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CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

Engaging Young Learners in the Process of English Learning through Critical Thinking Activities: Writing Skills – Application in the Seventh Level of Basic Education at "Bilingüe Interamericano" High School

Trabajo Investigativo del Curso de Graduación previo a la obtención del Título de Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación en la Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.

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Resumen

El pensamiento crítico es un tema que se ha convertido cada vez más importante en la educación. Es muy interesante leer sobre cómo las estrategias de pensamiento crítico pueden ayudar a los estudiantes y maestros en su vida académica. Una de las razones principales de por qué el pensamiento crítico es importante es que le permite al estudiante a pensar por si mismo / a, a ser creativos, dando una respuesta que es original y práctico, y permite al alumno resolver cualquier situación enigmatica, sin importar cuántas veces el estudiante falla. A largo plazo, crea experiencias de aprendizaje positivo y su sensación de logro crece, así como la autoestima de los estudiantes.

Este resultado es posible cuando el maestro y los padres proporcionan a los niños un entorno adecuado. Cada vez que el niño habla con un adulto, la conversación debe ser tomado en serio y debe enriquecer la opinión del niño sobre el tema dado.

El uso de las habilidades de pensamiento crítico es una herramienta que puede formar una base sólida de las opiniones e ideas de los estudiantes, lo que puede permitirles a dejar de pensar mecánicamente.

Palabras Clave:

Pensamiento crítico-estrategias-estudiantes-analizar- experiencias positivas de aprendizaje-maestros.

Abstract

Critical thinking is a topic that has become increasingly important in education. It is very interesting to read about how critical thinking strategies can help students and teachers in their academic lives. One main reason of why critical thought is important is that it lets the student think by him/herself, to be creative by giving an answer that is original and practical, and it allows the student to solve any puzzling situation, regardless of how many times the student fails. In the long term, it creates positive learning experiences and the sense of achievement grows as well as the students' self-esteem.

This outcome is possible when the teacher and parents provide the children with an appropriate environment. Each time the child talks to a grown up, the conversation should be taken seriously and should enrich the child's opinion about the given topic.

The use of critical thinking skills is a tool that can form a solid foundation of opinions and ideas in the students, which can enable them to "think out of the box".

Key Words:

Critical thinking-strategies-students-analyse-positive learning experiences-teachers.

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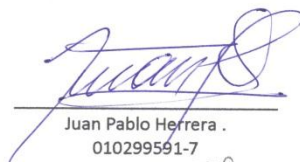
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Authorship

All the content of this work is the exclusive responsibility of the author.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated with great love

to God, my family and my wife, Ericka Jara,

who has always supported me, but especially during

this time of effort and sacrifice.

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I want to express my gratitude first to God, who has been my guide during all this study time. Then to my family who have been supporting me and encouraged me accomplish my studies. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Professor Catalina Astudillo N.,

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Introduction

Critical thinking skills are an important factor within the teaching-learning process. It involves the combination of various factors that teachers and parents should foster in students, for example, a high level of engagement, an interest in 'getting it right', as well as patience and persistence (Puchta 4).

In this graduation work the importance of teaching critical thinking is going to be explained and the influence it has in the learning teaching process of young learners in an EFL classroom will be discussed.

In Chapter I, the topic of this work is going to be explained through the description of The Problem and the Justification. Also, a Research Question is formulated for this research, as well as the Objectives that are the base for the analysis of the data in Chapter IV.

In Chapter II, the principles of critical thinking are going to be expanded by the Literature Review; these have been taken from several authors with experience in the field of critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom. Each of these authors contribute with different topics such as the basic knowledge of critical thinking, the importance of teaching critical thinking to children, how to teach critical thinking to students, some tips that can help the teacher to teach and evaluate critical thinking skills, and ways to face the problems that can appear while using critical thinking strategies.

In Chapter III, the techniques used for the qualitative and quantitative methodology of this graduation work are presented. Also, this chapter describes in which school the research was carried out. It describes the teachers who participated in a survey in order to find out if they use critical thinking strategies in their classes, an interview with an expert, and five observation and activity sessions involving seventh grade students in order to evaluate their level of critical thinking.

In Chapter IV, the author of this proposal analyzes the data that was gathered from the techniques applied in Chapter III, and a report is presented to compare the results with the objectives stated in the first chapter.

In Chapter V, the author presents the booklet containing the worksheets based on critical thinking skills.

In Chapter VI, the last part of this research, the author summarizes his conclusions that are based on the data and the analysis of the applied techniques. Furthermore, the author makes several recommendations as to how future research could explore some of the issues contained in the present study.

Chapter I: The problem

In the classroom, each and every teacher has a student who cannot concentrate on a topic very well, who loses interest in it as soon as a challenging situation appears, because he or she wants to escape or does not want to face any kind of difficulty. There may be another student who is completely the opposite, one who works, who asks questions when he/she faces a topic that he/she does not understand. The difference between these two students depends on the motivation which engages them to develop their thinking skills in order to express their own thoughts and opinions.

Thinking has to be developed; people do not acquire intelligence maturity as they grow, it is not a natural function like sleeping, walking and talking. Some children develop thinking skills by communicating with their parents, and thus they learn their thinking skills from them and other people. Other children do not grow up in an environment that nurtures their cognitive development. Nevertheless, children who come from different supportive circumstances will improve significantly thanks to teaching methods that can develop their thinking skills. This topic is about engaging young learners in the process of English learning through critical thinking writing activities.

1.1 Justification

This topic was selected because of the effect of motivation on students. When a teacher motivates them in the classroom, this fact makes them ask a lot of questions, to be persistent, to keep trying, until they understand the teacher. One important reason of why this topic was chosen is that by stimulating students´ skills they can develop critical thinking according to new knowledge in order to build self-confidence. It can also make them believe that they can succeed in any task, even if it gets difficult, and maintain their interest through the whole process without losing their concentration.

When a teacher engages students through *"Critical Thinking"* in the English learning process he/she is developing their skills in a way that can improve their imagination, it can engage them in order to be involved in their own learning, create meaningful conversations, etc.

The objective of this topic is to show that by developing students' critical thinking skills through writing activities they will get used to systematically applying their thinking skills and as they accomplish different tasks they will gain experience, and will start to enjoy tasks that could be more difficult. Therefore, their self-confidence will grow.

1.2 Research Question

To what extent can EFL writing activities develop critical thinking skills in the seventh level of Basic Education?

1.3 Objectives

General Objective

- To determine the importance of developing critical thinking skills through writing activities to engage students in the English learning process in the seventh level of Basic Education.

Specific Objectives

- To present the theoretical aspects of critical thinking

- To select writing activities to develop critical thinking in an EFL classroom

- To design a booklet with writing activities involving critical thinking

Chapter II: Literature Review

Critical thinking can be associated with levels of intellectual behavior in learning. Benjamin Bloom states that these intellectual levels can be divided into three groups: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective (qtd. in Fowler 39). This research focuses on the cognitive aspect which has six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Fowler describes the six cognitive levels of Bloom's taxonomy in the following way:

Level 1: Knowledge – displaying previously learned material by remembering facts, terms, basic concepts and answers.

Level 2: Comprehension – indicating an understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions and stating main ideas.

Level 3: Application – solving problems by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.

Level 4: Analysis – examining and breaking down information into parts by identifying motives or causes; making inferences and finding evidence to support generalizations.

Level 5: Synthesis – compiling information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.

Level 6: Evaluation – presenting and defending opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria (31-32).

Ennis holds that "Deciding what to believe or do is a higher-order thinking enterprise, and most practical higher order thinking activity is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (47). Also, the author of this research agrees with Puchta who states that higher-order thinking skills are not completely different from the lower-order ones, but are merely a combination of those basic skills used in a specific way (6).

In order for a student to be successful, when he/she is faced with a challenging situation, they have to think through the process of solving that particular situation. A student cannot just apply a solution to a problem based on guesswork or an assumption, he/she needs to understand the process and not just resort to a mechanical response (Puchta 4).

Rob Schnell gives a definition of critical thinking and states that it is a way of increasing our awareness of how we think and involves taking command of our own thinking processes to think more effectively (1). Based on this, the author of this research can state that when students are aware of their critical thinking skills, they can be focus on their level of achievements and failures.

