



**NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

**A CRITICAL THINKING INFUSED COURSE MODEL FOR TEACHING  
UNDERGRADUATE ARAB STUDENTS SPECIALIZING IN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE & LITERATURE STUDIES**

**PH.D. THESIS**

**ELAF ALMANSOUR**

**NICOSIA  
JUNE, 2022**

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**ELAF ALMANSOUR**


**SUPERVISOR  
PROF. DR. MUSTAFA KURT**

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### Approval

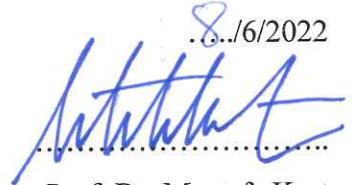
**Thesis defence was held online. The Jury members declared their acceptance verbally which is recorded**

We certify that we have read the thesis submitted by Elaf Almansour titled “**A Critical Thinking Infused Course Model For Teaching Undergraduate Arab Students Specializing In English Language & Literature Studies**” and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Ph.D. of Educational Sciences.

Examining Committee	Name-Surname	Signature
Head of the Committee:	Prof. Dr. Ismail Hakkı Mirici	ONLINE APPROVAL
Committee Member*:	Asst. Prof. Dr. Taye Emmanuel Akinmulegun	ONLINE APPROVAL
Committee Member*:	Prof. Dr. Oytun Sozudogru	ONLINE APPROVAL
Committee Member*:	Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kurt	ONLINE APPROVAL
Committee Member*:	Asst. Prof. Dr. Danish Suleman	ONLINE APPROVAL
Supervisor:	Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kurt	

Approved by the Head of the Department

8./6/2022



Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kurt  
Head of Department

Approved by the Institute of Graduate Studies

  
8./6/2022  
  
Prof. Dr. Kemal Hüsnü Can Başer  
Head of the Institute

**Declaration**

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with the academic rules and ethical guidelines of the Graduate School of Educational Sciences, Near East University. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all materials and results that are not original to this study.

Elaf Almansour

23/6/2022

**Abstract****A Critical Thinking Infused Course Model for Teaching Undergraduate Arab Students  
Specializing in English Language & Literature Studies****Almansour, Elaf****Ph.D, Department of English Language Education****Supervisor Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kurt****June, 2022, 196 pages**

The knowledge of critical thinking and how to promote it in literature and language classes is minimal. The purpose of this study is to remodel the traditional way of teaching both English literature and English language skills by designing and exploring the pedagogical potential of the proposed interdisciplinary course (the intervention) in enhancing Arab undergraduate students' critical thinking skills, English language skills, and learning outcomes in English Language and literature department. The quasi-mixed methods design was applied in this study to answer the research questions. Students practiced close reading and substantive writing by applying different critical lenses including Socratic discussions. The use of the infusion and the constructivist approaches were meant to achieve the goals of this course: to infuse Paul's reasoning elements and standards into the learning process of the novels with keeping critical thinkers' traits in mind and to engage students in discussions through the use of literature circles and Socratic dialogues. The research methods applied in this study were qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data investigated the primary objective of this research, which is the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of critical thinking enhancement and language improvement in the participant. At the same time, the quantitative tools were used in this study to explore the advantages and disadvantages of this intervention from the participants' perspective. The findings showed that the proposed course also allowed differentiation. Regardless of the level of the students before the class, the intervention influenced all of the students positively; their motivation and engagement did not depend on their levels of English proficiency; instead, critical thinking-based discussions trigger even less able students to involve through opposing challenging arguments.

*Key Words:* Critical thinking, English Language & Literature, Constructivist teaching, intervention (design course).

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the Study**

Several aspects of my academic history have prepared me to embark on this thesis. I am a BA holder from the English Language & Literature Department from Albaath University, Syria and a master holder in English literature, with a focus on the state of boredom in the British and Russian societies in two different eras. Through my thorough reading and work on my MA thesis, I have enhanced my knowledge about the reasons behind the loss of individuals' ambitions and demotivation in life, and the disastrous results that occur due to the loss of meaning in a human being's life. I have started to recognize how technology and leisure as well as social, religious and political conflicts are leading the world to uncertainty and loss as a fast untamed horse that has to be controlled before it is too late. In this thesis I aim to illustrate the importance of critical thinking as a cornerstone to have a hold over these changes and profit from them academically and in real life.

Through my work experience as an English instructor at different universities in the last few years, I have met different kinds of students with different personalities and backgrounds and with different hopes and ambitions for the future. Their varying levels of awareness regarding their future study, work, and their life in general with the majority being demotivated in their studying journey triggered my interest to work on a thesis that attracts attention to the importance of critical thinking for students, especially at the undergraduate level as this period is very critical in fostering their awareness about the value of what they learn and how to connect it with their real life. Cole (2015) states that the years between 18 and 22 are particularly important to cultivate critical thinking, planning and organization, and suggests that these years might be a

good time to teach and reinforce the cognitive skill components of critical thinking. Nowadays, in the Arab world, it is not enough anymore to possess remarkable knowledge in various fields of study without critical thinking; such skills are strongly needed in order to cope with all kinds of change striking the Arab world, mainly educational reforms which consequently leads to reform in all other domains in society such as economic or social reform. Hence, students who master their fields of study through thinking critically become competent in their future workforce and as productive citizens.

Alongside the fast and accelerated changes happening all over the world such as the trends and technologies which are dominating the world and leading to a more complex life, most Arab countries have also been undergoing serious changes, and Arab citizens have been affected in a contradictory manner. While some countries have witnessed great development and openness, such as the notable growth of educational and research institutes and universities and the increasing awareness of women's rights and role, other societies have unfortunately faced disastrous conflicts and destructive and devastating wars, which correspondingly have consequently led to serious catastrophes such as refugees crisis, loss of education and career paths, physical and mental disabilities and illnesses, and discrimination and inequality. Generally, such changes have affected most Arab citizens' lives and views, including university students.

My teaching experience at different universities has provided me an opportunity to notice various levels of awareness among students toward the major changes going on around them and their reaction and interaction with them, which is basically based on their different backgrounds and personal experiences; and needless to say, that the level of their awareness and consciousness would definitely affect their academic outcomes, life-long knowledge and

productivity in the workforce. Most of their attitudes, which are contradictory, chaotic, immature and random, towards their education and their role as active citizens have urged me to design a framework within which I first draw their attention to the importance of critical thinking in their academic pathway and their real life, and pave the way for them to learn how to develop their critical thinking skills and critical literacy through reading literature in accordance to what Friere (1970) believes that students should be highly conscious and aware of the consequences which have tremendously impacted their societies so they can be positively conscious and able to take action as they get really educated, to move beyond reading the words to reading the world.

Therefore, there is a serious need to apply a motivating and productive teaching process which aims to develop students' critical thinking skills, that enable them to cope and deal with. Literature is the best discipline to stimulate critical thinking as “working with literary texts helps students to reflect on the world around them, opening horizons of possibility, allowing them to question, interpret, connect, and explore” (Langer, 1997, p. 607). Developing students’ critical thinking skills not bring benefits only to students but to their society as well because these skills greatly enhance innovation in the workplace and society (Davies, 2006; Snyder, 2003). However, as mentioned by Al-Seghayer, most educators in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia are equipped with identical fixed syllabus, guidelines and deadlines which they have to follow strictly. This strongly prescriptive nature of curricula likely reinforces students’ dependency on the teacher and limits their learning to the specified content in the textbooks and learning materials (Alarabi, 2017). Following such teaching strategies limits the cultivation of critical thinking; as critical thinking skills are not sufficiently included in the curricula and Arab students lack the chance to be exposed to these skills; and if they do, they lack the confidence to apply

and demonstrate them due to the ignorance, lack of knowledge and practice of these skills at most Arab universities.

Furthermore, these great changes happening in all sectors, mainly in education, necessitate changing or modifying the role of educators, they have to shift their teaching approaches from didactic and instructional to critical ones, from delivering the learning contents as fragmented pieces of information to be grasped by students to a more complicated one, that is unifying what they study clearly and precisely. Teachers and educators' aim should be to nourish students' awareness and perception to their educational journey and to turn it to fruitful and life long one, "to think of their students not as receivers of information, but as users of information" (Snyder & Snyder, 2008, p.97). However, although critical thinking is as old as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, who laid the groundwork for teaching critical thinking more than 2500 years ago (Paul & Elder, 2014), still it can be hardly found in most of the traditional educational systems in English Language and Literature departments in most Arab countries. Critical thinking is rarely taught as a separate course at Arab universities with a limited or no practical implementation in other subjects.

### **Statement of the Problem**

#### ***English language and English literature teaching and learning at Arab universities***

English language and English literature are usually taught as stand-alone fields of study at most Arab universities, if not all. Several studies which have been concerned with the teaching of English language and/or literature in the Arab context show that regardless the efforts being done to improve teaching and learning outcomes in these two fields, students' results are generally dissatisfactory. (Al Shumaimeri, 2003; Hastings, 2012; Khan, 2011; Mahib ur Rahman

& Alhaisoni, 2013). The low proficiency and the continuing unsatisfactory performance of Arab students in English language have been attributed to the ineffective or inadequate teaching/learning strategies and methods, deficiency in curriculum design, and inadequate mastery of the language skills at university level, to name some (Suleiman, 1983; Alharbi, 2015).

The traditional frameworks for teaching literature are limited to the theoretical teaching of content, ignoring its role in developing critical and literate students; students in literature courses are mainly exposed to a selection of literary works with a focus on authors' biography and milieu, different literary eras, cultures, genres, themes and analysis, etc. Although these courses usually assume to improve students' language skills, reading and writing in particular, and enhance their critical analysis and evaluation of literary works, in fact they do not add any significant improvement to students' language competence as their main focus is on content rather than language (Bader, 1992). In other words, literature, in Arab context, is taught in a non-literary manner, that suppresses creative and productive thinking. And this is due to the fact that literary thinking have been rarely explored and the connections between such thinking and the goals and processes of instruction have barely been made; hence, it could be generalized that the linguistic competence of students does not enable them to make sense of a literary piece, let alone appreciate it (Zughoul,1987).

Traditional literature lectures usually start with warming ups such as a quick summary of the covered content to be sure the facts are known to all students. Then, certain interpretations and comments on that content are delivered to students to be exactly learned, tested and evaluated by educators. A wide range of students do read the assigned literary works in their courses just to fulfill a duty which they do not really enjoy; they are unaware of the importance of literature and its great impact on improving their literacy as well as critical thinking skills.

Consequently, students' attitude towards learning turns to be negative due to the external pressure not internal motivation (Lightbown & Spada, 1999), and their involvement and participation diminish due to feelings of discontentment and frustration, which eventually lead to hindering their academic achievements.

Similar to Literature courses, English language curricula are didactic and teacher-centered; lecturing strategies are also applied, in which lessons are delivered via speeches or presentations by lecturers and involve limited participation by students, teachers tend to reemphasize the same points and information in a repetitive cycle via speeches and lectures; they often use ready-made or outdated presentations or studying notes to be stored in students' brains and retrieved in exams. Surprisingly many of pre-prepared teaching notes and materials have been used for years and years with no changes, updates or modification. Students in the English language department study courses that are basically related to acquiring and learning language with a focus on the linguistic characteristics and skills (Ibrahim, 2015), but with a limited or no practical application in other subjects or even real life, and there is no real opportunity to improve their English as they do not encounter English native speakers nor English native context.

Supporting Alkubaidi's findings (2014), such teaching methods can only open up the possibility for students, as exams oriented, to retrieve the same content of books or the notes provided by teachers, thus end up with short-term superficial learning and vague understanding of learning content (Paul, 2007). Teaching and learning process are designed as "one-size-fits-all," English literature and language classes are best described by Richard Paul's statement "lecture, lecture, lecture, break ... lecture, lecture, lecture, lecture. [Then the instructor would say] I know I'm over time, but I've just got to cover this and this and this ... and you've really have to know this and this and this" (2007). As a result, students most of the time feel



bored and cannot follow all of lecturer' speech. Having said that, gaining literature knowledge or language competence at the expense of the other creates a big gap that hinder English graduates to be competent in workforce and diminish their opportunities.

***The need for a critical thinking-based course that teach literature and language skills***

Learning a second/foreign language requires its learners to understand and use it thoughtfully and clearly. Therefore, teaching English should be no longer considered to be merely learning a number of words and expressions connected to each other grammatically, but rather “a social practice of meaning-making and interpretation” (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p.16). Learning a language necessitates understanding its culture. Literature can be a rich resource for improving ESL students' language skills (Ghosn, 2002) as it helps them in acquiring a native-like linguistic competence, express ideas in a native-like English and learn the linguistic features clearly and concisely (Obeidat, 1997). However, the main issue with teaching and learning English language and literature courses, being taught as stand-alone courses, lies in that both mainly focus on delivering learning content but ignore learning process. Joseph John states "a student of linguistics learns about language, while a student of literature learns language as used in poetry, drama, fiction, or any other genre. In one case, the experience is derivative and remote; in the other, it is direct and immediate" (1986, p.19). Hence, English language-oriented courses focus on the use of language as a communication tool, but do not really enable students to become proficient in the target language, as they lack the skills to think creatively and critically when using the target language (Kabilan, 2000). Learners have “to become autonomous thinkers and so begin to command rather than be commanded by language” (Paul, Binker & Weil, 1990, p.120). Therefore, they need to acquire and practice critical thinking skills that enable them to reach higher levels of language proficiency (Renner, 1996).

At most Arab universities there are hardly courses that integrate the teaching of literature and language together. Although English language and literature departments are ambitious that students would enhance their knowledge and language skills with these stand alone courses, but this has rarely been achieved; such curricula and teaching approaches undoubtedly have detrimental influences on students' ability to critically and creatively study literary texts, and lead to students' low proficiency in English language skills (Alhamdi, 2014; Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014; Alharbi, 2015; Sofi, 2015).

Saying this, a radical reform in several areas, mainly in curricula and teaching approaches (Sofi, 2015) and critical thinking skills (Paul & Elder, 2019) is required in order to bridge the gap between the two fields and create an engaging and life-long learning experience. There is an impressing need to teach Arab students how "to learn to question, organize, interpret and synthesize" (Paul, et al., 1990, p113) in these departments; they have to reconstruct different information and expressions, induce meanings of new words from the context and come up with ideas from the texts and put them into words. "The English curriculum is a place for enjoying and reflecting on . . . cultural resources, debating their values, and imagining and designing . . . futures" (Goodwyn, 2009, p. 12); reading literary texts has to trigger students to "live imaginatively within another's world or experience, to consider someone else's view of things" (Paul, et al., 1990, p.112). Further, its diverse structures and expressions make students think about and figure out the different meanings, when students read literary works, they learn the language of these texts, which is rich in metaphors, similes, allusion and ambiguity, and such elements deepen students' thinking, understanding and literacy proficiency.

Despite the fact that critical thinking has been of intellectual concern to a growing number of institutions and universities in Arab world, its application has been limited to few higher order

questions; no framework of critical thinking have yet to become conceptualized as pedagogical instruction that can be learnt and practiced on everyday basis. Educators who follow traditional lecturing strategies fail to see that their teaching approaches contradicts the goals that they aim to achieve. As Paul (2007) believes, using standard formulas and questions that can be answered with standard procedures is not enough for a fruitful learning process, because although students might give correct answers for these questions but if the questions are slightly changed or modified students fail to answer them; thus, students can hardly remember little of information and knowledge covered in these classes after the courses are over. Students muddle answering questions as they have no framework or theory to apply while they think of their answers and no assessment tools to base and empower their responses on. Paul (2007) mentions two types of students found in such type of classes: The first are the intellectually-disabled students who are usually frustrated and unsuccessful; Paul gave a true example of what they say on their graduation day: "Thank god it's over. No more classes. How wonderful, I'm free, free at last" instead of saying "wow, now I can read all those books that I've been piling up, all those wonderful books I did not have time to read." The other type is the elite -disabled, students of this type thrive on memorizing, restating and recalling their teachers' words in order to satisfy them, they use their intellectual ability to do the required minimum for the sake of getting diplomas and later jobs; "what a loss of brain power" (2007). Students study the learning content in their courses just to fulfill a duty which they are neither aware of, nor really enjoy.

### **Purpose of the Study**

I have been working toward a critical thinking-oriented course for the teaching of literature with keeping the four English language skills in mind. One aim of this study is to refocus and redesign teaching instructional practices. As well, it aims to draw students' awareness to how to

be critical learners and more proficient users of language. The previously mentioned problems in teaching English language and literature to Arab students actually prevent them from developing various skills such as creative and critical thinking skills, which consequently lead to unsatisfactory results in both fields. This study aims to teach Arab students *how* to think instead of *what* to think; it prepares students to learn how to analyze, synthesize, reconstruct, use and reuse the information they receive; they apply critical thinking skills to learning content using a clear and precise language.

In addition, this study applies constructivist strategies, which can lead to communicative, cooperative and collaborative learning. A learning technique, namely Literature circles, is used as a constructivist tool. It aims to help students to cope with common challenges they usually face in English classes, such as when attempting to speak in English but lack adequate competence. This technique aims to engage and encourage students to participate with keeping differentiation in mind that no student is left behind.

### **Research Questions**

In order to investigate the significance of teaching students to think critically about literature with keeping language skills in mind this study aims to answer the following main questions:

1. Does implementing critical thinking skills in studying literature affect students' understanding and comprehension of literature?
2. Does implementing critical thinking skills improve students' language proficiency?
3. What are the positive impacts of this intervention from the participants' perspective based on:

- a. Enhancing critical thinking
  - b. Improving English language skills
  - c. Better understanding of literature
4. What are the negative sides of this intervention compared with the traditional language and/or literature classes from the participants' perspective?

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lays on remodeling the traditional way of teaching Arab undergraduate students in English language and literature department. The synthesized course proposed in this study enables Arab undergraduate students to study literature courses in a manner that develops their critical thinking skills and English language skills. It is the first of its kind at the Arab universities that brings together literature and language at once and most importantly, introduces students to critical thinking practices. The participant students will learn how to read critically, write substantively and speak and listen actively (Paul, 2007) through the use of literary works. They have the opportunity to cultivate their thinking and English language skills while they discover different cultures in an engaging and collaborative class. It is my aim to help students gain long life learning outcomes by connecting critical thinking, language, and literature in one course. Designing such a course would definitely enhance the educational level of the students and better prepare them for the job market.

This study, in addition to proposing instructional redesign, also remodels the role of educators in the English classroom, whether in literature or language. By applying this course, educators must transform the learning experience, from dominating to empowering their students. Integrating the teaching of literature and language with keeping critical thinking skills in mind transcends teaching the main elements of the literary works and the basic skills of

language to a more comprehensive and effective learning process. The significance of this course lies in creating a new learning environment that stimulate students' interest and motivation for learning by presenting information and content in new innovative ways. Students learn to create a deeper sense of their education through reading literature and reflecting on real life situations from different points of view, and consequently realizing their potential as critical thinkers and readers; at the same time, they become better users of English language. This study tends to build real educated students in the Arab world.

### **Definition of Key terms**

There are main terminologies that this study is built on, that need to be defined according to the purposes of this study, as some of them do not have fixed definitions due to their complexity and interrelation to several disciplines. Thus, this study adopts the following definitions that best match its purposes and offer a deep insight on their concepts implemented significantly in this study:

**Critical thinking:** a disciplined art of thinking that ensures that thinkers use their most capability of in any set of circumstances to observe, monitor, analyze, assess, and reconstruct thinking of many sorts in many dimensions of human life. (Paul and Elder, 2014).

**Constructivism:** The Constructivist approach is one in which learners actively create, interpret, and reorganize knowledge in individual ways (Gordon 2009).

**Infusion:** The Infusion approach is deep, thoughtful subject matter instruction in which students are explicitly taught critical thinking skills and are given a content and context in which to use them (Ennis, 1989).

**Socratic questioning:** it is a disciplined questioning that can be used to explore thinking in several ways and for many purposes, including exploring complex ideas, getting the truth of things, opening up issues and problems, uncovering assumptions, analyzing concepts, distinguishing what we know from what we do not and follow out logical implications of thought. (Paul and Elder, 2014).

**Literature circles** They refer to are small groups of students that regularly assemble to analyze and discuss an assigned text. These small groups are heterogeneous in that they include students of the same or similar literacy and reading levels. These groups are peer-lead and the students often are able to choose the text they want to read. Each group member reads the same text and then takes part in an active discussion about the text they read. This strategy aims to improve students' comprehension skills as well as their ability to interpret the text and think critically about the text. (Daniels, 2002).

These key terms are explained and investigated in the coming chapters.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

There are some limitations to this study. First, the modest sample size, 30 students, who are from the English language and literature department at a private university in Saudi Arabia, and the fact that there was no control group and random assignment; therefore generalizability of the findings can be risky unless similar characteristics exist in other samples (all, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Second, short term of instruction (10 weeks), this short period was necessitated by the summer semester system, which is 10 weeks; as two weeks were allotted to pretests and posttests and the left 8 weeks for learning. Therefore, instruction in this study was done as intensively as possible within the confines of the newly designed material. Finally, the possibility of the Hawthorne Effect, this effect refers to the awareness of the participants of participating in the

study, which might cause to increase their performance (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996); as at the beginning of the course, all participants signed a consent form for participating in the study.

### **Summary**

This introductory chapter established the widespread interest in and need for better teaching language and literature together using critical thinking. The status of teaching language and literature for Arab students and the need for developing critical thinking and literacy skills in literature courses were described. A synthesized course (treatment) proposed and designed by the researcher, that aims to test the effectiveness of infusing critical thinking into literary works in improving students overall knowledge, language abilities and learning outcomes. Four research questions were stated to investigate the effectiveness of the synthesized model empirically using instruments that assessed students' study of two literary works using the four skills of language in addition to the dispositions of critical thinking. Additionally, this chapter identified possible delimitations and limitations of the study and indicated how they were addressed.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

It is generally agreed that the role of education is not limited to filling students' vessels with knowledge, but it has other important roles that contribute in transforming them into critical thinkers who are able to form well-reasoned decisions and judgements (Marin & Halpern, 2011; Moore, 2011). It is widely acknowledged the importance of critical thinking in education. However, its definition and how to apply it might create confusion. This chapter introduces a brief review of definitions of critical thinking and its importance for English language and literature Arab students.

#### **Definition of Critical Thinking**

Focus on critical thinking in education is wide in its scope. Many educational institutions and organizations have reinforced the importance of critical thinking in their educational policies and curricula and considered enhancing critical thinking skills in students a primary educational goal. However, there are some shortcomings that restrict activating these skills, such as different conceptualizations of critical thinking and how to apply it. Before discussing the definitions of critical thinking, it is worth mentioning that despite its popularity and widespread in the education sector, some still believe that critical thinking refers to negative criticism with emphasis on weaknesses and limitations or lack the agreement on what a situation really is and how it should be done, and how to facilitate taking proper decisions or actions (Stupple, Maratos, Elander, Hunt, Cheung & Aubeeluck, 2017). In one meta-synthesis of ten studies, Webster (2016) finds out that there is a misconception of critical thinking among many students who often associated critical thinking with negativity. This misconception may impel educators' attentions to their students' ignorance of the definition and role of critical thinking in their study.

Further, as Andrews (2009), there might be awareness of the importance of critical thinking but with a wrong or vague conception of it some critical thinking skills such as questioning and argument, which are regarded as important dispositions, are also ignorantly associated with trivial disputes and could therefore be disagreeable and discouraging for both teachers and students. Due to the complexity of defining what is critical thinking, several studies show that it does not seem to be a simple term for educators and students to explain or define. In one study conducted by Moore (2011), results show that there is a lack of understanding and agreement among teachers on what and how to teach critical thinking that were reflected in their definitions of the term and analyzed in teaching materials.

Due to the complex nature of critical thinking and its interrelation with various with the various fields of knowledge there is no single definition for it in educational field. It is better described as a system that can open every system (Paul, 2007). Paul and Elder (2014) elaborate that critical thinking in biology or physics classes focuses on triggering students' ability for clarification and explication, while in English classes it aims to foster students' ability to explore new interpretations and understandings. Hence, definitions of critical thinking vary across disciplines based on their objectives and needs. Following are different attempts by many thinkers and educators, namely Norris and Ennis (1989), Ennis (1985), Dewey (1910), Facione (1990), Paul and Elder (2014), Siegel (2010) among others.

Norris defines critical thinking as "reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to do or believe" (1989, p.1). Ennis (1985) states that critical thinking involves reflection, formulating hypotheses and questions in addition to examining alternatives. Dewey (1910) defines critical thinking as "reflective thinking" that includes "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds

that support it” (p. 6). Siegel (2010) again emphasizes that critical thinking is based on reasonable examination and evaluation which support or underpin one’s thinking or judgement. Richard Paul (1994) says that critical thinking involves fostering dialogue, which paves the way for alternative points of view and considers the voices of those who need to be encouraged to speak for themselves. He adds that, because critical thinking encourages individuals to transcend ego-centric and socio-centric beliefs, it is essential to our role as moral agents and as potential shapers of our own nature and destiny (1994, p.67). Furthermore, critical thinking, as Harvey Siegel states, aims at self-sufficiency, “a self-sufficient person is a liberated person [...] free from the unwarranted and undesirable control of unjustified beliefs” (Siegel, 1998, p. 58). Generally speaking, all of these thinkers agree that critical thinking is a set of skills enable in comprising the ability to identify and clarify an idea or problem, to analyze and make inferences, to analyze and evaluate relevant assumptions, to investigate the validity and reliability of information in order to reach sound and fair conclusions apart free from biases

In the educational sector, Kuhn (1998) and Baxter-Magolda (1992) emphasize in their research the importance of considering critical thinking in relation to the progression of learning and thinking of students and find ways of working with students on the development of critical thinking. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) summarize various definitions of critical thinking in the literature and suggested that college-level critical thinking skills include identifying assumptions behind an argument, recognizing important relationships, making correct references from data, drawing conclusions from the information or data provided, interpreting the merit of a conclusion based on available information, evaluating the credibility of a statement and its source, and making self-corrections.

As we have seen, definitions of critical thinking are various and based on different backgrounds, and no one precise definition is provided. However, all of them agree on the same ultimate goal of teaching critical thinking: to enable students to make decisions or solve problems in different situations. This study is supported by these definitions, but is mainly build on the definition by Paul and Elder (2014), which defines critical thinking as a disciplined art of thinking that ensures that thinkers use their most capability of in any set of circumstances to observe, monitor, analyze, assess, and reconstruct thinking of many sorts in many dimensions of human life. Students base their learning process on reading and evaluating the tensions, conflicts and contradictions presented in the selected literary works, using different critical lenses, and they construct their own understanding with reference to their personal experiences rather than receiving predetermined facts to be memorized and tested. There are critical lenses that can be used to interpret literature, this study focuses on the most important and relevant ones such as the Marxist, Feminist and Psychoanalysis theories, students practice connecting what they read to their real world by using these lenses, they enhance their insights into their lives and into the literary works they are reading.

### **Critical Thinking and English Literature**

Many thinkers, theorists and educators see that critical thinking is not only a set of skills to be taught but also a range of dispositions that should be acquired. Paul (1993) refers to these dispositions as intellectual traits. This dimension of critical thinking is mostly interrelated with literature, defined by ethical and moral aspects. Paul's (1993) identifies a set of intellectual traits that entails the development of fairmindedness and moral judgement (Paul, 1993). Critical thinking does not only improve thinking skills but also enhance students' ethical and moral

perspectives through reading literature such as considering others' viewpoints, interpretations, evaluations and judgements.

Some might ask why literature? “[Why] digging again into the same old past? What might be relatively new, even exciting?” (Nelson, 1982, p.560). To answer this question, I would agree with Nelson's statement “knowledge of the past is something we can all hope in some measure to acquire; if we do not acquire it, we cannot appreciate the novelty of the new” (1982, p.558). Writers usually tend to fill their works with hidden symbols, structures, and meanings which should lead to deep understanding and sophisticated thinking about different issues related to politics, religion, individuals and society to name some. However, due to students' traditional studying of literature, they usually lack the skills and confidence to evaluate a work of literature on their own; instead, they depend on different resources for understanding the work. Therefore, they assume others' views and thoughts instead of developing their own.

