

Teaching Grammar to Promote Critical Thinking in EFL Classrooms

Fatmeh Ja'far

Department of Curricula and Instructions, College of Educational and Psychological Sciences, Amman Arab University, Amman – Jordan

Corresponding Author: Fatmeh Ja'far

Abstract: This study attempted to sketch critical thinking as an applicable concept in foreign language education. The researcher employed a number of critical thinking techniques in an academic Basic Grammar TEFL course of 25 students at Amman Arab University, during the first semester of 2016/2017. Interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation were the critical thinking skills adopted through group work, consisting of real life situations, watching silent movies, songs, T.V programs, presentations, planning for the future, interviews, role-playing and problem solving procedures. A debate session was used for the evaluation of both language and critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Critical thinking, grammar, teaching English as a foreign language.

Date of Submission: 25-01-2018

Date of acceptance: 16-02-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of learning a foreign language is to achieve communication, through the function, contextual situations and roles of interlocutors. Learning a foreign language includes mastering the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing, in addition to grammar and vocabulary acquired through techniques and exercises that enable learners to communicate. Grammar and vocabulary provide the foundation of deciding the forms that match the functions and the roles of interlocutors, in both oral and written activities. On the other hand, Critical Thinking is the ability to analyze the way of thinking and presenting evidence for ideas, rather than simply accepting the personal reasoning as sufficient proof. Willingham (2007) thinks that the primary, yet insufficient goal of schooling is to provide students with critical thinking skills. Critical thinking enables students see both sides of an issue, practice reasoning dispassionately, and be open to accept new evidence that disconfirms ideas. The skills of critical thinking also include among others, the capability of demanding backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, and solving problems. The importance of critical thinking is that it is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It is a valuable skill for students to master, because it entails effective communication and problem solving abilities, not only in class assignments, but in facing real world situations, and is valued both in the university setting and in professional situations. Critical thinking is essential in education, research, finance, management, and legal professions. Being able to think well and solve problems systematically is an asset for any career. In the new knowledge economy, critical thinking is very important.

Combining the techniques of teaching grammar with the techniques of critical thinking is expected to promote the use of the foreign language properly in real life situations.

1.1. Teaching Grammar

Grammar means a set of rules, with which each individual can make meaningful sentences in a language. According to Brown (2001:362), grammar is “the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence... Technically grammar refers to sentence-level rules only, and not rules governing the relationship among sentences, which we refer to as discourse rules.” Students learning L2 grammar usually face a serious dilemma; they need to know the rules of grammar, as that is what they are tested on at schools, but they also lack enough knowledge for communication in an L2. In teaching a foreign language there is a need to look at the way of combining form and meaning in a correct grammatical way. Grammar instructions have been the core issue in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). Grammar is commonly taught through rules of the language only. According to Ur (1999), grammatical rules enable the learners to know how the sentence patterns should be put together. At the same time, teaching

grammar should encompass language structure or sentence patterns, meaning and use, and furnish the basis of the set of language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Teaching grammar had its ups and downs in the recent decades. In Grammar Translation Method, the form was the central aspect of learning, while in the Direct Method and Natural Approach grammar had a marginalized role (Brown, 2001). Methods of teaching foreign languages shifted from audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods to the communicative language teaching. Much attention has been paid to language tasks focusing on global and integrative issues rather than on the discrete grammatical structure. Interest in teaching foreign languages through 'real-life-language' and language used in various social and cultural settings has increased since the 1970s of the twentieth century. According to Ellis (1997), communicative teaching approach was considered as a shift from form-based grammar to focusing on the meaning only. The communicative language teaching approach enables students to perform language spontaneously, but does not guarantee linguistic accuracy of the utterances, while form-based approaches focus on the linguistic and grammatical structures, and make the speech grammatically accurate. Students lack the ability to produce spontaneous speech accurately, it is only observed in prepared speech.

At present, teaching grammar is focused on task-based teaching and consciousness raising activities, in addition to the role noticing (Fotos, 2005). The important question that needs to be answered is: what is the best way to teach grammar explicitly through a formal presentation of grammatical rules or implicitly through natural exposure to meaningful language? English language teachers are encouraged to change their grammar teaching methods, from the traditional grammar rule teaching to a more communicative and interactive way, which focus on the use of grammar rather than the knowledge of grammar. But teachers in practice keep their beliefs on the benefits of explicit grammar teaching against the implicit strategies. Scott (1990) demonstrates the difference between the two ways, "an explicit approach to teaching grammar insists on the value of deliberate study of grammar rule in order to recognize linguistic elements efficiently and accurately" whereas "an implicit approach suggests that students should be exposed to grammatical structures in a meaningful and comprehensible context in order that they may acquire, as naturally as possible, the grammar of the target language" (p. 779).

