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Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

8 MAI 1945 UNIVERSITY / GUELMA

جامعة 8 ماي 1945 / قالمة

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

كلية الآداب و اللغات

DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS & ENGLISH LANGUAGE

قسم الآداب و اللغة الانجليزية



*The Importance of Critical Thinking in EFL Essay Writing  
(Argumentative, Problem-Solution, Critical Analysis): Case Study of  
Master One Students at the Department of English, 08 MAI 1945  
University, 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

Submitted by:

Supervised by:

Ms. FRIHI Asma

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**University of 8 Mai 1945- Guelma**

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## **DEDICATION**

**To all the special people who came across in my life**

**To my beloved family**

**To my precious friends**

**To my dear supervisor Walid**

**To my angelic dearest teacher Moumene Soumia**

**To all my Teachers**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

The present research attempts to explore teachers' and learners attitudes and perception towards the importance of critical thinking in essay writing. It aims at improving learners' essay writing through promoting critical thinking among them. Furthermore, this study uses a mixture of methods: Quantitative descriptive method by means of students' questionnaire, and qualitative descriptive one via teachers' interview. The sample of this research consists of fifty-six (56 out of 65) Master One students and three (3) Master one teachers at the department of English, 8 May 1945 University-Guelma. The obtained results from both tools confirm the research hypothesis, which implies that students perceive critical thinking as important and display a tendency to use it whenever they write argumentative, problem-solution, and critical analysis essays. Hence, it calls for the integration of critical thinking implicitly or explicitly at the department of English.

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, Critical thinking skills, Essay Writing.

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# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking has been a growing area of study since thousands years ago. Its core idea is about constructing knowledge from prior experiences, asking questions, analyzing and assessing all ideas and information gathered about the world. Critical thinking aims at making reasonable judgment, and wise decisions based on facts rather than opinions. It encourages different thinking skills such as: reasoning, decision making, problem solving, analyzing, and evaluating.

Critical thinking is a basic component of success in any career, social relationships, or education. Learners can gain numerous benefits from mastering critical thinking skills; such as helping them to transcend from solving problems in class assignments, to facing real world situation using reason and logic to resolve disagreements. It also makes learners more independent rather than relying on teacher for instruction and guidance. Additionally, critical thinking skills can help learners to improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing, more particularly essay writing. In other words, critical thinking allows learners to possess organized thoughts, produce effective arguments, analyze critically information, evaluate new ideas, select the best ones, and express them in coherent and logical way.

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

Most of students at the department of English at 8 Mai 1945, Guelma University, have a low writing proficiency, especially in EFL essay writing. This may be caused mainly by the lack of the mastery of the critical thinking skills. Even though critical thinking has been integrated in the field of high education, students do not use appropriately critical thinking skills, such as: evaluation, analysis, reasoning, decision making, and problem solving, when writing which affects negatively their writing proficiency. It is of paramount importance that

teachers encourage critical thinking among students. Thus, the work's research question is: Is critical thinking important for learners' essay writing proficiency to be effective?

## **2. Aims of the Study**

Critical thinking skills are very effective and useful in acquiring new knowledge, especially language. It would help students to improve their essay writing proficiency. Learners who recognize the importance of critical thinking in writing tend to write essay more effectively and successfully. Therefore, the aims of this research are:

1. To make both learners and teachers aware about the importance of critical thinking skills in argumentative, problem-solution, and critical analysis essays writing.
2. To encourage the integration of critical thinking in written expression.

## **3. Research Hypothesis**

Critical thinking skills are essential and effective ways for improving learners' essay writing. Neglecting the importance of critical thinking when writing essay would lead to a low proficiency in essay writing. So the hypothesis is that:

- Students perceive critical thinking important and display tendency to use it when writing argumentative, problem-solution, and critical analysis essays. (H1)
- Students perceive critical thinking unimportant and display no tendency to use it when writing argumentative, problem-solution, and critical analysis essays. (H0)

## **4. Research Methodology and Design**

### **4.1 Research Method**

The present research would be conducted through the combination of quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods. The former method aims at confirming the research

hypothesis through administrating a students' questionnaire, which would provide statistical data about learners' different views concerning the importance of critical thinking in essay writing. The latter method attempts to explore teachers' perceptions and attitudes concerning the same topic through making an interview.

#### **4.2. Population and Sampling**

The population of the present study targets Master One students at the Department of English Language and Letters, in 8 Mai 1945 University Guelma Algeria, enrolled for the academic year 2017-2018. Following and Krejcie & Morgan sampling, the research sample consists of 56 Master One students (as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 94). Furthermore, the sample of the present study was chosen randomly. Master One students would serve as the most appropriate sample for this research; because they are supposed to have the sufficient knowledge about the essential features of essay writing. Besides, at Master one degree, learners are exposed to critical thinking lessons in some modules. Consequently, they would be of great help to accomplish the research objectives.

#### **4.3. Data Gathering Tools**

To prove the research hypothesis, teachers' interview and students' questionnaire would provide valuable information about students' and teachers' perception and attitudes, with regards to the importance of critical thinking in essay writing.

### **5. Structure of the Dissertation**

This work is divided into two parts: The theoretical part includes chapter one and two; whereas, the practical part consists of chapters three. The first chapter entitled "Critical Thinking" deals with the history, definitions, and skills of critical thinking. The second chapter "Essay Writing" includes definitions of essay writing, and discusses its components

like: essay topic, thesis statement, structure, as well as some of its types and processes. The third chapter “Field of Investigation” consists of a description of learners’ questionnaire and teachers’ interview, its administration, analysis, interpretation, as well as recommendations.

# CHAPTER ONE: CRITICAL THINKING

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## **Introduction**

King stated once that “education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false ... and the facts from the fiction. The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically” (as cited in Downing, 2017, p. 207). Critical thinking has been a growing area of study that has attracted many philosophers, educators and researchers since a long time ago. This chapter attempts to provide an overview about critical thinking and discuss some of its main skills.

### **1.1. Historical Overview**

According to the research of Mind Two Project, critical thinking roots could be traced back to Socrates’s probing questioning method, 2500 years ago. The Socratic questioning was used as a strategy to teach critical thinking. It entails asking profound questions before believing in an idea. Following Socrates, both Plato and Aristotle made great contribution in the development of critical thinking (2004, p.1).

Besides the Greek philosophers, there are other contributors like the American philosopher, educator, and psychologist Dewey, who was seen as “the father of modern critical thinking” also called “reflective thinking-critical thinking” between 1910-1939 (Fisher, as cited in Billups-Thomas, 2011, p.5). Another important fundamentalist in the field of critical thinking came to rise during 1962-1979 is Ennis (Billups-Thomas, 2011, p.5).

### **1.2. Definitions**

There is no one clear definite definition of critical thinking agreed upon by researchers, and educators. Nevertheless, many tried to tackle its definition, such as Halpern (1996, p. 8) who defines critical thinking as purposeful and directed thinking that focuses on desirable outcome. Furthermore, she argues that critical thinking comprises some cognitive

tasks such; as inferring, arguing, decision making, creative thinking, and problem solving ( as cited in Michaelsen & Sweet, 2012, p. 8).

According to Paul critical thinking is a “disciplined” and “self-directed” thinking that involves a mastery of “intellectual skills “. He regards it as an art of thinking about ones’ own thinking when s/he is already thinking, to enhance his/her thinking. He also adds that critical thinking is the learners’ ability to draw accurate conclusion, through observing and gathering data (as cited in Billups-Thomas, 2011, p. 19-20).

Moreover, Norris declared that critical thinking is the ability to assess thinking and monitor behavior through implementing what is already known and felt (1985, p. 40-45). For Ennis, to think critically is to decide in a reasonable and reflective way what action to take, and what idea to believe in (1996, p.166).

Paul describes critical thinking as a “process of actively conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning“(as cited in Billups-Thomas, 2011, p. 19). It can be said that critical thinking can be defined as a set of cognitive skills.

Furthermore, Paul and Elder (2008) state that a critical thinker is someone who brings up critical issues for discussions, asks and formulates significant questions in clear and accurate manner, collects and evaluates the relevant data, then s/he interprets data and draw a reasoned conclusion based on evidence. Finally, s/he tests that conclusion against relevant standards (as cited in Michaelsen & Sweet, 2012, p. 8).

A critical thinker is a person who has the ability to think well and objectively, not only about his ideas and opinions; but also about those of others that can be opposed to his/her own beliefs. He or she do not hesitate and desires to explore and discuss any threatening views (Paul, as cited in Billups-Thomas, 2011, p.20).

All in all, Critical thinking is a complex mental capacity that enables one to see more than one side of the issue; it is to reason from logic rather than from passion. Critical thinking encompasses a set of cognitive skills, such as: decision making, reasoning, problem solving, evaluation, and analysis.

### **1.3. Critical Thinking Skills**

#### **1.3.1. Decision Making**

Bonaparte said that “Nothing is more difficult and therefore precious than to be able to decide” (as cited in Philips & Gully, 2012, p.290). Decision making is one of the most important skills of critical thinking. This skill can have a significant impact on the individual’s life.

##### **1.3.1.1. Definition**

According to online Merriam Webster dictionary (2018), the term decision means determination or resolution that one reaches after careful attention. Oxford dictionary defines it as the act of resolving questions or deciding something (n.d.). In Encarta Dictionary, a decision is “firmness in choosing something” (as cited in Parcon, 2007, p.1). In other words, decision is the ability of deciding about or choosing things without hesitation.

Equally, the online Encyclopedia Free dictionary mentioned decision making is the process through which people and organization determine what actions to take (n.d.). Pacron states that decision making is the procedures by which a person identifies alternatives depending on his/her values (2007, p.7). Generally, decision making can be defined as the process of selecting a choice among various options in order to achieve a specific objective (Harvey, 2007, p.3). It can be said that decision making is the act of selecting the most appropriate choice among other options, based on the decision maker’s preferences.



### 1.3.1.2. Decision Making Process

Decision making is a capacity that anyone can learn and develop (Pacron, 2007). Massachusetts Dartmouth University suggests that decision makers usually go through the following processes:

- A. Decision identification: The decision maker needs to identify the decision's nature and the need to make it.
- B. Relevant data collection: The decision maker gathers the needed information. This information is found in an internal source, like: the decision maker's background knowledge and past experiences, and/or in external sources, like: books, internet, or people.
- C. Choices identification: When collecting data, the decision makers may identify some possible and desirable choices. He/she can utilize his/her imagination and extra information to add new choices.
- D. Evidence Weight: Based on the gathered information and feelings, the decision makers will imagine the outcomes that would result from carrying out each choice to the end. S/he will assess these outcomes and see whether they meet the need s/he identified in the first process. During this phase, the decision maker will start to prefer the choices that have higher possibility to reach his/her objectives. Finally, s/he will classify these choices based on his/her preferences and values.
- E. Right choice selection: After weighing the evidence and evaluating the alternatives, the decision maker will be ready to choose the best choice for him/her. S/he can choose either one choice or combination of choices. Usually, the first choice in the list

that the decision maker made, in the previous process, is the choice he selects in this process.

F. Taking action: The decision maker will take action through implementing the choice he/she selected in the precedent process.

G. Decision Review: The decision maker will consider the outcomes of his/her decision.

If the decision does not meet his/her objective and need, s/he may revise and redo some processes to make a better decision. For instance, the decision maker can collect more information and go through other choices (2018, n. p.).

### **1.3.2. Reasoning**

Reasoning is another important skill of critical thinking in any field of science, as Galilei said “In question of sciences, the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of single individual” (as cited in Digumarti, 2009, p. 3).

#### **1.3.2.1 Definition**

GE Foundation Workplace Skills Program explains that reasoning is the capacity to construct arguments in a logical and coherent way, and to justify those arguments using reasons (2006, p. 6). Online Merriam Webster dictionary defines reasoning as “the mind’s capacity to think about and comprehend something in a logical way” (n.d.). In other words, reasoning is the act of thinking about things logically in order to construct arguments, draw a conclusion, or make decision.

Angell suggests that reasoning is a dynamic activity that people do when they solve a problem or think about something. He also adds that in this mental process (reasoning), a person is attempting to draw a conclusion based on reasons. He highlights four points concerning his definition:

- Reasoning is a process that has a goal.
- Reasoning is a mental activity.
- Reasoning seeks a conclusion based on specific methods and reasons.
- Reasoning belongs to humans only (1994, pp. 1-3).

### **1.3.2.2 Types**

There are two types of reasoning: deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning that are both used to construct arguments and conclusions.

#### **1.3.2.2.1. Deductive Reasoning**

According to Ayalon and Even, deductive reasoning is a process of inference in which the reasoner reaches a conclusion from known data, on the basis of certain rules of logic (20011, p. 911). Schechter defines it as a type of reasoning in which the verity of premises (assumptions or facts) ensures logically the verity of the conclusion (2013, p. 226). Hatch S. A. and Hatch L. Z. explain that in deductive reasoning, the reasoner starts from general principles or truth (premises) to arrive at specific conclusion. They state that if the premise is valid then the conclusion is valid too. For example:

- All humans are mortal. ( general assumption or premise)
- Danny is human. (specific premise)
- Danny is mortal (2006, p. 66). (very specific premise)

#### **1.3.2.2.2. Inductive Reasoning**

S. A. Hatch and L. Z. Hatch state that in inductive reasoning, the reasoner starts from specific proposition to draw a general conclusion (2006, p. 66). For example:

- Misha is a cat and has paws. (specific premise)
- Lucy is a cat and has paws.(specific premise)
- Chery is a cat and has paws. (specific premise)
- Thus, it is likely that all cats have paws. (general conclusion)

The conclusion might be false despite the accuracy of the premises, because it relies on specific examples. When the reasoner develops a conclusion through inductive reasoning, s/he should state “the conclusion can be or likely to be true” and not “the conclusion must be true” (S. A. Hatch & L. Z. Hatch, 2006, p. 66). McNabb also shares the same view which posits that inductive conclusions are not final, and will be open to revision and discussion whenever reasoners discover new facts. Inductive reasoning is often used in scientific research that starts with observation such as experiments (2008, p. 8), or when a writer tries to convince a doubtful audience that needs lot of proofs and evidences to believe his/her conclusion (Kirszner & Mandell, 2008, p.83).

### **1.3.3. Problem Solving**

Problems are easy to find, but difficult to solve even for a genius as Einstein, who stated that “ If I had an hour to solve the problem I’d spent 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions” (as cited in Winston, 2014, p. 132).

#### **1.3.3.1. Definition**

According to Online Cambridge dictionary problem solving is an activity, in which a person tries to find a solution to trouble or problem (n. d.). Vlahavas declares that problem solving is a complex mental process, that happens when someone does not have the knowledge of how to move from initial state to the desired state (2008, p. 151). Sternberg and

Detterman state that problem solving is the capacity of viewing relationships, learning quickly new information, and thinking abstractly (as cited in Malouff & Schute, 2014, p. 3). It is also defined as a situation in which one person or more are supposed to do a task in order to find solution (Ponte et al., 1991, p. 288). All in all, problem solving is a cognitive process that enables one to find solutions, that help him/her to overcome a given trouble and reach his/her goal.

### **1.3.3.2. Stages of Problem Solving**

According to GE Foundation Workplace Skills Program, in order to solve a problem, one should pass through the following stages:

- a. Identifying the problem: is the first and most significant stage, in which the problem solver looks at facts and map the problem to understand it. Then, s/he tries to determine the rout and the main cause of the problem.
- b. Looking for possible solutions: in the second stage, the problem solver will think of ideas and create possible solutions for the problem. S/he can start with brainstorming any possible ideas to solve the problem, and then s/he attempts to understand each of them.
- c. Selecting solution: this stage involves making judgments and decisions. The problem solver evaluates and discusses the pros and cons of each possible solution. Finally, s/he selects the most appropriate possible solution.
- d. Acting on solutions: is the final stage, where the problem solver makes an action plan in order to implement the solution. The last step in this stage is to check the implementation process and evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented solution (2006, p. 26-29).



**Figure 1.1.** Stages of Problem Solving (Adapted from GE Foundation Workplace Skills Program (2006, p. 26))

### 1.3.4. Evaluation

Churchill said once that “True genius resides in the capacity for evaluation of uncertain, hazardous, and conflicting information” (as cited in Pine, 2012, p. 28).

#### 1.3.4.1 Definition

According to GE Foundation Workplace Skills Program, evaluation is the act of assessing information against certain criteria (2006, p. 6). Friedman and Wyatt suggest that evaluation is a systematic procedure in which evaluator describes the implementation of a data and judge its worth (2006, p. 24). In short, evaluation is the process of judging data according to specific standards.