Modern literature is selected in this study because it is more practical and accessible for students; they can be more engaged, involved in thinking and ready to debate. The literature of modern era witnessed a shift from the world of objects to the examination of the mind perceiving it (Faulkner, 1977). Thus, I do not aim to familiarize students with the greatest modern literary works, but about creating the possibility for "a new dimension of a self-in-the-making" (Greene, 2007, p.37). As Greene observes, "without the ability to think about yourself, to reflect on your life, there's really no awareness, no consciousness. Consciousness doesn't come automatically; it comes through being alive, awake, curious, and often furious" (Greene, 2007, p.31).

Furthermore, “students should learn how to say something new about the same old texts, to regroup works into unheard of continuity, to revision works according to current concerns and ideologies politics, racism, psych-sexualism, linguistic structuralism, philosophizing rhetoricism,

old historical and aesthetic pieties or stereotypes have been battered both smugly and egomaniacally” (Nelson, 1982, pp.556-7). Greene (2007) views literature as an unbounded source of various perspectives on the human condition and ways to live more fully in the world, with a special capacity to arouse wide-awakeness or living in awareness. Thus, modern literature is concerned with consciousness, and also with the subconscious and unconscious workings of the human mind (Lodge, 1977), so it is rich with social issues that require students to read not only the text but to read the world surrounding the text (Freire, 2005) and to connect what they read to their life.

Alongside the rise of modern literature, many revolutionist theories have risen such as the Freudian theories, Marxism, Feminism, Reader-Response and others, known as critical lenses (Purdue Online Writing Lab, n.d.). Using critical lenses lead to reconstructing the traditional way of teaching (the analysis of characters and plot, etc...) and encourage students to apply different viewpoints and principles to reach a deeper and thoughtful understanding. These theories can be effectively employed to enable students to explore, interpret and evaluate literature from different perspectives, these lenses are best explained by Hemmingway’s statement when he said “I know now that there is no one thing that is true- it is all true” (Gillespie, 2010, p.xii). Accordingly, students practice thinking about different issues and relationships, such as mental illnesses, educational failure and illegal relationships. By using these critical lenses students explore real life norms and values that articulate and control society socially, politically and economically. They also engage in evaluative discussions in which opinions are not equal and the learning process entails judgment, evaluation, and argument; thus, judging the strength of an argument is mainly based on its power to persuade (Kuhn, 1999). Thus, students become more aware about their role as mature and educated citizens in getting more out of their education and

improving their life quality. It is my primary concern to differentiate between educated citizens and diploma holders, as holding a diploma or a certificate does not contribute to building societies unless its holder is fully conscious and able to think critically.

Snyder and Snyder in *Teaching Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills* (2008) mention four main barriers which might impede the integration of critical thinking in education: lack of training, lack of information, preconceptions, and time constraints. In an attempt to overcome these barriers, I restrict this study to two modern English novels only: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell and *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. These novels, I believe, are great sources of inspiration for students to generate new subjective ideas and interpretations because of their modernist style and techniques, such as complex characters and focus on the role of the individual in society, which create ambiguity and uncertainty and therefore prompts students to think deeply and critically, as what Virginia Woolf (1966) stated in *Phases of Fiction* that one of the key features of modernism is its moral ambiguity:

We are never told ... that one way is right and the other wrong. Every way is thrown open without reserve and without prejudice. Modernism's lack of certainty forces the reader to exercise their own judgment, or suspend their judgment, rather than being directed towards certain positions either by explicit narratorial direction or by the positive or negative consequences of events ( p. 84).

“Asking [students] to critically examine the complex reality they live in should be done through rich, complex, multi-faceted texts” (Poyas, 2016, p. 281). The novels I suggest for this study deal with topics that are very common and universal. In accordance to what Lo (2001) states, “[literature] not only illustrates and reflects the culture from which it comes, but it also gives us insights into the reasoning and belief systems of people whose outlooks and life

experiences may be far different from our own” (p.84). Ben Zid (2015) conducted a study at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman in which he has found that the majority of participants agreed that literature enhanced their language competence, allowed them to practice the language skills much better and led to higher competency in English.

Davidson and Dunham (1997) have found in one study that the students taught with the critical thinking-imbedded ESL instruction, performed significantly better than those who received only the traditional intensive academic English instruction. While McGee (1996) states that literature gives students insights and understandings that they cannot create alone, and this contribute to fostering their critical thinking. Daud and Husin (2004) also mention that incorporating literary texts for language teaching is effective in developing students’ critical thinking skills emphasizing the fact that literary texts and critical thinking are interrelated. Students become creative, critical, and analytical learners; hence, enhancing the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking using literature led to deep and rich learning outcomes based on a critical background. Lazar (1993) claims that literature sharpens linguistic and cognitive skills and enhances students’ understanding of the human condition, but still without cultivating critical thinking students do not gain long-term education, as Paul (2007) says that there is no learning of the content without critical thinking. However, the knowledge of critical thinking and how to promote it in literature and language classes is very limited (Brunt, 2005; McMillan, 1987; Tsui, 1998), as Reed states “while concern about critical thinking is widespread, effective instruction for critical thinking is not occurring on a broad scale” (1998, p.15), and this lack of knowledge weakens the educational role of literature and undermines the interaction between students and studying materials. As a result, students' critical thinking skills are constrained, and they are just passive listeners of long boring lectures. Would students be interested in reading



literature if they are not asked or even obliged to do so? Personally, I guess that most students in the language and literature departments would not as their main purpose is just to pass the courses and obtain diplomas.

### **Critical Thinking, Literature and Language Interrelation**

There is a strong interrelation between acquiring and practicing critical thinking skills and language and content learning improvement. As critical thinking is “self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored and self-correcting thinking” (Paul & Elder, 2002, p.15) infusing it to literature and language studies prepare students to be cultivated critical thinkers. There characteristics of critical thinking enable students to be more involved in their study; they learn to raise vital questions and issues, gather, evaluate and interpret information from different resources, and communicate their thoughts and responses effectively. So critical thinking can be considered crucial for all undergraduate students in English literature and language courses to master.

McGee (1996) states that literature gives students insights and understandings that they cannot create alone and this can be more effectively achieved by fostering their critical thinking. Thus, literature is an effective stimulus for students to think critically and express their thoughts and ideas as Lazere states, it is a field of study that “can come closest to encompassing the full range of mental traits currently considered to comprise critical thinking” (1987, p.3). By studying literature, students have to question and explore the world around them and opens “horizons of possibility” (Langer, 1997, p. 607), which consequently enhances students’ attitudes towards the world (Ghosn, 2002).

Learning a second/foreign language requires its learners to understand and use it thoughtfully and clearly, learners have “to become autonomous thinkers and so begin to

command rather than be commanded by language” (Paul, Binker & Weil, 1990, p.120). When learning a foreign or second language selecting the subject matter or the content is very important. Literature is considered as a rich resource for improving students’ language skills (Ghosn, 2002). First of all, learning a language necessitates understanding its culture, and reading literary texts allows students to “live imaginatively within another’s world or experience, to consider someone else’s view of things” (Paul, et al., 1990, p.112), also its diverse structures and expressions make students think about and figure out the different meanings.

Supporting Yaqoob’s (2011) findings that involving students in active learning such as making them responsible of meaning making and reflective reading of literature is sound and effective. Indeed, active reading of literature can develop critical thinking skills that are substantive for understanding hidden meanings, reconstructing knowledge from texts, differentiating facts from opinions, examine phenomena from multiple points of view, and connect their previous knowledge and experience to new learning content. In short, a close reading of literature involves various critical thinking skills: analysis, synthesis, argumentation, interpretation, evaluation, problem-solving, and reasoning, among others (Facione, 2007). Thus, there is an intimate interrelation between using language substantively and reading literature closely that should have a critical thinking base.

Thus, away from English language traditional classes, which just focus on the use of language as a communication tool, but do not really enable students to become proficient in the target language, as they are not imposed to the skills of thinking creatively and critically when using the target language (Kabilan, 2000), learning English using literature encourages students “to learn to question, organize, interpret and synthesize”(Paul, et al., 1990, p113); students learn to read literary texts in an active and reflective way for a better understanding (Gee, 1996; Janks

2010; Van, 2010). For instance, students reconstruct different thoughts and expressions, induce the meanings of new words from the context and come up with ideas from the texts and put them into words. "The English curriculum is a place for enjoying and reflecting on . . . cultural resources, debating their values, and imagining and designing . . . futures" (Goodwyn, 2009, p. 12).

Moreover, Obediat (1997) states that, literature helps students acquire a native-like competence in English, they learn to express their ideas in good English, learn the features and the linguistic system used for communication and they learn to use English more clearly, precisely and concisely. Besides, when students read literary works, they learn the language of literary texts, which is rich in metaphors, similes, allusion and ambiguity, and such elements deepen students' thinking, understanding and proficiency. Daud and Husin (2004) also mention that incorporating literary texts for language teaching is effective in developing students' critical thinking skills emphasizing the fact that literary texts and critical thinking are interrelated. Students become creative, critical and analytical learners; hence, enhancing the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking using literature lead to deep and rich learning outcomes based on a critical background. The Arab participants in this intervention have the opportunity to cultivate their thinking and English language skills while they discover different cultures in an engaging and collaborative class. It is my aim to help students gain long life learning outcomes by connecting critical thinking, language and literature in one course.

Davidson (1998) says that English language students should be able to critique, argue, and express their opinions clearly; therefore they need to acquire and practice critical thinking and critical thinking skills enable them to reach higher levels of language proficiency (Renner, 1996). Davidson and Dunham (1997) has found in one study that the students taught with the critical

thinking-imbedded ESL instruction, performed significantly better than those who received only the traditional intensive academic English instruction. Thus, there is a strong interrelation between acquiring and practicing critical thinking skills and language learning improvement.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Research Method**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the research method and data collection applied in this study, the epistemologies which inform it and the intervention design. Finally, ethical issues and limitations of the research are referred to.

The purpose of this study is to remodel the traditional way of teaching both English literature and English language skills by designing and exploring the pedagogical potential of the proposed interdisciplinary course (the intervention) in enhancing for Arab undergraduate students' critical thinking skills, English language skills and learning outcomes in English Language & literature department. This chapter describes the methods, the design and the conduct of this study in a private university in Saudi Arabia.

##### **Research Aims & Research Questions**

This study proposes an interdisciplinary critical thinking-oriented course, that teaches English literature with keeping the four English language skills in mind. The main aim of this study is to draw students' awareness to how to be critical learners and more proficient users of language. As well, it aims to refocus and redesign teaching instructional practices. The previously mentioned problems in teaching English language and literature to Arab undergraduate students in these departments actually prevent them from developing essential and necessary skills such as critical thinking skills and prevent them from acquiring a proper level of

English as a second language proficiency, which consequently lead to unsatisfactory results in both fields. Therefore, this study aims to teach students *how* to think instead of *what* to think (Paul & Elder, 2019) , as it prepares them to learn how to analyze, synthesize, reconstruct, use and reuse the information they receive. In addition to applying critical thinking skills to the learning content, they learn how to use a clear and precise language in a student-oriented learning environment. In order to investigate the significance of this intervention, that is teaching students to think critically about literature while improving their language skills, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Does implementing critical thinking skills in studying literature affect students' understanding and comprehension of literature?
2. Does implementing critical thinking skills improve students' language proficiency?
3. What are the positive impacts of this intervention from the participants' perspective based on:
  1. enhancing critical thinking
  2. improving English language skills
  3. better understanding of literature
  4. the teaching and learning style
  5. the instructor's role
4. What are the negative sides of this intervention compared with the traditional language and/or literature classes from the participants' perspective?

### **Research Methodology**

The quasi-mixed methods design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) is applied in this study in order to answer the research questions, namely (i) to measure the effects of fostering critical

thinking on improving language skills and grasping the learning content in English language and literature students by using various tools and (ii) to gather feedback from the students to investigate their perception and reflection on the intervention. A mixed research design is applied in order not to confine the study to one approach; instead, to overcome any potential bias when using a singular method (Creswell, 2003) and to take advantages of the strengths of both approaches by investigating and acknowledging the multifaceted nature of educational outcomes which are influenced by various factors (Dörnyei, 2007).

The intervention uses a one-group pretest- posttest quasi- experimental design to assess participants' before and after exposure to the treatment, in order to investigate if there has been a change in the dependent variable(s) of the study. The same dependent variables are measured in one group of participants, some variable(s) are measured pre and post the intervention, and others are measured only after the completion of the intervention. There is no random assignment. The variables of the study include the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are the teaching approaches and the designed intervention. Applying these variables, the dependent variables are to be measured, which include students' critical thinking skills and English language skills development as affected by the implementation of the teaching approaches and the intervention process. The treatment is administered to evaluate its effectiveness by comparing the scores of the pre- and post-tests and measuring the participants' performance, as well as the participants' responses to the questionnaires and interviews.

The research methods applied in this study are the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative research methods are commonly applied in social sciences for the purpose of studying social and cultural phenomena. According to Creswell "a qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex,

holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (1997, p.15). Examples of qualitative data include observation and fieldnotes, interviews and questionnaires, and the researcher's impressions and reactions (Myers, 2009). Maxwell (2006) states that the qualitative approach is applied for understanding the meaning, the participants, the events, situations and actions and the accounts they give. In this study, the qualitative approach is applied to reflect every stage of the intervention (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), a set of qualitative tools are implemented for collecting and analyzing data and for elaborating on the research questions. The qualitative data investigates the primary purpose of this study, which is the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of critical thinking enhancement and language improvement in the participants.

Quantitative research methods are applied for ‘explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that is analyzed using mathematically based methods’ (Aliaga & Gunderson 2000, p.1). This approach is widely applied in social sciences; it includes surveys, experiments, and numerical data, to name few; unlike qualitative approach which aims at understanding and interpreting behaviors, contexts, and interrelations, the quantitative approach refers to cause-effect relationships, it aims at searching for standardization, reproducibility, and measurability (Mayer, 2016). Thus, the quantitative tools are used in this study to explore the advantages and disadvantages of this intervention from the participants’ perspective.

### **Epistemology**

Educational research is usually based on underlying epistemologies that guide the research process in order to build on an existing body of knowledge and build new knowledge on it. The term epistemology refers to a theory of knowledge concerned with the scope and validity of that theory, and how knowledge can be fostered and acquired through applying it. For this study two

educational theories are applied: the constructivism and infusion, supporting previous researches and studies which have demonstrated the advantages of using these approaches to promote students' academic performance and critical thinking in collaborative and cooperative manner (Endag & Odabas, 2009; Eshel & Kohavi, 2003; Phan, 2009; Rodriguez, 2009), and more specifically studies in English language and literature learning (Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010; Ghaemi & Taherian, 2011; Fahim, Bagherkazemi & Alemi, 2010) to mention few.

### *Constructivism*

Nowadays, most higher education systems and learning environments are changing from 'delivery-centered to learner-centered' and from 'showing-telling to learning by doing' (Sadeghi, 2017, P.8) in which students are actively involved in the learning process instead of being passive receivers of knowledge. The constructivist approach aims to promote a socio-cultural learning environment, as constructivists acknowledge that the world is socially constructed (Steinberg, 2011), in which students are active creators and interpreters of knowledge (Gordon, 2009). Hence, according to this theory, "knowledge is constructed by learners as they attempt to make sense of their experiences" (Driscoll, 2005, p.387), students should be able to identify and pursue their own learning goals.

In this study, constructivism is applied as it is highly concerned with (1) students full and active engagement, (2) social interaction and (3) students' beliefs and knowledge enhancement. According to constructivism knowledge does not exist only in students' minds, but exists their previous experiences, beliefs, and values, their cognitive process, and their environment (Schunk, 2008). Therefore, the learning experience is not uniform, but unique to each student.

There are many perspectives on constructivism, primarily differing in the timing and amount of assistance given to each student and the type of knowledge that is constructed. For



elaborating on these constructivist perspectives Moshman (1982) presents three parts: exogenous, endogenous, and dialectical. He describes these three types in terms of root metaphor, referring to where the knowledge is taking place: First, the exogenous or the external construction emphasizes the environment's role in learning, a preoccupation with behavior. Second, the endogenous or the internal construction focuses on cognitive development, at what happens internally. Last, the dialectical or the interaction between the organism and mechanism, which is perched between these two, evidencing a highly interactive, reciprocal interaction and reflection that emphasizes learning; therefore, it is the best perspective that aligns with the purposes and aims of this study.

It is noteworthy that the role of the educator or instructor in constructivism essentially shifts from the "sage on the stage [to] the guide on the side" (King, 1993, p.30). According to Brooks and Brooks (1999), the role of a constructivist educator is that of a counselor, consultant, and friendly critic. He or she observes and interprets students' social and academic behavior and provides assistance that keeps the inquiry moving along without stopping it.

### ***The Infusion Approach***

The other educational theory applied in this study is the infusion. It was first founded by Ennis (1989), who identifies four approaches for teaching critical thinking: the general, the infusion, the immersion and the mixed approach. The general approach is based on teaching critical thinking skills separately without a content area; it can be used as an extra supplement course to the curriculum. The infusion approach is based on teaching students critical thinking skills by using a content and context in which they can explicitly use these skills. The immersion approach is similar to the infusion as it offers students a content and context to use, but the students are not explicitly taught critical thinking skills. The mixed approach is based on the

combination of the two approaches: the general and the infusion or the immersion. This study uses the infusion approach as this approach aims to enhance and instill critical thinking skills along with the study subjects (Swartz, 1992), which helps students to employ critical thinking skills in class as well as in real life. Similarly, Weinstein argues that critical thinking teaching should be embedded in other subjects because “whatever the dispositions, skills, and strategies used, they need to be identified, contextualized, and exercised within the regular curriculum if critical thinking is to take a secure place in teaching and learning” (1993, p. 40). The infusion approach introduces students to critical thinking and emphasizes the process of acquisition of its skills through the context of content knowledge learning and instruction. For the sake of enhancing critical thinking skills effectively in all aspects of student’s academic life, major changes in the existing curriculum content and teaching methods are needed and educators and teachers should be properly trained. In fact, the needed time to make these changes is the main limitation for this approach. Thus, existing content lesson/curriculum plans are remodeled to incorporate critical thinking skills into the classroom learning and instruction.

By applying the infusion approach a set of critical thinking skills are infused into the designed course. The infusion approach aims to develop students’ ability to recognize and use the infused skills of critical thinking, deepen their understanding of learning content and make connections between both (McGuinness, 2006; Sheehy, 2008), which consequently leads to embedding the teaching of critical thinking not only into this study but into other subjects so these skills permeate all aspects of student’s academic life (Dewey & Bento, 2009). Infusion can be subject-specific or may be developed on a wider scale across the curriculum (McGuinness, 2006); however, by infusing critical thinking into the curriculum, students’ understanding and thinking about a topic happened simultaneously, as Hatcher (1999) suggests that courses that

integrate the instruction of critical thinking and language skills are more effective than a standard stand-alone course of either critical thinking or languages. Thus, the learning content and thinking skills are taught and learnt together (Swartz & Parks, 1994). The infusion approach is applied as a good strategy for adult students, as they have the ability to identify common thinking patterns, so they take advantage of it and deepen their understanding (McGuinness, et al. 2006). In this study, the infusion approach is applied for the purpose of developing the students' comprehensive understanding of critical thinking based on Paul and Elder's (2001) three-dimensional critical thinking model (as shown in table 1). Response journals, worksheets and checklists are carefully designed and used throughout the course in order to infuse critical thinking into the four skills of language, reading, writing, listening and speaking to ensure an immersed learning and practice of critical thinking during the course.

**Table 1.**

*Paul & Elder's Elements of Thoughts, Intellectual Standards and Intellectual Traits (2019)*

<b>Elements of thought</b>	<b>Intellectual standards</b>	<b>Intellectual traits</b>
• Purpose	• Clarity	• Fair-mindedness
• Information	• Precision	• Intellectual courage
• Interpretation and inference	• Relevance	• Intellectual empathy
• Concepts	• Depth	• Intellectual integrity
• Assumptions	• Breadth	• Intellectual perseverance
• Implications and consequences	• Logic	• Confidence in reason
• Point of view	• Significance	• Intellectual autonomy
	• Fairness	

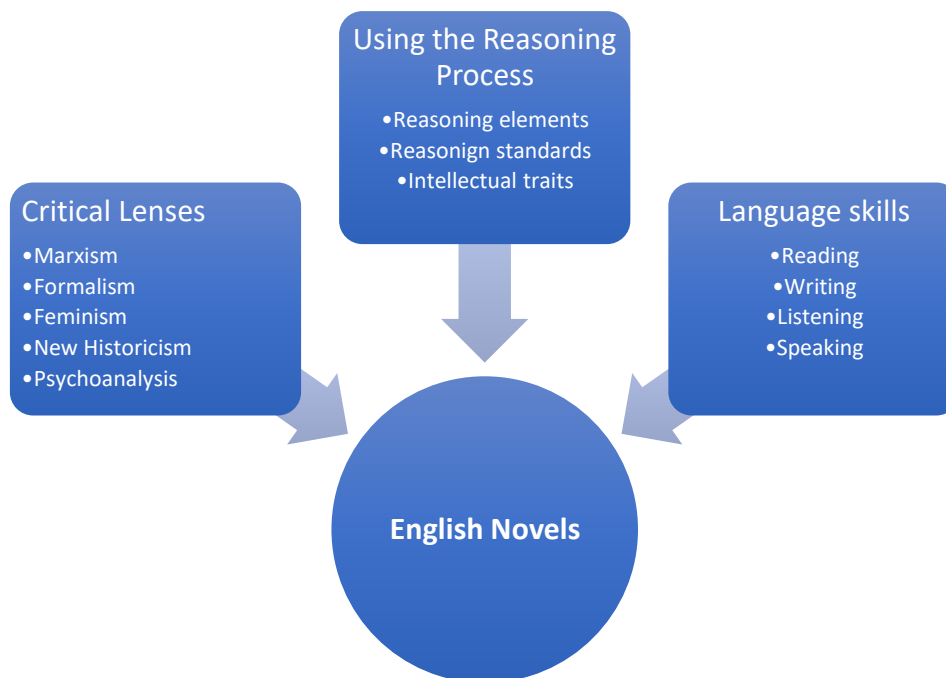
### **The Intervention (Designed Course) Structure**

This study seeks the possibility of improving students' English language skills and critical thinking competence in one course, the learning content is sourced from English literature, supporting McPeck's (1990) statement that when students think critically, they need something to think critically about. Several considerations have been made when designing the course, mainly choosing the literary works as "[literature] not only illustrates and reflects the culture from which it comes, but it also gives us insights into the reasoning and belief systems of people whose outlooks and life experiences may be far different from our own" (McPeck,1990, p.84). Choosing English novel genre is because these literary texts are authentic and offer the language of the real world which is richer and more varied. This genre also facilitates developing student-centered learning, since they provide the plot, characters, the context of settings all of which contribute to the engagement of students, regardless of specific proficiency levels, grammatical charts or writing exercises (Garies et al., 2009).

As seen in figure 1, the intervention is operationalized through the teaching of the critical lenses, the reasoning elements and standards, and the language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The five levels of critical thinking by Paul and Elder are infused into this course to foster in students the ability to read a text critically, write their answers and reflections on what they read and finally formulate disciplined and profound conversations. Using different critical lenses enriches students' experience to practice thinking within different viewpoints.

### **Figure 1**

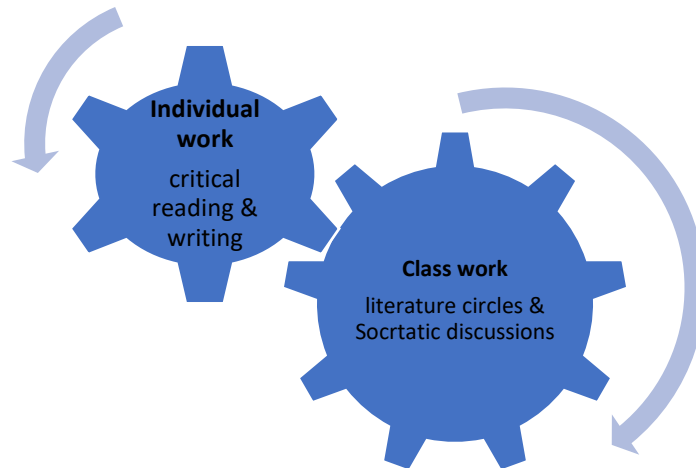
*The Intervention Framework*



The ten-week course is entitled *Critical Thinking for Studying English Novels*, it utilizes two complementary phases that aim to create a learning setting for students that would foster their critical thinking and improve language skills, (see figure 2). The first phase reinforces their reading and writing abilities; while the second emphasizes involving them in critical thinking discussions in which they enhance their listening and speaking skills. This cyclical process of the first and second phases over the course is the crux of this research; the steps are repeated in sequence as work progresses, creating an upward spiral of improved practice. These two phases require different tasks and techniques to be accomplished during the two phases, which are built on the previously mentioned educational approaches: the infusion and constructivism. The first phase is based on individual work, which requires close reading and substantive writing, and the second phase is based on group work, in which active listening and speaking are practiced in two different types of groups.

### **Figure 2**

*The Two Cyclical Complimentary Phases of the Intervention*



After signing the participation consents, completing the pre-test and filling in the pre study questionnaire by the participants, the course starts with an orientation, in which the students are introduced and familiarized with the course content and activities, and are supplied with course materials, including the two novels, the response journal and the critical thinking booklets, which are the main and essential component of this research as they include an overview of the critical thinking theory employed in the study, the critical lenses used to explore the selected literary texts, and a set of varying higher order thinking questions, as shown in following:

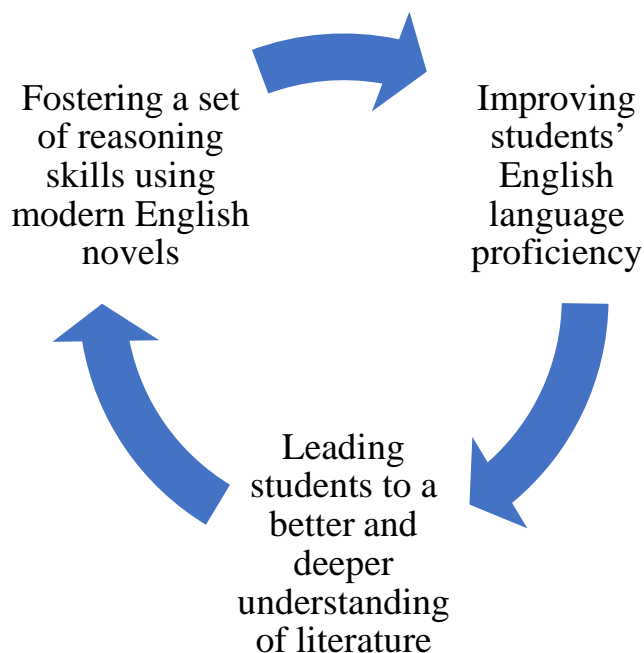
- Paul-Elder Reasoning Theory
  - Introduction to the reasoning theory
  - Elements of intellectual reasoning
  - Standards of intellectual reasoning
  - Traits of Critical thinkers
- Critical Lenses
  - Introduction to Critical Lenses
  - Looking at the novels through different lenses
    - The Marxist Lens
    - The Psychoanalytic Lens
    - The New Historicism Lens
    - The Feminist Lens
    - The Formalist Lens

In the orientation, the students are introduced to all components of the course in details: the critical thinking theory, namely Paul and Elder's reasoning elements, reasoning standards and traits of critical thinkers. Then, they are introduced to the learning techniques applied throughout the study, which include critical reading and writing, literature circles and Socratic discussion. Some examples on Youtube are presented to ensure that students understand these techniques. Finally, they are briefly introduced to the critical lenses applied in the course. This orientation is conducted to ensure that the students know what they are committing throughout course and to answer all their questions.

For the following weeks, students are asked to work on two novels, namely *Animal Farm* by George Orwell and *The House on the Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, they read every week a specific page count/chapter pre class and discuss them in the literature circles and Socratic discussions, this process last for ten weeks. Three main aims are sought to be achieved in this course as shown in figure.

### Figure 3

*The Main Aim to be Achieved in the Intervention*



These aims reinforce one another and lead to a life-long learning. However, the other two aims, improving language skills and better understanding learning content, are heavily based on the reasoning skills. The reasoning skills are adapted from the Universal Elements and Standards of Reasoning Skills introduced by Richard Paul and Linda Elder (1997).

