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**Investigating the Role of Socratic Seminar in developing Critical
Thinking among EFL Learners:
The Case of Intermediate Students of English at Harmony School in
Ghardaia Province**

*Dissertation submitted to University of Ghardaia for obtaining the
Master's degree in Didactics*

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the role of the Socratic Seminar method in developing critical thinking among intermediate EFL learners. It seeks to determine the impact of this method on learners' critical engagement and to explore students' and teachers' attitudes toward its effectiveness in enhancing both cognitive development and learning outcomes. This study also examines the extent to which the implementation of Socratic Seminars contributes to the development of reflective thinking, argumentation, and dialogic interaction in the EFL classroom. To this end, qualitative tools were used, including classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with the teacher and students. The results obtained from the classroom observation revealed significant improvements in students' participation, critical engagement, and willingness to collaborate. Moreover, the interviews indicated that both EFL learners and their teacher held positive views about the Socratic Seminar method, appreciating its role in creating a student-centred, thought-provoking environment. Therefore, the findings confirmed that the Socratic Seminar positively influences learners' critical thinking and enhances both teaching and learning practices.

Key-words: Socratic seminar, Critical thinking, EFL learners, Dialogic learning, EFL teachers.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to

My beloved parents, whose love, sacrifices, and unwavering support have been the foundation of all my achievements, your encouragement and prayers have guided me through every challenge, and for that, I am forever grateful.

To my beloved sisters, Sara and Soumia, and my dear brother, Ahmed El-Taher, thank you for your endless love, encouragement, and unwavering belief in me.

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List of Abbreviation

- **CT** stands for “Critical Thinking”
- **EFL** stands for “English as a Foreign Language”
- **SS** stands for “Socratic Seminar”
- **TBLT** stands for “Task-Based Language Teaching”

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General Introduction

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1. Background

The ability to think critically is a crucial skill in the 21st century; living in an era of content information exposure, receiving vast amounts of information daily from diverse sources is overwhelming. It can lead individuals, particularly students, to be at risk of becoming passive consumers of content, often accepting information without questioning (Fajaria & Suezdi, 2020). In order to handle these complexities, students must develop critical thinking, a key component of the highly recognized “Four Cs” of 21-century skills: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (Magpantay et al., 2022). These competencies help students to be prepared for life by equipping them to secure stable careers, contribute to society, and achieve personal fulfilment.

In today’s globalized world, students are required to cultivate both language skills and higher order thinking skills. Critical thinking stands out as a core educational competency that enables learners to effectively analyse and evaluate information, ultimately leading to the creation of new ideas and perspectives (Singh et al., 2020; Matmool et al., 2023; Taherkhani et al., 2023). The conventional teaching methods of English as Foreign Language usually focus on correct grammar instead of how students think analytically leading to incomplete cognitive development (Hamdani, 2019). The Socratic Seminar functioning as a dialogue-based instructional method presents an effective teaching strategy which develops EFL students' language proficiency and critical thinking by encouraging open-ended discussion and inquiry.

Therefore this study investigates the implementation of the Socratic Seminar method among a group of intermediate-level EFL learners at Harmony School, a private language institute in Ghardaia province, Algeria. The research investigates the impact of this approach on learner development of critical thinking abilities within speaking lesson contexts.

2. Statement of the Problem

The Algerian EFL classroom continues to emphasize rote learning, which stresses the passive memorization of information without questioning, rather than a deeper understanding and reflection. This is despite growing recognition of the need for critical thinking education requirements, combined with teacher-centred approaches. The result is that students find difficulties when they engage in meaningful discussion and develop independent thinking

while making logical arguments through English language. Educational research needs to investigate modern ways of teaching that develop these abilities. This research seeks to investigate Socratic Seminar as a method for developing critical thinking skills among intermediate-level EFL learners.

3. Aims of the Study

The purpose behind conducting this research is to examine the role of the Socratic Seminar method in fostering critical thinking among intermediate EFL learners. Specifically, it seeks to: first, analyse the impact of Socratic Seminars on students' critical thinking skills development. Second, to explore students' perceptions and engagement during Socratic discussions. Third, to explore the EFL teachers' perspective towards using the Socratic Seminars.

4. Research questions

To achieve these objectives, this study strives to answer the following questions:

- How does the Socratic Seminar method influence critical thinking development among intermediate EFL learners?
- How do students perceive the effectiveness of Socratic Seminars in enhancing their critical engagement and learning experience?
- .What is the EFL teachers' perspective towards using Socratic Seminars in their classrooms?

5. Research Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

- The Socratic Seminar method will have a positive impact on the critical thinking development of intermediate EFL learners.
- EFL learners will demonstrate increased engagement in reflective discussions, improved analytical reasoning, and argumentation skills and improved learning outcomes when participating in Socratic Seminars.

- EFL teachers will have a positive attitude towards using Socratic Seminars in their classroom.

6. Significance of the Study

This research can provide significant contributions to EFL pedagogy by presenting a student- centred and dialogic approach that focuses on critical engagement of students with texts and concepts. The results created by this study may help EFL teachers together with curriculum developers and educational policy makers develop learning practices which advance language proficiency and enhance cognitive skills. The educational framework at Harmony School provides contexts which can aid other educational settings in Algeria while also assisting developing regions worldwide.

7. Scope and Limitations

The study is limited to a small, homogeneous sample of 15 female intermediate-level EFL learners enrolled at Harmony School in Ghardaia province. While the study offers in-depth insights, the findings may not be generalizable to all EFL learners or co-educational environments.

8. Research Methodology

The investigation of Socratic Seminar method effectiveness in real-world EFL classroom adopts a qualitative case study as its research design. The study gathered data using two specified tools, which are as follow:

Classroom Observations: Conducted both before and after the implementation of the Socratic Seminar method to document changes in students' engagement and thinking processes.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Used with both the learners and their teacher to have in-depth insights about their experiences throughout the implementation of the method.

9. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into two main parts: the theoretical part and the practical part. The theoretical part includes two chapters related to the literature review about the dependent variable, critical thinking in English as a foreign language (EFL) context, and

the independent variable, the Socratic Seminar method. On the other hand, the practical part includes one chapter devoted to data analysis and discussion of the findings.

Chapter One: Critical Thinking in EFL Context

Introduction

1.1. Defining Critical Thinking (CT)

1.1.1. Components of Critical Thinking

1.2. Importance of Critical Thinking in Education

1.3. Critical Thinking in English Language Learning (EFL)

1.4. Theoretical Foundations of Critical Thinking

1.5. Approaches to Incorporate Critical Thinking in EFL context

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Conclusion

Introduction

Modern education sets critical thinking as its main objective while foreign language education demands learners to both understand language fundamentals and use language as a deliberate and analytical tool. Most educational practitioners agree that improving students' critical thinking abilities creates better academic results while developing students into autonomous reflective learners. In parallel, the Socratic Seminar method establishes itself as a transformative teaching method that promotes student interaction through questioning and lets them develop their critical thinking abilities. Therefore, the present section delivers an extensive study of the two theoretical concepts covered by this research divided into two chapters. The first one will explore the concept of critical thinking, presenting its various definitions, importance in education, core components, and key skills. It will also highlight the specific challenges and opportunities of promoting critical thinking in the EFL classroom, and the second one will focus on the Socratic Seminar method. It will define this method and outline its historical and philosophical foundations. Additionally, it will describe its structure, classroom application, benefits for EFL learners, and the roles of both teachers and students during a Socratic Seminar. Further, it will examine how this method supports the development of higher-order thinking.

1.1. Defining Critical Thinking (CT)

Scholars throughout the previous decades, such as Facione, Paul and Elder, Ennis, and Halpern, have confirmed critical thinking (CT) as a fundamental intellectual skill. Facione (2011) defines critical thinking as "purposeful self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference" (p. 2) emphasizing the demonstration of mindful reasoning processes which is not a simple random thinking. Building up on this foundation, Paul and Elder (2006) suggests a "Start-Up" definition that promotes the careful examination of one's own thinking in order to make it better ensuring that it is clear, fair and logical highlighting the metacognitive dimension. Similarly, Ennis (2011) defines CT as "reasonable and reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 1), in other words, choosing what to believe or how to act, this considers that individuals should take actions or decide to accept or refuse ideas after reflecting on them. Helpen (2014) adds that Critical thinking implies "the application of cognitive skills or strategies which boost the probability of desirable outcomes"(p. 8), thus directly correlating CT with effective problem-

solving abilities. According to Brookfield (2012) critical thinking functionality transforms individuals through a process which enables them to identify assumptions and challenge them while exploring different thinking paths until determining appropriate actions. Taking these perspectives together, critical thinking shapes into more than cognitive abilities because it stands as an interactive reflective process that enables people to build fair logical decisions through their deliberate actions.

However, it is important to distinguish CT from mere memorization or passive acceptance of information as Nickerson, Perkins, and Smith (1985) state in "The Teaching of Thinking" describing one type of thinking as "analytic, deductive, rigorous, constrained, convergent, formal, and critical". This positions critical thinking as a specific mode of thought characterised by these features. This skill is especially valuable in today's globalized world, where learners must sift through diverse sources of information, engage in dialogue with others, and make informed decisions.

1.1.1 Components of Critical Thinking

Multiple related aspects of critical thinking enable people to analyse data efficiently and reach logical decisions. For comprehending meanings in information alongside experiences, individuals absolutely need interpretation as Facione (1990) emphasized. To understand structure and implications of arguments and ideas one must carry out analysis through breaking them down (Facione, 1990). The evaluation process enables people to assess both source credibility and evidence strength (Paul and Elder, 2001), additionally the cognitive skill of inference lets people derive plausible conclusions from available information (Ennis, 2011), while explanation provides individuals with a means to disclose their rational methods of thinking (Facione 1990). The regulation of one's thinking processes through self-monitoring represents an essential element of critical thinking as defined by Halpern in 1998. The combination of open-mindedness together with fair-mindedness as dispositions enables reasoned judgment through the practice of unbiased perspective evaluation (Bailin et al., 1999).

According to Kapable Club (2025), critical thinking involves:

- **Analysis:** Breaking down complex information into manageable parts to understand its structure and underlying assumptions.

- **Evaluation:** Evaluating information credibility together with relevance serves to create decisions with high quality outcomes.
- **Inference:** Drawing logical conclusions based on evidence and reasoning.
- **Explanation:** The writer presents conclusions after providing step-by-step logical explanations.
- **Self-Regulation:** A person must observe their mental operations in order to prevent subjective errors and maintain unbiased professional judgment.
- **Perception:** Recognizing and interpreting information accurately.
- **Fallacy Recognition:** One should learn to recognize and prevent logical mistakes in how people structure their arguments

1.2.Importance of Critical Thinking in Education

Critical thinking is one of the core components of today's modern education that has been significantly improving students' academic achievements and cognitive abilities. It fosters analytical thinking enabling students to judge information while utilizing their gained knowledge to address problems in multiple fields of study (Rivas &Saiz, 2023). Additionally, Learners throughout their learning journey must cultivate their ability to reason effectively, solve problems, while being creative thinkers in order to succeed in academic, professional and social domains, this was under the declaration of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009). In the field of education, promoting critical thinking as an essential educational practice is a necessity to create autonomous students who are reflective and responsible individuals (Lipman, 2003).

