LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

**THE EFFECTS OF INTEGRATING CRITICAL THINKING IN L3
INTERMEDIATE CLASSES: A CASE STUDY**

By

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To my mom, Hayat...

**Despite your absence, you have been the present voice inside me pushing me to achieve
what would have made you proud...**

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The Effects of Integrating Critical Thinking in L3

Intermediate Classes: A Case Study

Jessica Ammar

Abstract

Finding new teaching methods and strategies that aim at developing students' levels of understanding, achievement, and motivation is one of the most important aspects educators work on constantly achieving. Thus, educators have always been interested in finding new means to cater for students' needs. One important mean and newly followed trend in education is the integration of critical thinking in teaching languages and sciences. Based on the difficulty in teaching critical thinking and expecting students to become critical thinkers, it is required to be taught starting at a young age. This study seeks to examine whether or not intermediate students prefer teaching methods that integrate critical thinking in English-as-a-third-language (L3) class, and if teachers integrate critical thinking in their teaching methods. The subjects of the study are multilingual students, trilingual teachers, and a bilingual observer. Results of the study indicate that integrating critical thinking in L3 intermediate classes has a positive effect on students' comprehension, motivation, and class participation. For future research, a greater number of students and schools in Lebanon could be observed over a longer period of time.

Keywords: Critical thinking, Trilingual, Multilingual, L3, Teaching methods

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Multiculturalism and multilingualism prevail in Lebanon. This is related to the French mandate (1920-1943), the European colonization and the missionary schools established in different areas of the country (See Bahous, Nabhani, & Cochran, 2011). According to Jarrar, Mikati, and Massialas (1988) the first foreign language taught in the majority of the schools has been French. This is somehow debatable nowadays as English is becoming more used worldwide and more in demand in the Lebanese market. In fact, teaching English has become essential in almost all schools in Lebanon. Many French medium schools are requiring that children start learning English as a third language from as early as KG classes ((Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani 2011; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2003). Furthermore, students' knowledge of the English language is now one of the requirements of graduating students who wish to start their career life. It is not enough anymore to comprehend and speak only the mother language. At the workplace and with the interaction among others, it is becoming a need to speak more than one language in Lebanon; a habit that was previously considered to be suitable only for the elite of the society.

It is a biological fact that every human being thinks, but not every person has the ability to think critically. Critical thinking is a process and a combination of skills that requires training in order to master it. Gathering information and drawing conclusions are two main activities required in critical thinking. However, integrating critical thinking in the process of teaching requires a lot of effort. Nowadays, schools are following the trend and asking their teachers to integrate critical thinking skills in preparing their lessons (Bean, 1998; D'Angelo, 1971).

1.2 Purpose of Study

Educators in general agree on the importance of critical thinking integration in teaching. Sedgwick (2008) states that, “Teaching philosophy or thinking in your classroom, and therefore treating the children as the human beings they are, already full of thoughts and ideas, will fail if, by contrast, a colleague next door is treating children as empty vessels to be filled, or clean slates to be written on” (p. x).

The integration of critical thinking in L3 classes has revealed students’ motivation and participation in class discussions and class work. Teachers who succeed in integrating critical thinking skills in their teaching methods, have pulled out the best in their students. This could be looked at as an achievement since students do not always feel interested in participating in class. However, they feel motivated enough when given the chance to express themselves in the five skills of learning a language; reading, listening, speaking, writing and grammar.

This study explored the integration of critical thinking in L3 classes and the need for this integration. The observation and results were based on the different skills of teaching English as a third language; reading, listening, speaking, writing and grammar. Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify the effects of integrating critical thinking in teaching English-as-a-third-language.

1.3 Research Context

This study took place in one private Lebanese school where the medium of instruction is French. A fictitious name, TAL was given to the school. The school caters for students who come from upper Socio Economic status.

The research is based on qualitative and quantitative research methods. For the quantitative instruments, I used two questionnaires for both grade 8 students and English teachers at a private school in Lebanon (TAL). The questionnaires aimed at identifying whether students prefer learning using critical thinking methods of teaching and whether teachers practiced critical thinking methods in teaching reading, listening, speaking, writing and grammar. The qualitative research method I used was limited to the anecdotal records I kept during the two months of observation. The observation took place in two grade 8 classes. I was the teacher and observer. The records kept during the time of the study revealed the importance and effect of integrating critical thinking in teaching the different skills of English and the different methods that were least and most effective in relation to the skill taught.

A sample of 48 student questionnaires and 4 teacher questionnaires from a private school (TAL) in Lebanon was obtained. Both questionnaires consisted of 10 questions. The questions were divided upon the five skills; two questions for each skill: reading, listening, speaking, writing and grammar. The choices made in the questionnaires were gathered and analyzed. The results showed how well was critical thinking integrated in teaching English-as-a-third-language and the extent to which students preferred the integration of critical thinking in the different skills.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was limited to the following research questions:

- 1- What techniques and methods could be used in English-as-a-third-language classes to enhance critical thinking?
- 2- What methods do students prefer in learning?

- 3- What methods do teachers prefer using in teaching the skills of English?
- 4- What are the effects of integrating critical thinking in L3 classes?

1.5 Hypothesis

Critical thinking has become a necessity in the field of education. In the past it was merely a course studied at colleges. Nowadays, educators have studied and realized the importance of its integration even in the early school years, among students of different thinking levels. Studies have only succeeded at highlighting the importance of critical thinking integration in L3 classes. There is no reference of studies proving the opposite. Therefore, the research serves to examine if students reveal higher levels of argumentation, participation, and motivation once taught in a medium that integrated critical thinking skills in teaching.

1.6 Rationale of Study

Intermediate school students are future engineers, lawyers, doctors, psychologists, professors, etc. Thus, building critical thinking skills in these students is of utmost importance to maintain a rigid level of achievement.

Intermediate students might not know and value the importance of learning in a medium of critical thinking integration. Yet, they seem to indirectly prefer the methods of teaching which integrate critical thinking. Students find such methods to be techniques that enhance their learning in an atmosphere of higher levels of comprehension; thus resulting in more participation and motivation among strong and weak students.

In this paper, the researcher will collect data and examine the importance of integrating the skills of critical thinking in teaching English-as-a-third language. The study will stress the

importance of integration in five skills of teaching English; reading, listening, speaking, writing, and grammar.

The study assists in providing a basis for further research on the integration of critical thinking in L3 classes as it is becoming a more important need in the society. The results of this study cannot be generalized since students and teachers who were part of this study are a minority of the larger number of student who could be affected by the integration of critical thinking in their teaching and learning methods.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Critical thinking: “Generally speaking, to think critically about an issue is to consider that issue from various perspectives, to look at and challenge any possible assumptions that may underlie the issue and to explore its possible alternatives.” (Halvorsen, 2005, p.1). More specifically, “When we think critically about a given topic, we are forced to consider our own relationship to it and how we personally fit into the context of the issue” (Brookfield, 1987, pp. 7-9).

EFL classrooms: In this study, EFL refers to the classrooms where English is taught as a third language; Arabic being the first and French the second.

Multilingualism: Multilingualism refers a person who is familiar with three or more languages to some degree of fluency. (De Angelis, 2007, p. 8)

Bilingualism: The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics describes bilingual communities as having ‘two or more different languages’ (Matthews, 1997, p. 39). Thus, defining bilingualism and multilingualism similarly. Hoffmann (2001) points out that the term multilingualism is sometimes used in the place of bilingualism intentionally since it reflects the

difference between a micro-level and a macro-level of investigation. He explains that multilingualism is preferred to bilingualism because it stresses the presence of linguistic varieties in sociolinguistic situations. (pp. 1-17). De Angelis (2007) states that despite the reasons behind mixing the use of these two terms, using them as synonyms results in confusion in the field. Thus, one would have to find whether the author is talking about bilingualism or multilingualism by looking for additional information in the text. (p. 9).

1.8 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is an introduction introducing the topic, the research context, research questions and key terms used in this study. Chapter two includes what scholars and other researchers have said about the integration of critical thinking in teaching English as a third language. The third chapter is concerned with the methodology adopted in this study, highlighting the research design, participants, instrumentation, data analysis, and ethical considerations of the study. Chapter four presents the findings and results of the study divided according to the instruments used. Chapter five is an analysis and discussion on the results displayed in the earlier chapter with reference to the review of literature. The last chapter includes the conclusion, limitations, reflexivity, and recommendations for further research.

