at the expense of accuracy.

Another limitation in debate is that it can cause frustration and anxiety for some learners. Omelicheva (2007) stated that not every single student benefited from classroom debates in terms of learning the debated issues. Alternatively, several students complained that they were stressed out by in-class debates as they were unable to fully comprehend the topics being discussed or to practice and apply critical thinking techniques.

Nevertheless, Omelicheva (2007) maintained that obstacles and barriers should not weaken our drive or deter teachers and educators from utilizing debates as a teaching/learning instrument in the classroom. The researcher further states that she has conducted study and found that, with careful planning of the debate's parameters and a clear explanation of its true goals to students, it is feasible to gain the benefits of classroom debate.

Moreover, Oros (2007) stated that some students criticized that the debate activities did not leave any time for lectures and any time to discuss the assigned readings. However, the researcher claimed that this issue can be addressed if the teachers spend more time in the classroom and explain why they hold arguments, this problem can be resolved. Additionally, each session that is controlled by the discussion activities can have one or two take away points introduced by the teacher, which are essentially mini lectures.

Some claim that debates are about winning and losing, which makes students anxious and frustrated. Limitations can be reduced by placing more emphasis on the preparation process and debate participation than on grades and competition (Zare & Othman, 2013).

For instance, Musselman (2004) indicated that debate can also turn the peaceful environment of the classroom into a confrontational atmosphere which might not do well with some students from some specific cultures. However, in another study Elliot (1993) claimed that she controlled this issue simply via grading only based on students' participation rather than on performance.

Opponents also claim that taking part in a debate simply highlights the participants' current set of beliefs and does not help promote a rational analysis of the debated issue. On the other hand, it has been reported that the only time students managed to change their positions and accept alternative viewpoints was only when they were involved in a debate or a role play (Simonneaux, 2001).

In addition, a technique was offered to keep students away from developing biased assimilation. Budesheim and Lundquist (2000) claim that if students are required to defend

an opinion that differs from their own, they will alter their viewpoints. They advise students to learn about all sides of the argument and to keep their side of the argument a secret until the very last minute.

Moreover, Zare and Othman (2013) findings stated that it is significant that the format of exercise stimulates students to consider the opposite, so they can become more open to new views and spend less time reinforcing old opinions" (p. 110).

Overall, researchers suggested that a debate can always be followed by a class discussion; to address any sort of limitations teachers and learner's encounter. For example, Garrett, Schoener, and Hood recommend that following a debate, the teacher can plan an open discussion to allow alternative viewpoints and questions to be addressed by all members of the class (Doody & Condon, 2012).

In summary, there are several benefits and drawbacks associated with using debates as a teaching tool. Classroom debates can be beneficial for increasing students' engagement, enhancing oral communication skills, fostering open-mindedness, and advancing students' capacity for reasoning and critical thinking. Conversely, in-class debates can have negative outcomes, as they may increase frustration and anxiety among some students, create a confrontational environment, and reinforce students' existing beliefs rather than encouraging rational thought.

2.2. Overview on Controversial Topics

History cannot define a time where controversy started as wherever humans are controversy goes along. There is no agreed definition of controversial topics. However, certain characteristics make a topic controversial. Oulton, Dillon, & Grace (2004) stated that controversial issues are issues about which a considerable number of people argue without reaching a conclusion.

according to Global Citizenship Guides, Oxfam (2006) controversial topics are topics that evoke strong feelings and view, affect the social, cultural, economic and environmental

context in which people live, deal with questions of value and belief, and can divide opinion between individuals, communities and the wider society and usually complicated, with no clear “answers” because they are issues about which people often hold strong views based on their own experiences, interests, values and personal context. In addition, arise at a range of scales, affecting local, national and global communities.

Moreover, the level of controversy surrounding an issue is highly contextual in nature (Misco, 2011; Thornton, 2005). It can vary significantly based on location and time, with controversial issues in one community or country potentially being widely accepted in another (Oxfam, 2006).

According to Al Badri (2015) what makes an issue truly controversial is that both views about it are right or at least, can be reasoned as right. In addition, as cited in his article, Crook and Truscott (2007) and Dearden (1981) claimed that a matter is controversial if contrary views can be held on it without those views being irrational rather than just being sensitive, arousing strong emotions, and leading to clashes among individuals (p. 74). Furthermore, Stradling (1984) as cited in Sudha (2018) defined controversial issues as “issues that deeply divide a society, that generate conflicting explanations and solutions based on alternative value systems” (p. 122).

The scope of issues that might be considered controversial is quite broad (Sudha, 2018); it covers a broad range of subjects, including gender, justice, migration, and climate change in addition to human rights. There are no lists outlining the controversial concerns. Politicians, the media, and social events all have a big influence on this decision at any given moment. The most controversial topics are frequently those about which a wide range of value judgments can be made. (KUŞ & Öztürk, 2019).

Today's shifting times necessitate that education must adapt and keep pace along. This is due to factors such as globalization, increased technological innovation, and the fast speed of life. The goal of education is to enable students to take on and actively participate in

local and global communities, to confront and overcome global issues, and, in ultimately, to become proactive participants in the creation of a more fair, tolerant, inclusive, safe, and sustainable world (UNESCO, 2014).

At times, teachers face events of such impact that they resonate with young people, sparking their curiosity or concern (Oxfam, 2015). Without a classroom tradition of addressing real-world issues through the curriculum, it can be difficult for both educators and students to navigate these situations. Global Citizenship Education (GCE) provides an integrated approach that fosters a classroom environment designed for discussing both ongoing and sudden controversial topics. It serves as a framework to prepare learners for critical and active participation in the face of life's challenges and prospects in a rapidly evolving and interconnected world (p. 7).

Global Education is a new approach to language teaching that aims to prepare students for citizenship in a global age. It focuses on knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action. Knowledge about world problems is the first goal, followed by skills like communication, critical thinking, and cooperative problem-solving. Global attitudes include global awareness, respect for diversity, and empathy. Action involves democratic participation in the global community (ÇAVDAR, 2006).

2.2.1. Controversial Topics and Education

The very concept of dealing with controversial issues in school appears to be controversial. (Divéki, 2018). Despite the difficulties that educators and students may face, promoting respectful discourse and promoting debate can be very beneficial for language acquisition as well as personal development (Divéki, 2023).

There is a considerable body of knowledge supporting the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom. Harwood and Hahn (1990) as cited in Sudha (2018) affirmed that the implementation of controversial topics in education is important due to a variety of reasons including improving students' critical thinking skills and increasing their social and

interpersonal communication skills. In addition, it helps students prepare for their roles as productive citizens in a democracy by boosting their self-esteem, increasing their interest and beliefs, and encouraging active engagement. Further, it helps students internalize democratic ideas and assists them translate those values into behavior.

Additionally, controversial issues are included within a curriculum for these common three reasons, which are to prepare students for their citizenship roles in a multicultural democracy, improve critical thinking skills, and enhance interpersonal communication skills.

Dealing with controversial issues in class has several benefits, which teachers might consider. Primarily, since authorities have already realized that "knowledge and skills divorced from real world situations leave young people unprepared for the complexities of the modern world", now they are taught in many countries' curriculum. Second, it appears that students are interested in disputed topics; most of them want to know what is going on in the world and believe that education should provide them with that knowledge. Lastly, debating controversial topics fosters the development of students. Various abilities (Oxfam, 2006).

According to (Oxfam, 2018) exploring contentious topics in the EFL classroom can offer a secure environment for students to debate and consider their principles and beliefs, helping them in better understanding both the world and themselves. Furthermore, engaging in difficult discussions and disagreements teaches young people how to think critically, respect others' perspectives, weigh alternative points of view, and settle disagreements. Whether on the playground, at home, or in their local community, these abilities help students develop the resilience and self-assurance they need to handle conflicts that erupt in response to global challenges and in their own lives.

DeVold (2018) emphasizes that engaging in the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom helps the students develop critical thinking skills, develops interpersonal communication skills, and enhances student interest and performance. Allow students to

practice communication and interpersonal skills. Students can effectively work on their four basic language skills by dealing with real-life issues (Brown, 2009; Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004) and they can also develop their creative and critical thinking skills (Brown, 2009; Oxfam, 2006; Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004 cited in Divéki, 2023).

By exploring different perspectives on complex issues, students can learn to evaluate information and arguments, form opinions, and express themselves in a logical and persuasive manner (Divéki, 2023).

Many teachers have already started to bring global topics. However, many are steering away from treating them in class because of their sensitive nature (Haynes, 2009; Yoshihara, 2013). As this kind of topics brings up challenging educational concerns such protecting the sensibilities of students from diverse backgrounds and cultures, preventing conflict in the classroom, and teaching controversial subjects impartially while avoiding accusations of bias. It additionally raises into doubt the role of a teacher's personal values and beliefs, as well as academic freedom.

Hess (2004) explained that rather than just teaching kids how to handle the kinds of political disputes that arise outside of school, many parents either want schools to reflect their opinions or worry that include debate in the curriculum may spark controversy (p. 258).

Clarcke (2005) argued that teachers may avoid controversial topics for classroom as they find them as complex as teaching itself. Those issues are multifaceted. Teachers may become discouraged by a topic if they do not feel like experts or at least well-versed in it, rather than so much by its difficulty (p. 1).

Due to possible student disagreements or difficulties presenting ideas that would be apparent for EFL students to comprehend and discuss, most teachers tended to stay away from bringing up controversial subjects. (Byford and Lennon (2009); Badri (2015); Harwood and Hahn (1990); Lan and Lam (2020) cited in Tukhvatulina (2022)).

2.2.1.1. Approaches and Frameworks to Teach Controversial Topics

When addressing contentious subjects in the classroom, educators should adopt the most appropriate approach and framework possible to resolve any issues or worries that may come up. The training pack provided by The Council of Europe 2012 “Living with controversy” promoted an open and collaborative approach with a focus on self-reflection and intentional action; Teachers are encouraged to reflect on the way their personal beliefs and values affect their professional attitude towards and practice in the handling of contentious material (p. 12). It also emphasized on the establishment of a safe environment in classrooms and schools, by promoting open discussion and debate on controversial issues, fostering non-violent conflict resolution, encourage self-reflection and listening to others, promote intercultural dialogue, develop a more critical approach to information received from the media.

Hess (2005), for instance, argues it is important for teachers to reflect on their own convictions (moral, political, social, etc.) when teaching controversial issues. She distinguishes between four approaches teachers commonly use when discussing and/or instructing in challenging course material: denial, avoidance, privilege, and balance. The first approach Denial occurs when teachers deny that an issue is controversial. They might be concerned, for example, about potentially triggering in students’ strong emotions that would be difficult to handle (p. 259). The second approach Avoidance occurs when teachers believe a topic is a controversial issue, they do not necessarily include it in their curricula and this may be due to the potential triggering in students’ strong emotions that would be difficult to handle (p. 260). Another reason for avoidance may be that a teacher has a strong opinion on an issue and finds it difficult to stay neutral. Conversely, the next approach Privilege involves teachers who believe a topic is controversial but want to privilege a particular perspective in their teaching which means they want to emphasize on a particular perspective in their teaching as the correct one (p. 260). The last approach is Balance, and it refers to teaching

that presents various perspectives and attempts by the teacher to present them as neutrally as possible.

