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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES-SECOND CYCLE

THESIS:

Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills through Speaking Activities in English as a Foreign Language Classroom – A Study with Students of Gymnasium “Kuvendi i Lezhës” in Vitis

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Declaration of Authorship

I declare that this Master's Thesis is my own original work. All sources that have been consulted are properly cited and listed in the reference list at the end.

Signature:

Acknowledgments

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Abstract in English

The research aims to study the enhancement of critical thinking through speaking activities in an EFL classroom, conducted in the Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia. The application of critical thinking through speaking activities in an EFL classroom might make the process of learning more attractive for students, and it facilitates both English language and critical thinking acquisition. Critical thinking is a skill that is in constant need in today's society. Being critical is required from an early age for simple things, but later in life, students need to develop it in a deeper form as they need it for academic reasons as well.

The study is mainly divided into two parts, where one presents relevant studies and the other covers the data collection through the research instruments. The data was collected through the use of three research instruments: a questionnaire, an interview, and observation, which were done with EFL teachers and 11th grade students at the Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia. The results show that critical thinking is a required element for the teaching process in the Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia. It is applied in the EFL classroom and through speaking activities as well. Further critical thinking is enhanced through speaking activities dependent on the language proficiency level. There are obstacles that complicate the process for both teachers and students as well.

Additionally, the collected data also aims at students' ability to think critically while doing speaking activities in the English language, their interest in the class, and their readiness and willingness to learn. It also emphasizes teachers' approaches to students, their ability to manage the class, and their teaching methods used in the classroom. All of these factors were found to be important in developing critical thinking in an EFL classroom through speaking activities.

The data collected both through investigating relevant studies and the research instruments concludes that critical thinking is enhanced through speaking activities in the EFL classroom in the Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia.

Keywords: Critical, thinking, enhancement, students, teachers, EFL, English, language, classroom, speaking, activities, methods

Abstract in Albanian

Hulumtimi ka për qëllim studimin e zhvillimit të mendimit kritik përmes aktiviteteve të të folurit në orën e gjuhës angleze si gjuhë e huaj, i realizuar në Gjimnazin “Kuvendi i Lezhës” në Viti. Aplikimi i mendimit kritik përmes aktiviteteve të të folurit në orën e gjuhës angleze si gjuhë e huaj mund t’u bëjë procesin e të mesuarit më të dashur për nxënësit dhe të zhvilloj gjuhën angleze dhe mendimin kritik. Mendimi kritik është një aftësi që nevoja e saj në shoqëri është e pashmagshme. Të qenurit mendues kritik kërkohet që në moshë të re dhe në gjëra të thjeshta por më vonë nxënësve/studentëve ju kërkohet t’u zhvillojnë në një formë më të thellë pasi që nevojitet gjithashtu për arsye akademike.

Hulumtimi kryesisht është i ndarë në dy pjesë në të cilën njëra prezanton hulumtimet relevante dhe tjetra mbledhjen e të dhënave përmes instrumenteve të hulumtimit. Të dhënat janë mbledhur përmes tri instrumenteve hulumtuese: pyetësorit, intervistës dhe vëzhgimit, të cilat u zbatuan me nxënës të klasëve të 11-ta në Gjimnazin “Kuvendi i Lezhës” në Viti. Rezultatet tregojnë që mendimi kritik është një element që kërkohet të zbatohet në mësimdhënie në Gjimnazin “Kuvendi i Lezhës” në Viti, zbatohet në orët e gjuhës angleze si gjuhë e huaj dhe gjithashtu përmes aktiviteteve të të folurit. Gjithashtu, mendimi kritik zhvillohet përmes aktiviteteve të të folurit por në varësi me nivelin e gjuhës angleze. Ka pengesa të cilat e komplikojnë procesin për mësimdhënësit dhe nxënësit.

Në vazhdim, mbledhja e të dhënave ka për qëllim aftësinë e nxënësve për të menduar në mënyrë kritike gjatë zhvillimit të aktiviteteve të të folurit në gjuhën angleze, interesimin e tyre në klasë, gatishmërinë dhe vullnetin e tyre për të mësuar. Gjithashtu thekson qasjen e mësimdhënësit ndaj nxënësve, aftësinë e tyre për të menagjuar orën mësimore dhe metodat e përdorura në klasë. Të gjitha këto elemente kanë dëshmuar që luajnë një rol të rëndësishëm në zhvillimin e mendimit kritik përmes aktiviteteve të të folurit në orën e gjuhës angleze si gjuhë e huaj.

Të dhënat nga shqyrtimi i literaturës dhe nga hulumtimi i bërë nxjerrin si përfundim që mendimi kritik zhvillohet përmes aktiviteteve të të folurit në orën e gjuhës angleze si gjuhë e huaj në Gjimnazin “Kuvendi i Lezhës” në Viti.

Fjalët kyçe: kritik, mendim, zhvillim, nxënës, mësimdhënësi, gjuhë, angleze, klasë, të folurit, aktivitete

Based on the Constitution of Kosovo, it is understandable that the English language is considered to be a foreign language.

Kosovo Constitution (ratified on June 15, 2008):

Article 5.

1. The official languages in Kosovo are Albanian and Serbian.
2. Turkish, Bosnian, and Romani languages are official languages at municipality level or will be in official use in accordance with the law.

Title of the thesis:

Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills through Speaking Activities in English as a Foreign Language Classroom – A Study with Students of Gymnasium “Kuvendi i Lezhës” in Vitia

Translation of the title in Albanian:

Zhvillimi i Aftësive të Mendimit Kritik përmes Aktiviteteve të Fjalorit në Orët Mësimore të Gjuhës Angleze si Gjuhë e Huaj - Një Studim me Nxënësit e Gjimnazit “Kuvendi i Lezhës” në Viti

Translation of the title in Macedonian:

Развој на вештини за критичко размислување преку говорни активности на англиски јазик како лекции за странски јазици - студија со учениците од гимназијата „Kuvendi i Lezhës” во Витија

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Chapter 1: Introduction

With technology development, many things are changing rapidly. Life in general is going through changes, including the working market. People need to adapt to these changes in order to have a solid life. People must have different skills to be able to get into the working market. In order to be more flexible in the work market, critical thinking is really useful. In Facione (2014), critical thinking is considered to have these core skills: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. The ability to think critically means having these skills and even more.

In this chapter, we give the introduction of the thesis, through which the foundation for the following chapters is introduced. Furthermore, it provides information about the background of the study, the purpose of the study, and the structure of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Modern education requires focusing more on preparing students for the real world and for the workplace. Society's requirements are changing continuously due to the development of technology and lifestyle changes. Therefore, people need to be able to judge different situations in accordance with their most suitable needs. A good decision-maker is a good critical thinker. Technology and the internet have opened many doors to almost everything, including education, but in order to absorb real and useful information, people need to sort that information based on its reliability and the purpose of their research. Critical thinking skills are important not only for academic life but for everyday life as well.

In order to develop critical thinking skills, children's brains should be challenged early in life by parents and later on at school by teachers. Parents should encourage children under the age of five to think critically once they understand how children think (Parent's Guide, 2019). According to Hitchcock (2020), it can be done by asking children questions, asking them to explain and giving reasons for their opinions.

Because the goal of schools is to prepare students for workplaces and real life by engaging them in the learning process, critical thinking is an unavoidable tool in accomplishing that goal. Teachers need to focus their attention on activities that facilitate students' critical thinking skills. Teachers of different subjects may apply critical thinking activities, including

EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers.

Teaching a foreign language requires a lot of preparation, including academic preparation, methodology, techniques, and other resources. In an English as a Foreign Language classroom, different methods and techniques may be used to facilitate critical thinking in students. A teacher may develop critical thinking by using the four basic language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). In order to be good at a language, one should possess good communication skills. Speaking is an important form of communication. Possessing the skill of speaking a second or foreign language is the most required skill for the majority of people, and in accordance with the development of a conversation in that language, the success is also assessed (Nunan, 1999).

There are many ways critical thinking skills may be enhanced. In this research, the main focus will be on enhancing critical thinking skills through speaking activities in an EFL classroom. Regardless of the difficulties, schools and teachers must offer students the conditions and apply methods that contribute to developing students' critical thinking skills. Teachers need to be creative and resilient to the changes and their students' needs.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The main purpose is to see if critical thinking can be enhanced through speaking activities in an EFL classroom. Speaking is considered to be one of the four most important language skills, and in many cases, it might be the most productive one. According to Aleksandrak (2011), speaking is the most required skill to master and it has been a target since the development of the early forms of communication. Now it is the central point for teachers and learners as well. Speaking activities are suitable to enhance critical thinking. Since speaking activities require simultaneous attention, it may encourage students to think critically in a rapid way.

Critical thinking is a skill that is in constant need in today's society. Being critical is required from an early age for simple things, but later in life, students need to develop it in a deeper form since they need it for academic reasons as well. Speaking activities and critical thinking are a combination of these two elements, and an important move for the teaching process. Many researchers question the idea that critical thinking can be taught. That is why this paper presents some approaches that different researchers have towards this case.

Additionally, critical thinking in the native language could be easier to approach, but enhancing it through foreign languages may make the whole process more complicated. The research aims also to show some of the activities that might be helpful for enhancing critical thinking through speaking activities in an EFL classroom.

To sum up, the main purpose of this paper is to find out the connection between speaking activities and critical thinking in an EFL classroom. In other words, if through a speaking class (EFL class), critical thinking can be developed by making progress in speaking too. This research will also provide general information about critical thinking, critical thinking activities, speaking, speaking activities, and most importantly, speaking activities that facilitate critical thinking skills in EFL classes. Through this research, data and analysis of critical thinking facilitation through speaking activities in an EFL classroom and in the Gymnasium "Kuvendi I Lezhës" in Vitia will be provided and further analyzed. Therefore, this study is useful for further studies, researchers, and for English language teachers.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This research paper consists of five chapters where each presents different information: introduction, literature review, research methodology, research results and analysis, and conclusion, recommendations, and limitations. Every chapter is further divided into sections. The first chapter, introduction, starts with the representation of the general idea of the research, deepening into some background of the study, the purpose of the study, and then its structure.

The second chapter is the literature review, which is further divided into five subchapters. "What is critical thinking?" is about explaining what critical thinking is. There are many approaches to it, therefore there are several definitions given. This section also shows some background history of critical thinking and the importance it has in today's life. Furthermore, the subchapter "Can critical thinking be taught?" introduces different opinions on whether critical thinking can be taught. The third subchapter, "Is critical thinking a skill that can be enhanced by learning a foreign language?" elaborates on the possibility of critical thinking being enhanced through learning a foreign language. Enhancing critical thinking can be complex in itself, but a foreign language might make the process more complicated. Both critical thinking and foreign languages are important for a successful life as they are the skills

most required in work places. The fourth subchapter, "The Importance of Speaking Activities in the EFL Classroom," shows the importance of speaking activities in the EFL classroom, whereas the last one, "Speaking Activities in Enhancing Critical Thinking in the EFL Classroom," shows the importance that speaking activities have in enhancing critical thinking in the EFL classroom. The fifth subchapter provides the most useful speaking activities for enhancing critical thinking.

The third chapter, Research methodology, demonstrates the purpose of the study, the research questions followed by research hypotheses, which later are going to be tested. In addition, the participants in the research, the research instruments, and the procedure are introduced in this chapter.

The fourth chapter, Research Results and Analysis, is divided into six subchapters. This chapter can be considered the heart of the research, where all the findings are presented. The first subchapter is data collection, through which the research instruments and their applications are shown. The next subchapter is "Findings from the Questionnaire." All the answers to the questionnaire in percentage are shown and additionally analyzed further to be discussed in the third subchapter, "Discussion of the Students' Questionnaire." The next one is "The results from the teachers' interview." Here the questions and answers from the interview are given with an analytical description. Furthermore, to be discussed is the fifth subchapter, "Discussion about teachers' interviews." The final part is "findings from class observation," where a description of the procedure is given.

The final chapter is titled "Conclusion, recommendations, and limitations." The conclusion summarizes the research paper in a short and simple way. Recommendations give some suggestions for having a better and more successful approach to speaking activities that enhance critical thinking in an EFL classroom. On the other hand, limitations show the difficulties the researcher faced during the procedure of this research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking is a critical skill that is required in everyday life to make decisions ranging from the most minor to those that have the greatest impact on us and our lives. Critical thinking is much more than just memorizing facts and repeating them; it is analyzing facts and, based on those facts, creating judgments.

Critical thinking is not a concept that can be clearly defined. There are many approaches towards it. For decades, there have been debates on whether critical thinking can be clearly defined or not (Lin, 2018). According to Cottrell (2005, as cited in Lin, 2018), critical thinking is a process of thinking that requires focus and the use of the mind. Caroselli (2009) states that critical thinking is the ability to make unclear things clear and that it refers "to thought processes that are quick, accurate, and assumption-free (They are often creative as well)." He also states that critical thinking helps us see things critically that require adequate responses. Cotrell (2005) states that critical thinking does not depend on personality or natural characteristics; it depends on methods applied to get the best outcomes. Atkinson (1997, as cited in Lin, 2018) is of the opposing opinion, claiming that critical thinking can only be improved through unconscious social practice.

Companies want to hire critical thinkers as they need employees that think beyond the tasks given to them and be able to execute more than what is served in front of them. For years, there has been a need to work on improving critical thinking skills. According to R. Paul, L. Elder, and T. Bartell (1997), since ancient times, critical thinking has been known as the ability to judge reasonably and, based on that, make assumptions. About 2500 years ago, Socrates tried to facilitate critical thinking in people because they were not able to question and judge situations and things properly, but they would rather just depend on people in authority. Therefore, Socrates established the so-called "Socrates Questioning", which is considered to be the best strategy for teaching critical thinking (R. Paul, L. Elder, and T. Bartell, 1997).