#### **1.3.4.2. Self-evaluation**

Online Collins dictionary defines self-evaluation as a process by which a person assesses him/herself and his or her achievements (n.d.). According to online Business dictionary, self-evaluation is the act of looking at one's advancement, growth, and learning to identify what improved and what needs improvement (n. d.).

Rolhesier and Ross Suggest that students self-evaluation is the process, in which a student makes a judgment about how good his/her work is, based on explicit standard and evidence in order to improve his/her performance. They argue that self-evaluation improves students' performance, and fosters their learning (as cited in Doyle, 2008, p.150). It can be said that self-evaluation is a process through which one assesses and judges his/her own progress in order to make improvements.

Rolhesier and Ross propose four stages of self-evaluation process. In the first stage, the student identifies the evaluation standards or criteria. In the second one, s/he applies the evaluation standards, which s/he identified in the previous stage. In the third stage, s/he evaluates his/her work. In the last stage, s/he determines his/her strengths and weaknesses, based on his/her self-evaluation (as cited in Harvey & Chickie-Wolf, 2007, p. 223).

#### **1.3.5. Analysis**

The final critical thinking skill this study tackles is analysis. It plays major role in understanding any sort of data. Additionally, it is integrated in all the previous skills.

### **1.3.5.1. Definition**

Huber and Snider view analysis as a process, in which one discovers the subdivisions of any subjects (2006, p.26). Oxford dictionary defines analysis as the process of studying in details the constituents of something (n. d.). Analysis is the capacity to separate something and examine its sections and the relationship between them (GE Foundation Workplace Skills Program, 2006, p. 6). In brief, analysis is a cognitive procedure by which one breaks down an entity into units and study the relationship between them.

### **1.3.5.2. Critical Analysis**

The Free dictionary defines critical analysis as categorizing a person or thing on the basis of careful analytical assessment (n. d.). Wilkins and Boahen state that it is a development of three notions: examining parts of something; having a good understanding of it; and then choosing the right action. It involves one to think and evaluate constituents of the information rather than considering it directly as fact (2013, p. 2).

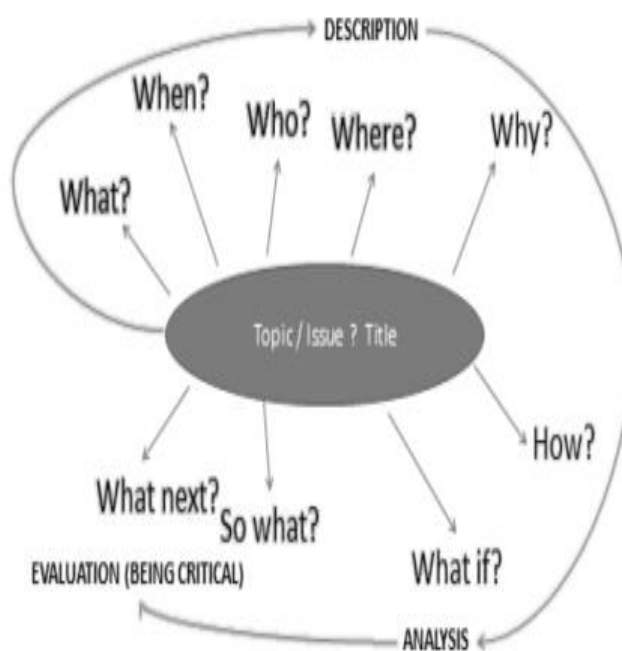
#### **1.3.5.2.1. Process**

The Bradford University published a paper which describes the process of critical analysis as the following:

- a. The description stage is about background information that helps to define clearly the topic or problem. It involves asking questions like: “What” is the problem? “Who” is the doer? “Where” does it happen? “When” does it happen?
- b. The analysis stage is concerned with examining the relationship that exists between the constituents, and suggesting possible alternatives. It involves questions like: “How” did this happen? Or “How one constituent influence the others? “Why” did it happen? “What if” there is an alternative?



- c. Evaluation stage involves making implications, drawing conclusions, and suggesting recommendations. It involves questions like: “So what” are the implications? “So what” can one learn from this? “What next” is needed to do? (2015, p. 2).



**Figure 1.2.** Stages of Critical Analysis (Adapted from Plymouth University (2010))

## Conclusion

Since a long time ago, many scholars and researchers defined critical thinking from different perspectives. However, most of them agreed that critical thinking is a set of

cognitive skills. A critical thinker can make a wise decision, logical reasoning, solve problems, evaluate effectively, and analyze critically. These skills have the power to improve people's thinking, thus their whole life. Thanks to their great importance, critical thinking skills must be incorporated in education especially in writing, which will be the focus of the second chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO: ESSAYS WRITING

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## **Introduction**

Writing is one of the most important language skills. It is the mean by which humans communicate, exchange ideas, and express their feelings and point of view. However, it is considered as difficult and complex process even for professional writers, as Mann stated “A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult” (as cited in Moore, 2012, p. 13). More precisely, EFL students regard essay writing as the most difficult task. This chapter focuses on providing some definitions of essay writing, and discussing its components like: essay topic, thesis statement, structure, as well as some of its types and processes.

### **2.1. Definitions**

#### **2.1.1. Writing**

Linguists describe writing as a process of transforming abstract ideas into written communication (D’Aoust, 1987, p. 7). Clark defines writing as a thinking tool by which learners can express and share their thoughts (2007, p. 4). Others, like Harris claim that writing is a complex skill which involves complex processes (as cited in Kihal, 2015, pp. 10-11). In sum, writing is the act of transmitting unseen thoughts into visible codes on paper.

#### **2.2.2. Essay**

Historically speaking, Michel de Montaigne was the first to use the term essay to describe his work in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. An essay is a lengthy piece of writing, which is composed of three or more paragraphs turning around one single topic (kihal, 2015, p. 101). Soles (2009) states that “An academic essay is a written text, rarely fewer than 500 words or more than

5000 words in length, on a topic related to a course taught at a school, college, university” (p. 6). It can be said that essay is a composition, usually written by students on subject linked to a given course and are written for different purposes; such as: informing, convincing, entertaining, or exploring.

## **2.3 Topic of the Essay**

### **2.3.1 Topic Choice**

In order to choose a well topic, students have to select a topic that captures their interest and the audience's. If they are interested in the topic, they will be motivated and inspired to write and know more about it. Another important step, students must consider when choosing a topic, is limiting the topic. It should not be too broad that they cannot develop it in depth, nor too narrow that they may run out of ideas (Chesla, 2006, pp. 44-45). For example: Violence is a broad topic, and bullying is a narrowed topic; however, a more narrowed one would be “bullying in high schools”.

### **2.3.2 Set Topic or Assignment**

Sometimes students do not have the freedom to choose a topic and are asked to write an essay about a set topic or assignment. In other words, an essay assignment obliges students to write about a specific topic, develop it in certain a way, and to respect the specified length. The assignment they usually face, can be a question or quotation (Woolf, 2005, p.34) that carries a hidden meaning. In order to write a good essay, students need to understand the assignment and identify the aim behind it. They should read the assignment carefully, highlight the key words, and follow the directions (Chesla, 2006, p. 26).

## **2.4 Thesis Statement**

### **2.4.1 Definition**

The Author Sharp says to his students repeatedly that the thesis statement represents the sun around which all what they have written rotates (2011, p. 1). He defines it as “the main idea of your paper. It tells the reader exactly what your paper is about and what specific point you are trying to make” (p. 2). It can be said that thesis statement is one or two sentences that indicates what is going to be discussed or proved in the essay. Usually, it is located at the end of the introductory paragraph.

### **2.4.2 Characteristics of Good Thesis Statement**

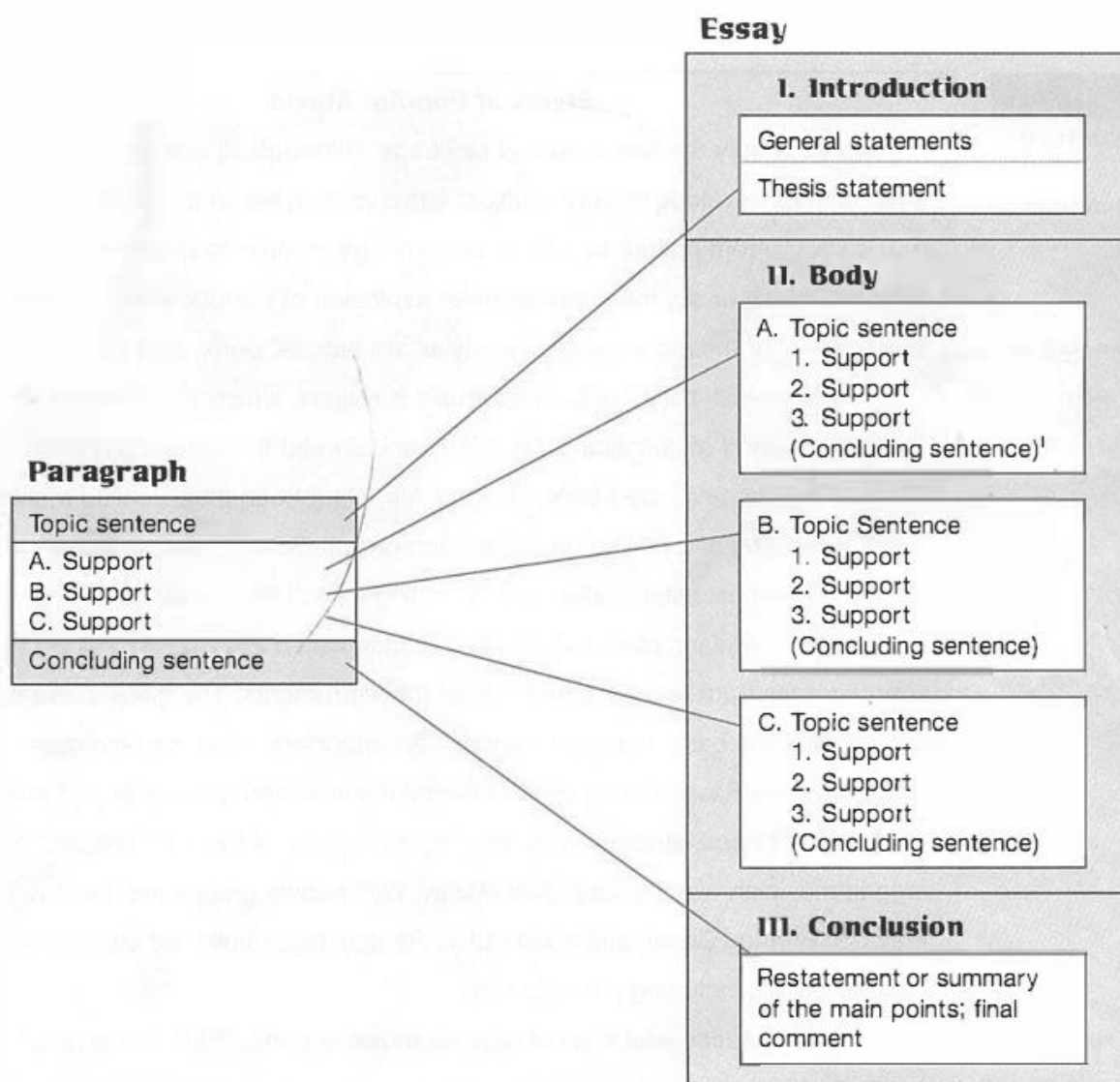
According to Galko, an effective thesis statement should:

- Be interesting to the writer and the reader.
- Be precise and specific.
- Focus on one aspect of the topic.
- Not state a fact.
- Express only one main idea.
- Guide the reader along the essay.
- Help in organizing what is going to be written.
- Usually take a stand on a given issue (2001, pp. 35-36).

For example: “People should stop eating fast food” is not an effective thesis statement; because it is too general thesis statement. Whereas, “American teenagers should reduce the consumption of fast food because it leads to obesity” is an effective thesis statement; because it is narrowed thesis statement.

## 2.5 Structure of Essay

The structure of an essay is an ordered organization of the information and materials that are going to be developed. Generally, an essay consists of three main sections: Introduction, body, conclusion (Ochima & Hogue, 2007, p. 147). The figure 2.1 describes the general structure of an academic essay.



**Figure 2.1** Structure of the Essay (Adapted from Ochima and Hogue (2007, p. 147))

### **2.5.1 Introduction**

The introductory paragraph is the first paragraph of any essay. Ochima and Hogue state that an introduction “has two functions: (1) It attracts the reader's interest, and (2) it introduces the topic of the essay” (2007, p. 161). In other words, an essay introduction catches the audience’s interest, informs the reader about the topic of the essay, and the controlling idea that is going to be developed in the body paragraphs, and presents the writer’s position. According to Kellogg, a good introductory paragraph includes “attention-catching comment on the topic” rather than facts that are needed in the body paragraph (2004, p. 23).

Usually, the introductory paragraph has two parts: General statements and specific statement. The general statements are the first part of the introduction, while the specific statement is the last part of the introduction. On one hand, the former consists of the hook (one or two sentences that attracts the reader’s attention) and general background information about the topic. On the other hand, the latter is the thesis statement (Ochima & Hogue, 2007, p. 161).

### **2.5.2 Body Paragraphs**

Body paragraphs consist of one or more paragraphs that are located in the middle between the introduction and the conclusion. The main function of the body paragraphs is to develop the essay thesis statement and never introduce new ideas that are not related to it. According to Robitaille and Connelly any paragraph in the body of the essay must focus and develop one main point which is known as the topic sentence that should support the thesis of the essay (2006, p. 101).



### 2.5.2.1 Topic sentence

The topic sentence in a paragraph is like the thesis statement in the essay in terms of function. In other words, the former tells the readers what the paragraph is about; while the latter tells them what the essay is about. Usually the topic sentence is the first or second sentence in the paragraph. An effective topic sentence must clearly express the controlling idea and the writer's attitude (Checkett & Feng-Checkett, 2013, p. 54). Furthermore, it is of paramount importance that the topic sentence relates to the thesis statement. For example:

The thesis statement: The most successful styles of music are Reggae, Punk, and rap.

The topic sentences: 1. One successful style of popular music is reggae.

2. A second successful style of popular music is punk.

3. A third successful style of popular music is rap.

### 2.5.3 The Conclusion

The conclusion is the last part of the essay, which summaries the main points that are discussed in the body paragraphs. Ochima and Hogue claim that a good conclusion must fulfill the following functions:

- It indicates the ending of the essay.
- It reminds the audience of the writer's main points.
- It shows the writer's attitude towards the topic (2007, p. 153).

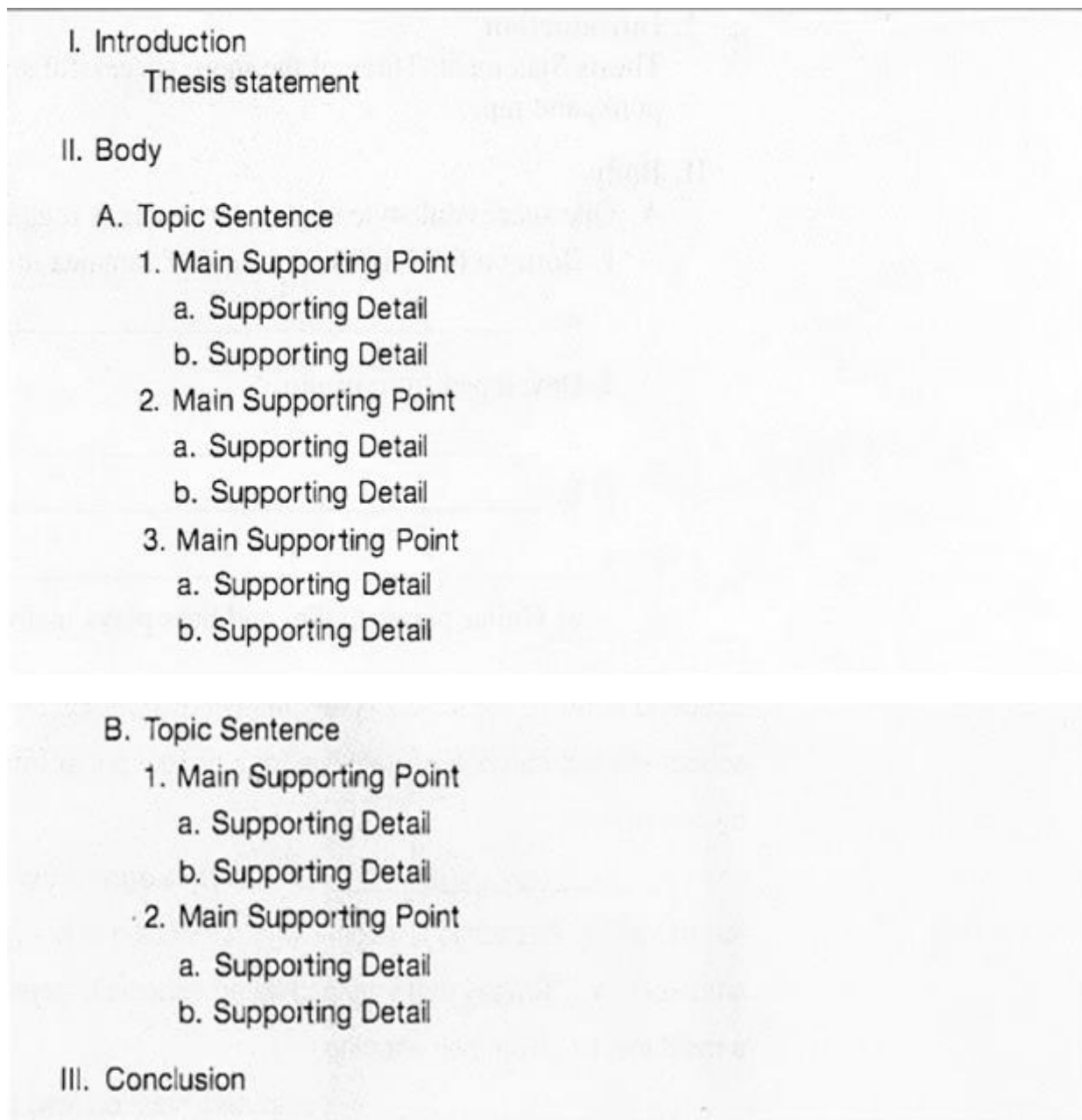
Generally, the concluding paragraph consists of two parts. The first part restates the thesis statement in other words, and/or summarizes up the main ideas that are developed in the body

paragraphs and which can be expressed in more than one sentence. The second part may express the writer's opinion, comment, judgment, or recommendation (Ochima & Hogue, 2007, p. 153). However, the writer must not introduce new ideas or argument in the conclusion.