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a general introduction to the thesis including the research context, the participants, the research questions, the definition of the key terms, and the division of the thesis. In the following chapter I will present what scholars have said about the importance

of critical thinking and its integration in teaching English as a third language using different techniques and methods.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A research on scholars' views on the impact of integrating critical thinking in teaching English was conducted and summarized in this literature review. The review is mainly divided into seven parts; multilingualism, English as a third foreign language, definitions of critical thinking, methods of integrating critical thinking in teaching English, teachers' role, students' role, and a comparison between critical thinking approach and the traditional method. The effects of integrating critical thinking techniques in teaching English, such as motivation and participation in class, are also discussed.

2.2 Multilingualism

A huge number of people worldwide use more than two languages in their daily life. Some of these languages are limited to the use in private domains while others are mainly used in public domains; such as work and school. In either case, multilingualism is frequent in use. Edwards (1994), says that being bilingual or multilingual is not an unwelcome deviation from what is normal, rather a necessity required worldwide by the majority today. "Community multilingualism can be the result of historical, political or economic movements such as imperialism, colonialism or immigration." (Cenoz & Genesee, 1998, vii). As a result of the increase in global communication, the need for individual multilingualism, as opposed to community multilingualism, has rapidly grown due to the need of competence in languages widely used for communication. Auer and Wei (2007) also believe that a lot of people are

bilingual or multilingual from birth. They further stress that becoming a bi- or trilingual speaker is sometimes a consequence of late stages in life that a person might encounter, for example migration could result in adding a language to one's repertoire.

According to De Angelis (2007), some parameters have proved to have some effect on multilinguals' cognitive and psycholinguistic processes. These parameters include, age acquisition of each non-native language; sequence of acquisition of all languages; proficiency level in all non-native languages, and how proficiency level was measured; exposure to native and non-native language environments; classroom language of instruction for each non-native language; amount of informal instruction in each non-native language; manner of acquisition; context in which each language is or was used; active or passive use of all languages; number of languages known to the speaker; and productive and receptive skills for each language and how these were measured.

2.2.1 Cultural Context

A monolingual child raised up in a family of the dominant social group is exposed first to the culture attained in the primary socialization at home and later repeated and more developed in the secondary socialization which overlaps with schooling. The school is the medium which offers the main continuity from the culture of the family despite the interaction between the child and other social institutions. This continuity takes place through the clear and precise curriculum chosen by the dominant social group to be taught at school as the explicit education a child receives. (Byram, 1998). Auer and Wei (2007) also agree that children are first exposed to more than one language in their own family. However, they believe that this generally takes place in multilingual societies. Furthermore, they believe that children raised up in monolingual social

contexts and multilingual families at the same time, go through a critical phase when they start school. They further explain that this is the case in societies where schools are dominated by one language.

2.2.2 Lebanese Curriculum

French and Arabic were considered the two official languages during the 1920 and 1943 under the French mandate. Globalization and the Lebanese independence resulted in the use of English in social, economic and education fields in Lebanon (Kobeissi, 1999; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2002). However, some scholars believe that learning foreign languages should be additional to the local language instead of being a substitute for it in order to avoid ‘killing’ the mother language (Schaub, 2000).

The National Curriculum, approved by the Council of Ministers in 1994, resulted in requiring all schools to include a second foreign language in their curriculum, English or French being the first foreign language used for instruction, and the other language considered the second foreign one taught (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1999).

A reform plan was launched in the 1990s by the Lebanese Ministry of Education to upgrade the national curriculum, teaching methods and teachers’ preparation and training. The emphasis was on the teaching and learning of foreign languages in schools and with the third language starting in Kindergarten classes (Bou Jaoudeh & Ghaith, 2006). As for the native language, Arabic, it is taught as a separate language subject and a medium to teach social studies; geography, history and civics.

As part of education reforms that took place after the war, the Lebanese Government made a new policy that allowed schools to choose between French or English as the medium of

instruction according to “students in their learning contexts” (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1999, p. 1). Yet, some Islamic schools decided to use standard Arabic as a medium of instruction at the primary level. However, these schools have recently been trying to change the medium of instruction from Arabic to either French or English believing that this would give students a higher opportunity in mastering the second language (Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani, 2011). Despite the effort put by the government and the educators, the language proficiency of students continues to vary depending on either the socio economic status or the school itself (Akl, 2007; Shaaban & Ghaith, 1999).

2.3 English as a Third Foreign Language

Teaching foreign languages to students is of great interest to educators. However, this phenomenon has undergone a revival which is related to the political, social and cultural developmental factors of the European Union, the increasing links between the European Union and Eastern European countries, and the role of English as a language of intraEuropean and international communication. (Cenoz & Jessnes, 2000; Weiss, 1991). Thus, teaching English as a foreign language became of utmost importance. With the increase in the role of English in countries other than the English-speaking ones, the demand for learning English has grown. The result is a need for more English instruction at a better quality, especially at schools. Cenoz (2004) states, “Third language acquisition in the school context is not a new phenomenon, but is becoming more widespread because of the trend to introduce a foreign language from an earlier age and a second foreign language at the end of primary school or in secondary school and because of the increasing use of minority languages in education” (p. 203).

In Lebanon, private schools catering for K-12 grade levels use a second language as the medium of instruction in all grades. Almost all schools teach the main subjects in the second language, that is, math, science and social studies. Some teach social studies in both the second language and Arabic. 7 hours per week are assigned by all schools for the second language, math and science, 5 or 6 hours for Arabic, 2 hours for social studies, and 3 or more hours for an additional second language; that is, the third language. However, in Muslim schools daily double sessions are offered; that is, 80 minutes of Arabic; the language of the Holy Book. According to the Ministry of Education (2006), 50.2% of the schools in Lebanon are public and 49.8% are private; 55.8% of the schools have French as the medium of instruction (i.e., French is the first foreign language), 21.6% have English as the medium of instruction (i.e. English is the first foreign language), and 22.6% have both French and English as mediums of instruction for different subjects (i.e., one acting as the first foreign language and the other as a second foreign language).

2.4 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking allows us to have a comprehensive view of ideas, information, opinions and situations. Brookfield (1987) identified four important key aspects: “Identifying and challenging assumptions, challenging the importance of context, imagining and exploring alternatives, and developing reflective scepticism” (pp. 7-9).

Firstly, identifying and challenging assumptions is when we test the less important assumptions and generalizations against our experiences and understanding; accepting assumptions without evidence negates the critical thinking factor. However, questioning and challenging traditions and habitual patterns is as important as testing the less important ones.

Secondly, challenging the importance of context takes place through being aware of the utmost importance of relating our thinking to the context in which it is set. Thirdly, imagining and exploring alternatives is the ability to think beyond the apparent and clearly logical. Thus, adopting various points of view and thinking crossways and imaginatively. Finally, developing reflective scepticism is when we are cautious of universal truths, claims and explanations. The fact that others think in a different way than us, does not mean they are right. (Leicester, 2010, p.4)

Winch (2006) claims “critical thinking is a central, but not essential, ability involved in critical rationality” (p. 58). This ability is the skill or group of skills that one acquires. Thus, “critical thinking is a technical set of skills, whose exercise presupposes given goals.” (p. 58). The result is the formation of one’s own opinions.

D’Angelo (1971) describes critical thinking as “a process of evaluating statements, arguments, and experiences”. In contrast, Ennis and Weir (1985) believe that critical thinking is “reasonably and reflectively deciding what to believe or do”. They see critical thinking as a means (i.e. reflection) to an end (i.e. what to do; the action). Paul (1992) illustrates the phenomenon as “the art of thinking about your thinking while you are thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more defensible”.

According to Atkinson (1997), the foundation of critical thinking lies in Western societies. Furthermore, the modern day concept of critical thinking and the Western academic tradition upon which it is based were a result to the culture of Greece, their schools of academic thought, and their philosophers. However, some argue that the social structures and values that developed in the East (e.g., China and Japan) personified a different value system from the West.

Thus, individualism in the West had led to public debate, the science of logic and a focus on objective observation (i.e., the scientific method). On the contrary, in the East, collectivism and a focus on the group had led to repression of individuality and generally a more holistic view of reality. (Nisbett, 2003; Davidson, 1988).