Oxfam (2018) suggested a Global Citizenship Education (GCE) approach as it supports the development of a classroom culture where both ongoing and unexpected or isolated controversial issues can be addressed. It is a framework to equip learners for critical and active engagement with the challenges and opportunities of life in a fast changing and interdependent world (p. 7).

Oxfam (2006) encouraged a participatory approach in the classroom, as evidence suggests that telling young people what to think or preaching at them about how to behave is likely at best to have no effect and at worst to close their minds to considering alternative views. In addition to familiar approaches such as debate, drama, role-play and simulation, other effective innovative approaches such as “Mysteries”, “Diamond ranking” and the “Consequences wheel”.

Furthermore, Divéki (2023) suggested “The boxing match”, “Think-pair-share”, “Story circles”, “Opinion line activity”, “Four corners activity”. In addition to debate as a framework, teachers can utilize to engage students in discussion and critical thinking. Step into other people’s shoes and develop their perspective-taking skills.

2.2.1.2. Importance of Incorporating Controversial Topics in EFL Classes

Many scholars and educators emphasize the importance of dealing with controversial topics in classes. Oxfam (2018) stressed that controversial topics (CTs) have an impact on the life of youth, so ignoring contentious topics would be equivalent to ignoring the realities of many young people's lives.

Regardless of age, many young people are likely to be exposed to national and international issues through the media so providing a safe and supportive space for them to process these is an important task for schools (p. 5). Additionally, exposing students to controversial topics pushes them to reflect on and express their own values and opinions, as

well as listen to and respect other people's perspectives. As a result, they can reflect critically on media information, make informed choices, stand up for their own rights, and develop a sense of responsibility for others (Oxfam, 2006).

Controversial issues may additionally promote these skills (Oxfam, 2018); the following thinking skills can be fostered in young people by exposing them to challenging and emotionally charged material: information processing, reasoning, inquiry, creative thinking, evaluation, and self-assurance in one's own judgment (p. 9). These abilities are essential for helping young people become engaged, accountable members of society as well as for promoting academic success and literacy. Furthermore, according to Flensner (2022) encouraging students to learn about contentious subjects can improve their comprehension of the issues they face in life as well as their ability to think critically and interact with others (p. 15). The contentious issues learning approach seeks to help students become more emotionally mature, adept at problem-solving as adults, and critical thinkers (p. 17).

2.2.2. Considerations for Implementing Controversial Topics in EFL Classes

According to the Council of Europe (2012) teachers might face challenges and obstacles when teaching controversial topics; as it may be too rigid, difficult to students' emotions, maintain positive climate and class control, or due to the lack of understanding of the topic. To overcome any hinders certain considerations are suggested; according to Oxfam (2018) when raising challenging topics in the classroom, providing a space which is collaborative, respectful and provides an opportunity for open dialogue where young people can test out their views in an open forum for critical, in depth and respectful discussion is quite crucial (p. 22). This can be achieved by establishing classroom ground rules which could include: Allowing only one person to talk at a time – no interrupting; Showing respect for the views of others; Challenge the ideas not the people; Using appropriate language –no offensive comments; Allowing everyone to express their view to ensure that everyone is heard and respected and finally inviting young people to give reasons why they have a particular view.

2.2.2.1. Teacher's Role in Teaching Controversial Topics

Council of Europe (2015) as cited in Divéki (2023) provided a set of useful recommendations for teacher when dealing with controversial issues in class, for instance teachers who take a stand on controversial issue in their classroom must be willing to clearly indicate that it is only one opinion, and provide the evidence on which their decision was based; self-reflection and awareness of the impact of one's beliefs on their teaching of controversial issues. In addition, understanding the role of teaching about controversial issues in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education, managing controversial subject matter sensitively and safely through the implementation of teaching techniques according to the circumstances and presenting issues fairly.

2.2.3. Impact of Controversial Topics on EFL Students

According to Dubay (1980), Controversial topics in ELT stimulate students' critical thinking skills, promoting a more complex mindset and enabling them to see problems from different perspectives. The Council of Europe suggests that controversial topics discussions in classrooms enhance learning competencies, promote tolerance, and increase students' interest in sensitive topics, thereby fostering community habits. Moreover, controversial issues in the EFL classroom can help students develop thinking skills (i.e., critical, creative and analytical thinking) (Oxfam, 2018 cited in Divéki 2023); by exploring different perspectives on complex issues, students can learn to evaluate information and arguments, form opinions, and express themselves in a logical and persuasive manner.

Incorporating controversial issues in the EFL classroom can provide an academic context for students to discuss and reflect on their beliefs and values; help them develop a better understanding of themselves and the world (Oxfam, 2018).

2.2.3.1. Students Engagement and Controversial Topics

Although many EFL teachers tend to avoid controversy, talking about controversial topics can enhance students' critical thinking and increase classroom engagement. Sudha

(2018) stated in his study about incorporating the controversial topic E-stalking in EFL lessons that learner-speaking engagement has been improved because of incorporating controversial issues into speaking activities. (97%) of the students found it interesting and engaging to discuss controversial topics that were familiar to them. Moreover, (85%) of the participants claimed that they pay attention to the issue as they had never analyzed that problem critically before.

Aubrey et al. (2020) found that the learners felt more comfortable and became more confident by the end of the course after providing ten classes tackling various controversial issues. In addition, he asserted that students could be more engaged if there were a more positive and supportive classroom environment. Hence, he emphasized the importance of creating such an environment to maintain student's engagement.

2.3. Importance of Controversial Topics Debates in Enhancing EFL Students Critical Thinking

Sudha (2018) affirmed that controversial topics are more suitable for critical thinking lessons as they spark debate and disagreement. Simultaneously, "Teaching Controversial Issues" (2004) expressed that without controversy (or at least, disagreement), teaching students to think critically is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for most students, reading the opinions of others, including a variety of viewpoints, is usually insufficient to foster critical thinking. Hence, students must immerse themselves in these concerns to develop critical thinking skills as they define problems, assess sources' credibility, challenge assumptions, recognize inconsistencies, and prioritize points in the argument (p. 6).

Moreover, Global Citizenship Guide (GCE) and Oxfam (2006) noted that engaging in challenging conversations and debates develop young people reasoning skills, respect for other perspectives, resolve conflicts, and enhance resilience and self- assurance in global and personal life (p. 5). Finally, Tukhvatulina (2022) affirmed that students found discussing

controversial issues engaging in speaking classes, as it practiced their speaking and vocabulary acquisition skills, and improved their speaking and critical thinking abilities.

In a nutshell, debates centered on controversial topics are therefore essential to helping students improve their critical thinking skills. Since these kinds of debates enable students to reflect on, connect to, and share their personal experiences and viewpoints. Along with evaluating diverse viewpoints, they additionally engage in deep discussions with their mates

Conclusion

In conclusion, chapter two entails that critical thinking is an organized and valuable cognitive skill that can be developed through proper instruction and practice. Additionally, it requires skill and knowledge to facilitate lectures on controversial topics effectively, which has been proved that using them as a teaching tool may develop students' critical thinking. Moreover, teachers must pay careful attention to the preparation of controversial topics debates and the establishment of a supportive collaborative safe space in the classroom, which allows students to express themselves and engage in discourses on a variety of topics. Consequently, well-constructed debates can help them develop a range of potential skills. Over time, a useful collection of techniques and approaches has emerged in the aim of enhancing the ability of students to think critically and deal with controversy in class through in-class debates, which proved to have advantageous impact on students thinking abilities as students find them thought-provoking, engaging and exciting.

**Chapter Three: The Importance of Controversial Topics Debates in Developing
EFL Students Critical Thinking**

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Introduction

After exploring critical thinking in chapter one and controversial topics debates in chapter two, it becomes possible to examine students' views on the link between critical thinking and controversial topics debates. The current chapter presents data; that in particular were gathered via students' questionnaire. Additionally, this chapter includes a full description of the data collecting tool, population, and discussion of the findings, and making conclusions on the investigated research problem and the tested hypotheses.

3.1. Methodological approach

In order to investigate the importance of controversial topics debates in developing EFL learners' critical thinking; a quantitative research design is required by using students' questionnaire to respond to study questions and test hypothesis.

Quantitative research is defined as the complete process a researcher uses to start a study (Leedy & Ormrod 2001; Williams, 2011, p. 14); consequently, in order to reach findings, this approach works with quantifying and analyzing variables. It entails using certain statistical approaches to the use and analysis of numerical data in order to provide answers to questions such as who, what, where, when, how many, and how much. Quantitative researchers aim for generalizable explanations and hypotheses that apply to different individuals and environments; the objective is to construct generalizations that advance the theory and establish, validate, or confirm relationships (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001, p. 102).

Moreover, quantitative research was seen as a research that is founded in traditional scientific research, which produces numerical data and typically aims to establish causal relationships (or associations) between two or more variables, and testing the significance and strength of the relationships with statistical methods (Fraser Health Authority, 2011,

p. 6). In addition to that, Variables are important in quantitative research since it is the phenomena that must be categorized and measured.

The quantitative approach has several advantages, such as the capacity to provide detailed statistics, offer in-depth analysis of the phenomenon, and enable the interpretation of data in an objective and trustworthy manner.

3.2. Description of the Students' Questionnaire

Mcquarie defined a questionnaire as a predetermined set of questions that are answered by a certain group of respondents, and the questions are prearranged and planned already (2011, p. 139). It was also defined in the Journal of Positive School Psychology; as an essential and openly available instrument for gathering data for empirical research. In short, the questionnaire is a series of questions meant to gather data or information from the people in relation to the given problem (2022).

The purpose of the students' questionnaire is to investigate how students view the importance of controversial topics debates on enhancing EFL learners' critical thinking, which adds to the validity of this study. The number of questions is 44; developed based on the current research's theoretical component.

3.2.1. Aims of the Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire is designed to examine students' perspectives and attitudes towards the use of controversial topics debates in classrooms along its effects on their classroom engagement and critical thinking abilities, the questionnaire aims are threefold:

- 1) To have an overview of the students' background about critical thinking and controversial topics.

2) To point out to what extent the students are aware of the importance of controversial topics debates in EFL classes.

3) To figure out the extent to which students' recognize the usefulness of controversial topics debates in enhancing their critical thinking abilities.

3.2.2. Students' Questionnaire Administration

The questionnaire was administered to Master I students, at the Department of English, University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma in the second semester. The questionnaire was conducted online using Google Forms, as they were studying online and heading to spring vacation at the time we administered the questionnaire. Data were collected anonymously to ensure that the informants would reply fairly and truthfully.

The questionnaire is made up of 44 questions organized into four sections that involve six open- ended questions and 38 closed- ended questions to allow the students respond more freely and to select from the proposed options.

The first section is entitled personal information, which includes four questions dealing with participants' backgrounds, such as their gender, age, duration of studying English, and level. The second section is entitled Critical Thinking, and it is composed of fifteen questions that aim to elicit critical thinking definition and characteristics according to students, its importance and usage in the classroom, the obstacles they encounter, and the techniques teachers are using to develop their critical thinking abilities. The third section deals with Controversial Topics Debates and it includes 16 questions that deal with students perspectives about in-class debates, their classroom engagement and the factors influencing this process, students and teachers attitudes towards discussing controversial topics in the class, and its importance and the strategies that facilitates these debates. Finally, the fourth section is about unravelling the relationship between critical thinking

and controversial topics debates, which consists of eight questions that revolves around students' perspectives about the effective higher thinking abilities they use during controversial topics debates, and its impact and importance in the development of their critical thinking.