Schnell is of the opinion that "Critical thinking is the trained and practiced application of rigor to our thought processes to ensure we are using the best thinking we are capable of in any situation" (1).

Schnell also agrees that when a student uses his/her 'best thinking', they are applying their critical thought skills in their everyday lives (1).

Critical thinking has become an important issue in education for a number of years now. For many reasons, teachers have already been involved in teaching thinking skills as opposed to teaching information and content only (Fisher 1). However, a number of teachers of the old school most old school taught content mainly - physics, history, geography, and so on. According to Fisher most teachers argue that they do incorporate Critical thinking skills in their classes, but they do it in an implicit or indirect way (1).

Nowadays, teachers know that motivation helps develop their students' thinking skills (Puchta 4). At an ELT conference, Sandy refers to Kirkland who provided an apt definition of Critical thinking skills saying that they are "... concerned with reason, intellectual honesty, and open-mindedness as opposed to emotionalism, intellectual laziness, and closed-mindedness" (n. pag.).

Critical thinking requires skills which Herbert Puchta defines as learning strategies which encourage students to be thoughtful, reflective, engaged, persistent, and patient (4). It is also important to state that the teacher has a significant role and should be the one who applies different Critical thinking strategies during his/her classes.

Herbert Puchta's booklet contains information which is intended to help teachers who are interested in developing and encouraging critical thought in

the EFL classroom. Critical thinking is not an easy concept to define as it can have a lot of different meanings to different people in different contexts and cultures. Even so, teachers and their students can greatly benefit by trying to understand and combine some of its most important elements into their classrooms in order to develop their students' cognitive skills.

The booklet referred to has been considered relevant for the theoretical framework of this proposal because it explains the elements that EFL teachers need to take into account for developing their students' Critical thinking skills while they learn English. The booklet starts with this sentence "Even extremely successful people are not successful because they were born geniuses…" (Puchta 1). This statement implies that there are differences between students that are successful and those who are not. One important reason could be that having a higher level of engagement, interest, persistence, and patience to accomplish different kind of tasks, even if they have a high level of difficulty, can change the students' attitude towards his/her own mistakes. This means that their self-confidence is not affected just because they cannot find an answer to a problem; on the contrary, it encourages them to keep on trying until they solve it. As this situation persists, every time students are confronted with a challenge, they would realize that having to think in order to find answers is fun.

Nevertheless, Puchta makes an important observation:

> "This is not to say that top performers might not have some natural talent that makes it easier for them to excel in whatever it is they are doing. But talent without persistence often leads to long-term failure or at least underachievement, whereas high levels of engagement and persistence can to a certain extent make up for a lack of talent, and over a longer period of time lead to positive learning experiences, a growing sense of achievement and … success!" (4)

This means that people who do not have a special talent can also be successful.

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Robert Fisher, a leading expert in developing children's thinking skills, says that thinking is not a natural function like sleeping, walking and talking (Puchta 5). According to this statement, the thinking process in a child needs to be developed because people do not necessarily become wiser as they grow up. In the case of children, they need to be motivated by their parents to develop their thinking skills. The best way to achieve this is when the parents take the child seriously, involve them in meaningful conversation, stimulate their imagination, and ask them questions so that this can get them to think and so on.

Children may not have the same home environment; some parents pay attention to developing and nurturing their children's thinking skills, while other parents do not have the capacity to do so. However, children coming from both environments can develop by leaps and bounds once Critical thinking skills are taught to them systematically at school.

The philosopher Matthew Lipman noticed that many children had a lack of reasoning skills and because of this situation he started a movement to capture the students' attention and used philosophy for this purpose.

In order to explain the need for developing systematically a child's thinking skills systematically, he used a metaphor in which he compared a mechanic with an average person who cannot repair their own car. The difference is not based on the knowledge that the car mechanic has with the usage of his tools (qtd. in Puchta 5). Almost all average people know who to use tools, but they would not be successful in fixing their own car engine, like a car mechanic would do. The difference between these two characters lies in how they use the tools in a logical sequence in order to obtain optimal results. The car mechanic knows the order in which to use the tools, and when he / she ends up with a poor outcome, they use other strategies until they end up with the outcome to be achieved.

The reason why the author uses this metaphor is because it can explain the "so-called higher-order thinking skills – such as problem-solving -…"

(Puchta 6). These skills are combinations of the lower-order ones. They have been combined in a specific way to obtain the expected results.

When these thinking skills are being applied, it is necessary to set a goal. In order to obtain positive results, it is essential that the teacher possesses creative skills. The instructor must think carefully what kind of outcomes can result from applying these skills in a classroom and be able to plan strategies if the outcome is not what it was supposed to be. When everything has been planned and the teacher knows what to do and how to do it, he / she needs to evaluate the end result. According to the outcome, the teacher can go back and make changes or use a different strategy.

Puchta emphasizes some of the benefits of the process: "When children get used to systematically applying their thinking skills, they will go through positive learning experiences, and they will gradually learn to enjoy more challenging tasks. As a result, their self-confidence will grow" (6).

Puchta perceives Critical thinking as a learning tool. This implies that it has a special function for the teacher and students. However, the success of passing on and acquiring these skills depend on the teacher's dedication and the positive attitude of the students. Both parties need to work hard to incorporate Critical thinking in the teaching-learning process and obtain the required results.

In conclusion, there is a hope that teachers are able to use this information as a starting point for the development of Critical thinking in their own classes.

If a teacher is not yet consciously nurturing critical thought in a class, he/she could begin almost immediately by teaching children some strategies (Sandy 1). The skills in question are Critical thinking skills and, according to a Cambridge educational website, "they will be taught in a way that expressly aims to facilitate their transfer to other subjects and other contexts".

However, the teacher first needs to know how to teach children Critical thinking skills. If the instructor applies Critical thinking in an elementary

classroom there are some problems that can occur, but fortunately there are solutions for these problems. All that may be required is a simple shift in focus.

This shift in focus is explained by William Klemm, who states that some people make the mistake of thinking that children are born geniuses, when it is actually possible to teach children to be thinkers. People often assume that is not possible to teach children how to be thinkers and that there is a common belief that one is either born with intellect or not. Here the author explains that most people are not born with intellect, and this belief results in questioning a student{s potential. Klemm also refers to creative and Critical thinking skills as skills that can be learned and developed.

Klemm states that the situation with young students is that they are told *what* to think and not *how* to think. This aspect depends mainly on their parents and teachers, on how they can motivate them into thinking by themselves. Klemm explains that for youngsters to behave in proper ways, their parents need to let them know why certain behaviors are chosen over others, instead of telling them how to behave. The same situation happens with teachers and their schools ("Teaching Children to Think").

Teachers have come across students who have low thinking skills, and this can be caused by various factors like the excessive use of video games, social networking Websites, cell-phone texting, and so on ("Teaching Children to Think"). Klemm refers to these recent developments as ones that do not let students concentrate and, as a result, they have flaws in the way they think. He also states that when students have flaws in their thinking, teachers and parents often do not do anything in order to intervene, because they are worried that pointing out problems with logical thinking may embarrass children.

One important aspect of this article is when Klemm states that parents and even teachers refrain from urging students to think critically, because they want to avoid failure, when the children are faced with a challenging

situation. They fear that the students' self-esteem would get damaged if they do not find a solution or an answer for a certain problem.

Klemm states that the reality is that students will discover that they do not have their thinking skills as developed as those of their peers and, in actual fact, this could lead to low self-esteem ("Teaching Children to Think").

In conclusion, Klemm states that there are three ways to teach children to think:

1. **Expect it.** This step requires students to defend their ideas and their answers to questions. They need to understand why they got to the answer that they chose and, more importantly, why is the answer that they chose "right."

2. **Model it.** The teacher can show students how to think critically and creatively about the instructional material itself. This means that the teacher has to show the students how to think about alternative answers, not just memorize the right answer. Also, why some answers are right and some of them are wrong.

3. **Reward it.** Teachers, as well as the students, should pay attention when good thinking occurs. In order to create critical and creative thoughts the teacher should make activities and assignments that have clear expectations for students. A grading incentive should be provided. "Rigorous analysis will only occur if it is expected and rewarded" emphasizes Klemm ("Teaching Children to Think").

David Carnes gives a basic definition of Critical thinking, stating that "[c]ritical thinking is the ability to solve problems through the use of reasoning, and the ability to identify flaws in an argument" ("How to teach children critical thinking skills"). The author states that Critical thinking is a skill that has to be learned and practiced at an early age and therefore the importance of teaching these skills to children.