While it is generally agreed that the enhancement of critical thinking skills is essential and important in education, the debate remains on what exactly constitutes critical thinking. Thus, several questions are examined: Should critical thinking be taught as a general skill or as a discipline specific skill? How related is students' nature and their ability to develop into critical thinkers? In order to comprehend the elements of critical thinking it is important to highlight the variable definitions of critical thinking. Some useful definitions of critical thinking in the literature are the following:

“Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933, p. 118).

“That mode of thinking – about any subject, content, or problem, - in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it” (Paul & Elder, 2007, p. 2).

“Purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual methodological, criteriological, or contextual consideration upon which that judgment is based” (Facione, 2006, p. 21).

“Is analytical and strategic, linking knowledge bases to practice strategies” (Price, 2004, p. 47).

“Critical thinking is an active process that goes beyond basic acquisition and memorization of information to the ability to recognize and rationally consider multiple concepts or elements that constitute a body of thought” (Jones, Hoffman, Moore, Ratcliff, Tibbetts, & Click, 1995, p.5)

Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy of intellectual behavior has been an important base to teaching and learning. The higher levels of thinking in this taxonomy are: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation; which are identified as critical thinking. In Bloom’s revised taxonomy the higher levels of thinking are analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Analyzing is the breaking of information into parts to explore understandings and relationships, comparing, organizing, deconstructing, and interrogating. Evaluating is justifying a decision or course of action, checking, hypothesizing, critiquing, experimenting, and judging. Creating is generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things, designing, constructing, planning, producing, and inventing (Pohl, 2000).

In the review of the literature, the differences in concepts between critical thinking as a generic skill or as an embedded skill have been discussed. According to Ennis (1962) and Halpern (1997), philosophy and cognitive psychology hypothesize that once critical thinking is practiced it can be applied in a variety of different contexts. Declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and metacognition are three aspects of critical thinking highlighted by Kurfiss (1988). Kurfiss further explains that declarative knowledge is the collection of facts and concepts of the discipline of field, procedural knowledge is learning how to reason, inquire, and present

knowledge about the discipline and metacognition is the ability to evaluate the outcomes of the thinking process. Based on this viewpoint, critical thinking skills may be taught in a separate course on critical thinking or logic, with the aim of training students to use the critical thinking skills in other situations inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, building critical thinking skills will primarily result in improvement in knowledge of the discipline. The other concept regarding critical thinking is dealing with it as an embedded or knowledge-based skill. Thus, it becomes important for a person to possess knowledge of the particular discipline; i.e., what Kurfiss (1988) refers to as declarative knowledge, in order to engage in critical thinking. Thus, a person has to “think critically about a particular thing or subject” (McPeck, 1990). Phillips and Bond (2004) state that the conception of critical thinking as an embedded skill “is concerned with teaching students how knowledge works in a particular discipline.” (p. 279). On the contrary, McPeck (1990) argues, “If you improve the quality of understanding through the disciplines, you will then get a concomitant improvement in the thinking capacity” (p. 21). Therefore, critical thinking is important in education despite the differences in opinion on what constitutes it and how it should be taught.

2.4.1 Integration of Critical Thinking in L3 Classes

Integrating critical thinking in teaching English is a trend required and followed nowadays by most educators. Teachers aim at promoting thinking, thus they observe how students produce knowledge. Producing knowledge requires the use of a number of thinking skills such as analytical, lateral, problem solving, critical, creative, and reflective thinking (Rose and Nicholl, 1997).

Bean (1998, p. 1) states that integrating critical thinking activities in teaching English “increases students’ learning while teaching them thinking skills for posing questions, proposing hypotheses, gathering and analyzing data, and making arguments.”

According to Halvorsen (2005), the general benefit to the classroom which involves elements of critical thought is twofold. Firstly, they tend to be generally more interesting and engaging. Secondly, the classroom becomes a more meaningful and cohesive environment. As a result, students who feel that they are working together will be more involved while they are there. In order to clarify this idea, Halvorsen (2005) suggests two possible discussion topics related to a unit on the environment. Topic one asks students to summarize in a paragraph the main topics covered in the class in order to prepare for a final writing activity. Whereas, topic two requires students to prepare an outline for a letter to be sent to the city's mayor addressing their concerns about environmental issues in the city. Despite the fact that both approaches are equal in terms of how well students make use of the language in class, it is obvious that the second topic will definitely interest and encourage students to participate.

Supporters of collaborative learning and the importance of integrating it in classes, claim that the exchange of ideas within small groups increases interest among students and encourages critical thinking. According to Johnson and Johnson (1986), “there is persuasive evidence that cooperative teams achieve at higher levels of thought and retain information longer than students who work quietly as individuals.” Furthermore, “the shared learning gives students an opportunity to engage in discussion, take responsibility for their own learning, and thus become critical thinkers” (Totten, Sills, Digby, and Russ, 1991, p.67).

Macrorie (1980), a famous writing process theorist, believes that writing activities should develop from students’ interest in order for education to be the result of a natural human need for

knowledge. He states that exploratory writing prompts the creative writing process. Bean (1998) states, “Exploratory writing takes practice, but once mastered, it is a powerful tool for focusing the mind on a problem and stimulating thought” (p. 98).

Language classes are suitable for teaching critical thinking due to the wide range of materials, different skills taught, and several approaches used. Thus, teaching English as a third language becomes more interesting for students and results in better effects on their motivation and participation once critical thinking is integrated in various methods. Therefore, teachers should initiate and guide critical thinking in class.

2.4.2 Techniques and Methods

Critical thinking is integrated in teaching English using different techniques and methods. Scholars and educators suggest different ideas to aid teachers in using the most beneficial techniques and methods of integrating critical thinking skills in their lessons.

Leicester (2010, p.100) believes that critical thinking should be integrated in the curriculum as cross-curricular thinking skills and as subject-specific skills. He emphasizes the importance of teachers being critical thinkers in the first place in order to teach critical thinking through demonstration and practice. He further explains the importance of establishing good relationships between teacher and pupils, and among pupils. These relationships result in each being respectful of the right of each one to have different points of view. Thus, each would challenge other points of view and answer questions raised about their personal views. On the other hand, Long (n.d.) suggests distinguishing facts from inferences as a key skill in order to develop one’s own opinion. He believes that opinions are only a form of inference based on observation.

Halvorsen (2005) suggests three classroom techniques used in integrating critical thinking skills into ESL/EFL classes; debate, media analysis, and problem solving. Halvorsen believes that debate pushes students to think about the different sides and details of a topic, in addition to the chance it provides them to interact with one another. Furthermore, debates are effective since teachers and students have a wide range of topics available. In order to start a debate, students must be aware of the different positions that can be taken on the topic. The topics could be selected from the course materials, classroom discussions, or the local community. However, students should be given the chance to research the topic (p.3). The next step would be to divide the students into small groups where students who share similar opinions would be able to give and receive information on the topic among each other. While sharing ideas in the same group, students should be encouraged to think of the different arguments that could come from the different groups and how they could counter-argue those arguments. One form of debates allows the different groups to present their opening and closing arguments followed by rebuttals all discussed as a class. Another form of debate is giving the students the chance to share their different views of a topic with one another in small groups. Then, the teacher would follow-up with a small summary of the different expressed views and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. The final step of any debate form should allow students to decide which side had a more convincing argument. This final step is of great importance since it helps students realize that the debate process gives closure on a topic and provides real results. Krieger (2005) agrees with Halvorsen on the importance of debate in teaching English. Krieger (2005) states that, "debate is an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways" (p.1). Davidson (1996) also states that, "with practice, many students show obvious progress in their ability to express

and defend ideas in debate [and] they often quickly recognize the flaws in each other's arguments" (p.42). Nisbett (2003) declares that, "debate is an important educational tool for learning analytic thinking skills and for forcing self-conscious reflection on the validity of one's ideas" (p. 35).

The second technique suggested by Halvorsen (2005), media analysis, is the process of analyzing different forms of media in EFL classes. Halvorsen believes that this method of integrating critical thinking allows students to look at the different types of issues that could bias reporting thus allowing students to analyze and reflect on those in detail. However, the focus would not only be on issues of bias since analyzing media raises students' awareness and encourages them to criticize the matters that affect them. In order to proceed in the application of this technique, a form of media and a topic should first be chosen by either the teacher or the students. The chosen topic should support critical thought. After that, students should read, watch or listen to the media chosen in order to analyze and work on it. Later, the discussion on the problems or questions arising from the topic could be done as a class, in small groups, or in pairs. Once students have understood the piece well, the teacher should probe questions aiming at encouraging critical reflection. By the end of the activity, it is good to ask students to write a response or reflection on the piece expressing their opinions. Tafani (2009) agrees with Halvorsen on the importance of using media to develop critical thinking skills in students. Tafani (2009) states that, "Media provide teachers and students with creative and practical ideas. They enable teachers to meet various needs and interests of their students. They also provide students with a lot of language practice through activities using newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, movies, books, Internet, etc, and tasks which develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills" (p. 81).