Due to the insatiable need for critical thinking in the working market and in everyday life as well, critical thinking is required to be enhanced in schools and in EFL classes as well. Many

books and many activities for teaching critical thinking have been written, and a lot of effort is given towards it. Despite the great effort to produce critical thinkers, teachers still face difficulties in developing critical thinking in students.

Critical thinking is an issue that for a long time, people have been concerned with. It is a skill that is unavoidable in life (in school, at work, and in daily life). Quite often, we encounter research questions that still have arguable opinions on how critical thinking can be taught. Is it really a skill that can be enhanced in school or is it a skill that depends on one's personal ability to think critically? On the other hand, there are many techniques presented to us that assure us that critical thinking can be enhanced by giving the right effort and presenting the tasks properly. Some of the techniques that will be elaborated upon below are: critical questioning, debate, discussion, and reciprocal peer questioning.

2.2 Can critical thinking be taught?

Critical thinking is a skill that is massively required in the work market, so it is pressured to be taught or enhanced in schools. As to the matter of whether critical thinking can be taught or not, there are different approaches. Frequently, critical thinking is seen as a skill that a person naturally has or lacks, so it is not viewed as a skill that can be taught. Other perspectives regard critical thinking as a skill that can be taught and developed in schools.

Teachers have been struggling for years to find the best suited methods and techniques to achieve their goal of teaching critical thinking faster and more effectively. The struggle is still ongoing. In a human resources survey, schools were asked by business leaders to do more to enhance students' critical thinking skills, which in correspondence to this were some organizations and initiatives that were pro-student critical thinking skills development. Additionally, the critical thinking teaching program, "A Nation At Risk," became very popular, and most nations by 1990 encouraged teachers to enhance critical thinking skills in students. Tactics for Thinking was one of the most popular programs. Despite the effort, they resulted in not being that productive. Willingham also states that those who attempted to teach critical thinking taught it as a single skill, whereas cognitive science researchers consider critical thinking as "the processes of thinking are intertwined with the content of thought (that is, domain knowledge)".

Shahini and Riazi (2011 as cited in Lin 2018) claim that critical thinking can be difficult for both ESL and EFL students who have low language proficiency. However, it is also believed that critical thinking skills depend on cultural aspects too. For example, Davidson (1998, as cited in Lin 2018) claims that some cultural contexts do not encourage critical thinking, but that it might still be present in society. Kaminske (2021), who considers critical thinking as "thinking on purpose," states that critical thinking can be taught. She agrees with Gelder (2005) that critical thinking is hard, meaning it belongs to the hard skills. He says that critical thinking seems to be essential, but in fact it is complex, so most people simply lack it.

Teachers should contribute to students' critical thinking skills by using different methods in order to enhance critical thinking in students. By selecting the proper activities and employing adequate methods and techniques, teachers will achieve their goal gradually. Harizaj and Hajrulla (2017) claimed that mastering critical thinking skills cannot be developed through one class only, but rather a longer procedure that requires handling it through different levels of difficulties, starting from simple ones. According to Panettieri (2015), critical thinking is not easy to evaluate or even teach since educators frequently encounter difficulties. Further, he states that the case is that some students lack this ability and that even though teachers make efforts to teach it, many students struggle when occupied with critical thinking tasks. In this journal, it is also stated that the use of standardized practice might become a problem when knowledge becomes mechanical, as learning mechanically results in confusion when students are required to give their own solution or decisions (Panettieri, 2015).

Critical thinking seems to be a complicated skill which requires the proper use of different methods and strategies in order to make gradual progress. Sometimes, with a little effort, we can change a boring lecture into a more active and interactive class. According to Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Cortell, 2005; Grosser & Lombard, 2008, as cited in Malmir (2012), there are researchers that consider critical thinking as a skill that cannot be learnt from lectures since critical thinking should be learnt through active performance. Malmir (2012) argues that though lectures are considered passive, it is possible to make them active by involving students through asking questions related to the presented material.

According to Browne and Keeley (2007), by asking critical questions we enhance our critical thinking. It is stated that in order to understand listening and reading, one should have skills and attitudes that can be built on critical questions. Critical questions are beneficial for

writing and speaking as well. It is also stated that critical questions simulate critical thinking as they guide the learners to be better decision-makers and to better judgements. The purpose of questioning is to have a better understanding and it helps in building confidence as it improves our intellectual independence.

Critical thinking can be successfully enhanced in school only if the right approaches are presented to students. Whether critical thinking appears to be complex, therefore enhancing it is complex as well. It cannot be enhanced through memorization of facts, but rather by engaging students in logical tasks.

2.3 Is critical thinking a skill that can be enhanced through a foreign language?

As mentioned in the subchapter, "Can Critical Thinking be Taught?", the most common approaches claim that critical thinking is a complicated skill that can be enhanced step-by-step by using different activities and tasks. The process gets more complicated when a foreign language is added. Learning a new language is beneficial on different occasions. People from around the world are getting closer, and knowing more languages increases people's prospects of incorporating into different domains. It helps understand a particular culture better, it helps get into the business world, it helps collaborate with people around the world and so on. Critical thinking in a foreign language may also aid in the development of critical thinking.

Learning foreign languages plays an important part in learning and understanding as well. Alone, foreign languages, according to Díaz-Lago & Matute (2018), are stated to present more accuracy and reduce the level of bias. This assumption is made based on the results taken from two experiments conducted. The first experiment was done with a group of native English speakers who studied Spanish as a foreign language. The second experiment was done with a group of Spanish native speakers that studied English. Both groups were divided into two groups; one group was given the task in the native language and the other in the foreign language. The results showed that in both the first and second experiments, the performance of the foreign language participants was obviously more correct.

According to Shirkhani & Fahim (2011), language learning and critical thinking are connected tightly. Shirkhani & Fahim (2011) claim that enhancing critical thinking in EFL classrooms is

important for some reasons: first, the ability of language learners to control their thinking is connected with the ability to find ways to learn more successfully; second, critical thinking enlarges students' learning experiences, so language becomes more meaningful; and third, critical thinking is highly associated with students' achievements Rafi, M. S. (n.d. as stated in Shirkhani & Fahim 2011).

According to Davidson & Dunham (1997), Shirkhani & Fahim (2011), Sun (2015), and Tang (2016), as cited in Zhao, Pandian, & Singh (2016), the latest tendency emphasizes the need for the development of critical thinking to be part of the curriculum of the English language as a foreign language. Furthermore, Zhao, Pandian, and Singh (2016) emphasize the importance of critical thinking, stating that it is necessary because it can improve students' ability to "read beyond the literal, to write convincing essays, to express their ideas with adequate supporting evidence, and to challenge others' positions."

Using a foreign language for enhancing critical thinking depends on the students' language level. Kabilan (2000, as cited in Zhao, Pandian, & Singh, 2016), claims that low language proficiency is not sufficient for developing critical thinking. But regardless of the language level, developing critical thinking in an EFL classroom might be challenging as students might be focused more on finding the right expression than thinking critically. According to a study conducted by Carter (2020), teachers claim that children have difficulty thinking critically due to linguistic barriers.

Both critical thinking and language learning are important for today's work market. Enhancing critical thinking through a foreign language is challenging, but beneficial as well. Language level has a significant impact on critical thinking development. In cases when the language level is proficient, foreign languages can be even more understandable and handy. Language learning is important to understand tasks better, which makes learners automatically enhance critical thinking.

2.4 The importance of speaking activities in EFL classroom

Speaking is considered the most essential skill in today's society. Attention towards the development of speaking a particular language has been given for a long time, since the beginning of the communication era (Aleksandrak, 2011). Mastering a foreign language is

incomplete without mastering the speaking skills of that particular language.

Speaking is one of the most important language skills (along with reading, writing, listening, and speaking). There are many factors that make speaking skills difficult to learn. The other three skills can be gained by our own willingness to learn, since we can read to increase our reading skills, listen to conversations and movies to enlarge our listening skills, and develop our writing skills by practicing writing. But when it comes to speaking, there are some methods that can be applied, but in order to be proficient, exercises and tasks need to be selected carefully. In Sadulloyevna (2016), it is stated that speaking is one of the most important skills in EFL. There, the emphasis on speaking is drawn as a skill that is needed to transmit information and ideas directly. Moreover, it transmits emotions as well. Sadulloyevna points out that the importance of speaking needs to be highlighted more and teachers need to be more focused on practising speaking rather than guiding them to memorization.

Hosni (2014) states that speaking is neglected since teachers are more focused on grammar and vocabulary. According to her, this happens because speaking is less tested. Students need to practice more speaking activities in order to develop communication skills.

According to Aleksandrak (2011), reaching speaking proficiency in a foreign language classroom is a tough job. Speaking beyond the classroom seems to be difficult for students, even the advanced ones. It is stated that this is a result of the lack of practice in speaking in the classroom. This comes from the fact that it is difficult to apply suitable discourse to the activities. Additionally, she states that frequently the high knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of a particular foreign language, in which oral communication is not integrated in an adequate way, does not ensure students' proficiency in oral communication. In accordance with this is Sadulloyevna (2016), who pointed out that in order to be fluent in speaking, grammar does not play an important part. She also announced that the balance between studying and practising is very important for learning a language. Therefore, it is preferable to find a way to practice the learned skills (writing, reading, listening, and speaking) outside the classroom.

Speaking skills are extremely important in the classroom. Applying speaking activities and selecting them properly has a great impact on improving students' communicative skills. For developing their speaking skills, students should be asked to be engaged in activities that stimulate their speaking and not memorize grammatical rules and learn by heart.

2.5 Speaking activities in enhancing critical thinking in EFL classroom

Speaking activities are important in the EFL classroom. Besides making students more fluent in speaking that particular language, they also stimulate their critical thinking skills. As the importance of both speaking fluency and critical thinking is mentioned separately, these two elements work together and have an impact on each other's capability.

In class, more importantly in ELF classes, students need to be motivated in order to have better results in communication. According to Slavin (2011), stated in Zhao, Pandian, and Singh (2016), through active groups, students can share ideas and develop critical thinking. Harizaj and Hajrulla (2017) present that there are many elements that affect students' capability to communicate in English as a foreign language. Some of them are: motivation, the classroom environment, and teaching and learning contexts. Another element that affects the communicative skills of students is thinking and acting critically.

Communicating in a foreign language can be difficult for many students as they may feel uncomfortable. The study done by Dil (2009, as cited in Hosni, 2014) was done with Turkish students regarding students' obstacles in communication in an English-language classroom. Anxiety and unwillingness in English speaking are two obstacles that students encounter most. The study shows that the reason these two obstacles are present in students is the fear of making mistakes and being negatively viewed. Additionally, the level of anxiety and unwillingness to communicate depends from students' language level. Students with low language proficiency feel more anxious and are more unwilling to participate in communication. Despite this, through regular effort in communication, students will start developing their communication skills. Harizaj and Hajrulla (2017) claim that enhancing fluency in a foreign language classroom helps in enhancing students' critical thinking as well. They also state that the ability to think critically impacts students' communication skills. Through critical thinking, students increase their communicative skills in English (Harizaj & Hajrulla, 2017). Whereas Zhao, Pandian, and Singh (2016) state that in order to develop critical thinking, it has been suggested to apply active and cooperative learning.

Some of the most effective activities that enhance speaking skills are debate, discussion, reciprocal peer questioning, and role play. Based on the fact that these techniques require thinking critically, they can all enhance critical thinking as well. As mentioned above, critical questioning is another method that stimulates critical thinking. This method can easily be

applied in an EFL classroom as well. All these strategies clearly can be applied to speaking activities since they all require achievement through communication and speaking, and most importantly, through thinking critically.

2.5.1 Debate

In the study conducted by Iman (2017), the results show that critical thinking and speaking skills improve through debates. Walker and Warhust (2000 as cited in Iman J. N., 2017) state that by giving students the opportunity to collaborate while learning things related to the subject during a debate in the classroom, debates are proven to be productive in developing critical thinking skills. According to Freely and Steinberg (2000, as cited in Malmir, 2012), the importance of debates, group discussions, and individual problem-solving activities in improving critical thinking in students is emphasized. Freely and Steinberg assume that debate enhances critical thinking skills in the event that the instructor offers students the perfect opportunity, but the opposite is proven by students.

2.5.2 Discussion

Discussion is one of the teaching methods that can be applied to increase speaking and develop critical thinking. According to Ikenobe (2002, as cited in Iman & Angraini, 2019), teachers can use discussion to make students active learners, increase their level of understanding, and enhance critical thinking.

Paul and Elder (2006, cited in Finn, 2018) claimed that Socratic questioning can be helpful for students regarding questioning different assumptions and considering different options.

2.5.3 Socratic Questioning

In the study conducted by Elder (2008), we are presented with three Socratic questioning categories: spontaneous, exploratory, and focused. Using these three categories to enhance critical thinking in students requires skillfulness in questioning.

Spontaneous or Unplanned

Spontaneous or unplanned is the first category explained in this article. This category requires asking questions based on the statements made by students. The purpose of the questions is to clarify the given opinion. By any chance, the given statement is unclear, incorrect, or questionable, this method gives students the chance of correction. This category helps students become self-correcting.

Exploratory

This category helps in displaying students' thoughts on different matters. Instructors can use this category to assess students' understanding of a particular topic to see what they understood properly and to clarify their uncertainties. Through this category, the instructor can also discover students' interests in a particular field. This method works best if students are introduced to the subject in order to analyze it later. They can even arrange a list of questions that might be asked of them. After the exploratory dialogue, the issue can be further discussed in groups.

Focused

In this category, the focus is specifically on the topic, the issue, and the content. This category stimulates students' thinking from different points of view. It helps them express their opinions clearly. In order to use focused Socratic questioning, we need to analyze, to classify, to sort concepts and issues, to evaluate different perspectives, and so on.

2.5.4 Reciprocal Peer Questioning

This strategy can be used in any subject and can be applied to fourth graders through university students. This strategy is applied by using questions in classroom lectures. Students are given a set of guided questions in order to stimulate students' own questions regarding the subject lectured. Afterwards, they engage in peer- questioning. Divided into

groups of 3–4 students, they answer each other's questions (King, 2010).