Researchers give different opinions regarding explicit versus implicit grammar instruction. Krashen (1982), believes that grammar is acquired naturally, and it does not have to be explicitly taught, while Larsen-Freeman (1995) emphasizes that instruction is essential to enhance the acquisition of grammar and to speed up the process. Harmer (2007) points out that students focus on form when their conscious attention is directed to some features of the language, such as a verb tense or the organization of paragraphs, which occur naturally in Task-based learning. "Focus on forms" (p. 53) is the structure around a series of language forms followed by most of the language syllabuses and course books. Sheen (2003) believes that "an underlying assumption of a focus on form approach is that all classroom activities need to be based on communicative tasks, and that any treatment of grammar should arise from difficulties in communicating any desired meaning." (p. 225). Including social issues and real life situations in the curriculum of EFL, aims to enable learners to enhance their cognitive skills.

1.2. Critical Thinking

People who can generate new ideas are favored in this fast evolving world, above those who lack the ability to absorb information and create new ideas to solve problems. There is an urgent need for equipping learners with the right thinking tools. Hashemi, Naderi, Shariatmadari, Naraghi and Mehrabi (2010), affirm that for acquiring this goal, the educational system is responsible of paying attention to critical thinking as one of the fundamental dimensions of the whole system.

Halanon (1995), states that there is no widely accepted single definition for critical thinking. Browne and Keeley (2007) define the term as an awareness of a set of interrelated questions, an ability to raise and answer critical questions at appropriate time, and a desire to actively use the critical questions. They divided the process into two categories, namely "weak-sense and strong-sense critical thinking; weak-sense critical thinking is the use of critical thinking to defend your current beliefs. Strong-sense critical thinking is the use of the same skills to evaluate all claims and beliefs, especially your own" (p. 10). According to Paul, Elder, and Bartell (1997), critical thinking is the process of conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication. As critical thinking is not an intrinsic part of instruction, in teaching they see that it aims at providing suitable environment where students are guided to construct their own knowledge and become responsible for their own learning.

For critical thinking to have an impact on educational practices, Siegel (1988) points out that it has to be delineated with some precision. He identifies two conceptions of critical thinking: the "pure skills" and the "skills plus tendencies" (p.6); the 'pure skills' conception concentrates upon a person's ability to assess correctly or evaluate certain sorts of statements, and the second conception concerns the ability to recognize the

depth of the concept of critical thinking, and the importance of character, values and other moral dimensions of the concept. Stout (1993) believes that learners should be accustomed to analyzing, conceptualizing, evaluating and synthesizing what they have sought. Forehand (2005) explains these thinking skills that Bloom (1956) created as the taxonomy of six main cognitive levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Furthermore, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) modified the nomination of the categories from nouns to verbs that denote action, and the skills were organized in a hierarchical order according to the complex mental processes in the human's mind in the following sequence: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create, where the "create" has been classified as the most complex mental skill in the list and comes on the top of the pyramid, while "remember" comes in the bottom, as the most basic one.

Facione (2007) clarifies that critical thinking is "about how you approach problems, questions, or issues, it is the best way we know of how to get to the truth" (p.10), in real life common situations. It enables learners to stop being passive learners, who are used to accept and believe every piece of information without investigation; it provides them with a group of mental abilities that they need to enhance by doing problem-based activities. Norris (1985) confirms that critical thinking is an educational ideal that should not be considered as an option, and Leach (2011) approves that critical thinking skills has to be learned, for they are not inborn abilities in the human brain, stressing that there is no specific course called "critical thinking". According to Buskist and Irons (2008), such an enterprise requires students to learn several subtasks which include, among others:

- a. Developing a skeptical approach to problem solving and decision making;
- b. Breaking down problems into their simplest outcomes;
- c. Searching for evidence that both supports and refutes a given conclusion;
- d. Maintaining a vigilant attitude toward their personal bias, assumptions, and values that may interfere with making an objective decision.

Education psychologists, such as Thomas & Smoot (1994), stipulate that critical thinking is a very important element of schooling in the 21st century, and that the changing conditions of today require new outcomes to be considered as a focus of schooling. Most of the teachers support the idea of teaching students critical thinking abilities, but some of them feel that they don't have the capacity or confidence to do so, while some teachers believe that critical thinking cannot be taught, or does not need to be taught deliberately and explicitly (Fok, 2002).

Pineda (2003) sees that "combining the learning of a language with critical thinking may result in a more meaningful learning experience" (p. 44). Moreover, working on developing critical thinking in the EFL classroom could become a better strategy to teach the language in a meaningful way. (Fox, 1994) also agrees that critical thinking is more than just a set of writing and thinking techniques, he says that it is a voice, a stance, a relationship with texts and family members, friends, teachers, media, even the history of one's country and the achievement of critical thinking by a person.