Moreover, CT serves as a vital tool for students to develop fundamental life skills, which include ethical reasoning, effective communication, and responsible decision-making. As the digital information sources increase, it becomes crucial for students to acquire the necessary skills to evaluate information's credibility and relevance (JJC Mentor, n.d.). Also, students who engage in critical thinking are better equipped to interpret texts, construct arguments, and assess multiple perspectives (Kuhn, 1999), thereby strengthening students' communication skills. Furthermore, employers increasingly value CT as a core competency, which helps employees deal with workplace obstacles and generate new ideas (JJC Mentor,

n.d.). By integrating CT as a part of educational curricula, students become ready to succeed academically as well as make substantial professional and social contributions.

1.3 Critical Thinking in EFL Context

Within the realm of English as a Foreign Language, critical thinking is important not only for improving students' English communication skills, but also for allowing them to build their independence as analytical thinkers in a world characterized by complexity and linguistic diversity. In EFL classrooms, learners are often required to surpass linguistic accuracy for expressing opinions, evaluating arguments, and interpreting information critically—skills that reflect and match the demands of real-life communication (Atkinson, 1997). This asserts that learners are able to apply what they learn in class in lifelike situations (Bouguelmouna & Cherairia, 2017).

According to Davidson (1998), integrating critical thinking into language instruction equips EFL students with the cognitive tools necessary to evaluate arguments, challenge assumptions, and make informed judgments, which are essential competencies for academic success and civic participation. Similarly, Wallace (2003) points out that critical literacy in EFL encourages students to question and deconstruct texts, thereby enhancing both their reading comprehension and analytical skills. This view has gained empirical support in recent years. For example, according to the research review conducted by Liu and Stapleton (2023) there was a proof that students' analytical and reflective capacities in EFL writing were improved through explicit teaching of CT, questioning techniques, and scaffold tasks. These findings confirm that encouraging critical involvement results as key to the development of language learning and cognitive processes.

Moreover, modern EFL instruction which uses the communicative approach provides an additional reason to prioritize critical thinking development for learners. Collaborative tasks with structured discussions and argument-based writing help students build language proficiency as well as their power of reflection (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory that emphasizes social interaction alongside dialogue in developing higher-order thinking abilities between individuals. In this regard, multiple investigations demonstrate that EFL students respond well to collaborative learning environments and inquiry-based methods like Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to improve their critical thinking along with language skills (Kayaoglu, 2023). Furthermore,

research in Algerian and Beninese secondary school contexts affirms that implementing Socratic questioning, Bloom's taxonomy, and critical reading strategies has a positive impact in enhancing the learner's engagement as well as analytical capabilities (Boulahnane 2022, Kpatchavi 2023).

Overall, CT implementation in EFL instruction serves as an absolute requirement which achieves dual benefits for the development of language proficiency and thinking processes. By embedding critical inquiry, collaborative learning, and reflective practices into language education, EFL learners are better equipped to navigate complex communication tasks and participate meaningfully in academic and outside academic contexts

1.4 Theoretical Foundations of Critical Thinking

Multiple foundational psychological and educational theories serve as the basis for critical thinking by explaining how individuals learn to reason, evaluate and form judgments. These theoretical bases provide enlightenment about how to cultivate critical thinking skills among language learners and how to create educational instructions that foster cognitive processes. The following are some of the most recognized frameworks:

Educational frameworks based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives are the most frequently used models in this field. Bloom et al. (1956) developed the cognitive skill hierarchy that begins with lower-order thinking and progresses through knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), the revised taxonomy presents intellectual activities which start with remembering and advance to understanding and applying before reaching analysing and evaluation and finally arriving at creation. The taxonomy serves language education professionals to develop task designs which promote increasingly complex thinking processes. (See figure1.1).

Another relevant theoretical foundation is supported by the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Piaget (1972) in his work emphasized that learners build their knowledge through active learning and problem-solving activities. Thus, meeting the thinking demands of critical thinking. The Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978), on the other hand, presented the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to explain the gap between what students can do without direct assistance and what they can accomplish with guidance. In EFL context, activities that promote CT, like group discussions, dialogues, debates and reflective

writing, frequently occur within the ZPD, enabling students to enhance their analytical skills through collaborative learning and teacher guidance.

Additionally, according to Ennis (2011) critical thinking embraces cognitive competencies and dispositional characteristics in a complete definition. He argues that analytical competency is insufficient for critical thinking as it requires an active disposition to participate in the process. Ennis's perspective becomes essential when teaching EFL learners since they typically feel uneasy about traditional argumentative methods and critical dialogue. Thus, critical engagement requires students to build their intellectual capabilities along with their mindset for meaningful discussion.

The sociocultural perspective also sheds light on how critical thinking can be cultivated in classroom settings. According to this view, learning is inherently social and mediated by language and cultural tools (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In this regard, classroom dialogue, peer interaction, and authentic communication tasks serve as vehicles for developing students' ability to reason critically in the target language.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives underscore the importance of designing learning environments that challenge students to go beyond rote memorization and engage in reflective, analytical, and evaluative thinking. They provide a strong foundation for integrating critical thinking into EFL instruction in ways that are developmentally appropriate, socially interactive, and cognitively demanding.

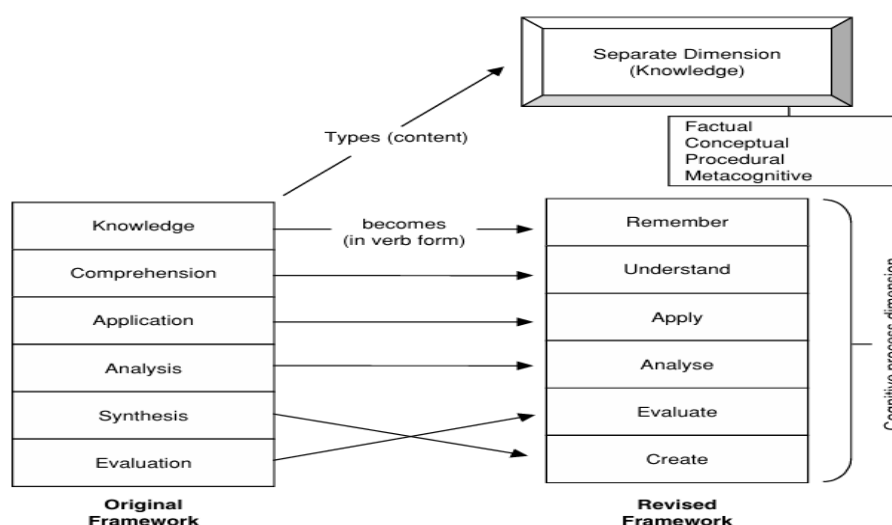


Figure1.1. Structural changes from Bloom to the Anderson and Krathwohl revision, retrieved from “Frameworks for Thinking” (2006).

The figure shows how Bloom's Taxonomy was revised. The original categories (like Knowledge, Comprehension, and Synthesis) were changed into action verbs (like Remember, Understand, and Create) to better reflect active thinking and learning processes. The revised version also adds a new dimension “the Knowledge Dimension”, which breaks down knowledge into four types: Factual, Conceptual, Procedural, and Metacognitive. This makes the framework more detailed and practical for teaching and assessing critical thinking

1.5. Approaches to Incorporate Critical Thinking in EFL context

In EFL classroom, fostering critical thinking skills goes beyond simply encouraging students to think; it involves deliberate instructional design, strategic questioning, and the inclusion of tasks that stimulate cognitive engagement, promoting analysis, reflection, and evaluation. In recent years, several educational approaches have been introduced to incorporate CT into language instruction, emphasizing student-centred approaches, active participation, and higher-order cognitive processes. These methods align with current research that highlights the incorporation of inquiry, technology, and real-world problem-solving in EFL teaching to promote critical involvement and meaningful language use.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) stands as a well-known teaching approach that helps students complete genuine assignments that demand decision-making and problem-solving, or meaning negotiation. Ellis (2003) explains that these kind of tasks make students

explain their thought processes and review multiple perspective options which leads to CT development. Studies on problem-based learning (PBL), a method closely related to TBLT, validate these findings by demonstrating that students who participate in PBL develop better analytical abilities and creative skills while improving their language proficiency. Cosgun and Atay (2023), for example, proved that EFL learners who received PBL instruction increased their CT skills notably, especially when it came to logical thinking and collaborating effectively. The findings of Koukpossi et al. (2024) that align with the collaborative nature of TBLT, suggest that using group inquiry and real-world tasks can significantly enhance CT in Beninese secondary schools.

Another effective approach is debate and discussion-based instruction that enables students to develop their CT abilities through their work of forming opinions backed by evidence while critically engaging with different viewpoints. These practices align with open-ended classroom dialogue, and they are reflected in more recent findings by Novianti (2023), who utilized inquiry-based cycles for discussion organization. Novianti's research revealed that structured discussion tasks with questioning methods helped Indonesian EFL students enhance their abilities to interpret, analyse and evaluate information. While teachers function as facilitators who guide students to reason deeply in order to overcome simplistic thinking, these students showed better improvements.

Reading and writing activities also offer fertile ground for critical thinking development, particularly those involving critical text analyses that includes reflective writing enables students to develop their CT skills. EFL students require better reading capabilities than basic comprehension to identify assumptions and implications in texts as Wallace (2003) explains. The approach has found support in contemporary ICT-based interventions. For instance, Wei and Li (2024) conducted research on Web Quests and concept mapping digital tools that assist students in advanced text analysis and idea synthesis based on CT principles. Similarly, the research conducted by Algouzi et al. (2023) demonstrated that EFL students improved inference abilities and evaluative skills through video-mediated self-study writing activities which maintained their study motivation. These findings support Stapleton's (2001) argument that written tasks such as argumentative essays cultivate both linguistic accuracy and critical awareness.

Furthermore, the inquiry-based learning model that follows constructivist theory enables students to solve real-world challenges through evidence-based conclusions. This

student-driven model fosters curiosity and autonomy, essential components of CT. King (1994) supported that investigative approaches increase intellectual participation while Novianti (2023) documented that students developed independent thinking abilities throughout their studies of contextual topics. Finally, explicit instruction in CT can be incorporated into language lessons, including bias detection together with argument evaluation and evidence analysis techniques. Ennis (1996) recommended direct CT teaching as a best practice and a recent research by Yuan et al. (2022) confirms this requirement since EFL teachers need specific guidance to integrate CT effectively. Professional development functions as the vital factor that helps reduce the distance between intended learning objectives and actual classroom implementation.

