CRITICAL THINKING APPLIED IN COMMUNICATIVE TASKS: AN INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

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“Por la Salsa que heredé de mi padre”

Daniel Murcia
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I was once told the beauty of language; I was invited and accepted to step in. Since I know you are capable of reading this, thank you mother.

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ABSTRACT

Critical thinking has been one of the most discussed areas in education; it validates the conception of creativity, fairness, objectiveness and collective reasoning by triggering Higher Order Thinking Skills. These skills are interrelated cognitive domains that prompt students' reasoning and serve to develop problems in multiple contexts and academic areas. When activating critical skills, learners seek for an objective perception of the world which corroborates the goals of education: Teaching learners to understand and be part of the world as constructive agents of a society.

This study embedded the area of critical thinking to the English language classroom by implementing the action research approach. For instance, the language teacher and participants were involved in active reflective cycles that sought to describe the impact of critical practices in the EFL classroom.

The study took place at the institute of modern languages with a group of upper-intermediate students of English who enrolled in language courses as a requirement for their bachelor's degree. After a process of purposive sampling, 5 students were finally chosen as focal learners of the project. Data was collected through interviews, teacher and student journals, and classroom artifacts. The analysis of data revealed how critical thinking is a pedagogical innovation that triggers reflective processes and impact learners by increasing their motivation towards language learning and raising awareness of their cognitive and language development.
RESUMEN

El pensamiento crítico se ha convertido en una de las áreas más discutidas en la educación. Ésta valida la concepción de creatividad, justicia, objetividad y razonamiento colectivo a través de la activación de habilidades cognitivas de alto orden. Estas habilidades son áreas cognitivas que están interconectadas e impulsan los procesos de razonamiento que sirven para solucionar problemas en contextos variados y a través de diferentes materias académicas. La activación del pensamiento crítico corrobora los propósitos de la educación: Enseñar para comprender el mundo como un ser que aporta a la sociedad.

Esta investigación incluye el pensamiento crítico a las clases de lengua inglesa por medio de la implementación del método investigación acción. Por lo tanto, el profesor y los estudiantes fueron involucrados en ciclos reflexivos que buscaban interpretar el impacto de estas practicas en el salón de clase.

El proyecto se desarrolló en el instituto de lenguas modernas con un grupo de inglés Upper-intermediate quienes toman los cursos para obtener sus títulos de pregrado. Después de un proceso de purposive sampling, se escogieron 5 estudiantes foco para el proyecto. Los datos se recogieron a través de entrevistas, diarios, y artefactos de clase. El análisis de datos reveló que el pensamiento crítico es una innovación pedagógica que activa procesos de reflexión e incrementa la motivación de los estudiantes hacia el aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa haciéndolos conscientes de su desarrollo cognitivo y su proceso de aprendizaje.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The implementation of critical thinking tasks in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) is by first instance one of the current trends to explore in the 21st century teaching and learning. I highlight two basic arguments to support my interest in this topic. The first draws from Kennedy’s (1991) concern about the applicability of learned concepts at university or school. The author argues that such concepts are part of artificial information (information that is not applicable in real life). Consequently, it is primarily worrisome for the institutions and schools which invest a lot of money and time on the learning of students, the teacher trainers and administrative personnel. That is why the inclusion of critical thinking in educational programs of all levels (even EFL) approaches the best of the students and institutions. It is not enough for the 21st century learners to know how to read, to write and to solve arithmetical problems. Nowadays, the arousal of new and increasing technologies and the variety of informative resources demands world citizens to be able to solve problems from a critical perspective, that is, because learners of all ages are exposed to vast amounts of information in which discrete and objective classification is required. Moreover, technology has allowed the individual to have several modes of communication with others, this burdens students to develop effective communication skills, implying a necessity to be cognitively skillful to code and decode messages under various situations and in different languages.
Along with the National Assessment to American students, Kennedy (1991) found out that although college students performed well in basic academic skills, they were not competent on thinking and reasoning. This means that American students can compute but they cannot reason, they can write complete sentences but they cannot write arguments. Kennedy’s (1991) claims are later recalled by Kellaghan et al. (2009) in their paper *using the results of a National Assessment of educational achievement*, where it is considered that the results of national assessment provides enough evidence to overcome the problems in curricula, where “teaching still tends to emphasize in rote memorization, routine drill-ing, and accumulation of factual knowledge, resulting in a passive approach to learning, rather than an approach that stresses higher- order general reasoning and problem-solving skills.” (Pg.10) Subsequently, several findings from National Assessment data (as in Kennedy, 1991. Kellaghan et al. 2009) indicate that American students are not doing well at thinking, reasoning, analyzing, predicting, estimating or solving problems.

In a study conducted by Alagozlu (2007) to Turkish EFL students who undergo some problems in expressing their voice in written documents, he argued that “since the traditional instructional process urges the students to receive ready-made information without questioning, they [students] are not encouraged to think critically, which is probably transferred into ELT classes as well” (p. 185). This clashes with Piagets’ (1961) notions of education, as he strongly believed that the principal educational objective is to form women and men who are able to innovate allowing themselves to contribute as a product of a new generation.
Piaget (1961) also considered the second objective of education, which is to comprise minds that are able to exercise “critique”. Individuals that can prove for themselves what is being shown in order to subject concepts, ideas and believes to a critical view. The information that learners receive is to be retained and applied in everyday life situations, which allows the individuals to face a technological and competency based world. In short, Piaget (1961) concluded that the goal of education is that students can rethink, use and apply the information displayed, without falling into the area of “inert information” that according to Elder (2002) is the type of information learned at the superficial level, result of crammed facts that lay on the memory without taking advantage of them, in other words, bundled facts that turn to dysfunctional parts of information as the individual does not know how to apply them to real life.

The second reason towards my interest on critical thinking instruction is the necessity of high order thinking processes in all academic fields. Pineda (2004) supports this view by stating that “the role of language educators should not be limited to the teaching of language features exclusively [...]. It also entails becoming agents of change, which means encouraging learners to actively reflect on current concerns” (p. 47). Today’s world, which is based on a globalized perspective, presents to the learners the necessity of growing integrally, that is because on the one hand, students should be competent communicatively to interact effectively with all the current information and the sources that provide such information (e.g. Web, digital television, Podcasting, etc.). And on the other, students who can proceed with high-order cognitive skills in all fields of knowledge. On the whole, this combination of skills permits
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individuals to process information objectively in whatever their professional careers demand.

In Colombia, the Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educacion Superior (ICFES, 2009) piloted in the national exam ECAES (2009), a Generic Skills Assessment (GSA) test based on generic competences to 3,572 Colombian college students. The study focused on oral communication, written communication, and critical thinking across all disciplines. As generic skills are cross curricular, Bryce and McCurry (2009) claim that “a student who learns problem solving skills in sciences can transfer those skills to social sciences or everyday life” (p. 4) As a conclusion, Winchester-Seeto’s and Bosanquet’s (2009) investigations suggest that generic competences should be instructed in all Colombian university courses to be interpreted, embedded and practiced in the learning spaces.

A report from ‘la Comisión Nacional para el desarrollo de la Educación Superior’ (National Commission for the development of Higher Education) dependency of the Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, depicts, based on previous studies, the necessity of providing students with instruction of critical thinking that permits the development of concepts concerning the main categories of the sciences.

In Colombia, education policies that prompt students to the development of critical thinking are necessary, since “part of the current educative system is characterized by a fragmented education, noncritical, old-fashioned and inadequate, that does not permit conceptual integration, which lowers the
motivation of the students and develops inappropriate cognitive structures and behaviors” (Men, 1997., Presidencia de la república, 1994 as cited by Montoya, 2007) Such statement suggests then the need of addressing the instruction of critical thinking in all educational courses.

The aspects held above go in accordance with the ‘plan de desarrollo 2007-2019’ of the T-state University. This context is appropriate to implement critical thinking tasks because as the institution’s PDI (projects of institutional development, 2008) states, the teacher must encourage the student to “desarrollar conocimientos, habilidades y destrezas, promover valores positivos encaminados a fortalecer estilos de vida saludables, pensamiento crítico y ético, mediante estrategias incluyentes y transversales, [...] adecuadas al contexto, para la autonomía, y compromiso social.”(p. 44) (“develop knowledge, abilities, and skills, to promote positive values directed to strengthen healthy life styles, critical thinking and ethics, through inclusive and transversal strategies, [...] adequate to the context, towards autonomy, and social compromise”. Translation by author)

The present project proposes an action research study that embarks critical thinking instruction among college students. The main intention of this study is to analyze the impact of critical thinking tasks in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) sessions, and furthermore, reflect on the performance, design and application of critical thinking tasks as a teacher-researcher, in order to provide ideas that could be implemented in the English language teaching curriculum. This proposal is supported by the findings of Bedoya and Mok (2009; 2010), which point to a necessity of research in the field of critical
thinking and language learning, as Mok (2010) depicts in her own words: “the need for further investigation (of Critical thinking) into teachers’ perceptions and their impact on teacher classroom practices” (pp. 277-278). Another conclusion reported by Mok (2010) evidenced the need of teachers reflection on critical thinking teaching/learning encounters, as drew from Carless (1998) notion; “to facilitate critical thinking education, like other curriculum innovations, I believe we have to start with teachers, for example, to listen to their voice and concern regarding the innovations and its implementation” (p. 28)
DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The present study attempted to observe the impact of critical thinking instruction in the English as a Foreign Language classroom (EFL) by noticing the most prominent features that aroused from interventions of criticality in a group of undergraduate students of the T-state university. The learners, who were undertaking English courses as a requisite for graduation, were expected to trigger their higher thinking skills and their language competences simultaneously as the course progressed.

During the upper-intermediate course of English 10 and 11 of the institute of modern languages, the researcher embarked in a reflective cycle where the lack of experience and instructional innovations were determinant factors to employ an Action Research approach. Consequently, the teacher took the role of a teacher-researcher, where he was in charge of designing the materials, teach and reflect actively by registering aspects occurred during sessions.