2.5.5 Role Plays

Role playing is an important technique for learning since it helps students develop several skills. According to Akhtamovna (2018), it develops students' language fluency, increases interaction between students and motivates them in class. Role play has an impact on increasing students' responsibility for learning, but it also promotes transparency in the classroom among teachers and students.

2.6 Conclusion

Critical thinking is a skill whose requirements cannot be denied. An exact definition of critical thinking cannot be given since there are different approaches to it. In general, critical thinking is the process of thinking, analyzing, and processing information. Many researchers question the idea that critical thinking can be taught. That is why this paper presents some approaches that different researchers have towards this case. The research also presents some of the activities that might be helpful for enhancing critical thinking through speaking activities in an EFL classroom.

So far, the outcomes are in correspondence with the hypothesis of the study.

According to the first hypothesis, 'Critical thinking is a learnt skill that can be developed through foreign language activities,' the abovementioned information indicates that critical thinking is a skill that can be enhanced through activities and can be developed systematically. Enhancing critical thinking through a foreign language is possible as well. The development of critical thinking depends on language proficiency. Students that are fluent in a particular foreign language face no difficulties in enhancing critical thinking, but if the language proficiency is low, then students face difficulties in understanding and expressing their thoughts as well.

The second hypothesis, 'Speaking activities in an EFL classroom can develop students' critical thinking skills,' corresponds with the information mentioned above that speaking activities in an EFL classroom also develop students' critical thinking skills. There are many useful

speaking activities that enhance critical thinking, such as: debate, discussion, reciprocal peer questioning, and role play.

Moreover, through the presented techniques, students can benefit in the best way possible regarding critical thinking and speaking activities. These techniques contribute to making students better critical thinkers, but they also make them better in their language skills, particularly in speaking English.

To sum up, the main purpose of this paper is to find out the connection between speaking activities and critical thinking have in an EFL classroom. In other words, if through a speaking class (EFL class), critical thinking can be developed by making progress in speaking too.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Purpose of the study

The study on Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills through Speaking Activities in English as a Foreign Language Classroom – A Study with High School Students of "Kuvendi I Lezhës" in Vitia aims to have a vision of implementing speaking activities that facilitate critical thinking in high school at "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia. Furthermore, it elaborates on activities that are useful for enhancing critical thinking.

Considering the fact that critical thinking enhancement requires some extra attention in order to be successfully developed, there are still some schools and teachers that do not make the effort to facilitate it for students. This lack of commitment to critical thinking has been present in recent years. Things seem to have started to change. My experience as a student at the same school from 2009 to 2012 taught me that critical thinking was not adequately developed. We were mostly required to memorize facts by heart and repeat them in order to assess our knowledge. During English classes, teachers focused more on grammar than on speaking activities and on critical thinking activities. Now, a decade apart, the teaching expectations have changed, in particular for critical thinking enhancement.

This study aims to see if the teaching process has really changed and if critical thinking is enhanced in the ELF classroom in Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia, if it is manageable to enhance it through speaking activities and so on. Furthermore, the research questions below show the main focus of this thesis, and the hypotheses show the expected outcomes of this thesis.

3.2 Research questions

This study is focused mainly on two matters, which are introduced through the research questions:

- Is critical thinking a skill that can be learned through a foreign language?
- Can speaking activities in English as a foreign language enhance critical thinking skills?

The first question will provide us with information like: if critical thinking can be developed in a foreign language classroom and to detect if the foreign language helps students in critical thinking enhancement or if it makes things more difficult for FL learners. This question gives a general idea about critical thinking enhancement through foreign languages.

The second question narrows the focus on speaking activities with the purpose of facilitating critical thinking in the EFL classroom. It will provide answers as to how critical thinking can be enhanced effectively through speaking activities in the English as a Foreign Language classroom. Furthermore, it provides information about the activities that might be effective and useful.

3.3 Research hypothesis

The following hypothesis will provide some assumptions on the research questions that will be tested later.

The research hypothesis:

H1- Critical thinking is a learnt skill which can be developed through foreign language activities.

H2- Speaking activities in EFL classroom can develop students' critical thinking skills.

3.4 Participants

All participants played a huge role in this study. To implement this study, three EFL teachers who taught 11th graders were interviewed. Teachers took part in the observation and the interview. Observation took place in a school with a physical presence, with three teachers and in three different classes. The classes observed were in the 11th grade, where in each class, around 23 students were present. The total number of students that took part in the observation is 70. There I observed and valued both the teachers' and students' performances.

The following chart presents the number of students present in class:

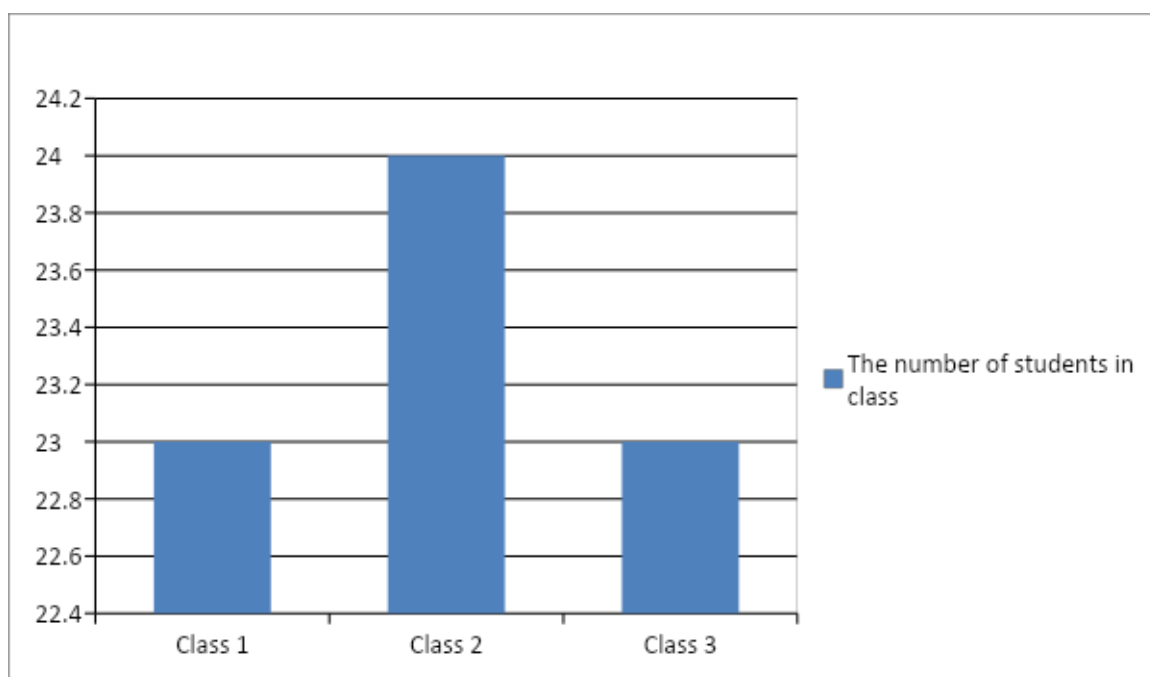


Figure 1: The age of students participating in the observation

The chart shows the number of students that participated in each class. In the first class, 23 students took part; in the second class, 24 students; and in the third class, 23 students.

The questionnaires were conducted online, via email. The questionnaire was sent to 70 students, but only 40 of them completed it. The questionnaires focused on students' viewpoints on critical thinking enhancement in the EFL classroom and also enhancing it through speaking activities in the EFL classroom. As mentioned above, these students were in the 11th grade and belonged between the ages of 16 and 17.

The following chart presents the age of students that participated in the questionnaire:

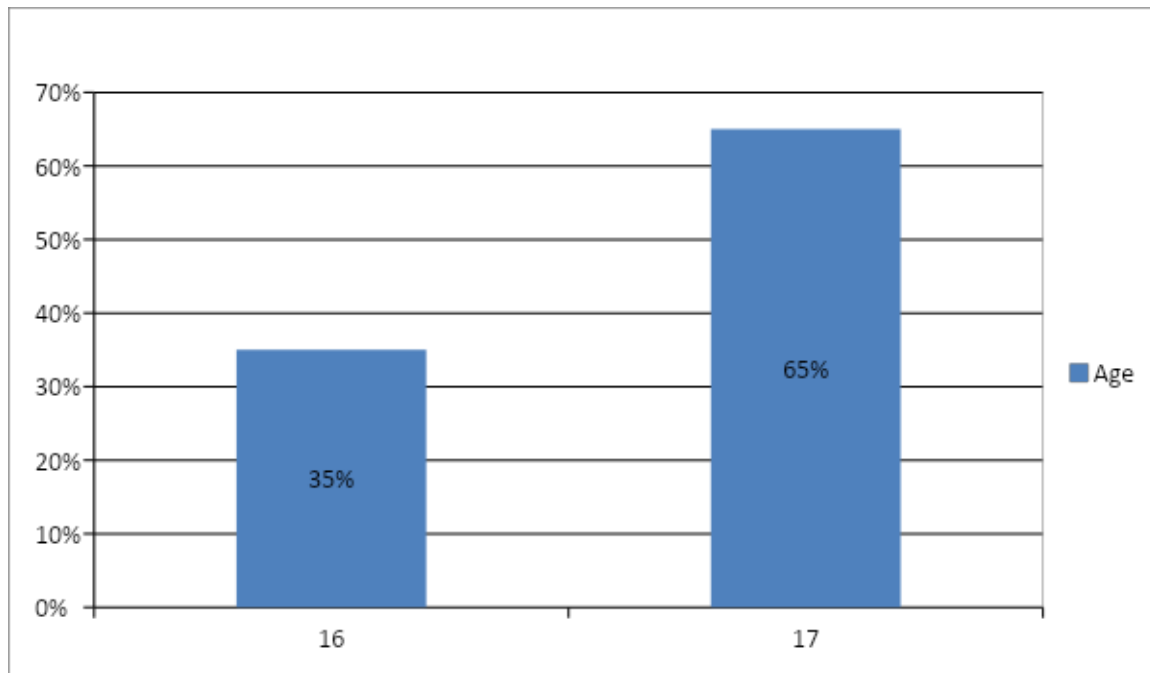


Figure 2: the age of students participated in the questionnaire

The chart shows the age of students that participated in the questionnaire. 35% of students were 16 years old and 65% of students were 17 years old.

Regarding the gender of participants the majority were females.

The following chart presents the gender of students that participated in the questionnaire:

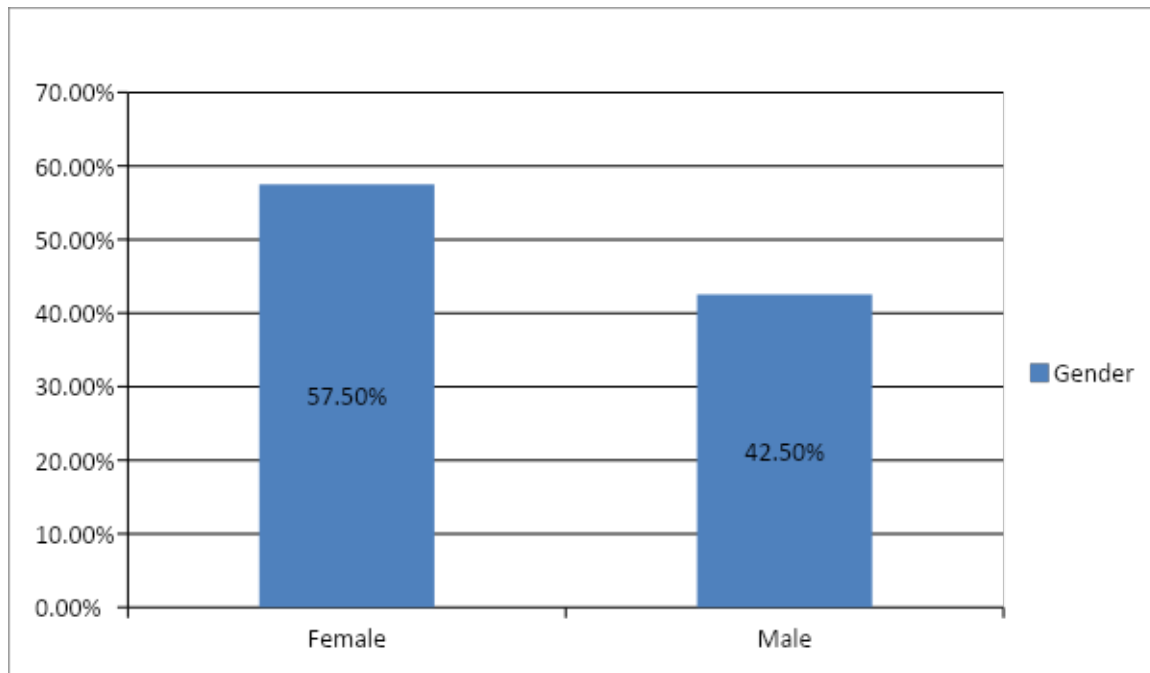


Figure 3: Students' gender

The chart shows that 57.5% of the participants were females and 42.5% were males.

The participants of the study played a huge role in the research and the result was really helpful. Teachers were really collaborative and ready to help, whereas students were a little hesitant, even though it was assured that the questionnaires would remain anonymous and the data used only for this research.

3.5 Research instruments

For this thesis, three research instruments were used: questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Every research instrument was conducted in the Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia with the same students and teachers.

The first instrument to start with was a questionnaire. They were conducted online where 70 questionnaires were distributed directly to students via email, but only 40 of them were completed.

The interview was conducted with EFL teachers who taught 11th grade students. The

teachers were collaborative, and the interviews were really helpful for getting the required information. They were mainly interviewed on the matter of EFL speaking activities that enhance critical thinking, if these activities can be done successfully, and the obstacles they face during the process.