In language learning, critical thinking is expected to enhance language and presentation skills. Thinking clearly and systematically helps improve the way ideas are expressed and improves comprehension abilities as well. In addition to fluent English language ability, most of the highest paying jobs require critical thinking skills, such as generating effective ideas and making important decisions. Job interviewers often ask applicants questions that test their ability to think critically. This study aimed at enhancing critical thinking abilities among university students at a university in Jordan through incorporating critical thinking strategies in teaching grammar in EFL classes. The interest in doing research in the field of critical thinking in EFL grammar class came from the notion that teaching EFL should not only be the study of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Mastering a foreign language is important, but it must not be the simple end of EFL education. The current study attempted to involve the students in the discussion of social topics using correct grammar and vocabulary, and practicing the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) through applying critical thinking processes.

1.3. Problem of the study

It was detected that English grammar was taught with an emphasis on the linguistic structures (e. g. simple tenses, perfect, future and progressive tenses) rather than the communicative practices of the language. Consequently, it is time to break the traditional grammar lessons in EFL classroom, in order to offer the learners a new communicative teaching methodology based on issues that involve them in the discussion of personal and social contexts of their own lives. It was noticed that most of the students had limited abilities and negative attitudes towards learning English. In addition to the weakness in using the language, Jordanian EFL students have limited chances to practice English language outside the classroom.

With these problems in mind, the main concern of the study was to change the traditional teaching practices, in order to give more meaningful and motivating classes for learners by implementing authentic materials and communicative strategies in EFL grammar classes. Therefore, if students need grammar for communication, it should be taught communicatively, that is, meaning-based teaching. On the other hand, if

students need the grammar knowledge to be able to translate from L2 to L1, and that is what they are going to be graded on, then form-based approaches will be more appropriate. The researcher believes that teaching critical thinking skills through EFL grammar classes is expected to enhance the abilities of the learners to think critically.

1.4. Questions of the study

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1- What critical thinking processes are implemented in EFL grammar class?
- 2- What is the result of the critical thinking processes in EFL grammar class?
- 3- What is the result of grammar achievement of EFL grammar class students?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

This review is about integrating critical thinking process in EFL classes, in order to better understand the relationship between critical thinking techniques and teaching grammar in EFL classes. Two very important educational goals are expected to be achieved: teaching the foreign language and training the learners to be critical thinkers for life. In the reviewed studies, each researcher used a different content in different environments of EFL classes to enhance critical thinking abilities of the learners. Meiramova (2017) used Socratic questioning in promoting critical thinking in a foreign language environment in teaching a course titled "Linguaculturology" to Kazakhstani students at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Kazakhstan that resulted in positive outcomes. Hernández and Rodríguez (2016) conducted a study on encouraging critical thinking development in an EFL classroom through urban legends using an action-research. Findings revealed that the students' critical thinking skills enhanced in a greater or lesser degree to evaluate, critique, and create, while they developed their language skills simultaneously in the foreign language. Parker (2016) carried out an analytical study on the relationship between critical thinking and the motivation of Korean university engineering students in EFL classes. The study took place at a Korean University in the greater Seoul metropolitan area. Two sections of the course containing 21 and 23 students participated in the study, all of whom were between the ages of 18 and 25. The results of the study showed that critical thinking activities have positive effect on the students' motivation towards learning English.

Some researchers came up with suggestions for integrating critical thinking and teaching a foreign language in well-designed activities. Zhao, Pandian & Singh, (2016) proposed some instructional strategies for developing critical thinking in EFL classrooms such as explicit instruction, teacher questioning, active and cooperative learning strategies, that include group discussion, debate, and reciprocal peer questioning. Furthermore, Vdovina and Gaibisso (2013) proposed a lesson plan for developing critical thinking in the English language classroom. Martinez and Jimenenino (2013) also studied implementing tasks that stimulate critical thinking in EFL classrooms at Universidad Pedagogica de Colombia in Tunja. The activity aimed at raising awareness about the need to strengthen critical thinking skills in undergraduate students through music and English language. Yang and Gamble (2013) carried out an experimental study to examine a proposed instruction for critical thinking in EFL classroom. Findings of the study showed that the experimental group learners demonstrated a significant improvement in English proficiency in comparison to the control group with superior critical thinking and academic achievement in a content-based exam.

Zarie (2012) investigated the relationship between critical thinking and L2 grammatical and lexical knowledge, using a 60-item vocabulary and grammar subtest of the TOEFL test, and an 80-item Watson Glaser Critical Thinking questionnaire distributed among 150 male and female Iranians studying English as a foreign language at Azad University in Takestan, Iran. Data analysis results indicated that the correlation between vocabulary and critical thinking was not statistically significant nor between grammar and critical thinking, but there was a strong trend towards a positive relationship between them.

Furthermore, Lai (2011) reviewed the theoretical literature on critical thinking from different points of view. Educators' view of critical thinking is a desirable educational outcome as one of several skills necessary to prepare students for post-secondary education and the workforce. He concluded that critical thinking skills are essential to some important student learning outcomes, such as metacognition, motivation, collaboration, and creativity.