3.2.3. Population and Sampling

The target sample for the current study is first-year Master students at the Department of English, University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. It involves 35 respondents taken out from 160. The participants were chosen randomly and voluntarily, and they gave their consent to participate in this research. This sample was chosen because the participants have more experience in dealing with controversial topics, over the years of studying English at university in various modules such as ethics, literature, and civilization, hence, their viewpoints are helpful. They are also considered as students with advanced knowledge that enables them to be better equipped with the skills to evaluate and analyze suggested problems. Finally, this study may be very useful for those students when preparing their thesis such as how to be critical thinkers while gathering the information; also, when they become future teachers, possibly how to help learners in enhancing this skill, and how controversial topics can help in the process.

3.2.4. Findings

The next section provides details about data gathering, analysis, and presentation. The results are presented in text format and tabulations.

a. Section One: Personal Information

This section discusses demographics of EFL students, including gender, age, for how long they have been studying English, and their English level.

Question 1: Gender

a- Male b- Female

Table 3.1 indicates that females represent the vast majority of participants (85.7%). While males' presents (14.3%) from the population. The gender of the 35 learners was explored since it may have an influence on the way of thinking of the learners. The results show that females interacted more than males may be due to their eagerness to learn about the investigated topic.

Table 3.1

Students' Gender

Option	Number	Percentage%
a. Male	5	14.3
b. Female	30	85.7
Total	35	100%

Question 2: what is your age?

Table 3.2 shows that student's age is figured between 22 to 25, which implies that they have enough learning experience of English and they serve as a good sample for the research.

Table 3.2*Students' age*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
22	14	40
23	10	28.5
24	7	20
+ 24 years	4	11.5
Total	35	100%

Question 3: For how long have you been studying English?

The data from Table 3.3 indicates that most students have studied English for varying periods. Particularly, (57.1%) of the students studied English for 12 years, while (25.7%) of them studied the language for 11 years. Simultaneously, (17.2%) of the students studied English for longer than 12 years depending on their personal experiences. Thus, these findings suggest that students have a sufficient understanding of the target language and culture.

Table 3.3*Students' Experience in Studying English*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
11 years	9	25.7
12 years	20	57.1
+ 12 years	6	17.2
Total	35	100%

Question 4: What is your English language level?

a. Beginner	
b. Intermediate	
c. Advanced	

According to Table 3.4, many of the students (57.1 %) reported having an advanced level of English proficiency. Meanwhile, (42.9%) claimed to have an intermediate level, and none of them reported having a beginner level. These findings reveal that a significant number of students have a sufficient command of the English language to understand and successfully complete the questionnaire. It also indicates a significant number of pupils reached a high level of proficiency, which can potentially have an impact on their intellectual, linguistic, and communicative abilities.

Table 3.4*Students' English Level*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Beginner	0	0
b. Intermediate	15	42.9
c. Advanced	20	57.1
Total	35	100%

b. Section Two: critical thinking

This section intends to gain information concerning EFL students' thoughts on the term critical thinking.

Question 5: Have you ever come across the term "critical thinking"?

- a. Yes b. No

The majority of students' (97.1%) have answered on this question with yes; as indicated in Table 3.5, that means the students are aware of the existence of the critical thinking skill. Whereas; just few students (2.9%) are found not to be with the term.

Table 3.5

Students' Familiarity with the term critical thinking

Option	Number	Percentage %
a. Yes	34	97.1
b. No	1	2.9
Total	35	100%

Question 6: If yes, give a brief definition for the term?

In this question, only 32 from the sample provided their answer. As shown in Table 3.6; approximately (37.1%) from the participants offered general definitions and descriptions of critical thinking, highlighting diverse perspectives on the topic, including questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and problem solving. About (21.9%) from the students defined it as a tool of reasoning and decision making; stressing the importance of clear and rational thought processes before making judgments. While (18.7%) from the sample claimed that CT is a process of analyzing and evaluating information. This indicates that the students are emphasizing on the need to critically assess incoming

information rather than accepting it passively. However, (18.7%) defined it as thinking outside the box and deep analysis they emphasized the significance of thinking outside the box and conducting deep analysis, indicating a desire to explore ideas beyond surface-level understanding.

Table 3.6

Students' definition of the term critical thinking

Option	Number	Percentage%
a. Analyzing and Evaluating Information.	6	18.7
b. Reasoning and Decision-Making	7	21.9
c. Thinking Outside the Box and Deep Analysis:	6	18.7
d. General Definitions and Descriptions	13	37.1
Total	32	100%

Question 7: Do you consider yourself a critical thinker?

a. Yes

b. No

Table 3.7 reveals that the mass majority of students (97.1%) declared that they consider themselves critical thinkers; this suggests they have some critical thinking skills. while very few students (2.9%) did not consider themselves critical thinkers, and this can go back to the fact that they do not have critical thinkers' characteristics.

Table 3.7*Students' consideration*

Option	Number	Percentage%
a. Yes	34	97.1
b. no	1	2.9
Total	35	100%

Question 8: If yes, a critical thinker is a person who:

- a. See problems as exciting challenges
- b. A person who is rational
- c. Think before acting
- d. Open-minded
- e. All above

The largest majority of students (51.4%) as shown in Table 3.8, argued that a critical thinker is someone who contains all of the mentioned options (see problems as exciting challenges, a person who is rational, think before acting, open minded). which implies that the students are fully aware of the critical thinking characteristics. The second majority (25.7%) assumed that critical thinker is someone one who is rational, which means; students know the importance of being rational rather than following feelings. A significant number (14.3%) believed that critical thinker is someone who think before taking any act; this denotes that participants recognize the importance of thinking before acting in the critical thinking process. Furthermore, 5.7% of the students picked option d- open minded; this indicates that their primary characteristic for being considering

themselves critical thinkers is being open minded. One respondent (2.9%) chose option a; which implies that s/he believes that critical thinkers See problems as exciting challenges only.

Table 3.8

Students' definition for critical thinker

Option	Number	Percentage%
1- a	1	2.9
2- b	9	25.7
3- c	5	14.3
4- d	2	5.7
5- e	18	51.4
Total	35	100%

Question 9: Have you ever encountered a situation where critical thinking skills helped you make a better decision?

- a. Yes
- b. Occasionally
- c. No

Table 3.7 show that (51.4%) of the participants have encountered a situation in their lives where critical thinking helped them make better decisions; which implies that most of them are good in decision making and they are using this skill in real life and they are aware of its existence. While almost half of the students (45.7%) answered with occasionally; that means, they display decision-making skills but not effectively or they do not know how they can actually use it to solve those situations. However, one student

(2.9%) answered with no; this can be explained with her/his lack of information on critical thinking as skill.

Table 3.9

Students' personal experience with critical thinking

Options	Number	Percentage%
a. Yes	18	51.4
b. Occasionally	16	45.7
c. No	1	2.9
Total	35	100%

Question 10: Which of the following critical thinking skills do you tend to apply more in the Classroom?

- a. Analysis (a detailed examination of the elements or structure of something).
- b. Inference (a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning).
- c. Reasoning (the action of thinking about something in a logical way).
- d. Problem solving (the process of achieving a goal by overcoming obstacles).
- e. Interpretation (the action of explaining the meaning of something).
- f. Evaluation (the making of judgments about the amount, number, or value of something; assessment)

This question received a wide range of replies. Table 3.12 demonstrates that option “a” gained (28.6%) which serves as the highest range; indicating that all of them apply analysis more in the classroom, so they tend to analyze during classes. The second highest majority (28.6%) opted for option “c” implying that those participants apply Reasoning in

the classroom. The third majority is for option “d” (17.1%); this implies that those students focus on using problem solving skills in the classroom more than the other skills, however; (14.3%) of the individuals stated that they use interpretation more than the other options; this demonstrates the value of the interpretation skills in the classroom for these learners. The minority (5.7%) contradicted all the option except option b, conceding that they use inference more in the classroom and it is most important for them. The rest (5.7%) claimed that they use evaluation more; which suggests those students tend to evaluate data in the classroom.

Table 3.10

Critical thinking skills

Option	Number	Percentage%
1- a	10	28.6
2- b	2	5.7
3- c	10	28.6
4- d	6	17.1
5- e	5	14.3
6- f	2	5.7
Total	35	100%

Question 11: If accuracy refers to the quality of being correct and precise, and precision refers to the quality of being exact and accurate to what extent do you prioritize them in your own thinking and communication?

a. Extremely low

b. Low

c. Average

d. High

e. Extremely high

A high proportion of respondents (54.3%) prioritized accuracy and precision in their thinking and communication; which implies that they are aware of the importance of being correct and exact in the communication and thinking process. (25.7%) of the learners stated that it is extremely important to be correct and exact during communication; that indicates that they are highly aware of the importance of accuracy and precision. furthermore, some students (17.1%) suggested that they find accuracy and precision neither very important nor unimportant. only 1 student agreed that it is not important at all; indicating his/her ignorance for the importance of this two terms (Table 3.11).

Table 3.11

Students' ranking

Option	Number	Percentage%
1- a	1	2.9
2- b	0	0
3- c	6	17.1
4- d	19	54.3
5- e	9	25.7
Total	35	100%

Question 12: Rank the following steps on how you tend to solve your problem.

a. Looking for possible solutions	
b. Define the Goals	
c. Define the Problem	
d. Acting on solutions	

As it appears in Table 3.12 that the majority of the informants (51.4%) consider defining the problem as the most critical initial step in solving problems. This indicates a strong recognition of the importance of understanding the problem before attempting to solve it. While a significant percentage of students (23%) prioritized searching for potential solutions once the problem is understood. This suggests that after defining the problem, exploring various solutions is the next crucial step for many students. Defining goals is considered was chosen by 14.3% of students. This step involves setting clear objectives that need to be achieved, which is essential for guiding the problem-solving process. The smallest group of students (11.3%) emphasized the importance of taking action on the solutions. This final step is crucial for the implementation of the solutions and resolving the problem.

Table 3.12

Students' ranking for steps of solving problems

Options	Numbers	Percentage
a. Looking for possible solutions	8	23
b. Define the Goals	5	14.3
c. Define the Problem	18	51.4
d. Acting on solutions	4	11.3
Total	35	100%

Question 13: Do you think developing critical thinking skills is something necessary for EFL learners?

a. Yes

b. No

The results displayed in Table 3.13 proves that the majority of informants (88.6%) agreed on the necessity of developing critical thinking skills; which implies that students recognize the value of critical thinking skills in their study and consider critical thinking skills as essential in their achievements. Only four students (11.4%) expressed a negative response; this suggests these students disregard the significance of CTS in learning.