Observation, the third instrument used for this research, was done with the observer's physical presence in class. Three different classes with about 23 students each were present in the classroom. The observation was completed successfully and with no interruption.

All three research instruments resulted to be successful and also gathered useful data for the research.

3.6 Procedure

This research was conducted in the Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia, with 11th grade students. Before starting the research in the school, I had to write a request to the Directorate of Education in the municipality of Vitia. After receiving the confirmation from the Directorate, I contacted the principal of the school and then three EFL teachers of 11th graders. I explained the research and its purpose to teachers in order to have a better understanding of the aim of the research. For the purpose of not making frequent contact with students and teachers due to the high numbers of infected people with COVID-19 during that time, I decided to send the questionnaires via email to students. Although I explained that the questionnaires would be anonymous, many of them did not fill out the questionnaires. Therefore, I had to ask students for a second time in order to get more responses.

Regarding the interviews, we agreed to send the questions via email with the opportunity to send follow up questions if needed. I sent the interview questions to three teachers, and later I got their answers back.

The observation was conducted with physical presence in the classroom. The three classes I observed were speaking classes with the intention of enhancing critical thinking.

The procedures that resulted were successful as all the needed data was secured for accomplishing this research. The data will be further analyzed in the following chapters.

Chapter 4: Research results and analysis

This chapter presents detailed information and data collected with the research instruments, such as: questionnaires conducted with students, interviews conducted with EFL teachers, and class observation. These three instruments proved to be sufficient tools to collect the required data needed for the research, which were all used in the Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia with 11th grade students and their EFL teachers. Through analyzing these research instruments, they will provide us with information like: can critical thinking be enhanced through speaking activities in an EFL classroom; what are the methods used by English language teachers to enhance their students' critical thinking skills; how do they implement these approaches; the obstacles they face; and so on.

4.1 Data collection

This chapter presents the research instruments and the data collected, which allow the research questions and hypotheses to be tested. Three research instruments were used for collecting this data. They were successfully accomplished and supplied the needed data for the study.

Through questionnaires, data was collected about students' view points on critical thinking enhancement. They were questioned about the value of critical thinking in the EFL classroom and how to incorporate it into speaking activities.

Interviews have been conducted with three different teachers (all EFL teachers of 11th grade students). The interviews provided data about how important it is for teachers to enhance critical thinking in EFL classrooms, how much they apply it, and what methods they use. Additionally, the data will demonstrate how teachers approach critical thinking enhancement and the challenges they encounter along the way.

The third research instrument is observation. The data collected from observation may be the most accurate since this tool allowed the class and all the teaching-learning processes to be assessed by the third-party observer and therefore to get the questions answered from

the observer's perspective. The main goal was to see if speaking activities that enhance critical thinking were presented to students and how successful they were.

The procedure of data collection went well and the purpose of the research instruments was fulfilled since each instrument provided with the required data. Both students and teachers' opinion on critical thinking enhancement through speaking activities in EFL classroom was taken. And through observation the two parties' performance were observed and analyzed according to the observer's viewpoint.

4.2 Findings from questionnaire

At the beginning of the questionnaire, there is a statement to assure you that the answers will be used only for this research and that all the questions will remain anonymous. Furthermore, in order for students to have a clear idea of what critical thinking means, a simple definition of critical thinking was written.

The questionnaire was intended to get useful data from students. It started with some basic questions such as age, gender, and grade. The other questions were all related to the learning process they do in class and critical thinking facilitation. The questionnaire aims to get students' ideas regarding critical thinking enhancement in the EFL classroom and their point of view on the process of implementing it in class.

To collect this data successfully, the questionnaire was designed carefully. It consists of 12 questions. 7 of the questions are dichotomous questions, two are multiple choice questions, and the last one is an open-ended question. This questionnaire was handed to 60 students and only 40 were completed, so the response rate is 67%.

The collected data displayed through descriptive statistics will be presented in charts and percentages.

Additionally, the questions from the questionnaire are presented.

Question 1: What is your level of English language?

The results show that:

20% of students estimated their level of English as **Excellent**;

27.5% of students estimated their level of English as **Very Good**;

35% of students estimated their level of English as **Good**;

17.5% of students estimated their level of English as **Basic**;

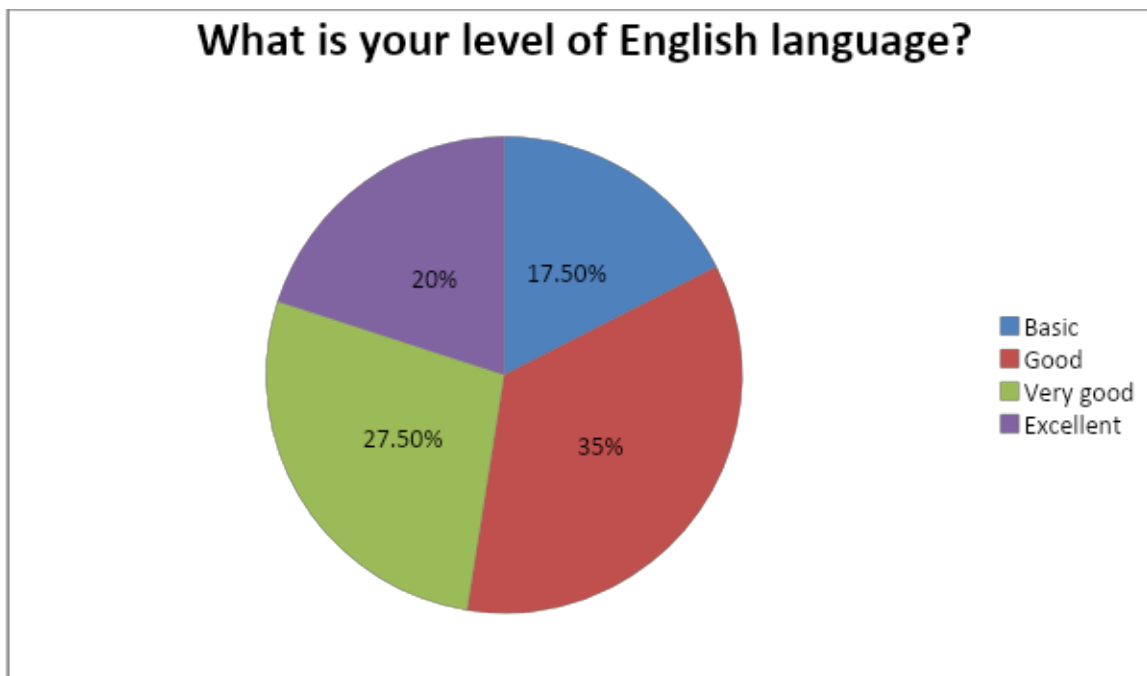


Figure 4. The responses of the first question.

This question was asked to see what the students' level of English language proficiency was in order to see what role language proficiency plays when it comes to critical thinking enhancement. Regardless of the fact that all students are in the same grade, their level of language proficiency differed among each other.

Question 2: Do you think critical thinking activities are important for students?

The results show that:

40% of students answered **Really important**;

52.5% of students answered **Important**;

2.5% of students answered **Somehow important**;

5% of students answered **Not important at all**.

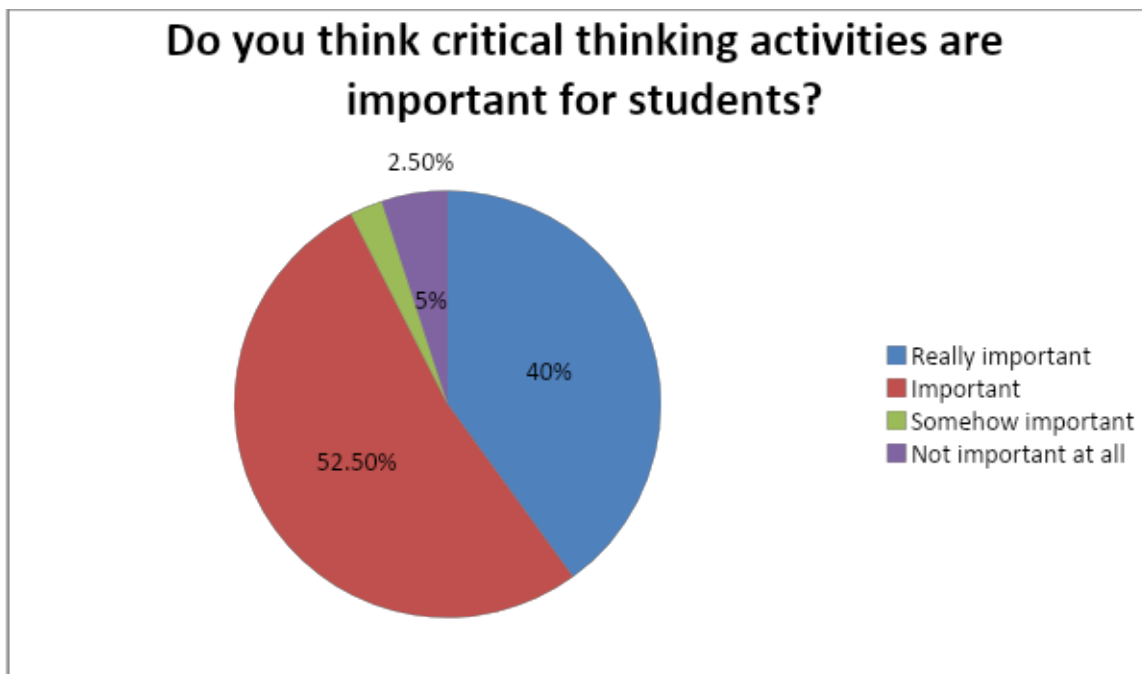


Figure 5: The responses of the second question.

For the second question, almost all students said that critical thinking is important for students. 40% of students think it is really important and 52.5% think it is important. On the other hand, only 2.5% think it is somehow important and another 5% think it is not important at all.

Question 3. Do you think in your school, including all subjects, you enhance critical thinking sufficiently?

The results show that:

50% **Yes;**

50% **No.**

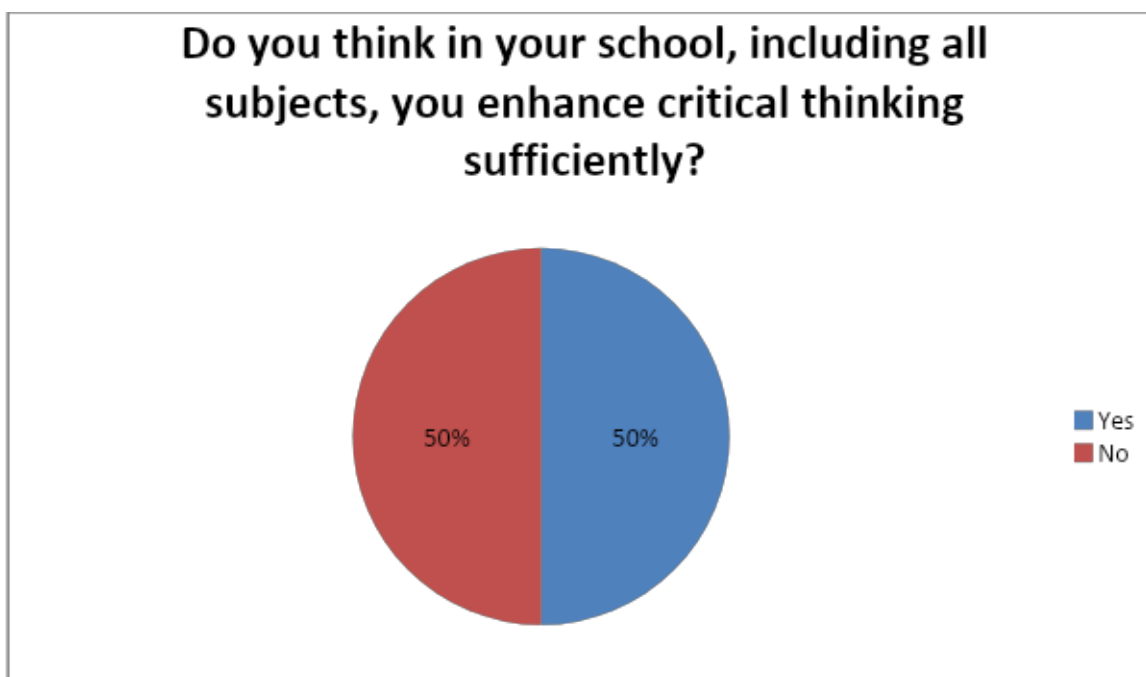


Figure 6: The responses of the third question.

For this question, students were given only two possible answers, from which they had to choose one. Half of the students think that critical thinking is enhanced sufficiently and the other half think it is not enhanced sufficiently.

Question 4. According to your opinion should critical thinking be more enhanced in your school?

The results show that:

85% of them answered **Yes**;

15% of them answered **No**.