Gaskaree, Mashhady, and Dousti (2010) aimed at suggesting critical thinking approach to language learning and introducing practical ideas for helping teachers to integrate language and critical thinking skills. The study introduced three critical thinking activities (dialogue journals, reading logs and literacy portfolios). The implementation of this approach and maintaining the learners engaged in these activities is expected to help them use authentic materials, and solve problems of their own interest which in turn will have a positive effect on students' motivation.

Rezaei, Derakhshan, and Bagherkazemi (2005) attempted to sketch the concept of critical thinking as a viable cornerstone in language education. Upon an in-depth review of literature on critical thinking, they

recommended that teachers assist their students to become effective critical thinkers, i.e. to help them acquire both the critical thinking skills and critical attitudes to deal with the changes and challenges of the information age. In a similar line of inquiry, Yuretich (2004), viewed the teaching of critical thinking as the teaching of some higher order reasoning skills, such as, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Regarding the teaching of critical thinking as the teaching of a set of generic reasoning skills, such as deductive and inductive reasoning, Solon (2003) conducted an experimental study that aimed to investigate the impact of different critical thinking instruction approaches on the critical thinking test scores of community college students. The findings of the study revealed that different levels of treatment can lead to significantly different levels of improvement and that 'the critical thinking course intervention had more impact than the infusion approach.

Zainuddin and Moore (2003) developed a structured controversial dialogue technique for fostering critical thinking among English language learners that can be used at all school and university levels, and for any content area. The four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) were used in the technique, the technique encourages students to read and write, learn new concepts, or better understand phenomena to which they have already been exposed. Students were allowed to practice their critical thinking skills that encourage them to generate new ideas, problem-solve through reasoning, and make the best decisions possible in a given situation.

On the best way to teach L2 grammar, Harizaj (2015) questioned how grammar is taught in English classes in Albania, inductively or deductively? The study was based on researches on how communicative language teaching approach (CLT) is implemented in English classes. Results showed that traditional methods of teaching a foreign language do not help students acquire and use language, and teaching inductively through a communicative activities help students communicate in a conscious way.

The reviewed studies focused on critical thinking strategies and procedures integrated in teaching English as a foreign or second language classes. The researchers suggested different techniques to be implemented in EFL classes while teaching language skills, grammar and vocabulary in a meaningful and fruitful way for the learners for the school achievement and their future. Discussion, debate, action research, and questioning skills are among the suggested activities that use communicative language teaching approach combining teaching the language, at the same time while training the learners on critical thinking skills. The generality of the suggestions could be specified in this study to teaching grammar in a communicative way to enable the learners to use the language correctly in real life situations.

III. METHOD AND PROCEDURES

For the purpose of integrating critical thinking skills in teaching grammar in EFL class, the researcher adopted the quasi-experimental method. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997), the purpose of the quasi-experimental design is to determine cause and effect, and there is direct manipulation of conditions, "however, there is no random assignment of subjects" (p.36). The critical thinking components are the APA report: Expert Consensus Statement on Critical thinking Skills (ERIC ED 315 423). 1990. These components illustrated in table No.(1) are: Interpretation, Analysis, Evaluation, Inference, Explanation, and Self-Regulation.

3.1. Participants of the study

Participants of the study were (25) BA first and second year students at the English Department in Amman Arab University, during the first semester of the academic year 2016/2017 studying a three credit hour course titled 'Basic Grammar' number (51032102), an 80 minutes meeting twice a week sessions. The textbook assigned for this course was Grammar Express, 2nd edition by Marjorie Fuchs & Margaret Bonner from Longman, 2000. Subjects of the course were distributed along sixteen weeks including two tests (first and second) and the final test at the end of the course. The topics of the course are: Present and Imperative, Past, Present Perfect and Past Perfect, Future and Future Perfect, Wh-Questions and Tag Questions, Modals I, Modals II, Nouns, Adjectives and Adverbs, The Passive, The Conditional, Indirect Speech.

All students have studied English as a foreign language during the school years from grade one to grade twelve. The curriculum was about general language teaching of English which included the four skills with grammar and vocabulary. It is supposed that all public and private school employ communicative language teaching techniques. But the problem is the outcome is weak, most of the students are not able to communicate properly in English. The responsibility of universities is to introduce intensive English courses that strengthen the capabilities of the students to use the language in their studies, work and real life.

3.2. Instrument and techniques of the study

3.2.1. Instrument

An observation notecard was prepared to evaluate the students on the debate activity. The notecard was based on the Critical Thinking Value Rubric (1990) (App. 1), by the Association of American Colleges and Universities,

and was used to evaluate the students at the end of the course. Two observers were trained to use the notecard giving a maximum of 4 points for the best performance on each part of the rubric, going down to 1 point according to the rubric of five parts. To assure reliability, inter-rater formula was applied with a result of 90.0.