Paul and Elder define two essential dimensions of thinking that are required in order to foster critical thinking in students. First, students need to be able to identify the parts of their thinking, such as clarity of writing, analysis of the author's argument, use of supporting



information, coherent organization and finally proper grammar and syntax. Second, students need to be able to assess their use of these parts of thinking, Paul and Elder manifest eight elements of reasoning, which, according to them, are universal because they are present in all reasoning of all subjects in all cultures for all time, which are manifested as the following: (1) All reasoning has a purpose. (2) All reasoning is an attempt to figure something out, to settle some question, to solve some problem. (3) All reasoning is based on assumptions. (4) All reasoning is done from some point of view. (5) All reasoning is based on data, information, and evidence. (6) All reasoning is expressed through and shaped by concepts and ideas. (7) All reasoning contains inferences by which we draw conclusions and give meaning to data. (8) All reasoning leads somewhere, has implications and consequences (1997). These points have been adopted as they definitely lead to a proper and reasonable evaluation of students' ability of good reasoning. Hence, these skills are manifested and practiced during the course by using different tools and techniques. The instructor does not only have to assess students' ability to use these skills but also to evaluate how well they can use them. Through practice, the aim of these course is to consolidate the framework espoused by Paul and Elder, utilizing their concept of critical reading to enable students to engage with literature as a means of analyzing the thoughts of the authors as well as their own as an attempt to foster critical reflection in their writing. As Freire and Macedo state, reading should not be “just to walk on the words” or “flying over the words,” it is re-writing what students read, it refers to the process of discovering the connections between the text, and the context of the text, and also how to connect the text/context with readers' context (1987, p.11).

***Phase 1. Close Reading and Substantive Writing***

Extensive reading before class meetings not only well prepares and motivates students but also increases their confidence throughout the learning process. Prior each class meeting, students are required to complete a set of tasks, namely reading the short summary of the applied critical lens, and reading assigned pages of the novel applying the critical reading techniques. The students have also to prepare their notes for their roles in the literature circles and finally answerer the questions in the response journals.

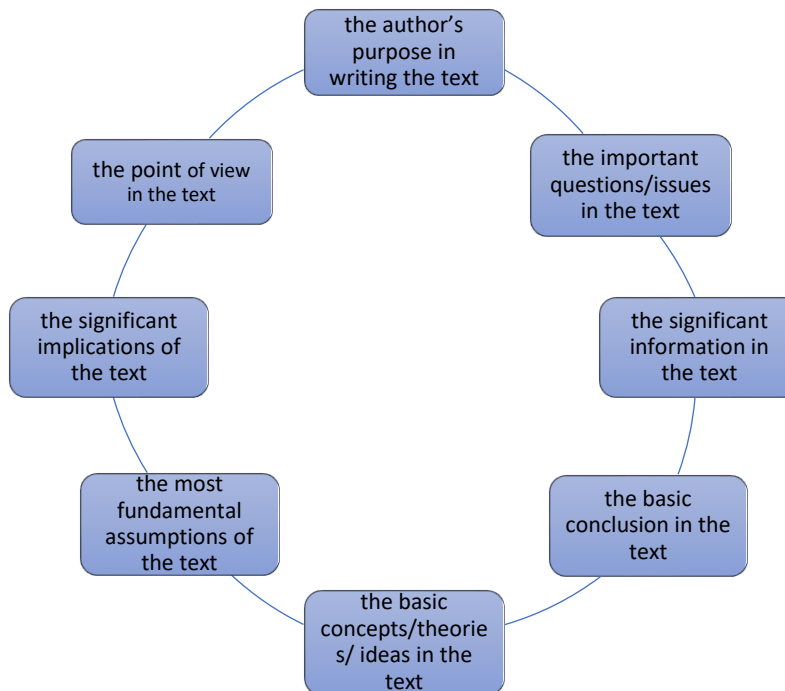
Theses tasks aim to cultivate students' critical thinking by practicing close reading and substantive writing techniques founded by Paul and Elder (2019). Paul and Elder emphasize the intimate relationship between thinking, reading and writing, "any significant deficiency in reading entails a parallel deficiency in writing. Any significant deficiency in writing entails parallel deficiency in reading." (Paul & Elder, 2019, p. 11- 19); these two skills go hand-in-hand in order to learn and deepen understanding of new ideas, and to correct conceptual misunderstandings. Therefore, students at this level have to distinguish clear texts from vague ones in order to be able later to formulate significant and clear pieces of writing, they also have to realize that "there is a significant difference between reading closely (and hence being able to say accurately and precisely what is said in a text) and reading superficially (and hence being able merely to express a vague, and often erroneous, facsimile of what is said in a text)... [and a] difference between writing that is merely fluent (but says nothing worth saying) and writing that is substantial (that says something important). In critical reading students should actively reconstruct author's meanings and words accurately and precisely. In critical writing students should actively construct their own ideas in clear and precise language; thus the focus is not only on the writing style but also on the substance. They, in other words, realize the difference between "style" and "substance" and understand the theory behind close reading and substantive

writing (Paul & Elder, 2019, p.11). Both skills require critical thinking skills to be accomplished successfully.

Saying that, Paul and Elder (2006) define five levels of critical reading and writing, or as they call them close reading and substantive writing. In this study, students practice the first three levels individually in the first phase, which are: (1) Paraphrasing: this level includes paraphrasing the text sentence by sentence, then stating in one's own words the meaning of each sentence as they read. (2) Explicating: in this level students explicate the thesis of a paragraph by stating the main points of each paragraph they read in one or two sentences, then elaborate on what they have paraphrased and give examples of the meaning by linking it to real life situations and experiences. Last, (3) Analyzing the logic of the text: as students read, they are encouraged to use the elements of reasoning, which are the purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications and points of view, in order to raise their reading ability to a higher level. Thus, the students have to define the points shown below.

**Figure 4**

*The Basic Reasoning Elements of Paul and Elder (2006)*



Students practice close reading and substantive writing by applying different critical lenses to the texts. A critical lens is a critical theory applied to reading a literary text, such as Marxism, Feminism and New Historicism. These lenses help students to explore different viewpoints and ideas and have different readings of the same novels by looking at it from different perspectives. Wilson emphasizes the impact of critical lenses in cultivating students' critical thinking, "these lenses provide the driving questions and the language to challenge readers' assumptions, [...] and offers a framework for teaching critical literacy" (2014, p. 73). Thus, these lenses enable students to evaluate and perceive the novels from multiple perspectives and contribute in developing their critical thinking. The thing that offers students more confidence about developing their own understanding and judgments and sharpen their general interpretive, analytic, and evaluative skills. Every week a critical lens from the following is introduced and applied when performing the reading and writing tasks: the Marxist, Feminist, Formalist, New Historical and Psychoanalyst lens.

**Response journals.** Response journals offer individualized instruction to the students as each student has different characteristics, background, and needs (Recker, Ram, Shikano, Li, & Stasko, 1995), this tool aims to assess what has been taught has been learnt with keeping these differences in mind in order to meet the different needs of individual learners” (Wang & Walberg, 1983, p. 603). In order to overcome the challenge of how to incorporate individualized assessment for each student without time-consuming of the classes, the current study seeks to achieve a practical and effective form of individualized teaching and learning through designing response journals in which students answer various types of questions and receive individualized feedback on their thinking skills and language performance. Thus, as a follow up exercise, the students have regular writing tasks to complete in the response journals. Nunan (1992) states that diaries and journals are effective tools that provide insights into the learning process. In this course the response journals are included as a tool for the students to assess their critical thinking and writing abilities, supporting Ruddock’s (2008) view that such a tool derives great educational benefits through increased understanding of students’ assessment in these journals. Students answer pre-designed questions in which they practice Paul’s (2019) substantive writing techniques and are assessed using his critical thinking rubric in addition to an English language writing proficiency rubric. Many students are unaware of how they are doing and what exactly it is that they need to do to improve their academic level. Students are provided with the scaffolding they need to advance from one level to another and thus to attain a deeper understanding of the novels they read, as the questions in these journals aim to gradually improve students’ writing level starting with paraphrasing and explicating what they read to more advanced levels where they analyze and evaluate the thinking of the authors. Students’ answers to the evaluation and inferences questions in the response journals are used later for

class discussion, as these answers play motivating and effective roles in engaging students in critical thinking discussions in the classroom. By answering these different types of questions, students do not practice and be able to answer questions about the selected novel only; they also develop skills that enable them to read and evaluate other literary works independently without external resources or guidance.

Response journals are central in this course for fostering and developing critical thinking skills as writing is the most skills that enables students to reflect. The instructor's feedback help students to know and understand what they need to do to improve their abilities. Similarly, it is effective for the instructor to know how well students are doing and guide them to remedy any gaps in learning by offering constructive feedback that helps to modify their work. As writing is the most needed skill for student's academic attainment, these journals guide them how to think deeply and write substantively. The instructor's role in these journals supports Li's argument (2011), who emphasizes the role of teachers in finding a fruitful space for learning through thinking. The response journals enable the instructor to closely observe students thinking and language progress and, in fact, this is one aim is looked forward to achieving in this study. Indeed, finding such a space for all the students to practice the learning content and receive feedback on their thoughts and language help the instructor to determine their various levels, their progress in content learning, their perception of critical thinking in addition to their writing ability. The linguistics mistakes are pointed out using the writing rubric agreed on with the students; for instance, the instructor asks for more details for the incomplete or unclear answers in order to give students a chance for self- correction and evaluation. At the same time, prepares regular reports on students' development throughout the course. Consequently, this helps to assess each student individually according to their output. These journals offer the

instructor a different way of working with students in which he/she observe students' learning development while addressing the issue of variance in students' abilities. These journals aim to engage students in their own assessment and enable them to have a clear understanding of the learning objectives and recognize their learning outcomes (Donaldson, 2015). The employment of differentiated instruction enables the instructor to minister to a wide range of abilities ranging from less able students who need of extensive support and guidance to the able ones who need further refinement of their skills (Pham, 2019).

***Phase 2. Active listening and Collaborative speaking through Literature Circles and Socratic Discussions***

This intervention emphasizes the notion of participatory, that learning is a well-scaffolded interaction process in which student-centered discussions and dialogues are necessary for fostering creative and critical thinking rather than a 'teach to the test' (Thompson, 2012). For students to be good critical thinkers they have to, in addition to close reading and substantive writing, involve in deep discussions about the learning content. Wells (1999) argues that thinking when verbalized and shared among others becomes a knowledge object, to which they can respond in various ways by extending, questioning, or agreeing or rejecting it. Schleppegrell also states that "language is learned through engagement in activities that enable participants to use the language resources they have in interaction" (2013, p.154). Several researches inform that English language student enhance their critical thinking through oral discussions and sharing or expressing opinions (Alagozlu, 2007; Chapple & Curtis, 2000; Davidson & Dunham, 1997). Wang (2009) finds out that students require opportunities to express their individual experiences in order to develop the skills of organizing thoughts and engaging in critical reflection. Bean (2011) lists a variety of ways to infuse and teach critical thinking, including whole-class

discussions and in-class debate, which aim not only at creating a collaborative and authentic context-based learning environment, but also at converting students from passive to active learners. Peterson (2009) and Golding (2011) also propose an application of Richard Paul's (1995) Socratic discussion, a systematic and multifaceted discussions that focus on and address different issues or problems in the learning content (Paul & Elder, 2007). Such studies have suggested that critical thinking can be enhanced through English listening and speaking activities, the potential for this intervention lies in examining the effectiveness of integrating critical thinking into the listening and speaking skills instruction and examine the improvement of students' critical thinking performance while dealing with literary works.

Hence, using critical reading and writing skills and techniques makes students well prepared for cooperative and collaborative classwork, which is the second phase of the course. As prior the meetings students practice the first three levels of Paul and Elder's critical thinking theory individually, in class they practice the last two: evaluation and role-playing, in these two levels, students learn how to assess or evaluate their own thinking and understanding and their peers' using the intellectual standards and elements. This phase is mainly based on literature circles and Socratic discussions, where the focus is primarily on interactive and collaborative discussions among the students supporting many researchers' claims that fruitful discussions and dialogues play a great role in teaching language and learning content and harness students' ability and confidence to speak and participate in class as their participation is the production of their own knowledge. (Skidmore 2006; Simpson, 2015; Sutherland, 2015; Wegerif, 2005) Further, these discussions create a relaxing learning environment in which the students are encouraged to get a deeper understanding of literature, to relate it to their life experiences and to



construct their knowledge with each other; it is in fact their opportunity to learn how to critique works of art.

The class meetings last for 120 minutes that are divided into two parts. In the first hour students practice speaking and listening in small groups, namely literature circles, while in the last hour the whole class participate in Socratic discussions. As mentioned above, these two techniques are aimed to overcome the three obstacles students face with English speaking skills, as proposed by Yang (2012): lack of authenticity, lack of a student-centered approach, and large variance in learner proficiency and background; overcoming these challenges contributes in developing students' critical thinking skills as the students have the time and courage to question, to critically challenge and reflect on each other's comments; in these discussions the students experience for themselves how dialogue encourages learning and aids knowledge construction (Barnes, 2010) and is therefore the key to the formation of an engaged and interactive classroom instead of learning by passively listening to lecturers.

The first hour is allocated for literature circles, a learning technique that is used as a constructivist tool. This technique was found by Daniels (2002) and refers to discussion groups where students make sense, discuss and develop their understanding of literary works through social interaction. Daniels (2002) defines literature circles:

Literature circles are small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book. While reading each group-determined portion of the text, each member prepares to take specific responsibilities in the upcoming discussion, and everyone comes to the group with notes needed to help perform that job. The circles have regular meetings, with discussion roles rotating each session. When they finish a book, the circle members plan a way to share highlights of their reading with the wider

community; then they trade members with other finishing groups, select more reading, and move into a new cycle. Once readers can successfully conduct their own wide-ranging, self-sustaining discussions, formal discussion roles may be dropped (p. 13).

This technique is applied to engage students in meaningful groups discussions, in which they apply and use the knowledge and information they have built prior the meeting as part of the learning process as well as to reinforce the social aspect of their learning. Therefore, instead of delivering content by lecturing and talking to students, literature circles facilitate collaborative learning (Pitton, 2005) and emphasize students' engagement in discussions and exchange of ideas with their peers in order to reach more comprehensive understanding and judgment of the literary works (Mezirow, 2007). Thus, this technique "involves students in the learning process" (Malik & Malik, 2012, p. 198) by running interactive discussions that allows extended turns for students to speak and helps "students to see the relevance of their learning" (Malik & Malik, 2012, p. 200), they have a realistic context that allows them to connect theory to application as they address their tasks together, and listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints and build on their own and each others' ideas and construct them into meaningful and well-thoughts knowledge; students express their thoughts and ideas freely without fear of embarrassment over wrong answers; and they help each other to reach common understandings, they also enable students to develop their own viewpoints and ideas and support or reject previously adopted ideas based on the discussions with their peers (Ketch, 2005).

Literature circles, as best described by Schleppegrell as a purposeful interaction and participation support students' language development (2013), they in addition to developing students' critical thinking, improve their literacy skills and help them to cope with common challenges they usually face in classes, such as when attempting to speak in English but lack

adequate competence. Schlick and Johnson (1999) emphasize the role of literature circles in enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of what they read through structured discussion and extended written and artistic responses. This technique can help students of all ability levels and language backgrounds to engage in learning (Christie, 2002; Hammond and Gibbons, 2005; Jones, 2010), it aims to engage and encourage students to participate with keeping differentiation in mind that no student is left behind. Thus, these circles aim to enhance students' critical thinking and reflection, and offer them the chance to have disciplined discussions (Adler, 1984), through creating collective responsibility and individual accountability (William, 2016), these two factors combined together lead to best learning outcomes.

The structure of Literature Circles depends on roles, which guide students to take up ways of interrogating a text from different perspectives. In this course five roles for literature circles from Daniel's literature circles model (2002) are adapted and adopted, Daniel identifies the first three as basic, and the last two as optional. These roles vary in their challenging intensity and this serves in involving less able students with simple roles at the beginning, some of them aligns with Paul's tips for critical reading. These roles are adopted in order to fully serve the purposes of this study in promoting students' critical thinking and language skills at the same time. The roles are:

1. Discussion Director: prepares a list of questions that focus on big ideas to be discussed with the group.
2. Connector: finds examples that elaborate the paragraph and makes connections between the novel and the real-world experiences, events and feelings.

3. Vocabulary Enricher: looks for new words in the novel which are puzzling, challenging or unfamiliar and look up their definitions in the dictionary. This role entails the first level of critical reading that is understanding each sentence separately.
4. Group checker: checks other members' participations, encourages them to speak and prepares a report on how the discussion goes on.
5. Summarizer: prepares a shorts summary with a focus on the important parts and the key points of the novel which summarize the novel, which is the second step of critical reading.

The second hour is allocated for Socratic discussions. According to Freire, the transition from naive to critical consciousness involves an 'active, dialogic educational programmes, where learners are actively involved in formulating critical analyses, and generating scenarios of alternate ways of being in the world (1973). Socratic discussions replace traditional lectures in which lecturers talk almost all the time, giving the students the opportunity to practice asking pertinent questions as an essential tool for learning and communication that aims to probe "the meaning, justification, or logical strength of a claim, position, or line of reasoning" (Paul & Elder, 2014, p.431). Students, instead of memorizing details and information, they question, organize, interpret, synthesize and digest what they study. Students read the material and responded to the texts using the critical lens framework. The purpose of the Socratic discussions is to engage the students in critical thinking as they explore different critical lenses and to apply the reasoning elements and standards as they develop their discussions.

The Socratic discussions in this course are mainly based on critical lenses. The students participate in conversations that examine the various issues represented by these lenses such as social status, identity, social classes and gender. These discussions provide opportunities for the

students to assume different critical stances and discover their own voices, exposing students into multiple perspectives is an important aspect of enhancing their critical thinking because it teaches students that texts can have multiple meanings based on various viewpoints, beliefs, and values. The discussions start with one or two students read their responses to a higher order thinking questions from the response journals aloud to their classmates, which are based on the reasoning elements; they are supposed to state their views using the reasoning elements such as point of view, information, assumptions and conclusions while others comment on them using the reasoning standards (Paul & Elder, 2014); so while reading aloud, other students prepare a list of questions, that mainly explore clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, significance, depth, breadth, logic, and fairness of what they listen to; in fact, offering students the opportunity to ask questions using critical thinking elements and standards enable them to dig deeply into what and why others believe so, and they begin to experience greater command of their own thinking as well as the thinking of others. Thus, these class discussions aim to help students better acquire understanding of multiple viewpoints of the novels and assess them in using the intellectual standards.

Therefore, Socratic discussions technique is a very effective way to test students' actual understanding (Paul & Elder, 2019). When students role-play an author or critic's viewpoints, they attempt to put themselves in their shoes and discuss any questions they have about the text by adopting his or her voice; In the Socratic discussions, the students are asked to examine various critical lenses in the assigned novels and to reflect on how they are represented in the works. Therefore, in these discussions students openly reflect on how they come to think the way they do about different concepts and issues in the novels, explain how they support their thinking using reasoning, evidence, and assumptions. Students collaboratively identify and analyse key

concepts in the various critical lenses, thus advancing individual learning whilst enabling scaffolding to take place. These discussions allow students to learn from each other, encourage them to evaluate texts from multiple perspectives and reinforce the importance of dialogue and discussion in critical thinking and foster critical thinkers' traits in students.

Paul and Elder (2019) state that some students might adhere to some standards while ignoring others; hence, in every meeting the following set of questions is presented on the board to reinforce the critical thinking elements and standards in students and to help them formulate their questions and inquiries: (1) Does the author clearly state her meaning, or is the text vague or confused in some way? (2) Is the author accurate in what she claims? (3) Is the author sufficiently precise in providing details and specifics when specifics are relevant? (4) Does the author introduce irrelevant material, thereby wandering from her purpose? (5) Does the author take us into the important complexities inherent in the subject, or is the writing superficial? (6) Does the author consider other relevant points of view, or is the writing overly narrow in its perspective? (7) Is the text internally consistent, or does the text contain unexplained contradictions? (8) Is the text significant, or is the subject dealt with in a trivial manner? (9) Does the author display fairness, or does the author take a one-sided, narrow approach? (Paul & Elder, 2019). Paul and Elder clarify that an author might state his thoughts clearly but fail to support them with accurate information or uses accurate information but fails to think through the complexities of the issue, or he might give logical argument but not significant and so forth (2019).

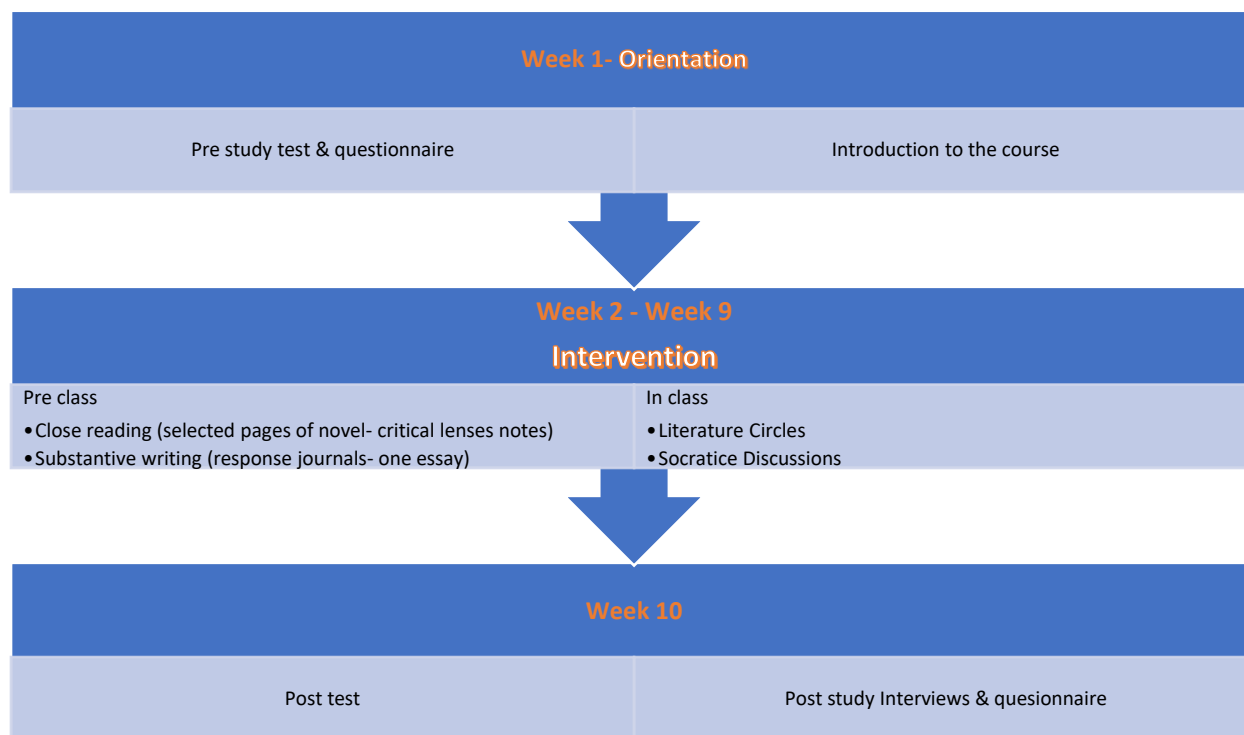
Week ten is devoted for investigating the effectiveness of the intervention by identifying any change in the students' critical thinking skills and language abilities through conducting the post test, post-questionnaire, and interviews. In this intervention, the students work alone and in

groups to practice the critical thinking skills along focusing on their language skills through a series of exercises and assignments in order to prepare for their final written work; as an end of term project, the students have a posttest, in which they critique selected passages from a literary work of their choice and interpreted it from their own perspective using the reasoning elements and standards. The posttest is not based on the novels studied during the course but on new ones to examine their ability to use critical skills and articulate their personal views without prior discussions or guidance.

In conclusion, the use of the infusion and the constructivist approaches are meant to achieve the goals of this course: to infuse Paul's reasoning elements and standards to the learning process of the novels with keeping critical thinkers' traits in mind, and to engage students in discussions with their peers about various issues through the use of literature circles and Socratic dialogues. Keeping students motivated and engaged is the core factor underlying this course because their motivation and interest in what they are learning are crucial factors in achieving success in content and in enhancing critical thinking (Grabe & Stoller, 1997); another factor is that no student is left behind, all students are involved in the learning process, through which they get a personal sense of whether they have really absorbed the core meanings of the learning content or not. The instructor's role is to analyze and assess the response journals in terms of their language efficiency and reasoning ability in accordance with Paul's critical writing rubric (2019). In addition, the during literature circles and Socratic discussions her role is to facilitate and observe students' discussions with no direct participation, her assessment role appears only in post discussions critiques where she points out what was done well and what needs improvement. Figure 5 summarizes the intervention design:

**Figure 5**

*The Research Design of the Intervention (the designed course)*



### **Setting & Sample**

This study was conducted at a private university, in the Department of English Language and Literature, where the researcher taught the course during a summer semester for a period of twelve weeks. As it is a private university the classes are not overcrowded; the number of students in courses is approximately 15-35. All the undergraduate students in the program are females, enrolled full-time, and are residents of Jeddah city, Saudi Arabia. The sample for the current study included thirty undergraduates. The course was voluntary for the participants, but the enrollment is contingent on the completion of the five levels of general English courses; thus the level of all the students was upper-intermediate as they had already had five semesters of pure English courses by the start of the course. The participants were all Arab undergraduate students in their fourth (last) year, who were considered a particularly attractive sample for the



current study as they were nearing the end of their program and were in the best position to contrast their experience in the intervention to that of other current and previous courses in their program. None of the students had attended an English course abroad or lived in an English-speaking country. This precaution was taken to make the data homogenous. The ethical consent forms were also considered and obtained from the participants. As well, ethics permission was sought and gained from the university and appropriate department of English language and literature studies.

### **Data Collection**

The mixed methods approach is selected for collecting data as counted for its capacity to capture the deepest level of understanding and accurate representation of the study (Stake, 1995). Although no control group is used, the one-group pretest–posttest design enables controlling many variables wherein the effect of the intervention is measured as the changes of dependent variable before and after the intervention. The tools used in this study for collecting data are the following:

#### ***Pre-test & Post-test***

The pre-test and post-test aim to measure the improvement in students' writing before and after the employment of the intervention, and to see whether the skills of critical thinking applied in this course have impacted the students' performance in writing. These tests are assessed in terms of students' language use and critical analysis: The language skills are assessed by meeting 3 essential criteria: (1) correct essay structure, (2) free of grammar mistakes and use a wide range of relevant terminology and (3) correct in-text citation and referencing. In addition, a rubric set by Paul and Elder (2019) is adopted to measure students' reasoning skills in terms of clarity, accuracy, precision and well exemplification (Appendix E). Students' performance was scored in

both the reasoning and language rubrics according to a 10-point scale: 0-2 points for unacceptable (unskilled) writing; 3-4 point for poor (minimally skilled) writing; 5-6 points for mixed level writing (beginning skills); 7-8 points for commendable writing (skilled); and 9-10 points for fully meeting the criterion that is excellent and highly skilled writing. A t-test is then done to determine if there is a significant difference between the writing level of the pre-test and post-test. Pretests and posttests are held during the first two and last two weeks of the course.

### ***Questionnaires & Interviews***

Two questionnaires and in-depth interviews are conducted in this study to investigate the participants' perception of the intervention and to take into consideration their awareness of their learning process and learning improvement, because their attitudes and perception play a crucial factor for building an understanding of and improving the teaching and learning process (Derakhshan et al., 2015; Chalak & Kassaian, 2010). These tools are important as they collect subjective feedback from the participants about the effectiveness of the intervention compared to their previous courses and learning styles, and hence help in determining the participants' needs, and challenges and other issues that can play an important role improving this intervention, as stated by Wasti (2016) that students' choice is considered central to successful learning.

**Questionnaires.** The participants fill in two questionnaires. They are conducted during the first and last weeks of the course for collecting subjective feedback from the students. The pre-study questionnaire is distributed before the course starts, it aims to collect some demographic information and educational background on the participants, and it investigates their critical thinking knowledge in order to understand their views and knowledge about critical thinking and what they believe it is, and their current level of English (Appendix F).