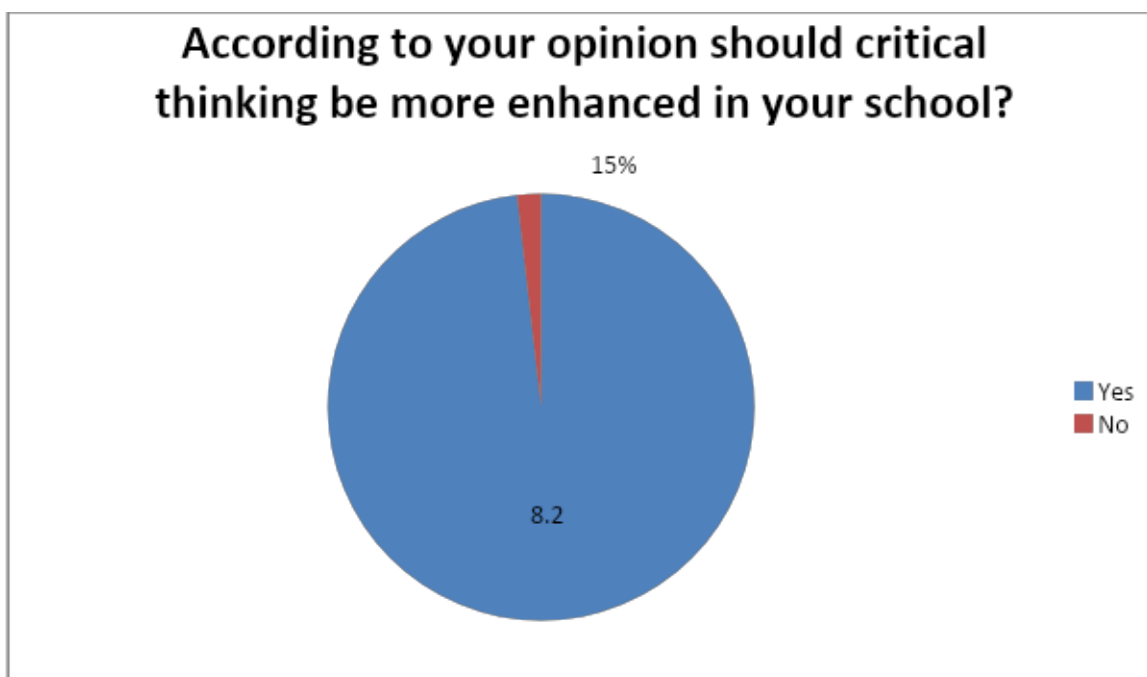


Figure 7: The responses of the fourth question.

In the fourth question, the majority of students think that critical thinking should be enhanced more in their school and only a small percentage think that it should not be enhanced.

Question 5. In English classes do you do activities that enhance critical thinking?

The results show that:

35% of them chose **Yes, always**

27.5% of them chose **Often**

35% of them chose **Sometimes**

2.5% of them chose **Never**

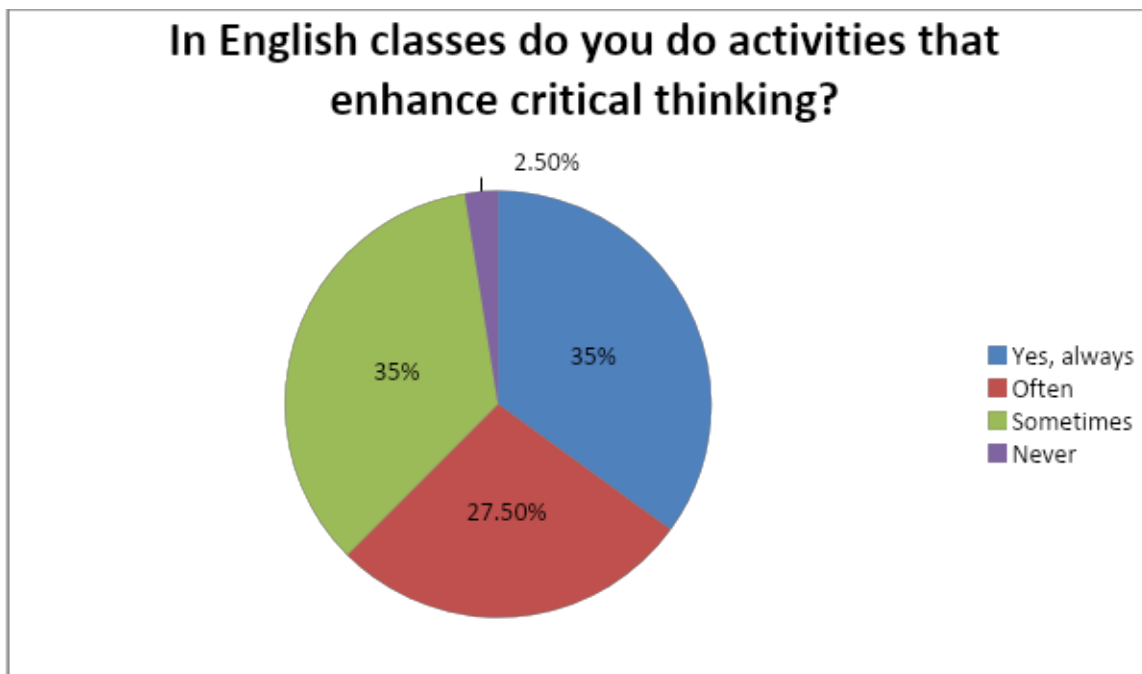


Figure 8: The responses of the fifth question.

On this question, almost all the students responded positively; only 2.5% answered negatively. It is understandable that activities that enhance critical thinking are used in an EFL classroom. Students' answers vary among "always," "often" and "sometimes," which means that the frequency of application might differ between classes.

Question 6. If yes, through which activities do you enhance critical thinking? (you may choose more than one answer)

The results show that:

42.5% of students answered **Reading**

52.5% of students answered **Listening**

30% of students answered **Writing**

77.5% of students answered **Speaking**

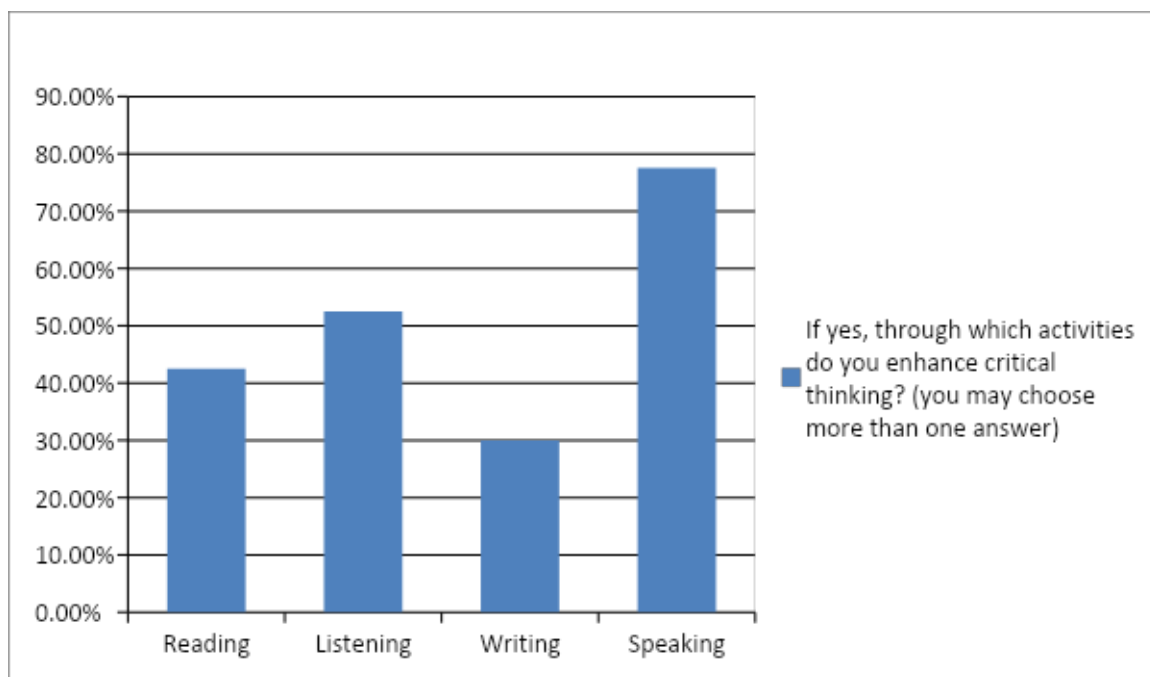


Figure 9: The responses of the sixth question.

In this question, students had the opportunity to choose more than one option. We can see that speaking activities have the highest percentage, followed by listening activities and then reading, whereas writing activities have the lowest rate.

Question 7. Do you develop critical thinking through speaking activities in English classes?

The results show that:

90% said **Yes**

10% said **No**

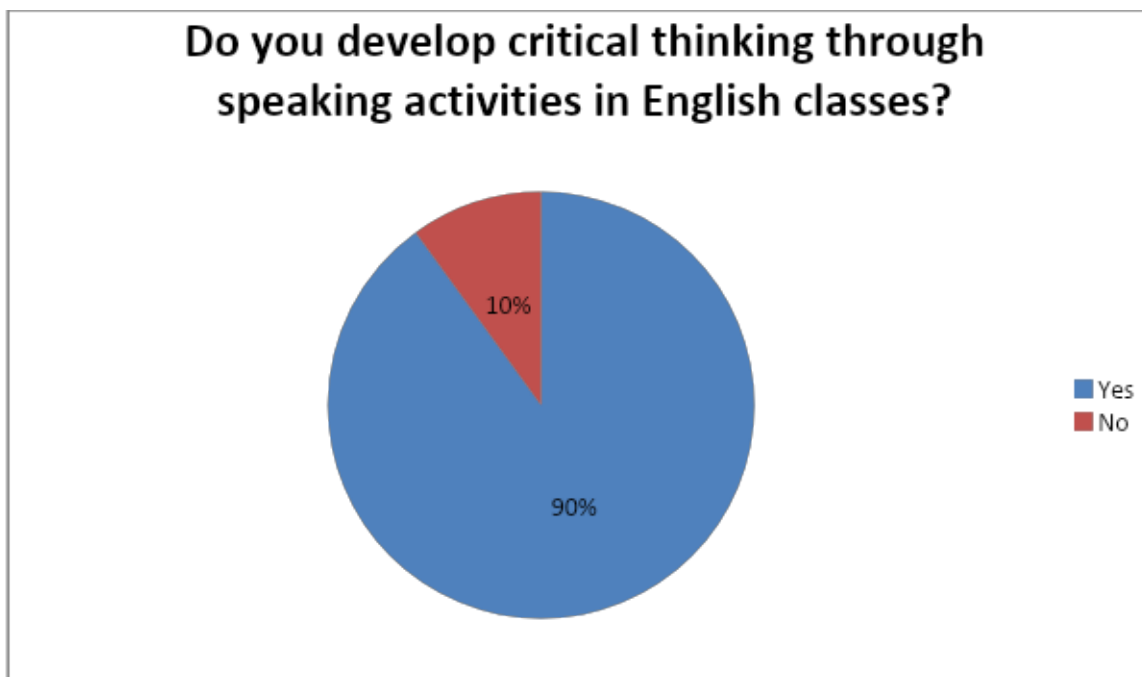


Figure 10: The responses of the seventh question.

This question is specific to speaking activities that enhance critical thinking. It required a clear answer with only two options available. Almost all the students responded positively, and only a few students responded negatively. As a result of this, we can say that critical thinking is enhanced through speaking activities in EFL classrooms.

Question 8. How often do you practice critical thinking through speaking activities?

The results show that:

30% chose **Every time we have speaking**

32.5% chose **Often**

35% chose **Sometimes**

2.5% chose **Never**

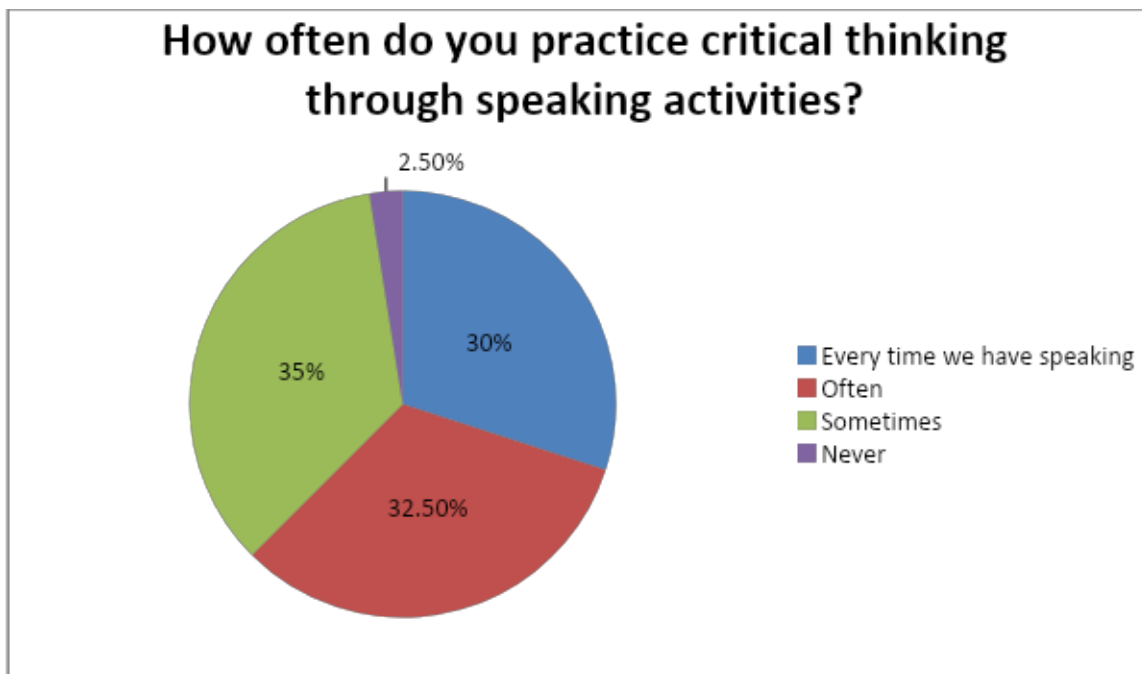


Figure 11: The responses of the eighth question.

This question requires the frequency of the application of speaking activities that enhance critical thinking in EFL classes. The chart shows that critical thinking is quite often enhanced through speaking activities since a considerable number of students answered that they apply it often and every time they have speaking activities.

Question 9. When you practice speaking activities which activities do you practice? (you may choose more than one answer)

The results show that:

40% of answers are **Debate**

70% of the answers are **Discussion**

65% of the answers are **Questions and answers**

25% of the answers are **Role play**

2.5% Other...