3.2.2. Techniques of the study

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following techniques were implemented in teaching the grammar course: Brain-storming discussions, conversation practices, role playing, writing reports, and debates. These techniques were based on the skills and sub-skills of 'Delphi Report' of the Critical Thinking Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction (1990), illustrated in Table 1.

Table No. (1) Skills and Sub-skills of Critical Thinking

SKILLS	SUB-SKILLS
1. Interpretation	Categorization Decoding Significance Clarifying Meaning
2. Analysis	Examining Ideas Identifying Arguments Analyzing Arguments
3. Evaluation	Assessing Claims Assessing Arguments
4. Inference	Querying Evidence Conjecturing Alternatives Drawing Conclusions
5. Explanation	Stating Results Justifying Procedures Presenting Arguments
6. Self-Regulation	Self-examination Self-correction

IV. ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS

4.1. Critical thinking Processes followed

To answer the first question of the study; (What are the critical thinking processes implemented in EFL grammar class?), following are procedures carried out in the classroom in order to practice the critical thinking skills and sub-skills

4.1.1. The participants worked in groups of four, six or twelve according to the activity.

4.1.2. The lesson began by introducing grammar items as listed in the course syllabus, one in each session: Students were given worksheets of chosen texts where they had to work together categorizing, decoding significance, clarifying meaning, and comparing the existence of the items in the given text when introducing each grammar item.

4.1.3. Each group evaluated their own work according to the discussions carried out between each group members and the other groups. The teacher gave instructions, corrected mistakes, and encouraged students to use the correct words.

4.1.4. The next activity was applying the knowledge in real life situations, for example; watching a silent movie, discussing a common issue, speaking about themselves, questioning, etc. Students were asked to form groups as the activity required, and assign a speaker for the current activity. Examples of the activities are listed below:

- Several silent movies were chosen according to the grammar element of the session (The Elevator, Memories, Thirst, The Thief..). The teacher asked the students to watch the movie and write sentences using the grammar element of the lesson. The students wrote the sentences on the board and they were asked to correct the mistake. The teacher played the movie again for more details. The students described the scene developing a story about it. The teacher played the movie for a third time for the groups to elaborate and think of assumptions, possible reactions and expected solutions to the problem by the characters. Students worked together to solve

the problem, put another ending for the scene, suggest or imagine what the characters could be thinking about or feeling, judge the behaviors of the characters, justifying their ideas and reasoning the suggestions. Each group presented its story by the speaker, after which all groups were involved in a discussion, exchanging ideas and thoughts, at the same time correcting grammar and vocabulary mistakes. The teacher worked as a facilitator giving instructions, watching the time, suggesting some vocabulary when needed, and helping students when asked only.

- An old song was used in teaching (The conditional) by giving the students copies of the song to interpret the meaning of it, and categorize the types of the conditional, showing the use of each type and the difference between them. The song was (If you go away) by Shirley Bassey. They listened to the song and practiced the grammar item through using it in a real life situation by developing suggested topics, for example; (What – if I: want to lose weight? I am the minister of education? I am a parliament member?...).Students were allowed to use the dictionary to use as much vocabulary as needed.
- As homework, students were directed to watch a TV program at home, and write a report about it using the (reported speech). Each student was given five minutes to present the report, the audience commented, asked questions about the information and the language.
- Another homework about (What I will be doing after ten years from now)to write about their plan to fulfill their dream, the assignment was to be written without mentioning the student’s name. This assignment aimed at using the future tense in planning for the future, justifying the procedures and giving clear information about the aimed goal. Papers were distributed among the students to evaluate the language, vocabulary, justification, and information, giving the corrector’s own opinion about the goal based on the plan mentioned in the paper.
- Three local famous women were invited to meet the students: a Parliament Member, a Jordanian actress, and a women’s rights activist. The class was divided into three groups, each group members were asked to prepare questions for one of the guests, and afterwards to come up with their analysis and judgments in the next session. The activity began with the three ladies introducing themselves, giving information about their education, careers and social activities. This activity aimed at enhancing the use of the grammar item of Questioning, and training the students to practice critical thinking skills.
- Three problems were suggested for the groups to choose from in order to prepare a role playing session. The problems were: (1)Un-employment (2)Extremism, and,(3)Women’s rights. Each group chose one problem and collected and analyzed data, then the next session they carried out a conversation through role playing as social activists, psychologists, ministers, clergy men, parents, business-owners, university presidents, and other personnel as needed. They came up with solutions they thought were appropriate and feasible.

4.2. Results of evaluating the critical thinking abilities

To answer the second question of the study; (What is the result of the critical thinking processes in EFL grammar class?), a debate activity was carried out. This activity was considered the highest activity that included all the skills of critical thinking, besides the knowledge of English language, and the capability of the students to use correct meaningful language in real life.