Taken together, EFL education benefits from these methods because they establish a learning space that combines meaningful communication activities with cognitive challenges. As students engage critically with content, they improve both their language proficiency and their capacity for independent, reflective thought, which are vital skills for success in today's globalized world.

1.6. Advantages of Teaching Critical Thinking in EFL Context

Teaching critical thinking skills to EFL learners yields multiple important benefits that exceed language acquisition. The main aspect of teaching critical thinking in EFL classrooms leads to improved cognitive performance among learners. When students tackle assignments which demand evaluation of information and problem-solving and formation of logical opinions they develop their abilities to think analytically and reflect. Students need these critical skills for academic triumphs and they also serve students throughout their lives as well as in their roles as responsible citizens (Paul & Elder, 2006).

Moreover, critical thinking promotes learners' autonomy. Through critical thinking students learn to evaluate what they already know while also developing their power to view information from different points of view before reaching independent conclusions thus becoming self-reliant learners. The freedom to decide personal language use in various situations becomes especially helpful for EFL students since it enables them to interact proactively with their linguistic materials (Halpern, 2014). These activities enable learners to develop assurance about their skills in language analysis together with text interpretation and reflective dialogue practices which form foundations for effective communication.

Another key benefit is the transferability of critical thinking skills. A person develops critical thinking abilities which enable them to use this knowledge in any subject area regardless of their field of study. For instance, learning to critically evaluate sources in an EFL context produces graduates who transfer this skill set to their future academic or professional lives for information assessment and decision-making (Facione, 2015). Critical thinkers demonstrate the capability to transfer their learned abilities into daily life situations because they bring discerning power to address challenging social conjunctions.

Finally, critical thinking fosters engagement in the learning process. Students engaging in critical thinking receive encouragement to take part in meaningful discussions and reflective writing activities and debates. Students receive motivation from activities that make language learning meaningful through purpose. Better academic achievement together with stronger language retention patterns emerge when students demonstrate increased educational engagement (King, 1994).

1.7. Challenges of Teaching Critical Thinking in EFL Context

While the benefits of teaching critical thinking are clear, several challenges hinder its successful implementation in EFL classrooms. One significant challenge involves resistance from different cultures. The educational culture of certain countries that support rote memorization and teacher-centric teaching methods creates unexpected discomfort among students toward open discussions and challenges to authority and debates (Atkinson, 1997; Hofstede, 1986; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). The introduction of critical thinking activities encounters resistance in these educational settings because students demonstrate unfamiliarity with these tasks and teachers lack expertise to guide them successfully (Tan & Miller, 2007).

Additionally, students' language proficiency functions as a hindrance when they practice critical thinking within EFL learning environments. Students who carry out critical thinking tasks need advanced linguistic abilities because they need to express their thoughts and analyse arguments and create rational responses through the target language. Lower-level learners encounter overwhelming challenges when completing complex cognitive tasks alongside language production that leads to their frustration and loss of interest (Kuhn, 1999). Teachers must balance how they develop critical thinking skills with the provision of adequate language support for their students.

Another challenge is the lack of teacher training in critical thinking pedagogy. The majority of EFL teachers understand the concept of critical thinking yet they require training to properly apply it in their language instruction. The combination of undefined guidelines and inadequate teacher trainings creates challenges for teachers to prepare critical thinking activities which meet both language requirements and intellectual challenge (Bailin et al., 1999; Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010). Effective critical thinking instruction requires professional development combined with team-based teaching and the willingness to experiment with new educational approaches.

Finally, there is the issue of assessment. Assessing EFL students' CT proves difficult because these abilities exist within specific contexts yet remain difficult to evaluate objectively. The assessment techniques based on multiple-choice questions may be insufficient for measuring both analytical depth and reflective abilities of learners (Ennis, 1993). Educators need to develop various assessment methods including portfolios and reflective journals and peer evaluations to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of students' critical thinking development.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the importance of critical thinking in the EFL context, showing it as both a key academic skill and a tool for personal growth. It explored major theories and teaching methods that support its development, such as Bloom's Taxonomy, inquiry-based learning, and debates. While critical thinking offers many benefits, its implementation in the EFL classrooms faces challenges like cultural resistance, language barriers, and a lack of teacher training. These issues call for thoughtful teaching strategies and professional support. The chapter sets the stage for the next, which will examine how the Socratic Seminar method can foster critical thinking in EFL learners.

Chapter Two: The Socratic Seminar Method

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Conclusion

Introduction

In recent decades, educational reformers are placing greater focus on developing students' thinking skills rather than transmitting knowledge. When compared to other teaching approaches, the Socratic Seminar is an effective way to foster deep thoughts, meaningful discussion and student-led education. In EFL settings, Socratic Seminars are useful since they help students speak the new language and sharpen their minds at the same time.

This chapter provides the background of the Socratic Seminar method both in terms of theory and practicality. It starts by tracing the history and philosophy of this field and then it describes what makes up its main elements and principles. The chapter also discusses how Socratic Seminars should be organized and implemented. Ultimately, the study recognizes the advantages and disadvantages of the method and how it can help EFL learners develop critical thinking.

2.1. Historical Overview of the Socratic Seminar

The Socratic Seminar has been incorporated into modern education since its inception in the ancient period of Greece. Socrates, a philosopher who belonged to that period of time, is recognized as one of the earliest 'teachers' who used a methodology centred on questioning assumed knowledge to promote critical thinking (Balbay, 2019). He believed there was a more effective way of teaching than lecturing; positing that within each student lays an untapped reservoir of knowledge and understanding. By helping students examine their beliefs and acknowledge the limitations of human thought, Socrates aimed to improve their reasoning skills and move towards more rational thinking (Copeland, 2005). His methods, preserved through the writings of his students like Plato and Xenophon, have been a subject of extensive discussion in pedagogy and ethics (Balbay, 2019). The idea was to use any content to dwell on presumptions, which systematically cultivate critical thinking. This method was useful in equipping the students with the skills in logical manner in thinking, as well as attempting to change the way of thinking by challenging their assumptions and biases while recognizing the flaws in human thinking.

Ideally, there has been a gradual transition in educational practices from the period of the Renaissance and the Modern age with an improved approach to seeking for other secrets and

information not seen from biased point of view. Hence, the Socratic Method adaptation has been debated in contemporary classroom (Balbay, 2019).

While the Socratic method of questioning is ancient, the specific format known as the Socratic seminar or Socratic circle is a more recent development. The term "Socratic seminar" is reported to have been first coined by Scott Buchanan. The Great Books movement, developed between 1910 and 1940 by figures like Alexander Meiklejohn, John Erskine, String fellow Barr, Scott Buchanan, and Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins, began incorporating Socratic inquiry into its curriculum, establishing a framework for this pedagogical practice (Copeland, 2005).

2.2. Defining the Socratic Seminar

A Socratic seminar, also known by terms such as Socratic Circles or Paideia seminars, is a distinctly unique format of classroom discussion (Copeland, 2005; Eraso Ibarra & Insuasty Cárdenas, 2022). According to Adler (1982), Socratic Seminar is an approach that leads students to think about the subject on their own and even take some control of classroom discussions. Using this strategy helps students stay motivated and involved since it includes learning that is meaningful in their daily life. Similarly, Ball and Brewer (2000) argued that SS contributes to empowering students and allowing them to control their learning. By reading and analysing different writings, students argue their points by using supporting information, avoid being unfriendly, and most importantly, discover and build their own identities (p. 3). In addition, it was noted by Eudora that when students act as leaders in discussions, it benefits their confidence and sense of worth (as cited in Ball & Brewer, 2000). Simultaneously, students learn to read better, remember new vocabulary, concentrate on spoken language, communicate well, and try to think more deeply about the subject. In the classroom, this method is applied through group discussions where students engage in open-ended conversations aimed at exploring ideas, examining different perspectives, and reaching deeper understandings (Paul & Elder, 2006). This means that SS adopt a student-centred approach.

2.3. Theoretical Foundations of the Socratic Method

The Socratic Method is underpinned by several key philosophical concepts that have shaped its application in education. The main aspect of this approach is called dialectical reasoning, where people discuss opposing ideas to reach a more accurate or clearer

understanding (Lipman, 2003). Socrates thought that listening to each other in a discussion would help people recognize their own shortcomings, notice things that do not add up and gain a deeper and clearer grasp of difficult concepts.

Additionally, The Socratic Method values the process of examining oneself. Socrates stressed that people should take time to think about themselves and their actions, since he believed that “The unexamined life is not worth living”. This principle in the classroom motivates students to challenge their opinions, consider alternative viewpoints and develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them (Paul & Elder, 2006).

Socratic Method also rests on the principle of knowing we do not know everything. Socrates stated clearly that he knew nothing, and this admission encouraged others to approach knowledge with humility and openness to new ideas. In the context of learning languages, this principle can matter a lot since it motivates students to be open-minded, realizing that they will always uncover new information and learn more about the language (Brookfield, 2012).

The method also values asking many questions. Socrates felt that true understanding could be reached by posing questions that force students to examine their ideas, assumptions and explanations. Students in the EFL setting can use questioning to study texts, learn about cultural differences and improve their reasoning which in turn helps their critical thinking (King, 1994).

2.4.Key Principles of Socratic Seminar

Building on the philosophical foundations outlined above, it becomes essential to consider how these core ideas have been translated into modern educational practice. The Socratic Method, with its emphasis on dialogue, inquiry, and reflective thinking, has inspired a structured pedagogical approach known as the **Socratic Seminar**. While rooted in classical thought, the SS adapts these concepts to suit contemporary classroom settings, particularly in promoting critical thinking and active student engagement (Copeland, 2005). The following outlines the key principles that define this method and distinguish it from other forms of classroom discussion:

- **Critical Thinking:** SSs are based on the belief that helping students participate in reasoned discussions improve their thinking skills. Instead of just storing information,

students are guided to challenge certainties, see the hidden messages and express their ideas with proof (Copeland, 2005). This allows students to think at a higher level as shown in Bloom's taxonomy.

- **Questioning:** The Seminar is also based on questioning, particularly open-ended and interpretive questions that have no single right answer. These kinds of questions prompt analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are part of higher-order thinking. As Paul and Elder (2006) confirm that using open-ended questions stimulate critical thinking and allow students to explore ideas beyond the surface level.
- **Collaborative Dialogue over Debate:** “Unlike debates, Socratic Seminars are cooperative, not competitive. Participants work together to achieve a deeper understanding of the text” (Copeland, 2005, p. 8). In other words, it means that SS aims to gain collective understanding, not to win an argument. Moreover students are encouraged to build on each other's ideas, and seek deeper comprehension collectively.
- **Respect for Diverse Views:** According to Reich (2003, p.37), “Respectful discourse and tolerance of ambiguity are cornerstones of the Socratic Seminar process”. On this basis, another essential principle is valuing multiple perspectives. Students should be able to listen sympathetically, behave respectfully and consider opposing viewpoints, these skills are essential not only for academic success but also for being able to take part in society.
- **Student-Centred Learning:** Socratic Seminars shift responsibility from teacher to students. In this setting, the teacher helps out and guides and students play a big role by being involved and discussing with each other while learning. As Murphy (2004) explains, leading discussions allows students to cooperate in gaining knowledge and to understand the process of learning (p. 58).