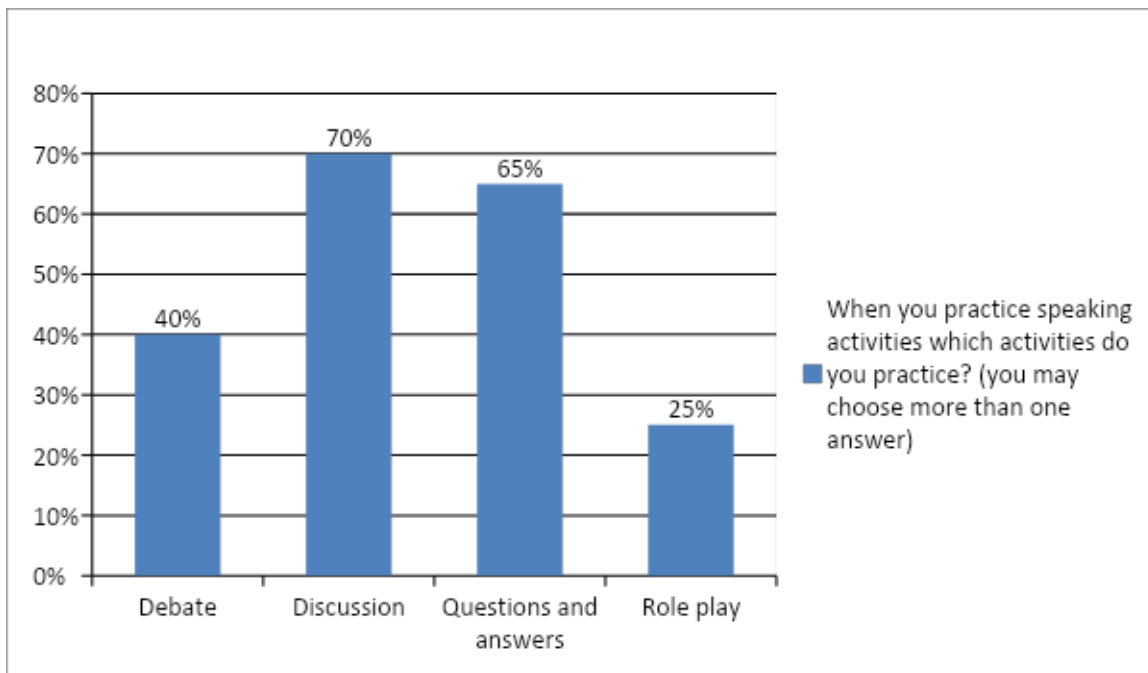


Figure 12: The responses of the ninth question.

Students were required to choose more than one answer if needed, through which they show what activities they use in EFL speaking classes with the purpose of enhancing critical thinking. As the chart illustrates, discussion is the activity that is mostly used as it has the highest rate, 70%. It is followed by questions and answers with 65%, then debates with 40% and 25% of the answers belonging to role play.

Question 10. How difficult is it to think critically when speaking in English language?

The results show that:

5% said it is **Too difficult**

25% said it is **Difficult**

50% said it is **Neutral**

12.5% said it is **Easy**

7.5% said it is **Very easy**

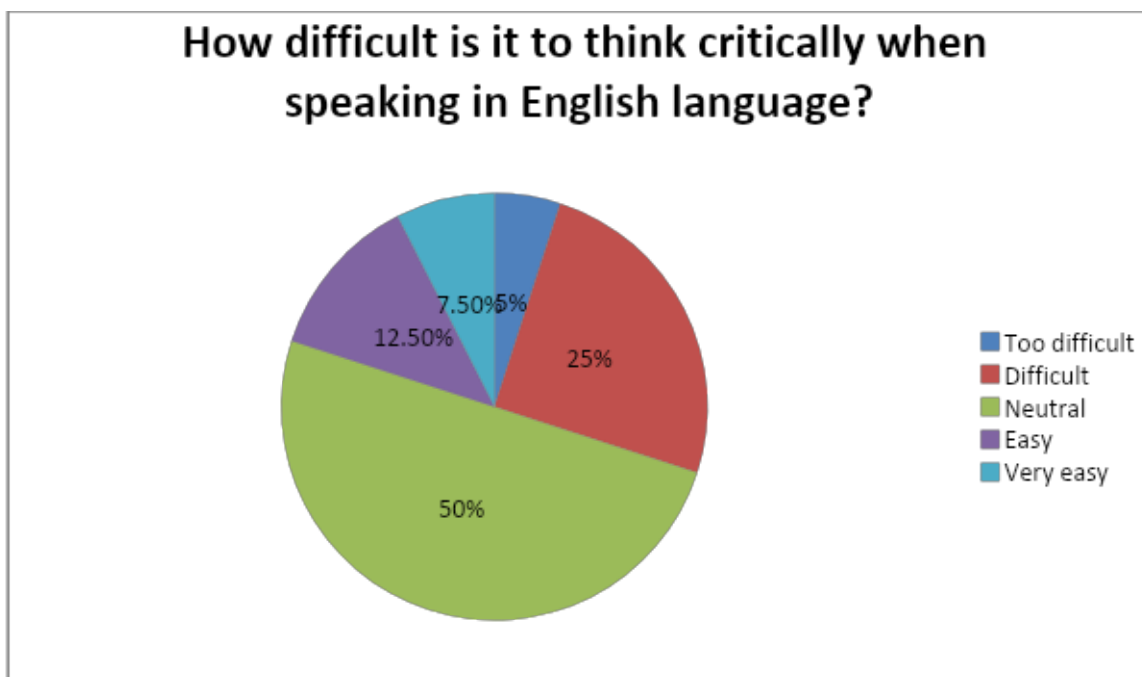


Figure 13: The responses of the tenth question.

Through this question, students were asked how difficult it was for them to think critically when speaking in English. Through this, we can see if English as a foreign language prevents them from thinking critically and facilitates critical thinking through different speaking activities. The answers demonstrated in the chart show that a small percentage of students think that it is very easy and easy to enhance critical thinking when speaking in English. Half of students are neutral, 25% think it is difficult, and 5% think it is too difficult.

Question 11. Do you think that you should have more speaking activities that enhance critical thinking in English classes?

The results show that:

77.5% of students said **Yes**

22.5% of students said **No**

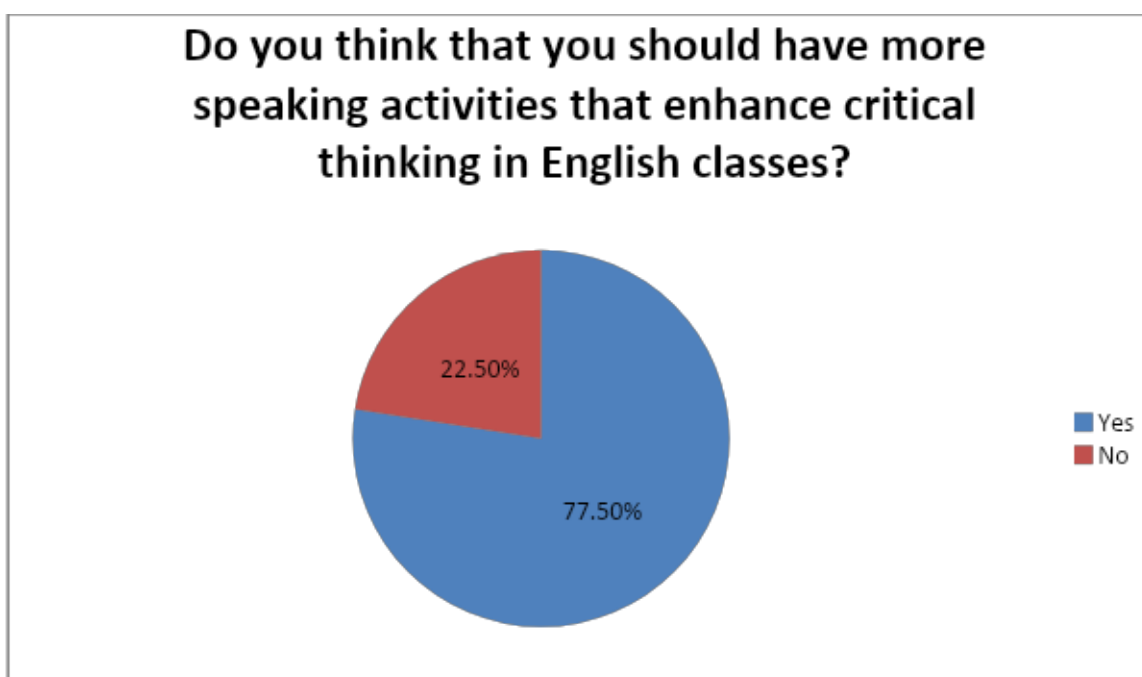


Figure 14: The responses of the eleventh question.

This question offers only two options. The majority think that critical thinking should be enhanced through speaking activities, and a few students think that it should not.

Question 12. What would you like to see changed regarding enhancing critical thinking in English classes?

This is an open-ended question where students had the opportunity to add things that they would change in the EFL classroom regarding the critical thinking enhancement. Many students said that they are satisfied with their EFL teacher and that they think there is nothing to change since his classes are the best. Some students said that teachers should do more activities that enhance critical thinking in class and do activities that involve the whole class.

4.3 Discussion about students' questionnaire

The questionnaire gives a view of students' opinions about critical thinking enhancement in general, through the EFL classroom, and through speaking activities in the EFL classroom. It is concluded that critical thinking is taught in the EFL classroom and that they apply it in speaking activities as well. Critical thinking is enhanced through all four main language skills, but speaking has the highest rate at 77.5%. The speaking activities through which critical thinking is enhanced are: discussion, with a 70% rate, followed by questions and answers with 65%, debates, 40%, and role play, with a 25% rate.

The data shows that even students of the same grade do not have the same English language level, which may complicate the process of learning. Only 20% of students think they are excellent at the English language; 27% think they are very good at it; 35% think they are good at it; and 17.5% of students think they have only basic knowledge of the English language.

As to critical thinking enhancement as regards all school subjects, half of the students think that critical thinking is sufficiently enhanced and the other half think that it is not sufficiently enhanced. Should critical thinking be encouraged in your school, in your opinion? 85% of students answered positively, and only 15% of them answered negatively. Here we face a contradiction with the previous question since 50% claimed that they enhance critical

thinking sufficiently and here only 15% of them think that it should not be enhanced more. Students might also find it difficult to enhance critical thinking skills through the English language. According to the students' answers, only a small percentage of students find it easy to think critically while they speak in English. More accurately, 30% find it difficult, 50% are neutral, and only 20% find it easy. This result makes us believe that learning a foreign language might be an obstacle for students doing speaking activities that enhance critical thinking.

When it comes to enhancing critical thinking through speaking activities, 77.5% of students think that it should be enhanced and only 22.5% think that it should not be enhanced. The last question is an open-ended one. Around 12 students answered that there is no need for change since they are satisfied with their EFL classes. Some think that they need more activities that enhance critical thinking skills and that there should be activities that all students get involved in.

It should be taken into consideration that three different classes have taken the questionnaire and the answers may differ according to their professor's application of methodology.

4.4 Results from the teachers' interview

The interview is semi-structured with open-ended questions. It consists of 13 questions designed to collect information about teachers' perspectives on critical thinking enhancement in EFL classes, more specifically through speaking activities. The purpose of the interview is to get the data that only teachers can give. For collecting this data, three EFL teachers were interviewed via email.

To begin with, teachers were assured that the data would be used only for the purpose of the study and their names would remain anonymous. The interview was conducted with EFL teachers who taught 11th grade students. The teachers were collaborative, and the interviews were really helpful for getting the required information. They were mainly interviewed on the matter of EFL speaking activities that enhance critical thinking, as well as whether these activities can be done successfully, students' interest in participation, and the

obstacles they face during the process.

Question 1:

Interviewer: What is critical thinking and how important is it for students?

Teacher 1: Critical thinking is the process of observing, thinking, analyzing, and reasoning about a specific assignment or project. In my opinion, critical thinking is a very important skill that helps students question ideas rather than just accept them as fact.

Teacher 2: It is hard to give a definition of critical thinking, but in my opinion, critical thinking is to expect others' judgment, to accept their opinion, to accept that different people have different opinions and ideas, and to support your opinion by giving arguments that are based on facts. Critical thinking involves a skill that will increase the level of thinking in solving a problem. Critical thinking has crucial importance for students because they will learn to think with logic.

Teacher 3: Critical thinking is thinking by using arguments to support ideas. It's very important for students because it helps them show their opinions and ideas better.

The answers show the understanding teachers have regarding critical thinking and their opinion of the importance of critical thinking to students.

Question 2

Interviewer – Are you required by the head teacher or the Ministry of Education to apply critical thinking activities in the classroom?

Teacher 1: Of course, we are. The new curriculum places critical thinking as one of the most significant elements in the classroom.

Teacher 2: We aim to increase critical thinking skills for our students, as required by both the head teacher and the Ministry of Education. We all agree that being a critical thinker will always be a solution to every problem and challenge.

Teacher 3: Yes, we are. from the ministry of education.

As it is seen from the teachers' answers, teachers are asked both by the head teacher and the ministry of education to apply critical thinking activities in the classroom.

Question 3:

Interviewer: In English classes, do you apply critical thinking activities?

Teacher 1: Absolutely yes. When teaching students about tenses, reading comprehension, and activities, I push them to think critically. Basically, these are some of the forms used in my classes: brainstorming, asking and answering questions in groups, connecting different ideas, agreeing and disagreeing about a friend's or author's opinions, inspiring their creativity, etc.

Teacher 2: Yes, I do apply different critical thinking activities, such as debates. I think that through debate they can become better critical thinkers, considering that they will learn that rather than raising their voice, they can choose their words wisely.

Teacher 3: I use critical thinking with my students occasionally, but not very often.

Two of the answers are somehow similar: both teachers say that they apply critical thinking in class through different activities, whereas the third teacher says that she applies it sometimes, but not that often.

Question 4:

Interviewer: Do you apply speaking activities that enhance critical thinking?