David Carnes as well as the educationalist, Mariko Nobori has written articles about how to teach Critical thinking to students. The latter gives ten interesting tips on how to develop students' Critical thinking.

Here are Nobori's suggestions for teachers to use in the classroom to improve their students' Critical thinking:

1. **Questions, questions, questions.** Asking questions from students while giving a class is the most important part of improving Critical thinking skills. In order to successfully use this tip, the instructor has to create an environment where intellectual curiosity is fostered and questions are encouraged (Nobori).

Nobori states that in the beginning stages, the instructor may be doing most of the asking to show the students the types of questions that will lead to higher-level thinking and understanding ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking"). The author also recommends that the instructor can also use "wrong" answers as opportunities to explore the students' thinking. Then ask more questions to lead them in a different direction. As students become more comfortable and skilled, their questions will drive the class discussions.

2. **Start with a prompt and help them unpack it.** Nobori explains that the teacher should pose a provocative question to build an argument around the students; both of them should identify any ambiguous or subjective terms and have the students clarify and define them. The students can only be able to look for and find evidence or answers that are important for their argument once the terms are clearly defined ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking").

3. **Provide tools for entering the conversation.** The author gives an example of giving students a list of sentence starters and connectors. For example, "I agree/disagree because," "I can connect to your statement because," "Can you clarify what you mean by," etc… When the instructor provides students with these words, it gives them ways to join a conversation and will let them analyze an argument through their thought process ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking").

4. **Model your expectations.** This tip explains that if a teacher has a behavioral expectation, the best way to teach this is to model. She states that the teacher has to demonstrate for his/her class different ways of entering a conversation, the difference between an analytical point and a summary and appropriate ways to disagree with one another. Nobori uses examples of people presenting arguments and having Socratic discussions ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking").

5. **Encourage constructive controversy.** Nobori states that to create an active discussion, teachers must involve some degree of different perspectives. Here she recommends playing the Socratic dialogue with students. In this game one player takes a position on a controversial issue, and the other player uses a "devil's advocate" card by asking a series of questions intended to trap the other player in a contradiction by seeing through weaknesses in his reasoning. Following this stage, the two players can switch roles and experiment with the arguments from the point of view of the other party ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking").

6. **Choose content students will invest in.** Nobori states that in order to get students talking and engaged, it is important that the teacher chooses topics that are relevant and significant. This situation will motivate the students and they will probably build the communication skills they need ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking"). Nobori agrees that the instructor should spend much of his/her preparation time finding rich sources such as including texts, photos, art, or even a single word, and she states that a follow up of questions should be put in practice.

7. **Set up Socratic discussions.** The author states that a Socratic discussion is the method in which the students gain understanding or clarity ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking"). The teachers should serve as observers and interfering only when there is a pause in the conversation. The advice that the author gives is that any answer that a student might come up with should result in another question ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking").

8. **Assess their reasoning through different methods.** Here the author recommends that the instructor should set a challenge for the students in order to learn if they are learning to think critically ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking"). For example, Socratic discussions, and speeches give students the chance to demonstrate their skills when they have to give an opinion and allows the teacher to evaluate their reasoning in a variety of situations. Also written tests can help to evaluate Critical thinking skills ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking").

9. **Let students evaluate each other.** The author states that the teacher can find it difficult to evaluate the students' performance in a Socratic discussion, because it requires a double amount of concentration ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking"). She proposes that teachers can evaluate their students by setting up the classroom in a "*fishbowl configuration*", with an inner circle and an outer circle. Students in the inner circle are the active participants while those in the outer are their peer evaluators ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking"). The author states that with the help of a rubric, the students that are evaluating will have a better understanding of what to look for. According to Nobori, by evaluating their peers with the same rubric the teacher uses, students gain a better understanding of the criteria for strong Critical thinking and discussion ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking").

10. **Step back.** Nobori states that most teachers are afraid of letting their students take the lead of their classes, but the process forces the students to improve their learning skills. Besides, students may arrive at outcomes that are more relevant to them than the solutions that the teacher may have envisaged ("Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking").

Nobori explains that these ten tips for teaching students how to think critically can help them in a way that can improve their academic level. Their capacity to think by themselves will be a skill that will help them significantly in class.

There are various authors that have published articles about Critical thinking, and have helped teachers create awareness in their students about their own Critical thinking skills. These skills have helped significantly in the improvement of creative and analytical thinking of students. One author in special is Vera Schneider, who has come up with some problems and solutions that can happen in the course of classroom work on Critical thinking skills (1).

In her article, Schneider wants to create awareness about Critical thinking as one of many goals of education. It also contains a series of suggestions on how to incorporate Critical thinking in the classroom, which she perceives as "…the need to provide effective solutions to complex problems" (1).

With this sentence the author tries to summarize various concepts about Critical thinking in one, which can explain the role of students when using Critical thinking. Later she goes on to explain the process that happens when students are faced with a challenge and later come up with a solution, which is that they actually start to identify, analyze, and solve problems by being aware for their own development process of Critical thinking skills (1).

According to Schneider, there is a hypothesis that in the future there will be so many technological advances that people will have the need to obtain, understand, analyze, and share information. All of these aspects will have only one factor in common, that is thinking (1).

The author states that it is the instructor's duty to supply young students with skills and strategies to think critically in order to solve problems. The main challenge for the teacher is how to transform these important objectives into real, appropriate activities that are joined into lessons. To combine these skills with a class can seem difficult but it may require no more than a small shift when designing activities or tweaking the curriculum (Schneider 1).

Teachers can provide everyday opportunities for students to identify, analyze characteristics, and consider similarities and differences between the

materials that they are working with. The instructor must provide students with time and space for brainstorming.

The purpose from reading this article is for when the teacher respects the value of the students' thinking skills; it can help them in an educational process where they can think by themselves in order to find solutions to a certain situation. Schneider states, that it can also help students to get a powerful and memorable result when they learn how to solve a problem or achieve a goal (2).

Students will become aware of their development regarding Critical thinking skills when they feel that their teachers take their ideas and opinions seriously. Students with a lower level of thinking skills may still look for opportunities to clarify the tasks and ask for help in formulating their own ideas and opinions.

Obviously, some problems may appear with the application of these skills, but the solution can be found in the creativity of the instructor when attempting to teach these skills. In this process, the teacher will be helping his/her students to begin to develop their Critical thinking skills and provide them with a good foundation for their further academic life.

Chapter III: Methodology

Colmenares states that the objective of any research is to gain knowledge. In order to perform any kind of research, a fundamental aspect is to choose the right method that can lead to the expected outcome ("El Conocimiento como Ciencia y el Proceso de Investigación").

The methodology that was used to perform this work is based on two methods: Deductive and Inductive.

The deductive method is generally involved with the quantitative approach. According to Wallace, this approach is mostly used to describe what can be counted or measured and can therefore be considered 'objective' (38).

The inductive method is generally involved with the qualitative approach. Wallace states that the qualitative approach is used to gather data that cannot be measured in an objective way, and are for that reason treated as 'subjective' (38). Here Wallace states that data obtained through qualitative methods can be measured the same way as when applying a quantitative approach. For example, in a lesson this can be done by measuring the amount of use of the target language as opposed to the mother tongue (38).

3.1 Basic Methodology

3.1.1 Setting and Participants

This graduation work was carried out in the Bilingüe Interamericano School. It involved students of the seventh year of Basic Education. The children are between the ages of ten and eleven.

The teachers in this school have some experience in teaching Critical thinking strategies to children, therefore, they were asked to participate in a survey and one of the teachers was also interviewed about the topic.

3.2 Data-gathering techniques

In this graduation work, three techniques were used: an interview with an expert, a questionnaire to be filled in by the teachers who have used Critical thinking strategies in their classroom, and five observation and activity sessions with the students to evaluate their level of Critical thinking skills.

The interview with Prof. Mary Flasher, Head of the English Department of the Bilingüe Interamericano School, was conducted as a qualitative research tool, and aimed at gaining her personal, expert opinion on using Critical thinking skills with young learners.

Her students are aged ten and eleven. The reason for the interview with her was that she has gained experience and knowledge of engaging young students in learning English.