Table 3.13

Students' perspective

Options	Number	Percentage%
a. Yes	31	88.6
b. No	4	11.4
Total	35	100%

Question 14: If yes, please justify why

The majority of respondents' (34.3%) justified their answers by highlighting the importance of the development of critical thinking for language learning. Which implies many respondents are aware of the importance of critical thinking skills in language learning, especially for EFL learners, as it enhances their proficiency and communication abilities. Most of them (31.5%) justified by stating that developing CTS has general importance for learning; saying that Critical thinking skills are crucial for all learners, not just EFL students, as they enhance active learning, problem-solving, self-awareness, effective communication, and academic success across various studies. Some other informants (22.8%) justified their answer by pointing that Critical thinking skills improve

cognitive abilities like analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creativity, foster independent learning, encourage curiosity, and empower learners to think logically and critically. However, (11.4%) justified their answer by insuring the significance of critical thinking in understanding globalization and cultural diversity, highlighting its role in helping EFL learners navigate diverse perspectives and address global issues (Table 3.14).

Table 3.14

Students' justification

Options	Number	Percentage%
a- Importance for Language Learning	12	34.3%
b- Relevance to Globalization and Intercultural Understanding	4	11.4%
c- General Importance for Learning	11	31.5%
d- Enhancement of Cognitive Skills	8	22.8%
Total	35	100%

Question 15: According to you, how could you improve this skill in the classroom?

a. Making connection to real life situation

b. Asking provoking questions

c. Discussions and Debates

According to Table 3.15, the majority of the students (71.4%) chose discussions and debates as the option that could improve critical thinking skill inside the classroom.

However, (20%) agreed upon making connection to real life situation. The minority (8.6%) assumed that asking provoking questions could improve critical thinking skills. This implies that the majority of students favor discussions and debates as the most suitable environment to promote their critical thinking skills.

Table 3.15

Strategies to improve critical thinking skills

Option	Number	Percentage%
1- a	7	20
2- b	3	8.6
3- c	25	71.4
Total	35	100%

Question 16: “Critical Thinking would enhance your academic achievements” to what extent do you agree?

a. Strongly disagree	
b. Disagree	
c. Neutral	
d. Agree	
e. Strongly agree	

Table 3.16 shows that the majority of students (57.1%) agreed that Critical Thinking would enhance their academic achievements. This implies that students are aware of the importance of critical thinking in their future achievements. Some participants (25.7%) strongly agreed upon this statement. Moreover, (8.6%) students were neutral.

While only (5.7%) strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, the least percentage (2.9%) disagreed. Thus, the majority showed a high level of awareness towards the effect of possessing critical thinking skill on their learning outcomes.

Table 3.16

Students' agreement

Option	Number	Percentage%
1- a	2	5.7
2- b	1	2.9
3- c	3	8.6
4- d	20	57.1
5- e	9	25.7
Total	35	100%

Question 17: What are the challenges that may obstruct the process of fostering student's critical thinking?

a. Ignorance

b. Fear of being wrong

c. Lack of information

The Table 3.25 indicates that the majority of the informants (N=18) revealed that one of the challenges that may obstruct the process of fostering student's critical thinking is the fear of being wrong; this indicates that these students' fear of being wrong frequently gets in the way of their ability to achieve their goals. Whereas, other informants (31.4%) agreed that the lack of information is the obstruct. This implies that these learners lack sufficient foundation that enables them to start developing their critical thinking. Some

students (11.4%) stated that ignorance is the main challenge. This indicates that these students are not educated on how to be competent researchers and analysts this is why they are afraid to be ignored.

Table 3.17

Critical thinking strategies

Option	Number	Percentage
1- a	4	11.4
2- b	20	57.1
3- c	11	31.4
Total	35	100%

Question 18: Do you think your teachers are putting effort into teaching this skill?

a. Yes b. No

As it is demonstrated in Table 3.18, the majority of respondents' (60%) asserted that teachers are not putting efforts into teaching this skill; this asserts the majority of teachers neglect CTs impact on learning outcomes. Whereas 14 students (40%) claimed that their teachers are putting much efforts on teaching CTs; this indicates that teachers sense the significance of CTs and promote it to their learners.

Table 3.18

Students' point of view

Option	Number	Percentage
a. Yes	14	40
b. No	21	60
Total	35	100%

Question 19: If yes, what kind of techniques the teachers are using in the classroom to improve your critical thinking?

- a. Make group discussion
- b. Use visual aids
- c. Emphasize self-reflection
- d. Ask open-ended questions

The majority of informants (50%) opted for choice d; which denotes that teachers use open-ended questions as a technique to improve their critical thinking. However, other informants (29.2%) declared that teachers use group discussion. This indicates that teachers are working on the student's critical thinking. Some other respondents (16.7%) opted for option c. this implies that teachers are aware that emphasizing self-reflection for students make them more self-aware, independent thinkers who are capable of critically evaluating information, solving complex problems, and making informed decisions. Only (4.2%) respondents stated that their teachers use visual aids to enhance their critical thinking. Which it implies that teachers believe that they can enhance students' engagement, creativity, and critical thinking skills by using visual aids (Tables3.19).

Table 3.19*Critical thinking improvement techniques*

Option	Number	Percentage
1- a	7	29.2%
2- b	1	4.2%
3- c	4	16.7%
4- d	12	50%
Total	35	100%

c. Section Three: Controversial Topics Debates

This section aims to measure students' knowledge about controversial topics along exploring their experiences and attitudes towards debating this latter.

Question 20: In your opinion what is a debate?

a. A mere conversation

b. speech delivered by someone

c. Discussion between two or more people with different views on the subject, with an effort to convince one another

The retrieved data from Table 3.20. Shows that the entire population (100%) chose option c. The accurate definition of debate is a discussion between two or more people with different views on the subject to convince one another. This indicates that students are already familiar with the specific meaning of debate and its characteristics that differentiate it from casual discussions and conversations.

Table 3.20*Definition of Debate*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. A mere conversation	0	0
b. speech delivered by someone	0	0
c. Discussion between two or more people with different views on the subject, with an effort to convince one another	35	100
Total	35	100%

Question 21: According to you, why are debates valuable as a learning strategy? (You may select more than one option)

- a. Engaging; make students interested in the course
- b. Promote listening and speaking abilities
- c. Foster teamwork and collaboration
- d. Prepare them for future academic/ professional endeavors

Table. 3.21 demonstrates that most of the students (22.8%) picked options a,b and d for how they perceived debate as a learning strategy; in which they found debates engaging, fostering listening and speaking skills, and preparing them for future academic and professional endeavors. (11.4%) selected a,d as they believed that debate's value lies in being engaging and preparing them for future prospects. Meanwhile, (14.3%) selected all the options which indicate that they are aware of the value of debates and how beneficial it is to their academic and overall development. (8.7%) of the students selected option a in which they find debates engaging. Furthermore, the other two students (8.7%) went for

option b,d; denoting that debates are mainly beneficial in fostering listening and speaking skills and equipping them for the future. Two students (5.7%) chose option b,c,d while two others (5.7%) went for b indicating that debates contributed to their listening and speaking skills. Moreover, one student (2.9%) chose option c; which implies that s/he believes that debates are essential in collaboration and teamwork. Another student (2.9%) selected d, while another (2.9%) favored a,c, besides another student (2.8%) who opted for c,d. Additionally, (2.9%) of the informants opted for a,b,c and the last participant (2.9%) went for a,c,d option; this demonstrates that students are aware of debates' multifaceted benefits as a learning strategy.

Table 3.21

Importance of in-class debates

Option	Number	Percentage%
a. Engaging; make students interested in the course	3	8.7
b. Promote listening and speaking abilities	2	5.7
c. Foster teamwork and collaboration	1	2.9
d. Prepare them for future academic/ professional endeavors	1	2.9
a + b	2	5.7
a + c	1	2.9
a + d	4	11.4
b+d	3	8.7

c+d	1	2.9
a+ b+c	1	2.9
a+c+d	1	2.9
a+b+d	8	22.8
b+c+d	2	5.7
a+b+c+d	5	14.3
Total	35	100%

Question 22: Do you participate in class debates?

a. Yes

b. No

Table 3.22

Students' participation in class debates

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	71.4
No	10	28.6
Total	35	100%

Table 3.22 demonstrates that (71.4%) of the students affirmed that they participate in class debates, which implies that debates are beneficial in terms of class involvement and serve to make students active learners. However, (28.6%) of them claimed that they do not participate, which may be due to a variety of reasons and may indicate several possibilities. Overall, the results imply that most students are actively involved in class debates, indicating a willingness to engage in discussions and express their opinions on various topics. However, there is also a notable minority of students who do not participate

in debates, suggesting that it is possibly due to some factors limiting their participation that could be addressed through supportive measures.

Question 23: How often do you engage in class debates?

a. never	b. rarely	sometimes	d. often	e. usually	f. always

The data retrieved from Table 3.23 shows that most of the students (25.7%) usually participate in class debates. Furthermore, (20%) of the students stated that they always participate in class debates which implies that debates as a learning strategy hold a good position in captivating students' willingness to engage in the classroom as it provides a vast space for them to develop on many terms. In contrast, (25.7%) of the students denoted that they rarely engage. Additionally, (14.3%) of the students claimed that they sometimes participate. While (11.4%) of the students denoted that they often participate and engage in class debates. Only one student (2.9 %) admitted that s/he had never participated in class debates which implies that they disregard the usefulness of this tool as a learning strategy and its benefits on their classroom or overall academic achievement. These findings provide insights into the varying levels of participation and engagement among students in debates, which can inform strategies for promoting active participation and fostering a supportive classroom environment for discussion.

Table 3.23*The Frequency of engaging in class debates*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Never	1	2.9
Rarely	9	25.7
Sometimes	5	14.3
Often	4	11.4
Usually	9	25.7
Always	7	20
Total	35	100%

Question 24: How would you define a controversial topic?

- a. A topic that evokes strong feelings and views
- b. A topic that generates disagreement
- c. A complicated topic with no clear answer
- d. All the above

As shown in Table 3.24, (45.7 %) of respondents chose the option of d ‘all above’ which reflects that students' views about the definition of a controversial topic match the various definitions of the term by scholars and experts. Moreover, the table indicates that (31.4%) of the students opted for option b; a topic that generates disagreement; indicating that this is the overall perspective about controversial topics. (17.1%) of the students chose option a, which is defined as a topic that evokes strong feelings and views which implies that students recognize this unique quality that makes a topic controversial. Finally, only (5.7%) chose option c, probably because this is how they perceived controversial topics.

Table 3.24*Definition of a controversial topic*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. A topic that evokes strong feelings and views	6	17.1
b. A topic that generates disagreement	11	31.4
c. A complicated topic with no clear answer	2	5.7
d. All the above	16	45.7
Total	35	100%

Question 25: Can you name some controversial topics you know?

This question aims to detect whether the students well understood the term “controversial topics” and to what it refers. Table 3.25 depicts that (11.4%) of the students mentioned the topic of Abortion. Simultaneously (11.4%) of the students mentioned Politics. Additionally, (8.6%) of the students mentioned Artificial intelligence (AI), Feminism, and Women's rights. Furthermore, (5.7%) of the students mentioned Immigration, LGBTQ+, Cloning, Deep Web, Religious Issues, and Euthanasia as the controversial topics they know. Moreover, one student (2.9%) mentioned Animals Testing and another student (2.9%) mentioned The Dilemma of evil. Similarly, a student (2.9%) mentioned controversial issues in Algeria such as Berber Identity, the Sahara Conflict, and Language Policies. All the topics that the students brought up are regarded as contentious issues, modern contemporary topics such as AI and traditional topics such Politics and Feminism; evidencing their ability to identify and characterize contentious topics, along

moving among the variety of controversial topics that are considered either global or local to them such as the Algerian Issues a student mentioned, implying students' awareness of the complex issues and topics that surround them as well as impact them in their everyday lives. Finally, (8.6%) of the students did not suggest any topics. The lack of suggestions from the students could be because they are not familiar with the definition of controversial topics, although several of the topics they already have knowledge about are categorized as controversial.