Hence, the process was divided in two main stages; the diagnostic stage that took place in course 10 and the implementation stage which lasted to the end of the course 11. During the first phase the facilitator determined the content of the course and designed the material. Thus, in course 10 it was essential to find the balance between the language syllabus aims and the Higher Order Thinking Skills to develop. The teacher-researcher assured this combination of thinking and language by scheming communicative tasks that enhanced critical processes and at the same time encouraged learners to use the target language. The current study intends to report the process of the
teacher-researcher through the construction and instructional practice of the critical thinking communicative tasks and how these tools affected the learners in relation to their language development and Higher Order Thinking Skills.

The implementation stage lasted 4 sessions and it sought to interpret what does it take for undergraduates to engage in critical thinking tasks and the role students and the teacher adopted in these encounters. Moreover, the teacher-researcher entangled in a reflective cycle over the material and instructional patterns in critical thinking and related encounters. Most of the insights from the students and the teacher were recorded for further analysis and consideration.

This research study also assayed to drop important conclusions over the field of criticality in foreign language learning, as it is a rather unexplored field in which there is no much research to base on. The voice of the students and the teacher were essential to reflect how the approximations to critical pedagogy as innovative procedures could enrich the language curriculum and enrich its components.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As a manner to focalize the research process the following related questions are intended:

• How does critical thinking instruction through communicative tasks impact a group of undergraduate English language students in relation to their English language development and cognitive skills?

• What contributions to the design of critical thinking tasks and their incorporation to the language curriculum can be drawn from the insights of the teacher-researcher and the students?

• What are students’ and the teacher’s beliefs regarding their role in communicative tasks that involve critical thinking?
LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the study presents the theoretical platform, arguments and pertinent findings that address critical thinking in the educational setting. Critical thinking is the main construct of the study and further on connected to the field of foreign language teaching and learning. This chapter also addresses the gaps and necessities in critical thinking instruction. According to these definitions, concepts and findings, the following document provides a structured relation among the core elements of critical thinking and the inclusion of criticality in the English language classroom.

Current educational trends have raised awareness on the importance of critical thinking instruction in the classroom. Far more than including criticality to the educative sessions, the findings by Mok (2010) reveal that teachers, at first, need to understand the relevance of critical thinking and what it implies in order to facilitate processes that could benefit the thinking skills of students. Since this project describes students’ thinking skills with the combination of foreign language teaching, I will determine from the various definitions of critical thinking how it is conceived in education.

The term Critical Thinking (CT) as described by Facione (1998) involves a set of cognitive domains illustrated in hierarchical categories. It is stated by the author that terms such as well-thinking correspond to a superficial definition, and that irrational or illogical processes help us define what is not. In order to reach a deeper definition of CT, authors such as Facione (1998); Pithers and Soden (2000); Scrivener and Paul (2003); converge that CT is an intellectually
disciplined and committed process, which involves a set of skills that allow to find a purpose, to process and to generate information and believes by responding to inquiries and supporting one’s arguments. It is a self-regulatory practice that implies the ceaseless usage of skills as an interdisciplinary, ethical, collaborative and life-long endeavor.

According to Facione (1998), among many factors of CT depicted in the individuals, classification portrays the collaborative and non-competitive nature of CT, since the good thinker considers, accepts and tolerates others’ perspectives towards a certain topic, as if the person realizes the importance of building his/her knowledge from the others. The author argues that this is especially relevant in the classroom setting, where students are expected to work as a team, communicating and allowing interaction to achieve a common goal. Consequently, these type of factors, the set of cognitive skills and the group of affective dispositions e.g. “a probing inquisitiveness, a keenness of mind, a zealous dedication to reason, and an eagerness for reliable information” (p. 7), pursue the heart of CT. Withal, the hierarchical order of skills proposed by Bloom (1956) named as “the taxonomy of educational objectives” and Facione’s (1998) six core critical thinking skills are compared, synthesized and developed by Aguirre (2004) and Pineda (2004).

Based on these similarities found in the definition of the different cognitive domains, the authors argue that although it seems rigid to classify thinking in six categories, it is a manageable way to propose its instruction and to define its learning purposes (Pineda, 2004). In addition, Aguirre (2004)
identifies that Bloom’s and Facione’s taxonomies may appear at different stages of someone’s construction of knowledge, that is, through the right stimulation process. Regarding this issue, Pineda (2004) states that learning is a constant repeated cycle, which demands renewing and refining our knowledge base towards higher order thinking processes, for instance, an individual can employ one or many of these cognitive domains in problem-solving procedures.

The list of cognitive domains provided by Facione (1998) and synthesized by Pineda (2004), embeds the knowledge component drawn from Bloom (1956). Pineda states that this domain is important to be listed in the taxonomy because in second language learning individuals are constantly exposed to new linguistic information that is required to be retained and retrieved. Therefore, the list of mental abilities is compounded in: Knowledge, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation1.

Concisely, knowledge entails remembering terminology, facts and conventions to solve a problem. The individual is able to prove or judge facts by classifying, using criteria and categorizing information. Whereas, interpretation refers to the ability of discerning an idea, argument or believe through paraphrasing procedures, and by grasping content in order to differentiate legitimate and contradictory conclusions.

In Analysis, one divides information to its structural components to find relations and compare them to our background knowledge. Pineda (2004) states that there are three subcategories of analysis; the first involves analyzing the elements to find the differences between facts and hypotheses. Secondly,

1 Authors such as Bloom (1956) and Facione (1998) elaborate in depth these concepts.
the analysis to understand relations of ideas and cause and effect sequences. And thirdly, identifying by inference the principles of organization of communication.

**Inference** is the mental ability of constructing assumptions and theses, making or developing rational results regarding opinions, data, tenets, and convictions by spotting elements that guarantee an estimated prediction. Wherein the cognitive skill is justifying one’s point of view is regarded as explanation; it implies support grounded on concepts, methods, sound criteria, and contextual considerations.

Using criteria to establish the value of information or judging the validity of statements, events, convictions, expressions, opinions, facts and figures, and regulations, constitute the characteristics gathered from Facione and Bloom (by Pineda, 2004) to describe evaluation. Finally, self-regulation is a self-supervision of the thinking process. It requires questioning, confirming, validating, and correcting our skills, their usage, and the outcomes with a frequent revision to the elements used to solve a problem.

A sense of constant evaluation of thought reveals a strategical process, which implies that thinking skills and language learning are bound together as stated by the Council of Europe (2001). The results of compiled studies presented in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages emphasize on the fact that learner’s language ability is observed through their performance in language activities and how they operate communication strategies such as metacognition. It is most evident that the previously
mentioned self-regulation skill is closely related to metacognitive processes, they both function as communication strategies that actuate students’ reflective activity and thereby raise awareness of their global learning process (Pineda, 2004). It is under this ground that principles of metacognition like; **Pre-planning, Execution, Monitoring, and Repair Action** (Council of Europe, 2001:57) depict the reflective quality of this last cognitive skill, and thereof, the remarked role of reflection in CT processes.

Facione (1998) and Scrivener & Paul (2003) note that having the six core CT skills does not mean one can apply them. Thus, a good thinker must know, at firsthand, how to implement these skills and have, of course, the opportunities to use them. Moreover, the authors specified that once these skills are acquired there is an intellectual commitment that prompts their usage, and that when there is a stated aim in mind, there is often an opportunity to employ CT skills.

It is essential to understand what critical thinking implies when one desires to include it in the language classroom. This postulation is supported by the findings of Alazzi (2008) which after a study to Jordanian social studies teachers about their perspectives on teaching CT skills in the classrooms, led him discover that most of the participants did not know what CT was or they were not exposed to the formal definitions of it. Consequently, they taught CT according to their own definitions, which impacted negatively on the outcomes in contrast to their positive intentions. Mok (2010) also finds this gap between professional knowledge and teaching practice in his study of CT syllabus.
implementation to secondary English teachers in Hong Kong. The author argues that the possibility of creating spaces for CT encounters are determined by the open-mindedness of the teachers, their willingness to hear what students have to say instead of guiding them to a specific answer, and the understanding of CT and its relevance in the learning context.

Other concerning issues encountered when CT is embedded in the classrooms is the lack of training, lack of information, preconceptions, time constrains and class size. These elements are highlighted by the authors Snyder and Snyder (2008) and Alazzi (2008), who establish that lack of training is caused because teachers know the content, but do not receive training in CT methods of instruction. Although CT is a requirement in the Jordanian Ministry of Education’s guidelines, some institutions do not include it as a condition in their teaching manuals (Alazzi, 2008).

Lack of information is a matter found in the educational textbooks revealing the lack of instructional material to enhance critical processes. Preconceptions are personal biases that teachers make in action, presumably because the intellectual traits (e.g. fairness, open-mindedness, empathy, etc. Paul and Elder, 2008) have not been introduced in their teacher-training. Time constrains are introduced by Snyder and Snyder (2008) to claim that against the notable amount of content to teach, a short period of time limits the opportunities to provide CT discussions and instructional procedures. Also, Alazzi (2008) found in his study that teaching methodology such as lectures and
no time for discussion or inquiry was limited by the class size, the teacher-
participants in his study expressed that the need to maintain discipline and the
pressure of the state exam was the main cause for their traditional teaching
approach.

This study follows the principles of the communicative approach by
privileging the use of language in interactive encounters as a primordial element
of communication. The MEN (1999) mentions in the lineamientos curriculares
para idiomas extranjeros the importance of an approach that allows learners to
amend their communicative competence and thereof postulates several
approaches and methods for language teachers to take into account in their
sessions. One of them is the communicative approach that stresses the
significance of language functions so that students are able to use language
forms in a variety of contexts, with a variety of users from the same speech
community, and for different purposes. (Harmer, 2001:84; MEN, 1999:32)

Despite the fact that the inclusion of CT instruction in language learning
environments still remains highly unexplored (Davidson and Dunham, 1996 and
Bedoya, 2009), some studies suggest relevant findings about CT in the TEFL
field. Informal observations by Davidson (1994, 1995) and a quantitative study
conducted by Davidson and Dunham (1996) with junior college Japanese
students revealed with the Ennis-Weir critical thinking essay (standardized
assessment tool to measure critical thinking abilities) that students who were
enrolled in English language instruction and additional critical thinking training
scored significantly higher on the provided test, which implies that “Critical
thinking skills can apparently be taught to some extent along with English as a foreign language” (p. 14). In addition, Kabilan (2000) emphasizes on the incorporation of critical processes in the language classroom; he claims that rather than learning about the language, is the fact that the communicative approach is attained by the usage of the language which implies constructing ideas and defending ones arguments with supported explanations, examples and details, all of these, direct features of creativity and CT.