The post study questionnaire investigates the participants' perceptions about the intervention. This questionnaire includes 5 sub-sections that explore the participants' overall perception of the intervention in terms of fostering their critical thinking skills, developing their language competency, applying a constructivist teaching and learning approach and its impact on their participation and motivation, namely their attitude of implementing literature circles and response journals, and finally, the new constructivist role of the instructor. A 5-point Likert scale is used for the 44 items in the questionnaire by indicating whether they *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, *strongly disagree*, or are *neutral* about the questionnaire items (Appendix F).

The questionnaires are designed by the researcher. In order to check their validity, a group of Ph.D holders were asked to evaluate the questionnaire items and provided their comments and suggestions and a final draft was written accordingly; then Cronbach alpha is performed in order to check the reliability and the overall reliability ranged from (0.92) to (0.97), which revealed good reliability.

**In-depth Interviews.** In order to enrich the data collected from the pre-determined responses of the questionnaires, in-depth interviews are conducted. This tool is best described by Kahn and Cannell as "a conversation with a purpose" (1957, p.149). In these interviews the researcher aims to uncover the participants' reflection on the intervention, as they allow the researcher to probe reflective responses by asking for more elaboration on their learning experience in the intervention, that would replace the current traditional teaching and learning approaches. Thus, in these interviews "the participants assume more power over the content of the conversation" (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, p.9) and offer the researcher access to the participants' thoughts and attitudes in their own words rather than the words of the researcher (Reinharz, 1992).

Due to the small number of participants in this study, all the participants are interviewed in order to ascertain how useful the intervention is and investigate any differences between the students who have made the most significant improvement in their critical thinking and language skills, and those who would make the least improvement. Their responses are used to triangulate the data and confirm results.

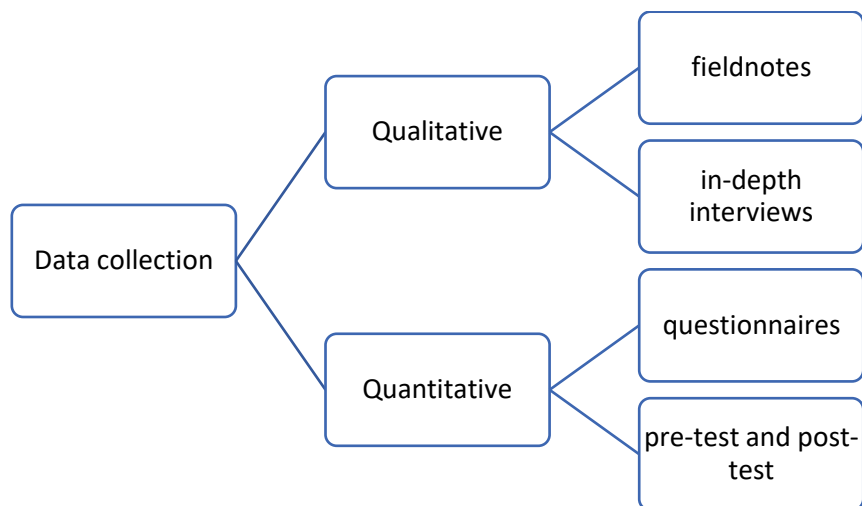
### ***Field-notes***

The observational records taken in intervention settings are referred to as *field notes*. This qualitative tool entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for a study (Marshall, 2006). In this study, the researcher takes a holistic and detailed description of the events and the participants' behavior during the classes, records non-judgmental notes and describes the learning process concretely (Marshall & Rossman, 2006); these regular, detailed and precise fieldnotes are taken to check the effectiveness of the intervention in achieving its purpose. The researcher observes and records students' interaction, progress and involvement, and consequently to what extent the intervention has succeeded to stimulate students' learning. The fieldnotes are a purposeful and effective tool that helps in evaluating classroom practice including students' engagement and participation in order to bolster the results of other tools. Audio recordings of the meetings are used to verify the researcher' field notes, when necessary in order to avoid any incomplete, over simplified or subjective notes. Supporting Bertrand et al's (1992) argument that field notes should not be used alone in order to get more reliable data and avoid and bias. Students' talks and discussions are recorded to more accurately measure students' participation in the class discussion, mainly to observe their listening and speaking during classes. This tool is used to support the fieldnotes taken by researcher. Consent is obtained by the participants.

As shown in figure 6, different but complementary data is collected for a better understanding and more reliable and validated results, “even though both Qual and Quan data are gathered in the study; there is no true integration of the information” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 142).

**Figure 6**

*Data Collection Tools for the Intervention*



### **Validity and Reliability**

A triangulation mixed methods design was used in the study and it is a type of design in which different but complementary data were collected on the same topic. In this study, quantitative instruments were used to test the overall perception of the participants and their critical thinking and language skills improvement. Concurrent with this data collection, qualitative phase included the intervention that is designed and conducted by the researcher, a PhD candidate specializing in infusing critical thinking in English language and literature education, with 8-year experience as an EFL instructor. She successfully completed 40 training hour course: “How to Infuse Critical Thinking into Instruction” with The Foundation of Critical

Thinking prior to this study. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data is to bring together the strengths of both forms of research to compare results and validate results.

### **Limitations of the Design**

The major limitation of this design is that it lacks a control group, as the intervention is unique and its length and conditions are not similar to other courses. This can limit the generalizability of the course results to a larger population. Another limitation is that participants are not randomly assigned, as they are volunteers and for different reasons a small were interested in joining the course. Hence, this means that there might be other factors beyond the control of the researcher which might influenced the results.

### **Challenges**

There were some expected challenges in this study. First, the students' prior learning style, which is teacher-centered, sometimes discouraged some students from actively asking questions, expressing personal opinions, or evaluating the received information. Consequently, they were less expressive and confident and were not as reflective as their partners, and could not connect the events or contradictions in the texts to their personal lives. Another expected challenge was students' lack of proficiency in English because they learnt English as a second language, insufficient English proficiency and lack of confidence in using English deter the students from expressing themselves freely (Lun, Fischer & Ward, 2010). To avoid this challenge, students were provided with all information about the course learning materials in simplified English to clearly understand the content.

## Chapter IV

### Results & Discussion

#### Introduction

This chapter seeks to achieve two aims: report on the findings of the study, and comment on these findings based on the mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) treatment in relation to each of the research questions. As explained in the previous chapter, the current study adopted a quasi-experimental design; only one incorporated group was exposed to the proposed course. As a mixed method approach, a number of different data collection instruments were implemented for the sake of triangulation in order to better identify any significance of the study by comparing the data prior to and following the implementation of the proposed treatment. The collected data consisted of pre and posttests, pre and post intervention questionnaires, interviews, and field notes. Strengthened by triangulation these data examine the effectiveness of utilizing the proposed course in enhancing critical thinking and English language competence, on the part of fourth-year university students residing in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who are specializing in English major. Tables and figures are used to represent the findings. Conclusions, recommendations, and implications are all discussed in next chapter.

The research questions and tools used to answer these questions are all listed in the table below:

**Table 2**

*The Implemented Research Questions & Tools*

Research Questions	Skill	Tools
<b>1. Does implementing critical thinking</b>	A. Critical thinking for substantive ReadingWriting?	Pre/Posttests

<b>skills in studying literature affect</b>		Response
<b>students' comprehension of literature</b>	B. Critical thinking for	journals report
<b>and improve students' productive</b>	meaningful	
<b>language skills?</b>	Listening/Speaking?	Field notes
<b>2. What is the participants' perception of the intervention?</b>	<p>A. The positive impact of this intervention in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>enhancing critical thinking</i></li> <li>• <i>improving the English language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)</i></li> <li>• <i>better understanding of literature</i></li> <li>• <i>the teaching and learning style?</i></li> <li>• <i>the instructor's role?</i></li> </ul> <p>B. The negative sides of this intervention: <i>compared with the traditional language and/or literature classes</i></p>	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Questionnaires</p>

## Findings & Discussions

### Critical Thinking for Substantive Writing

#### *Pre-Posttests*

To answer the first sub question in the first research question, pre- and post- intervention tests were conducted to compare each student's achievement on the pre- and post-tests. A T-test of students' writing in both tests was done to compare students' improvement in critical and substantive writing. In light of Witte and Faigley's assertion (1981) that the quality of writing should be evaluated according to features of the text that extend across sentence boundaries. The



proposed course guided the students to write far beyond writing traditional assessment, such as producing grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs, cohesion, and coherence; as such an evaluation approach would have been short-sighted.

Following researchers such as Çavdar and Doe (2012) and Franklin, Weinberg and Reifler's (2014), who used rubrics that combined the requirements for writing (essay question, essay components, description, outside sources, postscript, grammar and punctuation, and formatting) and critical thinking (recognition of assumptions, inference/application, and interpretation and evaluation of arguments). Accordingly, the current study combined the linguistic rubric with the reasoning rubric, founded by Paul and Elder (2001), which assesses clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness. Hence, the writing test was evaluated not only by focusing on the students' linguistic competence, but also on their levels of critical thinking; two rubrics were adopted in the test evaluation, one for linguistic competence and the other for the critical thinking ability. The two rubrics mainly evaluate the students' critical thinking skills and their language abilities in composition that measured in five areas (1) clarity of writing, (2) analysis of author's argument, (3) use of supporting information, (4) organization and spelling, and (5) grammar and syntax, (see Appendix E).

Table 3 shows comparison of students' performance in both pre- and post- writing tests. Students' writing performance was analytically assessed in terms of language and reasoning abilities.

### **Table 3**

*Independent Samples T-Test Comparing Students' Performance in the Pre and Post Intervention Writing Tests*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>			<i>Post-test</i>			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Reasoning	30	4.59	1.05	30	7.11	0.68	-8.77	.000
Language	30	6.36	1.26	30	7.56	0.92	-3.35	.000

1. There was a statistically significant difference in reasoning scores between the two tests. The results were,  $t(38) = -8.77$ ,  $p < .00$ , two-tailed in the posttest ( $M = 7.11$ ,  $SD = .68$ ), which is higher than the pre-test ( $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $-2.52$ , 95% CI:  $-3.10$  to  $-1.94$ ) was large (eta squared =  $.67$ )

2. There was also a statistically significant difference in language scores between the two tests:  $t(38) = -3.35$ ,  $p < .00$ , two-tailed with the post-test ( $M = 7.56$ ,  $SD = .92$ ), which is higher than the pre-test ( $M = 6.36$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $-1.19$ , 95% CI:  $-1.91$  to  $-.47$ ) was large (eta squared =  $.23$ ).

The statistical analysis of the two tests shows (1) the low level of the participants before the intervention as most of the students did not match the average score, and (2) a significant improvement in students' critical thinking and writing ability. This is attributed to the acquired skills of critical thinking applied as a learning strategy, which affected students' performance. Thus, the students demonstrated significantly higher performance in the reasoning skills and writing skill in the posttest.

In view of that, it can be argued that the reasoning skills assisted students to deeply read the novels and represent their thoughts of what they read in a skilled way through recognizing the reasoning elements of purpose, clarifying, questioning, summarizing, and connecting important ideas together. The reasoning skills helped the students to classify and organize their

thoughts, data and information, and differentiate between them. This is consistent with the statement that “educators agree that it is essential that students develop such skills while engaged in academic learning because they enable students to engage in purposeful, self-regulatory judgment. Using critical thinking helps students evaluate the arguments of others and their own, resolve conflicts, and come to well- reasoned resolutions to complex problems” (as cited in Behar-Horenstein & Niu, 2011, p. 115). Overall, these students were better able to think more deeply and write substantively, as they demonstrated the acquired ability to analyze the logic of the learning content, its purpose, its main questions, and the information it contains (Paul & Elder, 2007).

Moreover, the posttest results show consistency with Pecorari, who stated that learning to write substantially and comprehensively is an essential component of academic success (2006). Besides, Rigg showed that in order to achieve this level of writing, students should transcend the concept that writing is a tool of demonstrating knowledge to teachers to be a tool for discovering their thinking and understanding (1991). Indeed, some researchers have stated that thinking skills and writing skills go hand in hand and are inseparable (Paul and Elder, 2001; Brown, 2001); therefore, the better students think critically, the better they can produce better writings. Other studies that support our results such as Harizaj and Hajrulla, (2017) and Afshar et al. (2017) that focused on the interrelation between critical thinking and writing improvement in various contexts. Signifying that Paul’s critical thinking theory enhances students’ critical thinking and improves their writing skill and their writing organization in terms of rephrasing sentences, summarizing paragraphs and identifying thesis statements. Such improvements are mainly due to the practiced critical thinking skills (Afshar et al., 2017).

In sum, it can be concluded that explicit teaching of critical thinking skills has great effects on students' writing performance. Besides, it has a positive impact on students' critical thinking. The improvement in each subscale of the reasoning theory, namely analysis, inference, evaluation, and conclusion, was noted in the posttest. This may be attributed to the direct instruction and regular emphasis of using these skills, which coincides with the suggestions of previous researches (e.g., Gamble & Yang, 2010; Marin & Halpern, 2011). This significant improvement in critical thinking and writing contributes to the acclaimed effectiveness of the explicit approach to critical thinking (Dong & Yue, 2015; Qian, 2015; Golpour, 2014; Zeng, 2012; Moghaddam & Malekzadeh, 2011; Davidson & Dunham, 1997). These studies, as they measured students' critical thinking ability and argumentative writing proficiency separately, emphasized the intimate correlation between them; better critical thinking leads to better writing, since critical thinking is fundamental to substantive writing (Çavdar & Doe, 2012; Bean, 2011).

### ***Response Journals***

The response journal was another tool used to promote students' critical thinking and language abilities, through imposing them to different levels of cognitive questions. There were five types of questions, representative of Blooms Taxonomy, which allowed the students to concentrate on learning how to critically read questions and define what is required from each question type. First, the Comprehension type, it included the most basic questions, aimed to ascertain the students' fundamental understanding of the text, such as the plot, facts, character identification, etc. Second, the Reader-Response type, this type required the students to respond to the text by relating it to their personal experiences or by presenting their opinions on a character or event. Third, the Analysis type, it familiarized the students with the various techniques and literary devices, such as diction, symbolism, and metaphors, and how they were

used in the text, their interpretations and importance. Fourth, the Analysis questions which moved the student to a higher level of thinking and responding. Next, the Synthesis type, this type enabled the students to bridge the gap between the analysis and evaluation questions, requiring them to look at other scenes in the text and draw conclusions about themes, motifs, or authors' style. This type taught the students how to draw on prior knowledge what has been learned in prior classes or through information from other sources to arrive at a satisfactory answer. Finally, the Evaluation type, in this type the students were asked to make a judgment on the text and determine whether a particular aspect of it is effective or ineffective.

Students' responses to the questions in these journals were not calculated statically. Instead, the results were qualitatively analyzed by the instructor-researcher, the pre-post tests rubric was used again. The students had to write a first draft to be reviewed by the instructor. The instructor checked their responses and provided brief comments and hints on their writing. Then, the students were required to revise and improve their answers based on the instructor's feedback. Supporting the notion that learning significantly increases with the regular informative feedback (Hwa, Fook, Atan, Majid, & Luan, 2007; Jaehnig & Miller, 2007), it was noticed that the instructor's comments contributed to increasing writing accuracy. The instructor provided individualized and brief comments on the students' writing that aimed to enable them learn from their mistakes by figuring them out and use more accurate language forms, resulting in a better understanding of the content and more accurate responses (Jaehnig & Miller, 2007). Following are some examples of students' answers:

QUESTION TYPE	COMPREHENSION
QUESTION	What term does Major use to address the animals and unite them?
FIRST DRAFT	Major use the term "Comrade" when talk to animals.
INSTRUCTOR' COMMENT	Major <u>use</u> (ST) the term "Comrade" when talk to(ST) <u>animals</u> (MW). <b>Short answer, add more details!</b>
FINAL DRAFT	Major uses the term "Comrade" when talking to the animals. This term is used to unite them.

QUESTION TYPE	COMPREHENSION
QUESTION	What does Esperanza mean when she says that she hopes to have a house that she can “point to”?
FIRST DRAFT	Esperanza wants to have a “real house” by herself that make feel proud to show to others. The house on Mango Street disappoints her.(why/how)
INSTRUCTOR’ COMMENT	Esperanza wants to have a “real house” <b>by herself (WW)</b> that make <b>(ST)</b> feel proud to show to others. The house on Mango Street disappoints her. <b>(why/how)</b>
FINAL DRAFT	Esperanza wants one day to have a “real house” of her own that makes feel proud to show to others. The house on Mango Street disappoints her, as once she was ashamed to point out to it to a nun from her school. This incident, among many others throughout the story, leads her to set the goal of having a nice home.

QUESTION TYPE	READER RESPONSE
QUESTION	What is your first impression of Cathy? Why?
FIRST DRAFT	Cathy seems to be unreliable friend because she tells lies to impress others.
INSTRUCTOR’ COMMENT	Cathy seems to be <b>(MW)</b> unreliable friend because she tells lies to impress others. <b>(give example to support your answer)</b>
FINAL DRAFT	Cathy seems to be an unreliable friend. Her claim to be related to the queen of France is unbelievable and it seems she is simply trying to impress Esperanza by telling her something that she can’t believe

QUESTION TYPE	ANALYSIS
QUESTION	Is it plausible that the house on Mango Street will be a “temporary” place to live, as Esperanza’s parents say?
FIRST DRAFT	Esperanza’s parents plan to move with their children to a house and tell the children about the kind of home they want to have. They purchase the house on mango street, which means they move from renting to owning and from an apartment to a single-family house. They also work toward owning a car.
INSTRUCTOR’ COMMENT	<b>(Start your answer with yes or no?)</b> , Esperanza’s parents <u>plan</u> <b>(ST)</b> to move with their children to a house and <u>tell</u> <b>(ST)</b> the children about the kind of home they want to have. They <u>purchase</u> <b>(ST)</b> <u>house</u> <b>(MW)</b> <u>at</u> <b>(WW)</b> <u>mango street</u> <b>(P)</b> , which means they <u>move</u> <b>(ST)</b> from renting to owning and from an apartment to a single-family house. They also <u>work</u> <b>(ST)</b> toward owning a car. <b>Add analysis to these facts</b>
FINAL DRAFT	Yes, Esperanza’s parents have planned to move with their kids to a house for some time and have told the children about the kind of home they want to have. They have purchased the house on Mango Street, which means they have moved from renting to owning and from an apartment to a single-family house. They are also working toward owning a car. All of these incidents show that the parents have a serious plan and are taking real steps to offer their children a better life. Therefore, it is logical to expect that they will achieve what they mentioned earlier.

QUESTION TYPE	ANALYSIS
QUESTION	How does Esperanza’s encounter with Elenita in “Elenita, Cards, Palms, Water” alter her conception of “home”? How are Esperanza’s ideas about home evolving as the story progresses?
FIRST DRAFT	Esperanza has a strong desire to have her own house throughout the whole story. She talked about wanting a home that she is ashamed to point to, her only goal was having a house throughout the whole story. She does not know what a house made of heart

	means, but it is possible that this represents another missing aspect in Esperanza's personality—how to value not only the physical but the emotional things in her life.
<b>INSTRUCTOR' COMMENT</b>	Esperanza has a strong desire to have her own house throughout the whole story. She talked (use one tense in your answer, preferably the present simple) about wanting a home that she <u>is</u> (will not be ashamed_ to “point to.” (use quotation marks as this phrase is said by the author) Her only goal was having a house throughout the whole story. She does not know what “a house made of heart” (introduce the speaker of this comment) means, but it is possible that this represents another missing aspect in Esperanza's personality—how to value not only the physical but the emotional things in her life.
<b>FINAL DRAFT</b>	Esperanza has a strong desire to have her own house throughout the whole story. She talks about wanting a home that she will not be ashamed to “point to,” and is fully aware that the house on Mango Street is not where she wants to be. In the third part of the novel, her only goal is still longing for a have a beautiful house, that she would be proud of. She does not really like or understand Elenita's comment “a house made of heart”, but this comment shows another missing aspect in Esperanza's personality—how to value not only the physical but the emotional things in her life.

<b>QUESTION TYPE</b>	<b>EVALUATION</b>
<b>QUESTION</b>	How successfully has Orwell maintained reader sympathy for the animals? Why?
<b>FIRST DRAFT</b>	Orwell was successful, the situation for the animals gets steadily worse.
<b>INSTRUCTOR' COMMENT</b>	Orwell was successful, the situation for the animals gets steadily worse. <b>How did the situation get worse? Explain.</b>
<b>FINAL DRAFT</b>	Orwell was successful maintaining sympathy for the animals. The situation for the animals gets steadily worse. They are exhausted from overwork, starved from food shortages, abused by those who would call themselves the animals' liberators, and disheartened by the destruction of their hard-won progress. These are some examples of why readers would sympathize with them.

<b>QUESTION TYPE</b>	<b>EVALUATION</b>
<b>QUESTION</b>	How successfully has Orwell maintained readers' sympathy for the animals? Why?
<b>FIRST DRAFT</b>	Orwell was unsuccessful in maintaining readers' sympathy to the animals because the animals extremely trusted the pigs.
<b>INSTRUCTOR' COMMENT</b>	Orwell was unsuccessful in maintaining(SP) readers' sympathy to(WW) the animals because the animals extremely trusted(ST) pigs(MW). <b>What is wrong with trusting the pigs? Explain. Why can't you sympathize with them?</b>
<b>FINAL DRAFT</b>	Orwell was unsuccessful in maintaining readers' sympathy for the animals because the animals have extremely trusted the pigs and were very ignorant or unaware of what was really going on. It is difficult to continue to sympathize with characters who are so incredibly slow or stupid.

To meet each student's needs, individualized feedback, through the response journals, was integrated into the learning process. Students received feedback (such as affirmation of correct responses or hints for incorrect responses) after answering a set of questions. The response journals show that implementing well-designed writing assignments plays an important role in

the teaching of critical thinking and writing. These results similar to Li's (2011), 16-week action research which was designed to explore effective ways of improving students' reader awareness and critical thinking competence. The students were required to write through a seven-step writing process, the multiple steps for completing the assignments (writing the first draft and then the final responses after receiving the instructor's feedback) aimed to provide more opportunities for thinking during the writing process. Based on the feedback from the post-study questionnaire, the majority of the students reported that the response journals have improved their critical thinking and English writing. It was noted by the instructor that at the beginning of the course the students' level in writing was very low compared to their level by the end of the course, mainly in answering the higher order questions, the performance of the responses has significantly increased. Hence, the students' writing gradually started to show higher degree of clarity, accuracy, coherence and substantiality as they benefited from the instructor's remarks and in the process of completing these writing assignments, which also contributed to their critical thinking development, mainly the higher order questions related to problem solving, decision making and opinion expression.

These five types of questions led the students to think from multiple viewpoints, use their background knowledge to make decisions, justify opinions and solve problems. These requirements are assesses candidates' ability to "present a solution to the problem, present and justify an opinion, compare and contrast evidence and opinions, and evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence or arguments" (Cambridge ESOL, 2011, p. 6). After being acquainted with the principles of critical reading and writing skills and their implications, students' composition in the response journals showed significant improvement in producing substantive written answers to different types of questions that require acquiring the traits of critical thinkers, such as open-



minded views and clarification of ideas written in well-organized paragraphs with clear main ideas and supportive sentences. Moreover, learners' compositions were much clearer and void of undue ambiguities in the second draft. Some learners come up with new insights.

The response journals showed that higher order questions do not have one answer but allowed students to consider and advance many possibilities and answers. The thing that contributed in enhancing their critical thinking and encouraged them to bring their experiences and feelings, as well as knowledge of the novels to their answers. The response journals invited the students to look at their responses in a critical manner and deepen their vision.

Studying literature is usually challenging for ESL students as literary works are filled with hidden symbols, structures, and meanings that require good English mastery to uncover. Although the students lack the skills and confidence to evaluate a literary work by their own, still the response journals showed that the more proficient students in English language benefited more from the journals since their language abilities helped them get the most out of the feedbacks they received. For instance, they were ahead of less-proficient students in expressing their own opinions instead of assuming others', using sentence connectors, forming reasonable arguments, providing conclusion, providing details, using persuasive devices, using personal experiences, and categorizing information. This superiority may be the result of their higher sensitivity to feedback they received, and the critical thinking skills were taught.

In this study the response journals were aimed to break down complex questions students encounter into smaller parts, clarifying the different levels of thinking a critical reader should be aware of to develop a sound evaluation of a text. Each week the students were provided with a set of questions which are representative of Bloom's taxonomy, starting with the most basic skill,

knowledge and comprehension, and gradually building to the highest skill, evaluation. Imposing the students to these higher order questions gave the students a deep understanding of the works they read, and the knowledge and confidence to develop and articulate a personal view—a skill that they desperately need in their study; besides, it gave the instructor the opportunity to evaluate closely their progress. Thinking critically about the content and then transforming ideas into written words enabled the students to express their ideas clearly and accurately, they became able to elaborate and give examples. Thus, as Paul & Elder confirms, writing is the most powerful skill needed to reach deep learning; hence, the students who cannot write out what they learn are often poor learners (2019).

These results are supported by students' comments in the interviews. All students reported that they benefited a lot from the response journals; they used to wait for feedback from the instructor because they found that the feedback made them think more about their ideas and thought and exchange more informed ideas with the instructor. As well, their language mistakes were just underlined without correction, and this encouraged them to search for the grammar rules, check the spelling.

Student C: The feedback I got from the instructor was not direct correction of my mistakes, always I had to look back at my writing and check the underlined part and try to figure out what is wrong there. The feedback criticizes my answer in order to improve it, especially when I had weak points.

Student L: Response journals made me think more before I write, I had to be very careful in writing and using language to express my ideas.

The previous results support the claim that writing should help students compose essays that are grammatically and lexically accurate as well as produce valid arguments and responses. The students' ability to use clearer and more credible evidence, address alternative positions and

arguments, support conclusions, and maintain the logical flow of ideas in their writing did not reach a mastery level in the posttest or in their last responses in the journal. Yet the average level they reached is reassuring in view of the short time of the training they had.

To conclude, the students answered 30 questions over a ten-week period, which were evaluated by the instructor-researcher. The findings of the study reveal that: a) the participants in the first weeks had difficulty in writing accurately and fluently in English, as their answers were very brief and superficial, especially higher order thinking questions, alongside linguistic mistakes such as structure, capitalization, spelling and use of articles. Such difficulties that students face require revising and redesigning the English courses and the applied teaching approaches in order to cope the students with the needed skills for writing in English successfully in all courses not only the writing ones.

### **Critical Thinking and English Oral Skills Proficiency**

The oral skills, speaking and listening, are important as reading and writing to students' success in their academic study. The first phase of the intervention aimed to show that preparing students to be skilled readers and writers would enable them to individually master a learning content, without depending on lecturers, as Paul and Elder's (2014) claim, that many proficient readers have become educated through reading alone. The writing tasks in this study helped students to practice substantive writing, clearly and comprehensively. The second phase focused on the oral skills as speaking is another powerful tool in learning (Paul & Elder, 2014); students should be able to explain and discuss what they have learnt. In class discussions, when organized and disciplined, students share their understanding of ideas with other students, and this is a powerful tool in developing understanding of these discussed ideas. Alternatively, students must

discipline their thinking, so that they express their ideas and thoughts clearly and precisely, use concepts justifiably, ask relevant and significant questions, and assess their learning process. Conversely, active listening is probably the least focused-on skills of the four skills in English courses. Students' listening is superficial, unskilled and passive, due to the lecturing teaching style applied at universities supporting that poor listening not only leads to misunderstanding but also to unsuccessful learning.

### ***Field-notes***

To answer the second sub question of the research question two, field notes from the students' meetings are presented, moving chronologically from Week 1 to Week 10, followed by the instructor's reflections and findings on the student' critical thinking and oral skills growth. Some students' comments from the interviews are included to support the field notes. The use of field notes is very helpful for keeping a record of what happens throughout the intervention as they refer to a written account of what the researcher heard, saw and came up with in the course through collecting, evaluating, and reflecting on each and every incident took place during the meetings. There are three points covered in field notes, namely general point, good point, and point to improve.

**Week 1.** The first week was an orientation to the course that is to introduce the course by presenting a detailed overview of topics to be covered in the course and familiarize the students with its aims, tasks and assessment. Prior to the presentation, students had the pretest and filled in the pre course questionnaire. Then, the instructor introduced the course through a PowerPoint Presentation that included:

- *Introduction to critical thinking:* the reasoning elements, reasoning standards and traits of critical thinkers.