The students suggested several topics for the activity, and decided on the topic to be put up in the debate. The debate was about The UN and its role in keeping the world peace. The class was divided into two groups (G1 and G2) who worked for two weeks preparing for the activity. The teacher observed and followed both groups directing them and answering their questions when needed. They prepared their accusations and defenses based on collected information from different sources. The debate session took place in the classroom for 40 minutes. The points were given to the groups according to the rubric parts. Two faculty members from the department attended the debate as an evaluating committee given a note card to assess the students’ performance based on the Critical Thinking Value Rubric, by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (App.1).Table No. (2) illustrates the results given by the observers about the performance of both groups.

Table No. (2) Results of critical thinking on the debate

	Parts of the rubric	G1/20	G2/20
1	Explanation of issues	4	4
2	Evidence selecting and using information to investigate points of view	4	4
3	Influence of context and assumptions	3	2
4	Students’ position (perspective)	2	4
5	Conclusion and related outcomes(implications and consequences).	4	3
	Total	17	17

It was noticed that most of the students were influenced by the Palestinian issue when they came to discuss the UN efficiency in implementing the international rules. Both groups achieved high level of critical thinking skills according to the short duration of training they received. The results of G1 and G2 were 17 out of

20. In two parts (1 and 2) both groups got the same marks. G1 got only 3 out of 5 on the part: (Influence of context and assumptions). They identified their own and others' assumptions about the role that UN should play in accordance to the Palestinian issue regarding the resolutions of the Security Council. They reviewed several relevant contexts when presenting a position, but they did not analyze them systematically and methodically. On the same part, G2 got only 2 out of 5, as the group member missed some relevant contexts when presenting their position about the Palestinian issue and the Security Council Resolutions. They adopted a general assumption instead of their own.

On the other hand, G2 got (3) on the last part about the (conclusion), which was logically tied to a range of related information, including opposing viewpoints; consequences, and implications were identified clearly but they failed to discuss their evidence in priority order.

4.3. Achievement results of student's on the grammar course

To answer the third question: (What is the result of grammar achievement of EFL grammar class students?), the class was administered three required tests: First, Second and Final test. These tests are assigned by the university for BA students for each academic course. Table (3) shows the results of the grammar course listed in a descending order. The final mark was out of 100.

Table (3) Results of Basic Grammar Course No. 51032102
First Semester 2016/2017 at Amman Arab University

No.	ST. No.	100	No.	ST. No.	100
1	201510006	98	14	201510002	75
2	201610517	94	15	201610652	71
3	201610519	93	16	201610216	68
4	201610735	92	17	201420122	68
5	201610278	90	18	201610012	65
6	201610274	90	19	201510062	64
7	201610079	86	20	201610444	61
8	201420082	86	21	201610473	61
9	201420112	82	22	201610143	58
10	201510032	81	23	201610157	54
11	201610009	81	24	201530112	53
12	201610234	80	25	201610098	50
13	201520422	77			

The results of the students on the Grammar course are illustrated in Figure (1).

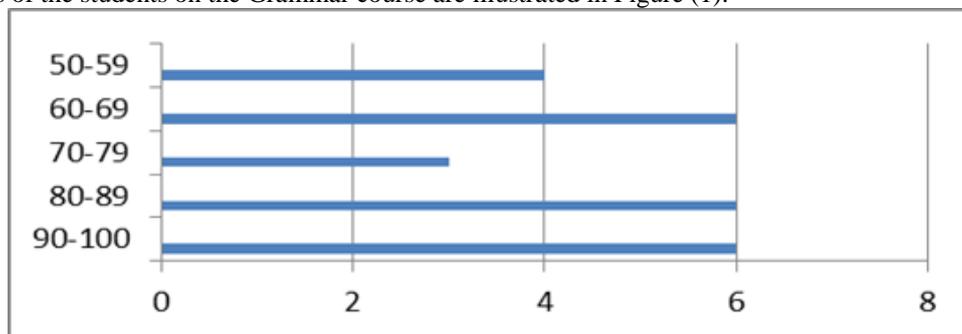


Figure (1) Results of Grammar Course

The results of achievement on the grammar course showed that six students got above 90, six students got between 80-89, three students got between 70-79, six students got between 60-69, and four students got between 50-59. No students failed the course as the passing mark is 50, which was the lowest score against 98 out of 100 which scored the highest. Merging critical thinking skills in a grammar course had a positive effect on the achievement of students on the course. Usually grammar courses are considered boring and difficult to learners of foreign languages, but the feedback on this course was positive and fruitful.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicated that critical thinking in EFL classes can help students master learning both; to use the foreign language in grammatically correct structures in real life situations, and the skills of critical thinking at the same time. It is not only achieving good marks at the end of the course, the cognitive dimension of critical thinking that insure the use of critical thinking skills outside the narrow instructional setting is more important. Students expressed their feelings towards the teaching strategy; although they felt uneasy about the difficulty of the requirements, and the time and efforts they spent. But after they got used to the procedures, they enjoyed competing with each other. Students' evaluation of the course included several positive results they attained:

- self confidence in one's own ability to think and reason
- open-mindedness regarding divergent world views
- understand other people's opinions.
- honesty in facing one's own biases, prejudices, stereotypes, egocentric or socio-centric tendencies
- flexibility in considering alternatives and opinions
- inquisitiveness with regard to a wide range of issues
- concern to become and remain generally well-informed
- alertness to opportunities to use critical thinking
- diligence in seeking relevant information
- orderliness in working with complexity
- ability to spontaneously speak English

At the same time, they listed some negative points of the course, which were:

- textbooks and learning material were not available
- too many assignments
- on the contrary to the expectations of an easy grammar course, it was too demanding
- working with weak students was not favorable
- correct answers to the tests were not specified
- allotted time was not enough

In comparison, the negative opinions of the students about the strategies might be changed at the end of the course, and the outcome and achievements justify maintaining such strategies. Turning grammar classes into enjoyable sessions that students attain more than one goal is important. It was found that the accomplished skills were acceptable for one course training on the critical thinking, although if they were exposed to them in more advanced courses they would have done better.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study showed that including critical thinking in EFL classes could be fruitful both in teaching grammar and critical thinking skills. Practicing English in real-life situations enhances learning the language, and when these situations are well designed to enable the students to develop reasoning and thinking, students will be equipped with higher thinking skills. The voluntary integration of the students in the activities reflected their willingness to learn and ability to be involved in different methods of the process of teaching-learning English as a foreign language. Modern technology of today enables the teachers to be creative and provides a wide range of choices to use in EFL classes. The researcher believes that it is important for EFL learners to improve their critical thinking for several reasons; their reading, writing and speaking in English will improve when they become able to give their opinions and defend them. Learning a foreign language implies using it within broader communicative contexts, and being successful in solving problems both in academic contexts and real life tasks.

It is recommended that EFL teachers maintain explicit instruction dedicated to critical thinking skills, abilities, and dispositions built into all levels of the curriculum. More studies on planning and applying critical thinking strategies in EFL classes are recommended, in addition to studies on training EFL teachers to implement different activities in their classes.

REFERENCES

- [1]. D. T. Willingham, *Critical thinking-why is it so hard to teach?*, *American Federation of Teachers*, 2007, 8-19.
- [2]. H. D. Brown, *Teaching by principles: an interactive approach to language pedagogy* (Longman and New York: Longman, 2nd ed. 2001).
- [3]. P. Ur, *A course in language teaching: practice and theory* (Cambridge: Teacher Training and Development, 1999).
- [4]. R. Ellis, *Second language acquisition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