The third suggested method by Halvorsen (2005) is the problem solving technique. This method is proved effective since problems exist inside and outside the classroom, and resolving these problems is through conversation in all countries and cultures. Students could learn to analyze a topic critically once subjected to analyzing a social complex problem. For example, asking students to analyze the pro's, con's, costs, and benefits of a city's poor public transportation is actually asking them to face and criticize real life problems that affect their daily lives. The class should first choose a problem relevant to their lives. Then, the class should define the problem. Later, in groups, students should list the main reasons causing the problem in order to discuss steps for solving them. Finally, students could write their ideas in an action plan. According to Kirkley (2003), "problem solving includes attitudinal as well as cognitive components. To solve problems, learners have to want to do so, and they have to believe they can" (p. 5). Motivation and attitudinal aspects such as effort, confidence, anxiety, persistence and knowledge about self are important to the problem solving process (Jonassen and Tessmer, 1996).

2.5 Teachers' Role

Experienced teachers and ones who cater for developing classes that focus on critical thinking realize the importance of knowing the interests of their students in order to achieve a well-engaged class. Despite the fact that these teachers could create a critical thinking component in any lesson, students would not respond similarly to each topic. Halvorsen (2005) gives an example in relation to this idea; a teacher integrating critical thinking into a unit on the use of the future tenses might ask a series of discussion questions related to the ethical issues surrounding future increases in life expectancy. Halvorsen believes that for this lesson to be successful it should be relevant to the students' age level, background knowledge, and language

proficiency. The idea is to shape the lessons in a form that interests the students in order to encourage and engage them in a classroom where critical thinking is an essential element.

Cazden (2001) and Stipek (2002) believe that in order for English-language students to know how to comprehend the material written in the English language, they should be given the opportunity to state their thoughts in the classroom. According to Wellington and Wellington (1960), when a class discussion of any problem takes place, a teacher has to realize his/her responsibilities. Some important roles the teacher has to maintain is seeing that students do not make broad generalizations that do not have any factual verification, making sure that students listen to one another and weigh the opinions of others, and encouraging students to accept different ideas. The teacher should also make sure the class does not drift too far from the original purpose of the discussion. Another important role the teacher should keep while having a class discussion is checking that not just a few students control the discussion. At the end of every discussion, the teacher and the students need to summarize what has been said and accomplished. “Discussions that are left without summary until the following day often lose their emphasis” (Weillington & Wellington, 1960, p.135). However, the teacher cannot be responsible about every student’s need. Thus, the teacher must teach by relating students’ needs to the units or subjects, in order to meet almost all, needs (Weillington & Wellington, 1960, p.319).

Qatipi (2011) believes that questioning should be an integrated part of any lesson. He states three important functions of questioning, which result in enhancing students’ critical thinking. The first function is the social one, in which questioning strengthens the relationships between students and teachers. In addition, students would be able to interact and express themselves more openly. Teachers ask questions in order to decrease the social gap between them and their students. The second function is the psychological one. Questioning develops a

healthy, emotional, intellectual, motivational, and encouraging climate by giving students the chance to ask and answer. The third function is the educational one, which allows questioning to gather, share, and give information. Thus, it probes students' prior knowledge previous to introducing a new subject, and it checks their knowledge after a lesson is taught. As a result, the more students participate and interact, the more active and positive the classroom's atmosphere would be.

In Lebanon, it was predicted that there will be a 10% increase of schools by 2010 and another increase by 2015 resulting in a major effect on the teaching and learning of languages (UNDP report, 2008 and UNESCO statistics, 2010). Thus, introducing teachers to the new methodologies as mentioned in the new national curriculum becomes highly important on the schools' agendas.

2.6 Critical Thinking Approach Versus Traditional Method

Stovall (1958) states that the discussion technique is more effective than the traditional method in stimulating critical thinking by helping students achieve a deeper understanding of subject matter. He believes that it contributes greatly to desirable classroom relations.

Wells (2001) believes that when the traditional method is used in class, knowledge is transmitted to the students through the teacher or the textbook. The reason behind that is the teachers' need to make sure students comprehend the material in the book. As a result, knowledge would not be constructed. Omatseye (2007) and Gladwin and Stepp-Greany (2008) agree that the use of the traditional method in the classroom results in passive, silent student participants who only receive information instead of constructing knowledge. Furthermore, Serafini (2008) states that there would be no room for intellectual complexity once the traditional method is used since the concentration becomes on the process of giving facts and concepts

previously chosen by the teacher. Similarly, Alexander (2006) agrees that teachers choosing the traditional method are choosing to be the decision makers regarding what should be discussed in class and what each students should share in the discussion. These teachers would end up interrupting the students while responding to make sure that the arranged time for the discussion is respected and that students did not change the discussion topics already assigned by the teacher.

Chinn, Anderson, and Waggoner. (2001) further discuss the teacher's controlling role. They believe that during classroom recitation, the teacher continues to be in control of the topic by again choosing what the students should discuss in class. Kahn (2007) agrees with Chinn et al. (2001) by that it is worthy to differentiate between discussion and question and answer recitation. He believes that an authentic discussion approach can only take place when the classroom involves an open exchange of ideas among students. Based on observations done by most scholars, Hadjioannou (2007) states that real classroom discussions do not have predictable conclusions. On the contrary, the discussions keep going as the students propose new ideas.

Applebee, Nystrand, and Gamoran (2003) believe that some students feel uncertain when it comes to asking the teacher to explain an idea they did not understand in class. The chance for these students to comprehend the material will be eliminated with the lack of discussion in class. Furthermore, choosing to eliminate discussion in class will surely decrease the chances of exploring new ideas that strengthen students' understanding. "Organized instruction involves fewer teacher questions and more conversational turns than recitation, as teachers and students alike contribute their ideas to a discussion in which their understandings evolve during classroom interactions" (Nystrand, 2006, p.399).

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented a review of the literature, which included different topics and sides relating to the thesis. The focus was on defining critical thinking and discussing the importance of integrating it in teaching English as a third language. A comparison between the effectiveness of the traditional method versus the critical thinking approach was also presented. In the following chapter I will discuss the methodology used and followed in this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The integration of critical thinking in L3 classes is a trend nowadays followed by a lot of educators. The literature review focused on the importance of this integration along with the different methods and techniques. Thus, this study highlighted the effects of integrating critical thinking methods and techniques on L3 learners.

This chapter is in three parts. This first part of this chapter portrays the participants and research design. The second part illustrates the three instruments of data collection; student questionnaire, teacher questionnaire, and anecdotal records. The last part covers the ethical considerations and the validity and reliability issues.

3.2 Research Design

The methods used in research act as a bridge between the theoretical discussions in the literature review and the chapters that tackle the styles of research, issues in planning a research design (e.g. sampling, validity, reliability, ethics), data collection, and data analysis. (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 73).

A case study is used in this research design, which includes a questionnaire for students and one for teachers, and anecdotal records. “Case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis.” (Cohen, et al., 2000, p. 181).

The use of two questionnaires and anecdotal records are a representation of the mixed method research; quantitative and qualitative. In order to highlight the strengths and disregard

the weaknesses of both the quantitative and qualitative methods of research, a mixed method research is used. (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). It is of great importance to use both qualitative and quantitative methods of research to be able to collect data that meets the aim of this research study.

3.3 Participants

The study took place at a school in Lebanon given a fictitious name, TAL, catering for students' needs starting at nursery and continuing to grade 12. TAL uses the French language in teaching history and geography (except for grades 9 and 12), mathematics and sciences. Thus, English is considered a third language at TAL.

Two heterogeneous classes, A and B, were involved in this study. Each class included 24 students, 15 females and 9 males. The age group was between 12 and 14. All students were trilingual, only some were multilingual. In addition, they all carried the Lebanese citizenship; some carried other foreign nationalities as well. The 48 students of both classes answered the students' questionnaire. I also observed both classes for a period of two months and kept anecdotal records of the effect and their interaction in lessons where critical thinking was integrated.