Hence, CT processes need to be embedded in language tasks that trigger students’ thinking skills, mainly because as Kabilan (2000) draws from Mirman and Tishman (1998), CT is not an isolated entity, it needs to be interlaced in the subject matter which in this case is the teaching/learning of a foreign language.

As described above, language tasks that embed CT skills are highly important to this project and related to it, Pineda (2004) found in her study of implementation of tasks related to Critical thinking, conducted to three groups of Economics in an English program offered by a Colombian university, that CT development expressed in English was manifested in the implementation of tasks and materials that encouraged thinking processes. Furthermore; linguistic, pragmatic, and argumentative competency development was evidenced in the analysis of the data, implicating that the learners’ lexical and discursive language competence evolve significantly after the intervention with the tasks. The author clarifies that the term evolve emerges because students’ discourse modifies and re-elaborates in a ceaseless cycle that characterizes the long-term
endavor of learning a language and development of criticality. On top of that, Aguirre (2004) found on the study of CT skills of analysis and evaluation in ninth graders at a Colombian school, that participation and motivation was prompted by the exposure to CT related language tasks. He discusses that EFL teachers must change their points of view by encouraging students to use the foreign language to talk about reality; only then, reconsidering the role of language teachers and students, the potential of learners can be exploited and further explored.

The role of the language teacher is also addressed by Pineda (2004) whose study provided a clear perspective on the teacher’s feedback as a factor that affects the quality of student’s production. The author argues that EFL teachers must become “scaffolders of debate” (p. 66) encouraged by curiosity and critiques to the topic of debate. Consequently, the researcher noticed that effective questioning techniques and by paying attention to how EFL teachers address students’ needs, how they answer students’ questions, and finally, how they praise students’ effort, leaners can be engaged much more to intellectual and academic productions (Aguirre, 2004). Additionally, teacher and student interaction in Pineda’s (2004) study followed an Initiation-Response-Feedback (IFR) model. In this prototype of interaction, the teacher initiated the exchange by posing questions and elaborating on students’ answers, then paraphrasing learners’ affirmations and finally expanding on the elicited thoughts of the students. Concludingly, the model evidenced a common pattern when interacting with students: “We recognize that the interaction around our tasks
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related to critical thinking led us to conclude that discourse is still marked by dominance on the part of the teacher” (p. 68).

The present study, pertaining to the critical pedagogy branches, continues the active concern of educators in relation to the critical thought processes of learners and how can this be fostered in a cross-disciplinary and reflective manner, that is, by listening to the voices of those who are directly exposed to the practices of criticality: The students and the teacher.
DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this section some relevant definitions are provided facilitating the understanding of terms used throughout this study.

The terms are divided in two main frames; the first one defines the expressions linked to the critical thinking area that pertain to this study and the other relates to the language teaching and learning domain. The latter resolves in the definition of a critical thinking communicative task, which is the fusion of the two categories aforementioned.

Critical pedagogy is one of the concepts deeply defined throughout the years from the conceptions of education of Freire (1970, 2000). The Brazilian professor emphasized on the role that education played towards the freedom of students. This conception has led to several interpretations of how education should be viewed, and more importantly, the role of the teachers in the acquaintance of freedom of students through educational procedures. Critical pedagogy upholds the conception that the world should be critically read because as it is not a finished product, students could speak freely about the oppressive reality they live, ending in a constructive critique and therefore the upcoming new transforming reality (Freire, 1970, 2000; Lipman, 2000) On the whole, this pedagogical notion pretends to use language in learning how to think, towards creativity, objectiveness, and a social common sense concerning reality.
In the search for students to think for themselves Brown (2001) suggests four principles that define critical pedagogy, these are: [critical pedagogues…]

1. *Allow students to express themselves openly (be sensitive to power relationships, encourage candid expressions)*

2. *Genuinely respect points of view (seek to understand their cherished beliefs and traditions)*

3. *Encourage both/many sides of an issue (welcome all seriously offered statements, opinions, and beliefs)*

4. *Don’t force students to think just like you (delay or withhold your own opinion)*

(Brown, 2001:444)

Under these conceptions of pedagogy, it is pertinent to state that Freire (1970, 2000); Lipman (2000); and Brown (2001); coincide in providing reformations to the teaching/learning pedagogy, this implies that critical pedagogy is, in essence, an educational **innovation**.

**Innovation** as explained by Carbonell (2001, cited in Usma & Frodden, 2003) is a pedagogical renovation where the whole educational community is affected. There is a concurrent relation to the definitions of innovation in Giraldo's (2009) study to this particular research. From the four paths of innovation explained in Giraldo (2009) there is one category that explains how innovative procedures appeared in this research project. One of them is through reflective cycles linked to theory, in other words, action research procedures,
these cycles drop innovation as the result of teachers’ reflection on their own pedagogical practice. Pedagogical innovations are, then, the effort of teachers to strengthen their teaching action and thereof many benefits will arise because “[…] When teachers are involved in the process of making changes, education is more focused on what actually happens in classrooms and with the individuals involved” (Giraldo, 2009:22)

**Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)** are cognitive skills used in processes of laborious thought, these are intellectually demanding skills that allow the individual to solve a problem and display creative thinking. In this study, I emphasized on those skills closely related to critical thinking processes as determined by Facione (1998) and synthesized by Pineda (2004), the list of mental abilities is compounded in: *Knowledge, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation.* (See page 18)

The HOTS self-regulation is colligated to the term **metacognition**. Pineda (2004) argues that meta-cognition involves constant reflection and an active awareness about the learning process. Thus, features such as permanent planning, assessment, and evaluation of thinking processes (Mayor, 1993; cited in Pineda, 2004) embrace the core of what meta-cognitive strategy imply in language learning.

Regarding the language teaching/learning domain the following terms are related:
The **language curriculum** contains six elements illustrated by Brown (1995); *Needs assessment/analysis*, which is the organized process of gathering students perceptions of a course for curricular developmental matters; *goals and objectives*, related to the students’ learning outcomes once the process is accomplished; *testing*, the supervision of how the goals and objectives are being attained during sessions; *materials development*, the inclusion of adapted tools for the completion of the curricula; *language teaching*, this is the how to conduct methodologically the classroom practice; *program evaluation*, the last which relates to the concluding collection of information that probes the effectiveness of the curriculum and leads to its improvement. Considering the aforesaid, a language curriculum is a set of systematic educational elements that provide the guides for the teaching and learning encounters, it allows organizing the language courses leading to the procedures (methods), which grant learning and teaching goals. The language curriculum definition is essentially relevant to my research project because the inclusion of criticality as an innovation to the English language teaching/learning practices render contributions in relation to the goals and objectives, material development, and language teaching components of critical pedagogy based curricula.

**Communicative competence**

The abilities appertained to language whether they are at the written or spoken level is what the Council of Europe (2001) refers to as the
Communicative competence. Emphasising on the aspect of ‘what one can do with the language’ so as to successfully and appropriately achieve a communicative purpose within the limits of a given context.

Since the present research project embraces the conception of developing undergraduates’ communicative competence, it is pertinent to mention the relevancy of the term in this section. Additionally, the communicative competence has also gained rather vast importance in the design and curricular expectations of the language teaching institutions in Colombia. This is evident in the Lineamientos de lenguas extranjeras (1999) and the MEN (2004), which implemented the features of communicative competence from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFRL) presented by the Council of Europe (2001). They offer a conception of competence in communication once the speech users comprise the linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic components. (Explained in CEFRL, 2001)

**Communicative approach**

Following the notion of communication in language teaching, the term communicative approach gains importance in this study due to the fact that the routines carried out throughout the process underpinned a set of real life interactive encounters which after all constitutes one of the features of the communicative approach or communicative language teaching (CLT). Harmer (2001) warns about the undefined clarity of what a CLT approach is, primarily, because its main intention is to improve students’ communication abilities (alike
many other approaches), adding to this that CLT also includes drills and language items practices just like many other methodologies. Thus, CLT becomes more of an umbrella term that by lesson sequences aims to improve the communicative competence of the language learners (Harmer, 2001). It is under these bases that CLT has shifted the emphasis in the how to teach languages, evolving to a notion where the language function has the fundamental role and grammar and vocabulary are just derived elements that emerge during encounters, after all, this process assures the conception that “language learning will take care of itself” (Harmer, 2001:85) For instance, language accuracy is less important than what learners want to achieve with it.

Language tasks are part of the CLT methodology. According to the council of Europe (2001), tasks demand learners to use language through language activities that encourage individuals to use strategies in communicating and learning. On the other hand, the Council of Europe (2001) remarks the nature of a task, that is, it may not need the usage of language to be carried out e.g. raising a tent. However, is the relationship of strategies, tasks and text that converge to form a language task, where learners have to receive, produce, interact or mediate in a written or spoken encounter so as to achieve the related aim of the assignment. Another important aspect commented by Brown (1995) is that communicative task-based curricula differ to content-based, theme-based and experiential instruction because the course objectives (as in this research project) are more language-based, thus, conserving the central focus on language functions stated in the course syllabus and learners’ pragmatic competence development.
All in all, the present study intervened in the traditional practice of language teaching and so including an innovation to the language classroom, this innovative processed involved the implementation of the communicative approach by using language tasks that triggered students critical thinking skills, this is what was entitled as **Critical thinking communicative tasks (CT tasks)**. Given the fact that HOTS are subject-related, i.e. they need a content to be triggered, therefore the present study allowed the learners to engage in pedagogical tasks that served as ground for learners to interpret, analyze, evaluate, infer, explain, and self-regulate, indeed, at the same time, these tasks focused on the language items that assisted communication in the critical thought encounters. (See instructional design)
METHODOLOGY

Type of study

The reflective cycle of this research project developed inside the frame of a qualitative action research (AR) study observed the implementation of communicative tasks that prompted critical thinking processes in the EFL classroom. As proposed by Burns (2010), AR is a type of study which teachers use to cover gaps that they perceive between their teaching situation and what they would ideally like to see happening. Hence, AR steadily provides the tools for professional growth and fulfils the teacher needs of self-improvement rather than making it a threatening process. (Wallace, 1998)

As stated by Wallace (1998), action research is an approach implemented in the teaching context and is carried out by collecting data on a systematic regularity. The data collected from the everyday practice is analysed to bear on decisions about how to perform in the coming practices. The following diagram provides a structured cycle that guides the methodology of this research project.