The survey applied to the teachers of the seventh level of Basic Education and some of the teachers from the English area was conducted as a quantitative research instrument and resulted in quantifiable data.

The last technique that was applied was the observation of the students themselves while carrying out some of the activities of the Booklet to evaluate their level of Critical thinking skills.

Chapter IV: Results – Analysis and Interpretation

As stated in Chapter III, there were three techniques used in this graduation work:

1. An interview with an expert in order to have a better understanding on how to apply Critical thinking activities in the classroom.
2. A survey applied in order to determine how teachers in this school apply Critical thinking strategies.
3. Five observation and activity sessions with the students of the seventh level of Basic Education to evaluate their level of Critical thinking skills.

4.1 Interview with an Expert

The interview was conducted at the "Bilingüe Interamericano School" at 11:50 am on April 10th 2013. The interviewee was Prof. Mary Flasher, Head of the English Department. Her answers were consistent and clear.

The knowledge and experience of the interviewee helped to gain an understanding of how to apply Critical thinking activities with young learners. This interview verifies the basic theory of Critical thinking skills, namely, that it has to be developed and learned in order to create an environment that can motivate and engage a student to think for him / herself. Prof. Flasher argued that the most important aspect of Critical thinking is that it allows students to become more independent so they do not to depend on their teachers for all of their learning. This statement is similar to what Herbert Puchta states when he says that a high level of concentration and engagement can led to success (4).

It also refers to the role of the teacher, where he/she has to take the students' ideas and opinions seriously in order to build a solid foundation, and if the teacher fails or is not aware of this aspect it can harm the students' self-esteem and therefore their ability to concentrate in class. Prof. Flasher gave some recommendations as to how teachers should try and use Critical thinking ideas for the development of all four language skills. She described
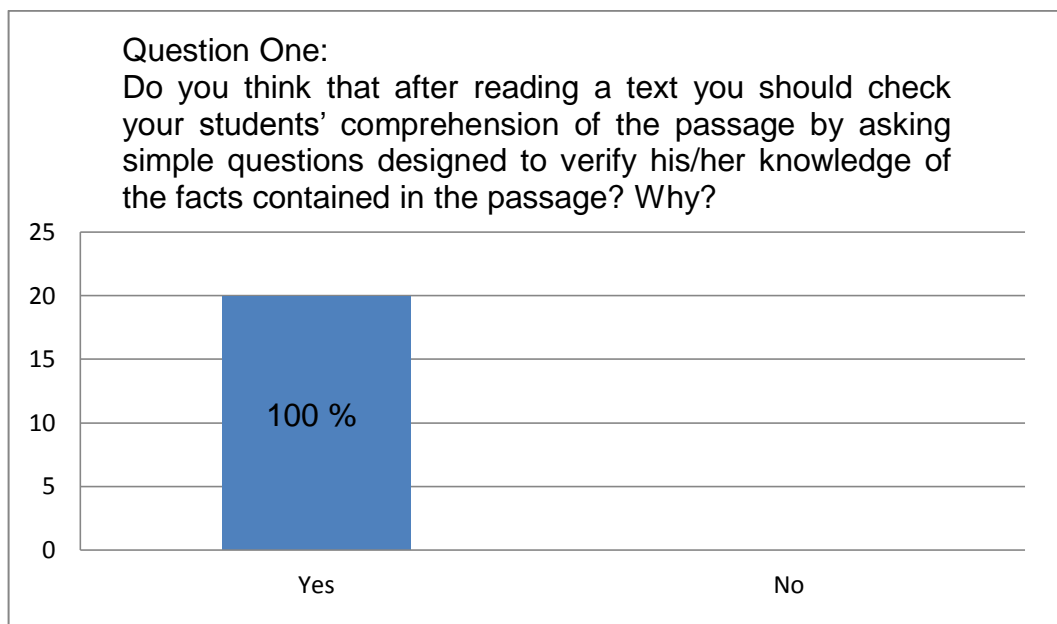
her own experience as a student when her teacher used speaking activities or she was given themes, and she had to talk about her own point of view. She recalled that she liked it because she became more creative and independent. Also, she gave her opinion on the risks of teaching Critical thinking: she argued that unless the teacher is very well prepared, the students may become bored or frustrated by the tasks set.

4.2 A Survey to Teachers

This graduation work required a survey which was applied to teachers from the seventh grade. The results of this survey are perceived as quantitative data, because they can be measured by statistical means. This kind of approach can also describe tendencies.
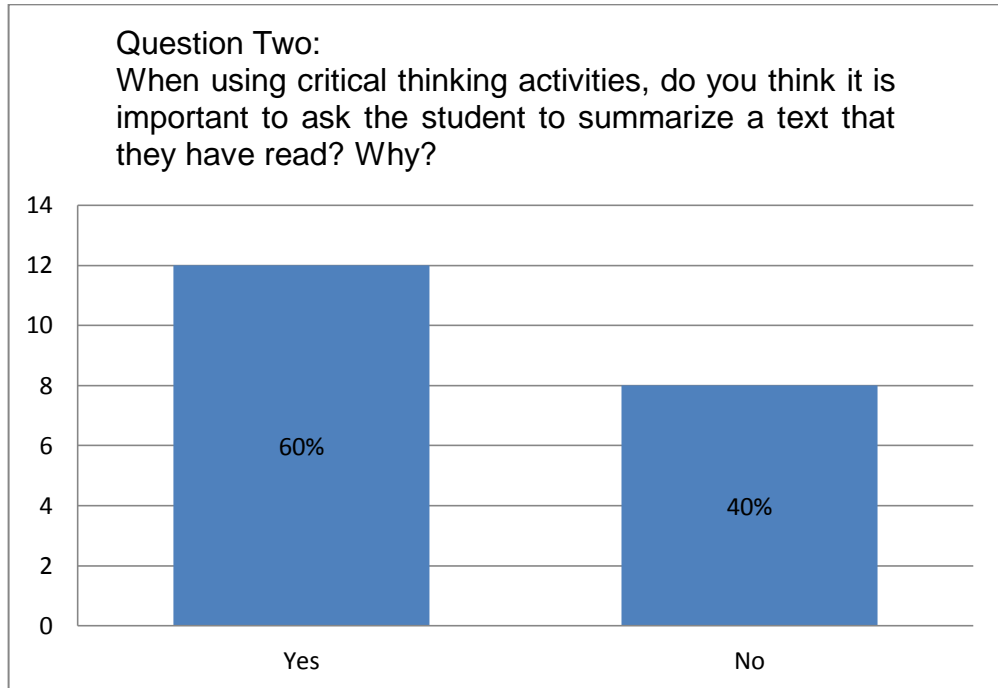
Graphic 1

Question One:
Do you think that after reading a text you should check your students' comprehension of the passage by asking simple questions designed to verify his/her knowledge of the facts contained in the passage? Why?

	Yes	No
25		
20	100 %	
15		
10		
5		
0		

In Question One, all of the teachers answered that it is important to ask questions from students in order to check comprehension of a given text. They pointed out that it is absolutely necessary to check the students' comprehension of the main idea of a given text.

Graphic 2

Question Two:
When using critical thinking activities, do you think it is important to ask the student to summarize a text that they have read? Why?