Four female teachers answered the teachers' questionnaire. They all taught English (L3) at TAL. As for the age group: one of them was between 25 and 30, two of them were between 30 and 35, and one of them was between 35 and 40. Some teachers were bilingual others were trilingual; all carried the Lebanese citizenship.

3.4 Pilot Study

For the pilot study, I chose one grade 8 section (section C) that was not part of the main study. I chose the same grade level that I intended to use in the study.

The questionnaire was divided in five main parts: reading, listening, speaking, writing and grammar. Each part included two questions aiming at finding whether students preferred traditional teaching methods or methods integrating critical thinking skills. Students were able to answer all the questions. However, I had to explain in number 8 in the writing part what process writing was, and in number 10 in the grammar part what close-ended questions were. The importance of leaving these terms as they were in the choices of the multiple choice questions resulted in making no changes in the questionnaires after the pilot study. Therefore, I explained the terms *process writing* and *close-ended questions* to the students in sections A and B while they were filling the questionnaires in order to ensure valid answers.

3.5 Instrumentation

Data on the effectiveness of integrating critical thinking in L3 classes was collected from three sources: a student questionnaire, a teacher questionnaire, and anecdotal records.

Table 3.5: Instrumentation

INSTRUMENT	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS/ANECDOTES
Student Questionnaire	48
Teacher Questionnaire	4
Anecdotal Records	4

3.5.1 Questionnaires

"The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, often being comparatively straightforward to analyze." (Cohen, et al., 2000, p. 245).

I used two questionnaires as quantitative research instruments. The first questionnaire was constructed for students in grade 8 classes in which English was the third language they studied at school. The questionnaires consisted of 10 multiple choice questions. At the end of every questionnaire, the participants could add any information they found necessary. Thus, the questionnaires were quantitative in nature because they analyzed numerical data; the number of students/teachers choosing each choice in each question.

3.5.1.1 Student Questionnaire

I established the questionnaire based on the aim of the study. I wanted to make sure the results of the questionnaire tackled the research question on the methods students preferred in learning. Based on the students' responses, I could tell whether they preferred traditional methods or teaching methods that integrated critical thinking.

The questionnaire (Appendix I) consisted of 10 questions. Students were asked to choose one or more answers based on the methods they preferred in learning English. At the beginning of the questionnaire, students checked the age group and gender they belonged to. The age group did not highlight any findings in the study since all the students involved in the study were of the same age group. In addition, the gender did not matter in the study since the questions were

applicable to both genders equally; none of the questions was directed to the females more than the males, and vice versa.

3.5.1.2 Teacher Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire (Appendix II) was similar to the student questionnaire in format, with the same number of questions and divisions but it incorporated different questions. While the students were asked about their preferred methods of learning, the teacher questionnaire highlighted the methods teachers actually followed in class. The teachers' age and gender did not affect the answers they chose.

3.5.2 Anecdotal Record

An anecdotal record is simply defined as a record of observed behaviors written down in the form of anecdotes (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). In anecdotal records, I can write down any behavior I believe is important for the study. Nevertheless, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) the observer should be precise and factual and should keep away from evaluative, interpretive and overly generalized comments.

Being an English teacher myself at TAL, I kept some anecdotes related to the effects of integrating critical thinking in teaching English on students. Four anecdotes were recounted in this study: one for every skill.

While the students' and teachers' questionnaires tackled their preferences and level of critical thinking integration in their learning and teaching methods, the anecdotal records that I kept throughout the two months of class observation highlighted the effects of the integration of critical thinking on L3 learners.

3.6 Data Analysis

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), conclusions made by the researcher from the data may be invalid or ambiguous if the data was not precisely and consistently scored.

In the students' questionnaire, five questions had four choices and five questions had three choices. In the teachers' questionnaire, all the questions had four choices. The data from the questionnaires was computed and tabulated in four rows; one for each response. I used Microsoft Excel to input and calculate the data of both questionnaires.

As for the qualitative part of the study, I kept five anecdotal record in the observed classes. Each record tackled a skill and described a lesson in which either students were subjected to the integration of critical thinking or were observed to check the extent to which they think critically.

3.6.1 Triangulation

“Triangulation is defined as the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic” (Olsen, 2004, p.3). This study used three instruments (a student questionnaire, a teacher questionnaire, and anecdotal records). The results were linked to reveal a relationship to the hypothesis, thus resulting in the validity of the study. The data obtained from the anecdotal records is reliable in its consistency. Observational data are revealing since they give the researcher the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations (Cohen, et al., 2000, p. 305). Thus, I had the opportunity to look at what was actually happening. During observations and writing anecdotal records, I was able to observe the physical, human, and interactional settings. This method of data collection is valid if used along with other measurable instruments. Therefore, keeping anecdotal records was valid when used with the questionnaires.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study kept participating individuals and institution anonymous, and did not in any way commit any unethical practice. Students and teachers were informed via written clarifying introductions at every questionnaire about the name of the researcher, field of study of the researcher, aim of the study, and the anonymity of the results. The questionnaires have not threatened the validity of the research since participants (students and teachers) were not pressured to be part of the study.

I sent a letter to the school principal seeking permission to fulfill my research at their school and received oral acceptance. There was no need for a written consent since the students', teachers', and institutions' names were not required in the questionnaires. Thus, there was no possibility that students or teachers would be put at any risk from being part of the research.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the three methods of data collection and the participants in the study. I also discussed the methods used in data analysis, and the triangulation used in the study to highlight the validity and reliability of the research. In addition, I considered the ethical issues of the study in relation to the students, teachers, and school. In the next chapter, I report the results of this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reveals the results of the student and teacher questionnaires and the anecdotal record kept by the observer. I will start by the results of the student questionnaire followed by that of the teachers. Then, I will describe the five anecdotal records kept for the five skills. Each anecdote will describe a different lesson where students were either subjected to a situation requiring them to think critically, or a situation that highlighted the use of critical thinking without the teacher's initiative.

4.2 Student Questionnaire Results

The first part of the questionnaire was mainly on background information related to the students. The gender of the students was equal; 50% males and 50% females. 27% of the students were between the age of 14 and 15, and 73% of the students were between the age of 12 and 13.

All students circled all five skills indicating the skills they learn in class; reading, listening, speaking, writing, and grammar. The questionnaire was then divided into five parts; one part for each skill. Each part included two questions related to that skill. Students were free to choose more than one answer per question.

Table 4.2 refers to the student questionnaire results. The table highlights the number of students who chose each response in each question respectively.

Table 4.2: Students' Questionnaire Responses

For the first question on the reading method they prefer to follow in class, 35 of 48 students believe that taking turns to read aloud and then discussing the text as a class is the best method. 21 students chose a similar choice, where they would have a class discussion after silent individual reading of the text. Only 3 students were interested in taking turns to read aloud and then answering the comprehension questions individually. One student chose silent individual reading followed by individual work on the comprehension questions. Students were then asked why they read in class. 29 students believe that reading is essential in class in order to provide their critical opinion of the text. 12 students consider reading to be an obligation to be following the teacher's instructions. 12 students read to be able to answer the comprehension questions correctly. 11 students read in class in order to prepare for similar readings on the administered tests in class.

The third and fourth questions were on listening. First, students were asked what they concentrated on while listening to an exercise in class. 25 students focus on the answers of the questions that follow the listening. 19 students try to get the general idea behind the text they are listening to. 17 students try to find the different ideas and opinions provided in the listening

exercise. 14 students focus on the pronunciation of words. The choices made by the students in this question were almost equal. In the second question on listening, students were asked what they preferred doing after a listening exercise. 27 students prefer discussing and commenting on the text they listened to with their classmates. 17 students choose to answer the comprehension questions in group as a class. Only 4 students want to answer the comprehension questions individually. And, only 3 students choose to write a brief reflection on the text they listened to.

The first speaking question requires students to choose their preference in assigning discussion topics. The majority of students (34) prefer that the topics are based on their own suggestions. 16 students wish for their teacher to choose the topics. And, 12 students would like to follow the discussion questions available in their textbook. Then, students were asked how they preferred to have the speaking activities in class. Most students (35) prefer having the discussions altogether as a class. 13 of the students prefer to have them in groups. Only 6 students are interested in pair work.