## **2.6 The Outline**

Another important step the writer should take before writing the essay, is making an outline. According to Chesla, outlining an essay can be very useful in many ways. For instance, the outline orders and organizes the writer's ideas and prevents him/her from deviating from the topic. Moreover, it helps the writer to decide whether s/he needs to add or delete supporting details and sentences. Besides, making an outline helps the writer to judge, revise, and modify the thesis statement before writing (2006, p. 50).

Generally, an outline of a four paragraph essay could be illustrated in figure 2.2



**Figure 2.2** Outline of an Essay (Adapted from Ochima and Hogue (2007, p. 160))

## 2.7 Types of Essay

There are many types of essay such as argumentative essay, problem solution essay, and critical analysis essay. Each type of essay is written to convey a certain message in a specific way.

## 2.7.1 Argumentative Essay

### 2.7.1.1 Definition

Baker, Brizee, and Angeli define argumentative essay as “a genre of writing that requires the student to investigate a topic; collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; and establish a position on the topic in a concise manner” (2013, para. 1). In other words, argumentative essay is that type of essay in which the writer draws a conclusion based on evidence.

The main purpose behind writing argumentative essay is to convince the readers to change their views or to take a certain action. In order to achieve this purpose and write a successful argumentative essay the writer must propose a debatable idea, support it with strong evidence, then construct a conclusion.

### 2.7.1.2 Structure

According to Illinois State University, the structure of argumentative essay can be like the following:

Introduction should:

- Catch the reader interest (the hook)
- Introduce the topic
- State clearly the writer’s opinion about the topic (the thesis statement)

Body paragraphs should include at least two paragraphs:

- Paragraph one states the writer’s stance regarding the topic and supports it with evidence.
- Paragraph two acknowledges the opposing views and refutes them.

Conclusion should:

- Restate the thesis statement.
- Summarize briefly the main points.
- Highlight the weakness of the opposition (n.d., n.p.).

## **2.7.2 Problem-Solution Essay**

### **2.7.2.1 Definition**

Dahi admits that problem-solution essay is a type of essay in which “the writer tells the reader about a problem or a situation they have experienced. They may experience explain what or who caused the problem and [...] offer the best solution or list of solutions for the readers” (2012, p. 110). It can be said that a problem-solution essay is a composition that begins with identifying a problem, then it proposes possible solutions for it.

### **2.7.2.2 Structure**

A problem-solution essay also consists of three parts: Introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. According to Dahi (2012, p. 110), the structure of the problem-solution essay should be as mentioned below:

The introduction includes:

- Background information about the problem.
- Statement of the problem (thesis statement)

The body paragraphs should:

- State the main causes of the problem and its effect.
- Propose possible solutions to the problem.
- Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each proposed solution.

The conclusion should:

- Summarize the main points.
- Restate the chosen solution.
- Emphasize the value of the chosen solution (2012, p. 110).

### **2.7.3 Critical Analysis Essay**

#### **2.7.3.1 Definition**

Rankin and Wolfe explain that “In a critical analysis essay, you systematically evaluate a work’s effectiveness including what it does well and what it does poorly. It can be used to discuss a book, article or even a film” (2017, n.p.). In other words, critical analysis essay is a type of essay that examines and evaluates any literary or academic work.

#### **2.7.3.2. Structure of Critical Analysis Essay**

According to Rankin and Wolfe a critical analysis essay should follow the following structure:

The introduction includes:

- Some bibliographic information about the work which will be analyzed like: the title, the author’s name, date of publication.
- The thesis and the major ideas of the work.
- The thesis statement that is going to be developed in the essay.

The body paragraphs should include more than one paragraph, in which:

- Paragraph one summarizes briefly the main points of the work. It also answers some questions that describes the theme (what), the major characters (who), the setting (where and when), etc.
- Paragraph two analyses the work. It reveals what the writer liked and dislike about the work, explains his/her ideas, and provides some illustration from the work.

- Paragraph three evaluates the work and answers the question of whether the author reaches the intended purpose or not.

The conclusion should:

- State again the thesis statement.
- Summarize the main points.
- Make the reader take an action through recommending or disapproving the work (2017, n.p.).

## **2.8 Essay Evaluation**

A good writer evaluates his/her essay before submitting it. S/he should go through two important processes which are “revising” and “editing”. These processes help the writer to produce an effective essay.

### **2.8.1 Revising**

#### **2.8.1.1 Definition**

Chesla points out that revising is to look “at your essay through a lens that lets you see it as a whole ... Have you addressed the topic? Is there a logical flow to your ideas or story? Is each paragraph necessary and properly placed?” (2006, p. 105). In other words, revising involves evaluating the content and organization of the essay.

#### **2.8.1.2 Steps of the Revising Process**

Galko proposes some steps to follow when revising any essay:

- Step one: The writer should read the essay critically considering him/herself as the intended reader. S/he should try to judge what s/he has written through asking some

questions like: Is my thesis statement clear and focused? Do the body paragraphs support my thesis? Does my essay follow a logical organization?

- Step two: the writer should decide about s/he needs to do.
- Step three: the writer should make the changes. S/he can add some supporting sentences, delete some details that do not support the thesis statement, or change the structure of sentences or paragraphs to make the ideas crystal clear (2001, p. 75).

## **2.8.2 Editing**

### **2.8.2.1 Definition**

Chesla explains that “editing takes a closer look at your writing, through a stronger lens that highlights words and sentences. Are your word choices appropriate and fresh? Are there any repetitive or awkward sentences or phrases? ” (2006, p. 105). In brief, editing is the process in which the writer evaluates and checks the essay, paying careful attention to spelling, grammar, word choice, and punctuation.

### **2.8.2.2 Editing an Essay**

According to Galko, to edit an essay effectively, the writer should consider the following:

- Use correct spelling.
- Use correct grammar.
- Avoid repetition.
- Avoid fragmentation.
- Use correct punctuation and capitalization (2001, p. 121).



## **Conclusion**

Writing an effective essay does not only require drafting flow of ideas; but also being critical. This means that the writer must be critical throughout all the stages of the essay writing task. S/he needs to choose a narrowed and interesting topic, make a clear and focused thesis statement, outline the essay, and follow the general essay structure. Depending on the assignment, the writer must choose carefully the appropriate type of the essay: argumentative essay, problem-solution essay, or critical analysis essay. Finally, s/he needs to revise and edit what s/he has written carefully. Therefore, a good essay shows how much the writer is a critical thinker.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **FIELD INVESTIGATION**

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## **Introduction**

After dealing with critical thinking in chapter one and essay writing in chapter two, it is now possible to investigate the attitudes and the views of teachers and students concerning the relationship between critical thinking and essay writing. The current chapter presents data and findings collected from students' questionnaire and teachers' interview. In addition, this chapter analyses and interprets the obtained results. All of these procedures will help in answering the research questions, and confirming or disconfirming the research hypotheses.

### **3.1. Students' Questionnaire**

#### **3.1.1. Population of the Study**

The research being conducted targets Master One students at the Department of English Language and Letters, 8 Mai 1945 University, Guelma, Algeria, enrolled for the academic year 2017-2018. It selected this population in particular; because Master One students are supposed to be mature and grown-ups. Besides, at Master one degree, learners are exposed to critical thinking lessons in some modules. All of this makes them display higher level of critical thinking. Equally, Master One students are presumed to have the sufficient knowledge about the essential features of essay writing. Consequently, they would be of great help for this research. Furthermore, the sample of the present study has been chosen randomly. Following Krejcie and Morgan sampling table, 56 questionnaires were administered to Master One students since the whole population consists of 65 students. It can be said that the research sample (S) is representative (as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 94).

#### **3.1.2. Description of Students' Questionnaire**

Students' questionnaire aims at exploring the student's perceptions towards the importance of critical thinking in essay writing; thus, it contributes to the validity of the research. It is

designed on the basis of the theoretical part of the present research. It consists of thirty-one (31) questions structured in three main sections. Most questions are closed-ended in which respondents are asked to choose from the pre-determined options. In addition, open-ended questions are also used in order to give the respondents an opportunity to clarify their answers and provide further comments and suggestions.

The first section consists of four questions which represent general information about the respondents such as their age and level in English. Section two includes ten questions (from Q5 to Q14). It aims at eliciting students' knowledge and perceptions about critical thinking and skills of critical thinking like decision making, reasoning, problem-solving, analysis, and evaluation. Section three is entitled "Essay Writing", which encompasses sixteen questions (from Q15 to Q31) that address students essay writing like the thesis statement, topic, structure of the essay, e essay types, and evaluating essay. It also covers the students' perceptions regarding the importance of critical thinking in essay writing.

### **3.1.3. Administration of Students' Questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire was administered on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 at the Department of English in 8 Mai 1945 university, Guelma. The questionnaire was distributed to Master One students in two groups and was answered immediately. Both teachers and students were very cooperative. The allocated time to answer the questionnaire took 15 to 20 minutes. The students answered all the questions easily, without any difficulty as the questionnaire was designed in way to avoid any ambiguity.

### **3.1.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

#### **3.1.4.1. Analysis of Results and Findings from Students' Questionnaire**

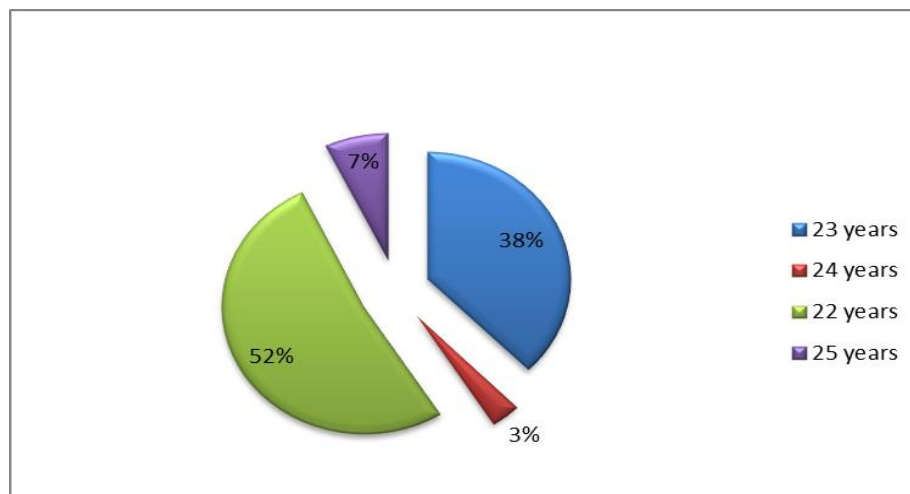
##### **Section One: General Information**

**Question One:** Age.....years.

Table 3.1

*Students' Age*

Age	Number	Percentage (%)
22	29	51.78
23	21	37.50
24	2	03.57
25	4	07.14
Total	56	100



**Figure 3.1.** Students' Age

As indicated in table 3.1, the majority of students (86.53 %) claimed that they are 22 years old, which implies that they started school at five years old. 37.50% of students declared that they are 23 years old, which means that they started school at six years old. Very few students (3.57%) stated that they are 24 years old. 7.14% of students mentioned that they are 25 five

years old. This suggests that the students over the age of 23 failed in their studies at least once or were not accepted in Master degree till this year. It can be said that all the students reached the age of maturity, as it was stated by Gray (2018) that adult maturity starts from the age twenty years old.

**Question Two:** How long have you been studying English language?

Table 3.2

*Years of Studying English*

Years	Number	Percentage (%)
11	50	89.28
More than 11	6	10.71
Total	56	100

The large majority of students (89.28%) asserted that they studied English language for eleven years, which means that they did not fail at all during their educational instruction. Few students (10.71%) stated that they studied English for more than eleven years and this suggests that these students failed during their educational instruction. In general, all students studied English language for enough period of time, in which they received all necessary insights and knowledge about the four skills of the language.

**Question Three:** Is it your choice to study English?

Table 3.3.

*Choice of studying English*

	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	55	98.21
No	1	01.78
Total	56	100

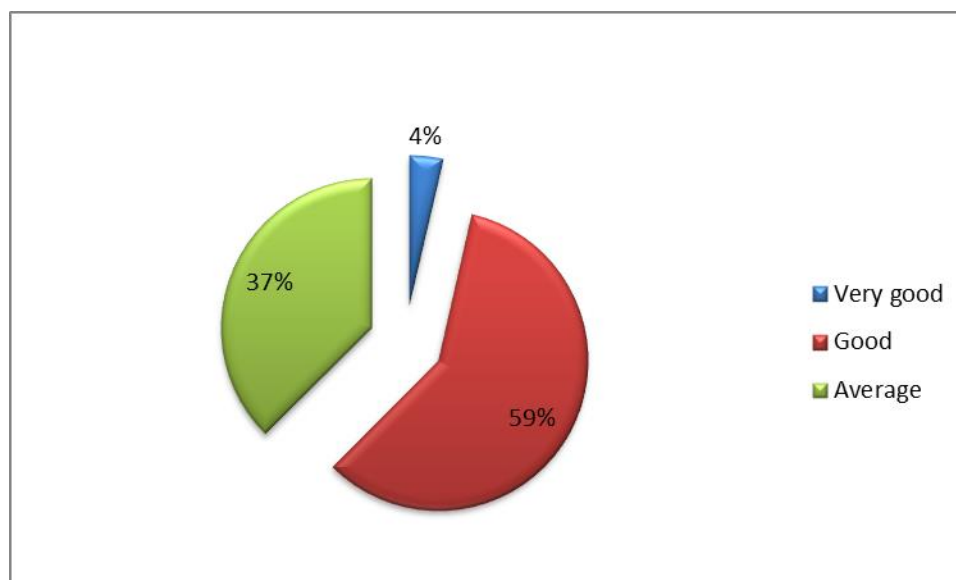
Concerning students' choice to study English, the mass majority of students (98.21%) answered yes, which indicates that they have positive attitudes towards studying English language. Only one student (1.78%) claimed that it was not his/her choice to study English. This suggests that he has negative attitudes towards English language. In general, most of the students are motivated and interested in studying English.

**Question Four:** How could you describe your level in English?

Table 3.4.

*Appreciation of English Level*

Level	Number	Percentage (%)
Very good	2	03.57
Good	33	58.92
Average	21	37.50
Bad	0	00.00
Very bad	0	00.00
Total	56	100

**Figure 3.4.** Appreciation of English Level

According to the results obtained, the mass majority of students (58.92%) claimed that their level in English is good. This suggests that they have they have acquired the basic



principles and rules of the English language successfully. Some students (37.5%) declared that their level in English is average, which implies that they need to improve their language proficiency. Only two students (3.57%) stated that they have very good level in English language, and this indicates that they have very effective command of the English language which will help them to succeed in their academic career.