Teacher 1: According to the speaking activities, as a teacher, I think that debates are an amazing activity to make students speak and think critically, expressing their pros and cons about a particular topic.

Teacher 2: Yes, I do. We apply different speaking topics that enhance critical thinking. This makes students curious about things around them.

Teacher 3: Yes, I do.

From the previous answers, we learn that teachers apply critical thinking. Furthermore, from these answers, we learn that critical thinking through speaking activities is applied by all three teachers as well. The first teacher mentions that debate is a great speaking activity for enhancing critical thinking.

Question 5:

Interviewer: How much interest do students show towards these activities?

Teacher 1: Most of my students like debates, interviews, or role plays. They have fun and get more engaged in these kinds of activities that have to do with speaking rather than writing.

Teacher 2: They are extremely curious and highly interested in these activities.

Teacher 3: Students do not show a lot of interest when it comes to speaking. The majority of them feel shy about speaking up and expressing their ideas. In a class, I can say that I have 1 or 2 students with whom I can do speaking activities.

The answers to this question are contradictory. The first two teachers say that students are highly interested and extremely curious about speaking activities. On the other hand, the third teacher says that students are not much interested in speaking activities; the larger part feel shy speaking; and only 1 or 2 students (the average number of students in a class is 25) are able to do the speaking activities presented by the teacher.

Question 6

Interviewer: What activities do you do? (Please specify)

Teacher 1: As mentioned above, English classes luckily have different topics that help the teacher use a variety of methods depending on what the topic's material offers us. Some of the activities used in my classes are debates, interviews, role plays, group presentations followed by a couple of questions by other groups, and so on.

Teacher 2: As I mentioned above, we use debates. Except this, basic questions like "create,

invent, and so on."

Teacher 3: I occasionally take different pictures and encourage students to analyze them, asking what they can see, what activities people are doing, what's wrong with the picture, and so on. But I also use activities as a discussion point, where students can discuss in pairs, in groups, but also individually. But as I mentioned above, only a few students show interest and get involved, even though I try to involve the other students by using simple questions and topics.

The answers show some activities that teachers use in class to enhance critical thinking. The activities are: debates, interviews, role plays, group presentations, questions, analyzing pictures, and discussion – individual, in pairs, and in groups.

Question 7:

Interviewer: Are these activities successful? Why?

Teacher 1: These activities have shown quite good results, as being part of the activities, students have learnt lots of new words. It means that their vocabulary is improving day by day and that they have become more fluent.

Teacher 2: Definitely yes, because these activities help them to understand their point of view, be flexible, creative, original, and think about their thinking.

Teacher 3: As I mentioned above, not very often because the majority of students feel shy and are not very interested in speaking English, and they lack English vocabulary a lot.

Here, again, takes part the contradiction between the teachers' answers. The first two teachers said that the activities are successful because they see the students' progress constantly. The third teacher claims that the activities are often unsuccessful since students are shy and do not have a rich vocabulary; therefore, they do not show a great interest in speaking English.

Question 8:

Interviewer: Do you face obstacles regarding speaking activities that enhance critical thinking? If so, please mention the obstacles.

Teacher 1: Regarding speaking activities, some of the obstacles are the shy students who prefer writing instead of speaking and another group of students who find foreign languages very difficult to learn and do not want to be part of some activities.

Teacher 2: Yes, surely. Some students do not like to communicate and express themselves, and some students are not able to express themselves in English.

Teacher 3: Yes, I do. Students get bored; they don't know how to give arguments about things they're saying.

All teachers claim that they face obstacles when it comes to speaking activities that enhance critical thinking. Some of the obstacles are shy students who do not like to speak, students who find the English language difficult, students' boredom, and a lack of speaking skills.

Question 9:

Interviewer: Is English as a foreign language an issue for successfully applying these activities?

Teacher 1: Foreign languages in general offer us a greater opportunity to mix these activities that are very useful to encourage students to think critically.

Teacher 2: Even though we try to use different activities again, some students may find it difficult to understand because of their low language proficiency.

Teacher 3: Yes, it is. There are plenty of times when the lesson is unsuccessful.

The first teacher thinks that foreign languages enable using various activities that may

facilitate students' critical thinking. The second teacher thinks that EFL speaking activities might be difficult for some students since they have low language proficiency. Whereas the third teacher claims that there are many times when the class results are unsuccessful due to English as a foreign language.

Question 10:

Interviewer: Is low language proficiency an issue?

Teacher 1: That is the main reason for that group of students that find foreign languages a very difficult task in general.

Teacher 2: Yes, it's hard, but not impossible. Using appropriate activities, you may achieve results.

Teacher 3: Yes, it is. Students don't know the importance of English yet, and even though I try and try, there is not a joyful success.

For this question, all teachers share the same opinion about low language proficiency. All of them think that low language proficiency is an issue for enhancing critical thinking in EFL classes. The first teacher gets more specific by emphasizing that for the 'unsuccessful students,' low language proficiency is the main obstacle. The second teacher says that even though that is the reason, it is still not impossible to enhance it. Whereas the third teacher says that even though she tries hard, it all goes in vain.

Question 11

Interviewer: How do you deal with low language proficiency students?

Teacher 1: I try to engage them as much as I can. Group working results perfectly because they find more courage to express thoughts, or usually try to find the easiest part for them to at least speak something.

Teacher 2: As I said above, using suitable activities, such as those that have to do with problems, in order to find a possible solution.

Teacher 3: Critical thinking must be taken seriously since the beginning of learning English.

Students from a very young age should know how to think and how to support their ideas, not just take the answers from the book.

According to the first teacher, working in groups is the best solution for students with low language proficiency since it gives them the comfort to express themselves more. For the second teacher, using different activities as problem solving activities can help to deal with this issue. Whereas the third teacher emphasizes that enhancing critical thinking should be a priority for students from the start of learning English.

Question 12

Interviewer: Should more effort be given to enhancing critical thinking in EFL classrooms?

Teacher 1: I think a great amount of effort is given to critical thinking, but there might be a place for more.

Teacher 2: Definitely. There is always something more to do since we should accept the fact that we are not always right and we should consider the consequences of our options.

Teacher 3: Teachers should work harder with students, but students should try and focus more on learning English and learning new words so that when it comes to speaking, it will be easier to say what they want.

All three teachers claim that there is a need to give more effort towards enhancing critical thinking. Additionally, the third teacher says that students need to pay attention to English learning and expand their vocabulary in order to be able to speak and express their thoughts.

Question 13

Interviewer: Should teachers be responsible for enhancing critical thinking in students or should students manage it by themselves?

Teacher 1: It is reciprocal, I guess. Both of them have their responsibility, teachers by creating, guiding, and helping, whereas students by doing and trying their best.

Teacher 2: According to my opinion, that is something that both teachers and students have

to be willing to do their part in. However, teachers should teach them how to think more effectively and how to judge information. Thus, students need to be taught how to think. Teachers should guide them in order to improve their skills. They should show students that there is more than one solution to a problem.

Teacher 3: Teachers should always be responsible for presenting activities that facilitate critical thinking, but it is not in their hands if a student is able to think critically or not.

On this question, all three teachers share a similar opinion. They all think that both teachers and students should work towards enhancing critical thinking skills in order to succeed.

4.5 Discussion about teachers' interviews

The qualitative interview, as seen from the transcript above, highlights teachers' approach towards enhancing critical thinking in the EFL classroom, the obstacles they face, and other relevant information.

Critical thinking can be enhanced through different activities, including reading, listening, writing, and speaking activities. From the interview, it is clear that the most suitable activities for enhancing critical thinking are speaking activities. Most of the teachers' answers are similar, with slight differences.

The interview shows that teachers are aware of the importance of critical thinking for today's learning process. The importance is also drawn from the competent operating bodies, such as the ministry of education and the school head teacher. Therefore, critical thinking activities are applied in EFL classrooms through different activities. The activities that teachers use to enhance critical thinking in EFL classrooms in general are: debates, reading comprehension, grammar (tenses), questions and answers, and discussion. Further, teachers enhance critical thinking during speaking activities as well, and they mostly use activities like debates, interviews, role plays, group presentations, questions, analyzing pictures, and discussion – individually, in pairs, and in groups. At this part of the interview, we face a contradiction between the teachers' answers. Two of them say that students show high interest when it comes to speaking activities, whereas one teacher says that students are not that interested in these activities since only 1 or 2 students are capable of taking part in speaking activities.

Concerning the accomplishment of the class, again, the same two teachers assess their speaking classes as successful and they measure it by the progress they see in students, although they accept the fact that they do face obstacles like dealing with shy students and students that are not fluent in the English language. The third teacher claims that speaking classes are frequently unsuccessful because students are not able to take part in the activities as a result of poor vocabulary. The other obstacles the third teacher faces in class are students' boredom, lack of interest, and lack of vocabulary.

According to the first teacher, foreign languages give the opportunity to use various methods and activities that make students more interested. Contrarily, the other teachers think that English as a foreign language is itself an obstacle to successfully enhancing critical thinking. It can also be said that low language proficiency is a major obstacle to enhancing critical thinking through speaking activities, since teachers think that, regardless of their efforts for that part of the students, it is still difficult for them to think critically during speaking activities.

Regardless of the difficulty in the process of teaching, there is always something to do in order to have better results. The first teacher claims that group work is the best solution for involving all students in the activity. The second teacher thinks that the problem might be solved through applying appropriate activities as problem solving activities. The third teacher thinks that in order to have success, the problem should be addressed earlier and constant work should be done.

The results of the interviews imply that teachers are aware of the importance of critical thinking and that they try to facilitate it through different activities and through speaking activities. According to them, the success of the class depends mainly on the students' language proficiency. It also depends on the students' willingness to learn and their interest in participating in activities. Despite the fact that a lot of effort is given toward critical thinking enhancement, all three teachers think that more should be done. Additionally, teachers think that both teachers and students should be responsible for enhancing critical thinking through speaking activities. Teachers should apply the most suitable activities and students should do their part by showing interest in the language learning itself, so as to be able to express their thoughts in speaking activities.

4.6 Findings from class observation

The observation was carried out in the Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Lezhës" in Vitia. Three classes were observed with three different EFL teachers. The students were in 11th grade, and the duration of the class was 40 minutes. The purpose of the observation was numerous, but the main one was to see if students are able to think critically when speaking in English and at what level their English language should be in order to successfully engage in critical thinking activities. Through this research instrument, the attention was also drawn towards teachers' approach to students, how the teacher presents the activities in class, how he/she involved students, how much interest did students show towards these activities, and how much students got involved.

Class I

The first observation was made in a class of 23 students. The teacher started to check the students' homework. Even though the teacher was previously told that the purpose of the research was to see the critical thinking enhancement through speaking activities, she started to do grammar exercises and only at the end of the class did she start with speaking activities. During this time, she did activities like discussion and questions and answers. The teacher presented the topic "Print Newspaper vs. Online Newspaper". Students were asked to show their opinions on which they preferred more and to give reasons. The teacher asked them to think for a few minutes and then to express their opinions. When the teacher asked them for the answer, the majority of students were hesitant, and only a few answered. One of the students was fluent and was also able to think critically since she was able to think from different perspectives. Three others got involved, but they were not that fluent, whereas the other students remained silent for the whole class. Even though the teacher tried her best to inspire students to speak, it did not result in a very successful result since the teacher was the one who talked the most and there were only a few students who got involved.

The class result was not that successful for some reasons: the teacher's low management

skills, the students' low language proficiency, and the students' lack of interest. The results of the first observation show that enhancing critical thinking in a speaking class depends on the language proficiency and the students' communication skills.

Class II

The second class observed consisted of 24 students. The class started with a warm-up activity, as students were asked to read the title in their textbook and look at the pictures. Further, students were asked to guess what the text might be about. After taking students' answers, the teacher asked students to read the text "Weekend" and see if they guessed correctly. After finishing the reading, the teacher asked questions about the reading they just did. At this part, a lot of students showed interest, but most of the answers were short and taken from the book with the exact words. The teacher asked students to tell him about their weekend, what they like doing on weekends, and how they should spend it. This time, only a few students took part and were able to give original answers.

The discussion part was successful with 3 or 4 students who were fluent and could express themselves and support their ideas. Students who could speak fluently could also think critically. The other part of the students only took part when they had the answers before them and could remember them from the book. They understood what was going on, but they were not able to take part in more sophisticated activities. The other group of students, around 7 students, remained completely silent and did not take part in any activity.

This class resulted in a success since the whole activities were successfully presented to students with clear directions. The success of enhancing critical thinking depended on students' language proficiency. Students with basic knowledge did not take part at all. Students with an intermediate level were capable of answering simple questions but could not participate in discussion and were not able to think critically, whereas the students that were fluent did participate in discussion and were able to think critically.

Class III

The third class observed consisted of 25 students present in the class, and the duration of

the class was 40 minutes. The teacher used basic questions as a warm up activity, like: "How was your day?" How was your weekend? And so on. The teacher started to talk about his day and then he started to tell a story about something that happened to him around a year ago. The teacher asked students to discuss his story and give their opinions on it. They had the opportunity to ask the teacher questions and also tell him what they could have done better if they were in his place.

The teacher used simple language that was easily understood. As he told his story, he had the students' attention and the majority wanted to take part in the discussion, even though some could not speak fluently.

For the second activity, the teacher asked students to form groups of four and have a 10-minute discussion where they could tell stories within their group members. The group had to select the best story. They could also make some changes and then say it in front of the class. The other groups could ask questions and give feedback to their peers. In this activity, all the students participated since they had to share their stories within the group and discuss them.

This speaking activity was very successful. Every student was involved and willing to participate, regardless of their language proficiency level. The topics were simple and easy to understand. The activity enhanced critical thinking as well, since it required students to be critical when they asked questions and gave feedback on the other groups' stories.