*Reflective cycle based on Wallace’s (1998) model*
Context & Setting

This study took place inside the academic sessions of the institute of modern languages\textsuperscript{2} dependency of the T-state University\textsuperscript{3}. This institute had as a main objective to provide an adequate and integral education in foreign languages to students of the University (some courses are provided to people outside the university). Although the institute offers instruction in other foreign languages such as, German and French, student population normally sign in for courses of English. The institute works attending to the demands of the “Acuerdo 49 del 9 de Noviembre de 2000” of the academic counsellor at the T-state University. This agreement states that learners of all undergraduate programs at the university should be competent in at least one foreign language.

Regarding pedagogical tools, T-state University provides students with a text-book in terms of lendable material while they are undertaking the course. However, the policies of the language institute allow the teachers to bring to the teaching sessions any material that can be employed for the language development of the students, this means that teachers are not strictly ordered to use the text-book as a requirement for instruction but are free to choose their instructional material.

Among many schedules that the institute offers to the student population, this study was conducted in a five hours session held on Saturday mornings. This was because it was more probable to find more population during this schedule as students are off their academic duties and have the time to study.

\textsuperscript{2} Pseudonym
\textsuperscript{3} Pseudonym
English. Along with this, the schedule allowed the observation to have greater details and expand, in richness, the amount of opportunities for learners to employ CT processes.

Regarding the duration of the course, the data collection was divided in two momentum, a planning and diagnostic period that is conducted during the first course (10) and an implementation period held during the second course of English (11). Each course had duration of forty hours divided in eight classes of five hours per session, adding a total of eighty hours of exposure to the language in one academic semester. In order to pass from course (10) to the following course (11), students had to take a progress test based on the communicative approach. This test is designed, implemented, and marked by the teacher who determined along with previous skills’ development grading if students were competent enough to continue their language development process in the following course.

Each course unit (e.g. 1 and 2, 3 and 4, etc.) is normally guided by a different teacher, which implies that each teacher inscribed to the language institute is constantly assigned to different English groups who are scaling up in their proficiency level, this means that teachers may not have previous contact with students.
Participants

A group of 28 male and female undergraduate students were the student-participants who were enrolled in the language sessions. They belonged to different programs offered by the T-state University and were in the process of studying English as a requirement for their bachelor’s degree on their respective programs. Their ages ranged between 17 and 28 years and their academic semester was improbable to define because it is not mandatory to start their language learning process at a certain moment of their program, for this reason, students are free of taking the English courses when desired.

The T-state university requires the students of each program (except from those studying English as a foreign language) to undergo a minimum of eight (8) courses of English with a stipulated amount of 320 hours of instructions in the institute of modern languages inside the University (some current changes have extended the amount of courses up to 16). However, the University does not state that studying in the institute is a mandatory aspect; learners are enabled to study wherever they choose as long as they prove their foreign language competence in a test provided by the institute. Otherwise, their undergraduate degree will not be delivered.

According to the institute policies there are some incontrollable variables that may be able to have changed the course of action of the study, for example, students’ nonattendance. Some students could find difficulties to attend during the course and withdraw from it leaving the data collection process at a raw stage. Another issue was the assignation of courses to
teachers; the T-state University demands a minimum of twenty-five students to consolidate an English course, if the student population is less than this number the groups are likely to be closed. Thus, the amount of students who passed course 10 was significantly important to assure the continuation of the process.

For this reason, I designed an alternative plan to undergo the probable problematic. First, a strategic selection of focal students in the planning and diagnostic period\(^4\), and then an intensification of observational procedures at the implementation stage (course 11). (See instructional design)

**Description of the participant focal students:**

As described before five students were finally chosen from the English language learning group to participate as focal students in the research study. All selected students were acquainted with the objectives and procedure of the study and were delivered a consent format\(^5\), as well as, the coordination of the institute so as to have the validation of the study and the permission to carry out the process with the students of the course.

The sample selection of the five students was accordant to Merriam’s (2002) model of purposive sampling or purposeful sample, which implies selecting those cases that can richly affect the results and purpose of the study. Under this conception the five cases where chosen by their language outcomes and behaviour detected by the teacher-researcher during the first segment of the study (diagnostic stage). This stage was conducted in a period of five weeks on every Saturday English session and the first impressions were recorded by

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\(^4\) Better description in the section of data collection methods.  
\(^5\) See appendix 6 to find the model of consent formats.
the teacher-researcher on his teaching journal entries, then a survey was carried out focused on the preferences in language learning methodology from the learners perspective, and finally, an analysis of the outcomes in the English language proficiency including the final test of course 10 was taken into consideration for the final selection. Three of the students were considered strong language users while the remaining two went through some difficulties in the process. Other aspects such as punctuality and attendance were also determining factors to make the selection.

The follow are the profiles of the focal students. Most of the information is compiled from the observations of the teacher-researcher and a biography written by the focal learners. All names further described are pseudonyms that cover students’ identity as an agreement dealt in the consent format signed by them.

**Luisa:** She was a 20 year old female student of electrical engineering at the T-state University coursing her 5th semester; although she had living experience in other countries such as Brazil, she was born in Pereira (Colombia) and is currently living in this country.

Luisa was a very competent English language speaker and had a certain competence in Portuguese. She was able to establish quick relations with the people; thus she was highlighted in the course as one of the spokesperson as she was able to express herself freely in the language sessions. Luisa portrayed herself as an optimist person, very collaborative and passionate for the arts in general, she was also an emphatic person who enjoyed listening to others and sharing different points of view.
One of the language aspects she emphasized at the beginning of the course was that her grammar usage was not accurate and that she wanted to gain more fluency in the English language.

Maria: She was a 21 year old female student of electric engineering at the T-state University, coursing her 6th semester; Maria had stayed in Pereira only for three years. She was born in Popayán and coursed her high school there, where she also studied English at “Colegio Mayor del Cauca”

Maria was a very reserved student and did not participated much in class, although she was attentive to the sessions her production in English was very limited and did not compromised much on speaking tasks. She was very punctual and attended to most of the sessions; she describes herself as quiet and a very organized and responsible person which she proved at the end of the course.

Eduardo: was an 18 year old male student of Medicine at the T-state University, he was coursing his 4th semester of medicine and graduated from a state high school in Pereira. He was a former student of English at the “Centro Colombo Americano” where the participant finished all the levels offered by the institution.

Eduardo was very competent user of English, even though he described himself as a shy person, he was very expressive during the sessions and managed to use English all of the time to present his arguments, opinions, and ideas regarding the topics displayed during the sessions. He also stated that he
was a passionate reader and that he was enrolled in research projects related to field of his program (medicine).

Andres: was a 20 year old student of Industrial technology at the T-state University. He was at the final stage of his studies and was close to graduation. He was a very talkative person and established good relationships during the course, Andres was very punctual and attended to all the sessions of the course. He was really motivated with the process and usually remained after the lessons to discuss about the material which was presented during the sessions and provided plenty of feedback about the class in general. He described himself as a serious and responsible person with a high motivation to learn languages.

Sergio: was a 20 year old student of Electric Technology. In his 6th semester Sergio was very passionate about his program and felt a strong compromise for his field of knowledge, he was really interested to continue his studies on the area of electric engineering. Sergio expressed on his expectations that the English language is very important for him but that he was normally not involved in situations where English was required, for that reason Sergio believed his language proficiency was very poor.

Sergio was very reserved in the sessions of English and normally did not commented or expressed himself during the activities. There were several intentions to connect to the perceptions of the activities and tasks developed in the course and he replied positive to them. Sergio expressed that there were several difficulties with the language and that the listening activities were strictly
hard for him to follow, he believed that he needed more exposure and practice with the language. Furthermore, Sergio was very punctual and he completed full attendance to the sessions of English.

On the other hand, I will also be a participant of the study. The teacher-researcher is a male last semester student of the TEFL program offered at the T-state University. He had been enrolled as a language teacher in the institute of modern languages for 4 years and had taught over 3,000 hours at the same institute. In his teaching experience at the University, he had guided English language courses from elementary (1) to pre-intermediate (7); lastly he has been assigned the courses 10 and 11.

According to the in-service time in the institute, the teacher was very well acquainted with the policies of the institute and had develop some expertise in the design and implementation of learning resources other than the text-book. However, he expressed not having previous experience on the design and implementation of communicative tasks that involve CT processes.

**Researcher’s role**

My role in this study was that of a teacher-researcher. Defined by Burns (2010) as “The teacher [who] becomes an investigator or explorer of his or her personal teaching context while at the same time being one of the participants in it” (p. 13). It is then, the dual role that is distinctive in action research, where the teacher is guiding the sessions and at the same time is observing the impact of his/her intervention in a continuous cycle of data collection and analysis (Wallace, 1998).
This study was conducted in my teaching context which provided an ample opportunity to investigate how my design of tasks, teaching instruction and implementation of tasks, and students’ responses was affected when CT was addressed through communicative units. According to Reinking and Bradley (2004) this intervention may alter the learning environment and it may result on important unintended consequences that mainly arouse by assuming an investigative role in the classroom action. Moreover, Burns (2010) claims that this role allows the teacher-researcher to collect data that has to do with “making familiar things strange” (p. 57). In other words, becoming strangers in the classroom who pay special attention to aspects that were not spotted before. Consequently, it allowed me to gain deep insights into my action as a teacher and the learning context.

Data Collection Methods

The following are the methods used to gather data in the present research project:

• Teacher’s journal.