In Question Two, the teacher asks the students to write a summary about a given text. As seen in the graphic, sixty percent of the teachers answered in a positive way and they stated that making the students write a summary will help them recognize the main ideas in the passage. They pointed out that the summary should be shorter than the original passage and for the students to summarize they will have to understand the general idea of the text.
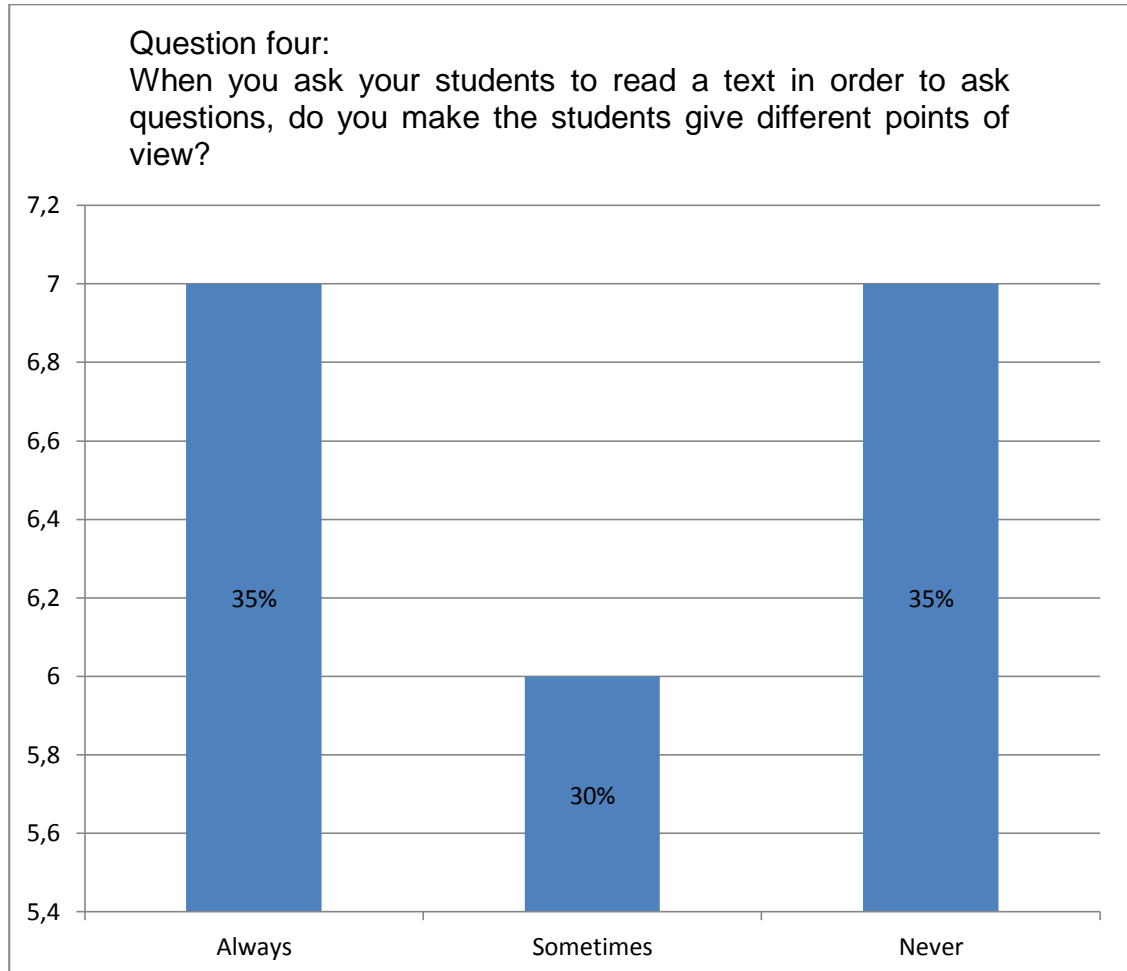
Graphic 3

Question Three:
How often do you ask your students indirect questions about a text?
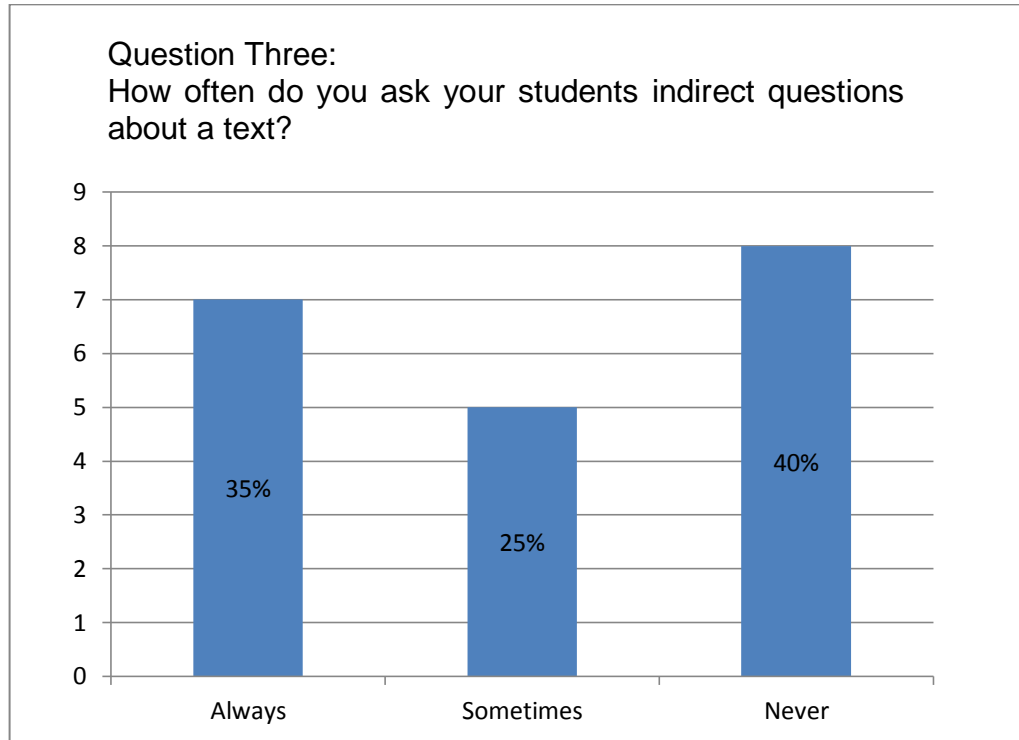
In Question Three, the purpose is to perceive if teachers are actually motivating their students' critical skills through indirect questions. These require the learner to provide information, give an opinion, explain or clarify. They often focus on content rather than language, require 'follow-up' or 'probe' questions, and the answer is not necessarily known by the teacher ("Asking Questions" n. pag.). As seen in the graphic, thirty-five percent of the teachers who participated in this survey ask indirect questions from their students while twenty-five percent does it rarely. This means that approximately sixty percent of the teachers are building a base for Critical thinking skills for their students. This still leaves us with forty percent of the teachers that never pose indirect questions.

Graphic 4

Question four:
When you ask your students to read a text in order to ask questions, do you make the students give different points of view?
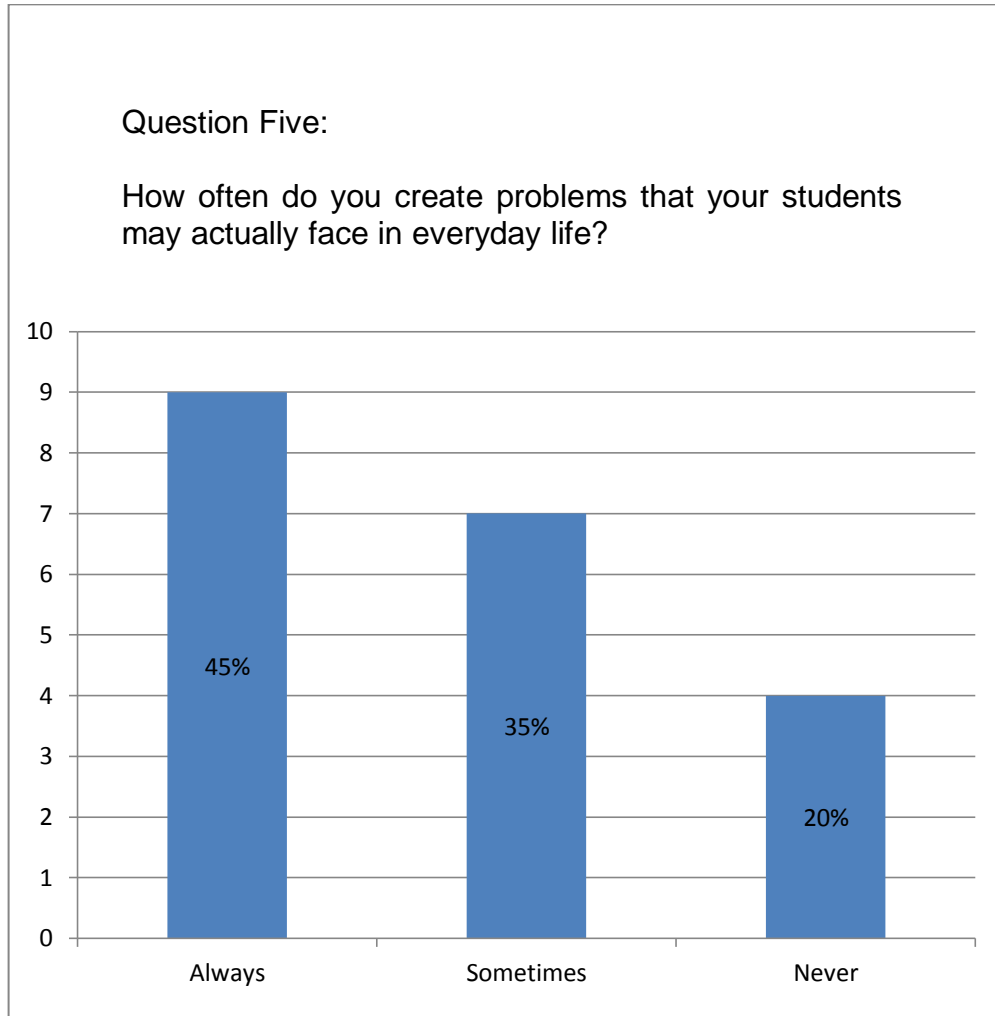

Question Four tries to find out if the teacher asks students to give different points of view of a given topic. The objective of this question is to learn if teachers ask students to decide which point of view they agree with.