2.5.Elements of Socratic Seminar

Key to the successful use of the Socratic Seminar is based on certain elements that allow students to lead and drive the discussion. According to Copeland (2005), Tredway (1995) and Paul (1993), important elements of a successful seminar are the use of interpretive text, open-ended questions, discussion norms, and reflective practices. Such things help

developing critical thinking, active listening and respectful ways of communication. This section describes these main aspects and explains their push towards effective classroom interactions.

2.5.1. The Text

The text is one of the main elements of SS, and it must be rich in ideas, meaningful, thought provoking, and open to multiple interpretations. As Copeland (2005) emphasizes that selecting a meaningful and ambiguous text is crucial, as it encourages interpretation rather than provide definitive answers. Similarly, Tredway (1995) mentioned the importance of a text, and states that Socratic questioning is most effective when it begins with a shared text, around which the discussion is focused.

2.5.2. Open-Ended Questions

A major part of the Socratic Seminar is opening the discussion with thought-provoking questions. Since interpretive questions normally do not have a single right answer, students must use reasoning, evidence and combine their comments. Tredway (1995) observes that students' level of involvement depends on the level of depth and ambiguity in the first question. Most times, the questions come from what is written in the text and can evolve as the class talks.

According to Canady and Rettig, (1996) there are three types of seminar questions: opening questions that set the tone of the discussion, core questions which explore the central ideas of the text, and closing questions that reflect on the relevance of the text or discussion.

2.5.3. The Seating Forms

The seating arrangement can take two forms in a Socratic Seminar: Inner/Outer circle or one large circle.

2.5.3.1. The Inner and Outer Circles or Fishbowl

Arranging the classroom as described is helpful when teaching more than 30 students. Organizing learners into two centric circles: an inner circle, where students participate actively in a conversation by sharing evidence from both the text and their own experiences, and an outer circle, where students listen attentively, observe, take notes and provide constructive feedback (Copeland, 2005).

In this form, there are hot seats, which are additional empty chairs in the inner circle, where outer-circle students can join the discussion when they have something to share. Students move back to their seats after they finish speaking. In order to promote equal participation and language use, the teacher asks students to switch the roles, so that the students in the inner circle observe while the others interact. The approach encourages students to be interested, use critical thinking and actively take part (Ball & Brewer, 2000; Copeland, 2005).

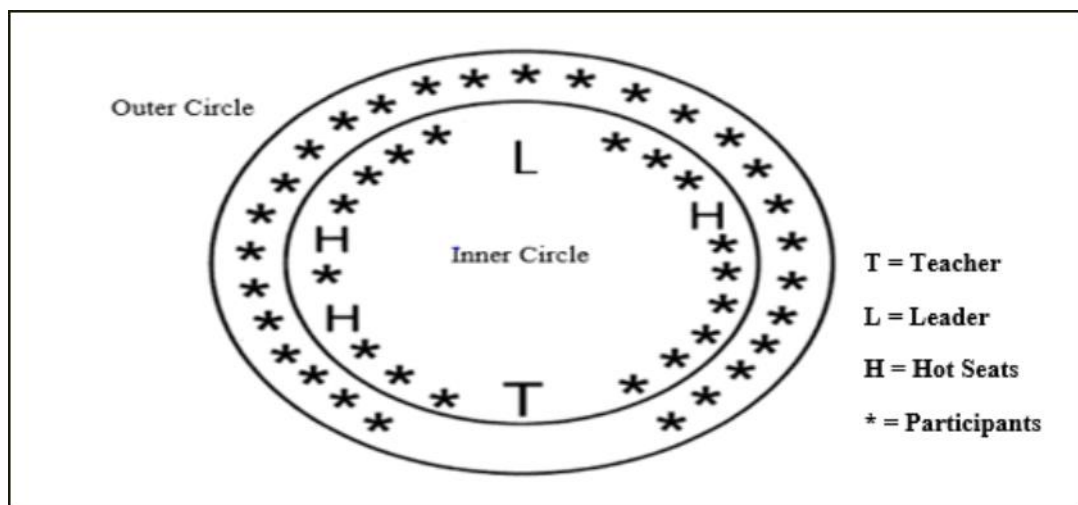


Figure 2.1 Inner and Outer Circles or Fishbowl (Ball & Brewer, 2000, p.23)

The figure visualizes how the form of Inner and outer circles should be implemented.

2.5.3.2. One Large Circle

In this classroom seating arrangement, Students sit in one single large circle, so that all of them take part in the discussion. All participants, instructor and seminar leader have seats at the same level to make sure everyone is equal and no one feels judged when talking. If students deviate from the text's themes or ideas, the teacher or leader steers the discussion by asking follow-up questions. This arrangement is effective for medium-sized groups, but it could be challenging for larger groups, who may not have enough room to talk and share (Canady & Rettig, 1996).

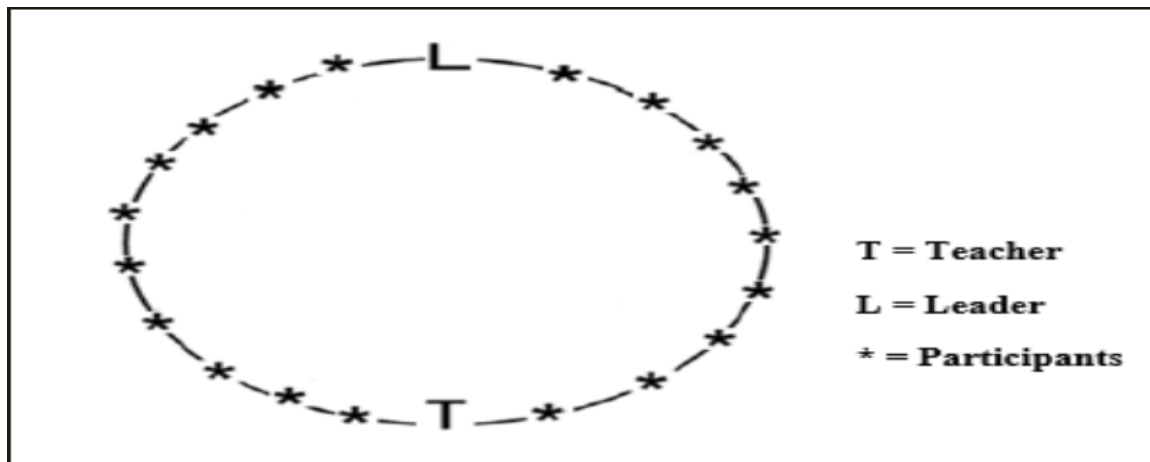


Figure 2.2 One Large Seminar Circle

The figure illustrates the seating form of one large circle.

2.5.4. Discussion Norms

Clearly setting guidelines for discussion is necessary for having a respectful and successful seminar. The norms usually consist of rules such as listening without interrupting, supporting claims with evidence, addressing ideas rather than individuals, and being open to differing viewpoints. According to Copeland (2005) and Tredway (1995), setting out clear rules for behavior helps make the dialogue welcoming and secure. Wherever possible, students should be invited to develop the class norms, helping them feel responsible for their learning.

2.5.5. Facilitator Role

“The teacher acts more as a guide than a transmitter of knowledge, empowering students to construct meaning through dialogue” (Adler, 1982), which means that the role of the teacher lies in being a facilitator and a guider rather than a lecturer, who dominates the discussion. It is his responsibility to pose probing questions or to encourage students to do so, besides monitoring the flow of the discussion and having the quieter students participate.

2.5.6. Reflection and Debrief

Reflection comes at the end of the Socratic Seminar as a key part of the process. After discussing, students are guided to assess what took place across the discussion and their experience participating as a group. It could involve students checking their own performance, getting comments from their peers or talking about the result as a whole group. Tredway (1995) emphasizes that reflection deepens learning by helping students internalize the discussion norms and recognize the growth of their thinking. It also provides teachers with insights into student understanding and participation.

2.6. Advantages of the Socratic Seminar in EFL Contexts

In the EFL context, using the Socratic Seminar helps develop language and thinking skills. During structured discussions, students are urged to speak and write about their ideas, debates and thoughts in the target language. As its conversations are interactive, the Socratic Seminar is very beneficial for language students to improve their speaking and listening skills in a meaningful and communicative context.

One of the primary benefits of the SS in the EFL classrooms is that it promotes active language use. Usually, in traditional language classes, students are taught passively, but during the SS, they need to actively participate in dialogues that make them communicate using the new language. SS helps students gain better skills in speaking, broaden their vocabulary and learn the rules of grammar and pronunciation when speaking to others (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2004).

Furthermore, through the SS, students cooperate to examine topics, discuss ideas and jointly understand different concepts. Rather than having students compete, the Socratic Seminar gives them the chance to help and understand each other which creates a friendly and open learning environment (Burbules, 2000). In other words it fosters collaborative learning and cooperation among students.

The SS also fosters critical thinking by stimulating students to question, analyse, and evaluate ideas (Copeland, 2005; Paul & Elder, 2006). In the EFL context, this approach encourages students to think beyond the language itself, to be involved, and eager to engage with the ideas being discussed. Students are required to think about the consequences of their responses; challenge others to explain their reasons and build sound statements. These are the

key components, which contribute to the development of critical thinking skills (Tosuncuoglu, 2018).

Finally, the SS allows for the exploration of cultural perspectives. Learning a new language also involves gaining cultural knowledge and the Socratic Seminar gives students a chance to discuss cultural issues, views and values in a responsible way. Since EFL students might have diverse cultural backgrounds, being exposed to different views and ways thinkers' think can really help them gain intercultural competence (Baker, 2012).

2.7.Implementing the Socratic Seminar in the EFL Classroom

To opt for the SS in an EFL class, its key principles have to be adjusted to meet the needs of learners and work in accordance with the language teaching objectives stressing both thinking and communication skills. One should plan the changes carefully, support them step by step and be aware of the stages of both language and thinking development among the learners (Copeland, 2005). The seminar is helpful for intermediate EFL students since it allows them to discuss and increase their understanding in a structured environment.

2.7.1. Preparation and Material Selection

Effective implementation of the SS relies heavily on choosing suitable materials first. Some possibilities are short stories, articles, opinion pieces or texts connected to culture that trigger conversation and enable several interpretations. Texts should stimulate students' minds while remain linguistically accessible. In Adler's opinion (1982), the best Socratic text is one that raises moral, philosophical or social questions without suggesting an answer, allowing students to consider different opinions.