Wallace (1998) presents a journal as a “shared account of a person’s actions, thoughts and feelings written by the person him/herself, usually on a daily basis. Journals are different from diaries because they can be read and commented on by others” (p.257)
In this research project, I used a teacher’s journal to reflect on relevant issues regarding the study. Because the investigative approach implemented was action research cycle, the journal served to actively reflect on the study progress and the changes taken during the process. The journal entries were done once the classes finished and where I also registered my reflections towards the design, the instruction of CT through communicative tasks, and the learners’ responses to the tasks.

Video recorded classroom activities aided the researcher with the possibility of recalling information that during class time was unsupervised. Videotaped sessions were transcribed to provide a more detailed perspective and reflect on the students’ and teacher’s performance.

Mp3 recording devices were helpful instruments to enhance clarity on the collection of data, because the recorder was hanged on the neck of the teacher (as proposed by Burns, 2010) it allowed to make accurate transcriptions that video recordings may not provide, for example, in interactions of the teacher with small groups.

- Students’ journals

Because there are determining variables that may change the course of action of the study, students’ journals were part of the session as a resource in the planning and diagnostic stage. Journals served as crucial information to choose the focal participants of the study. Six entries of journals were conducted at the planning stage, each one at the end of the sessions. Among
some benefits listed by Brock, Yu and Wong (1992) (cited by Wallace, 1998) in using journals are that they provide an effective means of identifying variables that are important to individual teachers and learners, they are excellent tools for reflection, and they enhance awareness about the way a teacher teaches and a student learns. (p. 63)

- Questionnaires and interviews to focal students.

  The following techniques as presented by Wallace (1998) are determined to tap into facts/personal perceptions, opinions/preferences or experiences/anecdotes of the participants. The responses to these tools are usually presented in a systematic way and are recorded for further analysis and reflection.

  In this study, questionnaires were used to define the opinion/preferences of the students. This was to identify their likes and opinions regarding the layout, the content, and the topics of interest when exposed to language tasks. The questionnaire was in a written format, it contained open-ended and close questions, and it was conducted on the second session of the course 10.

  Wallace (1998) defines interviews as a sort of predetermined conversation or meeting intended to gather certain information. It has a list of questions (or interview schedule) prepared by someone who is conducting the interview. This study contains two semi-structured interviews to focal students which took place at the beginning and at the end of the implementation stage in course eleven (11). Wallace (1998) stated that this type of interviews display a prepared interview schedule and previously prepared open questions, they
allow “a certain degree of control with a certain amount of freedom to develop the interview” (p. 147). These interviews done during the second stage gathered students’ personal perceptions, opinions, and experiences when engaged in communicative tasks that demand high order thinking. Consequently, they described students’ perceptions at the beginning of the interaction with the designated tasks, and students’ final points of view after an estimated amount of interaction with tasks. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for further analysis of data.

- Classroom artifacts e.g. written work, journal entries, and written responses to readings.

Burns (2010) suggests this method for data collection to monitor the improvements and gaps in the students’ learning process. The written and oral productions of the learners were the compass of the study and they were collected at the implementation stage of the study (course 11). These artifacts or communicative tasks provided the outcomes needed to reflect on the research experiment. The oral production were normally audio-recorded and later transcribed and the written production was evaluated in order to identify how the students performed and what aspects were relevant to consider in the written output.
Data analysis

Once I gathered data from all the methods described above (i.e. concluding observations that were registered during the action research cycle, teacher’s and students’ journal, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, and classroom artifacts) I divided all data of the focal students from the rest of the materials. This was done to make sure that there was a consistency between the perception of the rest of the students and the ones directly involved in this study.

Then, I made the transcriptions from both interviews conducted to focal students plus the transcriptions and observations from the sessions that were video recorded. The latter information was registered directly in the teacher’s journal as part of the reflection process. All the information of the teacher’s journal was registered during and at the end of the sessions following a dynamic reflection method (see instructional design); thus, I used moments of group work and break time to make some observations for further elaboration, routinely, at the end of the session. The teacher’s journal was a crucial element in this process because it contained the reflective progression of action research, this is, it described the impact of the small-scale intervention of the cycle, it depicted how I evaluated the impact of the encounter and finally, the subsequent action that was going to be taken as an alternative to improve the efficacy and efficiency of the instructional material and my (the teacher) teaching action.
After all data was assembled, I constructed an organizational chart that related the questions and the methods used to collect data, this was to consider which method could provide more information in relation to the questions that guided this research project. (See chart at the end of this chapter)

The coding of data obeyed two stages; in the first stage I read and drafted several codes from the methods that involved the students’ perceptions, then I read the digitally transcribed interviews of focal students and finally the classroom artefacts of all the learners. Each method dropped a list of codes that were later compared to contend a list of seven categories. This process was done to avoid biases due to the fact that I had the double role of being the teacher and at the same time the observer of the study. Hence, in the second stage I compiled the categories that were suggested at that first stage and compared them to the categories that emerged from the entries of the teacher’s journal, which then were discussed with the academic advisor of this research project. This triangulation process allowed me to conclusively arrive to a list of 5 self-explanatory categories which are the findings of this present study.

The following chart evidences the relation of methods to the questions of this research project and the relation of findings to the questions:
Research questions | Methods | Findings
--- | --- | ---
How does critical thinking instruction through communicative tasks impact a group of undergraduate English language students in relation to their English language development and cognitive skills? | - Classroom artifacts.  
- Semi-structured interviews.  
- Teacher’s and students’ journals. | Critical thinking tasks involved a continual reflective process that prompted higher order thinking skills and awareness of language usage.  
CT tasks in English language sessions ensued motivation for students and the teacher.  
CT tasks are unfamiliar practices that resulted challenging for undergraduate students. |
What contributions to the design of critical thinking tasks and their incorporation to the language curriculum can be drawn from the insights of the teacher-researcher and the students? | - Teacher’s journal.  
- Semi-structured interviews. | CT communicative tasks granted the usage of language skills and supplied content for English language learning/teaching. |
What are students’ and the teacher’s beliefs regarding their role in communicative tasks that involve critical thinking? | - Teacher’s journal.  
- Semi-structured interviews. | Democratic language classrooms: Teacher and learners as agents of collective construction of knowledge. |

Instructional design

This section describes the teaching process that took place in this research project. Materials such as the lesson plans and tasks (classroom artifacts) that were implemented are all exposed in the appendix section of this paper.

As for the nature of session’s development, I must remark that the design of the English language classes was strictly bounded to the reflective approach of Action Research. This reflective cycle determined the stages of research and imparted most of the key elements to take into account when teaching and conducting a research project simultaneously. As mentioned in
Burns (2010) the action research cycle embraces four main phases that were described as *iterative* cycles by Kemmis & McTaggart (1988). For this reason, I selectively employed each stage for certain purposes and used each teaching session as crucial momentums to gather information for further reflection and further on starting the cycle again. This is reflected in the following four periods of this project: the *Planning, Action, Observation, and reflection* stage.

**Planning and Diagnosis**

At this stand, the main focus of the study was to define the focal students and to design communicative tasks that addressed the critical thinking component, this stage and its sub-phases is referred in this paper as the *Diagnostic stage*. As mentioned earlier on the context description, this first momentum took place inside a period of six (6) sessions of five (5) hours each of the upper-intermediate English course ten (10). According to Burns (2010), there are three areas which action researchers must consider in the planning stage; first, *consulting the literature*; second, *involving others*; and third, *Identifying and using equipment*.

**Consulting the literature:**

I actively consulted all the accessible information that related the teaching components of EFL and critical thinking processes. I previously read plenty of guides about critical thinking but the correlation of the two constructs of this study (EFL & CT) was an aspect that was not very much explored. Most
of the books, journals, and Internet resources consulted (see reference section) allowed me to visualize the structure and appeal of a critical thinking task in the language classroom.

Involving others:

In this process it was crucially important to involve the voices of the students in regards to the materials and thematic they would like to see happening in their language sessions. Hence, the involvement of students to the process was achieved by implementing a preference survey (see appendix 4) and six journal entries. The students’ journals were used to identify focal learners to the study and gather important characteristics about the impact of tasks I used during sessions of the course 10, which after all contributed to the design of better appealing language tasks. Whereas the survey, it was an essential tool to know the likes and needs of the students in order to design the communicative tasks with meaningful information that appears relevant to them.

After reading the journals and tabulating information from the survey I selected a group of 5 students who were the focal learners of the study, they were distributed a consent format on the last session of the course 10 to which all wanted to take part.

Identifying and using equipment:

As Burns (2010) describes, this phase was essential to identify the type of materials I used for the encounters. This is the list of elements utilized for the intervention stage of the study:
1. **Physical and virtual journals:**

   As postulated in Wallace (1998) Journals are essential exercises for students to reflect upon the circumstances of learning, in this particular case I implemented a routine of journal writing at the end of each language session. The questions were to be registered in English and were guided by a set of questions related to the language experience of each session. Matsumoto (1996) expresses that journals are introspective techniques; the researcher claims that journals are normally employed in second language classroom research to investigate the students’ mental processes under L2 encounters. In this case I used journals to understand students’ learning process and most important, their cognitive development when critical thinking instruction was introduced to their language sessions.

   **JOURNAL QUESTIONS:**
   1. In general, how do you consider that the tasks, activities and exercises of this course have impacted your language learning process?

   2. Throughout the English sessions have you noticed processes that demanded thinking, criticizing and arguing? If yes, what is your perception and comments when using these elements in the English classes?

   3. Think about the motion you presented and how the committee responded. How did you feel in the presentation? How did you feel with the feedback from the committee members?

   *Journal entry Nº 5- Conducted after a critical thinking interaction.*
Another way to register students’ reflection was by using a Google form that allowed Ls to reflect about certain aspect of the class. This was implemented by the middle of the further mentioned implementation stage.