As can be seen from the graphic, two-thirds of the teachers ask their students to give their points of view, while one-third never feels the need to do so.

Graphic 5

Question Five:

How often do you create problems that your students may actually face in everyday life?

The purpose of this question is to find out if teachers are setting real life situations that their students may face. As a result, it creates an environment where the students have to think for themselves in order to search for an answer that will improve their thinking skills. As seen in the graphic, four-fifths of the teachers do apply this strategy. This might reflect the realization that if teachers do not make connections between the students' real life situations and what they actually learn, it will not be significant to them.

In conclusion, the results of the survey helped the researcher to have an idea of the number of teachers applying Critical thinking activities such as asking indirect questions after reading a text, making the students write a

summary, addressing real life issues and giving their opinion supported by arguments.

This survey verifies the basic theory of Critical thinking skills that it has to be developed and learned. The application of these strategies will significantly improve the students' thinking skills when they are faced with a challenging situation. If the teacher is aware of the advantages of these activities, their students will approach a new way of expressing their own opinions and thoughts. On the other hand, if teachers are not fostering the Critical thinking skills of their students, they may be continuing to make the students think mechanically and when they are faced with a challenging situation they will not be able to handle it in a correct way.

4.3 Using Critical thinking Strategies with Students of the Seventh Grade

This involved observation and activity sessions with the students of the Seventh Level of Basic Education to evaluate their level of Critical thinking Skills.

The third technique used was evaluating to what extent the use of appropriate activities can teach students Critical thinking skills while thinking creatively, sequencing, analyzing cause and effect, solving problems, and making comparisons. The material was created by the author of this proposal on the basis of the theoretical principles.

All of these strategies were used with the students of the seventh level of education. One of the objectives of this graduation work was to design a booklet that contains 12 Critical thinking activities, but for the purposes of this research there were only five activities employed. Each activity was developed as a worksheet provided by the author of this graduation work. The time that the students had for each activity to be completed was forty minutes.

The first strategy applied in this graduation work is thinking creatively. In this activity the procedure was as follows: first, the students get together in

groups of five. After that, they will choose a food recipe. Finally, each student will write up one step of the recipe and draw a picture of the step involved.

In this activity the students had a great time because they could be creative in how to prepare a recipe. They worked in groups, although in some groups there were students who did not want to collaborate; in that situation the members who were not getting the work done were put in charge of the group in order for them to pay more attention to the exercise.

The second strategy aims at practicing sequencing. The students read a short story and then work out the sequence in which the events took place.

While applying this strategy, some of the students had problems with organizing their thoughts and expressing their ideas, but when the teacher gave an example, the students who had problems earlier, came to understand how to do the exercise. The understanding of the text was very good for most of the students and they were able to describe the sequence of events in a given short story.

The third strategy focuses on analyzing cause and effect relationships. The students' task was to read a piece of text and then fill in a chart to present the cause and effect aspects of the text.

The outcome of applying this strategy was that most of the students understood the text and those who did not understand it had to use a dictionary. The same problem of not being able to express their own ideas and opinions was detected, but fortunately the teacher was able to help them by giving examples to clarify what needed to be done.

The fourth strategy is solving problems; the procedure implies that the students read the text in order to write advantages and disadvantages about the main idea of the text. Finally, they give a personal point of view about the topic.

During the application of this strategy, the students had some problems when expressing their ideas and writing them in the chart, but they

understood the main idea of the text and what the exercise was asking them to do. The students also needed to provide answers to the problem presented. They had to write this in the space below the chart and, in due course, they were asked to share their suggestions with the whole class. Their answers were concrete and original, although some students could not express their ideas and chose to agree with a classmate.

The fifth and last strategy applied was making comparisons; here the students are asked to look at a picture and have to write comparisons, and then write comparisons about other students in their class.

While using this strategy, the students understood the instructions and proceeded to follow them, because they had done this exercise before. This work was done individually and before the students started to do the exercise, the teacher gave an example to clear all doubts. The results were that some students had problems with structuring a sentence when making comparisons; in that situation the teacher gave a short explanation using different examples.

In conclusion, based on the results of these observations, most of the students did not have any difficulty with the activities. However, the author noted how these activities could be improved and additional clarification provided in case the activities are used again in a different classroom setting.

4.4 Report of the results.

According to the objectives stated in this graduation work, the results were analyzed separately (the interview with an expert, the survey applied to teachers who use Critical thinking strategies and the observation of students to gauge their level of Critical thinking skills).

In this part of the research, the outcomes will be connected in order to provide a general point of view of the application of the three techniques used as part of the methodology.

Qualitative data emerged from the interview and the observation and activity sessions.

Prof. Mary Flasher stated that when a teacher uses Critical thinking strategies with children, they get more independent; during the observations, most of the students did not have any problem and while they were doing the activity, their level of motivation began to grow. As Herbert Puchta states, when students are faced with a challenging situation, they have to find answers and while searching for them, they begin to have fun (4).

The survey asking teachers who have some experience in applying Critical thinking skills in the classroom was very helpful because it confirmed the thinking behind the results from the observations done with the students.

This survey validated the basic theory of Critical thinking skills which, according to Vera Schneider, states that the implementation of these strategies may appear difficult, but often requires only a slight shift of the teacher's approach in his/her curriculum (1). Alec Fisher states in his book that there are some teachers who still teach content, but they claim that they do it in an indirect or implicit way (1).

In conclusion, according to the objectives stated in this graduation work it can be stated that when Critical thinking strategies were used with children, the general result was that the teacher plays an important role in the classroom because he/she is in charge of how to perform the use of the said strategies. The teacher has to motivate the students in order for them to participate actively in class. Also according to the results and the theoretical principles, the teacher has to plan carefully each specific class and try to evaluate it, because in this way the teacher can, if necessary, make any corrections in order to choose the right strategy.

Chapter V: The Proposal

5.1 The Booklet

One of the objectives of this research project was the elaboration of a booklet. This booklet contains different activities, such as Problem solving, Creative thinking, Sequencing, Making comparisons, Analyzing cause and effect and Categorizing.

BOOKLET

Activity One

Strategy: Problem solving

Age: 11

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. read the text.
2. write advantages and disadvantages about the main idea of the text.
3. give a personal point of view about the topic.

Background

Monica has been working in a factory for six years. She likes her job, but it is hard work, and her salary is not very good. Last year, she joined in evening classes which cost $300 each semester. She is taking computer classes. After three years, she will get a certificate and then can get a better job at a different company.

Monica's boss thinks she is a very good worker. She is always on time, works hard, and never misses work. He wants to enroll her in a 6 month management training job skills and allow her to move into a better position at the fabric factory.

Write the advantages and the disadvantages of Monica's and her boss's plan.

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES

What should Monica do?