Instructors should pre- teach the key vocabulary and ask students to prepare by answering certain questions. The examination of these questions requires students to use analysis, evaluation and synthesis skills (Bloom, 1956). For example, a question like "What motivates the main character's decision?" requires students to infer, predicts, and justifies their ideas based on textual evidence.

2.7.2. Structuring the Seminar

A typical SS is structured around three phases: pre-seminar, seminar, and post-seminar.

In the pre-seminar phase, students read the assigned text and reflect on guiding questions. Teachers may assign roles (e.g., summarizer, questioner, connector) to ensure that each student is actively involved and prepared to contribute (Israel, 2002).

The seminar phase is the core of the method. Students sit in a one large circle or two circles, where they engage in dialogue, listen to one another, build on others' ideas, and pose new questions. The teacher acts as a facilitator, intervening only to prompt deeper inquiry or redirect the conversation as needed (Tredway, 1995).

In the post-seminar phase, students reflect on their participation and the ideas discussed. This can take the form of journal writing, group debriefing, or revisiting the initial questions. Reflective activities help reinforce learning and allow students to evaluate their contributions and reasoning (Brookfield, 2012).

2.7.3. Challenges and Considerations in EFL Contexts

Despite its benefits, the SS method presents certain challenges in EFL classrooms. Students may initially struggle with open-ended discussions due to limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, or unfamiliarity with turn-taking norms in conversational English. Teachers must therefore create a supportive environment and encourages risk-taking.

Cultural background also plays a crucial role. In particular educational spaces, students are often used to teachers leading the learning teaching process, so they may find it difficult to challenge their peers or question previously approved thoughts. Burbules (2000) pointed out that supporting dialogic education in a classroom means changing the typical role of learners from being passive to becoming active participants.

To address these challenges, teachers should introduce the approach progressively, guide students through model discussions, and supply them with sentence phrases. For example, (“I think you’re right because...,” “Tell me why you think that...”) in order to take part in the process (Anto and Coenders, 2019). Practicing in smaller groups can help students feel more confident before taking part in a seminar held in the full class (Sunggingwati, 2018).

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Moreover, SS might be time consuming because its effectiveness requires considerable planning: selecting text, teaching discussion skills, formulating questions, and facilitating reflection. This may be a barrier for teachers who have large classes or standardized curricula.

Additionally, assessment criteria may also be a challenge, and that making fair judgments about students' work can sometimes be hard. Unlike assignments that can be graded by a rubric. In seminars, participants are evaluated based on how they interact, reason, and collaborate rather than by a clear list of tasks to complete (Brookfield, 2012).

Even though every classroom is different, the SS is worth the effort when its advantages outweigh the challenges. EFL learners gain a lot from the approach, as it boosts their language and thinking skills. Yet, to be effective, implementation should involve clear preparation, dedicated support, and group participation where everyone's ideas are appreciated.

Additionally, difficult assessment criteria may also be a challenge, where making fair judgments about students' work can sometimes be hard. Unlike assignments that can be graded by a rubric. In seminars, participants are evaluated based on how they interact, reason, and collaborate rather than by a clear list of tasks to complete (Brookfield, 2012).

Even though every classroom is different, the Socratic Seminar is worth the effort when its advantages outweigh the challenges. EFL learners gain a lot from the approach, as it boosts their language and thinking skills. Yet, to be effective, implementation should involve clear preparation, dedicated support, and group participation where everyone's ideas are appreciated.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this chapter has provided a comprehensive exploration of the SS, initiating from its philosophical origins to its application in modern EFL classrooms. Grounded in Socratic questioning and reflective dialogue, this method promotes active student engagement, deeper comprehension, and the development of critical thinking skills. The chapter has outlined the theoretical foundations, core principles, essential elements, and implementation strategies of the SS. It has also highlighted its unique benefits for language learners, such as improving speaking abilities, encouraging cultural awareness, and fostering collaborative learning. These insights lay the groundwork for understanding how the method can be practically applied to support EFL learners' intellectual and linguistic growth.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Data Analysis

Introduction

3.1 Research Design

3.2 The Sample

3.3 Data Collection Tools

3.3.1 Description of Classroom Observation

3.3.1.1 Analysis of Classroom Observation

3.3.2 Description of the Semi-Structured Interviews

3.3.2.1 Analysis of the Teacher's Interview

3.3.2.2 Analysis of Students' Interview

3.4 Discussion of the Findings

3.5 Recommendations

Conclusion

Introduction

The current chapter deals with the research design and the analysis of the collected data. Initially, this chapter attempts to provide a clear description of the research design, the sample as well as the data collection tools (classroom observation and semi-structured interviews) used to gather the necessary data to investigate the role of Socratic Seminar in developing critical thinking among intermediate EFL learners. Moreover, it presents the analysis of the gathered data. Finally, this chapter provides a discussion of the findings and the conclusion in an attempt to confirm or reject the research hypotheses.

3.1. Research Design

In order to examine how the Socratic Seminar helps intermediate learners of English improve their ability to think critically, a qualitative case study is adopted. This method is suitable in schools because it allows for a detailed and relevant analysis of various social and educational issues (Yin, 2003). In this study, we use “case” to describe a group of fifteen all-female students in intermediate EFL classes at Harmony School in Ghardaia province. It is best to use the qualitative case study framework as it allows for an in-depth exploration of experiences, views, and behaviours of the participants.

3.2. The Sample

This study is conducted with fifteen females who are currently enrolled in a programme of the English language at Harmony School, a private institute for teaching languages in the province of Ghardaia, Algeria. Participants were purposefully selected based on their proficiency level, classroom accessibility, and willingness to participate in the study.

Purposeful sampling, as defined by Merriam (1998), is a common technique in qualitative research, where experts in the subject under study are mainly chosen for the sample. Since the participants have on-going exposure to communicative English instruction and their intermediate proficiency level, they are helpful cases for study due to their ability to take part in Socratic Seminars.

In addition, the EFL teacher who instructs the class as part of Harmony School’s staff is also considered a participant in the study. The teacher’s insights and understanding is important for observing changes in students’ engagement during Socratic Seminars.

Before embarking on data collection, all participants were informed about the research purpose, how it would proceed, and that their confidentiality and freedom to leave were

guaranteed. Thus, both the learners and their teacher provided consent for the study and showed willingness to be part of it. As researchers, following ethical guidelines in educational research is highly required (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

3.3.Data Collection Tools

To study the way Socratic Seminar helps intermediate EFL students improve their critical thinking, two qualitative data tools were used: classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Tools were selected because they provide depth and richness of information in that classroom observation helps to record how learners take part in Socratic Seminars, uncover their question-making skills and notice their strategies for reasoning and how they collaborate with their peers. In semi-structured interviews, students and their teacher can share their views, attitudes and experiences using the method, plus their reflections on how it affects critical thinking.

3.3.1. Description of Classroom Observation

The classroom observation took place for a limited time and consisted of four speaking sessions, one of which is for the pre-intervention observation (traditional speaking classes) and the other three for the post-intervention (Socratic Seminar sessions). The purpose of these observations was to examine students' involvement, the way they reason and ask questions, and the classroom dynamics in addition to the teacher's role during discussions.

An observation checklist based on the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy(2001) revised version (see appendix A) was used to record signs of critical thinking abilities, such as challenging assumptions, analysing perspectives, synthesizing ideas, and evaluating arguments. Observational notes were taken in a non-intrusive manner, and the researcher acted as a non-participant observer to minimize influence on classroom dynamics.

3.3.1.1. Analysis of Classroom Observation

As part of the qualitative data collection, classroom observations were carried out during the pre-intervention and post intervention phases.

Part One: The Pre-intervention phase

This session took place on 16/03/2025, and it was dedicated to an open discussion about the importance of relationships. Initially, it was observed that the school followed the "U" seating arrangement, and the teacher had a good relationship with her students. The

discussion was supposed to be a group work, where they could have a debate between two groups about the topic, but when the teacher asked them if they preferred working in groups or individually, it turned out to be an open discussion where students could share their opinions about the topic. The teacher then started by asking a question, “Do you think that relationships are important?” and set a timing of 5 minutes to let students think about it before they started discussing.

Concerning participation, it was noticed that as soon as the teacher gave the students the sign to start the discussion, some members begin to express their opinions. In addition to this, through the discussion some members were dominating the talk while the others remained silent and few of them were creating side noise and were not interested, which led the teacher always to remind them to be respectful to their classmates. The interaction was mostly teacher-students interaction, because as it was observed, the teacher had about 80% of the talk, commenting on students’ answers, and providing them with information which led students relies on the teacher to carry on the discussion. Despite the limited number of participants, they were directing the talk towards their teacher, not their peers, which resulted in a mostly student-teacher and teacher-student interaction in the discussion. It is noticed also at the heart of the discussion that the topic turned to be only about friendship.

Concerning students’ critical engagement, it was low, because the majority of their answers were brief and focused on the surface-level of the topic. Students barely asked open-ended questions to each other or provide examples from real life situations to support their arguments, which indicates that there is a need for enhancement.

Part Two: The Post-Intervention Phase

Following the intervention plan, three Socratic Seminars were conducted on 15-22-29/04/2025) in speaking sessions that are held every week. Before starting the seminars, the researcher contributed to explain the method and its requirements for both the teacher and students. These seminars followed the required Fishbowl seating arrangement, 7 students were chosen randomly to construct the inner circle and 8 for the outer circle shifting the sitting every 20 to 30 minutes. Each Socratic Seminar took an hour and a half, and each session was based on delivering a short text or reading passage dealing with moral, ethical or social themes (see appendices B, C, D). The researcher observed that as a pre-seminar activity, the teacher specified 30 minutes for reading and answering questions related to the overall comprehension of the text, besides explaining vocabulary that may hamper

understanding. Moreover, students were encouraged to prepare questions related to the assigned text.

Unlike the pre-intervention phase, it is noticed that the environment of the Socratic Seminar is more student-centred. The teacher shifted her role from an instructor and an information provider to a facilitator and a guide; she also acted as a leader during the seminar and sat at the same level as students, where she guided the discussion, asked opening questions and follow-up questions when it is needed and listened attentively to the students without judgment. Moreover, she created a sense of humour, leading to a kind of supporting and safe atmosphere

From the first session, it was observed that students demonstrated increased participation and confidence in speaking. While some others remained passive and hesitant in the initial stages, participation levels rose steadily with each seminar. So as to ensure a good flow of the lesson, students were regularly reminded of the rules and responsibilities before each session.

Furthermore, it was noticed that some students from the outer circle expressed frustration about waiting for their turn to be in the inner circle so they could share their views with their classmates. Other than that, students who acted in the outer circle tried their best to take notes, evaluate their classmates' performance in the inner circle, and listen carefully to them. Students posed their questions, responded to peers, referred back to the text as evidence, and reflected on their personal experiences. In the last Seminar, which dealt with the text "Why Kindness Matters" students managed to take through the discussion from the start by asking opening question and diving deeply throughout the topic with less interference from the teacher compared to the first seminar. Some students expressed directly their positive thoughts and gratefulness about participating in the Seminar and encountering these kinds of topics that are thought-provoking without even asking them to do so.