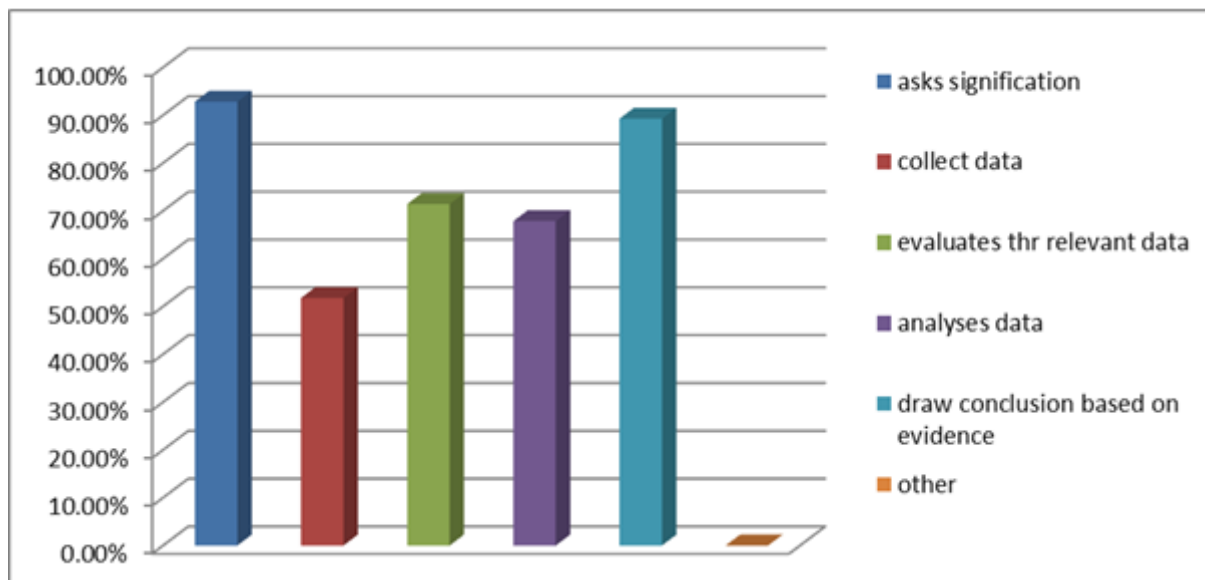
## **Section Two: Critical Thinking**

**Question Five:** Critical thinker is someone who can (more than option)

Table 3.5.

### *Characteristics of Critical Thinker*

Characteristics	Number (out of 56)	Percentage
Asks significant questions	52	92.85
Collects data	29	51.78
Evaluates the relevant data	40	71.42
analyses data	38	67.85
Draw conclusions based on evidence	50	89.28
Other	0	00.00



**Figure 3.5** Characteristics of Critical Thinker

As shown in table 3.5., the largest majority of students (92.85%) agreed that a critical thinker is someone who asks significant questions. This means that they are aware of the importance of questioning characteristic. The second large majority of students (89.28%) approved that critical thinker draws conclusions based on evidence, which indicates that students recognize the significance of constructing conclusion that follow logically the evidence. A significant percentage of students (71.42%) confirmed that a critical thinker evaluates the relevant data. This denotes that they know that evaluation is one of the most important skills of critical thinking. Many students answered that critical thinker is someone who analyses data, which suggests that they recognize the necessity of analyzing any given data. Almost half of the students (51.78%) agreed that critical thinker is someone who collects data, and this implies that they understand that collecting and gathering relevant data is an important step in critical thinking.

**Question Six:**

- a) Do you consider yourself a critical thinker?

Table 3.6.

*Students' Critical Thinking*

	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	89.28
No	6	10.71
Total	56	100

The mass majority of students (89.28%) claimed that they are critical thinker, which implies that they display some skills of critical thinking. However, very few students (10.71%) stated that they are not critical thinkers, and this indicates that they lack some skills of critical thinking or neglect its importance.

- b) Why?

Unfortunately students did not answer this question, which implies that they might be too lazy to answer it.

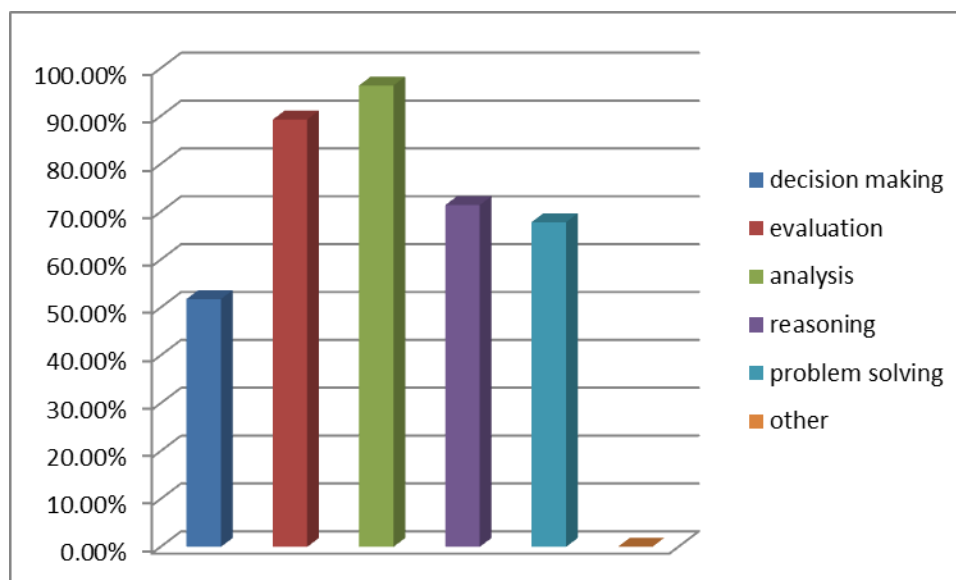
**Question Seven:**

- a) Which of these critical thinking skills need to be taught? (More than one option)

Table 3.7.

*Skills of Critical Thinking*

Characteristics	Number(out of 56)	Percentage
Decision making	29	51.78
Evaluation	50	89.28
Analysis	54	96.42
Reasoning	40	71.42
Problem-solving	38	67.85
Other	0	00.00

**Figure 3.6.** Skills of Critical Thinking

Concerning which skills of critical thinking needs to be taught, the mass majority of students (96.42%) opted for the analysis. Many students (89.28%) claimed that evaluation needs to be taught. 71.42% of students chose reasoning. Some students (67.85%) asserted that

the skill that needs to be taught is problem solving skill. Just few students selected decision making.

b) Explain why?

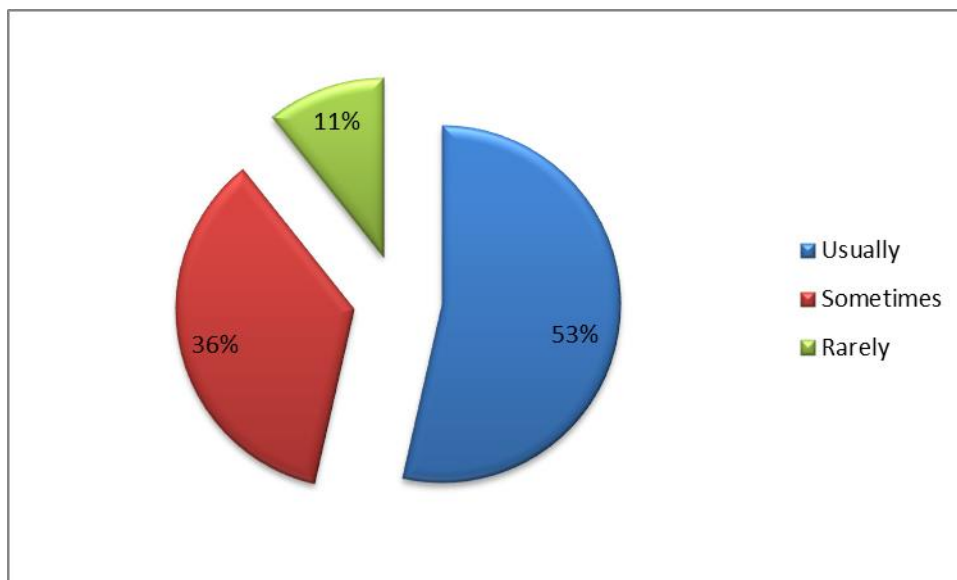
The majority of students justified their choice stating that: Analysis skill is necessary in all aspects of life. Many said that analyzing, evaluation, and reasoning are very important. Others explained that if you are an analyzer, evaluator, reasoner, problem solver, then you are a critical thinker. Some students claimed that all of these skills help us in our learning. Few students answered that analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and decision making bring success in all fields of life.

**Question Eight:** How often do you make correct decisions?

Table 3.8

*Frequency of Making Correct Decisions*

	Number	Percentage (%)
Always	0	00.00
Usually	30	53.57
Often	0	00.00
Sometimes	20	35.71
Rarely	6	10.71
Never	0	00.00
Total	56	100



**Figure 3.7.** Frequency of Making Correct Decisions

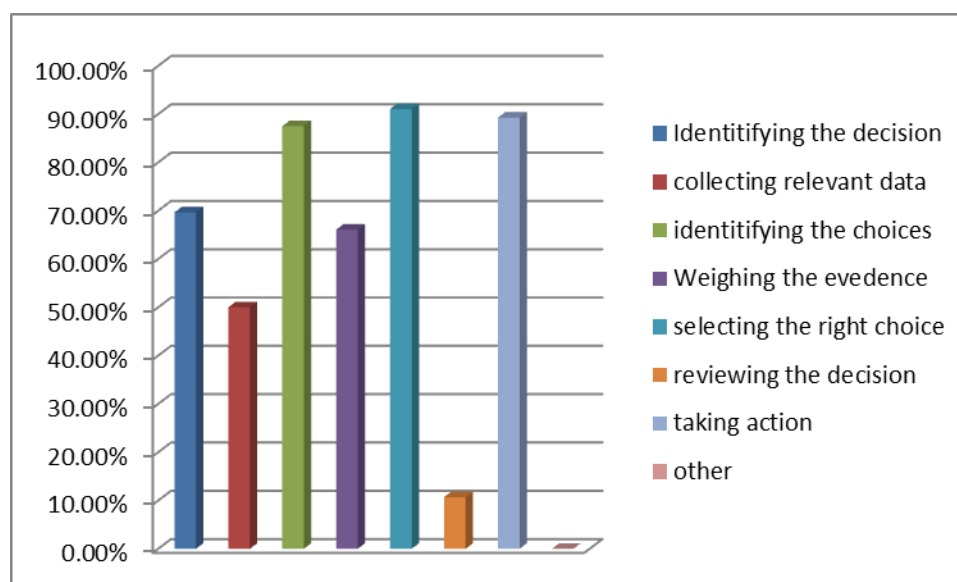
As shown in Table 3.8, more than half of the students (53.57%) claimed that they usually make correct decision, which implies that these students are good decision makers. Less than half of the students (35.71%) stated that they make sometimes correct decision, and this denotes that they display decision making skills but not effectively. Very few students (10.71%) declared that they rarely make good decisions. This suggests that they need to develop their decision making skill.

**Question Nine:** What are the processes you go through when making decision? (More than one option)

Table 3.9

*Decision Making Processes*

Process	Number (out of 56)	Percentage(%)
Identifying the decision	39	69.64
Collecting relevant data	28	50.00
Identifying the choices	49	87.50
Weighing the evidence	37	66.07
Selecting the right choice	51	91.07
Taking action	50	89.28
Reviewing the decision	6	10.71
Others	0	00.00

**Figure 3.8.** Decision Making Processes

As it is demonstrated in table 3.9, almost all students (91.07%) claimed that they go through the process of selecting the right choice, which implies that they are aware of the importance of making the best choice. Great number of students (89.28%) asserted that they go through taking action process when making decisions. This indicates that they implement the choice they select. A significant percentage of students (87.50%) chose identifying choices, and this means that they recognize the importance of identifying desirable choices. Many students (69.64%) stated that they go through the process of identifying the need to make a decision, which suggests that they are aware of the benefits of identifying the need in decision making. 66.07% of students opted for weighing the evidence process and this denotes that they assess the outcomes of their choices. Half of the students (50.00%) asserted that they go through the process of collecting relevant data, when they make decisions. This implies that they appreciate the relevance of gathering data to decision making. Surprisingly, only six students (10.71%) claimed that they go through the process of reviewing the decision, which indicates that the mass majority of the students ignores the significance of reviewing and revising their decisions.

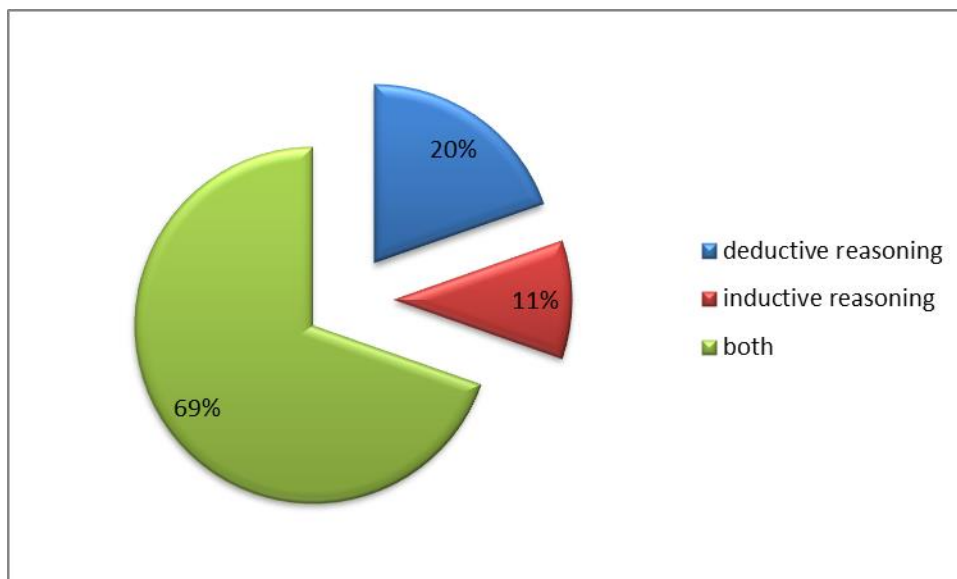
**Question Ten:** What do you use when constructing arguments?

Table 3.10

*Constructing Arguments*

Options	Number	Percentage(%)
Deductive reasoning	11	19.64
Inductive reasoning	6	10.71
Both	39	69.64
Total	56	100





**Figure 3.9.** Constructing Arguments

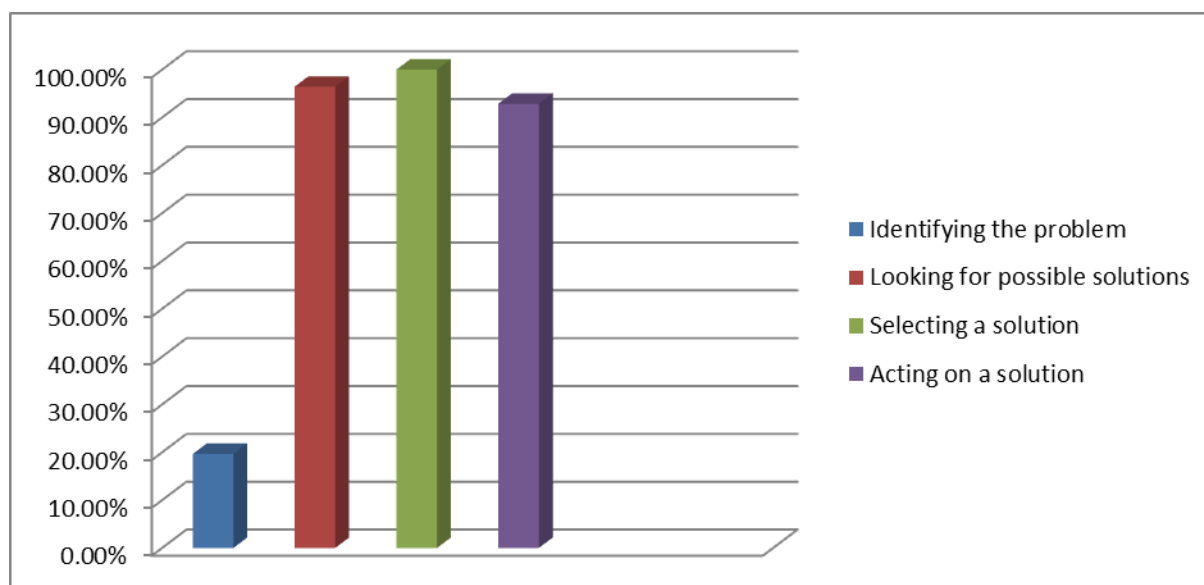
Table 3.10 shows that the majority of students (69.64%) uses both deductive and inductive reasoning when constructing arguments, which implies that they are aware of the importance of developing arguments, using both the deductive and inductive reasoning. 19.64% of students opted for deductive reasoning, and this suggests that they acknowledge the importance of deductive reasoning; but ignore the importance of the inductive one. Six students (10.71%) claimed that they use only inductive reasoning, which indicates that they recognize just the significance of inductive reasoning, but neglect the importance of deductive reasoning.