- *Introduction to critical lenses*: the students were going to respond to the text using them. The explicit purpose of the critical lens approach is to help students decide which is the most convincing of conflicting readings of a text. The critical lens approach thus fosters critical thinking in students by encouraging them to evaluate a text from different perspectives and arrive at a reasoned judgment. For example, a Marxist approach to *The Animal Farm* addresses the issues of wealth, power and inequality in the novel whereas a feminist approach in *The House on Mango Street* focuses students' attention on gender expectations and the role women play in the society portrayed in the novel. The critical lens approach aligns with the goal expressed fully in the previous chapter, namely, to move students from passive learning by receiving knowledge to be memorized to active learning in which they evaluate the knowledge in hand and shape information. The significance of using a critical lens approach lies in its ability to help students engage in active learning wherein there are different readings to literary works, which require them to judge, evaluate, and argue. The students were shown an example on how this technique could be used to evaluate a text from multiple perspectives, which lead to multiple ways of thinking and understanding. Thus, students start to understand that there is no single, unifying reading, understanding or response to literary texts. They had to apply the Marxist, Feminist, New Historical and Formalist Perspectives to the novels. Every two weeks the focused on a critical lens, the students had to focus on the main themes of that lens, they were encouraged to connect these themes to real life experiences to make connections between the characters and the events in the novels and their real-life knowledge and experience; thus, reinforce their thinking and understanding.

- *The learning techniques applied in the course:* literature circles, Socratic discussions, and response journals. The students were now aware that the literature circles and Socratic discussions would require them to read, write, and speak. Students were expected to read and prepare their tasks in written forms at home; reading and writing were essential components of these techniques because the first encouraged students to define the main points of the text and comprehend them, while the latter reinforced incorporating the critical thinking skills they were imposed to. Thus, these two skills played a fatal role in assisting the students in their discussions and conversations. These techniques were proficient strategy that were to be applied for 120 minutes to target critical thinking skill development amongst students. These specific strategies were selected because of their alignment with critical pedagogy, which is the philosophical foundation that guided the development of this project. The first was to last for about 30 minutes whereas the latter for 90 minutes they were aimed to guide the students to refine their understanding throughout the course. They also allowed students to reflect on their learning as they would trigger them to practice thinking about their own and peers' answers, required more elaboration or examples.
- The assessment procedure and learning materials: Finally, students were introduced to and provided with the critical thinking rubric and the language rubric that were to be used to evaluating their writing, and the other learning materials, including: (1) The two novels *Animal Farms* and *The House on Mango Street*. (2) The literature circles booklet, it included an overview of this technique and explained the five roles applied in the study, and the guiding questions for each role, it aimed to familiarize the students with their roles and to organize their answers in one place. (3) The Socratic discussions booklet, it

included an overview of the Socratic discussion technique founded by Paul and Elder (2001), an overview of applied critical lenses in this study, and a set of critical thinking-based questions to think about and answer. The response journal booklet, it included two or three questions that required various levels of thinking (from retrieving information and summarizing to higher order thinking), this journal aimed to familiarize the students with the different types of questions and the way to figure the best answer for each question. Besides, it allows them to practice critical writing, correct their language mistakes and improve their way of thinking.

- Finally (5) the critical reading and writing guiding notes adopted from Paul and Elder's reasoning theory (2001) and a glossary of some common critical thinking words.

By the end of the meeting, the students were asked to make groups of 4-5 students and each student had to choose one of the five roles in the literature circles in order to prepare for the next meeting. Being fully prepared, punctual, listening respectfully to each other without interruption, no side talks, laughing or making fun, respecting others' opinions and comments, helping each other, especially with using English language properly were the main rules that were emphasized too.

**Week 2.** The second week began with great enthusiasm; the instructor and the students arrived on time for the class. About 10 minutes of class were spent getting the classroom organized for the literature circles and ensuring every student knew what to do. As it was not possible to organize the classroom prior the meeting because as there were other classes in the room, so that the instructor had to assure the students about the importance of punctuality. At the beginning, the instructor checked with the students if they had done the following tasks: had read the assigned pages of *The House on Mango Street* (pp. 1-30) and applied the critical reading

techniques A, B and C in the booklet by putting some marks and comments on the margins of the text, and prepared for their roles in the literature circles. Finally, whether they had read the assigned critical lens in the Socratic discussion booklet and answered the questions that followed.

The students were very excited and prepared; however, as they started the literature circles they seemed a bit hesitant. They took their places in the literature circles. The instructor was moving around the groups and sitting with each group for few minutes to take notes on their preparation and performance. All the groups started to present their roles in the circles and share their thoughts and findings. Yet, some students were not fully involved nor very active in the discussions, and their answers were very brief. They talked about their assigned roles, but never participated in the discussions nor commented on others' responses and ideas. Hence, it was noted that some students were more active than others. The actives were talking most of the time, while the less active students tried to get involved by imitating, repeating or agreeing/disagreeing.

Next, the Socratic discussion started. The students were to discuss their feminist reading to the novel using Paul's reasoning theory (the reasoning elements and standards). They started to exchange their answers to the set of critical thinking questions they had prepared prior the meeting and to come up with new questions based on their classmates' answers. As the learning content and learning approach were new to the students, they had not really gained the sufficient understanding needed to analyze the text from this point of view. Most of the students were not quick nor confident in sharing their thoughts.

The field notes showed that most of the students showed low achievement in all skills for this week. They could not run up the discussions for a long time. Their questions and comments



were short and brief. Some groups did not have lively discussions, as their members showed low involvement in the topics. This would be due to their inability to speak fluently using appropriate vocabulary and proper grammatical structure, as they assumed that they lacked relevant vocabularies related to the topics. There was also mispronunciation of some words. Still, the more active groups turned to their mother language, Arabic, frequently to express their ideas.

The students were classified as average and below average in their performance during this meeting. This classification was determined based on the field notes taken and checking the recordings of literature circles. Only this meeting and the last one were recorded for the purpose of taking detailed and accurate report of students' performance during the meetings, where the instructor asked each group to record their discussion in order to listen to each student later and define necessary actions needed to improve their performance.

As the instructor thought that students' performance was not satisfactory for promoting critical thinking and English skills, prior week 3 meeting, she sent the students an example of an everyday short story that is analyzed using the reasoning elements and standards in order to better bolster their understanding of what critical thinking is; they were encouraged to read it, and then prepare for their coming week tasks.

**Week 3.** In the second meeting, some students and the instructor arrived few minutes earlier and prepared the classroom while others were there on time. Immediately all the students took their places and were ready to start. However, the instructor used 10 minutes to present some weaknesses or problems based on the recordings of the previous meeting. She defined them in the recordings in order to improve students' performance, these ten minutes were aimed to more familiarize the students with the procedure and make them had more command of the course content and task; so to make them feel at ease. The students pointed out their lack of

familiarity with such tasks was the predominant factor of their low performance. Although students were introduced to some examples of how to apply these techniques on orientation meeting and practiced it a week ago, the instructor had to reinforce and refine this technique in order to make sure that all students were on track. The instructor was still playing the role of a leader of her students rather than a facilitator.

For less than 10 minutes, the instructor went back to the feminist handout and explained the logic of applying a feminist reading to the story and ensured the students that it was their task to come to their own conclusions, without any fear of giving wrong answers or making mistakes, unlike the way they had used to study any literary work from a predetermined point of view; thus, the success of achieving this goal was determined by the courage of expressing their understanding of what they were doing, superficial understanding would impede reaching an appropriate level of reasoning and analyzing. For example, she presented some previous responses saying that they were brief and insufficient and elaborated some tips on how to develop them through imposing some guiding questions to think about.

On this day, work progressed slowly too. Students were given few minutes to chat at the beginning of their literature circles and relax, and then started their literature circles discussions. They started their literature circles with more confidence than the last week. For this week, they continued discussing *The House on Mango Street* (pp. 31- p.70), each literature circle started to discuss their roles and share their notes and findings. The instructor observed and facilitated their work. Unlike the previous week, in which the field notes showed the students had low oral abilities, most of them were trying to talk about their roles, mostly all students were able to speak about their pre-prepared notes but still not commenting on others' responses. Then they moved to the Socratic discussion.

**Week 4.** On this week the students continued doing the same tasks in the third part of the novel, and the instructor was observing and facilitating their work, noticing that they were now more competent with what they were doing, the students were seen with their written notes in front of them to refer to while they were speaking and listening carefully to their peers in order to comment on their responses. By week 4 the learning process started gradually to be more interesting and livelier throughout the course, some obstacles started to fade, such as self-confidence problems, grammar structure and vocabulary problems, limited knowledge or the lack of information related to the given topic. Rather, the students started to show higher oral communication competence than the previous weeks as evidenced by the number and variety of words they used, the fewer word errors and utterance pauses and the lively and collaborative discussions. The literature circles and Socratic questioning techniques incredibly optimized students' critical thinking as Paul (2006) stated that Socratic questioning is at the art of critical thinking; as well as their oral skills. They started gradually to familiarize themselves with these techniques and overcome some obstacles; their self-confidence and their fluency much better improved as practicing deep thinking paved the way to the construction of a new knowledge and helped them generate more meaningful ideas and robust answers. Students started to understand how to develop a deep and meaningful series of questions that probed and improved their thinking and understanding. For example, asking about or explaining the reasoning of an answer in more details, and asking for examples, elaboration, and clarification to better understand the answers.

They explored the information as much as possible about the assigned lens for this week, collected information and facts from various recourses, built arguments and shared their experiences. The findings of this week's field notes confirmed the results of similar research

results (Ross, 2003; Hadi, 2012), which confirmed that students can learn to think critically and can take intellectual risks in classroom discussions.

**Week 5.** Students had to work on the last part of the novel, from page 71 to page 110. The discussions of this week were entirely student led. The students now became more independent and confident. The students started to apply the reasoning skills and maximize utilizing language in the classroom without feeling fear of making mistakes. Consequently, students' motivation and self-confidence became more apparent. The activities promoted cooperative and communicative learning. The instructor was not anymore interfering in the students' responses; she only tried to aid them to solve their grammatical challenges, such as giving the right words needed in order for them to continue their discussion without long pauses. There was a transformation of the classroom atmosphere to a lively and more fun class. The students started to have the willingness to learn in such relaxing and joyful atmosphere. They were able to build more meaningful and proper discussions and arguments and became less hesitant and doubtful during the discussions; this was due to their increasing understanding of the critical thinking skills. In addition to the oral skill improvement, the field notes showed that the critical thinking skills played a significant role in the quality of the discussions produced during the Socratic discussions. The intervention improved students' interest, engagement and appreciation of the class discussions, it triggered construction of meaning and encouraged creating, developing and justifying their ideas. Students were more able to produce fruitful discussions and develop different viewpoints. As student D commented:

There was no way I would have read a literary text on my own, I used to read the translations of the assigned literary works or just few pages, which the lecturer mentioned. Now, I seek to read more. The critical lenses added a lot of joy to the reading and made me realize that a deeper look at a literary work can change my opinions and thoughts and make me want to read more and more.

The literature circles and Socratic discussions provided the opportunity for communicative learning, in which fluency and accuracy were the main targets of the discussions. Small group discussion and engagement could attribute to the reason that students found reading more interesting after the implementation of literature circles. As stated by student M in the interview:

During each Literature circles, the instructor asked us to record our talks and send it to her. She told us that our discussion was not flowing in the first two weeks; some students merely took turns to state the notes they prepared, there was no responding or interacting to each other's contributions. However, from the third week on the literature circle discussions started to flow dynamically, we were more confident to respond to our group members' comments, state our opinions, challenge each other's thoughts and questioned our understanding. I think we started gradually to be more confident in speaking English.

**Week 6.** This week was the start of working with the second novel *The Animal Farm* by George Orwell, the students had read from page 1 to page 30. They were introduced in this week to the Marxist critical lens. They came to class well prepared and ready to start their roles in the literature circles, the novel was a good choice as they were very interested in its themes. On this week, it started to be noted that the students showed significant improvement in participation and engagement that would attribute to both the direct and explicit instruction of the reasoning skills accompanying the choice of the novel. The students could at this stage fluently express their ideas by using appropriate vocabs and grammatical structure, and never used their mother language anymore. The following statement mentioned by one in the interview supports these finding as she says:

Before this course I had never heard of critical thinking and now I feel like I am so much more aware of what and why I study. Learning about critical thinking helps me to understand not only literature but also the world around me. I think this course has given me an insight that I didn't have before.

**Week 7.** During this week the students continued the second part of the *Animal Farm*. On this week the students continued doing the same tasks, and the instructor was

observing and facilitating their work, noticing that they became much more confident running the discussions. The learning process continued to be more interesting and challenging. They explored various themes related to the assigned lens for this week and were able to identify the type of the information they had such as facts or opinions. The findings of this week's field notes support earlier weeks finding about the capability of the students to think critically and use English more fluently as long as they have the chance to do so.

**Week 8.** For this week, the students read the third part of the novel. They were to apply the assigned lens to the novel efficiently. It is clearly shown at this stage how the applied critical lenses have helped expanding the sources of information against which students would shape their participation in the course, as the diverse lenses led wider contexts for discussions and collaboration. The field notes findings of this meeting were supported by students' comments in the interviews, as they reported several benefits that they gained from the discussions. Most of the students reported that the course has improved their critical thinking and language, they started to feel confident and willing to speak and participate after joining the course, and they said that in other courses they usually do not have the chance to speak as they did in this course. Student J stated:

After I became familiar with the reasoning skills I was able to more fully understand the messages inherent in the novels. This course, for me, revealed the importance of literature in fostering critical thinking as the novels as were an interesting gateway into deeper learning; I learned how to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information. Most importantly, I participated in articulating my learning rather than uncritically absorbed information from didactic lectures.

Student K stated "I think now I have big improvements in English language, reasoning skills, and learning to consider multiple opinions." As well, they have personal and social benefits, as mentioned by another student: "I acquired competence in encouraging and supporting my

classmates and in the process, acquired new friends, the thing I could not do in other courses as we don't interact with each other during the classes.”

**Week 9.** Students had to continue doing the same tasks in the last part of the novel, p.71-p.112. The students were competent to engage, interact and act upon others' talking; thus assisting each other in reflecting upon their responses and the purpose of their contributions. The learning environment was now diverse and supportive that it assisted the students in questioning and analyzing the targeted critical lens. Through the application of the reasoning skills. Throughout this meeting it was noted that all students could express their ideas in detail using English, using sufficient and variant words and expressions, no record of using their mother language, Arabic, to express what they wanted to say; even when discussing higher order thinking points, they proved to gain sufficient and useful vocabs to develop comprehensive discussions. In some occasions, better students assist their less able peers by repeating what the others were trying to say with more accurate or proper words. Pronunciation mistakes were very few; almost all the students were clear and confident in their talks. Thus, by the end of the second novel the students showed improvement to express their ideas and develop discussion by using appropriate words and grammatical forms and less pronunciation errors.

**Week 10.** Week 10 was the last week of the designed course. There was no study during this week; it was assigned for the post research tools. First, the students took the posttest, in which they applied the reasoning elements and standards to two passages taken from the critical reading and writing test by Paul and Elder (2014). The test was allocated 60 minutes. Then, the students filled in the post-course questionnaire for 10 minutes. Finally, they were invited to participate in the interview according to their time slots.

***Field-notes Discussion***

The field notes reported several benefits that the students gained from the intervention on two levels: the intervention improved their critical thinking and language skills, as well as their learning skills. On one hand, the field notes showed that the designed course enhanced Arab students' critical thinking as shown by end of the course the highly improved quality of the discussions and talks produced by students. The students were noticed to become more able to spontaneously produce meaningful and well thought arguments and spontaneously consider other points of view in comparison to their performance at the beginning of the course. This finding conforms to other findings on improving their critical reading and writing skills; hence, the intervention is proved to be advantageous in enhancing the students' critical thinking. The role and influence of the instructor was limited as it started to gradually get minimized paralleling students' increasing involvement and participation more confidently.

In accordance with the definition of The Foundation for Critical Thinking of the concept of critical thinking, as the following: "Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness" (Paul & Elder, 2019). This definition was applied in the designed course for this study; the discussions were designed to provide students with various topics to challenge them and provide them with a real life talks and discussions; the extended conversations enabled the students to actively listen to their group members and classmates actively and promote meaningful conversation. The reasoning skills aimed to teach the students what higher level thinking questions are, how to



develop relevant and significant discussion, how to relate the reading to personal experiences, and how to find important events or themes in the novels; as well as provide students with different types of questions that familiarize them with the different levels of thinking. The intervention introduced the students to student directed courses that require individual, small group and whole group work. It required their commitment and responsibility toward their learning; this consequently offered the students a sense of independence. This is the best way to get students to start asking questions and sharing their ideas and understanding. Supporting Lian's (2005) viewpoint, Socratic discussions engaged students in dealing with and discussing different points of views in order to construct increasingly more enabling, or more relevant, understandings for acting upon others.

The Literature circles and Socratic discussions were very interesting, joyful, student-centered, group-work techniques; The fieldnotes reports that there was a transformation of the classroom atmosphere to a lively and more fun class. These techniques showed that students had willingness to learn in a relaxing and joyful atmosphere. These findings can be attributed to many aspects that were considered when designing the course. First, the learning content which includes the novels and literary lenses, the topics were relevant to the students' real-life experiences and culture. Second, the applied teaching and learning techniques and materials are consistent with Vyas and Patel's (2009) study where they showed that the variation of the topics should be indispensable to engage EFL students in learning the content in English; pleasing topics encourage them to actively participate in class, which would lead to a positive classroom atmosphere.

On the other hand, the findings of the field notes show that Literature circles and Socratic dialogue are powerful tools for improving active and critical listening and speaking. The

participants were aware of the potential of these techniques to create and develop critical discussions; for example, how the different role in literature circles created a motivating environment where ideas are exchanged through social interaction. The fieldnotes showed that the designed course accelerates the participants' English oral skill as reflected by their performance on the literature circles and Socratic discussions. The speaking skill has improved in terms of the students' improving ability to use wider and more appropriate range of vocabularies and grammatical structures, their fluency in their discussions and arguments and their less use of mother language.

Lexical diversity and syntactically more complex responses produced by the students. This improvement could be recognized from the students' increasing ability to a wider range of relevant vocabularies and correct grammatical forms, their increasing ability for running and developing meaningful and longer discussions with their classmates, and their increasing avoidance of using mother tongue. This is consistent with Celce-Murcia (2002) who revealed that the function of any grammatical form or structure should be understood at the discourse level within the context. Most of the students improved their grammatical structures through communicating and interacting with their peers in the meetings. They started to create more comprehensive sentences and arrange longer words order and use the tenses significantly.

Moreover, using the critical thinking word lists, which included various significant and rich parts of speech, helped the students to overcome some speaking challenges that could occur when they tried to express complicated ideas using English, especially when concerned with the substance over the form to express their ideas. The various words that included verbs, adjectives and other parts of speech related to their topics reduced pauses, repetitions and dis-fluencies. As students were supplied with a useful word list that they could consult frequently, their

vocabulary has also improved. Besides, they learned many useful and comprehensive words related to the learning content from their friends, mainly during the literature circles as in each circle there was a student whose task was vocabulary enricher. This student had to collect and explain a list of useful words and expressions to peers, the definition, part of speech, synonyms and examples on it. Ellis (2008) revealed that when the topics are relevant to students' interests, they had great motivation to learn the language in order to express their ideas clearly and meaningfully. Thus, the students could use a wide range of new words in different contexts.

Finally, their pronunciation and fluency improved. Meanwhile, they started to pronounce a wide range of new words correctly including stress and intonation. From their peers, they learn new words and how to pronounce them. This is consistent with Grabe and Stoller (1997); this study showed that keeping students motivated and interested are two essential factors crucial in supporting students' success in learning and enhancing higher thinking skills.

From the research findings above, it could be concluded that the student's oral skills significantly increased in all aspects due to the following factors: pre-preparation tasks they had to do prior class meetings, the constructivist and learner-centered learning environment, and the critical thinking-based learning content. These factors increased students' enthusiasm and joy in learning. It could be seen in students' participation in various activities of listening and speaking, explaining and commenting on each other's thoughts and ideas, thus improving their pronunciation and fluency in English language. This is supported by Brown (1994) who believed that keeping the reasoning skills and standards in students' hands reinforce the confidence and accuracy when organizing speaking. Thus, speaking is seen an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. This is also consistent with Hadi (2012); his study shows that speaking – form and meaning- is dependent on the

context, participants and their collective experience, adding to the physical environment and reason for the speaking itself. Therefore, the students' ability in reasoning and expressing their ideas and thoughts are reflected in the speaking performance. They explored the information as much as possible about the current issues, collected the trusted data resource, evidence and facts, constructed the arguments and shared the experiences.

As the proposed course aims to activate on Constructivist learning, it is based on communicative and collaborative learning, this approach of learning focuses on enabling students to learn through being actively engaged in the learning process, they do not depend on the teacher to guide them or to be the source of information. It is found that the constructivist student-centered learning environment applied in this course the increase of students' motivation. The discussion techniques applied made students involved, relaxed and enjoying their talks, they talked most of the time with less anxiety about mispronunciation and making mistakes, which support Hale's (2008) view of effective speaking improvement. The literature circles roles emphasized students' collaborative learning; each student played an essential part in the learning process, including information gathering and knowledge construction. The constructivist learning environment, which in this study built on small group discussions and class discussions, enabled the students to engage and interact in various social contexts due to the various topics they were imposed to, and to assist them in questioning, analyzing and reflecting upon their understandings and contributions which reflect their interactions. This supports Nurhadi (2002) belief of the importance of constructive learning, as he refers to that in various points: First, it reinforces the concept of collectivity among learners when using their explicit use of alternative linguistic markers referencing "we", "we found", "our conversation", etc. Moreover, it emphasizes the concept of supportiveness as vital factor. All students' voices were to be heard

and shared, their ideas and talks are noticed and explained to be understood. They use terms like opinion, perspectives to express their thoughts and beliefs. Therefore, questioning is a vital activity for learners to dig information, analyze and explore ideas.

Finally, the findings showed that the proposed course also allowed differentiation. Regardless the level of the students prior the course, the intervention influenced all the students positively; their motivation and engagement did not depend on their levels of English proficiency; instead, critical thinking-based discussions trigger even less able students to involve through opposing and challenging arguments. This is consistent with Zhang, Anderson and Nguyen-Jahiel's (2013) statement which claims that the opposition, disagreement or conflicts that might emerge in critical thinking discussions are exciting for students including for low-proficient students. However, these skills may be poorly developed in other courses because of the lack of teaching and learning approaches and courses designs that allow students to freely express their ideas and understandings.

Moreover, though the level of English was supposed to be intermediate to upper intermediate, it was found that they did not all have the same English language abilities. However, this was overcome, as the better students were able to mentor, led the less able ones and supported them in various occasions. The instructor's teaching role was consequently reduced because guiding and explaining were needed, which allowed her to focus more on individualized evaluation and instruction. This environment led to a productive and active learning in which all members were respectful and supportive to each other's' learning. The learning process was also no longer teacher centered, because the roles of the instructor was only organizing, observing, and guiding when necessary. Consistently, Elis (2008) stated that teaching

language could be highly efficient in a communicative learning atmosphere, which supports the idea that constructive learning atmosphere abetted the learners to learn from each other.

As stated by Brown (1994), that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. In this intervention, the students could use appropriate English words and pattern, produce meaningful sentences matching the subject matter, organize their thoughts in a logical sequence, and use the language more fluently and confidently with less pauses; the applied methods and techniques enhanced students' critical thinking and oral skills as their application to the reasoning skills into their thoughts was clearly reflected on their speaking performance.

### **The Impact of the Intervention from the Students' Perception**

The following results shows that participants had positive views regarding the intervention, as shown in their positive responses to the questionnaires and interviews. Most students express positive impact on

- critical thinking
- improving English language skills
- better understanding of literature
- the teaching and learning style
- the instructor's role

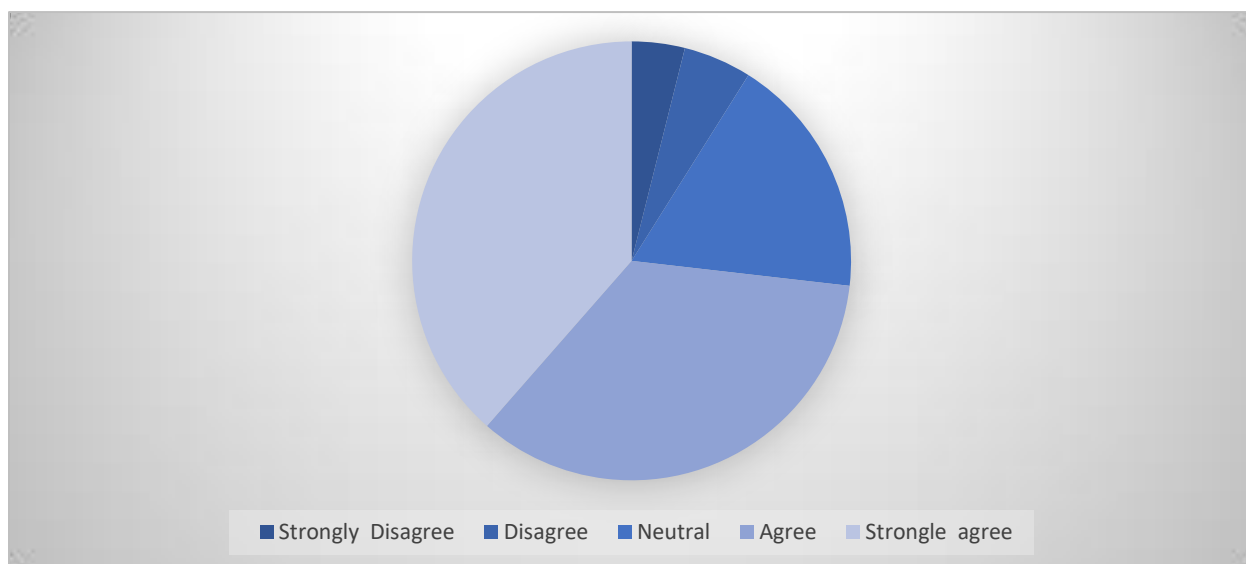
### ***The Post Questionnaire***

The post questionnaire included five parts aiming at gathering sufficient data about their overall perception of the intervention, their critical thinking and language skills improvement, their attitude toward literature circles and Socratic discussions for learning and the instructor's constructivist teaching style.

For the first section of the questionnaire “the overall impact of the intervention on the participants”, only 4% to 5% of the students believed that the intervention did not have a positive impact on their learning, 18% of the students chose *neutral*, while 74% ranged between *agree* and *strongly agree*. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority believed that the intervention introduced them to critical thinking and made them aware of its importance in learning, helped them better study literature courses and had appropriate allocated work load and time (Figure 6).