As for the writing, students were asked how they preferred having the topics assigned. 29 students chose to have them based on their own suggestions. 15 students chose to have them assigned by their teacher. And, 11 students based on the preceding reading text. In question number eight, 45 students chose creative writing as their preferred kind of writing. This choice had the highest votes among all other questions. 6 students chose reflective writing. And, only 1 student chose process writing.

The last part of the questionnaire was on grammar. 30 students prefer that the teacher starts with an example followed by the explanation of the grammar rule. 14 students wish for the teacher to start with the rule followed by examples they come up with. 12 students prefer that the

teacher writes the rule on the board followed by an example (top-down approach). Only 7 students think it is better for the teacher to start with an example and then to ask them to come up with the rule (bottom-up approach). As for the quizzes and exams, 33 students prefer close-ended questions. 31 students prefer short-answer questions. And, only 2 students chose paragraph writing.

At the end of the questionnaire, students were asked to write comments if they had any. The comments were: "I like music in class." "The English class is entertaining and well-taught. And to keep us concentrated on our work, she plays classical music." "Play music that the students like in class." "Like she always do it, Miss Ammar puts for us music in class, like Bach and Vivaldi, but she should put 21st century English music." "I like music in class." "I'd like to put music in class." "I would suggest to play games related to what we are learning." "We listen to music while working individually." "Music helps us to concentrate in class." "I want to put music in class." "In the tests or exams, we use a dictionary." "I like how we discuss topics in class." "Playing music while doing individually exercises."

4.3 Teacher Questionnaire Results

The first part of the questionnaire was on background information related to the teachers. All four teachers were females. One teacher is between 25 and 30, two of them are between 30 and 35, and one of them is between 35 and 40.

All teachers circled all five skills indicating the skills they teach in class; reading, listening, speaking, writing, and grammar. Similar to the student questionnaire, the teacher questionnaire was divided into five parts; one part for each skill. Each part included two questions related to that skill. Teachers were free to choose more than one answer per question.

Table 4.3 refers to the teacher questionnaire results. The table highlights the number of teachers who chose each response in each question respectively.

Table 4.3: Teachers' Questionnaire Responses

For the first two reading questions, teachers were asked how they start their lessons and what they ask students to do after reading a text. All four teachers chose the same answers for the first question. They chose to say that they sometimes start the reading lesson with a discussion on the title of the text, at other times they anticipate students' feedback on what they expect after reading by asking them a set of questions, and at times they start with a set of hints related to the text without further discussion. After reading the text, two teachers ask students to reflect on the reading and two teachers ask students to suggest different endings to the text. All teachers agree that it is essential to ask students to analyze the events of the text and to answer the comprehension questions that follow.

When it comes to listening, all four teachers use close-ended, comprehension, and discussion questions after listening exercises. While three teachers use debate questions. As for the listening objectives, none of the teachers aim at enhancing students' pronunciation from the

listening exercises. All four teachers want to ensure that students are following in class and can answer the related questions that follow. At the same time, two of the teachers aim at teaching their students new vocabulary words. And, three teachers intend at initiating class discussions.

For the speaking skill, none of the teachers never teaches speaking skills or teaches it once a month. One of the teachers teaches speaking once a week and the three others teach it every class. As for the method of teaching speaking, none of them teach it as a separate skill, while all four teachers integrate it with listening and reading.

In teaching writing, all four teachers use essay and free writing activities. Three of the teachers use short answer questions. None of them uses journal writing. All four teachers ask students to write in order to check their language acquisition, check their writing and grammar skills, and check students' critical thinking abilities.

The last part of the questionnaire was on teaching grammar. When asked on the methods they use to follow in their lessons, all four teachers give students an example and then ask them to infer the grammar rule. Only one teacher explains the rule and then asks students to answer the related exercises. None of the teachers explains the rule and then gives students an example. For the last question on the process they use to answer the exercises, all the teachers ask students to work individually and sometimes ask students to answer one question each in order. Two of the teachers ask students to work in groups to answer the exercises. While none of the teachers choose to ask students to work cooperatively.

4.4 Anecdotal Record Results

Being an English teacher at TAL myself, I kept anecdotal records in both classes I taught (A and B) over a period of two months of observation. Each anecdote describes a situation in

which critical thinking was either administered or expected in a certain skill. The records describe the lesson, what was expected of students, and students' responses. The four anecdotes kept on the five skills taught in English; reading, listening and speaking, writing, and grammar, reveal the effects of integrating critical thinking in L3 intermediate classes.

4.4.1 Anecdote #1

This first anecdote is on reading. The reading text was on obesity. Before reading the text, I asked students to brainstorm on a piece of paper everything that they had eaten over the weekend. Students drew a table and divided it into two sections; one for Saturday and the other for Sunday. They also divided each column into three sections: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. After writing down the meals they had, I asked them to highlight what they thought was healthy in what they had eaten. Then, each student chose a meal he/she had to tell the class about and to describe how healthy it was. After giving all students time to share their experiences, I asked them to think what the text was going to be about. Almost all students said that the text had something to do with eating healthy. I then asked them to think of the disadvantages of not eating healthy food. Students' responses described the different illnesses and diseases that resulted from unhealthy food. Their answers to the last pre-reading discussion questions were the key to the reading text. After reading the text, I asked students to reflect on the reading by relating the chart they had included their meals in to the problem of obesity. So, students chose an unhealthy meal from their charts and drew a map highlighting the negative end result they could reach from repeated unhealthy meals. (Appendix III)

The reading text also mentioned fast food as a problem believed to cause obesity. The writer explained how some American citizens have filed a law suit against fast food companies,

and what the lawyers of fast food companies replied. While discussing this issue with the students, I asked them to think of a similar situation that could have happened earlier in history and of its end result. Thus, I was asking them to find a base for their argument. In order to help students think of a similar case, I asked them to think of a product that is highly purchased with a note written on it warning people of its negative effects. Students were immediately able to identify the product; tobacco cigarettes. Based on this argument, students suggested that in some years' time, the wrapping of fast food might have a warning statement similar to the one on tobacco cigarettes. Students were also able to discuss the reasons that make fast food unhealthy; for example: the addictive products in them. At the end of the classroom discussion, I concluded by restating the main ideas mentioned.

4.4.2 Anecdote #2

The second anecdote is on a listening and speaking activity. The topic was on testing new medical products on animals. Students first listened to a documentary on the topic. A researcher explained the importance of the testing that takes place. He also highlighted the consequences and effects of the studies on the animals. The documentary was objective. The discussion made by the researcher presented the different procedures that take place without mentioning the different opinions on the topic. While listening, I had asked students to take notes on the information discussed.

After listening to the documentary, a class discussion was initiated. Students first read the notes they took followed by their opinion on the topic. Students tackled different sides to the topic. Some students thought it was important to test medical products on animals in order to ensure the safety of its use. Others argued that animals should not be used in testing medical

products. One student said, “Animals cannot defend themselves so we need to help them and defend them.” Another student said, “I have a cat and a hamster at home, and so I understand how harmful it is to use them for tests.”

4.4.3 Anecdote #3

The third anecdote is on a writing activity. The best way to integrate critical thinking in writing is to ask students to write creatively. Creative writing is a writing activity that gives the students the freedom of choosing, imagining, and describing a topic. One of the creative writing activities I gave in class required students to come up with a personal story. I asked them to write a story starting: “My brother and I always fought like cat and dog!” Each student wrote about an experience they had really lived or one they had imagined. Some students wrote about a life full of fights between them and their brothers, until an incident took place and changed that reality. Other students chose sad endings to their stories. One student wrote about her brother who was loved a lot by her parents until one night he killed himself without anyone knowing why. After each student read his/her writing, the class discussed the plot and ending of the story. Students gave suggestions to one another on things that could be changed to make the story sound better.

4.4.4 Anecdote #4

The fourth anecdote is on grammar. One of the most effective teaching methods used in teaching grammar is the bottom-up approach. Integrating critical thinking is highly effective in teaching grammar once the bottom-up approach is applied. I wanted to explain the present perfect simple to my students in grade 8. I started by writing different examples on the board. Some of the examples were: “I have been to Paris.” – “I have had this car for three years” – “I have bought this house since 2001.” First, I asked students to highlight the verbs in the

sentences. Second, I asked them to figure out the formation of the present perfect simple from the examples on the board. After that, I asked them to spot the events in the sentences on the timeline in order to find out the different uses of the present perfect simple. For the first example: “I have been to Paris”, students highlighted the past in the timeline, but could not figure out when exactly in the past. Thus, they came up with the first use of the present perfect simple; for actions that started and ended in the past with an indefinite time. For the second example: “I have had this car for three years”, the timeline looked like this:

Figure 4.4.4: Anecdote #4

Thus, students deduced the second use of the present perfect simple; for actions that started in the past and continue to the present. Students also noticed the use of *since* and *for* in the present perfect simple.