**Question Eleven:** What are the stages you go through to solve problem? (More than one option)

Table 3.11

*Stages of Problem Solving*

Stages	Number (out of 56)	Percentage (%)
Identifying the problem	11	19.64
Looking for possible solutions	54	96.42
Selecting a solution	56	100
Acting on a solution	52	92.85

**Figure 3.10.** Stages of Problem Solving

As it demonstrated in Table 3.11, all students (100%) claimed that they go through the stage of selecting a solution, which denotes that they know the significance and advantages of selecting a solution. Large number of students (96.42%) declared that they look for possible solutions, which implies that they recognize the necessity to think and search for possible solution to the problem. 92.85% of students asserted that they go through the stage of acting

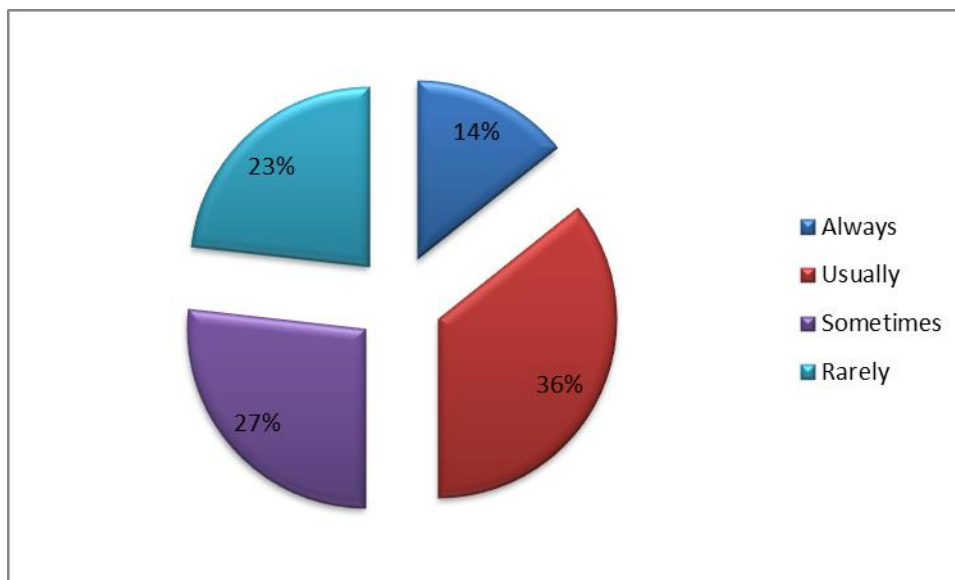
on a solution, and this indicates that they understand the need to implement and check the effectiveness of the solution. Unexpectedly, only few students (19.64%) stated that they identify the problem, which suggests that the majority of students are not aware of the importance of this stage and its impact, except few of them.

**Question Twelve:** How often do you evaluate your academic progress?

Table 3.12

*Frequency of Evaluating the Academic Progress*

	Number	Percentage (%)
Always	8	14.28
Usually	20	35.71
Often	0	00.00
Sometimes	15	26.78
Rarely	13	23.21
Never	0	00.00
Total	56	100



**Figure 3.11.** Frequency of Evaluating the Academic Progress

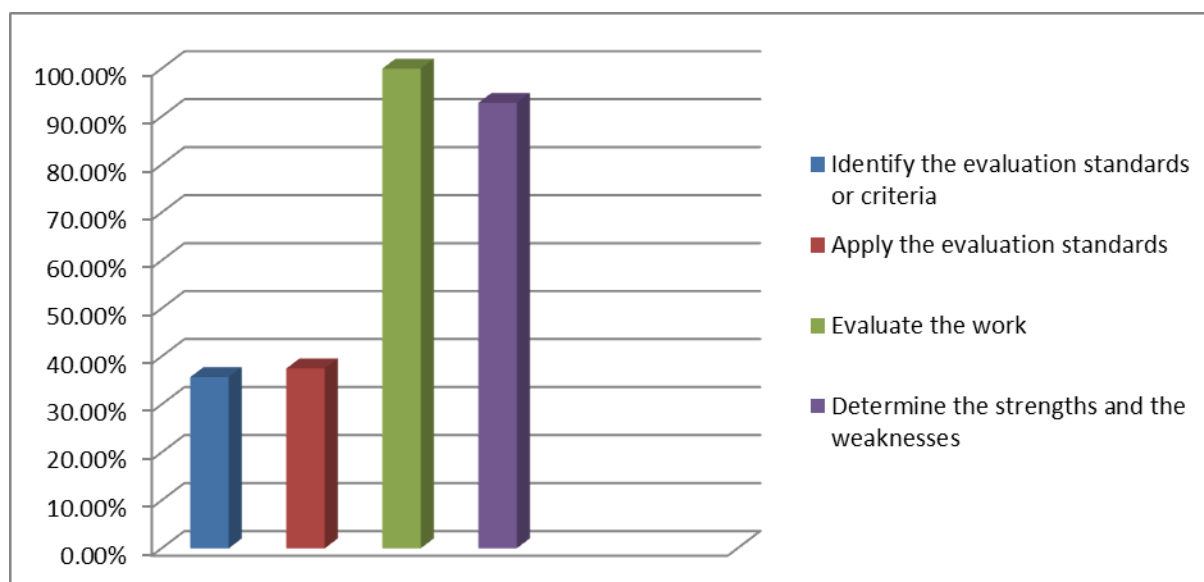
Table 3.10 shows the frequency of evaluating the academic progress among Master One students. The majority (35.71 %) asserted that they usually evaluate their academic progress; while 8 students (14.28%) stated that they always do it. This implies that they appreciate the importance of making self-evaluation. Some students (26.78%) claimed that they sometimes evaluate their academic progress, which denotes that, in a way, they are interested in making self-evaluation. Surprisingly, 23.21% of students stated that they rarely evaluate their academic progress, which indicates that they are not interested in evaluating their academic progress.

**Question Thirteen:** What are the steps you take to make self-evaluation? (More than one option)

Table 3.13

*Steps of Self-evaluation*

Steps	Number (out of 56)	Percentage (%)
Identify the evaluation standards or criteria	20	35.71
Apply the evaluation standards	21	37.50
Evaluate the work	56	100
Determine the strengths and the weaknesses	52	92.85

**Figure 3.11.** Steps of Self-evaluation

As it is shown in table 3.13, the entire students in the sample (100%) claimed that they evaluate their work, which indicates that they acknowledge the importance of evaluating it. The majority of students (92.85%) stated that they determine the strengths and weaknesses, and this implies that they are aware of the benefits of highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. 37.50% of students asserted that they apply the evaluation standards. This

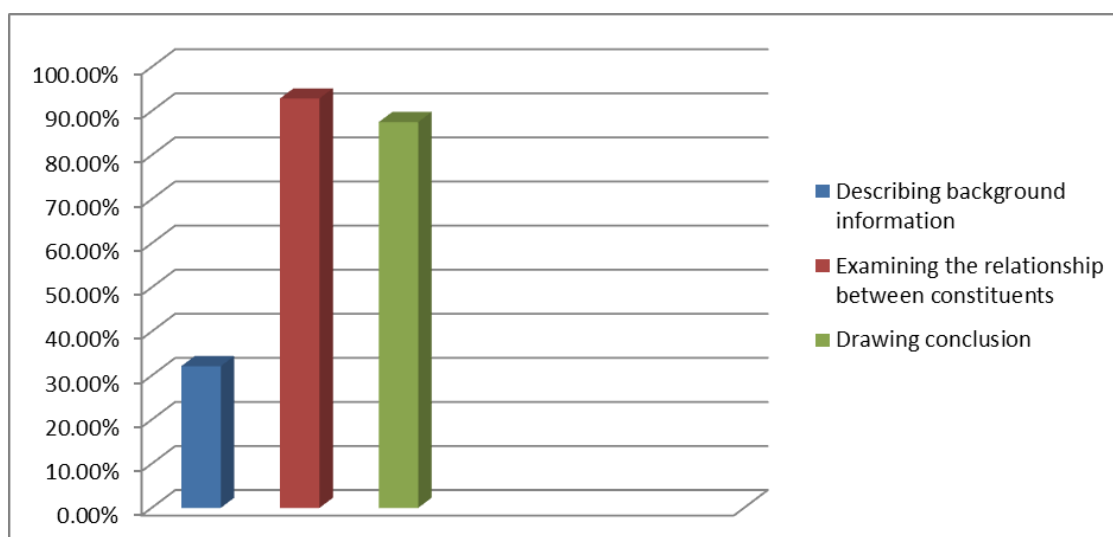
suggests that they recognize the relevance of applying the evaluation standards on their works. Some students (35.71%) declared that they identify the evaluation standards or criteria, which implies that only these students appreciate the significance of identifying the evaluation standards; while more than half of the students ignore its significance or may be unconscious when doing so.

**Question Fourteen:** What does critical analysis involve? (More than one option)

Table 3.14

*Critical Analysis Process*

Processes	Number (out of 56)	Percentage (%)
Describing background information	18	32.14
Examining the relationship between constituents	52	92.85
Drawing conclusion	49	87.50



**Figure 3.12.** Critical Analysis Process

According to the findings in table 3.14, nearly all the students (92.85%) claimed that they examine the relationship between constituents, which denotes that they appreciate the importance of analyzing the relationship that exists between constituents. Many students (87.50%) opted for drawing conclusion, which implies that they evaluate what they have reached, draw conclusion, and make implication. 32.14% of students stated that they describe background information. This indicates that they recognize the significance of the background information in defining the topic or the problem they are dealing with.

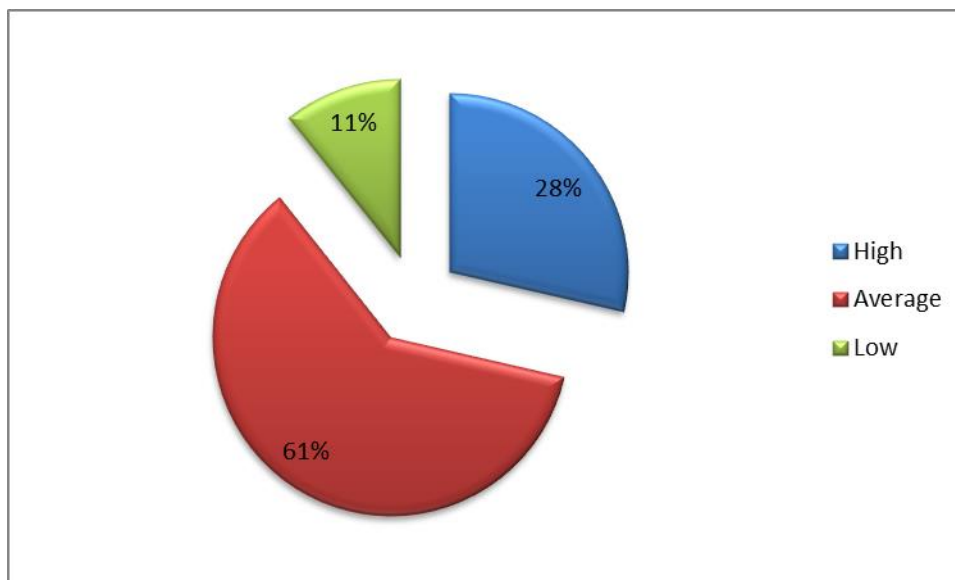
### **Section Three: Essay Writing**

**Question Fifteen:** How is your writing proficiency?

Table 3.15

*Students' Writing Proficiency*

Level	Number	Percentage (%)
High	16	28.57
Average	34	60.71
Low	6	10.71
Total	56	100



**Figure 3.13.** Students' Writing Proficiency

As Table 3.15 demonstrates, the majority of students (60.71%) asserted that their writing proficiency is average, which indicates that they face some difficulties when writing. 28.57% of students stated that they have high level of the writing proficiency, which implies that they master the writing skill. Whereas, few students (10.71%) claimed that they have low level in the writing proficiency. This suggests that they are facing many difficulties, which they need to overcome.

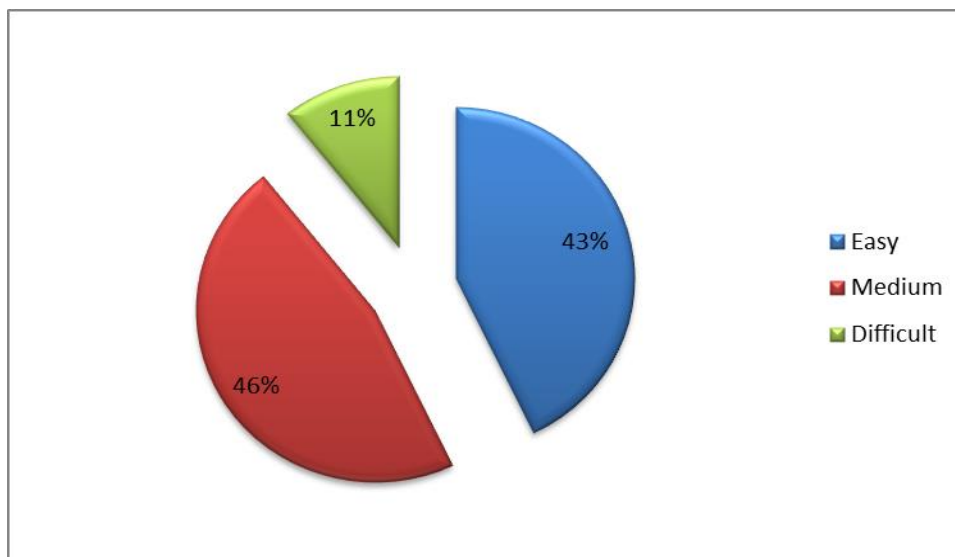
**Question Sixteen:** How do you find essay writing task?

Table 3.16

*Students' Essay Writing*

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
Easy	24	42.85
Medium	26	46.42
Difficult	6	10.71
Total	56	100





**Figure 3.14.** Students' Essay Writing

According to table 3.16, nearly half of the students (46.42%) claimed that they find essay writing task medium, which suggests that they do not have sufficient knowledge about essay writing. 42.85% of students opted for easy, which indicates that they master all the principles and rules of essay writing. Only six students stated that the essay writing task is difficult. This denotes that they have low essay writing proficiency.

**Question Seventeen:** Do you like to write about?

Table 3.17

*Topic of the Essay*

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
Topic of your choice	30	53.57
Set topic	26	46.42
Both	0	00.00
Total	56	100

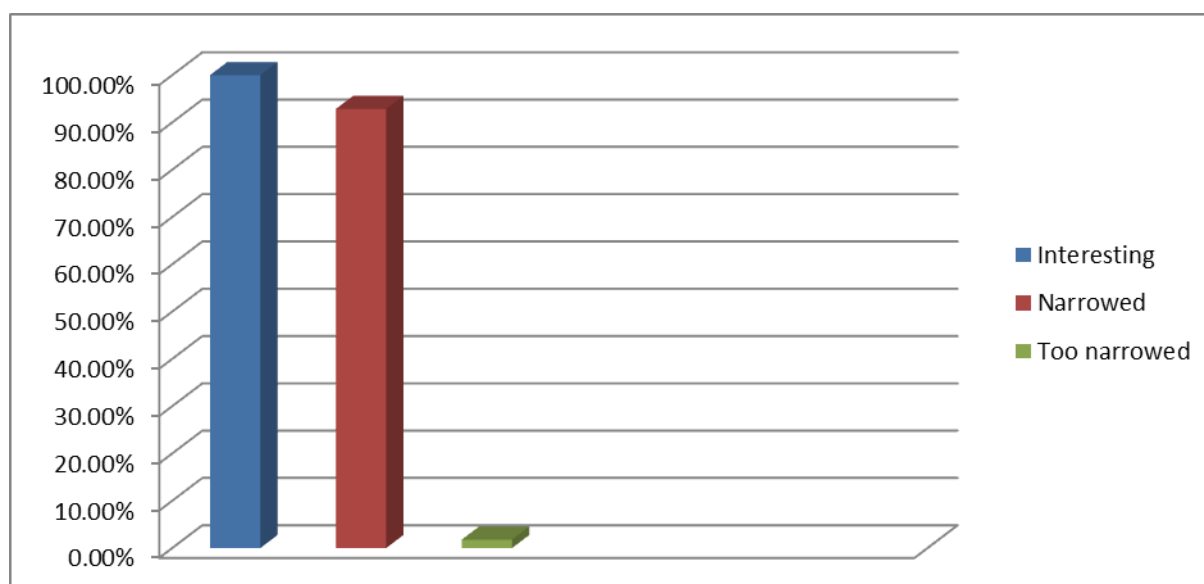
According to table 3.17, the majority of students (53.57%) claimed that they like to write about topic of their choice. This denotes that they like to have freedom control over their writing. 46.42% of students stated that they prefer to write about set topic, which indicates that they prefer to be limited about what they write.