- [5]. S. Fotos, Traditional and grammar translation methods for second language teaching. In E. Hinkel (ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005) 653-670.
- [6]. V. M. Scott, Explicit and implicit grammar teaching strategies: New empirical data, *The French Review*, 63 (5), 1990, 779-789.
- [7]. S. D. Krashen, *Principles and practice in second language acquisition* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Inc., 1982).
- [8]. D. Larsen-Freeman, On the teaching and learning of grammar: Challenging the myths. In F. Eckman et al. (Eds.), *Second language acquisition theory and pedagogy* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995).
- [9]. G. Harmer, *How to teach English: an introduction to the practice of English language teaching*, 2nd Ed (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2007).
- [10]. R. Sheen, Focus on form--a myth in the making, *ELT Journal*, 57(3), 2003, 225-233.
- [11]. S. A. Hashemi, E. Naderi, A. Shariatmadari, M. S. Naraghi, and M. Mehrabi, (2010). Science production in Iranian educational system by the use of critical thinking, *International Journal of Instruction*, 3(1), 2010, 62-78.
- [12]. J. S. Halonen, Demystifying critical thinking, *Teaching of psychology*, 22(1), 1995, 75-81.
- [13]. M. N. Browne and S. M. Keeley (2007). *Asking the right questions: a guide to critical thinking*. 8th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007).
- [14]. R. Paul, L. Elder, and T. Bartell, (1997). *Study of 38 public universities and 28 private universities to determine faculty emphasis on critical thinking in instruction*, (Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, 1997). weblink - <http://www.criticalthinking.org/articles/researchfindings-policy-recom.cfm>
- [15]. H. Siegel, *Educating reason: Rationality, critical thinking and education* (New York: Routledge & Metheun, 1988).
- [16]. C. J. Stout, C.J. (1993). The dialogue journal: a forum for critical consideration. *Studies in Art Education*, 35(1), 1993, 34-44.
- [17]. M. Forehand, M. (2005). Bloom's Taxonomy: Original and Revised. In M. Orey (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology* (E-Book), 2005. https://textbookequity.org/Textbooks/Orey_Emergin_Perspectives_Learning.pdf
- [18]. L. W. Anderson, and D.R. Krathwohl, (Eds.) *A taxonomy for learning, teaching And assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives* (Complete Edition, New York: Longman, 2001).
- [19]. P. A. Facione, (2007). *Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts* (Millbrae, CA: California Academic Press, 2007). Retrieved on April 5th from: www.insightassessment.com/pdf_files/what&why2007.pdf
- [20]. S. P. Norris, Synthesis of research on critical thinking, 1985. Retrieved on March 15, 2009, from <http://stallion.abac.peachnet.edu/bray/synthcritthink.pdf>.
- [21]. B. T. Leach, *Critical thinking skills as related to university students' gender and academic discipline*, doct. diss, East Tennessee State University, Carolina, 2011.
- [22]. W. Buskist, and G. J. Irons (2008). Simple strategies for teaching your students to think critically. In D. S. Dunn, J. S. Halonen, and R. A. Smith (Ed) *Teaching Critical Thinking in Psychology: A Handbook of Best Practices*, (UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008) 49 -57.
- [23]. G. Thomas, and G. Smoot, Critical thinking: A vital work skill, *Trust for Educational Leadership*, 1994, 23, 34-38.
- [24]. S. C. Fok, Teaching critical thinking skills in a Hong Kong secondary school, *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 20032, 3(1), 83-91.
- [25]. C. Pineda, Searching for improved efl classroom environments: The role of critical thinking-related tasks, Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia. Colciencias, 2003.
- [26]. H. Fox, *Listening to the world: Cultural issues in academic writing* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1994).
- [27]. S. Meiramova, Applications of critical thinking research: Foreign language teaching in an international context, *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*, 2017, 7(1).
- [28]. M. L. Hernández, and L. Rodríguez, Encouraging critical thinking development in an EFL classroom through urban legends. *FPrimeraeopoca*, 43, 2016, 137-152.
- [29]. A. S. Parker, *Analysis of critical thinking and motivation in a Korean university EFL classroom*, MA thesis at Hamline University, Minnesota, USA, 2016.
- [30]. C. Zhao, A. Pandian, and M. Singh, Instructional strategies or developing critical thinking in EFL classrooms, *English Language Teaching*, 9(10), 2016, 14-21.
- [31]. E. Vdovina, and C. Gaibisso, Developing critical thinking in the English language classroom: A lesson plan, *ELTA*, 1(1), 2013, 54-68.
- [32]. A. Martinez, and P. Nenino, Implementing tasks that stimulate critical thinking in EFL classrooms, *Cuadernos de Lingüística Hispánica*, 21, 2013, 143-158.
- [33]. C. Yang, and J. Gamble, Effective and practical critical thinking-enhanced EFL instruction. *ELT*, 2013, 67(4). 398-412.
- [34]. A. Zarei, and E. Haghgoo, The Relationship between critical thinking and L2 grammatical and lexical knowledge, *English Linguistics Research*, 1(1), 2012, 104-110.
- [35]. E. R. Lai, *Critical Thinking: A Literature Review – Research Report* (New York: Pearson, 2011).
- [36]. B. L. Gaskaree, H. Mashhady, and M. Dousti, Using critical thinking activities as tools to integrate language skills, *Sino-US English Teaching*, 6(4), 2010, 33-45.
- [37]. S. Rezaei, A. Derakhshan, and M. Bagherkazemi, Critical thinking in language education, *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(4), 2011, 769-777.
- [38]. R. F. Yuretich, Encouraging critical thinking: Measuring skills in large introductory science classes, *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 33, 2004, 40-46.
- [39]. T. Solon, Teaching critical thinking: The more, the better! *The Community College Enterprise*, 9(2), 2003, 25-38.

- [40]. H. Zainuddin, and R. A. Moore, Enhancing critical thinking with structured controversial dialogues, *The Internet TESL Journal*, IX(6), 2003, <http://iteslj.org/>
- [41]. M. Harizaj, Teaching micro skills through communicative activities in EFL classes in Albania, *Philosophy, Social and Human Disciplines*, 1, 2015, 97-103.
- [42]. J. H. McMillan, and S. Schumacher, *Research in Education* (New York: Longman, 1997).
- [43]. APA report: Expert Consensus Statement on Critical thinking Skills, *ERIC ED*, 315- 42, 1990.

Appendix 1 Critical Thinking Value Rubric, by the Association of American Colleges and Universities

	Capstone 4	Milestones 2	3	Benchmark 1
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by commissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence Selecting and using information to investigate points of view or conclusion	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as face, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumption (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Students' position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific positions (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but simplistic and obvious.

	synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).			
Conclusion and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion), some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implication) are oversimplified.

Critical Thinking Value Rubric, Association of American Colleges and Universities

Fatmeh Ja'far "Teaching Grammar to Promote Critical Thinking in Efl Classrooms." IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 23 no. 2, 2018, pp. 15-26