Table 3.25

Controversial Topics

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
AI	3	8.6
Abortion	4	11.4
Immigration	2	5.7
Feminism	3	8.6
Women's rights	3	8.6
Politics	4	11.4
Animals Tests	1	2.9
LGBTQ+	2	5.7
Cloning	2	5.7
Dark web	2	5.7
Euthanasia	2	5.7
In Algeria: Beber Identity, Sahara Conflict, Language Policies	1	2.9

Delima of Evil	1	2.9
Religious Issues	2	5.7
No suggestions	3	8.6
Total	35	100

Question 26: Name the course (s) that introduces controversial topics?

This question was asked to locate which courses present controversial topics; most of students (31.4%) referred to civilization as the course that introduced controversial topics. This reflects the nature of this course as it is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of various civilizations throughout history, recent phenomena of world politics and international issues. Secondly, (25.7%) of the students mentioned Oral Expression course's main goal is to improve students' abilities to perform effective spoken interactions in the target language. Therefore, addressing contentious issues gives students an array of practice with language as students' speaking abilities are enhanced when they engage in meaningful discourse, express their thoughts, and defend their views. (14.3%) of the students mentioned Literature; this course exposes students to diverse cultures, traditions, and perspectives, as well as the various deep issues in societies which contains potential controversy. Furthermore, (11.4%) of the students mentioned the course of Ethics, which strives to educate students about moral competence, and the ability to apply ethical concepts and values to real-life situations, ethical reasoning, and ethical judgment. This objective can only be accomplished by introducing challenging subjects like controversial topics. Additionally, (5.7%) of the students mentioned Communication course. This might be an outcome of what they learned in this course; where they were exposed to cross-cultural scenarios that allowed them to understand distinctions and variations in traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of worldwide cultures. A student (2.9%)

mentioned the course of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and another student (2.9%) mentioned written expression. The variety of the courses mentioned by students indicates that EFL classes present controversial topics in most of its courses; as they deal with a variety of cultural nuances from diverse backgrounds, as students encounter the different issues that arise around them on the worldwide and on the local level while learning the language. Consequently, serving in enhancing their cognitive, communicative competence along their linguistic competence.

Table 3.26

Courses that Introduce Controversial Topics

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Ethics	4	11.4
Civilization	11	31.4
Literature	5	14.3
Oral Expression	9	25.7
ESP	1	2.9
Communication	2	5.7
Written Expression	1	2.9
Mentioned None	2	5.7
Total	35	100%

Question 27: what was your impression about the topic and how was your engagement with it?

This question aims to discover students' impressions and opinions about controversial topics discussions and their engagement during its discussion. It is found that

(14.3%) of the students had good impressions about discussing controversial topics, while (7.4%) of the students stated that this type of topics got them engaged. Moreover, (8.16%) of the students had very good experiences with discussing controversial topics. Simultaneously, (8.6%) of the students affirmed that their experience with discussing controversial topics was very good. Simultaneously, (5.7%) of the students noted that their experience with discussing controversial topics was great. While (5.7%) of them asserted that this type of discussions made them motivated to explore those topics even further. Furthermore, Some students (5.7%) stated that discussing controversial topics made them curious while others (5.7%) affirmed that their experience with discussing controversial topics was positive. These findings suggest that discussing controversial topics sparks interest and engagement among students. When students engage into contentious issues, to which they relate and/or are interested in they become more invested in the learning process. Nevertheless, (14.3%) of the students claimed that they did not engage in discussions about controversial topics. In addition, one of the students (2.9%) stated that his experience with discussing these controversial topics was negative. This may be due to the possible disagreements or difficulties students face while presenting their opinions about such multifaceted, complex, challenging topics. Finally, (17.1%) of the respondents did not answer this question.

Table 3.27*Students Impressions & Engagement with Controversial Topics*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Great	2	5.7
Very good	3	8.6
Good	5	14.3
Excited	3	8.6
Motivated me to explore more about the topic	2	5.7
Got me engaged	4	11.4
Made me curious	2	5.7
Positive	2	5.7
Negative	1	2.9
Did not engage	5	14.3
Did not answer	6	17.1
Total	35	100%

Question 28: In your opinion, what affects your classroom engagement?

- a. Anxiety and frustration
- b. Lack of information and preparation
- c. Lack of interest
- d. Others

Table 3.28 indicates that many of the students (51.4%) chose lack of interest as the reason that affects their classroom engagement. Moreover, (22.9%) of the students claimed that anxiety and frustration is what hinders their classroom engagement, which is a common reason among students, besides (20%) of the students stated that lacking information about the topics under discussion and the lack of preparation hinders their engagement. Finally, (5.7%) of the students stated that there are other reasons that affect their classroom engagement. These results suggest that factors such as lack of interest and lack of preparation and information about whether the course or the information presented, or maybe the nature of the topic or the manner it is delivered do not strike students' attention. From this, it can be deduced that students' classroom engagement can be manipulated and improved by teachers. By designing courses aligned with students' interests, and surrounding world and environment which they already internalize opinions and thoughts about, teachers can easily improve students' classroom engagement. However, it is also worth noting that some students believe that personal factors that are out of teachers' control affect their classroom engagement, which could include anxiety and frustration.

Table 3.28*Classroom Engagements hinders*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Anxiety and frustration	8	22.9
b. Lack of information and preparation	7	20
c. Lack of interest	18	51.4
d. others	2	5.7
Total	35	100%

Question 29: How would you rate your debating skills?

a. Beginner	
b. Intermediate	
c. Advanced	

Most students (60%) reported having intermediate debating skills. Meanwhile, (28.6%) claimed to have an advanced level, and only (11.4%) reported having a beginner level. These findings suggest that most students have sufficient debating skills from speaking to listening, and collaborative work. It also implies that a significant number of students have reached a high level of proficiency, which could potentially influence their critical thinking skills and effective communicative skills.

Table 3.29*Students Debating Skills Rate*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Beginner	4	11.4
Intermediate	21	60
Advanced	10	28.6
Total	35	100%

Question 30: When debating conflicting topics in the classroom what does the teacher do?

- a. Avoid discussing it / skip it
- b. Express denial towards it
- c. Emphasize a certain point of view about it
- d. Be neutral and present all the views about it

The retrieved data from Table 3.30 suggested that (45.7%) of the students affirmed that their teachers tend to be neutral about presenting controversial topics in the classroom. This indicates that those teachers are open to discussing disputed subjects and displaying all the perspectives around those topics fairly. This may infer that those teachers are self-reflective, as their personal beliefs do not influence their professional attitudes toward dealing with contentious materials. In contrast, (34.3%) of the students have noted that their teachers often center on a particular side of the controversial topics they debate in class, suggesting that personal biases hold an impact on their teachers' professional

attitudes. In addition, (14.3%) of the students claimed that their teachers prefer to steer away from topics that are contentious, which could be prompted by their concerns about possible triggers that may result in intense emotions and disagreements among students that could be difficult to manage. Finally, (5.7%) of the students indicated that their teachers often seem to be in denial regarding contentious topics that arise in their classes and the discussions they entail. This implies that while teachers recognize the controversial aspects of a topic, they exclude it from their curriculum and minimize the potential advantages that discussing this topic could offer their students.

Table 3.30

Teachers' Attitudes toward Controversial Topics Debates

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Avoid discussing it / skip it	5	14.3
b. Express denial towards it	2	5.7
c. Emphasize a certain point of view about it	12	34.3
d. Be neutral and present all the views about it	16	45.7
Total	35	100%

Question 31: Are you updated about the current global issues and controversial topics?

a. Yes b. No

Table 3.31. Demonstrates that (71.4%) of the students are updated about current global issues and controversial topics. However, (28.6%) of the students are familiar with

nowadays global issues. This implies that most students, as a part of society, are aware of what goes around them as they are exposed to national or international issues through the media, indicating that students would likely share their thoughts and views if a heated current issue was brought up for debate in class.

Table 3.31

Awareness of Current Controversial Topics

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	71.4
No	10	28.6
Total	35	100%

Question 32: If yes, please provide examples

This question was asked to figure out the topics students are familiar with whether on the global or local level in terms of controversy. (37.1%) of the students mentioned the Palestinian Conflict which is a deeply contentious issue, particularly for our EFL students as Arab Muslim students. As they are exposed to it through the media where they face, for instance western media narratives, stereotypes, worldviews so Arabs and Muslims views (Arab nationalism) in relation to the escalating conflict in Ghaza, the boycott, ethnic cleansing and famine...etc. Which make it a multifaceted topic. Furthermore, (8.6%) of the students mentioned the AI (Artificial Intelligence) Fast Development. AI is a topic that sparks considerable debate and controversy; it raises many questions in relation to humans and their future in all fields. Moreover, (5.7%) other students mentioned global warming, COVID-19 vaccines and the events in Sudan, Syria and Yemen. A student (2.9%) mentioned climate change, while another (2.9%) mentioned the Russian Ukrainian issue.

The Matrix. These findings suggest that students are aware of the rising contentious topics surrounding them. Which infers that if those topics were debated in their classes, it would allow them to engage in meaningful discussion, encounter various perspectives, and develop their communicative, linguistic, and even cognitive skills. Finally, (28.9%) of the students did not suggest any topics.

Table 3.32

The Justification for the Awareness about Current Controversial Topics

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Global Warming	2	5.7
Climate Change	1	2.9
Events in Sudan, Syria and Yemen.	2	5.7
Russian, Ukrainian Issue	1	2.9
Palestinian Conflict	13	37.1
Covid-19 Vaccines	2	5.7
AI Fast Development	3	8.6
The Matrix	1	2.9
Answered No	10	28.6
Total	35	100%

Question 33: Did you encounter any discussion or debate about them in the class?

a. Yes b. No

The retrieved data from Table 3.32 suggests that (74.3%) of the students encountered controversial topics debate in their classes, while (25.7%) of them did not

come across any discussion about this kind of topics in the classes. This indicates that controversial topics are implemented in EFL classes, and students are familiar with debating them.

Table 3.33

Controversial Topics Debates Frequency in Classes

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	26	74.3
b. No	9	25.7
Total	35	100%

Question 34: If yes, was it:

a. Raised by the teacher

b. Raised by a classmate

The findings expressed in Table 3.34 suggest that (55.6%) of the students stated that the controversial topics debates that have been raised in their classes were raised by their teachers. However, (44.4%) of the students stated that those debates were raised by their classmates, which implies that controversial topics debates are frequent in EFL classes and teachers are aware of its benefits, while the students are familiar with those topics and engage in debates about revolving around them.