4.7 Analysis of observation

The data collected from observations is really useful. The data show that students in the same grade level have varying levels of language proficiency, and teachers may play a significant role in the teaching-learning process. Three different classes with three different teachers were observed. Through this research instrument, it has been witnessed that the three classes differed in many cases. They differed in language proficiency, willingness to participate, and teachers' class preparation.

The first class was poorly managed, and the teacher was not well prepared. On the other hand, just a few students took part in the discussion, and the majority did not participate at

all. Regarding the second observation with another class, the teacher was prepared and mainly conducted speaking activities with the purpose of enhancing critical thinking skills. Even though the class had some reading activities, the teacher managed to perfectly connect them to speaking and critical thinking enhancement. Whereas the third class was a class that was mainly held by storytelling and discussion. This was a class where students had fun and, at the same time, developed their speaking and critical thinking skills.

As an outcome of the observations of the classes, it might be said that students' participation depends not only on the teachers' approach in class but also on the students' willingness to take part in the activities and their language proficiency as well.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, recommendations and limitations

5.1 Conclusion

The research on the topic Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills through Speaking Activities in English as a Foreign Language Classroom – A Study with High School Students of "Kuvendi I Lezhës" in Vitia with the purpose of finding out if critical thinking can be enhanced through EFL classes and if it is enhanced through speaking activities in EFL classrooms. Three research instruments were used for accomplishing this research: questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The research instruments proved successful.

Both hypotheses are tested and the following outcomes are presented:

To the first hypothesis, 'critical thinking is a learnt skill that can be developed through foreign language activities' we can conclude that critical thinking can be enhanced through a foreign language, but it depends on language proficiency. Students who do not understand the language find it difficult to participate in the activities, and as a result, their critical thinking skills do not improve. Students who are fluent in the language, on the other hand, can improve their critical thinking skills by learning a foreign language.

The second hypothesis, 'Speaking activities in an EFL classroom can develop students' critical thinking skills,' based on the data collected above, critical thinking can be enhanced through speaking activities in an EFL classroom.

The results show that speaking activities are the activities that are most often used to enhance critical thinking in an EFL classroom. The activities that are more commonly used are: discussion, questions and answers, debates, and so on.

Through the students' questionnaire, the students' points of view regarding critical thinking enhancement in the EFL classroom were taken. Most students think that critical thinking is enhanced in their school and in the EFL classroom as well. Even though critical thinking is enhanced through speaking activities, the majority of students think that it should be enhanced more. On the other hand, some students think that there is no need for change when it comes to their English classes.

The second instrument is the teacher's interview. The interview contained questions oriented toward teachers' opinions on critical thinking enhancement. Three teachers were interviewed. The answers were mainly similar. Teachers think that critical thinking is enhanced through speaking activities in the EFL classroom, but there might be room for some improvement. Teachers agree with the idea that critical thinking enhancement in an EFL classroom depends on students' language proficiency, especially in a speaking class.

The third instrument is observation. Its aim was to see the process of learning in person

where both teachers and students were included. Here, all the data taken from the previous instruments was strengthened or disproved. Three classes were observed, and each class varied from the other. But at this point, it is concluded that language proficiency plays a huge role in enhancing critical thinking through speaking activities in an EFL classroom.

The data shows that critical thinking is a skill that can be facilitated through ELF classes and through speaking activities as well, but it depends on language proficiency. If students' level of English is low, there is a really low possibility of being able to enhance critical thinking through speaking activities, but if their level of English is excellent, there is a high possibility for them to enhance critical thinking through speaking activities in an EFL classroom. There are other difficulties that both students and teachers face, such as: students' willingness to learn, their interest in the activities, the teachers' approach to the activities, and so on.

5.2 Recommendations

The study has been successful, and from the analysis of the data, we can come up with some recommendations. According to the results of this research, there are many things that can be improved. The success of the class depends on many elements. Teachers' classroom management, students' performance, systematical work, speaking activities, friendliness, and inspiration are all recommended characteristics that should be enhanced in order to be effective in class.

Classroom management by teachers is an essential component of a successful class. To begin with, teachers should be prepared for the class and have the class planned. Furthermore, they should manage the class accordingly. They should pay close attention to the teaching process and change strategies based on student performance and efficiency.

Students' performance is another element that is inevitably important. Students should show interest during the class and take part in the activities presented by the teacher. The responsibility for students' interest belongs to the teacher, as well as the teacher should select activities that get students' attention.

Systematic work: both teachers and students should work systematically in order to make progress. They should be aware that every activity is important and helps students improve

their language skills. To have better results, teachers should do activities that involve the whole class. It is really important for students to take part in the learning process even if they have lower language proficiency since it gives them the chance to improve their language skills. Despite this, all students will have made progress and there will no longer be such a huge difference in language proficiency between same-grade students.

Speaking activities: When it comes to language learning, students are not exposed enough to speaking activities, as frequently, language learning is more focused on learning grammar. When speaking activities are practiced more frequently, students will become more fluent, so it is much easier for them to take part in speaking activities that enhance critical thinking. Students should be able to express themselves in English in order to be able to participate in speaking activities that enhance critical thinking.

Kindness and inspiration: There are also other elements that are important for a better performance in class that should never be neglected. Teachers should always be kind and inspiring. All critical thinking activities require motivation in order to make students think deeply. Therefore, through using different methods, teachers should inspire and encourage them.

The collected data shows the classes are handled differently. There was a difference in all three teachers' classroom management and students' performance. Teachers should be able to control these elements and try all possible methods to get students' attention and encourage them to participate. It is important to have students' attention, so the learning process should be fun for them by applying different activities. Perhaps students might feel more comfortable and get used to speaking when these activities are applied more frequently.

5.3 Limitations

This master's thesis was done through surveying different books, scholar articles, and other resources. Additionally, through three different research instruments, the data was collected and analyzed. The process went well, with only some minor complications.

There was limited access to information, as, for instance, during the research of the

literature review, difficulties in finding relevant information were encountered since I had limited access to useful material.

During the implementation of the research instruments, there were some difficulties.

Due to the high number of infected people from the coronavirus, I tried not to have much physical contact with both teachers and students. I conducted all questionnaires and interviews via email.

The first instrument I decided to use was a questionnaire. There was a limitation on the sample size, and there could be improvement by increasing the sample size. There were 70 questionnaires planned, but only 40 were completed. I described the aim of the questionnaire to students and informed them, in writing, that the questionnaire is anonymous and that the data will only be used for research purposes. However, questionnaires were neglected by students as only half of them responded, so I had to ask them for the second time. Reasonably, if the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in class, a higher number of students might have completed the questionnaire. Regarding the interview, the limitation was to the form of implementing it. I sent the interview via email in a written form. The interviews would have supplied more information if they were done face-to-face.

The process of observation generally went well, except for the first observation, where the teacher started with grammar exercises instead of speaking activities and switched into speaking activities only for 15 minutes.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire in English

Questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire is to identify how much critical thinking is enhanced through speaking activities in English as a Second Language classroom in Gymnasium “Kuvendi i Lezhës” in Vitia. This questionnaire will take less than 10 minutes of your time. The data collected will be used only for the purpose of this study which is for my Master Thesis in the department of English Language Teaching in South East European University.

*In case you are not informed what critical thinking is, see the definition below.

Critical thinking is known as a process of thinking logically and analyzing facts. Critical thinking requires considering things properly in order to reach a particular conclusion. It contradicts memorizing facts and just repeating them but it requires facts to be examined, analyzed and to be used for our own good. According to Cottrell (2005, as cited in Lin, 2018) critical thinking is a process of thinking that requires focus and the use of mind.

Age:

Sex:

Class:

Please circle one of the answers. In some cases you may choose more than one answer.

1. What is your level of English language?

- Basic
- Good
- Very good
- Excellent

2. Do you think critical thinking activities are important for students?

- Really important
- Important
- Somehow important
- Not important at all

3. Do you think in your school, including all subjects, you enhance critical thinking sufficiently?

- Yes
- No

4. According to your opinion should critical thinking be more enhanced in your school?

- Yes
- No

5. In English classes do you do activities that enhance critical thinking?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

6. If yes, through which activities do you enhance critical thinking?

(you may choose more than one answer)

- Reading
- Listening
- Writing
- Speaking

7. Do you develop critical thinking through speaking activities in English classes?

- Yes
- No

8. How often do you practice critical thinking through speaking activities?

- Every time we have speaking
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

9. When you practice speaking activities which activities do you practice?

(you may choose more than one answer)

- Debate
- Discussion
- Questions and answers
- Role play
- Other _____

10. How difficult is it to think critically when speaking in English language?

- Too difficult
- Difficult
- Neutral
- Easy
- Very easy

11. Do you think that you should have more speaking activities that enhance critical thinking in English classes?

- Yes
- No

12. What would you like to change regarding enhancing critical thinking in English classes? _____

Appendix 2

Questionnaire in Albanian

Pyetësor

Qëllimi i këtij pyetësori është që të identifikojmë se sa është duke u zhvilluar mendimi kritik përmes aktiviteteve të folurit në orën e gjuhës angleze si gjuhë e huaj në Gjimnazin “Kuvendi i Lezhës” në Viti. Ky pyetësor do ju marr më pak se 10 minuta kohë. Të dhënat e marra nga ky pyetësor do të përdoren vetëm për qëllim të këtij hulumtimi i cili është pjesë e punimit të diplomës së masterit në Universitetin e Evropës Juglindore, dega Mësimdhënie e Gjuhës Angleze.

*Në rast se nuk e keni të kjart se çka është mendimi kritik shikoni përshkrimin më posht.

Mendimi kritik njihet si një proces i të menduarit logjik dhe i të analizuarit të fakteve. Mendimi kritik kërkon që të mendohen mirë gjërat në mënyrë që të vijm në një përfundim të caktuar. Bie në kundërshtim me memorizimin e fakteve dhe përsëritjen e tyre, por kërkon që faktet të shqyrtohen, të analizohen dhe të përdoren në më të mirën tonë. Sipas Cottrell (2005, e cituar në Lin, 2018) mendimi kritik është proces i të menduarit që kërkon përqendrim dhe përdorimin e mendjes.

Mosha:

Gjinia:

Klasa:

Ju lutem rrumbullaksoni një përgjigje. Në disa raste ju mund të zgjedhni më shumë se një përgjigje.

1. Cilit nivel të gjuhës angleze i përkisni?

- Bazike
- Mirë
- Shumë mirë
- Shkelqyeshëm

2. A mendoni që aktivitetet e mendimit kritik janë të rëndësishme për nxënësit?

- Shumë të rëndësishme
- Të rëndësishme
- Disi të rëndësishme
- Aspak të rëndësishme

3. A mendoni që në shkollën tuaj, duke përfshirë të gjitha lëndët, zhvillohet mjaftueshëm mendimi kritik?

- Po
- Jo

4. A mendoni që në shkollën tuaj mendimi kritik duhet të zhvillohet më shumë?

- Po
- Jo

5. Në orën e gjuhës angleze, a mbani aktivitete që zhvillojnë të menduarit kritik?

- Po, gjithmonë
- Shpeshherë
- Nganjëher
- Kurrë

6. Nëse po, përmes cila aktiviteteve i zhvilloni ato?

(mund të zgjedhni më shumë se një përgjigje)

- Të lexuarit
- Të ndëgjuarit
- Të shkruarit
- Të folurit

7. Në orën e gjuhës angleze a e zhvilloni mendimin kritik përmes aktiviteteve të të folurit?

- Po
- Jo

8. Sa shpesh praktikoni zhvillimin e mendimit kritik përmes aktiviteteve të të folurit?

- Çdo herë (gjat praktikimit të të folurit)
- Shpeshherë
- Nganjëherë

- Kurrë

9. Kur praktikoni aktivitetet e të folurit cilat aktivitete i praktikoni?

(mund të zgjedhni më shumë se një përgjigje)

- Debat
 - Diskutim
 - Pyetje dhe përgjigje
 - Aktivite në role
 - Tjetër _____
-

10. Sa është e vështirë të mendoni në mënyrë kritike kur flitni në gjuhën angleze?

- Shumë e vështirë
- E vështirë
- Neutrale
- E lehtë
- Shumë e lehtë

11. A mendoni që në orën e gjuhës angleze duhet të mbani më shumë aktivitete për zhvillimin e mendimit kritik?

- Po
- Jo

12. Çfarë do të ndryshonit rreth zhvillimit të mendimit kritik në orën e gjuhës angleze?

Appendix 3

Teachers' interview

Interview

The aim of this interview is to find out how much critical thinking is enhanced through speaking activities in English as a Second Language classroom in Gymnasium “Kuvendi i Lezhës” in Viti. This interview will take around 15 minutes of your time. The data collected will be used only for the purpose of this study which is for my Master Thesis in the department of English Language Teaching in South East European University.

Please try to elaborate each question by giving reasons.

1. What is critical thinking and how important is it for students?
2. Are you required from the head teacher or the Ministry of Education to apply critical thinking activities in classroom?
3. In English classes do you apply critical thinking activities?
4. Do you apply speaking activities that enhance critical thinking?
5. How much interest do students show towards these activities?
6. What activities do you apply? (please specify)
7. Are these activities successful? Why?
8. Do you face obstacles regarding speaking activities that enhance critical thinking? If yes, please mention the obstacles.
9. Is English as a foreign language an issue for successfully applying these activities?
10. Is low language proficiency an issue?
11. How do you deal with low language proficiency students?
12. Should more effort be given for enhancing critical thinking in EFL classroom?
13. Should teachers be responsible for enhancing critical thinking in students or should students manage it by themselves?

Appendix 4

Classroom Observation:

School Institution/ High School: Gymnasium "Kuvendi i Leshës"

Lesson topic: _____

Time: _____

Teacher: _____

Observer: _____

Textbook: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

1. Teacher presents listening activities to students.
2. Teacher uses techniques like:
3. Teacher involves students in critical thinking.
4. Students get involved in the activities presented by the teacher.

5. Students are able to speak English.

6. Students are able to think critically while speaking in English.