_____

_____

_____.

Activity Two

Strategy: Creative thinking

Age: 11

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:
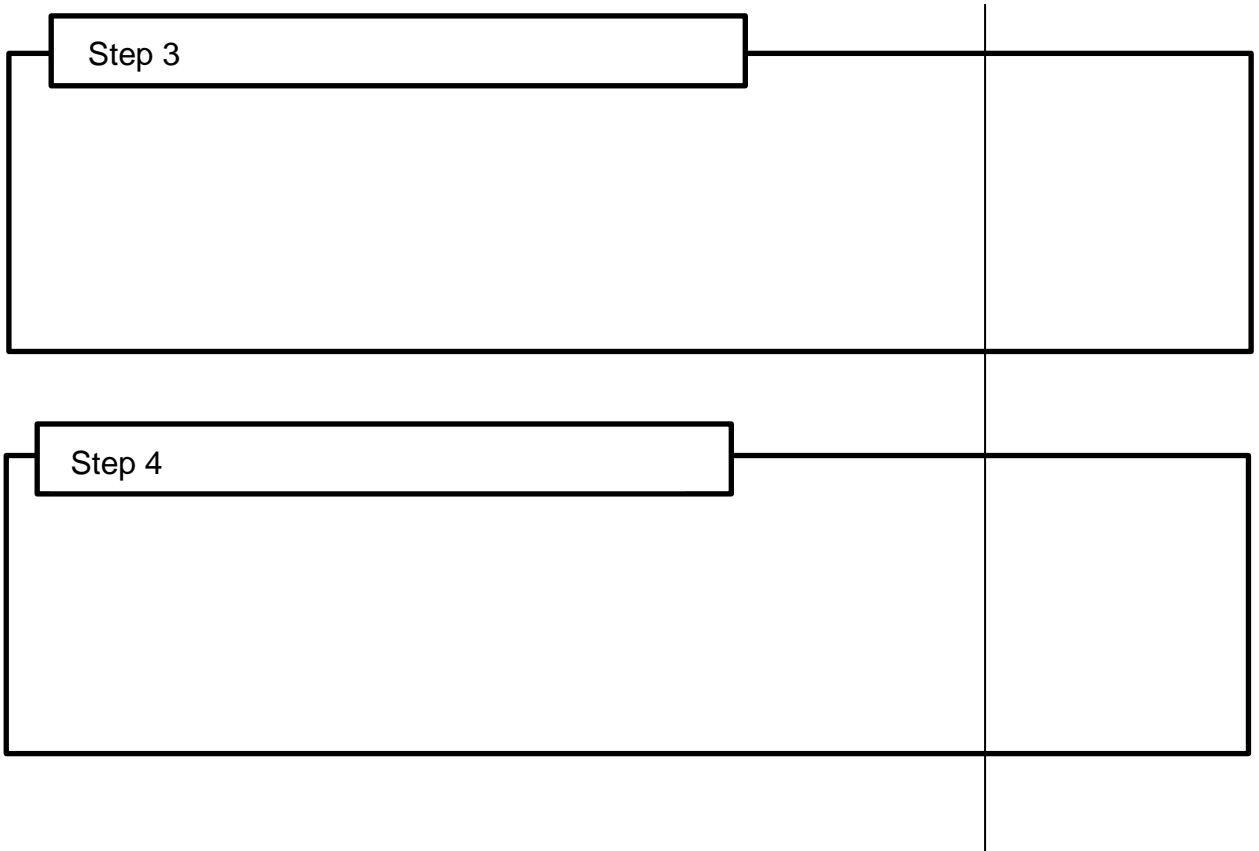
The students will

1. get together in groups of five.

2. choose a food recipe.

3. write a step of the recipe.

I want to cook:

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

Activity Three

Strategy: Sequencing

Age: 11

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. read the following entry.

2. order the events at the bottom of sheet with the numbers 1-6 based on the sequence of events that took place.

<div align="center">Camen the Relay Machine</div>

Camen was a star swimmer at Cuenca Middle School. She had been swimming competitively since she was five years old. She was to swim in three events and one relay at the race on Tuesday. As always, Camen had her bowl of spaghetti and meatballs before preparing for the race. She also always has a Rice Krispies bar immediately following her warm up routine. When she prepares for an event, the first thing that she does is stretch her muscles and warm-up by running in place, immediately after stretching. Then, she does ten push-ups followed by a run up and down the middle school bleachers. Camen swam well. She was first twice and got a third place in the 500 meter butterfly stroke. She truly dominated the relay getting her team a two lap lead by the time she got out of the water.

Order the sentences by writing the correct number at the beginning of each sentence.

_____ Camen ate a Rice Krispies bar.

_____ Camen ran up and down the bleachers.

_____ She did push-ups.

_____ Camen won her first swimming event.

_____ Camen ate meatballs and spaghetti.

_____ She stretched her muscles.

Activity Four

Strategy: Sequencing

Age: 11

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. read a mini-book.

2. write a sequence of what the story is about.

Reading Response Journal

Book Title:

_____

Author: _____

This book has _____ pages.

This book was easy / just right / hard to read.

Tell what happened at the beginning of the story.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

Tell what happened in the middle of the story.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

Tell what happened at the end of the story.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____.

Activity Five

Strategy: Making comparisons

Age: 11

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. observe the picture.

2. write comparisons.

3. write comparisons about their classmates.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____.

Write comparative sentences about people in
your class.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity Six

Strategy: Analyzing cause and effect.

Autor: Juan Pablo Herrera Caldas   48

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. read the given text.

2. write in a chart the cause and effect of the situation that the text describes.

Hamster Cause & Effect

Read the story. Then fill in the chart of causes and effects.

Yesterday, after playing with my hamster on the floor, I put him back into his cage. But, I didn't close the lid tightly and he escaped. I didn't know he was loose until I saw something run by my feet. I jumped up quickly and hit the lamp on the table next to me. The lamp fell and crashed to the ground, making a loud noise. Soon, my dad was in the room upset that he was awoken from his nap. I walked over to apologize when I stopped just in time. My hamster was sitting in front of me, looking up, and smiling. I reached down to grab him, and he took off under the couch and into the kitchen. When I heard the scream, I knew my mom had seen my pet. She scooped him into a colander and popped him back into his cage. I tightly secured the top, and he was back in his home. I watched him play, and thought for sure I saw him give me a little wink.

CAUSE	EFFECT

Activity Seven

Strategy: Analyzing Cause and Effect

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. read all the following sentences to identify the cause or effect.

2. write the cause and effect of each sentence in the appropriate line, using different words form the original sentence.

Cause and Effect

Write the Effect (what happens) and the Cause (why it happened).

1. Joe went to the store because he needed food.

Effect: (What happened?) _____

Cause: (Why did it happen?)_____

2. Kay ate a bowl of soup because she was feeling sick.

Effect:_____

Cause:_____

3. Rick was very quiet because the baby was sleeping.

Effect:_____

Cause:_____

4. Vicky got a vacuum cleaner because she wanted to clean the house.

Effect:_____

Cause:_____

5. Troy stopped the car because the light turned red.

Effect:_____

Cause:_____

6. Jenny raised her hand because she had a question.

Effect:_____

Cause:_____

Activity Eight

Strategy: Creative thinking

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. read the text.

2. answer the questions.

Colds

Pedro has a cold. His nose is stuffed up, he coughs a lot, and he has a sore throat. He felt fine last night, but now he is very sick. Pedro wants to go home and rest, but he can't. He is an accountant and payroll is due today. He needs to print and sign payroll checks so the employees get paid on time. Pedro's boss went on a business trip to Springfield, Illinois. He won't be back until next week. Before he left, he asked Pedro to take care of the office. There are twenty office workers, and they are all very busy. Hopefully, they won't catch Pedro's cold. If the employees catch colds, they might take several days off work.

B. True or False

1. _____ Pedro is sick.

2. _____ All twenty office workers are busy.

3. _____ Pedro's boss is on vacation.

4. _____ An accountant needs to be good at math.

5. _____ Employees get payroll checks.

C. Yes or No – Share your opinion.

1. _____ Pedro should stay at work.

2. _____ Pedro should go home immediately and eat chicken soup.

Autor: Juan Pablo Herrera Caldas

3. _____ The employees should avoid touching their nose, eyes, and mouth.

4. _____ Pedro should cover his mouth when he coughs.

5. _____ It's okay if the employees get paid late.

D. Writing – What do you do when you have a cold?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

Activity Nine

Strategy: Creative thinking

Language level: Beginner

Autor: Juan Pablo Herrera Caldas   53

Procedure:

The students will

1. put together a dinner for Martin and his friends, spending no more than $9 and using only the products listed.