### Figure 6

*The Overall Impact of the Intervention on the Participants*

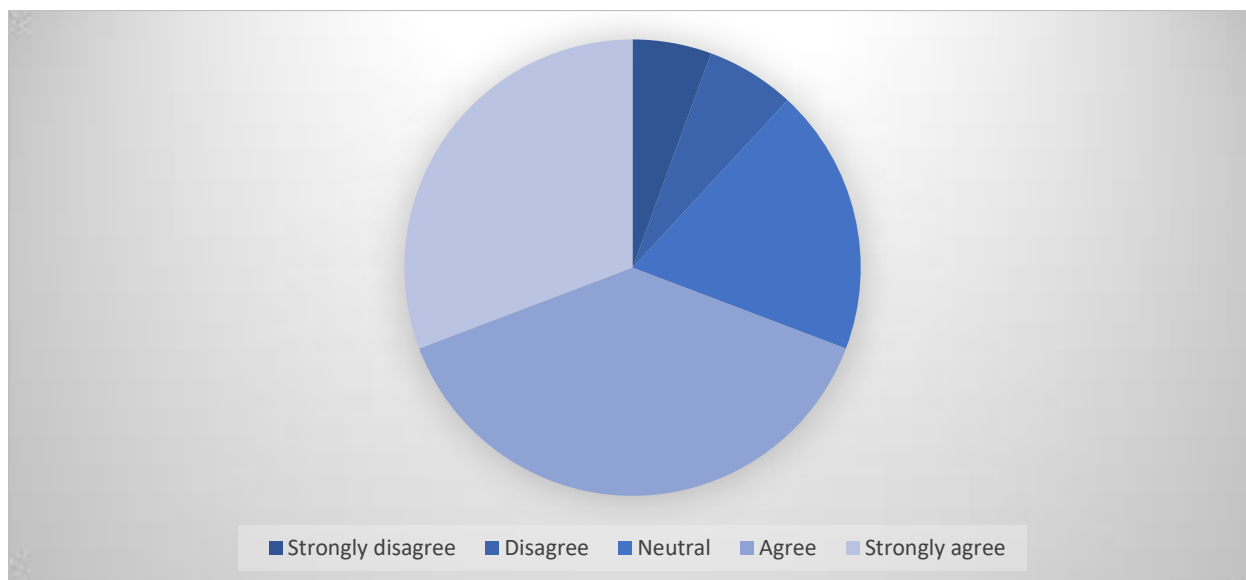


For the next two sections, “Students’ CT skills improvement” and “Students’ English skills improvement”, as shown in figures 7 and 8 respectively, the majority agreed that the intervention has significant impact on acquiring and improving their skills. The result shows that 69% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the intervention enhanced their critical thinking skills, namely understanding the importance of implementing reasoning skills in English courses to better analyze authors’ arguments and support with significant information and elaboration. In

addition, they believed that they learned to differentiate between facts and assumptions, make clearer inferences and develop relevant ideas about the topics under study. As for the second section, 61% believed that their English improved alongside the learning content, as the intervention increased their confidence in using English language to express their thoughts and beliefs orally in live discussions or in written forms. However, neutral answers in both sections were 19% and 26%, while *disagree* responses were 12% and 13% respectively. These results are most probably due to the time limitations of the study, as less able students need more time to be able to use the critical thinking skills smoothly and be comfortable with the constructivist more of learning. Nevertheless, these same students' post tests showed significantly higher grades compared to their pre-tests.

### Figure 7

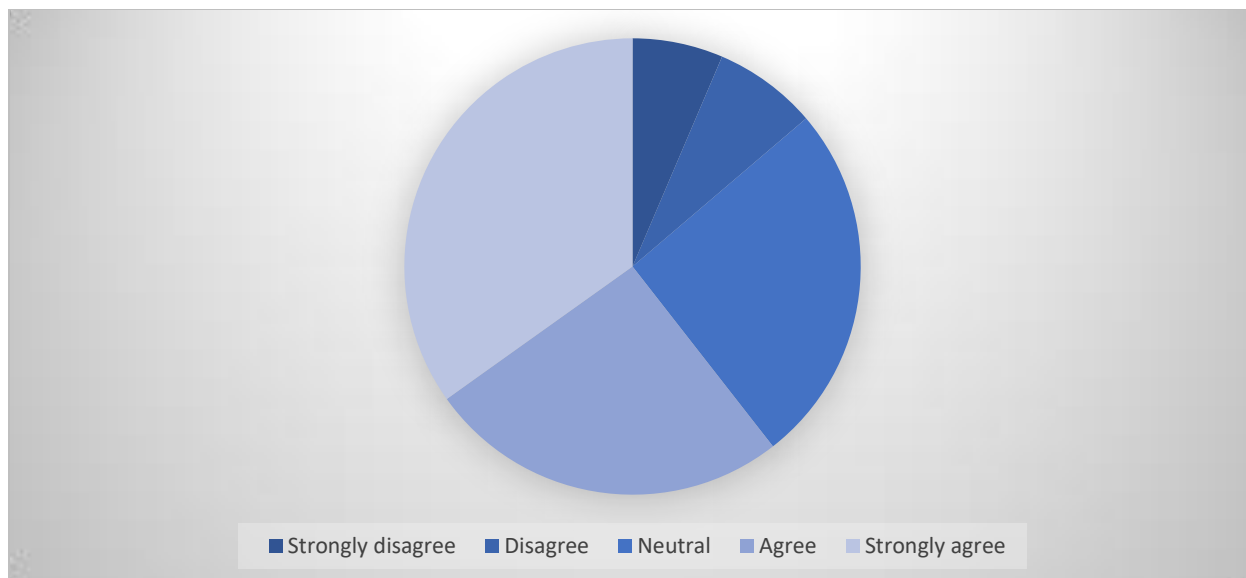
#### *Students' Reasoning Skills Improvement*



### Figure 8

#### *Students' English Skills Improvement*

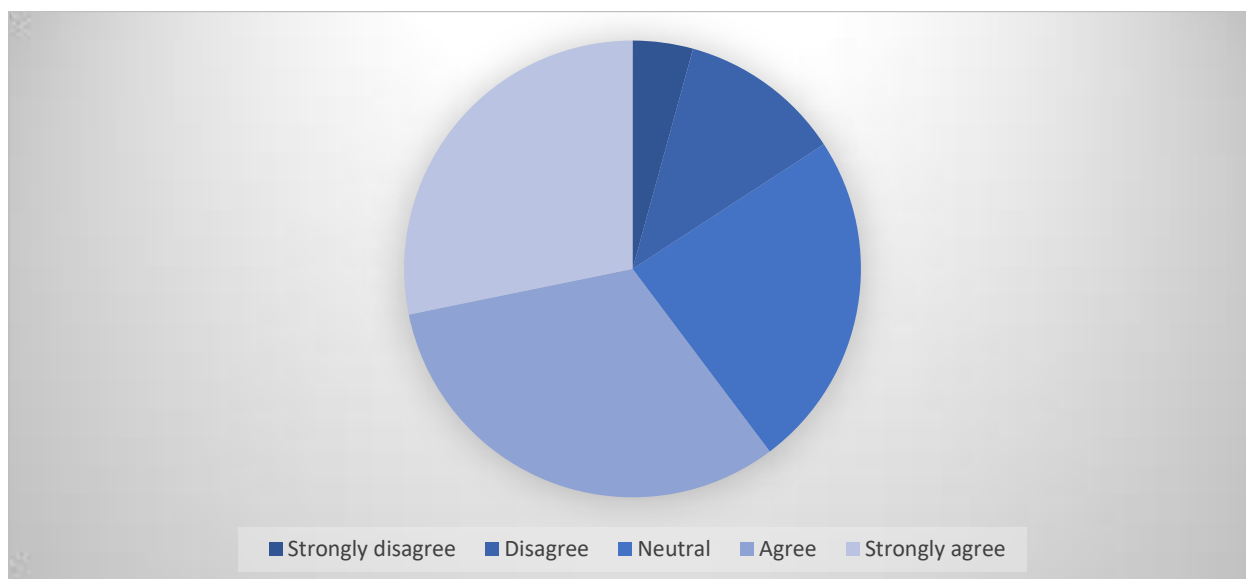




For utilizing literature circles and Socratic discussions as learning techniques, the majority agreed/strongly agreed that these techniques facilitated their learning and their critical thinking enhancement and increased their communication and interaction as they cooperated and collaborated with their peers and the instructor, which also increased their motivation and involvement (figure 9).

### Figure 9

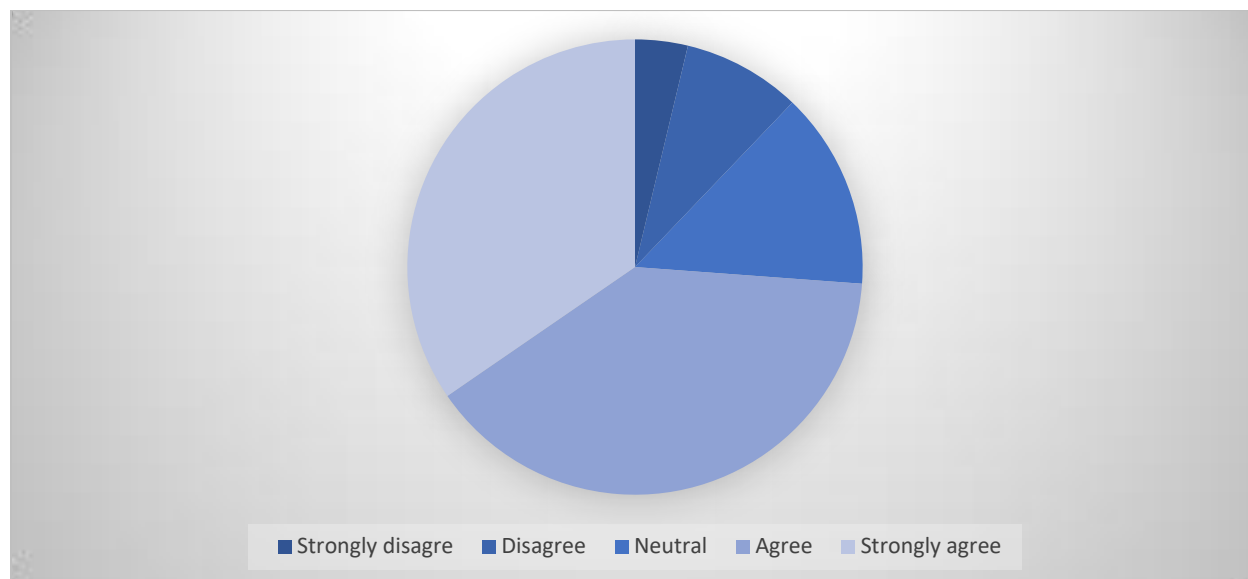
*The Impact of Utilizing Literature Circles & Socratic Discussions on the Participants*



The students confirmed, as shown in their responses, that the instructor challenged them to do their best and provide individualized feedback on their writing, an act that helped them recognize their weaknesses and work on them. 74% of the students was the instructor successful in designing the course for the sake of infusing the critical thinking skills and she clearly introduced the course to them. In addition, she effectively organized and facilitated the group work and discussions (figure 10).

### Figure 10

*Students' Perception on the Instructor's Role*



To conclude, the results of the questionnaire showed that the intervention which was built on the constructivist and infusion approaches for teaching literature and enhancing critical literacy was welcomed by students as their responses were generally positive towards infusing critical thinking into the learning content for a more comprehensive and substantive use of the language. Normally speaking, this is an indicator that the proposed course has been effective in modifying students' attitudes towards literary texts and their abilities in dealing with literary texts and affecting students' habits and activities as ESL learners.

## *Interviews*

Interviews were carried out with all the students; each student was given about ten minutes to answer a set of five questions about their perception of the course. The first question was about the impact of the teaching and learning style applied in the study: “What is your perception of the learning style applied in this course?” Generally, students agreed that the course facilitated collaborative and cooperative learning unlike other courses in which they used just to sit and listen to the lecturers and did not have the courage or the chance to express their ideas during class. Literature circles and Socratic discussions offered challenging conditions for them to engage and express their ideas as stated by student O: “This style of learning is very different from traditional way of teaching and learning we have in most Arab universities, in which typically students listen to their lecturer’s presentations and wait for his/her instructions on what to do”. Also, almost all of the students reported that the various tasks motivated them to search for information from various sources without those sources being predetermined by the teacher. They stated that student-centered learning environment played a significant role in the improving their learning attitudes and outcomes. Following are some students’ responses to the question:

Student A: I'm pleased at how much I've learned from this course. I think this is because I was interested in the literary works and because of being responsible of creating my understanding and knowledge.

Student B: I usually go to SparkNotes and other websites for studying the summary and plot of any literary work. In this course, I knew I was responsible of preparing for my tasks in the literature circles and thus had to produce my own idea and views or I would not be able to defend my answers in front of my classmates. Now I feel more confident about using English language to express my own ideas rather than memorize from online websites.

Students C: Traditional courses usually make me bored and unengaged in learning as the Drs. Or lecturers keep talking all the time and we just have to listen. However, in this new way of learning; I had to search for information by myself

and prepare well for my task. I did not just listen to the lecturer to get the information from her but I create my own views and understanding.

Students D: The different roles in the literature circles made my group members and I search for different types of information using different sources online. We were surprised that we got lots of information in these short talks, much than what we expected. It was interesting because each one presented different type of information. For example, one student would explain some new words, another would relate some events in the story with real life problems and someone would tell us her favorite line in the story that touched her and so on. The more we prepared for these roles and met, the more we learned. I think that the different roles are all important and can together enrich our understanding. I have never studied a course in such a way before.

Student E: As my role was the connector, it was so inspiring for me to talk to people outside the university to collect some information about a certain theme in the novel, discussing learning materials with people around me in real life allowed to make deeper sense of what I read.

Students reported that they were challenged by the tasks of the course, supporting the constructivist notion ‘learning by doing’, which they found useful since they learned a lot from this process, student J said:

The instructor rarely interfered in our talks. However, she challenged us in the response journals to produce better answers than what we did in the first draft. I think supporting us individually while giving us the freedom to work by our own in the class worked more efficiently than if we were following a set of instructions to do during the class. We could understand the novels much through this course.

Students also discussed their findings with each other in their small working groups. In group meetings, all group members talked about the information obtained by exploring and exchanging ideas with other. This was seen by the students as a good way to gain a fuller understanding of the novels, as student K commented:

In our group, all of us had to search for information from different sources. First, we outlined the key issues needed to be addressed in the circle, and then we searched for information everywhere because we thought that doing this was a better way to find out more. We searched for information as much as we could, even though sometimes we all happened to find the same things. We thought that

if each of us searched for just the information on the issues she was responsible for, we would miss some interesting information. In the next group meeting, each member had to summarize what they found including their opinion and give it to all group members. Working in this way helped us to see what each member thought on the same issue.

The students confirmed that they were able to learn from their peers, discuss confusing parts of the text, and engage with novels in new and different ways. These interactions enhanced the students' attitudes toward their own learning; student P said: "reading was too boring for me. I would find it challenging to read any literary work previously and I was never interested in reading for pleasure until I started taking this course." The majority also agreed on the enhanced responsibilities that group work placed on them. They said that because they had to talk in the literature circles, they had to check many sources in order to find some relevant information to their task, which was an important preparation for participating in the Socratic Discussions. Thus, students believed that it was useful to look for and question various sources of information. Examples from students' comments:

Student A: I was happy to address the texts I was reading and tried to find new ways of thinking. I believed that training to think critically would help me to gain logical thinking skills which I could then apply in real life situations.

Student B: I had an opportunity to practice to think critically and to work with other mates in my group. I have learned how to read texts critically in order to be able to hold discussions with my group and in the Socratic discussions. For example, I learned to distinguish between a fact and an opinion, and the author's message and tone.

Student D: I searched many online websites to find more information about the critical lenses we worked on in order to be able to argue better during the Socratic discussions, I wrote down all my thoughts and supported them with different quotes. I was excited to read more about the critical lenses online to understand better what thinkers in each school believe, which was the first time for me to search for such information for learning, I had lots of information that helped me to understand better.

Student E: Having a chance for us to express our ideas is an effective way for learning because we received a variety of ideas from different groups in the class, who have different thoughts, ideas and experiences. Listening to others' opinions and using these opinions helped to improve my understanding and expand my perception on the themes in the novels.

Student F: Using critical lenses is very interesting. These different subjects made us think of different points of view, they also were very useful for us when doing the writing tasks too, they made us think about one point from different perspectives.

Student B: The literature circles and Socratic discussions were my favorite part of the course because they really helped me to clarify the ideas I thought of at home, and these discussions sometimes changed my mind.

Student N: Working in literature circles and Socratic discussions were good ways for learning as we exchanged and obtained various ideas. I liked this way of learning because I learned about the ideas of others. Sometimes we are led to good questions which were unexpected. Before this, I had no questioning skills.

Student J: These techniques were useful for our learning. Every new week our thinking skills improved more. I felt that our discussions were real life ones, almost all were serious in presenting their thoughts and points of view, and with thinking about others' answers. They were enthusiastic about working in the literature circles and questioning in the Socratic discussions and they produced lots of interesting ideas.

Moreover, students found that group meetings developed their self-confidence and understanding of others. Their comments reveal that they learned to listen to others' opinions to know more about the topic of the discussion, most students said that they became more confident about participating in class discussions using the English language, which was beneficial supporting Ellsworth's (1992) statement that students' confidence is an essential factor in engaging in self-directed learning. For example, student K explained the growth in her confidence as the course progressed:

At first, I felt I had very little to say in the literature circle discussions, but the more I got into it, the more confident I felt about my ideas and thoughts and by the end of course, I felt like I could say what I wanted to say without feeling embarrassed of making mistakes. I have become more confident about my

thinking because I applied the critical thinking skills I learnt. I had never thought about my opinions or thoughts of a literary work before I participated in this course. The reasoning skills and critical lenses really made me look at everything from a wider perspective, they helped me understand the literary works much better. It was a very useful and enjoyable to discuss the novels using the critical lenses and to express our understanding and discuss our thoughts freely in the class.

Student G: Working in a group made me more mature. I had to listen to others' opinions. We discussed our work and got various ideas.

Student H: We had to listen to each other and give reasons if we did not agree with some ideas. I feel now more confident when I express my ideas because I have learnt reasoning skills that help me to explain them.

Student I: Socratic discussions encouraged me to ask questions. Before I used not to ask any questions because I was afraid that I would be wrong. Now I do not feel fearful when asking questions anymore.

Additionally, they mentioned that the applied learning style required them to engage in extensive preparation for and involvement in discussions. For instance, student F said:

In the beginning of the course, I had problems because I had to read lots of sources and do the written tasks. Because we had to write, we needed to read more than we are used to, otherwise we would just read quickly, and not to think much. Working in this way has improved my language and my friends and I could see what each thought on the same issue.

Further, Students found the interaction in the literature circles and Socratic discussions beneficial because it made them responsible of their learning. They enjoyed their different but complimentary roles in the literature circles because they learnt how to work together using various kinds of information, how to argue meaningfully and how to agree or disagree with others' responses. literature circles provided students with the group dynamic, students were required to depend on one another and make decisions as a group. Without each student' participation, the group could not succeed in meeting the outcomes and expectations of the course. Here are comments by some students on this point:

Student D: I found myself making new friends and talking to them but about the novels. It was exciting to connect the novels to our real-life stories. Usually, I passively listen to my lecturers, but in this course, I felt refreshed and motivated, and gave me a chance to learn from others so much. We rarely get to do that in other courses.

Student K: I felt more responsibility when looking for main ideas to be able to discuss and to work with friends in my own group. I decided to take part in the project because I wanted to work in a group, and to have a chance to discuss things with others. I wanted to be able to express ideas courageously in class, learning how to give reasons more appropriately.

Student O: I had to search for information by myself and worked with other members in my circle. We had to share ideas and discuss the information we got. I learned to work with others as a group and to be very punctual and well prepared. We had to listen to each other and give reasons if we did not agree on some ideas.

This emphasis on preparation prior discussions have probably helped students better be active and contribute in the class. Student O said: “Talking about what I read prior meetings helped me a lot understand the novels.” In addition, students mentioned that the applied techniques provided them with the opportunity to listen to their peers more intently and thus added to their understanding of the text, other students mention that exchanging information with other members in literature circles and Socratic discussions enriched their understanding:

Student A: Now I can somehow think critically and involve in group work effectively, and this is very useful. I liked the Socratic Discussions, all students shared interesting ideas. But this required hard work.

Student C: Working in literature circles and Socratic discussions required me to be very well prepared, I had to work very hard in order to participate, but it was fun. In the first two weeks of the course, I found it somehow tough. After starting to work in groups and understanding our roles clearly, I found that I have learned a lot from this learning technique. The discussions we had in the class were very fun and very productive. I hope to participate in such courses in the future.

Student J: Working in-group was a good way as I got various ideas. I liked group discussions in my literature circle and in Socratic discussions because we learned about the ideas of others. Sometimes we got good questions which were unexpected. Before this, I had no questioning skills.



Student E: Working in literature circles or in Socratic discussions taught me how to learn from others so that my classmates and I could work better together. I have learned how to organize information and to ask meaningful questions. We could share ideas when we worked in our literature circle which me learn more. I have learned to listen to different opinions and work cooperatively with my friends in my circle. Apart from studying the novels, I learned to work with others in a supportive manner.

A group of the students stated that at the beginning of the course, they had difficulties with the course as they felt that everything was unfamiliar, and the demands of the course seemed to be tough. However, since the third week, they reported that course became enjoyable:

Student H: It was exciting. This style of learning I had not tried before. It was somehow tiring and demanding but also worthwhile. I can now write better in English and think in a critical way. Before, my learning style was ineffective.

Student J: I worked very hard in this course, but I enjoyed a lot, I felt motivated when I was fully involved in the discussions. It was useful but tiring because we had to prepare a lot before each class, but it was fun and useful.

Student C: These discussions were useful for our learning. Every new week our thinking skills improved more. I felt that our discussions were real life ones, all the students were serious in presenting their thoughts and oints of view, and with thinking about others' answers. All students were enthusiastic about working in the literature circles and questioning in the Socratic discussions and they produced lots of interesting ideas.

Student L: I have learned how to organize information and to ask meaningful questions. I have learned to listen to different opinions and work cooperatively with my friends in my circle.

Student H: I have learned to be open-minded and to listen to other people's opinions. I also learned that a good relationship between students working together is very important. Another important thing is that we learned how to cope with all challenges and to work cooperatively.

Student J: Working in a group made me more motivated and comfortable when participating in the class. It was fun to listen to my group's opinions and discuss with them my thoughts. Sharing our thoughts and come up with various ideas was something new to do in our classes.

Student N: It was a good way for working together in literature circles, working with friends made me feel free and confident during the discussions. I could express my ideas among other members better than in class.

Student F: We had a chance to read and practice much more than in other courses. This course allowed us to learn more and to be more skillful in thinking critically, reading, writing, listening, and studying in general. Sometimes the members did not agree on the same ideas but finally after discussions we would come up with the best conclusions.

Almost all the students agreed that the classroom atmosphere was warm, relaxing, and friendly. This was very important to them because they felt comfortable in asking questions or exchanging different and sometimes conflicting ideas, which made them enthusiastic about their learning. Besides, the diversity of activities that students undertook demonstrates that the course environment was proved to be successful in its attempt to help students to expand their understandings.:

Student L: I had to work very hard but I felt comfortable in class. It was different from other courses. Here I did not feel stressed. Time passed very quickly I think. I can say that I have gained new useful skills and improved a lot in English since I participated in the course.

Student B: The classes were very relaxing, I felt comfortable when thinking and asking questions, much more than in other subjects. Unlike other classes, where I feel that do not want to ask questions because I am afraid that they would be wrong. The warm atmosphere in this class made me feel comfortable to ask and talk about my viewpoints freely.

Student E: The atmosphere in the classroom was very relaxing which was totally different from other courses in which students usually sit and listen to the lecturers and do not have opportunities to express their ideas. That way of learning makes students, including me, less enthusiastic about learning. However, in this course the students had to search for information by themselves and create their own knowledge. We did not just sit down waiting for the lecturer to speak.

Thus, these comments by all the participants about the learning style applied in this course show that they represent a sample of the class community defined by Shaffer and Anunden as "a dynamic whole that emerges when a group participates in common practices, depends upon one

another, makes decisions together, identifies themselves as part of something larger than the sum of their individual relationships and commits themselves to their own, one another's and the groups' wellbeing" (1993, p.3).

The second question was about the usefulness of applying critical thinking to their study: "How useful do you think is the critical thinking theory applied in this course? and could it be applied to other subjects and in your real-life experiences?" All students commented that their thinking skills have significantly improved after taking this course, and they mentioned that developing critical thinking was useful to their study and even to their future career. Examples of such feedback come from the following student:

Student D: Prior every meeting I used to search for more information related to the new topic and tried to apply the critical thinking elements instead of blindly accepting others' opinions and comments. The course helped me to enhance my critical thinking skills by learning the elements, standards, and traits of critical thinkers.

They also acknowledged the importance and necessity to apply critical thinking in other courses, here is a quote from student P: "Applying critical thinking into studying the novels enabled me to apply these skills to other literary works and even to real life experience." Other students also reported that they enjoyed the new challenges. The applied critical thinking skills and lenses made them motivated to work harder and more cooperatively. They claimed they found the use of literature and critical lenses to foster critical thinking an enjoyable learning process, as giving them the freedom to expand their sources of information and references, then discussing the various findings in the class was very motivating. They also claimed that the use of critical lenses introduced them to new ways of thinking as many contrasting opinions used to

emerged in their discussions. Following are some of the students' comments and feedbacks on this point:

Student A: Studying the novels critically enabled me to have a deeper understanding of the works I could have more things to talk about during the class, as we could connect the novels to our real life and experiences. It was very fun and useful. I feel now I am better user of English after practicing these activities.

Student B: It is very challenging to think in a critical manner but very interesting. I feel that I want to dig deep and uncover hidden meanings in the texts, not the teacher asks me to do so.

The third question was about the impact of the intervention on the quality of the students' learning: "What is your perception of the learning outcomes and knowledge you gained after completing this course?" Students reported that their engagement in the learning tasks and discussions helped them to enhance their learning outcomes. Students reported a number of changes after participating in the course as shown in these examples:

Student O: The most important thing is that I fully understand how to understand a literary text from different perspectives. I now know a lot more about the novels from the information obtained by critical lenses. I believe this course was a great experience for me. it was also very useful for improving my English language.

Student K: From this course, we not only learned about the method and skills of critical thinking while studying literature, but also how to think critically in all domains of our life. These skills also make us more conscious about our ideas and beliefs.

Other students added that this course make them enjoy reading literature and understand it better, especially in reading in English without getting a translated copy, as they said that this would rarely happen before. They also mentioned that they their writing has significantly improved:

Student D: Learning in this way is very useful, I think. I have changed a lot. Now I read with more pleasure and can understand more. Before this course I did not like to read literary texts in English because I felt that I need to translate a wide range of vocabulary and this is boring and time consuming. Now I can better identify the author's meaning without translating every and each word, so I feel more comfortable. In this course, I actually read and worked more compared to other courses, but I enjoyed it and I learn a lot.

Student N: Now I would like to read more as I can think better about what I read. I feel I am more confident to talk about various issues, that exist in our real life. Before I used to be quite in classes and not interested in talking about such issues as they were the themes of the novels that I had no idea about. My participation in this study benefited me to think critically.

Student G: Before this, I could not identify the main idea when reading, but in this class we had to read in order to write, so I learned to arrange all the information and to think clearly. My writing skills improved greatly. I gained good marks in many subjects in the mid-term examinations. I think it was a result of having practiced critical reading and writing techniques. I then used the new skills in my examination papers.

Student J: It was challenging. I have learned a lot from this course. I can think more deeply and broadly than before. I believe my writing skills have also improved greatly comparing to other skills. I learnt to think thoroughly when preparing to write.

Student K: I now know how to think critically when reading. Before this I could not question the things I read. I believed that everything in written texts was true and could be trusted. This was the first time in my life that I could analyze texts, and had opportunities to practice critical reading. I have learned to think critically and learned to notice things in written texts.

Student O: I think I have changed a lot from a student who was not interested in learning new things or researching information, into a person who is interested in searching and seeking access to various sources of information much more than before. This is because of the variety of perspectives I studied in this course and the critical thinking skills I learnt, that facilitate my learning a lot.

Student P: I have learned a lot more about reading different information about the same text. now I can explore a literary text using different perspectives. This method of teaching and learning enhanced my understanding and perception of literature.

Student M: My reading and thinking skills have improved a lot. In the past, I could not find the main ideas when reading. I can now understand more when I read because I have been practicing the critical reading skills during this course.

The important thing was that we wanted to learn. The big problem was “what would happen if we did not learn anything from our readings?” Even though at times we could not find answers to our questions, we learned more in the process of searching for more information. It was a good exercise for us to practice critical thinking by ourselves, instead of just listening to the lecturer the whole time.

Student I: I think this course was successful because now I can think more and I have more things to say, I know how to think about something and how to collect information about it. In the small groups and class discussions, I could see that many students who were very shy and quite at the beginning soon started to use the reasoning skills. I believe that I have developed important questioning skills that I can use in other courses effectively. This is the best thing of this experiment.

Student O: I have learned to be open-minded and to listen to other students’ opinions and accept different or opposite ones. Good communication with classmates is very useful, it helped me to cope with all ambiguities in texts. I strongly believe that thinking about the novels and working together as a team is better than doing this by myself.

Student P: I think critical thinking encourages us to think deeper about the different literary lenses and to deeper understand the novels from various perspectives. We really learned about a lot of issues that we overlooked in the various critical lenses, these lenses are related to our real life. Thus, we got better understanding of the novels due to the lenses applied in the course.

Student H: It was a chance to learn and practice the reasoning skills, and to discover the differences in thinking among us. Because the topics we discussed exist in our real life, we were excited to search for more information, in order to justify our opinions. This was very useful and very fun too!