Sample of the Google Form used to reflect about the sessions:

https://spreadsheets.google.com/a/utp.edu.co/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dEdOOGhPU1gxUjd1eDhwZTd4NVp0bEE6MQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. What differences did you perceive from the last session and the one of today? *(There may be differences or similarities, on the whole, describe the impact of the lesson today)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. What has been challenging for you at the first stage of the survey? *(Describe the obstacles and positive aspects that you are facing in this first stage of the survey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. What positive and negative aspects did you perceive from the material presented today? *(The language instruction of the quantifiers and the beginning of the survey-based report)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Any other comment?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. Communicative tasks (classroom artifacts):

The communicative tasks implemented were the core instructional elements of critical thinking. Hence, they were the content that permitted to trigger students’ thinking abilities. As expressed before, it was a challenge for
me to construct these didactical units because I did not have any experience linking both areas together (EFL & CT). Nevertheless, the stages which I followed as a teacher-researcher allowed me to understand main aspects of criticality and thinking abilities in the foreign language classroom, that is why these tasks (see appendix 3) are a compilation of proposals around the area of critical thinking, the communicative approach and the voice of the students of the upper-intermediate course of English from the T-state university (participants of this study), who after all, were the main agents of construction and evaluation of these artifacts.

Another important aspect of these tasks is the approach to which they obey (the Communicative approach). One of the main aspects considered when designing these tasks was the communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2001). For instance, classroom artifacts were active prompters of the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence of the students. It was under this ground that the name: Critical thinking communicative task (CT communicative task) was born, as it clasps the communicative approach by triggering learners’ communicative competence and incorporating elements of critical thinking such as the Higher Order Thinking Skills proposed by Bloom (1956), Facione (1998), Pineda (2004), and Aguirre (2004).

Among procedures included when the CT tasks were implemented was the exposure of learners to language items and deductively studying them; interpreting data and information seeking for a relation to learners background knowledge; students also inferred and took guesses from thematic proposed;
there was a constant analysis of the information where learners arrived to objective conclusion; undergraduates enrolled in discussion and debates where they had to explain their points of view, opinions, concerns, and objections; at the same time, individuals evaluated others’ arguments and discussed objectively through them; and mostly important, the students were constantly self-regulating their thinking with classroom artifacts that encouraged them to reconsider their beliefs and others’ conclusions.

Action

This section is named in this action research project the implementation stage. It took place in the second course of upper-intermediate English 11, during a time extension of 7 sessions. In this phase of the study the CT communicative tasks were presented to the students.

According to Burns (2010) in AR data is collected in a regular systematic way. Therefore, in this research data was collected during and after each session through classroom artifacts and journals. Each CT communicative task was collected at the end of the lessons so that it could be further evaluated.

Observation

Once the action stage began, I entangled in an observational cycle of the material presented in lessons. This phase was essential to analyse and synthesize data from the small-scaled intervention (action). Because of the cyclical reflective nature of AR, I started examining and analysing data (classroom artifacts, teacher’s and students’ journal entries) in a dynamic way (Burns, 2010:114). From the observation of my performance and the impact of
CT tasks in language learners, I began to make reforms, changes and new arrangements. This process was done over a weekly period that was because once the class finished I read and included the modifications in 6 days before the following session.

The spiral process stopped after the last session of the course. Having all the data set collected I scrutinized and reflected developing Burns (1999) framework of analysis by (1) assembling data, (2) coding the data, (3) comparing the data, (4) building meaning and interpretations, and (5) reporting the outcomes.

Reflection

One of the most important cycles of this project was the reflective stage which did not happen all at once but was a rather dynamical and cyclical process that enhanced reflection during each intervention and at the end of the whole data collection. This is evidenced in this chart.

![Cyclical AR model based on Kemmis and McTaggart (1988).](image)
A dynamic reflection was the primordial practice under the AR approach. In order to avoid biases I carried out a dynamic reflection supported by the principles of Burns (2010). AR reflective stage is described by Burns (2010) as “dynamic [rather] than simply being the last phase in the cycle. Reflection involves creative insights, thoughts and understandings about what you have been doing and finding, and it happens right from the beginning.” (p. 152). Thus, the four types of reflection provided by Burns (2010) were implemented on my teacher-researcher practice. First, reflecting on practice was held after each session by registering information on my teaching journal. It guided the research process along and led to ideas that were later implemented in the practice. Second, reflecting on the research process to determine the outcomes of the process. It was carried at the end of the process once data was finally gathered.

Equally important, the reflection on believes and values phasis developed inside the afore mentioned reflection over practice (i.e. during and at the end of each session) provided valuable insight of how me as a teacher was undertaking the AR approach and dropped evidence about conceptions of my role as a teacher in this practice and my conceptions about the learners.

Another type of reflection was: Reflecting on feelings and experiences. This “includes dealing with the emotional reactions we have to the way our practices may be changing because of our research.” (Burns, 2010:155). Consequently, my reflective-writing practice also addressed the emotional
responses from learners and me as an active participant felt after the sessions, which served to determine the aspects of my teaching practice that needed to be reconsidered for a richer development of the sessions.

Hence, the types of reflection from Burns (2010) provided clear guidelines to register information of the encounters in each entry to the teacher’s journal which compared to the video recordings and student’s journal drew a global perspective of the happenings of the classroom, thus, avoiding biases that might have misled the research process.

After presenting the methodology used in this investigative project, the following chapter displays the findings that thrived from the process.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section exposes the contentions made after the process of data analysis, the following results are revealed under five categories presented as follows:

**Critical thinking tasks involved a continual reflective process that prompted Higher Order Thinking Skills and awareness of language usage.**

The inclusion of critical thinking in the language sessions of undergraduate students of English led to a cycle of constant reflection which encouraged the learners to raise awareness about their thinking process and language matters (metacognition) A representation of this reflective practice is evident in the students’ journals.

**Student A Journal entry 16th April 2011**

...durante el curso [...] se han escuchado y respetado pensamientos, se han realizado respetuosas críticas constructivas y se ha argumentado incluso acerca de temas que no conocemos bien gracias a la acogida y ayuda mutua del grupo.

**Student B Journal entry 14th May 2011**

...Today was a challenging session. It was plenty of new activities. In the reading activity I could improve my analysing skills doing conclusions statements, inferring ideas of the author [...] As positive aspects: Extract ideas from texts and build conclusion statements, took a position respect to some problematic and get ideas to give an argument to defend it, interact with the classroom analysing their points of view. Negative aspects: I don’t have fluency in express my ideas but in general I liked a lot this session way!

These entries, sequenced chronologically in dates, demonstrate that as the course progressed students were encouraged to activate their “Higher Order Thinking Skills” (HOTS) in order to work through their assigned tasks, this was a direct repercussion of the process of task design which incorporated the critical
thinking component (see instructional design section). In the second journal entry, student B writes about his experience with the tasks and also comments about the negative aspects that have balked his language performance, meaning that these practices carried learners to also reflect on their English language usage specially about those areas that they are personally willing to strengthen.

In order to discuss the significant pattern that emerged in this particular finding, the term “metacognition and self-regulation” must be clearly expounded in this section. Criticality is strictly related to metacognition in the sense that it is a practice of constant reflective endeavour regarding the global development of the learning process. Pineda (2004) draws from Mayor (1993) that metacognition comprehends activities related to planning, assessment, and evaluation of the thinking process, all these provided of well guidance direct the learners in a self-regulatory cycle that targets autonomy and learning to learn. In this study CT tasks allowed the learners to self-monitor their thinking through reflective exercises like journal entries or guiding questions in classroom artifacts, enabling undergraduates to raise awareness about aspects of thought and language usage that they may have not spotted before.

There is also a common pattern used in these journal entries; all of them mention the usage of HOTS (i.e. Learners mentioned analysis, inference, arguing, evaluating) which implies that learners raised awareness about the critical process that the tasks demanded and so they were capable of recognizing which cognitive skills were triggered in each task, this process is
also known as “self-regulation” that belongs to one of the most prominent HOTS and which is one of the skills required for CT development.

Other than this, written constructions also portray reflective procedures that are a product of learners’ critical thought.

Portion of a student’s final written test/ Facebook comment about the death of Osama Bin Laden.
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, I believe that in some aspects I was wrong. I supposed that young people were not interested to get informed by news and didn’t use internet for this aim, but the results showed me the entire contrary. […]

Classroom artifact Nº 3 features how students through an objective process arrived to supported conclusions from the data they have gathered. This task was carried out throughout the whole course because it required careful planning and objective consent from the rest of the classmates to be implemented, once the survey proposal of the students was accepted they could collect the information and then submit a final paper with the findings, conclusions and implication that their surveys drew. Clearly, the expertise of learners in survey procedures varied according to their personal experiences, however, the aim of this task was to trigger students’ HOTS through several cognitive processes that are pursued in investigative activities. Despite the importance of methodology in survey conduction, the intention of the task was attained because in this example (classroom artifact Nº 3) the learner showed objectivity in the development of arguments, as a result of an analytic procedure conducted in the exercise. It also depicts competence in the explanatory skills and features of self-regulatory thought that led to unbiased thinking.

Criticality is also evident on the portion of the final written test (pg. 61), where learners constructed comments showing empathic characteristics mentioned in Paul and Elder (2008) as Intellectual Empathy; this is, the test and artifact Nº 3 reveal how students correlated with the ability to consider
viewpoints and reasons of others to genuinely understand them. It is also evident how students used evaluative skills (Facione, 1998) to state a point of view about global concerns of the world, all of these remarkable qualities of CT.

Finally, the instructional routines also revealed the reflective nature of the CT tasks in the language sessions.

**Teacher journal entry (comments and transcription from a video recording of the second session 16th April 2011)**

[Instructions from the teacher normally addressed the thinking skills of the student. Although students were studying future forms, the facilitator addressed reflectively to the topics and made students elaborate on their answers/points of view.]

Changes that society needs/ facilitator giving instructions REC: 1:33’

(F)acilitator: -Eh, andres! Could you please read the title of it? It says…

(St)udent- (A)ndres: We work, we vote, we care, but nobody listen to us!

F: …but nobody listen to us. Do you feel the same situation?

St-A: Aha…

F: Why is that?

St-A: Eh, in Colombia some people try to fight but I think that we need more people…

F: …more people to be heard?

St-A: yes! Because one doesn’t make difference…
Classroom artifact №2: Instructions to construct the motion to defend the thematic of the students' surveys.