Table 3.34

Controversial Topics Debates Initiator

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Raised by the teacher	15	55.6
b. Raised by a classmate	12	44.4
Total	35	100%

Question 35: Why is it important to discuss controversial topics in the classroom? (You may select more than one option)

a. It provides a platform for the expression of personal opinions.	
b. It promotes open-mindedness about different views and beliefs.	
c. Helps in enhancing critical thinking abilities	
d. As students express themselves in a logical, convincing way, it fosters speaking, communication, and collaborative skills.	
e. These subjects are fascinating, thought-provoking, and engaging	

According to Table 3.35, (11.4%) of the students opted for a,b,c,d,e in which they asserted that controversial topics discussion in the classroom provides a platform for the expression of personal opinions, promotes open mindedness about different views and beliefs, helps in enhancing critical thinking abilities and allow them to express themselves in a logical, convincing way, ad it fosters speaking, communication and collaborative skills. In addition, they find that those controversial topics are fascinating, thought-provoking, and engaging. Simultaneously (11.4%) of the students opted for option a,c,d ,while others (11.4%) of the students chose options b,c,e affirming that the importance of controversial topics debates lies in fostering open mindedness, enhancing critical thinking abilities, and the fact that those topics are fascinating and thought-provoking for them. Furthermore, (8.6%) of the students chose options c,d, according to them controversial topics debates enhance critical thinking abilities and helps the students to express themselves in a logical, convincing manner along fostering their speaking, communicative and collaborative skills. Moreover, (5.7%) of the students chose option c. While (5.7%) of them chose options a,b,c while others (5.7%) chose a,b,c,d. Additionally, one student (2.9%) opted for option e while another (2.9%) went for a,d. The other students (2.9%)

varied in their individual choices in answers between a,e; a,c; cd; cde; abd; abe; ace; bce; bde; cde; acde; and abce. These findings highlight that students believe that controversial topics are important for a variety of reasons including its role in fostering critical thinking, promoting open-mindedness, enhancing communication skills, and engaging students intellectually. Each student may have a unique perspective or combination of reasons for valuing these discussions, however, it all implies that all the students are aware of its potentials and benefits.

Table 3.35

The Importance of Controversial Topics Debates in The Classroom

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. It provides a platform for the expression of personal opinions.	0	0
b. It promotes open-mindedness about different views and beliefs.	0	0
c. Helps in enhancing critical thinking abilities	2	5.7
d. As students express themselves in a logical, convincing way, it fosters speaking, communication, and collaborative skills.	0	0
e. These subjects are fascinating, thought-provoking, and engaging	1	2.9
a+d	1	2.9
a+e	1	2.9

a+c	1	2.9
c+d	3	8.6
c+e	1	2.9
d+e	1	2.9
a+b+c	2	5.7
a+b+d	1	2.9
a+b+e	1	2.9
a+c+d	4	11.4
a+c+e	1	2.9
b+c+d	4	11.4
b+c+e	1	2.9
b+d+e	1	2.9
c+d+e	1	2.9
a+c+d+e	1	2.9
a+b+c+e	1	2.9
a+b+c+d	2	5.7
A+b+c+d+e	4	11.4
Total	35	100%

Question 36: To address any challenges. How can your teacher facilitate these debates, so you engage? (You may select more than one option)

a. Ensure that all students feel safe expressing their opinions.

b. Offer a variety of materials presenting different perspectives on the topic, such as articles, videos, etc.

- c. Provide language support as needed, including vocabulary lists,
sentence frames, etc.
- d. Reflect on the students' perspectives and how their views may have evolved through
the debate.

Table 3.36 results suggest that (20%) of the students went for options a and b together indicating that a significant portion of students believe that ensuring a safe environment for expressing opinions along with offering a variety of materials presenting different perspectives would be the most effective way for their teacher to facilitate debates on controversial topics. This suggests that creating a safe space for expression while providing diverse resources for understanding different viewpoints is crucial for engaging students in such discussions. Simultaneously, (14.3%) of the students opted for options a and c, assuming that if teachers provided language support along making them feel safe would ultimately facilitate debates that revolve around controversial topics. (11.4%) of the students chose a,b while others (11.4%) of the students opted for d, in which they believe that offering a variety of materials such as articles and videos on the topics would facilitate the discussion; this may imply that those students feel that exposure to various viewpoints is essential for insightful, meaningful discussions. Moreover, (8.6%) of the students went for options a,b,c and d while others (8.6%) selected a,b,c. This indicates that those Students who chose all options recognize the importance of all the suggested strategies in facilitating debates on controversial topics. (5.7%) of the students chose d. Finally, some students (2.9%) answers varied individually between option c; a,b,c; b,d; a,b,d ; a,c,d; and b,c,d. These students' responses vary, indicating that their choices might reflect personal experiences, learning styles, or specific needs. These findings imply that students find that having access to a variety of perspectives, language support, emotional safety, and the opportunity to reflect on changing opinions are all important in promoting discussions on

contentious issues. Teachers can use this feedback to adapt their teaching strategies to better meet the varied needs of their students and foster an atmosphere that invites thoughtful, peaceful debates.

Table 3.36

Facilitating Challenges by Teachers

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Ensure that all students feel safe expressing their opinions	4	11.4
b. Offer a variety of materials presenting different perspectives on the topic, such as articles, videos, etc.	0	0
c. Provide language support as needed, including vocabulary lists, sentence frames, etc.	1	2.9
d. Reflect on the students' perspectives and how their views may have evolved through the debate.	2	5.7
a+b	4	11.4
a+c	5	14.3
a+d	7	20
c+d	2	5.7
b+d	1	2.9
a+b+c	1	2.9
a+b+d	1	2.9
a+c+d	3	8.6
b+c+d	1	2.9
a+b+c+d	3	8.6
Total	35	100%

d. Section four: controversial topics debates and EFL students' critical thinking development

This section aims to figure out the existing relationship between controversial topics debates and EFL students critical thinking development.

Question 37: Which of the following skills do you think are most important for effectively engaging in debates on controversial topics?

- a. Analytical thinking and reasoning
- b. Logical argumentation and evidence evaluation
- c. Active listening and empathy
- d. Adaptability and open-mindedness
- e. All of the above

Table 3.37 shows that the vast majority (51.4%) agreed that all of the mentioned options are similarly effective and important for effectively engaging in debates on controversial topics. This demonstrates that the learners are more conscious that critical thinking skills are crucial for effectively engaging in debates on controversial topics. While some (17.1%) stated that, it is important to have logical argumentation and evidence evaluation. Which implies that these students recognize these elements as foundational aspects of critical thinking and effective debate. However, (11.4%) argued on analytical thinking and reasoning as well as some other respondents (11.4%) that in particular opted adaptability and open mindedness. This indicates that the focus on analytical thinking and reasoning, adaptability, and open-mindedness demonstrates students' contradictory viewpoints on the most important skill for fostering CTS. Moreover, (8.6%) informants

argued that active listening and empathy is the most important skill. This demonstrates that active listening and empathy may not have been the predominant focus among informants.

Table 3.37

Important CTS for effective engaging in debates on controversial topics

Option	Number	Percentage%
1- a	4	11.4
2- b	6	17.1
3- c	3	8.6
4- d	4	11.4
5- e	18	51.4
Total	35	100%

Question 38: How do you handle disagreements or conflicting viewpoints during debates on controversial topics?

- a. Listen actively and respectfully
- b. Present counterarguments calmly
- c. Seek common ground
- d. Agree to disagree
- e. Other

Based on the results from Table 3.38, most students (31.4%) indicated that they handle disagreements by listening actively and respectfully, which suggests that those

students value attentive listening and maintaining a respectful attitude towards others' viewpoints during debates. Furthermore, (20%) of the students reported that they handle disagreements by presenting counterarguments calmly, which implies that those students are willing to engage in reasoned discourse and express their perspectives in a composed manner rather than aggressive responses. Alternatively, (17.2%) of the students selected a,b. In addition, some students (5.7%) indicated that they handle disagreements by agreeing to disagree. This suggests that those students have significant differences in views and a willingness to respectfully accept them without engaging in additional discussion or arguments. (5.7%) of the students selected b and d while others (5.7%) opted for a,b,c. Additionally, one student (2.9%) chose c, while another (2.9%) went for a,b,d; b,e; a,c; c,d; and c,d. This suggests that students may employ multiple strategies simultaneously when handling disagreements. Finally, no students selected the "Others" option, indicating that the provided options adequately cover the ways in which students handle disagreements during debates on controversial topics.

Table 3.38

Ways of Handling Disagreements during Controversial Topics Debates

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Listen actively and respectfully	11	31.4
b. Present counterarguments calmly	7	20
c. Seek common ground	1	2.9
d. Agree to disagree	2	5.7
e. Others	0	0

a+b+c	2	5.7
a+b+d	1	2.9
a+b	6	17.2
a+c	1	2.9
b+d	2	5.7
b+e	1	2.9
c+d	1	2.9
Total	35	100%

Question 39: How do you perceive the overall value of engaging in debates on controversial topics?

a. Highly valuable for developing critical thinking, communication,

and analytical skills

b. Somewhat valuable, as they reflect our lives and the world around

us

c. Neutral, as debates on controversial topics do not significantly influence

my learning

d. Not valuable at all, as debates on controversial topics are

uncomfortable

The retrieved data from Table 3.39 regarding how students perceive the overall value of engaging in debates on controversial topics, Most respondents (60%) view

debates on controversial topics as highly valuable for personal and intellectual development. They recognize the role of such debates in fostering critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills, which indicates their belief in the educational benefits of engaging with contentious topics. (20%) of the students perceive debates on controversial topics as somewhat valuable, primarily because they believe these discussions reflect real-life situations and societal issues. While they may not prioritize the skill development aspect as much as the first group, they still acknowledge the relevance of these debates to understanding the world and current events. Simultaneously, (20%) of the students expressed a neutral stance, indicating that debates on controversial topics do not significantly affect their learning. Finally, one of the respondents indicated that they perceive debates on controversial topics as not valuable at all due to discomfort. This suggests that even though debates on such topics may evoke discomfort for some students, they still recognize some level of value in engaging with them. Therefore, the results imply that most students recognize the importance of engaging in debates on controversial topics for their intellectual and personal growth, emphasizing the development of critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills. However, there is also a portion of students who perceive them as less impactful on their learning.

Table 3.39

Students' Perspectives toward the Overall Value of Controversial Topics Debates

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
a. Highly valuable for developing critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills	21	60

b. Somewhat valuable, as they reflect our lives and the world around us	7	20
c. Neutral, as debates on controversial topics do not significantly impact my learning	7	20
d. Not valuable at all, as debates on controversial topics are uncomfortable	0	0

Total	35	100%
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Question 40: Do you believe engaging in debates on controversial topics has an impact on critical thinking skills?

a. Yes b. No

The Table 3.40 shows that the complete number (100%) of students believe that engaging in debates on controversial topics has an impact on critical thinking skills, this indicates a strong consensus among students regarding the value and benefits of debate in fostering critical thinking.

Table 3.40

Students' perspective

Option	Number	Percentage %
a. Yes	35	100
b. No	0	0
Total	35	100%

Question 41: Do Controversial Topics Debates enhance student’s critical thinking?

a. Yes

b. No

The findings expressed in Table 3.41 show that all participants declared their acceptance on the fact that Controversial Topics Debates enhance students’ critical thinking. The overwhelming acceptance of Controversial Topics Debates' good influence on students' critical thinking is most likely due to participants' general acknowledgment of the cognitive and intellectual benefits of debate participation.