Student A: Critical thinking was useful, many times I was so surprised how other students connect the novels to their real life in ways I never thought of. Learning how to apply the reasoning elements and standards was very beneficial, I learnt how to agree or disagree with the points presented by others, indeed critical thinking made our discussions meaningful and deep. Sometimes I changed my opinions on some issues after looking at them from different perspectives presented by other students.

Student M: The novels tackled interesting topics. It was so motivating to learn in such a way. It is the first course that I worked that much but I enjoyed doing my tasks and listening to others. I would like to practice critical thinking skills in other courses too. I usually do not have a chance to learn to think critically; I just do what I am told to do it. But I want to be a good critical thinker.

Student C: It is a very good idea to have this course because it is a good chance for students gain various important skills, which are very useful for their future work. For individual work, we had the chance to express our own ideas and learned how to support them. In group work, students had very interesting ideas and issues to discuss, it was a very interesting cooperation.

Student N: There are many issues presented in the critical lenses that are important issues in our real life. We had to think deep when answering the questions in the journals. We had to correct our mistakes by ourselves, that could happen many times for one question, It was interesting although very challenging for us to discover our underlined mistakes and try to correct them ourselves.

Students added that the response journals allowed them to approach the task of writing in a manner where success did not depend on teachers' evaluation or correction, but on their ability to think again about their writing to improve it and produce better pieces of writing:

Student F: The questions in the journals are interesting and made me think deeply. They taught me how to read a question carefully and discover the correct answer for it by using the hints mentioned by the instructor. It helped me a lot.

Student A: The course is quite good. I learnt how to convince my teacher about my ideas in my writing. Reasoning skills teach me how organize my thoughts and to write well organized paragraphs.

Student D: The course provides me with a good opportunity to express my ideas, opinions as well as improving my English language abilities. The response journal questions were short tasks that help improving my writing a lot.

Student K: I think that this course is time consuming but it was useful for me as I have learned a lot of important skills that can help me in my academic study and real life.

The fourth question was about their perception of the instructor's role as a supportive guide: "What do you think about the instructor's role in this course? How effective and supportive was it to your learning?" The students said that they felt close and comfortable when discussing any relevant information with the instructor. This is another feature that encouraged students to learn. They also thought that as the instructor who listened to them with an open-minded manner this could enhance their learning process:

Student C: The instructor was friendly and very open-minded when listening to the students. She did not act as though she was the only person who knows the correct things in the class. The students had a chance to learn by themselves, which I think is very effective and meaningful.

Student E: In this course, the instructor acted as is a facilitator, not prompter. The students felt comfortable in thinking and expressing their ideas without being impressed whether they are right or wrong. Having the instructor as a guider was very useful. At first, we would not know to start without her instructions and guidance

Student H: The instructor helped us a lot in the process of learning during the course through encouraging us to think and discover; unlike other courses in which we are asked to memorize the information that lecturers provide to us.

Student N: The instructor gave me lots of good ideas including how to develop my answers in the response journal. She encouraged us to consider things more broadly and think critically.

Student O: The instructor was very helpful because she gave me lots of good tips including how to develop my paragraph and how to apply the reasoning skills. Her presence was very important and very helpful during the course because her tips or suggestions were useful for our discussions.

Student F: The instructor taught me how to organize my thoughts and ideas, she also helped me to think critically about the works, I learnt how to get new ideas which I did not use to think about. She was able to organize the course and encourage us to work actively without imposing her own ideas.

The last question was about the limitations of the intervention from the students' perception: "What do you think are the limitations/challenges of this course?" Some points were drawn by the students as limitations of the proposed course, namely time consumption, and challenges of group work. Some students stated that the course was time consuming and somehow demanding on them unlike other courses.

Students B: Time was the only problem I faced in this course. I could have improved much better in both critical thinking and language if I have more time to work harder. All the activities in this course were very useful and improved my language skills, but it is really time consuming. This course requires a lot of time to complete all tasks and prepare well. I think thinking critically is time consuming.



Student C: I think that this course is very helpful but should not be taken with many other many courses because it takes time to be familiar with the new learning style and applying the critical thinking skills. It requires more time and hard work.

Student N: Such a course needs to be taken with no more than two other courses because it is time consuming. In the beginning, I was excited, but later on I started to feel that the course is very demanding, and it was taking a lot of time compared to other courses. So, I found it somehow tough.

This claim could be attributed to the target objectives of the course which emphasize individual critical thinking in student-oriented learning environment, as this learning approach, unlike traditional courses which are based on passive learning memorization of information, is demanding on students in terms of time and effort.

Another challenge mentioned by students was with group work. The participants reported few problems that arose during their group work as elaborated in the following statements:

Student F: Some group members had low level of responsibility as they used to come late sometimes which delay the start of the meetings. Not all group members were active in the group dicussions or some students repeat same ideas so they did not have new points of view to discuss.

Student L: At the beginning of the course our work was not really organized because we were not used to working in this way. We were not very familiar with Literature Circles and Socratic Discussions. But then we become familiar and started moving smoother. Not all the students were active, and some used to say very little. And sometimes some students had side talks which were not related to the discussions and wasted time.

Student O: In the first weeks, I was not very confident to present my opinions or points of view to others because I have never done this before, but near the end of the course I felt more confident.

In conclusion, the participants' responses can be summed up in the following points: the proposed course was useful and supportive in terms of promoting English skills and critical thinking skills, and hence, should be recommended to other university students; however, they

said that the course would be ideal for English language and literature students who are interested in promoting their thinking and skills, and are willing to work hard to enrich their knowledge and learning experience, as it is more demanding and require more time and hard work more than other courses because it is based on mandatory tasks that should be accomplished individually prior each class, so they would consume a lot of time to accomplish them.

The responses varied in a way or another, yet, they all agreed that the course has improved their thinking and language skills, they reported that improving their critical thinking and language literacy have improved their competence in collaborative and cooperative learning, and self-confidence such as thinking of multiple viewpoints and encouraging and supporting their classmates. It was apparent that students started to have awareness of the importance and role of critical thinking in their learning process. This makes possible transitioning to more practice and application of critical thinking in their future study. On the other hand, their response to the disadvantages of the course should be seen normal as they generally reflect students' different learning styles, language proficiency levels and personal and academic needs.

Ultimately, the results from interviews show that while there is much yet to do, the critical constructivist approach taken in this research has actively engaged students in critical thinking through the medium of literature and that their perceptions is positively correlated with the aims of the intervention, thus validating a positive evaluation of research question two. They also support the findings of the fieldnotes questionnaire, which present significant improvements in their critical thinking skills and language skills.

### *Post Questionnaires and Interviews Discussion*

The questionnaires and interviews were used to report students' perception of the course, and to confirm the data received in the tests and field notes. The results of these two tools indicate that students have improved in listening and reading, as shown in their responses. Their responses also refer to their improvement in taking ownership of their English, namely listening and reading efficiency, besides their productive skills. The responses obtained from these tools, supporting the results of other tools, confirm that the students have enjoyed learning literature in this proposed course and were motivated to participate in the learning methods used, which are literature circles and Socratic discussions, as they confirmed that using such methods and techniques enhance their sources of information. For instance, they suggested that using critical lenses presented newly thinking methods for the contrasting opinions emerged across groups. These results are also supported by previous studies. For example, King (1995) revealed that teaching Socratic questioning through generic questioning stimuli is an effective motive for learners' critical thinking. In addition, Alexander (2020) showed the importance of literature circle discussions as it is not similar to any talk and when designed precisely, they can harness the power of talk to inspire and enhance students' thinking and motivate their learning and understanding.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Conclusion Principal**

This research argues for developing critical thinking and improving English language literacy in Arab students in the English language and literature department residing in Saudi Arabia, aiming to make them successful learners, skilled users of English language and competent 21<sup>st</sup> century professionals who can think reasonably and effectively. English literature is proved in this study to be a very effective material that has the potential in developing both critical thinking and the linguistic competence of Arab students. As presented in the introduction chapter, there is a demand for fostering critical thinking in Arab learners, namely in the English Language and literature department, as the medium of learning is a foreign language for them and many are not highly proficient in using English, which usually causes surface-level learning; Arab students in this department rarely get opportunities to express their understanding and ideas nor actively practice the English language skills, due to their keenness to teacher-centered learning approaches, and this plays a vital role in preventing the majority from engaging in thinking critically (Johnston, et al., 2011).

Consequently, this study aimed to confirm that skills of critical thinking are vital in developing their second/foreign language abilities and their learning outcomes; Besides, it investigated the need to adopt in depth student centered learning strategies, techniques and skills to enhance deep thinking and learning. Towards accomplishing this purpose, this study attempted to propose a course design that integrated: learning content (English novels), language competencies (the four skills of English language) and critical thinking (Paul-Elder's reasoning

elements and standards). As the results of the treatment proved, these approaches and techniques could effectively enrich the learning experience among various levels of students and provided opportunities for stress-free and lively interaction for all students, especially the less able ones. The proposed course has triggered them to think about their own thinking (Halpern, 2003) and to learn how to learn (Shelyakina, 2015); as by the end of the course the majority of participants asserted that the proposed course was effective in fostering new skills they have never experienced before, namely in critical thinking, and that they have become aware of their thinking and proper learning; as well, they become better users of English language.

The learning techniques applied in this course, namely literature circles and Socratic discussions, have prompted students to analyze, compare, synthesize and justify. Moreover, engaging students in critical thinking activities outside the classroom, such as the critical reading and writing activities, were equally effective to encourage the habits of critical thinking as an extended classroom instruction. The infusion approach (Ennis, 1998) was selected to achieve the aim of implementing critical thinking to the current learning curricula, that students study the same learning materials but in a new innovative way. Therefore, this study would conclude with the possibility of infusing and developing critical thinking into English language and literature syllabi and curricula in Saudi universities.

### **Summary of the Finding**

As discussed in the introduction chapter, despite efforts made in the field of teaching English to Arab students in Saudi Arabia, the output gained in terms of critical thinking enhancement and language competence is still below expectations. This study suggested that this low achievement could be due the ineffective or insufficient proposed solutions. The proposed a remedy in this study, a literature-based course for critical thinking was designed, set, and taught

to a sample taken from an English language and literature department in one private university in Saudi Arabia. To measure the effectiveness of the treatment. Several tools were applied: pre-post questionnaires, post interviews, pre-post writing tests, writing activities and fieldnotes in order to expand the scope and enrich the vision of this study. The proposed course had a positive impact on students' critical thinking and English language competence as the results showed that it has contributed in developing both in the participants significantly.

On one hand, improvement in critical thinking skills was noted by the end of the course and it was proved through the results of the treatment. It is concluded that the concise definition of critical thinking applied in the study and the comprehensive explanation of the applied learning tools and materials led the participants to gradually demonstrate a deep understanding and effective application of critical thinking in course, supporting Mehta and Al-Mahrouqi's (2014) claim that gaining a proper definition of critical thinking is essential in raising students' awareness of the importance of its practical implications in learning, such as being engaged in decision-making and problem-solving activities. Otherwise, if students are not able to define what critical thinking means, they are often unable to concentrate on developing and activating its skills and traits effectively (Paul, 1990). Therefore, it was essential and central to foster a direct definition of critical thinking and set explicit instruction and activities for developing its skills in an active learning context. Respectively, the participants not only had a clear idea of what these skills involved, but they also became able to put them into practice.

Moreover, the findings of this study indicate that the applied learning methods and techniques were very effective in fostering critical thinking. Using open-ended questions in the Socratic discussions and the higher order thinking questions in the Response journals were effective tools that promoted active learning and led to meaningful classroom interaction. These

methods could stimulate the participants' thinking skills, merits, and traits, which are recognized as the key components of critical thinking (Paul, 1996). In addition, the activation of using English language critically was greatly effective in improving students' language abilities. This was first worked out by activating critical reading, as this skill has a higher capacity in developing critical perspectives; critical reading enabled students to highlight, emphasize and articulate their own ideas in order for them to be critical about specific aspects (Bailin, et al., 1999), and consequently it contributed to developing their critical thinking by applying and maximizing the use of higher thinking skills in classroom interaction; students were given opportunities to interact with the text and deeply think about it, rather than just read it superficially; this study concludes that good readers should be critical thinkers and critical thinkers should be good readers. Second, the writing tasks in the Response journals had also the potential for fostering students' critical thinking. This skill has reflected the interrelation between critical thinking and substantive writing and proved the role of critical thinking in enriching the writing skill, as implementing well-designed writing assignments plays an important role in achieving this purpose. Besides, allowing more time for students to work on ideas for writing, using a multiple-step writing process often has the advantage of involving such thought-provoking activities as brainstorming and instructor's hints, which triggered the students into sufficient interaction that contributes to the development of multi-perspective thinking. In fact, sufficient brainstorming and the instructor's feedbacks were to be beneficial in developing and improving ideas and language. Therefore, speaking of the proposed course within the context of critical reading and writing competences, the qualitative and quantitative findings proved that the proposed course has been effective in promoting communicative critical writing competence on

the part of participants. This proof is true of all the writing tasks and tests conducted for study purposes.

In addition, the proposed course also included literature circles and Socratic questioning in order to enhance learners' critical thinking as well as their listening and speaking skills; the positive results of these two techniques supports King's claim (1995) that generic questioning prompts is effective in promoting students' critical thinking. The participants have realized that creating and building new knowledge is their responsibility. For example, performing their roles in the literature circles in which they discussed vocabulary, passages that were interesting or unclear and the authors' intentions or hidden messages. This technique made them feel that they were in a small community within the classroom; they said in the interviews, talking about their roles in the novels was one of the best ways to comprehend what they had read. Also participating in the Constructivist Socratic discussions and expressing their views and beliefs, the participants have become familiarized with the techniques of critical talks, they learnt how to bring their personal and real-life experiences to the classroom, (Macknish, 2011). Creating a constructivist learning atmosphere where the students freely practiced a set of reasoning elements, standards and traits was the key element in developing their critical thinking because as suggested by Lunenburg (2011), Richardson (2006) and Vygotsky(1978), to name few, that the interaction between students is central to the learning process. Since constructivist learning involve students in the decision-making processes within learner-centered practices, the participants had greater opportunities to transform into learners who are conscious about their learning process in critical ways. The class discussions provided a social and academic safe-haven for the participants and developed their thinking to multiple perspectives and understandings. Such learning methods and techniques strengthened the personal bonds among



the participants and improved the classroom community relationships, and ultimately improve the learning outcomes. The various qualitative and quantitative tools applied in this course to collect data offered an adequate evaluation of the effectiveness of the treatment as well as an awareness of the participants' attitudes towards the proposed course.

As the proposed course provided students with opportunities to seek intellectual stimulation and peer support and learning without being judged or restricted; the course compelled cooperative and collaborative learning with less stress, less teacher instruction and control, and mates scaffolding and this helped them to instead of using their mother language to practice English more comfortably and confidently. The participants interviews referred to Arab students need to find more effective and new ways of learning that is contrary to the passive and rote-learning practices which they are used to in teacher-centered classrooms.

In conclusion, speaking of the proposed course within the context of communicative critical use of language, the statistical findings of this study give evidence that the course has been effective in promoting critical thinking and language competence on the part of participants. As well, it created a motivating and exciting learning atmosphere for them.

### **Contributions of this research**

This study attempts to demonstrate that critical thinking and language competence are two essential and complimentary parts of deep and substantive learning. Basing on these two major parts, students should create their own understandings by engaging in social interaction in and out the classroom (Larochelle et al., 2009; Brooks & Brooks, 1999): their interaction contributes to foster the interrelationship between language and thinking because the development of language influences the development of thinking and vice versa (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Michelle & Myles, 1989); hence, language teaching could have a higher capacity

for developing critical thinking than other majors. This study strives to establish a course that aimed at benefitting the Arab students studying English language and literature at achieving these aims by contributing to raising awareness about the need of fostering critical thinking and consequently language competence, and identifying several important teaching practices that are central for fostering critical thinking and improve language abilities, such as the effectiveness of learner-centered practices. Most importantly, the proposed treatment can be incorporated into any existing/future curricula.

This research hopes that developing critical thinking skills will contribute to lessen the various existing challenges that lead to lack of achievement of learner goals and lessen fresh graduate students' opportunities in finding work. Towards this purpose, this research offers a comprehensive body of knowledge that prompts the need to integrate critical thinking and improve language competence as an educational policy in the context of Saudi Arabian universities. **Limitations of this research**

Some important concerns related to the study methodology emerge from this research. First, the sample of the study was to some extent small, as the participants were volunteers; thus, it was challenging to ask them to join the course as an extra one to their current courses without getting any credits for their participation. Bigger sample would have enriched the research data and findings, and so widening the research lens. However, the results of the treatment showed that this limitation is diminished to a large extent due to the diversity of research tools, which enabled the researcher to investigate the significance of the study effectively. Second, as several authors and researchers (e.g., Yang & Chou, 2008) have suggested, critical thinking cultivation requires a longer period. The duration of this study was somehow short and the researcher would suggest longer period of time in order to get better results. These limitations might be addressed

through conducting a similar research project with a larger sample, for a longer duration, and/or at a different setting.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

As the findings of this study suggest, focusing on the development of critical thinking is an effective approach to improve students' learning outcomes as well as their English language competence. The findings of this study have led to other important issues and conclusions which need further investigations and research. Some of these key issues can include:

1. The need to raise stakeholders', namely teachers and instructors, awareness about the importance and significance of fostering critical thinking within English language and literature courses and prepare them for teaching and enhancing it in their students. Their readiness to foster these skills through implementing constructivist learner-centered approaches would make their role more effective. Investigating teachers and instructors' awareness of that teacher- student and student-student interactions are key aspects for building concise knowledge and enabling comprehensive learning allowing students to have more freedom and confidence interacting and engaging in the classroom would be a very important issue to tackle. Further studies and research on these teaching/learning methods and skills would allow the shift from the traditional teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching and practices, a shift that confirms the change in teachers' view to knowledge from being objective to subjective; indicating that this shift about their perception of nature of knowledge shape their teaching (Borg, 2003). Therefore, preparing teachers to be more skilled as well as motivated practitioners of critical thinking would enhance their own knowledge about critical thinking and the constructivist teaching/learning methods and techniques; when teachers join their

students' knowledge construction process and make the learning content and materials relevant, they can find out their students' strengths and weaknesses in order to help them achieve their learning goals. And as proved in this study, making learning more relevant to students would increase students' motivation and encourage active participation in learning, which without, developing critical thinking can be challenging. Hence, inspiring, engaging and guiding their learners to search and construct their own knowledge and become critical thinkers and making the learning content and materials relevant, teachers should be trained about how to find out their students' strengths and weaknesses to help them achieve their learning goals. Teachers should seek to employ what may work most efficiently with a particular type of learners under certain circumstances. Using a variety of purposeful methods and techniques is necessary to meet students' different learning styles and requirements. Therefore, they should be skilled at modelling 'how' to think rather than 'what' to think (Paul, 1993).

2. The need to redesign and remodel the English language and literature courses/curricula to incorporate critical thinking in a constructivist learning context. For example, utilizing the proposed course to other English language and literature courses would be of great use in this regard, taking into account the discussed concerns in previous chapters regarding remodeling and redesigning courses, such as the selection process of appropriate literary texts and genres, language complexity, age group, variety, cultural appropriateness, length, authenticity, relative contemporary and human values. These issues would be some of the concerns to be considered throughout the selection process. In addition, issues related to assessment and evaluation should be carefully designed, such as reliability, validity, practicality, and credibility of these assessments; also a

variety of assessment types that might include teachers' assessment of their students, and self-assessment; as shown in this study, varying the types of assessment is efficient in achieving self-directed learning, raising students' awareness of language, as well as increasing motivation and goal orientation in terms of learning. Besides, self-assessment should not be excluded to students, instructors are also recommended to self-evaluate their instructional performance regularly in order to ensure the expected performance. Therefore, it is essential for all parties involved-whether curriculum designers, instructors, students, examinees, or researchers, to bear in mind that the key solution to any single problematic issue within critical thinking for learning is summed up in two key points: exposure and practice. The more students are exposed to adequate critical thinking skills as well as have meaningful practice, the better the results and outcomes will be. To maximize the effectiveness of exposure and practice, involvement has a significant role to play; active and effective involvement requires motivation and interaction. This issue should be widely addressed in order to reach significant conclusions.

### **Concluding Word**

It is the researcher's pleasure at this stage to state that this current research has been of genuine use, enjoyment, and support to her as a lecturer in the department of English language and literature: It has been of genuine use in the sense that she has investigated a problematic issue, initiated a remedy, and obtained some promising results. It has been of genuine enjoyment since when a challenging aim is truly sought, throughout the journey feelings of achievement, pleasure and satisfaction would accompany the sweet suffering of hard work, which ultimately

would yield in reaching the end of the journey. Throughout the whole process beginning with identifying the study problem and ending with gaining some promising results, the researcher has read, written, investigated, consulted, diagnosed, analyzed, examined, communicated, and most importantly gained much knowledge and new skills, namely in critical thinking and language competencies. In brief, this is what the current study seeks to achieve on the part of Arab students enrolled in English language and literature department, and similarly, this is what the researcher herself, a non-native speaker of English, has gained as well.

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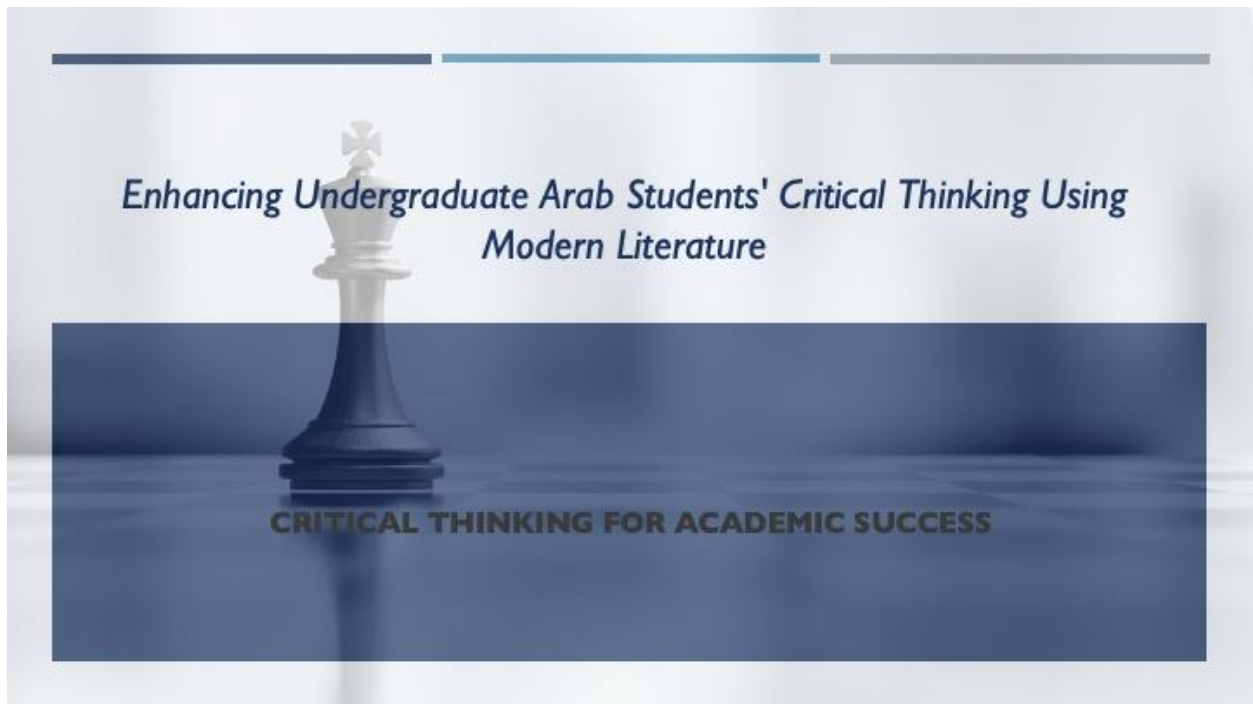
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**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

**Introduction to the Course for the Students**

**(PPT Presentation)**



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## WHAT DOES BEING CRITICAL MEAN TO YOU



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## TO BE CRITICAL MEANS

- To know how to initiate, analyze and evaluate your own thinking and the thinking of others
- To be a critical reader, writer, listener and speaker
- To encompass a range of skills that are both vital to academic study and transferable to many other areas of life, including identifying arguments, analytical reasoning and synthesizing information



## COURSE STRUCTURE



1. Critical Thinking

2. Language skills



3. Literature

## I. CRITICAL THINKING

You will be introduced to :

- ✓ Types of Thinkers & Intellectual Traits
- ✓ The Elements of Reasoning
- ✓ Universal Intellectual Standards

THIS COURSE IS BASED ON RICHARD PAUL'S DEFINITION AND CONCEPT OF CRITICAL THINKING



## There are Three Main Kinds of Thinkers



### Here is the voice of the naïve thinker...

"I don't need to think! I understand everything without thinking. I just do whatever occurs to me to do. I believe most of what I hear. I believe most of what I see on TV and what I read on the internet. I don't see why I should question the messages that come at me on TV shows and the internet. I don't think they affect me that much anyway.

"And I don't need to waste a lot of time trying to figure things out. If I need to find the answer to a problem, I just ask someone else. Other people can figure things out better than me, so why should I try to figure things out for myself? It's a lot easier to say 'I can't!' than to do a



lot of work. A lot of times trying to figure things out takes too much time. And sometimes it's just too hard for me, so why bother?

"I mostly go along with whatever people are doing. It's just easier that way. I do what I'm told, keep my mouth shut, and go along with whatever my friends decide. I don't like to make waves. Thinking gets you into trouble."





### Here is the voice of the selfish critical thinker...

"I think a lot! It helps me get what I want. I believe whatever I want to believe as long as it gets me what I want. I question anyone who asks me to do what I don't want to do. I figure out how to get other people to do what I want them to do. I even figure out how to avoid thinking if I want."

"Sometimes I say 'I can't!' when I know I could but don't want to. You can get what you want from people if you know how to manipulate them. Just the other night, I talked my parents into buying me a really expensive new computer gadget I knew they couldn't really afford. But hey, they work don't they? They can always make more money. I'm their kid so they should give me what I want."



"It helps to tell people what they want to hear. Of course, sometimes what they want to hear isn't true, but that doesn't matter because you only get into trouble when you tell people what they don't want to hear. You can always trick people if you know how. Guess what, you can even trick yourself if you know how."

### Here is the voice of the fairminded critical thinker...

"I think a lot. It helps me learn. It helps me figure things out. I want to understand the thinking of other people. In fact, I even want to understand myself and why I do things. Sometimes I do things I don't understand. It's not easy trying to understand everyone and everything. Lots of people say one thing and do another. You can't always believe what people say. You can't believe a lot of what you see on TV and the internet. People often say things they don't mean because they want things and are trying to please you."

"I would like to make the world a better place. I want to make it better for everyone, not just for me and my friends. To understand other people you have to look at things as they do. You have to understand their situation and what you would feel like if you were them. You have to put yourself in their shoes. I think about people who don't have



what I have, like people who are starving or homeless. I want to help create a world where everyone has enough to eat and somewhere to live."

"It isn't easy to be fair. It's a lot easier to be selfish and just think about yourself. But the world isn't a nice place to be if people are selfish."



## TRAITS OF A GREAT THINKER

(ELDER & PAUL, 2001)

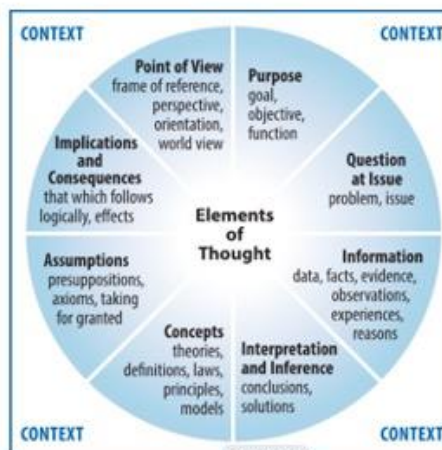
- 1 • **Raise important questions**
- 2 • **Gather and assess relevant information**
- 3 • **Test well-reasoned conclusions against relevant standards**
- 4 • **Think open-mindedly, recognizing and assessing their assumptions, implications, and consequences**
- 5 • **Communicate their ideas effectively**
- 6 • **Figure out solutions to complex problems through a well-reasoned process**
- 7 • **Consider other points of view/perspectives**

## THE COMPONENTS TRAITS OF CRITICAL THINKERS



# ALL THINKING IS DEFINED BY 8 ELEMENTS THAT MAKE IT UP

Thinking



# TO ANALYZE THINKING WE MUST LEARN TO IDENTIFY & QUESTION ITS STRUCTURE



Screenshot

## INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

- The question can then be raised, "What appropriate intellectual standards do students need to assess the 'parts' of their thinking?" The following standards are virtually universal (that is, applicable to all thinking)
- How well a student is reasoning depends on how well he/she applies these universal standards to the elements (or parts) of thinking.