Examples of student comments from the last Socratic Seminar, included:

"I believe that humans were born kind, and their changes for the bad or the good are a matter of social interaction, what do you think?"

" Yes, I agree with you, because as humans, when we encounter bad treatment from others, especially the close ones, we sometimes tend to lose hope that there is still kindness, so we forget ourselves and let the negativity control us, and unfortunately, we become cruel"

These statements demonstrate higher-order thinking, especially in the areas of analysis, evaluation and reflection as categorized in Bloom's Taxonomy. Students responded to one another, asked for more information and respectfully disagreed, demonstrating essential aspects of dialogic learning.

Concerning body language and attentiveness, students reflected a deeper engagement. They often made frequent eye contact with each other and signalled interest through gestures such as nodding and taking notes.

In what concerns fluency, accuracy and vocabulary, it was noticed that the majority of students have a better level of fluency in comparison with accuracy; they tend to speak smoothly without pauses, even though there are mistakes related to using the right tense for verbs and pronunciation. Some of them also faced difficulty having the right vocabulary, which indicates a shortage at the level of vocabulary. The teacher here was correcting them indirectly.

Part Three: Overall Insights

After the intervention, the researcher noticed that the way students interacted in class has changed considerably. The Socratic Seminars promote collaborative dialogue, critical engagement and reflective thinking which was not present in the pre-intervention phase.

The method made students act more independently; it also leads them to take risks when thinking, an important part of strengthening critical thinking for EFL learners

3.3.2. Description of the Semi-Structured Interviews

The objective of the interviews was to explore what students and their teacher think about how this method affected critical thinking, communication and engagement in the classroom.

Two interviews were created: an interview for the students and another for the teacher. The interview with students involved seven questions, placed into three sections: (a) experience with Socratic Seminars, (b) critical thinking development and engagement, and (c) overall reflection. Five students were selected purposefully due to their participation during the seminars and their willingness to take part in this interview; they were asked how they felt and how their experience with the seminars was different from classroom discussions, how they responded when exposed to new ideas and whether they noticed any changes in their reasoning or communication abilities.

On the other hand, The teacher' interview had ten questions grouped into five different sections: (a) background and teaching context, (b) Implementation of Socratic Seminar, (c) Observation and Impacts, (d) pros and cons of the method and (e) Reflection and future use. The researcher asked about the teaching process during seminars, types of guidance given to students and the improvements in learners' involvement and ability to reason.

The interviews were held using the English language, in a peaceful and confidential setting at Harmony School (Ghardaia). All participants were informed about the aim of the study and were assured that their answers would be kept secure and private to be used for research objectives only. Interviews were between 20 and 30 minutes long. The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants, and they were further transcribed so they could be analysed

3.3.2.1. Analysis of The Teacher's Interview

As it is mentioned above, the interview comprises a set of sections as follows:

Section (a): Background and Teaching Context

Question 01: Can you briefly describe your experience of teaching and working with intermediate-level EFL learners?

Teacher's Response: *"My English teaching journey with intermediate students was challenging for me, because I have different types of students and different learning skills, so as a teacher it was a big challenge to provide all students with the same educational content and make sure they all learn, participate and engage through the lessons"*

From the teacher's answer, we notice that she is aware of the diversity, individual differences, various learning styles regarding all strengths and weaknesses of the EFL intermediate learners. Thus, she described her teaching experience as challenging due to the variety of learners skills and their learning styles, highlighting the difficulty of delivering a unified educational content to all students while maintaining their engagement in the same way. This response indicates that the teacher is concerned about active participation of the students, which entails a student-centred and adaptive teaching approach, and it reveals her comprehension of the significance of differentiated instruction in classrooms with multiple languages and abilities.

Question 02: What do you consider the most important skills for EFL learners to develop in speaking classes?

Teacher's Response: *"The most important skills are speaking and the students' ability to express their point of view without feeling oppressed by someone else's opinion, and at the same time to build a healthy constructive conversation between the students inside the classroom"*

The teacher emphasizes students' confidence in speaking and expressing their views openly without being interrupted by others. Thus, there is a focus not only on fluency; but also on being respectful and supportive during discussions. The teacher further stresses that a healthy and respectful discussion encourages students to work together and respect one another. Altogether, the teacher's focus is principally on helping students enhance their communication skills within a setting that encourages open conversation, foster analytical thinking and endorse a feeling of security.

Section (b): Implementation of Socratic Seminar

Question 03: How did you prepare students for the Socratic Seminar activities?

Teacher's Response: *"Firstly, with your help, we did explained the method to them in terms of seating arrangement (Fishbowl) and how this form works, then we provided them with the rules and responsibilities of this discussion. Secondly, before each Socratic Seminar, as you noticed, I pre-teach vocabulary, gave them sentence starters and prepare questions for the overall understanding of the text, besides follow-up questions for the discussion in case they are needed"*

The teacher clearly plans the process of instruction in a way that supports students step by step. We began by walking students through how the Fishbowl should be set up and how the seminar would operate. After that, the rules and expectations for the discussion and everyone's roles were shared, leading to greater discipline. The teacher also took initiative by teaching some of the vocabulary before the reading and preparing questions after it.

Question 04: What topics did you choose for the discussions, and why?

Teacher's Response: *"The topics were both familiar and thought-provoking, which met the goal of the method, because I want to align with my student's preferences"*

The teacher explains that the topics were both familiar and thought-provoking, aligning with the goals of the method. This response makes it clear that the teacher tried to pick topics that are challenging without leaving learners confused, which means that she guides learning according to what students enjoy. This shows that she cares about each student's interests and encouraging their involvement. Further, the reason for combining

familiarity and depth seems to be to maintain a balance between language accessibility and enabling students to learn to understand deeply and think analytically.

Section(c): Observations and Impact

Question 05: What changes did you notice in students' critical thinking abilities during or after the seminars?

Teacher's Response: *"The changes were noticeable especially when they started to analyse their answers, discuss them while respecting others answers and the free will to openly talk and ask interesting questions, besides building up on each other's' opinions"*

The teacher marks several significant changes. Students started to think more deeply about their choices and were able to participate in respectful dialogue more often. They also showed willingness to share ideas and ask meaningful questions, which demonstrated that they are now more likely to think independently. Importantly, students began building upon what their classmates said, an important sign of collaborative thinking and dialogic learning. We can see that the Socratic Seminar adaptation helped students to form their views and also pay close attention to and interact with others' views. The teacher's observations suggest a meaningful progression in learners' ability to reason critically and communicate effectively in a supportive academic setting.

Question 06: How did students respond to this method in terms of engagement and motivation?

Teacher's Response: *"They were hesitant at first, but then they were all engaged and excited to share their perspectives with their friends about the topics they were given"*

The teacher reports students' initial hesitation, but later they become more interested and try to take part in every way. It seems that the method, which students may have found strange at first, became familiar and accepted with time. Students' eagerness to share their ideas with others is a sign that they want to learn. It also points out that exchanging opinions with classmates, helps students stay interested, as it likely sparks community spirit and made them want to learn more. The teacher's observation shows that the method changes students' initial resistance into greater eagerness and involvement.

Section (d): Benefits and Challenges

Question 07: What do you see as the main benefits of using the Socratic Seminar in an EFL classroom?

Teacher's Response: *"The main benefits promoting deeper thinking, enhancing students' attention to listen to each other, plus it does teach them to let go of their over-dependence on the teacher, and it supports their collaboration."*

There are a number of main advantages that the teacher points out for the EFL classroom context. First of all, the method encourages students to think about problems more deeply than just answering the question asked. In addition, it furthers active listening since students must take note of others' ideas. Also, it encourages students to think on their own as they depend less on the teacher's input. Finally, the approach highlights how this way of teaching is meant to help students collaborate and learn together. Out of these remarks, one can say that holding Socratic Seminars is good for learning, practicing skills and developing real-life social abilities.

Question 08: What challenges did you face in implementing this method?

Teacher's Response: *"The main challenges that I received during practicing the method were when the students weren't familiar with the method at first and they were trying their best to talk and stick into the rules of the method itself, plus having difficulty in maintaining the same duration for discussion for each circle, which was impossible"*

The teacher also acknowledges challenges encountered in implementing the method. A primary issue was students' unfamiliarity with the seminar structure and expectations, which initially hindered smooth participation. Besides, she explains having difficulties assigning equal time for all to speak across both inner and outer circle, indicating difficulty in balancing participation. Because of these issues, language educators need to prepare well, make sure scaffolding is in place and manage their time carefully when conducting Socratic Seminars.

Section (e): Reflection and Future Use

Question 09: In your opinion, is the Socratic Seminar effective in promoting higher-order thinking among EFL learners?

Teacher's Response: *"It does promote a better thinking quality where students need to discuss deeply"*

The teacher affirms the value of the method in encouraging students to discuss more deeply and reflectively

Question 10: Would you consider integrating this method more regularly in your teaching? Why or why not?

Teacher's Response: *"Yes, I would for sure consider integrating it, especially in speaking sessions, which will make students more engaged and have more productive conversations, but maybe not for every week because it takes a lot of preparation"*

When discussing future plans, the teacher indicates a positive attitude toward continuing implementing the method, mainly in speaking classes. She highlights increased student engagement and that the seminar discussions lead to productive outcomes. But she says it's important not to use them too much, as they require a lot of preparation. This response demonstrates a balanced perspective, valuing the method's impact while acknowledging practical constraints in regular application.

3.3.2.2. Analysis of Student's Interview

This section is dedicated to analysing student's interviews following the same order of sections in the interview.

Section (a): Experiences with Socratic Seminars

Question 01: How did you feel about participating in the Socratic Seminars during your English class?

Table 3.1. Students' Attitudes toward Participating in Socratic Seminars in English Class

Student 01	Hesitant at first, not because of the method but due to my anxiety to talk in front of people, even if I am used to them. However, SS encouraged me to express my opinions without having fear about others' judgment.
Student 02	Happy
Student 03	I liked it, as it allows me to think deeply while also improving my English skills.
Student 04	Happy and lucky to be part of it.

Student 05	Confident and comfortable
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Question 02: *What was different about the Socratic Seminar compared to your usual class discussions?*

Table 3.2: Students' Insights on How Socratic Seminars Differ from Usual Class Discussions

Student 01	I believe that this method created a safe and respectful atmosphere compared to our usual discussions, because everyone was having the chance to be heard.
Student 02	I noticed that the teacher remained mostly silent and didn't share her opinion regarding the topic as she used to do.
Student 03	The main difference was in the structure of the SS and the idea of thinking more deeply.
Student 04	The difference is that I became wiser in terms of my answers and the respectful atmosphere that was created.
Student 05	There is a big difference compared to our usual class discussions, because you have one.