What data exposes in these samples is that the core of CT tasks lies on reflection through questioning routines. Although there is a difference between the two procedures that can boldly affect the guidance of the exercise, both of them are compromised to trigger students’ thinking and reflection over the topics. One difference is that on the spoken student-teacher interaction, the questions arrived spontaneously and the elaboration of the answers were developed in-course which may lead to unexpected endings and finally losing the topic of the task, these procedures may turn risky as the instructional experience of the teacher is crucial to make the encounter as enriching as
possible. On the other hand, Classroom artifact Nº 2 is supported with theoretical background, it is an adaptation of the critical thinking criteria for evaluating reasoning from Paul and Elder (2008) and therefore dwells in trusty standards to prompt HOTS in students. A second difference is the nature of register, this is, the first is a spontaneous oral encounter whereas the second is a group written work which allows the learners to have more thinking time to elaborate their response and for this reason to feel comfortable and less anxious with their possible answers.

Primordially, effective questioning techniques are the leading factor to fulfil successful practices of metacognition. In Mok (2010) this crucial aspect was found to be the key of success in encounters of critical thinking. Therefore, a marked predominance of higher order thinking questions, ability to recognize the potential of open-ended questions, and appropriate waiting-time, characterised a suitable approach to enhance critical encounters in the language sessions. This drops relevant information to state that teachers who attempt to perpetuate encounters of critical thought in their language session require of basic knowledge about the components that enhance an appropriate engagement to higher order thinking procedures, on the whole, the inclusion of critical thinking tasks in the EFL classroom demand the instructors to know amongst language teaching approaches, a degree of instructional matters regarding CT and what it implies. Hence, cited in Mok (2010) there is a strong claim which indicates that “engaging students actively in CT processes through the effective use of questions and critical discussion in a context that supports
critical thinking and values enquiry as well as teachers’ practising of critical
testing skills and attitudes and their provision of explicit explanations of the
significance of critical thinking, could all contribute to students’ development of
both CT skills and critical attitudes” (D’ Angelo, 1971; Mayfield, 2001; bourdillon
and Storey, 2002; Solon, 2003; Yuretich, 2004). (P. 267)

Critical thinking tasks in English language sessions ensued motivation for
students and the teacher.

Data drew that the students’ as well as the teacher’s motivation aroused
during the interaction with critical thinking (CT) tasks. This determination falls
into two main subcategories which are presented below:

*Controversial topics and authentic materials were appealing and relevant
subjects that enhanced students’ interest, objectivity and creativeness.
(Meaningful learning)*

The implementation stage conducted in this study allowed the learners to be
exposed to CT tasks involving topics that caught students’ attention mainly
because the presentation of the thematic granted students likes. Thus, the
content was adapted to the learners’ preferences (see Chart 1. Topic
preferences of language students) engaging the audience with the issues they
wanted to know about.
CHART 1. Topic preferences of undergraduate students.

These are transcribed pieces of the two semi-structured interviews conducted to focal students in relation to their impression of the CT tasks presented in the English sessions:

*Semi-structured interview Nº 2 focal student Luisa*

Eduardo: - [...] es una cosa que pienso que es muy novedosa, es muy innovador [...] en este caso ya se ve uno enfrentado a uno y a los demás y retado como decía Luisa a no decir pues cualquier cosa porque uno llega y pues en una clase dicen: Haga una frase con “HAS”, entonces uno la hace de una, pero en este caso usted tiene que decir bueno que voy a decir, o sea no puede decir cualquier cosa, entonces es algo que me parece pertinente y a la vez provechoso.
Patently, there is a learners’ consensus that the material presented on the course had a positive impact on their learning process. Considering that most of the materials and lessons were designed based on their likes (see preferences survey in appendix 4) and the controversial nature of the themes, it allowed the sessions to entangle in topical debates and discussions, a characteristic that students defined as “innovative” and “valuable” for their understanding, language learning process and learning in general. This aligns with the theory of meaningful learning by Ausubel (1963), the psychologist claims that individuals are more likely to learn a second language if the learning process is driven by a necessity to learn it. In other words, if there are motivational factors that lead to the requirement of using the language for specific purposes. In this case learners had to work their way out of discussions and debates which fostered their language process development, however, and most important, the language input provided was contextualized as the themes were recognized by them, they then could “subsume”, as Ausubel (1963) states, to new learning that was language benefiting but at the same time valuable as global learning for the students.

Subsequently, the allotted CT tasks, as mentioned previously, were designed using the students’ preferences survey and linked to a certain thematic embracing content for the exercises to take place (see classroom artifacts in appendix 3) For this reason many of the topics were taken from recent news and problems in Colombia, and so they were closely related to the learners context. This “real context” or authentic material exposure was
Critical thinking applied in communicative tasks

appraised by the students as an incentive for language usage and development, it allowed learners to develop English language skills (Finding Pg.79) and at the same time to reflect about information or to “subsume” (Ausubel, 1963) valuable input in other areas of knowledge (out of EFL).

Students’ motivation was also evident in the field notes of the teacher who after watching a classroom video included his perceptions of the clip;

Teacher journal entry (comments from a video recording of the second session 16th April 2011)

[...This clip evidences students interacting in relation to the topic “the changes society needs” and how I guided the discussion. [...] Once I expressed that students must confront each other arguing their positions to the whole group students got excited and answered positively to the exercise. The group was motivated because they started to raise their hands to participate and challenge their peers…]

In this case, learners had as a theme “the changes that society needs” a topic that incited argumentative discussion and gathered the personal views of the students getting to a final whole group ratiocination. Harmer (2001) comments about the implementation of discussions and debates in language tasks, he considers that it is one of the best ways to encourage language learning because it forces students to reach a decision or a consensus using language items provided by the teacher, and often based on alternatives that the same participants [students] propose. Under this bases learners enhance in procedures where they have to use the target language in democratic real life
situations that similar to debates and conversations all learners must perform. (Capone and Hayward, 1996)

On the face of it, the competitive conception that students had about arguing and debating offered to the language classroom plenty of opportunities for learners to use the language in real context and exchange information being free to express their conceptions, opinions, beliefs or tenets. These occasions implied that learners must display objectivity and creativeness in the use of language to attain the purpose, that is whether students wanted to defend their position, support someone else claims or establish a collective point of view.

*Compromised and motivated professional: Action research cycles encouraged the teacher’s creativity.*

The constant reflection from both sides, the students and the teacher, characterized this particular study. The on-going reflection that was registered throughout the development of the sessions permitted the facilitator to evaluate personal/attitude features such as his interest and motivation, which dropped significant results in terms of design and development of the tasks and sessions. The following data reveals a notable link between the teacher’s attitude and the development of the sessions:

*Teacher journal entry Nº 12- 11th May 2011*

[...Since I began to carry out the activity of reading students’ journals I have started to increase my motivation in lesson design. I am aware of what the students would like to see happening in the classroom which gives an impression of a course that is mostly learner led…]
One of the most prominent characteristics of this study was the on-going reflective cycle that allowed the teacher to be constantly contemplating the notable qualities that aroused during the study. One of the matters that concerned the facilitator during the study was the design of critical thinking tasks and more important how to make the link with the subject matter, in this case EFL. Hence, the needs’ analysis (see diagnostic stage in instructional design) of this study was crucially important to define the construction of materials for the course, which at the same time allowed the teacher to have some insights regarding how critical thinking would look like in language sessions.

The action research cycle is a prominent tool in lesson design, it lets the teacher visualize the main frame of the course and focus on what is desired to achieve by the end of it. However, the cycles displayed important information to re-change the teaching action and add or take away elements that may not have impacted the sessions positively. Wallace (1991) maintains that action research can have a “specific and immediate outcome which can be directly related to practice in the teacher’s own context” and is “an extension of the normal reflective practice of many teachers, but it is slightly more rigorous and might conceivably lead to more effective outcomes” (Pg. 56-57) This cycle seemed appealing and called the teacher’s attention towards lesson design and to follow the parameters and features that students have successfully accepted in past sessions. A motivated lesson designer and compromised professional is
a definition to the teacher given the results of the constant reflection on instruction, design and impact of the tasks in the undergraduate students.

*Semi-structured interview Nº 1 focal student Eduardo*

Eduardo: -(...) es muy chévere que uno como estudiante sentir que el profesor se interesa por uno, porque es algo que uno usualmente no siente...

Subsequent data reveals the conceptions of students from the instructional procedure of the course and the difference to other courses they have taken.

*Final Semi-structured interview Nº 2 to Focal students.*

Luisa: [...] siempre es el profesor que lleva su marcador y el libro, no más. Normalmente los profesores que tuve eran así, y mi primera impresión cuando empezamos la clase de inglés fue como de uff...¿qué es esto? (giggles)

Luisa: (giggles) pues más que todo las presentaciones de los temas, todo era como tan genial inclusive las actividades que hicimos en clase [...] o sea no fue quedarnos tanto en el inglés de la forma antigua, [...] expandimos la creatividad más que todo.

Students remarked the difference once an innovation was introduced in the language classroom. So far, the mere contention from what the data revealed is that CT tasks and action research are innovative procedures that because of their authenticity (subjected to real life situations) attract the interest of the students motivating them and allowing the teacher to actively reflect about the sessions and display creativeness in lesson planning.

Of course, this does not imply that CT is a requirement for language lessons to be motivating for students and teachers, what data states is that criticality fits successfully as part of an English language session and that students will benefit from the features it displays such as Language development and cross-disciplinary knowledge.
Critical thought in EFL can be an enriching feature that impacts positively the learners as they enrol on a constant reflection of the information that is presented in the tasks. This finding confirms Pineda’s (2004) view by stating that “the role of language educators should not be limited to the teaching of language features exclusively [...]. It also entails becoming agents of change, which means encouraging learners to actively reflect on current concerns” (p.47).

Moreover CT is a generic competence that serves as a versatile tool for the learners, meaning that CT skill progress made in any discipline can be used in others that require the student to do so. For example, Bryce and McCurry (2009) claim that “a student who learns problem solving skills in sciences can transfer those skills to social sciences or everyday life” (p. 4) And the EFL classroom can also be a context to develop these skills, however, we must recognize that including this innovation in the EFL settings requires experience from the teachers and more research regarding the topics either in different contexts and with different student population, something which can be achieved as Mok (2010) proposed through collaborative action research.

Democratic language classrooms: Teacher and learners as agents of collective construction of knowledge.