**Question Eighteen:** A good essay topic should be? (More than one option)

Table 3.18

*Characteristics of Essay Topic*

Options	Number (out of 56)	Percentage
Interesting	56	100%
General	0	00.00%
Narrowed	52	92.85 %
Too narrowed	1	01.78%



**Figure 3.16.** Characteristics of Essay Topic

As demonstrated in table 3.18, all students claimed (100%) that the essay topic should be interesting. 92.85 % of students opted for narrowed, which denotes that they are aware of the characteristics of good essay topic. Whereas, only one student (01.78%) chose too narrowed, which indicates that s/he ignores the main characteristics of a good essay topic.

**Question Nineteen:** How often do you consider the following when writing an essay?

Table 3.19

*Students' Consideration When Writing an Essay*

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Always		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Essay starts with introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	100	56	100
The thesis statement informs the reader of the content and the direction of the essay	0	0	3	5.35	13	23.21	43	76.78	56	100
Each paragraph in the body of the essay develops one main point (topic sentence)	0	0	0	0	21	37.5	35	62.5	56	100
Topic sentence supports the thesis of the essay	0	0	3	5.35	27	48.21	26	46.42	56	100
The conclusion brings the main ideas in one paragraph	0	0	0	0	5	8.92	51	91.07	56	100

According to table 3.19, the entire students (100%) claimed that they always consider that essay starts with an introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. This indicates that they have well acquired all the rules of essay structure.

The majority of the students (76.78%) asserted that they always consider that the thesis statement informs the reader of the content and direction of the essay. 23.21% of the students opted for sometimes, which implies that they know the function and characteristics of the thesis statement. While, few students (5.35%) opted for rarely, which denotes that they do not recognize the function and importance of the thesis statement.

A large number of students (62.5%) stated that they consider that each paragraph in the body of the essay develops one main point when writing an essay, which denotes that they have sufficient knowledge about writing paragraph and structure of the essay. 37.5% of the students chose sometimes and this suggests that they know some rules concerning writing paragraph.

Almost half of the students (48.21%) answered that they sometimes consider that the topic sentence supports the thesis of the essay when writing an essay, which indicates that they know some of the basic rules about the relationship between the topic sentence and the thesis statement. 46.42% of the students chose always, which suggests that they master the rules concerning the relationship and the connection between the topic sentence and the thesis statement. Only three students (5.35%) opted for rarely which indicates that they lack the knowledge of relationship between the topic sentence and the thesis statement.

The mass majority of the students (91.07%) claimed that they always consider that the conclusion brings the main ideas in one paragraph. 8.925% of the students opted for sometimes. This suggests that the majority of students learnt how to write conclusion.

**Question Twenty:** Do you write an outline before you write your essay?

Table 3.20

*The Essay Outline*

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	29	51.78
No	27	48.21
Total	56	100

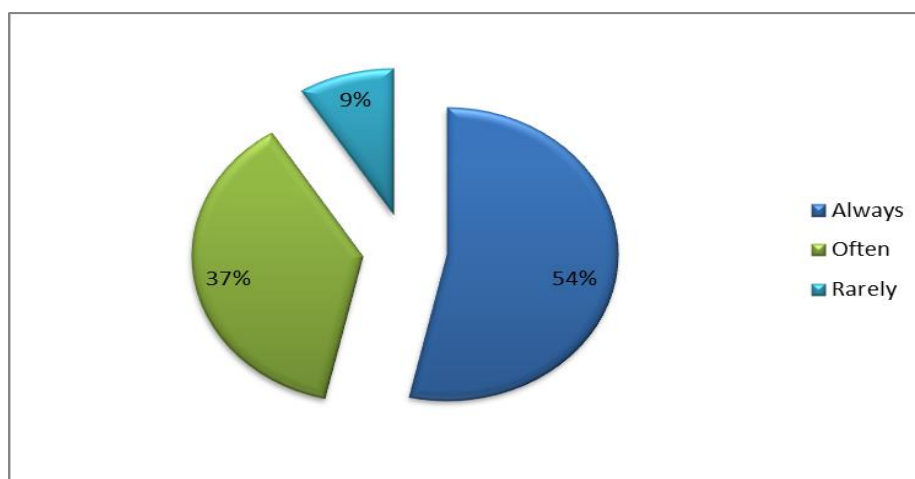
According to Table 3.20, more than half of the students (51.78%) stated that they write an outline, which implies that they recognize the importance of making an outline before writing the essay. 48.21% of the students opted for no, which indicates that they neglect the importance of writing an outline.

**Question Twenty-one:** How often do you evaluate (revise and edit) your assignment before submission?

Table 3.21

*Frequency of Evaluating the Assignment*

	Number	Percentage(%)
Always	30	53.57
Usually	0	00.00
Often	21	37.50
Sometimes	0	00.00
Rarely	5	08.92
Never	0	00.00
Total	56	100

**Figure 3.17.** Frequency of Evaluating the Assignment

As demonstrated in table 3.21, more than half of the students (53.57%) claimed that they always evaluate their assignment before submission, which indicates that they are aware of

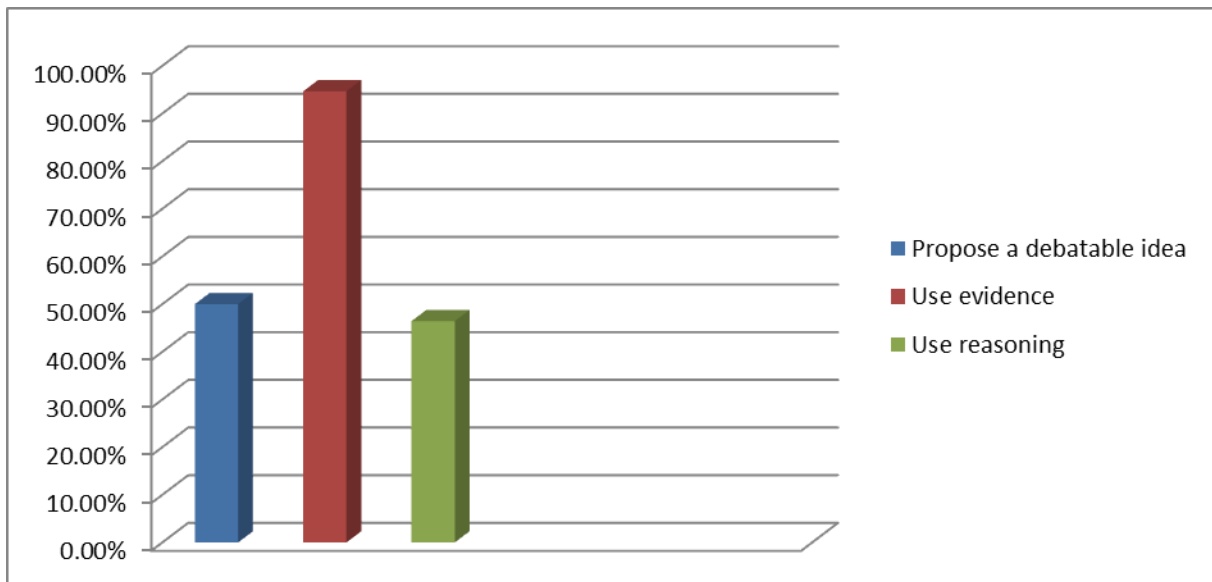
the importance and impact of revising and editing in their academic studies. 37.50% of students stated that they often evaluate their assignment, which implies that they recognize some advantages of revising and editing processes. Only five students (08.92%) opted for rarely, and this indicates that they ignore the importance of revising and editing the assignment.

**Question Twenty-two:** What do you do to write a good argumentative essay? (More than one option)

Table 3.22

*Steps of Argumentative Essay*

Steps	Number (out of 56)	Percentage (%)
Propose a debatable idea	28	50.00
Use evidence	53	94.64
Use reasoning	26	46.42
Others	0	00.00



**Figure 3.18.** Steps of Argumentative Essay

According to Table 3.22, the large majority of students (94.64%) declared that they use evidence to write a good argumentative essay. This denotes that they master one the most important feature of argumentative essay which is the use of evidence. Half of the students (50.00%) asserted that they propose debatable idea, which implies that they know how to introduce the argumentative essay. Almost half of the students (46.42%) opted for reasoning, which indicates that they recognize the necessity to use reasoning in writing argumentative essay especially in constructing strong arguments.

**Question Twenty-three** When you write a problem-solution essay, do you identify the problem?

Table 3.23

*Students' Identification of the Problem*

	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	33	58.92
No	23	41.07
Total	56	100



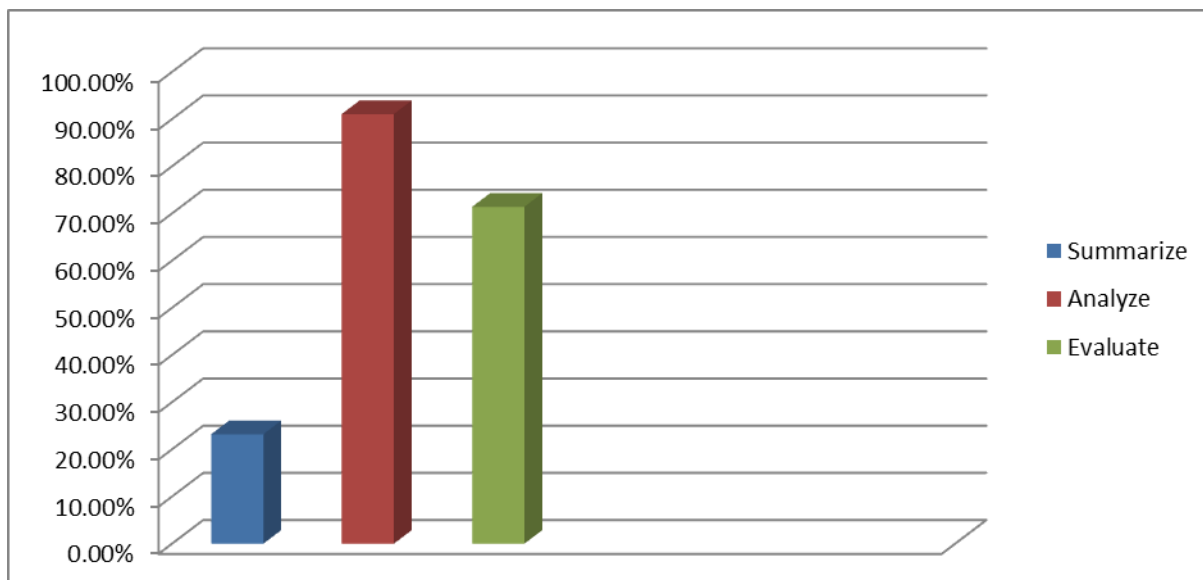
Concerning students' identification of the problem when writing a problem-solution essay, 58.92% of students opted for yes, which indicates that the majority of the students knows the basics about how to write a problem solution essay. Whereas, 41.07% of the students opted for no which means that they lack the proficiency of writing a problem solution essay.

**Question Twenty-four:** What do you do to write a critical analysis essay? (More than one option)

Table 3.24

*Steps of Critical Analysis Essay*

	Number (out of 56)	Percentage (%)
Summarize	13	23.21
Analyze	51	91.07
Evaluate	40	71.42
Others	0	00.00



**Figure 3.19.** Steps of Critical Analysis Essay

According to table 3.24, a great number of students (91.07%) stated that they analyze when they are asked to write critical analysis essay. This indicates that they are familiar with this type of essay and recognize the importance of analysis. 71.42% of the students opted for evaluate, which implies that they acknowledge the necessity of evaluation in this type of essay. Few students (23.21%) opted for summarize, which denotes that only minority of students recognize the need to make summary in the critical analysis essay.

**Question Twenty-five:** How important is the decision making skill in deciding about the following?

Table 3.25

*The importance of decision making*

	Not at all		A Little		Important		Very important		Total	
	Number	Per centage	Number	Per centage	Number	Per centage	Number	Per centage	Number	Percentage
The essay topic	0	0	5	08.9	30	53.5	21	37.5	56	100
				2		7		0		
The thesis statement	0	0	10	17.8	40	71.4	6	10.7	56	100
				5		2		1		
The topic sentence	0	0	14	25	27	48.2	15	26.7	56	100
						1		8		
The outline	2	3.71	18	32.1	36	64.2	0	0	56	100
				4		8				

As table 3.25 shows, more than half of the students (53.57%) asserted that decision making skill is important in deciding about the essay topic. 37.50% of the students opted for very important. This indicates that the majority of the students experienced the advantages of decision making in selecting the topic of the essay. Only five students (08.92%) opted for a little important, which implies that very few students ignore the advantages of decision making skill.

The largest majority of the students (71.42%) stated that they find decision making skill important in deciding about the thesis statement. 10.71% of the students chose very

important. This denotes that they benefited from decision making skill in deciding about the thesis statement. Few students (17.85%) opted for little important, which implies that they neglect the benefits of decision making skill in deciding about the thesis statement.

Nearly half of the students (48.21%) declared that decision making skill is important in deciding about the topic sentence. 26.78% of the students opted for very important. This suggests that they agree about the advantages of decision making skill in deciding about the topic sentence. Some students (25%) opted for a little important, which denotes that they do not recognize the advantages of decision making skill in deciding about the topic sentence.

Many students (64.28%) asserted that decision making skill is important in deciding about the outline, which implies that they acknowledge the importance and benefits of decision making skill in deciding about the outline. 32.14% of the students opted for a little important. Two students (3.71%) chose not at all. This indicates that they ignore the advantages and significance of decision making skill in designing the outline of the essay.

**Question Twenty-six:** Is problem solving skill useful in writing problem-solution essay?

Table 3.26

*Usefulness of Problem Solving Skill*

	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	37	66.07
No	19	33.93
Total	56	100

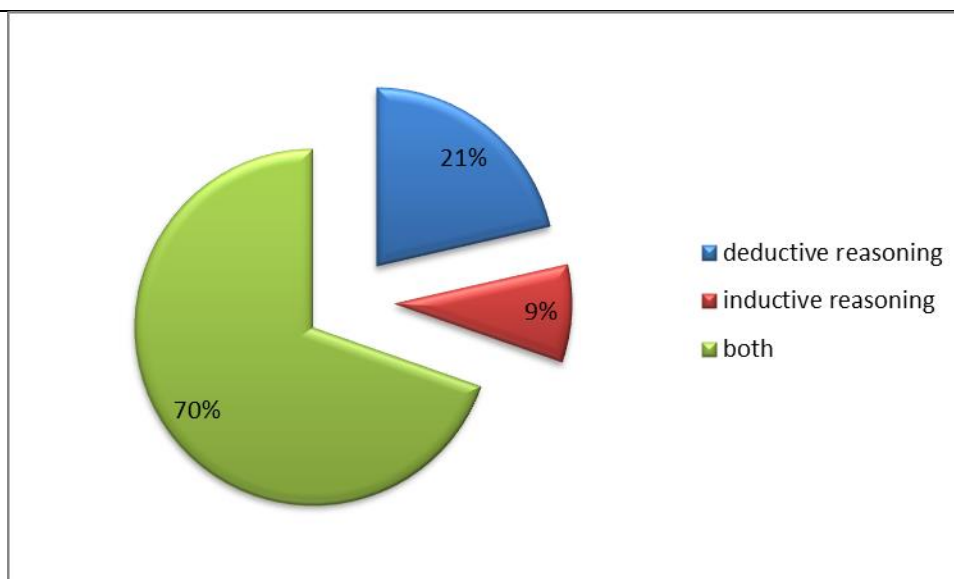
As table 3.26, significant percentage of students (66.07 %) claimed that problem solving skill is useful in writing problem-solution essay, which implies that they confirm the usefulness and importance of problem solving skill, when writing problem solution essay. Some students (33.93%) answered with no, which implies that they are not aware of the usefulness and importance of problem solving skill is in writing problem-solution essay.