Question 03: *Did you feel encouraged to express your own ideas during the discussions? Why or why not?*

Table 3.3: Students' Perceptions of Encouragement to Express Ideas in Socratic Seminars

Student 01	Indeed I did, because as I told you before there is a respectful environment where you express your ideas freely without being interrupted or ignored.
Student 02	Yes I did, because of the discussion structure that allows you to do so.
Student 03	Yes, I really felt encouraged to participate and share my ideas, because everyone sees the topic from different side.
Student 04	Yes, of course because I found the right atmosphere that encouraged me to share and discuss my opinions while exchanging with others, which keeps the discussion going.
Student 05	Yes, I extremely felt encouraged to share my ideas whether they are positive or negative, right or wrong. I only have to support them with arguments.

Students reported positive perceptions, participated more and learned in a supportive way when using the Socratic Seminar (SS). In response to **Question 01**, which was about how they felt during Socratic Seminars, they had varied experiences ranging from reluctance to taking part (Student 01) to confidence and pleasure (Students 02, 03, 04 and 05). Even Student 01, who mentioned experiencing anxiety, admitted that the Socratic Seminar provided her a safe environment to share her ideas without fear of being judged. This means that using the method can help students build confidence and reduce anxiety, which is particularly important for learning English.

For **Question 02**, students noticed that Socratic Seminars were different from their usual class discussions. Their comments show that, firstly, everyone was given a chance to be heard in a respectful environment (Students 01 and 04) and secondly, the teacher adopted a less dominant role in the classroom (Student 02). This aligns with student-centred approach, which is the focus of the Socratic Method. Additionally, both Students 03 and 04 showed signs of the higher order thinking involved in formulating their answers.

Moreover, all five students affirm being encouraged to speak up their ideas in **Question 03**. Their justifications declare emotional safety, structured participation and intellectual honesty. As Student 05 pointed out that students could express opinions, no matter how or what they were, as long as they had reasons for them. As a result, Socratic Seminar encourages people to have arguments, discuss their opinions and welcome all voices. The participants also pointed out that showing mutual respect and organizing turn-taking helps make EFL activities successful.

Section (b): Critical Thinking Development and Engagement

Question 04: Did the Socratic Seminar help you think more deeply or differently about the topics discussed?

Table 3.4: The Impact of Socratic Seminars on Depth and Shift in Student Thinking

Student 01	Yes, it did.
Student 02	Yes, it did.
Student 03	Yes, of course, it helped me a lot, especially after hearing each one's perspective, which makes me change mine sometimes.
Student 04	Definitely, because it helped me see the real essence and value of the thing and understand them deeply.
Student 05	Yes, of course, for me this is the best thing about this method.

Question 05: Did you feel more responsible for your own thinking and speaking during the seminars? Why or why not?

Table 3.5: Students' Perspectives of Responsibility for Thinking and Speaking in Socratic Seminars

Student 01	Yes, I did feel that, because during the discussion, I should make a clear and strong statement that can influence others.
Student 02	Yes, because I had to prepare then speak.
Student 03	Yes, sure, I felt more responsible for my thoughts, because we are adults, and what we say reflects our consciousness and awareness about how we see things.
Student 04	Yes, sure I did feel more responsible, because I should be realistic when expressing any idea related to the topics.
Student 05	Yes, I did feel responsible about my thinking, because the method helps you to do so.

Students' answers to the questions in this section clearly indicate that the Socratic Seminar approach had a positive impact on their critical thinking development and their sense of academic responsibility. All five students responded affirmatively, to the **Question 04**, which explored whether the method helped them think more deeply or differently about the topics discussed. While Students 01 and 02 gave brief confirmations, Students 03, 04 and 05 provided more elaborate justifications, revealing the method's impact on the thinking process. For instance, Student 03 stated that listening to other students' opinions sometimes led them to change their own opinion, indicating a strong and evaluative personality, a main aspect of critical thinking. Student 04 highlighted her deeper understanding of the real value of the discussed topics, a sign that there is a move beyond surface level comprehension. Similarly, Student 05 pointed out that developing better thinking skill is the most significant feature of the method, demonstrating Dialogic Inquiry's important role in Socratic discussions.

Participants once more answered positively in **Question 06**, which focused on students' sense of responsibility for their own thinking and speaking. Their answers demonstrate that they are aware of both responsibility and independence, required in the Socratic Seminar format. One example is that Student 01 recommended making a clear and convincing argument. As for Student 02, responsibility meant both being prepared and delivering the message, while Student 03 emphasized maturity and self-awareness, stating that what one says reflects individual. Student 04 mentioned that contributing reality in sharing opinions was valuable, and Student 05 believed that responsibility grew from the format of the method. These insights reveal that students were not only engaging critically but also recognizing their role as independent thinkers in a collaborative learning environment.

Section(c): Overall Reflection

Question06: *What did you enjoy about the Socratic Seminars?*

Table 3.6: Students' Reflections on the Enjoyable Aspects of Socratic Seminars

Student 01	I enjoyed the calm atmosphere that was created, when expressing my ideas everyone was listening carefully.
Student 02	A respectful and insightful discussion.
Student 03	The thing that I enjoyed the most was practicing my English while thinking deeply using it.
Student 04	Exchanging new ideas for the same topic, I felt like I am in a real TV show.

Student 05	Having fun, discovering people' personalities, learning to be flexible.
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Question 07: What were the biggest challenges you faced during the seminars?

Table 3.7: Students' Perspectives on the Major Challenges Faced During Socratic Seminars

Student 01	Creating good arguments.
Student 02	Running out from ideas.
Student 03	For me the biggest challenge was to explain my opinion in simple way without making others lost or confused, and also lacking the right vocabulary.
Student 04	Lacking vocabulary, which can make me find it hard to share my opinion.
Student 05	Sticking to my Role in the outer circle, where I have to wait to be in the inner circle to express my idea.

According to the replies, the process of using the Socratic Seminar had a notable positive impact on students' affective engagement and enjoyment, while it also presented some language and structure issues. Many students in **Question 06** stated that they found both the emotional atmosphere and the learning aspects of the seminars to be the most rewarding. Student 01 commented that the space was soothing, and everybody paid attention to her thoughts, which showed that there is a sense of being valued in the class. Additionally, Student 02 mentioned that their peer interaction were "respectful" and "insightful". Student 03 focused on the dual benefit of practicing English while engaging in deep thinking, thus reflecting the development of language skills and critical thinking. For Student 04, learning new things was like watching a television show, showing great motivation and pleasure. Furthermore, Student 05 talked about the social-emotional aspects of the experience, such as "having fun," "discovering people's personalities," and "learning to be flexible," pointing to the seminar's role in fostering interpersonal skills alongside cognitive development.

According to many participants in **Question 07**, there are several language-related difficulties. Both Student 03 and Student 04 identified that having a limited vocabulary was a noticeable barrier, affecting their ability to express their ideas clearly and confidently. Student 03 also mentioned the challenge of articulating opinions in a simple, understandable way, underlining the cognitive demand of translating complex thoughts into accessible language. Additionally, Student 01 had difficulties presenting well-developed arguments, indicating that

further training in arguments is important. Student 02 expressed concern about “running out of ideas,” pointing to moments of cognitive block during spontaneous discussion. Student 05 addressed a challenge tied to the structural nature of the Socratic Seminar; she spoke up about the main frustration of having to wait for her turn, when she was a member of the outer circle. This reflects a potential tension between the method’s structure and learners’ desire for more frequent participation.

3.4. Discussion of the Findings

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of the Socratic Seminar method in developing critical thinking among intermediate EFL learners. Therefore, we opted for semi-structured interviews with students and their teacher, along with classroom observations, to elicit participants’ perceptions and behaviours related to the use of Socratic Seminars in the EFL classroom. The study also sought to understand the influence of this method on students’ engagement, analytical reasoning, and classroom interaction, as well as the teacher’s perspective toward its implementation. The outcomes of the analysis with both tools showed a gradual and consistent progression from traditional teacher-centred practices to more reflective and dialogic classroom environments. Though all of the tools extracted data differently, the results aligned to affirm the study’s hypotheses and answer its key questions.

The findings drawn from the analysis of student interviews reveal that learners perceive the Socratic Seminar method as an effective tool for improving their critical thinking and learning experience. Students reported that the method helped them think more deeply and differently about the discussed topics. According to them, the Socratic Seminar led them to pay attention to alternative viewpoints, examine conflicting ideas and at times reconsider their own ideas, which are all fundamental to critical thinking. Additionally, students noted that the method helped them realize their responsibility over their own contribution. This reflects their increased autonomy, self-awareness and willingness to engage in thoughtful discourse. Students further explained that, due to the collaborative nature of the seminars, they suffered less from a fear of judgment, enhanced their confidence, and felt more responsible for their learning.

Moreover, results from classroom observations, which were done before and after the intervention, show a positive shift in students’ engagement, cognitive participation, and interaction quality. In the pre-intervention phase, students were generally passive and did not get involved in critical thinking much. Most of these conversations were brief, mainly superficial and relied heavily on the teacher’s input. In contrast, the post-intervention phase

showed that students become more motivated, attentive and able to respond to their peers with well-structured arguments. They brought up questions that couldn't be given a simple 'yes' or 'no', used examples from the materials and gave examples from real life. These behaviours highlight a clear development in analytical reasoning and argumentation skills.

It was also noticed that the Socratic Seminar created a more student-centred environment in which learners practiced essential academic habits role by allowing them to take turns, respect one another and collaborate to share and build ideas. Although some students' language difficulties were observed, chiefly about accuracy and vocabulary, though they maintained fluency and established a growing willingness to speak and express ideas freely. The teacher's role also shifted clearly during the intervention; instead of dominating the discussion, she gently helped students and created a positive, non-judgmental classroom environment.

Finally, the teacher's attitudes observed and expressed throughout the study indicate strong support for the Socratic Seminar method. Her active role in planning, guiding, and evaluating the sessions, along with her observations about the positive changes in students' behaviour and thinking, confirms her favourable view of the method. She recognized the method's potential in developing not only language skills but also learners' critical and reflective abilities.

To conclude, the findings of this study revealed that the Socratic Seminar method can be both useful and effective in developing intermediate EFL learners' critical thinking and enhancing their overall classroom engagement. Accordingly, the majority of participants, both learners and the teacher, showed positive attitudes and responses towards the use of Socratic Seminars in English-speaking sessions. As a result, all three research hypotheses are confirmed, and the study's research questions are answered.

3.5.Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and educational policymakers to enhance the development of critical thinking and communicative competence among intermediate EFL learners:

1. Teachers and curriculum designers are recommended to consider integrating the Socratic Seminar into regular speaking sessions as it promotes critical thinking and enhances communicative competence.