4.5 Conclusion

The three instruments used in this research study helped in highlighting the importance of integrating critical thinking techniques and methods in teaching English. The findings and results of the study answered the research questions. In general, students were more interested in learning when critical thinking methods were integrated. In the next chapter, I will discuss the above results in details.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter a detailed analysis on the data collected is presented and discussed in relation to the literature.

5.2 Student Questionnaire

The results of the student questionnaire in general reveal that students prefer to study in an atmosphere where critical thinking is integrated. Almost all the choices made by students showed their interest in learning through the integration of critical thinking. They seem to prefer learning reading, listening, speaking, writing, and grammar through discussion rather than following the traditional method of teaching and learning. The results obtained from the questionnaire concur with the literature. In fact, Brookfield (1987) hints that being able to identify and challenge assumptions, challenge the importance of context, imagine and explore alternatives, and develop reflective skepticism helps in having a comprehensive view on ideas, information, opinions and situations. Students' choices in the reading part of the questionnaire reveal their belief in the importance on reflecting critically to the texts read and the discussions made in class. Ennis and Weir (1985) see critical thinking as deciding what to believe or do in a reasonable and reflective manner. They believe that critical thinking is a means (i.e. reflection) to an end (i.e. what to do; the action). When students were asked about their preferred method in learning listening, the majority chose discussion. Stovall (1958) believes that the discussion technique is more effective than the traditional method in stimulating critical thinking by helping

students achieve a deeper understanding of subject matter. Accordingly, the first research question is answered. As for the speaking and writing skills taught in class, students prefer that they choose the topics. However, Chinn et al. (2001) believe that the teacher should be in control of the topic by choosing what the students should discuss in class. Whereas, Kahn (2007) believes that an authentic discussion approach can only take place when the classroom involves an open exchange of ideas among students. Finally, in learning grammar, students prefer the bottom-up method of teaching. According to Jones et al. (1995), “Critical thinking is an active process that goes beyond basic acquisition and memorization of information to the ability to recognize and rationally consider multiple concepts or elements that constitute a body of thought” (p.5). The choices students made in the student questionnaire were a tool to answer the second research question; what methods do students prefer in learning?

5.3 Teacher Questionnaire

The results of the teacher questionnaire show that teachers do not tend to integrate critical thinking in every lesson. The choices they made in the questionnaire prove that they seem to use methods of triggering critical thought in their students, but not in every lesson. None of the teachers, who answered the questionnaire, starts a reading lesson by immediately asking a student to start reading. They all start with a discussion, a set of questions to anticipate students’ feedback, or a set of hints to the text. Therefore, the teachers are actually getting students to think about the reading topic before starting to read. As for the listening and speaking, teachers seem to integrate critical thinking at an appropriate level for the students. Therefore, they tend to use discussion questions in class more than debate questions. Halvorsen (2005) believes that for a lesson to be successful it should be relevant to the students’ age level, background knowledge, and language proficiency (p.2). Thus, the lessons would cater for the students’ interest in order to

encourage and engage them in a classroom where critical thinking is an essential element. Despite that all the teachers who participated in answering the questionnaire, sometimes ask students to write in order to check their critical thinking abilities; yet journal writing is never used in class and free writing is rarely used. Being a teacher myself at TAL, I could tell that the reason teachers do not use free writing more often in class is because of the teachers' agenda full with lessons to be followed and completed at the same pace and time in all sections. However, integrating more writing activities that cater to integrate critical thinking should be part of the planned lesson plans. Omatseye (2007) and Gladwin and Stepp-Greany (2008) agree that the use of the traditional method in the classroom results in passive, silent student participants who only receive information instead of constructing knowledge. This is why Stovall (1958) states that the discussion technique is more effective than the traditional method in stimulating critical thinking by helping students achieve a deeper understanding of subject matter. When it comes to teaching a grammar lesson, participants seem to usually use the bottom-up method. Thus, they integrate critical thinking in teaching grammar. However, when it comes to answering the exercises that follow, participants never choose to integrate cooperative work. Johnson and Johnson (1986) believe that students who engage in cooperative work achieve higher levels of thought and retain information longer than those who work as individuals. The results of the teacher questionnaire served as a response to the third research question; what methods do teachers prefer using in teaching the skills of English?

5.4 Anecdotal Record

The results that could be clearly seen from the anecdotes indicate that integrating critical thinking in L3 intermediate classes has a positive effect on students' motivation and participation. In the first anecdote on reading, discussion questions were the trigger for students

to think critically. They were able to criticize their own meals, unhealthy food, and fast food restaurants. Based on scholars' observations, Hadjioannou (2007) states that real classroom discussions do not have predictable conclusions, on the contrary, the discussions keep going as the students propose new ideas. This is what the first anecdote described. According to Weillington & Wellington (1960), discussions should not be left without summary until the following day in order not to lose their emphasis. The anecdote on listening and speaking was also based on a discussion. The discussion was in the form of a debate. Some students were for testing new medical products on animals and some were against. Halvorsen (2005) believes that debate gives students the chance to think about the different sides and details of a topic, in addition to the opportunity it provides them to interact with one another. The third anecdote on a writing activity highlighted how creative writing is one of the best methods of integrating critical thinking in teaching writing. Macrorie (1980) believes that writing activities should develop from students' interest in order for education to be the result of a natural human need for knowledge. In addition, Bean (1998) also talks about the importance of stimulating thought through mastering exploratory writing. The last anecdote was on a grammar lesson taught using the bottom-up approach. Thus, allowing students to comprehend and deduce the rule from the provided examples.

The four anecdotes I kept based on the observations I made in both grade 8 classes had one thing in common; discussion. The importance of integrating discussions in L3 classes was clearly one way to motivate students and give them the chance to apply some critical thinking skills. Applebee et al. (2003) believe that integrating discussions in class is one way to help less active and shy students in becoming more involved in class. Furthermore, they believe that eliminating discussion in class will surely decrease the chances of exploring new ideas that

strengthen students' understanding. Nystrand (2006) states, "Organized instruction involves fewer teacher questions and more conversational turns than recitation, as teachers and students alike contribute their ideas to a discussion in which their understandings evolve during classroom interactions" (p. 399). The need for integrating discussions in L3 classes is a major technique for integrating critical thinking. Thus, answering the first and fourth research questions, what techniques and methods could be used in English-as-a-third-language classes to enhance critical thinking? And, what are the best techniques used to integrate critical thinking in class.

5.5 Conclusion

The discussion of the results of the study concurred with most of the opinions presented by the scholars in the review of the literature. Moreover, the results served as answers to the research questions.

Students' responses highlighted their preference to study in an environment that caters for integrating critical thinking in teaching and learning. Students' need for this environment is a result to their interest in expressing themselves and being part of class discussions. Similarly, teachers' responses showed that they do their best to integrate critical thinking in order to develop a critical sense in their students. However, the main difference between students' responses and that of the teachers' is that all the choices made by the students in the questionnaire showed their tendency to follow more in class in activities and methods that integrated critical thinking; whereas teachers' choices showed that they sometimes choose methods where critical thinking is less integrated.

The following chapter concludes this study and presents the limitations and the suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

Based on the research done, it could be concluded that the integration of critical thinking in L3 intermediate classes has a positive effect on students in general. Students become better learners, more involved and motivated in class. The choices made by students in the student questionnaire highlighted their interest in learning in a medium where critical thinking is appreciated and integrated. The observation done by the researcher in the two grade 8 classes also showed how students became motivated in class when critical thinking techniques were integrated in teaching reading, listening and speaking, writing, and grammar.