Food Mart	Grocery Store
Macaroni & Cheese 4 boxes for $1.00 One for $.50	1 Pint Mullins' Ice Cream $1.25 Regularly $2.39
Eight-inch Apple Pie $1.99 Regularly $3.00 ea.	Whole Beef Rib Eye $2.78 lb. Regularly $3.50 lb.
One-serving Prepackaged Salad $.99 Regularly $1.05 ea.	Cut Green Beans 3 cans for $.99 One Can for $.40 a can
33-ounce Can of Coffee $4.99 Regularly $6.00 ea.	11-ounce Can of Coffee 3/$5.00 One Can for $2.99
Catfish $.99 a pound Regularly $1.99 lb.	12-pack of Cola $1.49 Regularly $2.50

1. Shopping List at (name of store): _____

Food Quantity Cost

2. Cold Drink _____

3. Meat or Fish_____

4. Pasta_____

5. Vegetable_____

6. Coffee_____

7. Dessert_____

8. Total cost: _____

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9.   Money   saved   by   buying   sale   items:

_____

Activity Ten

Strategy: Making comparisons

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. work in pairs.

2. interview each other about the top ten most stressful things in their lives. They should give reasons for their answers.

3. Join with another pair to make a group of four and compare their answers and find the most frequent stressful things or situations of the group.

Stress

Examples: relationship problems, assignments, pimples on your face

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Common stressful things	Reasons
1	
2	

3	
4	
5	

Activity Eleven

Strategy: Categorizing

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. write down ten things that make them happy.

2. share their information and ask their classmates why something makes them happy

3. work in groups of four, discuss and find out what are the most popular categories for happiness, e.g. Health, Education, Money, People, Free-time Activities, Luck, Appearance, etc.

What makes you really happy?

Write down ten things that make you really happy in your life.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Activity Twelve

Strategy: Creative thinking

Language level: Beginner

Procedure:

The students will

1. read the instructions and get in groups of four.

2. decide which eight of the fourteen people they will save.

3. write the reasons for saving those people they chose.

There is a fire in a hotel with 14 people who are trapped on the thirty-eighth floor. There is one elevator working, which holds a maximum of eight people, and it can only go down once.

1. A politician - Male, 50, active ecologist

2. A reporter - Female, 29, recently voted one of the best journalists of the year

3. A professional singer - Female, 25, has recorded several successful singles

4. A professional soccer player - Male, 26, a billionaire

5. A police officer - Male, 34, has three children

7. A doctor - Female, 44, pediatrician

8. A company president - Male, 66, wife died last year in a traffic accident

9. A lawyer - Female, 38, mother of four young children

10. A cook - Female, 46, takes care of her elderly mother

11. A mailman - Male, 41, suffering from cancer but responding to treatment

12. A priest - Male, 54, does a lot of community work

13. An accountant - Male, 38, gives a lot of money to charity

14. A shop assistant - Female, 17, an only child

Write your reasons here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____.

Chapter VI: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

In Chapter I and II, the theoretical framework was developed in order to set up the conceptual referents that were used. These referents helped the author to provide a basis for this research project. Some specialists were quoted because of their contribution in the application of Critical thinking

skills in the EFL classroom. Therefore, according to these authors and this piece of research, the author of this graduation work can conclude that the application of Critical thinking strategies can significantly increase the students' performance in the classroom.

Chapter III and IV, described the methodology used in this research. Here there were different strategies that were applied to help gather data. These data were obtained from teachers and students. Based on these results, the author of this research argues that the students' performance is determined by how the teacher can apply Critical thinking strategies in an EFL classroom.

In this graduation work, a Research Question was formulated which was about the extent the students' Critical thinking skills can be developed. To which the author, according to his research, can answer that the effect of applying Critical thinking strategies in the EFL classroom is that the students can have a better sense of how to build their own opinions and ideas. Students become more independent and their self-esteem grows as they accumulate achievements in their academic lives.

From all of these conclusions, the author can finally state that with the application of Critical thinking strategies in the EFL classroom the critical thought of any student can improve. Even so, in the case of students who are just beginning to experiment with the application of Critical thinking skills, it is essential that they are encouraged to ask as many questions as they wish in order to help them along and familiarize them with this important cognitive skill.

5.2 Recommendations

After the author finished this research, he can make the following recommendations:

- It is felt that all teachers should use at least one or two Critical thinking strategies in their EFL classroom, and should someone require further

information, it is hoped that the suggestions included in this research project and the accompanying booklet might prove helpful.

- Teachers should make every effort to present the content of the material to be taught in a way that reflects that they themselves are using Critical thinking skills.

- Teachers should be well prepared so that their students can fully understand the tasks set and the methods to be applied when accomplishing those tasks.

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Appendices

APPENDIX ONE: Interview on Critical Thinking

Q: In what aspects can critical thinking help students?

Q: Do you use Critical Thinking activities in class and with which skill do you use it?

Q: Do you think critical thinking is a tool for teaching? Why?

Q: What recommendations would you give to fellow teachers about using critical thinking activities?

Q: When you were a student did any of your teachers use any critical thinking activities?

Q: What would be the disadvantages of using critical thinking activities on young learners?

APPENDIX TWO: Survey

1. Do you think that after reading a text you should test your students' comprehension of the passage by asking simple questions designed to test his/her knowledge of the facts contained in the passage?

yes   no

2. When using critical thinking activities, do you think it is important to ask the student to summarize a text that they have read?

yes ☐   no ☐

3. How often do you ask your students indirect questions about a text?

always ☐   ☐ sometimes   ☐ never

4. When you ask your students to read a text in order to ask questions, do you make the students give different points of view?

always ☐   ☐ sometimes   ☐ never

5. How often do you create problems that your students may actually face in everyday life?

always ☐   ☐ sometimes   ☐ never

APPENDIX THREE: Interview (Transcription)

This interview was conducted at the "Bilingue Interamericano School" on April the 10th, at 11:50 am. The interviewee was Prof. Mary Flasher, Head of the English Department. Her students are from the ages of 9 to 10 years old.

The reason of this interview with her is that she possesses knowledge of engaging young students into learning English.

Q: In what aspects can critical thinking help students?

A: Well, I think the most important aspect of critical thinking is that it allows students to become a little bit more independent- not to depend on their teachers all of their learning, but to begin to be able to do some self-learning and it also will improve their self-esteem when their able to complete activities on their own, they will feel more independent and they will feel older than they are.

Q: Do you use Critical Thinking activities in class and with which skill do you use it?

A: Because I work with younger children I would say that I use more critical thinking activities in speaking activities because I encourage my students to not only complete the activities and exercises in the book, but that to begin to speak on their own and talk with their classmates. We do a lot of roll playing and different activities where students are able to use the language that they have learned, but in their own way in order to be creative.

Q: Do you think critical thinking is a tool for teaching? Why?

A: I think it's definitely a tool; it's not the only one, of course. You have to do all different activities, but it can be very useful, because it will help students, like I said before, to be able to work and learn on their own and not always depend on the teacher and I think that is really important. In today's society where internet is available and lots of learning opportunities are available that does not have a teacher in a traditional classroom setting. So it helps students to be able to realize that they can do things on their own that they are capable of doing it.

Q: What recommendations would you give to fellow teachers about using critical thinking activities?

A: I think it is important that teachers try and use them with different skills and with a vast amount of knowledge and research available on the internet. I encourage teachers to check out what's available, according to the ages of the students that they work with, to try and involve those critical thinking skills to help their students become more independent.

Q: When you were a student did any of your teachers use any critical thinking activities?

A: It's been quite a few years first of all, but I especially liked when I had a speech class or we were given themes and we had to talk about it. You are able to choose as a student what interests you? You can be creative and I think that's what's good for students; giving a chance for students to do something they are interested in, they can be creative, as I said before, and it makes you feel good that as a student, you know, you are able to do something on your own and every time you are able to do something you are more challenged to do something more, and you learn that you are capable of doing it.

Q: What would be the disadvantages of using critical thinking activities on young learners?

A: I think young Learners is the key phrase, because if students are too young and they haven't learned the skills that they need in order to do critical thinking, they will either gonna be completely lost, not understand what they are supposed to do or they will get frustrated and feel like they are failing in things and then often times that will, you know, led them to not even want to try in the future because they will just think "Oh, can't do it!, I couldn't do it before, so I can't do it now!" so you will have to be careful whether your students are prepared and they have enough critical skills in order to do what you are asking them to do.