2. Provide pre-seminar training sessions for students to help them understand the structure, goals, and expectations of the Socratic Seminar. This can include lessons on how to formulate open-ended questions, actively listen, and respectfully disagree.
3. Select thought-provoking and level-appropriate texts that deal with ethical, social, or moral issues, as these topics tend to generate meaningful dialogue and reflective thinking among EFL learners.
4. Train teachers on how to facilitate Socratic Seminars effectively. This includes how to create a safe and respectful environment, guide discussion subtly without dominating it, and encourage equitable participation.
5. While the method is highly effective, language barriers can hinder participation for lower-proficiency students. Teachers should adapt the materials by pre-teaching key vocabulary, using visual supports, and allowing flexible speaking formats (e.g., pair discussions before whole-group dialogue) to scaffold student engagement.
6. Use observation and peer feedback tools to assess both participation and critical thinking during the Seminars. This can help students become more aware of their strengths and areas in need for improvement.
7. Encourage reflection after each Seminar by assigning brief written reflections. This allows students to consolidate their learning and develop metacognitive awareness.
8. Incorporate the method across different EFL skill areas, not just in speaking, to promote higher-order thinking across reading, writing, and listening tasks as well.
9. To build a more comprehensive understanding of the method's effectiveness, future studies should explore the long-term impact of using Socratic Seminars on students' critical thinking, writing skills, and overall academic performance in various EFL contexts, particularly in the Algerian setting.

Conclusion

Since the aim of this study is threefold: to investigate the impact of the Socratic Seminar method on the development of critical thinking among intermediate EFL learners, to explore students' perceptions of this method in enhancing their learning experience, and to determine teachers' attitudes towards its classroom implementation, our practical part relied on two main tools of data collection: classroom observation and semi-structured interviews.

Through classroom observation, we were able to notice changes in learners' behaviour and cognitive engagement during the pre- and post-intervention of the Socratic Seminar. Alternatively, the semi-structured interviews revealed in-depth insights into both learners' and teacher's reflections on the method's effectiveness. Both instruments pointed out that students gradually showed higher levels of critical engagement, participation, and reflective thinking throughout the intervention period. Additionally, students became more confident in expressing their opinions, asking meaningful questions, and interacting respectfully with their classmates.

Furthermore, results from the teacher's interview indicated a generally positive attitude towards using the Socratic Seminar in EFL classrooms. The teacher acknowledged its role in shifting the classroom dynamic from teacher-led activities to learner-centred ones, as well as its capacity to promote deeper thinking and active participation. However, it is noted that there are challenges related to students' linguistic limitations and that more assistance and guidance are required in using the method.

Taken together, the data confirm that while the Socratic Seminar method shows strong potential in developing students' critical thinking and communicative abilities, its success depends on careful preparation, appropriate materials, and on-going teacher support. We hope that the suggested recommendations proposed in this study will offer valuable guidance for teachers and institutions seeking to adopt the method to foster higher-order thinking skills among EFL learners.

General Conclusion

The Socratic Seminar method in the context of EFL education proves to be an essential pedagogical tool for fostering learners' critical thinking and enhancing the overall quality of classroom interaction.

The present study aimed to explore the effectiveness of Socratic Seminars in developing critical thinking skills among intermediate EFL learners, and to examine both learners' perceptions and teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of this method.

This research also addressed the impact of structured dialogic teaching, through Socratic Seminars, on learners' ability to reason, argue, reflect, and engage meaningfully in classroom discussions. Drawing from both the literature review and the fieldwork, it is clear that the method contributes significantly to encouraging deeper thinking and student-centred learning practices.

Based on the analysis of the collected data, it can be generally concluded that EFL learners demonstrated increased engagement and critical participation following the introduction of the Socratic Seminar. Additionally, EFL teachers expressed positive attitudes toward using this method, recognizing its value in promoting both language and thinking skills, despite facing challenges such as time constraints and the need for adequate training.

It is hoped that this research will contribute to the on-going development of EFL teaching in Algeria by encouraging educators to adopt reflective, student-focused methods and by inspiring further attention to training and methodological support in this area.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Observation Checklist for Critical Thinking Based on Bloom's Taxonomy Revised Version

Teacher:	The Topic:
Observer:	
Number of Students:	
Date:	

Comments on the General Classroom Atmosphere

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Comments on the Teacher's Role

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Bloom's Level	Indicators of Critical Thinking	Observable Behaviours / Student Actions	Observed? (✓ / ✗)	Notes / Examples
1. Remembering	Recalls relevant knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accurately recalls facts or vocabulary - Quotes from the text or prior lessons - Refers to seminar readings by name or idea 		
2. Understanding	Demonstrates comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summarizes main ideas - Paraphrases a peer's point - Explains meaning of terms or concepts in own words 		
3. Applying	Uses knowledge in a new way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applies previous learning to support an argument - Connects topic to personal or real-world examples - Uses grammatical or 		

		vocabulary structures learned earlier		
4. Analysing	Breaks down ideas and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies causes/effects - Distinguishes between facts and opinions - Compares different points of view - Questions assumptions or implications 		
5. Evaluating	Makes judgments based on criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supports opinion with reasoning or evidence - Critiques the logic of an argument - Justifies agreement or disagreement respectfully - Prioritizes ideas or solutions 		
6. Creating	Produces new or original thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposes alternative solutions or interpretations - Poses thoughtful, open-ended questions - Synthesizes multiple ideas into a new viewpoint - Extends the discussion beyond the topic 		

Additional Observation Dimensions

Area	Observable Behaviour	Observed? (✓/✗)	Notes / Examples
Language Use	Uses complex language structures or academic vocabulary during discussion		
Interaction Skills	Listens actively, builds on others' ideas, takes conversational turns		
Confidence and Engagement	Participates voluntarily, maintains eye contact, shows interest		
Metacognition	Reflects on thinking or learning process (e.g., 'I used to think... now I realize...')		

Appendix B: Socratic Seminar Text Number 01

Should People Be Punished for What They Say Online?

The internet allows people to speak freely. They can share opinions, comment on news, or talk to others. But sometimes, people say hurtful or dangerous things online. Some spread hate, lies, or threats. These words can cause real harm. For example, false news can make people afraid. Hate speech can hurt feelings and even cause violence. Some countries have laws to punish people who say harmful things online. Others believe in free speech, even if it is offensive. They say that everyone has the right to speak their mind. But where is the line? Should all speech be allowed, or are there limits? This is a big question in today's world. Finding the right balance between freedom and safety is not easy.

Appendix C: Socratic Seminar Text Number 02

Nelson Mandela's quote

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall"

Appendix D: Socratic Seminar Text Number 03

Why Kindness Matter?

Of course, we feel better when we're being kind to others than we do when we're being impatient or annoyed. A simple act of consideration - a smile, an encouraging comment, or just acknowledging someone with a nod of the head – makes us feel good. This simple act actually changes our physiology. Our body becomes flooded with chemicals that improve our health. Each time we respond to someone with a gentle acknowledgement, we notice how much we have lifted their spirits and our own. It feels good, and the more we find opportunities to keep spreading kindness, the better we feel. We benefit as much as others do from our kindness. But our simple kind act has a much greater impact on the world than we realize.

Kindness is Contagious

Every word we say and the energy behind it has an impact. A sincere compliment usually cheers a person up. That simple act may lift his mood and change the way he greets other people, which in turn, cheers them up a bit. Kindness feels good, even to those observing it. It changes the mood of people around you, and soon they're spreading it as they

go through their day. Just making a commitment to live with kindness will make a difference in the world. You're already doing it. So how can you take it to another level?

Appendix E: Students' Interview

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I’m conducting a study on how the Socratic Seminar method may help improve critical thinking skills in English classes at Harmony school. So the purpose of this conversation is to explore your experiences with the Socratic Seminars and how they may have influenced your thinking. Your answers will be confidential and used only for research purposes. There are no right or wrong answers — I just want your honest opinion.”

a) Experiences with Socratic Seminars

1. How did you feel about participating in the Socratic Seminars during your English class?
2. What was different about the Socratic Seminar compared to your usual class discussions?
3. Did you feel encouraged to express your own ideas during the discussions? Why or why not?

b) Critical Thinking Development and engagement

4. Did the Socratic Seminar help you think more deeply or differently about the topics discussed?
5. Did you feel more responsible for your own thinking and speaking during the seminars? Why or why not?

c) Overall Reflection

6. What did you enjoy the most about the Socratic Seminars?
7. What were the biggest challenges you faced during the seminars?

Appendix F: Teacher's Interview

“Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for my Master's research. The study explores the impact of the Socratic Seminar method on developing students' critical thinking in EFL contexts. Your insights are valuable, and all your responses will remain confidential.”

1. Background and Teaching Context

1. Can you briefly describe your experience teaching English and working with intermediate-level learners?
2. What do you consider the most important skills for EFL learners to develop in speaking classes?

2. Implementation of Socratic Seminar

3. How did you prepare students for the Socratic Seminar activities?
4. What topics did you choose for the discussions, and why?

3. Observations and Impact

5. What changes did you notice in students' critical thinking abilities during or after the seminars?
6. How did students respond to this method in terms of engagement and motivation?

4. Benefits and Challenges

7. What do you see as the main benefits of using the Socratic Seminar in an EFL classroom?
8. What challenges did you face in implementing this method?

5. Reflection and Future Use

9. In your opinion, is the Socratic Seminar effective in promoting higher-order thinking among EFL learners?
10. Would you consider integrating this method more regularly in your teaching? Why or why not?

المخلص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التعرف على دور منهج الندوة السقراطية في تنمية التفكير النقدي لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المستوى المتوسط. وتهدف إلى تحديد تأثير هذه الطريقة على المشاركة المعرفية للمتعلمين ' واستكشاف مواقف الطلاب ' والمعلمين ' تجاه فعاليتها في تعزيز كل من التطور المعرفي ونتائج التعلم. تبحث هذه الدراسة أيضًا في مدى مساهمة تنفيذ الندوات السقراطية في تطوير التفكير التأملي والحجج والتفاعل الحواري في الفصول الدراسية للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ولتحقيق هذه الغاية، تم استخدام الأدوات النوعية، بما في ذلك الملاحظة الصفية والمقابلات شبه المنظمة مع المعلم والطلاب. وأظهرت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من مراقبة الفصول الدراسية تحسنات كبيرة في مشاركة الطلاب، والمشاركة النقدية، والاستعداد للتعاون. علاوة على ذلك، أشارت المقابلات إلى أن كلاً من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ومعلميهم لديهم آراء إيجابية حول طريقة الندوة السقراطية، مع تقدير دورها في خلق بيئة تتمحور حول الطالب ومثيرة للتفكير. ولذلك أكدت النتائج أن الندوة السقراطية تؤثر بشكل إيجابي على التفكير النقدي للمتعلمين' وتعزز ممارسات التدريس والتعلم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ندوة سقراطية، التفكير النقدي، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، التعلم الحواري، معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.