This study did not only highlight the effects of integrating critical thinking on students, but also the role that teachers play. The teacher questionnaire showed how even teachers find it more interesting to integrate critical thinking in their teaching methods. Of course the positive effects resulting from that integration are the only reasons for them to highly recommend using techniques of integrating critical thinking in their lessons. Teachers should consider four critically reflective lenses to view their teaching. These lenses include: teachers' autobiographies as teachers and learners in order to see the teacher's practice from the other side of the mirror and to connect to what the students are learning; students' eyes in order to check whether or not students are learning what teachers intend to teach; colleagues' experiences by engaging in critical conversations to notice the hidden aspects in teachers' practice; and theoretical literature to provide several interpretations of some situations (Brookfield, 1995, p.29)

It might be difficult for teachers to integrate critical thinking techniques and to find different approaches to every lesson. However, once teachers have become used to the main methods of integrating critical thinking it would be difficult to choose not to use them. Even though some methods of integration are used several lessons, the challenge given to students and the material itself are what actually shape the lesson. Therefore, using one method for more than one lesson should not be a conflict or a reason for teachers to be afraid of falling into repetition.

The research study was conducted to highlight the effects of integrating critical thinking in L3 intermediate classes. The literature review along with the results of the study proved that integrating critical thinking enhances well-engaged and motivated students.

6.2 Limitations

The results of the study in general are valid and reliable since the triangulation method was used in data collection. A student and teacher questionnaire was used and anecdotal record based on observation was kept. However, some unmanageable issues might have made the study more reliable and valid had they been better controlled. As a result, it is difficult to generalize the results of this study.

The main limitations in this study are three. The first limitation is time. The data was collected over a period of two months only. Therefore, it was difficult to make sure the data collected through observation is consistent. The second limitation is the number of students who participated in the study. Only 48 students participated. This number could not have been more given the only two months provided for the study. The third limitation is that I am the researcher and the observer. It was difficult to choose a different observer with the restrictions at school to allow a stranger to visit our classes. And, given the time limit, it was also difficult to ask another

teacher to provide me with at least twenty anecdotes about her classroom to choose the most suitable four.

6.3 Reflexivity

If I had the chance to start again with this study, I would change some things. First, I would give myself more time for observation to make sure how different methods of integrating critical thinking affected students' learning. Second, I would observe more than two classes to make sure my study was more valid and reliable. Finally, I would have conducted interviews with other teachers to find out how they integrated critical thinking in their classes and to hear their opinion on how well the effects are.

6.4 Recommendations

In order to generalize the results, further research could be done on a greater number of students and schools in Lebanon. The same instruments could be used to make sure the results are reliable. However, interviews with teachers would also be helpful. In addition, the study would achieve better results if it is repeated over a longer period of time.

This study was limited to intermediate classes and specifically grade eight. Thus, it would be even more efficient to choose the other intermediate classes. And, maybe in a more developed study, the secondary classes, since critical thinking is taught at schools to develop critical citizens.

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Appendix 1

MA Research Questionnaire for Students

My name is Jessica Ammar. I am in the last phase of completing my M.A. in Education, emphasis Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages at the Lebanese American University. My interest is in finding methods and techniques to enhance critical thinking in English-as-a-foreign-language classes. Please, note that your names and the school name will be anonymous and that being part of the study is on voluntary basis.

Tick the correct answer.

Gender: ☐ male ☐ female

Age group: ☐ 12 – 13 ☐ 14 – 15

You may circle more than one answer.

Which skills do you learn?

- a- Reading
- b- Listening
- c- Speaking
- d- Writing
- e- Grammar

Reading:

- 1- Which reading method do you prefer to follow in class?
 - a- Taking turns to read aloud and then discuss the text as a class.
 - b- Taking turns to read aloud and then answer the comprehension questions individually.
 - c- Silent individual reading followed by a class discussion.
 - d- Silent individual reading followed by individual work on the comprehension questions.
- 2- Why do you read in class?
 - a- To follow the teacher's instructions.
 - b- To answer the comprehension questions correctly.

- c- To prepare for similar readings on the administered tests in class.
- d- To criticize and give your opinion of the text.

Listening:

- 3- What do you concentrate on when listening to an exercise in class?
 - a- The pronunciation of words.
 - b- The general idea behind the text listened to.
 - c- The answers of the questions following the listening.
 - d- The different ideas and opinions provided in the text listened to.
- 4- What do you prefer doing after listening to an exercise in class?
 - a- Answer the comprehension questions that follow individually.
 - b- Answer the comprehension questions that follow with the class.
 - c- Discuss and comment on the text you listened to with the class.
 - d- Write a brief reflection on the text you listened to.

Speaking:

- 5- How do you prefer the discussion topics to be assigned?
 - a- By the instructor.
 - b- Based on the discussion questions in your textbook.
 - c- Based on your own suggestions.
- 6- How do you prefer having the speaking activities in class?
 - a- In pairs.
 - b- In groups.
 - c- All the class together.

Writing:

- 7- How do you prefer the writing topic to be assigned?
 - a- By the instructor.
 - b- Based on the preceding reading text.
 - c- Based on your own suggestions.

8- What kind of writing do you prefer?

- a- Process writing.
- b- Reflection writing.
- c- Creative writing.

Grammar:

9- What kind of explanation do you prefer?

- a- Teacher writes the rule on the board followed by an example.
- b- Teacher starts with an example followed by the explanation.
- c- Teacher starts with the rule and asks you to come up with an example.
- d- Teacher starts with an example and asks you to come up with the rule.

10- How do you prefer having your quizzes and exams?

- a- Close-ended questions.
- b- Short-answer questions.
- c- Paragraph writing.

Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix 2

MA Research Questionnaire for Teachers

My name is Jessica Ammar. I am in the last phase of completing my M.A. in Education, emphasis Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages at the Lebanese American University. My interest is in finding methods and techniques to enhance critical thinking in English-as-a-foreign-language classes. Please, note that your names and the school name will be anonymous and that being part of the study is on voluntary basis.

Tick the correct answer.

Gender: ☐ male ☐ female

Age group: ☐ 20 – 25 ☐ 25 – 30 ☐ 30 – 35 ☐ 35 – 40 ☐ above 40

You may circle more than one answer.

Which skills do you teach?

- a- Reading
- b- Listening
- c- Speaking
- d- Writing
- e- Grammar

Reading:

- 1- How does your lesson start?
 - a- A discussion on the title of the text.
 - b- A set of questions to anticipate students' feedback on what to expect after reading.
 - c- A set of hints related to the text explained by the teacher without further discussion.
 - d- A student immediately asked to start reading.
- 2- After reading the text, what do you do?
 - a- Ask students to reflect on the reading.
 - b- Ask students to suggest a different ending to the text.

- c- Ask students to analyze the events of the text.
- d- Ask students to answer the comprehension questions following the text.

Listening:

- 3- What kind of listening exercises do you apply?
 - a- Close-ended questions (true or false, multiple choice, fill in the blanks, etc.)
 - b- Comprehension questions.
 - c- Discussion questions.
 - d- Debate questions.
- 4- What is/are your listening objectives?
 - a- Enhance students' pronunciation skills.
 - b- Ensure students are following in class and can answer the questions following.
 - c- Teach students new vocabulary.
 - d- Initiate discussions.
 - e- Other: _____

Speaking:

- 5- How often do you teach speaking?
 - a- Once a week.
 - b- Once a month.
 - c- Every class.
 - d- Never.
- 6- How do you teach speaking?
 - a- As a separate skill.
 - b- Integrated with reading.
 - c- Integrated with listening.
 - d- Other: _____

Writing:

- 7- What kind of writing activities do you use in class?

- a- Essay writing.
- b- Short answer questions.
- c- Free writing.
- d- Journal writing.
- e- Other: _____

8- Why do you ask students to write?

- a- To check their language acquisition.
- b- To check their writing skills.
- c- To check their grammar skills.
- d- To check students' critical thinking abilities.

Grammar:

9- Which method do you follow in your lesson?

- a- You give students an example and then ask them to infer the grammar rule.
- b- You explain the rule and then give students an example.
- c- You explain the rule and then ask students to answer the related exercises.
- d- Other: _____

10- Which of the following do you use in class for answering the exercises?

- a- You ask students to work in groups only to answer the exercises.
- b- You ask students to work individually.
- c- You ask students to work cooperatively.
- d- You ask each student to answer one question in order.

Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix 3

Student Reading Worksheet

~~On Saturday~~ On Saturday I had
a burger and fries and
pepsi from McDonalds.
↓
if I eat this everyday.
↓
I could become obese
↓
if I became obese,
I could have heart
problems