### **Clarity:** Understandable, the meaning can be grasped; to free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities.

Clarity is a 'gateway' standard. If a statement is unclear, we cannot determine whether it is accurate or relevant. In fact, we cannot tell anything about it because we don't yet know what it is saying. For example, the question "What can be done about the education system in America?" is unclear. In order to adequately address the question, we would need to have a clearer understanding of what the person asking the question is considering the "problem" to be. A clearer question might be "What can educators do to ensure that students learn the skills and abilities which help them function successfully on the job and in their daily decision-making?"

Thinking is always more or less clear. It is helpful to assume that we do not fully understand a thought except to the extent that we can elaborate, illustrate, and exemplify it. Questions that focus on clarity in thinking include:

- Could you elaborate on that point? or Do I need to elaborate on that point?
- Could you express that point in another way? or Can I express that point differently?
- Could you give me an illustration? or Should I give an illustration?
- Could you give me an example? or Should I provide an example?
- Let me state in my own words what I think you just said. Am I clear about your meaning?
- I hear you saying "\_\_\_\_\_." Am I hearing you correctly, or have I misunderstood you?

**Accuracy:** free from errors, mistakes or distortions; true, correct.

A statement can be clear but not accurate, as in “Most dogs weigh more than 300 pounds.”

Thinking is always more or less accurate. It is useful to assume that we have not fully assessed it except to the extent that we have checked to determine whether it represents things as they really are. Questions that focus on accuracy in thinking include:

- How could we check that to see if it is true?
- How could we verify these alleged facts?
- Can we trust the accuracy of these data given the source from which they come?

**Precision:** exact to the necessary level of detail, specific.

A statement can be both clear and accurate, but not precise, as in “Jack is overweight.” (We don’t know how overweight Jack is, one pound or 500 pounds.)

Thinking is always more or less precise. We can probably assume we do not fully understand it except to the extent that we can specify it in detail. Questions that focus on precision in thinking include:

- Could you give me more details about that?
- Could you be more specific?
- Could you specify your allegations more fully?



**Relevance:** bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand; implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, the matter under consideration.

A statement can be clear, accurate, and precise, but not relevant to the question at issue. For example, students often think that the amount of effort they put into a course should be used in raising their grade in a course. Often, however, “effort” does not measure the quality of student learning, and when this is so, effort is irrelevant to their appropriate grade.

Thinking is always capable of straying from the task, question, problem, or issue under consideration. It is useful to assume we have not fully assessed thinking except to the extent that we have considered all issues, concepts, and information relevant to it. Questions that focus on relevance in thinking include:

- I don't see how what you said bears on the question. Could you show me how it is relevant?
- Could you explain the connection between your question and the question we are addressing?
- How does this fact bear upon the issue?
- How does this idea relate to this other idea?
- How does your question relate to the issue we are dealing with?

**Depth:** containing complexities and multiple interrelationships, implies thoroughness in thinking through the many variables in the situation, context, idea, question.

A statement can be clear, accurate, precise, and relevant, but superficial (that is, lack depth). For example, the statement “Just Say No,” which was used for a number of years to discourage children and teens from using drugs, is clear, accurate, precise, and relevant. Nevertheless, those who take this injunction to solve the social problem of unhealthy drug use fail to appreciate the true complexities in the problem. Their thinking is superficial at best.

Thinking can either function at the surface of things or probe beneath that surface to deeper matters and issues. We can assume we have not fully assessed a line of thinking except to the extent that we have fully considered all the important complexities inherent in it. Questions that focus on depth in thinking include:

- Is this question simple or complex? Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
- What makes this a complex question?
- How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

**Breadth:** encompassing multiple viewpoints, comprehensive in view, wide-ranging and broadminded in perspective.

A line of reasoning may be clear, accurate, precise, relevant, and deep, but lack breadth (as in an argument from either the conservative or liberal standpoints which details the complexities in an issue, but only recognizes insights from one perspective).

Thinking can be more or less broad-minded (or narrow-minded) and breadth of thinking requires the thinker to reason insightfully within more than one point of view or frame of reference. We can assume we have not fully assessed a line of thinking except to the extent that we have determined how much breadth of thinking is required (and how much has in fact been exercised). Questions that focus on breadth in thinking include:

- What points of view are relevant to this issue?
- What relevant points of view have I ignored thus far?
- Am I failing to consider this issue from an opposing perspective because I am not open to changing my view?
- Have I entered the opposing views in good faith, or only enough to find flaws in them?
- I have looked at the question from an economic viewpoint. What is my ethical responsibility?
- I have considered a liberal position on the issue. What would conservatives say?

Screenshot

**Logic:** the parts make sense together, no contradictions; in keeping with the principles of sound judgment and reasonability.

When we think, we bring a variety of thoughts together into some order. When the combination of thoughts is mutually supporting and makes sense in combination, the thinking is logical. When the combination is not mutually supporting, is contradictory, or does not make sense, the combination is not logical.

Thinking can be more or less logical. It can be consistent and integrated. It can make sense together or be contradictory or conflicting. Questions that focus on logic include:

- Does all this fit together logically?
- Does this really make sense?
- Does that follow from what you said?
- Does what you say follow from the evidence?
- Before you implied this and now you are saying that, I don't see how both can be true. What exactly is your position?



**Significance:** having importance, being of consequence; having considerable or substantial meaning.

When we reason through an issue, we want to concentrate on the most important information (relevant to the issue) and take into account the most important ideas or concepts. Too often we fail to recognize that, though many ideas may be relevant to an issue, they may not be equally important. Similarly, we may fail to ask the most important questions and instead become mired in superficial questions, questions of little weight. In college, for example, few students focus on important questions such as, "What does it mean to be an educated person? What do I need to do to become educated?" Instead, students tend to ask questions such as, "What do I need to do to get an 'A' in this course? How many pages does this paper have to be? What do I have to do to satisfy this professor?"

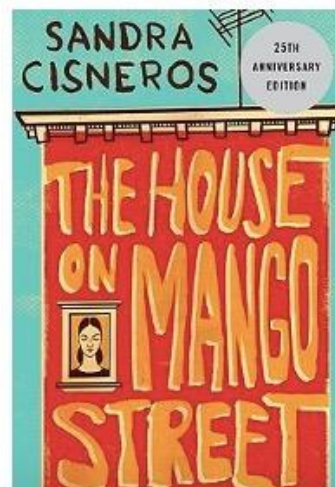
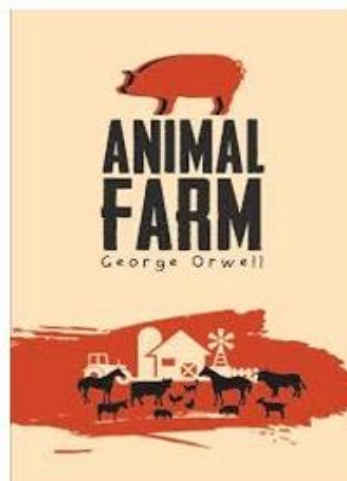
Thinking can be more or less significant. It can focus on what is most substantive, what is of the highest consequence, what has the most important implications. Or it can focus on the trivial and superficial. Questions that focus on significance include:

- What is the most significant information we need to address this issue?
- How is that fact important in context?
- Which of these questions is the most significant?
- Which of these ideas or concepts is the most important?

## 2. LITERATURE

Two novels will be used to apply the critical thinking skills

Critical lenses will be used to reason different issues



## CRITICAL LENSES



Critical lenses are approaches applied to studying a text based upon a critical knowledge or theory. They enable students to evaluate a text from multiple perspectives

### The Applied Critical Lenses

The Marxist Lens

The Feminist Lens

The New Historical Lens

The Psychological Lens

The Formalist Lens

## DIFFERENT VIEWS

Fem

- What possibilities are available to a woman who eats this apple? To a man?

Form

- What shape and diameter is the apple?

Marx

- Who owns the apple? Who gets to eat the apple?

Psych

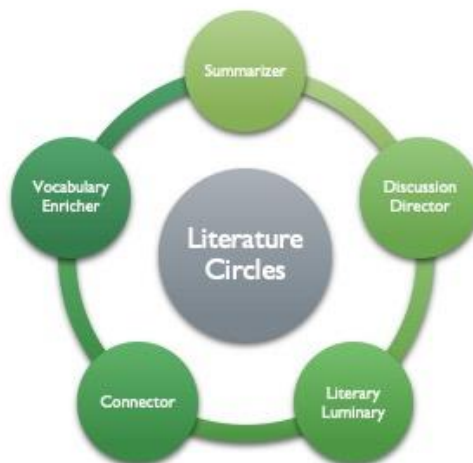
- What does the apple taste like to me? What does the apple remind me of?





## LITERATURE CIRCLES

*"groups of people reading the same book and meeting together to discuss what they have read"*  
(Peralta-Nash and Dutch 30)

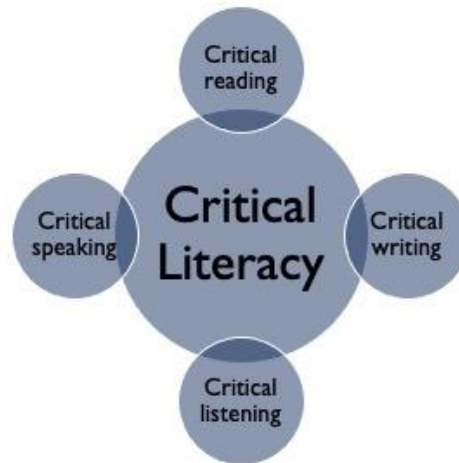


## MEMBERS' ROLES

<b>Discussion director</b>	creates questions to increase comprehension , asks who, what, why, when, where, how, and what if
<b>Literary luminary</b>	choose extracts that are interesting, powerful, funny, puzzling, or important from the novel to discuss with your group
<b>Connector</b>	find connections between the novel and the outside world
<b>Vocabulary enricher</b>	prepare a summary of the reading, focus on the important parts and the key points
<b>Summarize</b>	look for new words in the novel which are puzzling, challenging or unfamiliar and look up their definitions in the dictionary

### 3. LANGUAGE SKILLS

- ❖ The logic of content should be practiced by students' logic through the four skills of language
- ❖ All skills must be active



**THE END**

Presented by  
Elaf Almansour, Ph.D candidate

[Elaf\\_mm@yahoo.com](mailto:Elaf_mm@yahoo.com)  
053 110 6333

## The Course Pretest, the Posttest & the Applied Rubric

### Course Pretest

Student name.....

**Read the following short story and write a summary that includes the following information:**

- the main purpose of the story (in 1 or 2 sentences)
- the key concepts (facts and data) used to support the main purpose
- the story's application to other fields of knowledge/ aspects of life
- the story's personal relevance to you.

### The Plate of Mangoes

One evening the king and his wife were sitting on a balcony that looks on to the River Jumna, eating mangoes. The king was sucking the juice from the mangoes and putting the skin and big seeds on a plate in front of his wife. When Birbal came in to talk about country matters, a huge stack of mango skins had piled up as the king ate one mango after another.

The king's eyes danced playfully. 'Look Birbal, see how greedy my wife is. Look at the huge pile in front of her.'

The queen frowned, but before she could say anything Birbal said 'It must be the result of the bad company around her.'

'What do you mean?' said the king. 'Are you trying to say that I am greedy? Look, there is nothing in front of me, while there is this huge pile of skins and seeds in front of her.'

'That's what I mean,' said Birbal. 'The queen has been sucking the mangoes in the normal way, while you have eaten them all with skins and seeds!'

The queen laughed, while the king, out-smarted once again, slapped his thighs at the joke and smiled softly.

### Course Posttest

Student name.....

**From your reading of *Animal Farm* and *The House on the Mango Street*, choose one novel and write an essay (250 words) that addresses the following information:**

- the main purpose of the novel
- the key concepts (facts and data) used to support the main purpose
- the story's application to other fields of knowledge/ aspects of life
- the novel's personal relevance to you.

### The Applied Rubric

Grade	Reasoning skills	Language & Organization
A 9–10 points	Excellent (highly skilled).  The answer is accurate, insightful, clearly and precisely stated, and well exemplified (when an example is relevant).	- Has an introduction defining plan of essay/ Body divided into several paragraphs/ Conclusion which directly relates arguments to topic - Error-free grammar - Wide range of specialized terminology -Consistent in-text citation and form of referencing
B 7–8 points	Commendable (skilled).  The answer is well expressed, though with minor problems. It is basically correct and clear. Any misunderstanding is minor.	- First four criteria above maintained- Demonstrates extensive grammar control - Terminology specialized but less varied.- Minor Inconsistency in in-text citation and referencing
C 5–6 points	Mixed level (beginning skills).  The answer is clear but not perfectly accurate. It is partially correct and partially incorrect.	- Introduction and/or conclusion short but still satisfactory. - Evidence of editing.- Less grammar control than above.- Good range of specialized terminology.- Inconsistent in in-text citation and referencing
D 3–4 points	Poor (minimally skilled).  The answer, though partially accurate and minimally clear, is significantly inaccurate or misleading.	- Introduction and/or conclusion short but acceptable. - no evidence of editing.- Few grammatical errors that impede communication.- Above average range of specialized terminology.- Slightly confused introduction and/or conclusion, but body still fair.- No evidence of editing.- Some error types that impede communication.- Fair range of specialized terminology.- Inaccurate in-text citation and referencing
F 0–2 points	Unacceptable (unskilled).  The answer is inaccurate and/or unclear.	- No introduction and /or no conclusion.- Body badly organized or irrelevant.- Poor grammar control (extremely limited range of grammar & register).- Limited or not specialized range of terminology. - No in-text citations and no referencing

## Appendix C

### The Questionnaires

#### Pre-Course Questionnaire

### A CRITICAL THINKING INFUSED COURSE MODEL FOR TEACHING UNDERGRADUATE ARAB STUDENTS SPECIALIZING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE STUDIES

Dear student:

This questionnaire is part of a PhD study at Near East University for the purpose of investigating your perspectives of the course: *Enhancing Undergraduate Arab Students' Critical Thinking Using Modern Literature*. Please read the following questions carefully and answer them accurately. All answers will be dealt with in complete confidentiality. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Thank you.

Researcher

Elaf Almansour

#### A. Demographic information:

1. What is your age?	
2. What is your nationality?	
3. What is your gender?	
4. What is your marital status?	
5. What is your current employment status?	

#### B. Educational background:

1. What is your English language level?	
2. Have you even been exposed to a culture other than your own?	
3. Has any previous course helped you to enhance your critical thinking skills?	

## Post-Course Questionnaire

Dear student:

Please read the following statements carefully and answer them according to how each describes you level of agreement with its content . All answers will be dealt with in complete confidentiality. Your cooperation is highly appreciated .

Thank you.

Researcher

Elaf Almansour

### SectionA. The Overall Impact of the Course on Students

*1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = neutral ; 4=agree; 5= strongly agree*

No.	Statement	Response
1	The course has increased my critical thinking skills	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2	The course has increased my interest in critical thinking.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
3	The thinking skills I have acquired in this course are important.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4	The course was well organized.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
5	The course workload was appropriate for the course level.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
6	The amount of studying hours I needed at home to do required tasks was appropriate.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
7	The course has helped me understand how to read literary works.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
8	Using modern English novels was appropriate to the goals of the course.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
9	The course has given me confidence to use critical thinking skills in other subjects.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
10	The course has increased my ability to relate what I studied at university to real life.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
11	After I completed the course I began having a new outlook on life and current events.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

**Section B. Students' Reasoning Skills Improvement:**

*1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = neutral ; 4=agree; 5= strongly agree*

No.	Statement	Response
1	I understand the importance of implementing reasoning skills in learning English.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2	I can better analyze authors' arguments	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
3	I can better use supporting information to express my viewpoints.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4	I can better elaborate on different viewpoints	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
5	I can better differentiate between facts and assumptions.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
6	I can better develop relevant ideas about the studying topics.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
7	I can make clearer inferences when reading the studying materials.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
8	I can answer complex questions more deeply.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

**Section C. Students' English Skills Improvement:**

*1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = neutral ; 4=agree; 5= strongly agree*

No.	Statement	Response
1	The course has helped me further develop my reading skill.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2	The course has helped me further develop my writing skill.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
3	The course has helped me further develop my writing skill.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4	The course has helped me further develop my speaking skill.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
5	. The course has increased my confidence in using English language to express my thoughts and beliefs.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

**Section D. The Impact of Literature Circles on the Participants:**

*1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = neutral ; 4=agree; 5= strongly agree*

No.	Statement	Response
1	During literature circles, I had more time to practice English than in traditional classes.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2	Literature circles facilitated my learning.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Literature circles developed my critical thinking.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Literature circles encouraged me to express my ideas and thoughts.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
5	Literature circles increased my ability to work	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>



	collaboratively with other students.	
6	Literature Circles has improved my verbal communication skills.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
7	Literature circles was an effective way for enhancing my critical thinking.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
8	Many times during literature circles I changed my opinions during the discussion.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
9	I always learnt something new from literature circles discussions.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

### Section E The Impact of Reflective Journals on the Participants:

1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = neutral ; 4=agree; 5= strongly agree

No.	Statement	Response
1	Reflective Journals questions have deepened my insight into the topics.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2	Reflective journals reinforced my learning.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Reflective journals were complementing Literature circles.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Reflective journals questions have helped to develop effective reasoning skills.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

### Section F. The Impact of Critical Lenses on the Participants:

1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = neutral ; 4=agree; 5= strongly agree

No.	Statement	Response
1	Critical lenses have helped me to understand the importance of diversity.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2	Critical lenses have helped me to understand different viewpoints on the same topic.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Critical lenses have helped me to understand underlying concepts in the literary works.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4	I think reading literature using different critical lenses is important.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
5	. I could learn about empathy, acceptance, and common misconceptions by putting myself in the shoes of someone else.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

### Section F. The Instructor:

1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = neutral ; 4=agree; 5= strongly agree

No.	Statement	Response
1	Prior to starting the course, the instructor focused my attention on the reasons for taking the course.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2	The instructor provided a summary of the major components of a course.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

3	The instructor provided helpful feedback after each class.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4	The instructor provided a clear evaluation of my writing in the reflective journal.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
5	The instructor effectively organized the literature circles discussions.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
6	The instructor effectively facilitated the literature circles discussions.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
7	The instructor challenged students to do their best work.	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

**Appendix D**  
**The Interview Questions Form**

**The Interview Questions**

Students to be asked the following questions, they have about 10 minutes to answer all:

1. What is your perception of the learning style applied in this course?"
2. How useful do you think is the critical thinking theory applied in this course? and could it be applied to other subjects and in your real-life experiences?"
3. What is your perception of the learning outcomes and knowledge you gained after completing this course?"
4. What do you think about the instructor's role in this course? How effective and supportive was it to your learning?"
5. What do you think are the limitations/challenges of this course?"

## Appendix E

### Near East University Application Form for Ethical Approval

**Title of the study:** Enhancing Arab Undergraduate Students' Critical Thinking Using Modern Literature

#### Primary applicant

*Notes: Please note that by entering your full name below, you will be considered as signing this form.*

Full Name and Signature: Elaf Ziad Almansour

Graduate School Educational Sciences

Department English Language Teaching

Contact e-mail & phone number: elaf\_mm@yahoo.com- 0090 542 875 75 33

#### Research Team

*Notes: If there are other researches included in this study (including supervisors, their names, titles, affiliations, emails and roles in the project should be provided. Please note that by entering your full name below, you will be considered as signing this form. Please add as many people as required by adding new rows below.*

Full Name and Signature: Dr. Prof. Mustafa Kurt

Email: mustafa.kurt@neu.edu.tr

Role: Supervisor

#### Funding Body

*Notes: Please provide the details of the funding body if your research received funding from a funding body.*

Name of the Funding Body: N/A

Contact Person N/A

Contact e-mail address & phone number: N/A

**Proposed Dates of Research:**

Research start date 07/01/2019

Research end date 04/01/2020

**Briefly describe the purpose of your research.**

Teaching literature with a focus on enhancing critical thinking skills and language efficiency. The purpose of this study is to remodel the traditional way of teaching English language and literature with a focus on enhancing students' critical thinking skills. Most literature and language courses at Arab universities are separated and each is taught by itself. The teaching methods are teacher-centered, students are storing the same information given by the teachers, and their evaluation is measured by their ability to memorize and recall the same information they receive from the teacher. Nowadays such teaching styles and methods demotivate students and weaken their critical skills, to name some. The course, that I will develop, aims to transform the learning experience, from dominating students to empowering students, they will learn to create a deeper sense of their existence through reading literature and reflecting on real life situations from different points of view, and consequently realizing their potential as critical readers of literature. Their language efficiency will be improved in this student-centered learning atmosphere, as they will practice the language skills, and have self-assessment. For example, they will practice speaking and arguing with their peers in the literature circles; literature circles technique encourage them to read and analyse critically and argue their viewpoints. This study will hopefully build effective free-thinkers and educated persons in the Arab world as well as more proficient users of English language.

**Briefly describe the method and procedures to be followed during data collection. Please enclose any relevant materials (including interview questions where possible, participant information sheet(s) and participant consent form(s) where applicable).**

*Notes: Please make sure that your explanations cover the answers to the following Questions.*

1. What kind of data will be collected from the participants? (e.g. qualitative data about drug use, quantitative data about voting behaviour etc.)

2. What sort of data collection tools will be used? (e.g. Semi-structured questionnaires, structured questionnaires etc.)
3. When and where will the data be collected? How long will data collection last?
4. Who are the intended participants and how will they be selected/recruited? (e.g. Age, Gender, intended sample size, representative sampling, convenience sampling etc.)
5. Will the participants be paid for their time and effort? If so, how much and what will be the nature of this incentive/reimbursement be?
6. How do you plan to provide the participant information sheet(s) to participants?
7. When and how exactly do you plan to obtain consent of the participants?

The study will use a One-Group Pretest-Posttest Quasi- Experimental Design in which the same dependent variable is measured in one group of participants before (pretest) and after (posttest) a treatment is administered to evaluate the effectiveness of this treatment by comparing the scores of the pre- and post-tests. It has no random assignment. A quasi- mixed methods design will be applied in order to answer the research questions. The qualitative data will answer the first two research questions, i.e. to test the primary purpose of this study, and the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of language improvement, while the quantitative data will answer the last research question, which is about the advantages and disadvantages of this intervention from the participants' perspective. I will collect different but complementary data for a better understanding and more reliable and validated results. Qualitative data will be collected through: (1) Classroom observations: the researcher will take a holistic description of the events and behavior during the classes, taking non- judgmental notes and describing the learning process concretely. (2) Response journals, a pretest and posttest: the researcher will design a set of questions to be practiced in the response journals; it is based on Bloom's Taxonomy thinking levels. There will be a pre and post tests to measure the participants' improvement after taking the course. (3) Interviews will be conducted with 10% of participants to collect their feedback by asking them few open ended questions about the course. Quantitative data will be collected through questionnaires: The participants will fill in a questionnaire in which they answer questions related to the effectiveness, the advantages and disadvantages of the intervention, based on their opinion and beliefs, and the results will be treated within the framework of 5 point lickert scale. The questionnaire form will be designed by the researcher. Based on the collected

data by using these different tools, the researcher will come up with a conclusion about the effectiveness of the intervention on students' critical and language skills.

**Do you intend to collect data from any vulnerable groups (e.g. prisoners, minors, socioeconomically disadvantaged, etc.)? If so, please provide details regarding how you will be accessing these groups and how you intend to protect their rights within the process of your research.**

No.

**Does your research necessitate any deception? If so, please provide reasons for this and also provide details of debriefing session you plan to do with the participants. If information will be withheld from the participants at any stage during the research, when and how will they be provided with full information?**

No.

**Do you foresee any psychological or physical discomfort for the participants? If so, how do you intend to minimise/overcome these?**

No.

**Where and for how long do you plan to store the data? How will you make sure that personal data will not be obtained by third parties?**

*Notes: Please describe all the measures you will be taking in terms of keeping the participants' data confidential and anonymous during the research process and after its completion.*

All the data will be kept with the researcher and can be accessed only by her and the supervisor. It will be destroyed after completing the project in one year.

**Date of Application**

25/04/2019

*Note: Please attach all relevant data collection materials (List of Questions, Participant Information Sheet(s) and Participant Consent Forms) to this application form and make sure that you compile all documents into ONE PDF file before submission.*

## Appendix F



### BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMALAR ETİK KURULU

14.05.2019

Dear Elaf Ziad Almansour

Your application titled “**Enhancing Arab Undergraduate Students’ Critical Thinking Using Modern Literature**” with the application number YDÜ/EB/2019/339 has been evaluated by the Scientific Research Ethics Committee and granted approval. You can start your research on the condition that you will abide by the information provided in your application form.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Direnç Kanol

Rapporteur of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee



**Note:** If you need to provide an official letter to an institution with the signature of the Head of NEU Scientific Research Ethics Committee, please apply to the secretariat of the ethics committee by showing this document.

## **Appendix G**

### **Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form**

#### **(for Undergraduate Students in the English Language and Literature Department)**

**Research Project:** Enhancing Undergraduate Arab Students' Critical Thinking Using Modern Literature.

The study will be conducted by Elaf Almansour, Ph.D. student in the English Language Teaching Department at Near East University, Northern Cyprus, under the supervision of Dr. Mustafa Kurt.

I (print name).....give consent to my participation in the research project. In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have discussed all the information about the project and my involvement in it with the researcher.
3. I understand that that my participation in this project is completely voluntary- I am not under any obligation to consent and I may withdraw from the study at any time; a decision not to participate will in no way affect my academic standing or relationship with the school and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential, and that no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity, only the researcher will have access to information about me. The report of the study will be submitted for publication but individual participants will not be identifiable in it.
5. The data collected during this study will be used to evaluate the role of literature in fostering critical thinking and to inform further research in the area. The data will be kept for a period of one year for research purposes. The data will be anonymized and kept in a safe place for the duration of the research.

Signed.....

Name..... Date.....

You will receive a copy of this form.

**Appendix H**  
**Information Sheet And Informed Consent Form For Members Of University**  
**Administration**

I would like to ask for your permission to carry out a ten week course at your university for the purpose of a Ph.D. research project during the summer term in 2019-2020 academic year. Please read the following information about the objectives of this course and your students' role in it before giving your decision. You can ask any questions you may have for more information.

The main aim of this research is to enhance Arab undergraduate students' critical thinking skills, namely reasoning skills and English language skills in a collaborative manner by using modern literature.

The main points about the course:

1. Students have to read two English novels, conduct regular meetings(literature circles meetings and Socratic discussions) and answer pre-designed questions in their response journal booklets.
2. The instructor's role will be to facilitate and observe the Literature Circles discussions and Socratic Discussions during the class meetings.
3. The instructor will check students' response journals to assess students and trace their critical and literacy skills during the course.
4. Students will make a pre-test and a post-test to measure their improvement in critical and language skills.
5. Interviews with students and a post questionnaire will be conducted by the end of the course to collect students' opinions and beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages of this course.

I guarantee anonymity and confidentiality to all participants in the study. No real names will be used in the study, pseudonyms will be given to the school and also research participants in it. Data collected from you will not be traceable back to you.

The data collected during the study will be kept confidential at all times and will only be shared with my supervisor at the Near East University in Nicosia, Northern Cyprus. The data will be used for academic purposes only. Results of this study may be used in publications and presentations. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. You may quit participating in this study at any time by contacting us. If you opt out of the study, your data will be deleted from our database and will not be included in any further steps of the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Elaf Almansour (Near East University) at 00966-599115986 or at elaf\_mm@yahoo.com I have been informed about the procedures involved in this research. All of my questions have been answered by the researchers and I agree to participate in this research.

Signed.....

Name..... Date.....

You will receive a copy of this form.

## Appendix I

### Originality Report