**Question Twenty-seven:** What do you use when developing argumentative essay?

Table 3.27

*Developing Argumentative Essay*

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
Deductive reasoning	12	21.42
Inductive reasoning	5	08.92
Both	39	69.64
Total	56	100



**Figure 3.20.** Developing Argumentative Essay

According to the result presented in table 3.27, the majority of students (69.64%) admitted that they use both deductive and inductive reasoning when writing argumentative essay, which indicates that these two types of reasoning are necessary for developing a good argumentative essay. 21.42% of students opted for deductive reasoning, which means that they acknowledge the importance of deductive reasoning in writing argumentative essay. 8.92% of the students opted for inductive reasoning, which indicates that they appreciate the significance of inductive reasoning; but ignore the importance of deductive reasoning in developing argumentative essay.

**Question Twenty-eight:** Does analysis skill help in understanding the essay assignment?

Table 3.28

*Understanding the Essay Assignment*

	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	47	83.93
No	9	16.07
Total	56	100

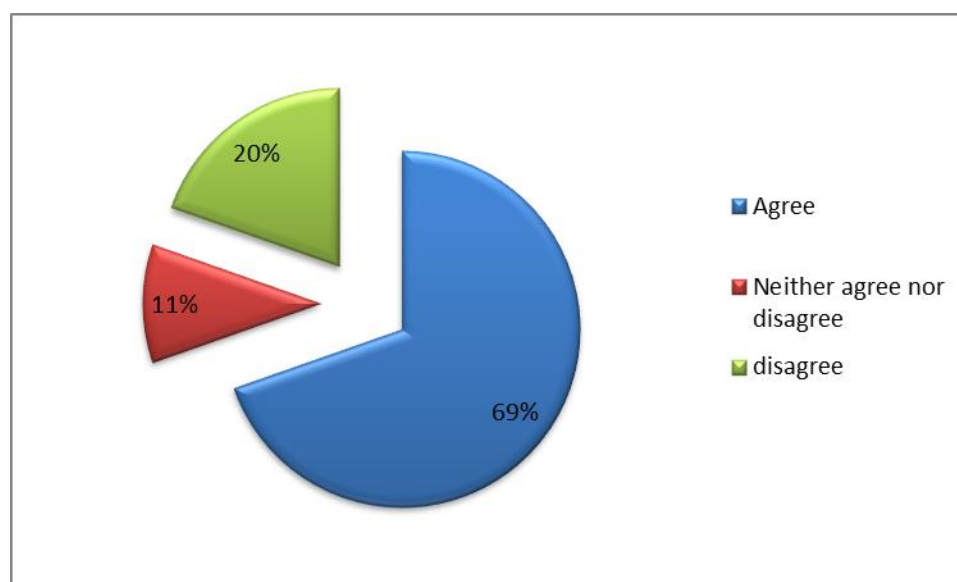
As shown in the previous table, 83.93% of students stated that analysis skill help in understanding the essay assignment, which indicates that analysis skill is of great significance in understanding the essay assignment due to the fact that it helps students to figure out what they are required to write. While 16.07% of students answered with no, which implies that they ignore the significance of the analysis skill.

**Question Twenty-nine:** Do you agree that critical analysis help in writing better critical analysis essay?

Table 3.29

*Usefulness of Critical Analysis in Writing Critical Analysis Essay*

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
Agree	39	69.64
Neither agree nor disagree	6	10.71
Disagree	11	19.64
Total	56	100



**Figure 3.21.** Usefulness of Critical Analysis in Writing Critical Analysis Essay

According to table 3.29, large number of students (69.64%) agreed that critical analysis helps in writing better critical analysis essay, which denotes that critical analysis plays an important role in developing critical analysis essay. 19.64% of students disagreed, which suggests that they neglect the paramount importance of critical analysis in writing critical analysis essay. 19.64% of the students were indecisive, which suggests that they do not have a clear idea about how to use critical analysis in writing critical analysis essay.

**Question Thirty:** Does self-evaluation skill facilitate the process of?

Table 3.30

*Self-evaluation*

	Number	Percentage (%)
Revising	7	12.50
Editing	0	00.00
Both	49	87.50
Total	56	100

Concerning table 3.30, the mass majority of students (87.50%) asserted that self-evaluation skill facilitates the process of revising and editing. This suggests that there is a relationship between self-evaluation skill and both revising and editing processes; which results in positive effects. Very few students (12.50%) opted for revising only, which indicates that self-evaluation skill is useful and important when revising the essay.

**Question Thirty-one:** Could you please add any comments or suggestions on the role of critical thinking in improving essay writing proficiency?



Some students (21.42%) (12 out of 56) have provided further suggestions and comments that can be summarized as follows:

- Critical thinking shows that you are a knowledgeable writer.
- Critical thinking is very important in enhancing essay writing.
- Critical thinking enables the learners to analyze the question of the essay and answer it in perfect way.
- Critical thinking helps in writing very organized essay with fruitful information.
- Critical thinking makes students evaluate their achievements, which will lead to improving their skills, especially writing.
- Critical thinking helps in building strong argumentative essay.
- Since Critical thinking facilitates solving problems in our life, it will easily solve the problems we face in our essay writing.
- Critical thinking is important in writing well thought essay.
- To a write successful essay one must be a successful critical thinker first.
- All the skills of critical thinking contribute in improving essay writing.

Based on students' suggestions and comments, it can be said that students are aware of the importance of all the skills of critical thinking in improving the essay writing proficiency.

#### **3.1.4.2 Summary of Results and Findings from Students' Questionnaire**

The section about general information shows that all students are aged between 22 and 25, which implies that they are mature and adults. Additionally, the entire students studied English language for at least eleven years which indicates that they familiar with English language. Moreover, the majority of students are studying English out of their personal choice, which makes them motivated and interested in improving their level. This section also

demonstrates that the majority of students have a very effective command of the English language.

Concerning Critical Thinking (section two), the majority of students recognize the basic characteristics of critical thinker. Based on the latter, most of the students identified themselves as critical thinkers. Large number of students asserted that they are familiar with decision making process, which enables them to make correct decision usually. Nearly all the students declared that they use deductive and inductive reasoning when constructing arguments, which indicates they are aware of the importance of both types of reasoning when arguing.

Concerning problem solving skill, the majority of students claimed that they go through all the stages of this skill: looking for possible solution, selecting a solution, acting on a solution, yet only few of them opted for the first stage: Identifying the problem. All students pointed out that they evaluate their academic progress with varying frequency, which suggests that they are interested in making self-evaluation. When asked about the processes of critical analysis, the majority of the students affirmed that they examine the relationship between constituents and draw conclusions; while few of them added that they describe background information. In the light of all the previous answers, it can be said that all students acknowledge the importance of critical thinking skills.

Essay Writing (section three) covers questions about students' essay writing proficiency and the relationship between critical thinking and essay writing. The majority of students asserted that they have good level in writing proficiency, which makes the essay writing task easy to medium for them. Additionally, more than half of the students stated that they prefer to write about topic of their choice rather than set topic, which suggests that they like to be autonomous in their writing or they might face difficulty in understanding the topic of the

assignment. When asked about characteristics of the essay topic, most of students opted for interesting and narrowed, which means that they are familiar with criteria of good topic.

Furthermore, the majority of students admitted that when writing an essay they consider that: Essay starts with introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion; the thesis statement informs the reader of the content and the direction of the essay; each paragraph in the body of the essay develops one main point; the topic sentence supports the thesis statement; conclusion brings the main ideas in one paragraph. This denotes that they have sufficient knowledge about the structure of the essay. More than half of the students declared that they write an outline before drafting the essay, which shows that they are aware of its importance. Significant percentage of students claimed that they evaluate their assignment before submission, which implies that they recognize the significance of revising and editing processes.

Concerning the steps of argumentative essay, many students stated that they propose a debatable idea, use evidence and reasoning, which means that they know how to write a good argumentative essay. Great number of students affirmed that they need to identify the problem when writing a problem solution essay. Many students pointed out that they are familiar with the processes of critical analysis essay. All of this, make it noticeable that they are knowledgeable about the basics of this three types of essay.

Equally important, this section shows that more than half of the students acknowledged the importance of decision making skill in deciding about the essay topic, the thesis statement, the topic sentence, and the outline. Besides, the majority of the students admitted that problem solving skill is very useful in writing good problem solution essay. Likewise, they agreed that both deductive and inductive reasoning are necessary for developing a good argumentative essay. Concerning whether analysis skill helps in understanding the essay assignment or not,

the majority of students answered with yes, which shows that analyzing the essay assignment is needed to figure out what they are required to do. Similarly, almost the same portion of students agreed that critical analysis helps in writing better critical analysis essay. More than that, most of the students asserts that self-evaluation skill facilitate the process of revising and editing. All in all, the majority of the students appear to display some critical thinking skills when it comes to essays writing, which make them stress the importance of the skills of critical thinking.

## **3.2 Teachers' Interview**

### **3.2.1 Population of the Study**

This interview targets Master One teachers at the department of English, 8 May 1945 University, Guelma. The sample of this study is chosen randomly. In other words, there are no prior considerations in regard to the selection of the teachers. Due to the fact that the research being conducted is limited by time, only three teachers out of nine were interviewed.

### **3.2.2. Description of Teachers' Interview**

The present interview consists of eleven questions, which are ordered thematically. Almost the whole questions are open-ended, which makes the nature of the obtained data qualitative. Additionally, this interview is based on the previous theoretical chapters as the students' questionnaire. The main purpose behind conducting this interview is to explore teachers' attitudes and perceptions about the importance of critical thinking in essay writing.

Question one (Q1) was general question that gives an idea about the interviewees' teaching experience with Master One classes. Question two till four tackle the teachers' perceptions about critical thinking, its importance, and relevance in essay writing. Question five till ten attempt to investigate the role of critical thinking skills (decision making, reasoning, problem-

solving, analysis, evaluation) in enhancing essay writing. The last question (Q11) offers free space for the teachers to add any comments, suggestions or recommendations regarding the research topic.

### 3.2.3 Administration of Teachers' Interview

The administration of this interview took place at the Department of English in 8 Mai 1945 university, Guelma, and lasted for one week starting from April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 till May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. The duration of the interview differed from one teacher to another; because of the qualitative nature of the interview questions and the teachers' background knowledge. Subsequently, some of the interviews lasted for 25-30 minutes, while one interview took 14 minutes. Generally, all the teachers did not face any difficulty in answering the questions.

### 3.2.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

#### 3.2.4.1 Analysis of Results and Findings from Teachers' Interview

**Question One:** For how many years have you been teaching Master one classes?

Table 3.31

*Teachers' Period of Teaching Master One*

	Number
Less than four years	0
Four years	1
More than four years	2

According to table 3.31, two teachers stated that they have taught Master one for more than four years. Whereas only one teacher claimed that s/he has taught Master one students for four years. This denotes that all the interviewed teachers have reasonable teaching experiences.

**Question Two:** Could you explain to me your perception of critical thinking?

All of the three teachers have different perception of critical thinking. One says that critical thinking is deep reflection of ideas using different faculties of reasoning. Another stated that critical thinking is the learners' ability to think about their thinking. The third teacher admitted that critical thinking is the process of questioning and judging the information based on Logical criteria. These answers indicate that all the interviewees are familiar to some extent with critical thinking.

**Question Three:** How often do you think that critical thinking should be taught at the department of English and why?

The three teachers agreed that critical thinking should be taught at the department of English. Two teachers declared that it should be integrated in all the modules, because of its vital importance to reach any academic achievement. The third teacher declared that it has to be taught as an independent course at least once a week, because everything in our life requires thinking. All of this implies that critical thinking is necessary in the process of acquiring knowledge.

**Question Four:** What do you think about the importance of critical thinking in essay writing?

This is the main question in this interview as it tackles directly the topic in question. The first teacher stated that critical thinking is an essential faculty in essay writing not only in argumentative essay, but in all types of essay. The second teacher claimed that critical

thinking is very important in the word choice and organization of ideas in all types of essay. The last interviewed teacher said that writing is an intellectual process; so critical thinking must be there. All of the previous answers show that critical thinking is of paramount importance in essay writing.

**Question Five:** Is decision making skill useful in essay writing concerning the essay topic, thesis statement, topic sentence, and outline? Could you elaborate your answer?

All the interviewees agreed strongly that decision making skill is useful in essay writing. Two teachers justified their answers saying that, since the writer must choose a good topic; thesis statement; topic sentence; and outline, s/he needs to be a good decision maker to make the right choice. Another teacher explained that decision making is crucial skill that helps the learners in selecting: an interesting topic, good thesis statement, related topic sentence, and well organized outline. This denotes that decision making skill is very helpful in essay writing.

**Question Six:** What is the role of deductive and inductive reasoning in developing argumentative essay?

One teacher pointed out that both deductive and inductive reasoning are necessary to reach the purpose of argumentative essay, which is persuasion. Another teacher declared that deductive and inductive reasonings give more credibility to the premises. The last teacher stated that argumentative essay is based on logic, and deductive and inductive reasoning are logical processes that are needed to develop any arguments or argumentative writing. This shows that deductive reasoning and inductive reasonings play major role in building strong argumentative essay.

**Question Seven:** How can problem solving skill help in writing problem-solution essay?

The first interviewee affirmed that problem-solution essay needs problem solving skill, which provides the writer with the appropriate mechanisms and sub-skills such as identifying the problem and selecting solution. The second interviewee explained that when a student writes problem solution essay s/he is describing the process of problem solving. The third interviewee claimed that when the procedure of solving problem already exists in the mind of the writer then solving problem of the essay will be an easy task. This implies that problem-solving skill is very relevant and useful in problem solution essay, in the sense that it facilitates the process of solving the essay problem successfully.

**Question Eight:** Does analysis skill help in understanding the assignment? Explain why?

All the interviewees confirmed that analysis skill helps in understanding the assignment. One interviewee elucidated that, whenever students face ambiguity and difficulty in understanding the assignment, they try to decode the question and find the key words. By the end of these processes of analysis, they will understand the assignment. The other interviewees explained that if the learner does not analyze the assignment s/he will probably be unable to answer the question in the right way. In the light of the previous answers, one can deduce that understanding the assignment depends on students' analysis skill.

**Question Nine:** What is the role of critical analysis in writing a good critical analysis essay?

The first teacher stated that critical analysis has vital role in critical analysis essay. In other words, writing a critical analysis essay about certain work is based on critical analysis. The second teacher said that if the learners are not critical analyzers, then they cannot analyze any sort of content and write about it. So, before writing one must first develop his/her critical analysis. The third teacher admitted that critical analysis skill provides the writer with appropriate method and procedure to analyze any piece of writing. Thus without critical



analysis skill, students cannot produce any type of analytical writing. This indicates that critical analysis is a necessary skill that should be present when writing critical analysis essay.

**Question Ten:** How could self-evaluation improve essay writing?

One teacher clarified that self-evaluation enhances all mental and intellectual abilities, and writing is one of them. Another teacher added that self-evaluation is necessary to improve essay writing. In other words, when one evaluates his/her writing s/he will notice his/her strengths and weaknesses that need improvements. The last teacher declared that self-evaluation is very important skill that helps the writer to write better essays, through promoting revising and editing processes. This suggests that this complex skill facilitates two important processes which are revising and editing that lead to improve essay writing.

**Question Eleven:** Do you have further comments, suggestions or recommendations?

All the interviewed teachers provided comments and suggestions that can be summarized as the following:

- This topic is very relevant and important; it should be taken seriously.
- Critical thinking is very important; it should be at least taught as lessons in all modules especially written expression and reading.
- Foreign language teachers should promote critical thinking in their classes.

All of these suggestions and comments prove that teachers are aware of the importance of critical thinking in education, especially writing proficiency. They also show that teachers are willing to advocate and promote critical thinking among their learners.

#### **3.2.4.2. Summary of Results and Findings from Teachers' Interview**

According to the results obtained from teachers' interview, one can notice that all the interviewed teachers have reasonable teaching experiences with Master One students.

Additionally, all the interviewed teachers appear to be familiar with critical thinking, as they provide different but relevant definition. Besides, they all agreed that critical thinking should be taught at the department of English and they provided different reasons that justify their answers. Moreover, the three interviewees emphasized that critical thinking is of paramount importance in essay writing.

As noticed from their views, all the teachers agreed strongly that decision making skill is useful in essay writing, especially in deciding about the essay topic, thesis statement, topic sentence, and outline. Furthermore, the three respondents admitted that deductive and inductive reasonings play major role in building strong argumentative essay. The interviewed teachers claimed that problem solving skill is very relevant and useful in problem-solution essay. In other words, problem solving facilitates the process of solving the essay problem successfully, through providing the appropriate procedures to do so.