Table 3.41

Students’ perspective

Option	Number	Percentage %
a. Yes	35	100
b. No	0	0
Total	35	100%

Question 42: If yes, students will be able to:

a. Analyze multiple perspectives

b. Evaluate evidence

c. Develop logical arguments

d. Engage in civil discourse

e. Synthesize information from various sources

f. All of the above

Table 3.42 indicates that a large number of the participants (74.3%) agreed that they would be able to have all of the above options. This implies Participants may believe that debates provide a rich and dynamic learning environment where students can cultivate a comprehensive skill set that empowers them to thrive academically and personally. Unlike (11.4%) from the participants who stated that they would be able to analyze multiple perspectives. The indicates that students reflect a recognition of the importance of this skill in fostering deep critical thinking and promoting a nuanced understanding of complex issues in the context of Controversial Topics Debates. Only 3 participants opted for option c; demonstrating that they would be able to Develop logical arguments. The minority (5.7%) opted for option e., which implies the students' awareness of the importance of this skill in enhancing students' ability to construct well-informed, evidence-based arguments and engage critically with complex issues in Controversial Topics Debates.

Table 3.42

Students' ability

Option	Number	Percentage %
1- a	4	11.4
2- b	0	0
3- c	3	8.6
4- d	0	0
5- e	2	5.7
6- f	26	74.3
Total	35	100%

Question 43: On a scale of 1 to 5, circle how much do you think controversial topics can help foster critical thinking?

Helpless 1 2 3 4 5 Helpful

Table 3.43 suggest that A significant portion of students (34.3%) rated controversial topics as a 5, while (48.6%) of students rated controversial topics as a 4; indicating a high degree of belief in their effectiveness in fostering critical thinking. This suggests that many students perceive controversial topics as highly beneficial for stimulating critical thinking skills. A small percentage of students rated controversial topics as a three, suggesting a neutral stance regarding their effectiveness in fostering critical thinking. This may imply that some students think that controversial topics have limited impact on critical thinking skills. Finally, none of the respondents selected the second-lowest rating, similarly, none of the respondents indicated that they believe controversial topics are completely helpless in fostering critical thinking. This shows that all students appear to agree that controversial topics may promote critical thinking to a certain extent.

Table 3.43

The extent to which Controversial Topics Foster Critical Thinking

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
1 Helpless	0	0
2	0	0
3	6	17.1
4	17	48.6
5 Helpful	12	34.3
Total	35	100

Question 44: If you have any suggestions or recommendations on the subject under inquiry, please feel free to share.

Aside from admiring and expressing interest in the topic under inquiry, the informants (N=4) suggested several beneficial recommendations about the importance of controversial topics debates to enhance critical thinking abilities. Students' answers were presented as follows:

- A student affirmed that having a solid base in a variety of subjects and being cultivated about many domains is also crucial for critical thinking since students utilize this information to conclude.
- Another student proposed that the controversial topics discussed should not go beyond the limits of the educational environment and respect religion.
- Another student suggested the use of problem-solving activities and role-playing as tools that will enhance EFL students' critical thinking.
- Another student emphasized thinking logically along avoiding interference in a debate with emotions

3.2.5. Students' Questionnaire Summary of Results

The present research aims to investigate the role of controversial topics debates as a learning strategy, its impact and importance in developing students' critical thinking skills. Following the quantitative method, a questionnaire was designed and administered to the sample that consisted of 35 first-year master students. Hence, the findings are reported, analyzed and discussed.

The extracted data in the first section of Personal Information demonstrated that most of the sample has an advanced level in English, which enables them to be qualified as a sample for this study. They have also studied English for many years, hence; they have a diverse background and an immense amount of knowledge, which can aid in providing accurate and trustworthy data for this study.

The second section of the study discusses critical thinking (CT) from various angles, particularly for EFL students. It was evident that students are aware of the concept of critical thinking by providing reliable definitions for the term. In addition to demonstrating an enormous amount of interest, they underlined the importance of critical thinking in education, as they face many topics and information that needs to be processed, and analyzed, and evaluated cognitively. Furthermore, the results show that teachers are making a real effort to improve this skill. In light of this, students declared that teachers who focus on developing critical thinking skills are using some techniques such as debates, open-ended or thought-provoking questions, and visual aids. However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges associated with the process of developing such skill, and from the point view of the students the primary obstacle is the fear of being wrong; this can arise from several issues including the lack of background information or the lack of confidence. Finally, EFL students need to focus more on fostering their critical thinking skills if they want to become active learners, reach high achievements and set ambitious goals.

As the investigation proceeds in the third section, it is evident that students are aware of the specific meaning of both debates and controversial topics. Respectively, students recognize the value of in-class debates as a learning strategy. In addition, the data gathered indicated that their classroom engagement was dissimilar due to some factors during this activity. Regarding controversial topics, students' suggestions and attitudes towards discussing them in the class indicated their deep awareness, immersion, and knowledge about the potentials and risks that revolve around discussing those contentious topics in the class. Therefore, the suggested considerations and the findings give insights for teachers to facilitate and create supportive environment for students to engage in those exciting, thought- provoking and meaningful discourses according to their opinions and experiences.

Finally, the analysis of section four denotes that there is a strong link between controversial topics debates and critical thinking abilities, as those higher thinking abilities are triggered, stimulated during heated debates, besides students emphasize on the impact and the high value of controversial topics debates in developing their critical thinking abilities for analytical purposes, logical argumentation, adaptability, and open-mindedness when engaging in discussions that are centered around controversial topics.

To sum up, the hypothesis is confirmed. It is evident that EFL students are aware of the importance of enhancing their critical thinking skills and recognize the tremendous benefits of discussing controversial topics. In addition, the students emphasize the teachers' role in facilitating those heated discussions along with the creation of a safe space for them to deal with those topics respectfully. Therefore, controversial topics debates are important to develop EFL students' critical thinking.

Conclusion

The third section of the study is concerned with the practical framework. The research hypothesis is put under examination through the administration of the students' questionnaire. The findings strongly support the effectiveness of controversial topics debates in fostering students' critical thinking abilities. In addition, the findings prove that by providing students with a supportive environment where they can discuss and reflect on their beliefs, and their classroom engagement and involvement would potentially increase. Consequently, this ultimately would lead to the improvement of their speaking, communicating and critical thinking abilities that contributes in their overall academic achievements and future prospects. Accordingly, based on the findings of the questionnaire we conclude that controversial topics debates are important in enhancing EFL students' critical thinking abilities.

Pedagogical Implications

The endeavor of this study is to raise students' attention towards the significant role of controversial topics debates as a learning strategy in enhancing their critical thinking skills. In this respect, the most frequent problems of EFL students are their limited classroom engagement and involvement due to many factors including teachers' methods, course subjects; choices, and even psychological issues such as anxiety and frustration, those factors hinder students' classroom engagement which affects negatively their linguistic and communicative competences let alone, their critical thinking abilities. Teachers can manipulate external factors such as learning strategies and course content by introducing controversial topics that correspond to students' interests and real-life experiences that allow them to express and engage in their classes when provided within a safe supportive environment.

The implementation of controversial topics debates would help to stimulate students' cognitive skills as they engage with thought-provoking and interesting topics along maintaining respectful debates and practice their speaking skills. Consequently, this enables students to cope with the various contentious topics that surround them and develop better understanding about themselves, their classmates and the world. This latter develops their critical thinking abilities, builds their confidence, open-mindedness and their overall personal and academic achievements and prospects.

Finally, fostering critical thinking abilities is a collaborative work outcome between the teacher and the students, as teachers have a primary significant role in providing the most beneficial materials, approaches, strategies, and creating the optimal classroom atmosphere to guarantee triggering students' cognitive abilities.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, further research is recommended in the following areas:

- Conducting pilot studies on the impact and the importance of controversial topics debates as a learning strategy for EFL students.
- A study that explores teachers' attitudes and perspectives towards the use of controversial topics debates in EFL classes
- The application of the frameworks designed for teachers to design critical thinking lessons that align with global education and teaching controversy.
- Examining the Role of Emotional Intelligence in Critical Thinking Improvement during Controversial Topic Debates.
- Exploring the Relationship between Gender and Critical Thinking Development in Controversial Topic Debates.

Limitations of the Study

Like any other research endeavor, this study faced its fair share of challenge:

- Limited scholarly papers about controversial topics debates, the study encountered a significant challenge in accessing relevant sources, debates and controversial topics in relation to pedagogy and critical thinking specifically were well explored. However, controversial topics debates as a learning strategy are not explored.
- The lack of research and investigations about students attitudes and perspectives about the implementation of controversial topics in classes, or their experiences with debating them, little works shed light on students and their willingness to engage in lessons about controversial topics.
- All the academic works and articles that addressed teachers concerning controversial topics included only exploratory studies around their attitudes or frameworks and strategies to implement contentious topics in classes, yet little studies were experimental.
- Time constraints did not allow us to administer the questionnaire to a large sample size.

General conclusion

This study was conducted to examine how controversial topics debates can develop EFL students' critical thinking abilities. The study primarily attempts to explore Students' awareness, engagement, perspectives and attitudes towards dealing with controversy in their classrooms. In addition to the impact and the value of debating controversial topics in terms of promoting students critical thinking abilities.

Through participating in debates about these subjects, students are challenged to process, evaluate, and synthesize information and evidence, thoughts and ideas from diverse perspectives that will particularly result in strengthening their critical thinking skills. Additionally, debates are used to promote open-mindedness and tolerance among students. When engaging with opposing viewpoints and challenging their own beliefs, students develop a greater appreciation for diversity and learn to lead challenging topics with empathy and respect. This fosters not only a culture of intellectual curiosity, but also improves students' linguistic, communicative and cognitive competences, and prepares students to participate effectively in a globalized society. Furthermore, it helps them to be good researchers that think before relying on random information, especially for EFL students as higher educators.

The field of investigation revealed valuable data from a questionnaire presented to thirty-five (n=35) EFL students to test the hypothesis and answer the research questions. According to the achieved results, students are aware of the existence of critical thinking as a cognitive skill to be developed as well as its significance on their personal and academic achievements. Moreover, the findings shed light on the effect and significance of controversial topics as well as the importance of debating in enhancing thier critical thinking competences. In addition to their awareness of the numerous strategies used by

teachers in the classroom, there is a strong connection between controversial topics debates and critical thinking abilities as these debates stimulate higher thinking abilities.

The quantitative research method provided reliable results and offered clear interpretations of the research hypothesis and questions. The findings from the students' questionnaire allowed us to locate critical thinking status among EFL students, awareness, interest, and positive attitudes towards the discussion of controversial topics in EFL classroom. Additionally, it is realized that EFL students emphasize teachers' role in creating and maintaining supportive environment as a pivotal aspect that affects their classroom engagement particularly with heated topics, for the aim of stimulating their critical thinking abilities.

All in all, this study underscores the significance of incorporating controversial topics debates as a pedagogical tool for enhancing EFL students' critical thinking abilities. Students should discover their weaknesses and difficulties from gathering data to analyzing them, and evaluating sources and topics discussed in the classroom, respectfully, logically, and most importantly selectively. Correspondingly, teachers should raise more awareness about this skill and put much effort into highlighting it and improving it through distinct techniques that is in the level of the whole class. By allowing students to participate in stimulating debates, educators may empower them to become critical thinkers, competent communicators, and responsible scholars.

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Appendix A
Students' Questionnaire

The Importance of Controversial Topics Debates in Developing EFL
Students' Critical Thinking

Dear students,

We kindly invite you to answer our questionnaire that deals with the importance of Controversial topics debates in enhancing EFL students' critical thinking. Your collaboration is very important for the validity of our research, your participation in this study is voluntary, and all responses will remain confidential. Please answer the following questions thoughtfully and honestly, by ticking the appropriate box, or providing a full statement when necessary.

Thank you in advance for your time, efforts, and cooperation.

Ms. Haddad Amani

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Department of English

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2024

Section One: General Information

1. What is your gender?

a. Male

b. Female

2. What is your age?

.....

3. For how long have you been studying English?

.....

4. What is your English language level?

a. Beginner	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Intermediate	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Advanced	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section Two: Critical Thinking

5. Have you ever come across the term "critical thinking"?

a. Yes

b. No

6. If yes, give a brief definition for the term?

.....

.....

7. Do you consider yourself a critical thinker?

a. Yes

b. No

8. If yes, a critical thinker is a person who:

a. See problems as exciting challenges

b. A person who thinks rationally

c. Think before acting

d. Open-minded

e. All above

9. Have you ever encountered a situation where critical thinking skills helped you make a better decision?

a. Yes

b. Occasionally

c. No

10. Which of the following critical thinking skills do you tend to apply more in the Classroom?

a. Analysis (a detailed examination of the elements or structure of something).

b. Inference (a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning).

c. Reasoning (the action of thinking about something in a logical

Way).

d. Problem solving (the process of achieving a goal by overcoming obstacles).

e. Interpretation (the action of explaining the meaning of something).

f. Evaluation (the making of judgments about the amount, number, or value of something; assessment).

11. If accuracy refers to the quality of being correct and precise, and precision refers to the quality of being exact and accurate to what extent do you prioritize them in your own thinking and communication?

a. Extremely low

b. Low

c. Average

d. High

e. Extremely high

12. Rank the following steps on how you tend to solve your problem

a. Looking for possible solutions	
c. Define the goals	
d. Define the problem	
e. Acting on solution	

13. Do you think developing critical thinking skills is something necessary for EFL learners?

a. Yes

b. No

14. If yes, please justify why

.....

.....

.....

15. According to you, how could you improve this skill in the classroom?

a. Making connection to real life situation

b. Asking provoking questions

c. Discussions and Debates

16. "Critical Thinking would enhance your academic achievements" to what extent do you agree?

a. Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. What are the challenges that may obstruct the process of fostering student's critical thinking?

- a. Ignorance
- b. Fear of being wrong
- c. Lack of information
- d. Others

18. Do you think your teachers are putting effort into teaching this skill?

- a. Yes
- b. No

19. If yes, what kind of techniques the teachers are using in the classroom to improve your critical thinking?

- a. Make group discussion
- b. Use visual aids
- c. Emphasize self-reflection
- d. Ask open-ended questions

Section Three: Controversial Topics Debate

20. In your opinion what is a debate?

- a. A mere conversation
- b. speech delivered by someone
- c. Discussion between two or more people with different views on the subject,
with an effort to convince one another

21. According to you, why are debates valuable as a learning strategy? (You may select more than one option)

- a. Engaging; make students interested in the course
- b. Promote listening and speaking abilities
- c. Foster teamwork and collaboration
- d. Prepare them for future academic/ professional endeavors

22. Do you participate in class debates?

- a. Yes
- b. No

23. How often do you engage in-class debates?

a. never	b. rarely	c. sometimes	d. often	e. usually	f. always
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. How would you define a controversial topic?

- a. Topic that evokes strong feelings and views
- b. A topic that generates disagreement
- c. A complicated topic with no clear answer
- d. All of the above

25. Can you name some controversial topics you know?

.....

.....

26. Name the course (s) that introduces controversial topics?

.....

.....

27. What was your impression about the topic and your engagement to discuss it?

.....

.....

.....

.....

28. In your opinion, what affects your classroom engagement?

- a. Anxiety and frustration
- b. Lack of information and preparation
- c. Lack of interest
- d. Others

29. How would you rate your debating skills?

a. Beginner	
b. Intermediate	
c. Advanced	

30. When debating with conflicting topics in the classroom what the teacher does

- a. Avoid discussing it / skipped it
- b. Express denial towards it
- c. Emphasize on a certain point of view about it
- d. Be neutral and Present all the views about it

31. Are you updated about the current global issues and controversial topics?

a. Yes

b. No

32. If yes, please provide examples

.....

.....

.....

33. Did you encounter any discussion or a debate about them in the class?

a. Yes

b. No

34. If yes, was it:

a. Raised by the teacher

b. Raised by a classmate

35. Why is it important to discuss controversial topics in the classroom? (You may select more than one option)

a. It provides a platform for the expression of personal opinions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. It promotes open-mindedness about different views and beliefs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Helps in enhancing critical thinking abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. As students express themselves in a logical, convincing way, it fosters speaking, communication, and collaborative skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>

e. These subjects are fascinating, thought-provoking, and engaging	
--	--

36. To address any challenges. How can your teacher facilitate these debates, so you engage? (you may select more than one option)

- a. Ensure that all students feel safe expressing their opinions.
- b. Offer a variety of materials presenting different perspectives on the topic, such as articles, videos etc.
- c. Provide language support as needed, including vocabulary lists, sentence frames etc.
- d. Reflect on the students' own perspectives and how their views may have evolved through the debate.

Section Four: The Importance of Controversial Topics Debates in Developing EFL Students Critical Thinking

37. Which of the following skills do you think are most important for effectively engaging in debates on controversial topics?

- a. Analytical thinking and reasoning
- b. Logical argumentation and evidence evaluation
- c. Active listening and empathy
- d. Adaptability and open-mindedness

e. All of the above

38. How do you handle disagreements or conflicting viewpoints during debates on Controversial topics? (you may select more than one option)

- a. Listen actively and respectfully
- b. Present counterarguments calmly
- c. Seek common ground
- d. Agree to disagree
- e. Other

39. How do you perceive the overall value of engaging in debates on controversial topics?

- a. Highly valuable for developing critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills
- b. Somewhat valuable, as they reflect our lives and the world around us
- c. Neutral, as debates on controversial topics do not significantly impact learner's academic achievements
- d. Not valuable at all, as debates on controversial topics are uncomfortable

40. Do you believe engaging in debates on controversial topics has an impact on critical thinking skills?

- a. Yes
- b. No

41. Do Controversial Topics Debates enhance student's critical thinking?

a. Yes

b. No

42. If yes, students will be able to:

a. Analyze multiple perspectives

b. Evaluate evidence

c. Develop logical arguments

d. Engage in civil discourse

e. Synthesize information from various sources

f. All of the above

43. On a scale of 1 to 5, circle how much do you think controversial topics can help foster critical thinking?

Helpless **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** Helpful

44. If you have any suggestions or recommendations on the subject under inquiry, please feel free to share.

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Thank You

Résumé

Le traitement des sujets controversés dans les classes d'anglais langue étrangère fournit aux étudiants un contexte académique leur permettant de penser de manière critique et de communiquer efficacement. De nos jours, les étudiants sont exposés à de nombreuses situations qui soulèvent des points de vue puissants et diversifiés. Ces sujets controversés doivent être vus à travers les lentilles de la pensée critique, une capacité cognitive qui permet d'analyser, d'évaluer et de juger rationnellement ces sujets. Cependant, les professeurs d'anglais langue étrangère ont habituellement une tendance à enseigner aux étudiants ce qu'il faut penser en se concentrant sur la transmission de la matière, au lieu de leur donner l'opportunité de penser réellement à travers les encouragés à être des participants actifs. Cette étude vise à examiner le rôle des débats sur des sujets controversés en tant que stratégie d'apprentissage pour améliorer les compétences linguistiques, cognitives et communicatives des étudiants en anglais langue étrangère, ainsi qu'à souligner son importance dans l'amélioration de leur pensée critique. Par conséquent, nous émettons l'hypothèse que la prise de conscience des étudiants de l'efficacité de l'engagement dans des débats sur des sujets controversés les aidera à développer leur esprit critique. Pour tester l'hypothèse, nous avons adopté un modèle quantitatif descriptif en administrant un questionnaire en ligne aux étudiants de première année de master (N= 35 sur 160) au département d'anglais de l'Université 8 Mai 1945 de Guelma. Sur la base des données collectées, il a été révélé que les étudiants d'anglais langue étrangère reconnaissent l'importance d'améliorer leurs compétences en pensée critique et les immenses avantages de discuter de sujets controversés, ce qui devrait être facilité par leur enseignant dans un environnement de classe encourageant et confortable. Cela leur permettra de participer à des discours profonds et significatifs qui développeront leur autorégulation, leur argumentation, l'évaluation des réclamations, raisonnement, compréhension émotionnelle et capacité d'adaptation.

Mots-clés : Sujets Controversés, Pensée Critique, EFL, Débats, Discussions.

الملخص

يوفر التعامل مع الموضوعات المثيرة للجدل في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للطلبة سياقًا أكاديميًا للتفكير النقدي والتواصل الفعال. يتعرض الطلاب في الوقت الحاضر للعديد من القضايا التي تثير وجهات نظر حادة ومتنوعة. ينبغي رؤية تلك الموضوعات المثيرة للجدل من خلال عدسات التفكير النقدي؛ وهي قدرة معرفية يتم من خلالها تحليل تلك الموضوعات وتقييمها والحكم عليها بعقلانية. إلا أن معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يميلون عادةً إلى تعليم الطلاب ما يجب أن يفكروا به من خلال التركيز على نقل الموضوع بدلاً من إعطاء الطلاب الفرصة للتفكير فعليًا من خلال تشجيعهم على المشاركة الفعالة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحريّ دور مناقشات الموضوعات المثيرة للجدل كاستراتيجية تعليمية في تعزيز الكفاءات اللغوية والمعرفية والتواصلية لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بالإضافة إلى الإشارة إلى أهميتها في تحسين تفكيرهم النقدي. وعليه، فإننا نفترض أن إدراك الطلاب لفعالية الانخراط في مناقشات الموضوعات المثيرة للجدل سيساعد في تطوير مهارات التفكير النقدي لديهم. ولاختبار هذه الفرضية تم اعتماد تصميم وصفي كمي من خلال إدارة استبيان عبر الإنترنت لطلبة السنة الأولى ماستر (العدد=35 من أصل 160) في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة 8 ماي 1945 بقالمة. استنادًا إلى البيانات التي تم جمعها، تبين أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يدركون أهمية تعزيز مهارات التفكير النقدي لديهم والفوائد الهائلة لمناقشة الموضوعات المثيرة للجدل؛ وهو ما ينبغي أن يُسهله أستاذهم في بيئة صافية داعمة ومريحة. وهذا سيسمح لهم بالمشاركة في حوارات عميقة وذات مغزى من شأنها أن تنمي في المقابل ضبطهم الذاتي والجدل وتقييم الادعاءات والاستدلال والفهم العاطفي والقدرة على التكيف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مواضيع مثيرة للجدل، التفكير النقدي، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، المناقشات، الحوار.