Concerning whether analysis skill helps in understanding the assignment or not, they all approved and provide similar justification, which denotes that understanding the assignment depends on students' analysis skill. Moreover, the interrogated teachers affirmed that critical analysis plays major role in analytical essay, which indicates that critical analysis is a necessary skill that should be present when writing critical analysis essay. According to their answers, all the three interviewed teachers confirmed that self-evaluation helps in improving essay writing, which suggests that this complex skill facilitates two important processes which are revising and editing that lead to improve essay writing. In consistency with the results in students' questionnaire, the interview findings confirm the hypothesis of the thesis, which posits that students possess a positive attitude towards critical thinking and display a tendency towards critical thinking skills, whenever they write essays.

## **Recommendations for Further Studies**

The main academic contribution of the present research is to advocate critical thinking among learners. Indeed, the results of this study prove that critical thinking is of paramount importance in essay writing. Yet, not all policy makers, teachers, and students are aware about the need for critical thinking. Consequently, it would be valuable to make recommendations and suggestions that may help in closing this gap.

Since LMD system aims at creating self-sufficient learners who are able to infer, interpret, analyze, criticize, and evaluate information and not just absorb whatever presented to them, it would be advisable if policy makers and decision makers integrate implicitly or explicitly critical thinking in all departments, especially the English department. This could be done through teaching critical thinking as a separate module or integrate it into other courses as Literature, Reading Techniques, and Written Expression.

Teaching critical thinking for students is a crucial need. Hence, teachers are required to promote critical thinking skills in their classes. They should look for interesting and useful strategies to impart skills of critical thinking into students. One way to do this is to target some cognitive tasks associated with critical thinking, such as: involving students in constructive discussions, asking significant questions, comparing two sources addressing the same issue, reviewing learner's own writing and their peer's to evaluate and make logical judgments.

Critical thinking has the absolute power to transform a learner from being passive information receiver into an active learner with outstanding ability to solve problems, construct strong arguments, analyze and evaluate any sort of information, and make wise decisions and logical judgments. Therefore, Students should recognize the significance of critical thinking skills in their academic development, especially in essay writing. They need

to search by themselves for ways to develop their own critical thinking skills and make use of them when writing essays.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of both students' questionnaire and teachers' interview revealed the existence of an influential and direct relationship between critical thinking and essay writing. Looking at the results of students' questionnaire, one can understand that the majority of students find critical thinking very helpful in essay writing. Skills like decision making, reasoning, problem solving, analysis, and evaluation are necessary skills, which should be present at each stage of essay writing. Equally important, teachers' interview revealed the importance of critical thinking skills in essay writing. All teachers agree that critical thinking should be advocated among students to enhance their essay writing proficiency. All in all, the results of teachers' interview conform to the findings of students' questionnaire regarding the importance of critical thinking in essay writing.

## **Limitation of the Study**

The present research faced some contextual and methodological obstacles that prevented the appropriate conduct of the interview. Frankly speaking, only three teachers out of nine were interviewed due to several reasons. Mainly, Time constraints constitute a considerable obstacle to enlarging the size of the interview sample. Additionally, Master one teachers have very overload schedule that prevented them to take part in the interview. Consequently, this might affect the representativeness of the sample.

# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

## **General Conclusion**

The present research offers some interesting insights concerning the importance of critical thinking in essay writing. It goes through two main stages: Theoretical stage and practical stage. The first stage is composed of two theoretical chapters that provide some pertinent notions and concepts concerning critical thinking and essay writing. The second stage consists of one practical chapter, which aims at exploring the perception and attitudes of students and teachers in regards to the topic under investigation.

The first chapter is entitled Critical Thinking. It covered various numbers of definitions about critical thinking centered on one main idea, which is critical thinking is complex cognitive activity that reasons from logic rather than from emotions and instincts. Furthermore, chapter one discussed five skills of critical thinking. First, decision making is the process of selecting the best choice among other alternatives. Second, reasoning is the act of thinking about things logically in order to construct arguments and draw conclusions. Third, problem solving is mental process that involves identifying a problem, selecting a solution, and acting on it. Fourth, evaluation is the act assessing information against a certain criteria. Finally, analysis is the most important skill, which involves dividing a subject, examining its sections and the relationship between them.

The second theoretical chapter was is devoted to discuss one of the most dreadful tasks in writing among learners, which is known as essay writing. This chapter attempted to provide some definitions about essay writing that can be summarized as the process of producing lengthy piece of writing that turns around one main idea. Moreover, it offered some insights about how to choose a good essay topic and thesis statement. It also tackled the essay structure and outline in terms of organization and parts. Then, it moved to discuss three main types of essay: argumentative essay, problem-solution essay, and critical analysis essay. The

last section in chapter two dealt with evaluation that is comprised of two processes: Revising and editing.

The third chapter, “Field of Investigation”, is the practical part of the study that is grounded on the two previous theoretical chapters. This chapter dealt with the analysis and interpretation of students’ questionnaire and teachers’ interview. The results obtained from these two data collection tools revealed the existence of strong relationship between the two variables of the research. Therefore, the findings confirmed the research hypothesis.

All in all, the current research affirms that critical thinking is of paramount importance in essays writing. Skills of critical thinking like: decision making, reasoning, problem solving, analysis, and evaluation are necessary skills that should be present at each stage of essay writing, starting from choosing a topic till revising and editing. It is high time to call for the integration of critical thinking as a separate course or a part of other courses at the department of English at 8 Mai 1945 University - Guelma.

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## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX I: Students' Questionnaire**

**APPENDIX II: Teachers' Interview**

**APPENDIX III: Interview Transcript**

## **APPENDIX I**

### **The Students' Questionnaire**

Dear Master One students,

It would be really appreciated if you devote some of your time to answer this questionnaire that deals with the importance of critical thinking in essay writing proficiency. Your collaboration is very important for the validity of the research. You should know that your responses will be kept anonymous and used only for research purposes.

You are required to tick (√) the appropriate box, or provide a full answer where it is necessary.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

**Ms. Asma Frihi**

**Department of English**

**University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma**

## Section One: General Information

1. Age:.....years.

2. How long have you been studying English language so far?

.....years.

3. Is it your choice to study English?

Yes	
No	

4. How do you describe your level in English?

very good	
Good	
Average	
Bad	
very bad	

## Section Two: Critical Thinking

5. Critical thinker is someone who can (more than option):

Asks significant questions

Collects data



Evaluates the relevant data

Analyses data

Draw conclusions based on evidence

6. Do you consider yourself a critical thinker?

Yes

No

Why?

.....

.....

7. a) Which of these critical thinking skills need to be taught? (More than one option)

Decision making

Evaluation

Analysis

Reasoning

Problem solving

Others

If others, please specify.

.....  
.....

7. b) Explain why?

.....  
.....

8. How often do you make correct decisions?

Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

9. What are the processes you go through when making decision? (More than one option)

Identifying the decision	
Collecting relevant data	
Identifying the choices	
Weighing the evidence	
Selecting the right choice	
Taking action	
Reviewing the decision	

10. What do you use when constructing arguments?

- Deductive reasoning (you start from general premises that can be assumptions or facts, and they guarantee logically the truth of the conclusion)

- Inductive reasoning (you starts from specific propositions or premises to draw a general conclusion)
- Both

11. What are the stages you go through to solve problem? (More than one option)

Identifying the problem	
Looking for possible solutions	
Selecting solution	
Acting on solutions	

12. How often do you evaluate your academic progress?

Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

13. What are the steps you take to make self-evaluation? (More than one option)

Identify the evaluation standards or criteria	
Apply the evaluation standards	
Evaluate the work	
Determine the strengths and the weaknesses	

14. What does critical analysis involve? (More than one option)

Describing background information

Examining the relationship between constituents

Drawing conclusion

### Section Three: Essay Writing

15. How is your writing proficiency?

high	<input type="checkbox"/>
average	<input type="checkbox"/>
low	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. How do you find essay writing task?

Easy

Medium

Difficult

17. Do you like to write about?

Topic of your choice

Set topic (assignment topic)

Both

18. A good essay topic should be? (More than one option)

Interesting

General

Narrowed

Too narrowed

19. How often do you consider the following when writing an essay?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Essay starts with introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion				
The thesis statement informs the reader of the content and the direction of the essay				
Each paragraph in the body of the essay develops one main point (topic sentence)				
Topic sentence supports the thesis of the essay				
The conclusion brings the main ideas in one paragraph				

20. Do you write an outline before you write your essay?

Yes

No

21. How often do you evaluate (revise and edit) your assignment before submission?

Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

22. What do you do to write a good argumentative essay? (More than one option)

Propose a debatable idea

Use evidence

Use Reasoning

Others

If others, please specify

.....

.....

23. When you write a problem-solution essay, do you identify the problem?

Yes

No

24. What do you do to write a critical analysis essay? (More than one option)

Summarize

Analyze

Evaluate

Others

If others, please specify

.....

.....

25. How important is the decision making skill in deciding about the following?

	Not at all	A little	Important	Very important
The essay topic (the subject or issue discussed in the essay)				
The thesis statement				
The topic sentence				
The outline				

26. Is problem solving skill useful in writing problem-solution essay?

Yes

No

27. What do you use when developing argumentative essay?

Deductive reasoning

Deductive reasoning

Both

28. Does analysis skill help in understanding the essay assignment?

Yes

No

29. Do you agree that critical analysis help in writing better critical analysis essay?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>

30. Does self-evaluation skill facilitate the process of?

The process of revising

The process of editing

Both

31. Could you please add any comments or suggestions on the role of critical thinking in improving essay writing proficiency?

.....  
.....

**Thank you for your collaboration.**



## **APPENDIX II**

### **Teachers' Interview**

Dear teacher,

The research being conducted is about the importance of critical thinking in essay writing. This interview is of pivotal importance to the research as it will provide some answers about the topic in question. You are kindly invited to take part in this short interview which will be recorded based on your permission. You should know that the interview will be tape recorded to be used as data for coding and analysis. Your identity will be anonymous. If you feel that you are in no position to answer any given question, please inform me.

Questions:

1. For how many years have you been teaching Master one classes?
2. Could you explain to me your perception of critical thinking?
3. How often do you think that critical thinking should be taught at the department of English and why?
4. What do you think about the importance of critical thinking in essay writing?
5. Is decision making skill useful in essay writing concerning the essay topic, thesis statement, topic sentence, and outline? Could you elaborate your answer?
6. What is the role of deductive and inductive reasoning in developing argumentative essay?
7. How can problem-solving skill help in writing problem solution essay?
8. Does analysis skill help in understanding the assignment? Explain why?
9. What is the role of critical analysis in writing a good critical analysis essay?
10. How could self-evaluation improve essay writing?
11. Do you have further comments, suggestions or recommendations?

Thank you for your cooperation.

## **Appendix III**

### **Interview Transcript**

#### **Respondent 1**

**Q1:** Good morning. Well, I have taught Master one classes for five years.

**Q2:** Act of reflecting your thoughts through the use of reasoning.

**Q3:** I think critical thinking must be taught in each module.

**Q4:** Critical thinking is a necessary element in any type of essay, especially argumentative essay.

**Q5:** Yes. The writer must be a good decision maker in order to choose good essay topic, thesis statement, topic sentence, and outline.

**Q6:** In order to achieve the main purpose of argumentative essay, which is persuasion, learners need to use deductive and inductive reasoning.

**Q7:** Problem solving skill is necessary in writing problem-solution essay. In other words, this cognitive skill equips the student with the most appropriate procedures and sub-skills as problem identification, solution selection etc.

**Q8:** Yes. When learners come across ambiguous question that makes the assignment difficult to understand they resort to analyze that question like decoding it and highlighting the key words.

**Q9:** Critical analysis plays a major role in writing a good critical analysis essay. How? Critical analysis is the basic process that the writer needs to consider when writing any analytical essay about any work.

**Q10:** Evaluation or self-evaluation is can improve any cognitive or intellectual ability like writing.

**Q11:** I would like to comment on your choice of topic, it's very relevant and significant. I hope it will be taken for serious.

## **Respondent 2**

**Q1:** I taught Master one students for five years.

**Q2:** Critical thinking occurs when students are able to think about their thinking.

**Q3:** First let's agree that critical thinking should be taught as separate module. If it is taught once a week, it will be fine, sine our life needs critical thinking.

**Q4:** Critical thinking plays an important role in essay writing, in terms of word choice, organization.

**Q5:** In order to be able to select a good essay topic, thesis statement, topic sentence, and outline, the student needs to be qualified decision maker.

**Q6:** The role of deductive and inductive reasoning in developing argumentative essay is to give credibility to your claim.

**Q7:** The process of writing a problem-solution essay is kind of reflection of problem solving skills.

**Q8:** yes. If the learner ignores analyzing the assignment question, s/he may not be capable of answering the question in the right way.

**Q9:** If the students do not display critical analysis skill, they are unable to analyze or write about any academic or non-academic work. Consequently, students are required to develop first their critical analysis skill.

**Q10:** Self-evaluation is needed to improve writing in general. When students assess their writing they will highlight their strengths and weaknesses to make improvements.

**Q11:** Critical thinking is very crucial in education, it needs to be integrated in all modules especially in written expression and writing.

### **Respondent 3**

**Q1:** for four years

**Q2:** Critical thinking is the ability to ask significant questions and judge the data according to some logical criteria.

**Q3:** Critical thinking needs to be integrated in all courses.

**Q4:** Critical thinking is important in any intellectual activity and writing is one of them.

**Q5:** Decision making is very important in essay writing, since it facilitates for the learner to choose a catchy topic, effective thesis statement, related topic sentence, and organized outline.

**Q6:** First, let's make it clear that argumentation requires logic, and deductive and inductive reasonings are two logical processes. Consequently, these two types of reasoning are necessary in developing argumentative essay.

**Q7:** If problem solving skill is imparted in the writer's mind, any essay problems will not make any challenge for the writer.

**Q8:** Yes, sure. The assignment usually is an indirect question that requires analysis to answer accurately. If students neglect this step, they will probably misunderstand what they are required to do.

**Q9:** In order to produce critical analysis or any analytical writing, students need critical analysis. Because this skill equips the students with the right method and instructions to write a successful critical analysis essay.

**Q10:** We can say that self-evaluation is of paramount importance in and enhancing essays through facilitating revising and editing which are two significant processes in writing.

**Q11:** English teachers are required to advocate critical thinking among their students.

## **Résumé**

Cette recherche vise à explorer les attitudes et les perceptions des enseignants et des étudiants à l'égard de l'importance de la pensée critique dans la rédaction d'essai. Il cherche à améliorer l'écriture d'essai des étudiants par la promotion de la pensée critique parmi eux. De plus, cette étude utilise un mélange de méthodes. Méthode descriptive quantitative par l'intermédiaire du questionnaire d'étudiants, et méthode descriptive qualitative par l'intermédiaire de l'entretien avec des enseignants. L'échantillon de cette recherche se compose de cinquante-six (56) étudiants de Master 1 et trois (3) enseignants au département d'anglais, faculté des lettres et langues Université 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. Les résultats obtenus à partir de ces deux outils confirment l'hypothèse de recherche qui implique que les étudiants possèdent une attitude positive envers la pensée critique et affichent une tendance envers son utilisation quand ils écrivent un essai. Par conséquent, il appelle à l'intégration de la pensée critique implicitement ou explicitement au département d'anglais.

***Mots-clés:*** Pensée Critique, Compétences de la Pensée Critique, Rédaction d'Essai

## ملخص

يسعى البحث الحالي إلى سير توجهات و آراء المعلمين والطلبة إزاء اهمية التفكير النقدي في كتابه المقالات. كما تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحسين كتابة مقالات الطلبة من خلال تعزيز التفكير النقدي فيما بينهم. وعلاوة على ذلك ، تستخدم هذه الدراسة مزيجا من المناهج. منهجية وصفية كمية من خلال استبيان للطلبة ، ومنهجية وصفية نوعية من خلال اجراء مقابله مع الاساتذة. تتألف عينة البحث من ستة و خمسون (56) طالب سنة اولى ماستر وثلاثة (3) اساتذة يدرسون سنة اولى ماستر بقسم اللغة الانجليزية كلية الآداب و اللغات بجامعة 8 ماي 1945 قالمة . اثبتت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من كلا الوسيلتين صحة فرضية البحث التي تقر بان الطلبة الذين يمتلكون موقف ايجابي اتجاه التفكير النقدي و يظهرون نزعة نحو استعماله عند كتابة المقال . و بالتالي تجدر الدعوة إلى إدماج التفكير النقدي بصوره ضمنية أو صريحة في قسم اللغة الانجليزية

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التفكير النقدي ، مهارات التفكير النقدية ، كتابة المقال