The inclusion of innovative procedures in the language classroom displayed several opportunities for the participants of the study to reflect about
their roles in CT tasks and related encounters. Likewise, the data collected offered a perspective that sheds light on how freedom of speech is prompted through criticality, and how democratic agreements that are of collective nature became essential characteristics in the sessions.

The teacher and students agreed upon their function on the development of the tasks, getting to a consensus where the facilitator represented multiple roles, all of them as a member of the group rather than an authoritarian figure of power:

**Teacher journal entry (comments from a video recording of a diagnostic session 19th February 2011)**

...The facilitator on the other hand is seated in a group (twitter users) but he is pointing (moderating the discussion) and concluding students’ responses by saying the same they have stated...

**Teacher journal entry (comments from a video recording of the second session 16th April 2011)**

*First stage of the session:*

...When students propose a question the facilitator shares the idea and explanation to the whole group. Meaning that the teacher’s role is to unblock language items when students cannot access to certain words and therefore he explains them so that students may continue to develop and work over content...

...The facilitator is part of the groups, he sits down with the groups and follows the discussion students are having...

*Concluding stage of the session:*

... The facilitator used one of the students to take his role as the moderator of the discussion. Whilst he was writing the journal questions, the student was guiding the session...
This information is crucial to understand that “flexible role taking” is perhaps one characteristic that required the teacher to attain; it is under these bases that the unilateralism of traditional classrooms can mutate seeking for students’ constant trade of the target language. Additionally, data reveals that learners constructed a conception of how the teacher and students’ role attempted for all the members to be active participant of the tasks:

Final Semi-structured interview Nº 2 focal students:

(A)ndres: yo era crítico y moderador…

(S)ergio: Yo siempre he dado mi punto de vista, pues en cada actividad yo proponía, pues cada integrante ponía su punto de vista y ya después cogíamos toda la información y la plasmábamos.

T: […] ¿cuál era el papel o la función mía en ese tipo de actividades?

A: eh…no como decíamos ahorita pues… de moderador ¿cierto? Porque muchas veces en los debates y es cierto lo que decía él también, éramos nosotros básicamente los que hablábamos[…]. Entonces es más bien como de moderador o de guía, de la persona que nos está dando las pautas, que es lo que hay que hacer y nos ayuda al desarrollo de eso.

The words moderator, guide, critic, and proposer are concurrent patterns throughout the interview to the learners, this indicates that several roles were compromised during the tasks and which at the given moment scattered the decision-making role for several members of the class, in other words, the facilitator was not the primary source of ideas but that students supplied the process of construction as active members of the group. However, teacher journal entries from a pilot encounter indicate that the authoritarian role of the teacher is a difficult aspect to overcome and that releasing authority to the learners defies the traditional conceptions of the teacher:
Teacher journal entry Nº5/ 19th February 2011)

[...] the prompter of the debate was the unwillingness of the students to perform the punishment[...]. For this reason students argued with objective reasons to not perform the punishment [...]. These types of exercises are very interesting to prompt students’ speaking skills and cognitive abilities. Once the punishment was performed by me and the students who got it (the answer) wrong, I began to have this feeling of “loss of control”.

Raising awareness about the role in CT encounters implied that the authoritarian persona became obsolete in a context where freedom of expression lead by objectivity and understanding of others’ points of view was crucial and benefiting for communicative purposes, for instance, in this CT encounters learners had more opportunities to exchange using the target language and address to others in different ways than the unilateral sessions (teacher centred) might allow. This finding concedes with Brown’s (2001) conception of critical pedagogy in the language classroom, he claims that for effective learning there should be room for “learners to be free themselves, to think for themselves, and to behave intellectually without elite power coercion” (Pg. 443)

Democracy is essentially relevant for CT encounters because as many theorist propose (Piaget, 1971; Freire, 1970; Facione, 1998; Brown, 2001; Moreno-Lopez, 2005) critical pedagogy seeks for the redefinition of classroom relationships where the teacher and students share the authority and responsibilities discussing class procedures, structure, content, assessment, textbooks and how they relate to each other.
**Student A Journal entry 16th April 2011**

I think that throughout the English sessions I have changed, especially in the form of communication and how I could see a problem from other points of view and how I can discuss with other people to learn of him and to put this new knowledge in my life.

**Semi-structured interview Nº 1 focal students:**

Eduardo: [...] Otra cosa que me ha parecido muy interesante ha sido la interactividad es que no es que la clase deja de ser tan unidireccional para pasar a ser más como grupal. Dejar de ser la persona que escribe en el tablero a pasar a ser personas que ya hablamos por nosotros.

**Final Semi-structured interview Nº 2 focal students:**

Luisa: [...] en este curso me dio la oportunidad de expresarme mucho [...] para mí fue la verdad una experiencia muy, muy significativa, es algo que yo realmente voy a valorar mucho, pues aprendí más que todo a expresarme como persona. Y eso la verdad ayuda mucho más que todo como en mi vida…

Criticality in the language classroom was a promoter of students’ voice because it displayed opportunities for the learners to listen to others and to express and be heard. This was how democratic classrooms hatched in the language sessions; in it, the students and the teacher became active participants who worked together to achieve a certain goal.

One of the most prominent patterns that aroused in this finding was the flexible role of the facilitator. What data suggested is that the facilitator became part of the group rather than a hierarchical entity that submitted the decisions of the class to his consideration. Congruent to Moreno-Lopez (2005) study, the facilitator neither the students abandoned their primary role because the
teacher was in charge of the curricular matters and pedagogical inquiry (i.e. follow the course syllabus, elaborate on language functions, explain language items and grammar study). Whereas, students followed the course content and studied language items demanded in the course, however different was the inclusion of their voice in the decision-making process of the CT tasks. Learners and the teacher included their decisions in the design and redesign of the material, the development of the CT encounters, the feedback provided to other students, and the conclusions to which the group arrived after the tasks. (e.g. in surveys to agree on the thematic of the course, journal entries to redesign the material, student committees to validate the worthiness of other student’s tasks, etc.), this way converging in terms of agreement for the development of the course to be collectively developed.

Bourdieu & Passeron (1998) cited in Moreno-Lopez (2005) defined the term *habitus* to state that educative establishments among others are one of the institutions that inculcate a hierarchical social structure stating specific power practices, in other words, the hierarchical difference of power between students, teachers, and administrators. A condition that Selfe (1996) objected by introducing the term *agency*, which is a form of resistance to the lack of democracy in oppressive pedagogical environments. The critical theorist claims that “the concept of *agency* refers here to the human ability to influence and change the environments individuals have constructed through their discursive practices” (p.275) In this way CT tasks allowed in this particular study to permeate the state of agency following the conceptions of scholars who point to
the necessity of restructuring language practices so that they can address cultural sensitivity and thus turn more relevant for language learners (Kramsch, 1993; Omaggio, 1993; Seelye, 1993; Schwartz & Kavanaugh, 1997).

The CT tasks implemented in this study made it possible for the learners and the teacher to share decisions and create a new context where the *habitus* was interrupted by the students’ involvement (agency) and decision making in the learning process. Students and teacher worked collectively as active builders of knowledge.

**CT communicative tasks granted the usage of language skills and supplied content for English language learning/teaching.**

Given the current high role of EFL with regard to this study, it is fundamentally important to state that since the beginning the teacher intended at all cost to maintain the institution’s curricular plan of action and the linguistic aims of the course. Despite the fact that there was included an innovation in the classroom, the teacher made it possible to combine the linguistic goals of the course with the critical tasks to which students were exposed.

The next subcategories expose how the link between critical thinking and language instruction flourished in the present research study.
Critical thinking tasks involved the usage of the four language skills.

Throughout the development of the research project, there was a prominent concern regarding the inclusion of criticality to the EFL sessions. Nonetheless, the reflective action research cycle was the ideal approach that allowed to construct (under constant reflection over the material) objective models of how critical thinking could have been linked to language teaching materials.

The design of classroom artifacts was successfully conducted and suffered several changes throughout the process, all of them taking into consideration the impact that these artifacts had on the learners. One common pattern found on the artifacts was the inclusion of allusive tasks that ensured the usage of the English listening, reading, speaking and writing skills (see classroom artifact in appendix 3) However, classroom artifacts were not the only encounters of criticality offered in the language sessions, CT tasks embraced several opportunities of English language usage; some of them derived from the course text-book or from spontaneous encounters were the criticality of the students was triggered by unexpected individual and group questions.

**Final Semi-structured interview Nº 2 focal student:**

Luisa: [...] la forma en la que usted enseña el inglés acá es muy diferente y me ha parecido muy buena en muchos sentidos [...] uno llega y se topa con cosas que tiene que escuchar, que tiene que hablar, que tiene que leer, que tiene que escribir...
It is important to explain that CT tasks as innovative instructional procedures in the sessions were not the sole reason for undergraduates to use their English language skills, what data implies is the connection made between the material provided and the several opportunities that this tools offered to engage in practices that fostered the usage and integration of language skills. As evidenced on Davidson’s and Dunham’s (1996) study, the combination of criticality and language instruction provides learners to score significantly higher on test that require the use of higher order thinking skills. Furthermore, Kabilan (2000) concedes with the same principles as he states that the communicative approach is only achieved using the language in those situations that imply constructing ideas, defending ones’ arguments and being objective speakers, all of these notable features of critical thinking. On the whole, criticality finds its subject matter in the EFL classroom benefiting the language development of the learners and at the same time triggering cognitive skills that are essential for professionals to be as the population of this study. (See finding Pg. 59)

Student’s language abilities challenged by the CT tasks.

As aforementioned, the nexus of critical tasks and the syllabus of the course was crucial for the design of materials and sessions. The fact that this study took place in an upper-intermediate class of English made it possible that tasks were fairly challenging so that they fit in relation to the language competences that students were supposed to develop by the end of the course. As the lesson plans revealed (see appendix 2) the CT tasks sought to achieve
the aim of the session meaning that students had to entangle in language usage procedures that triggered student’s high order thinking skills.

*Classroom artifact Nº2: Extract of the outline of a student’s motion to defend the thematic of his survey.*

This extract of a motion paper exposes how a student’s writing skill was challenged by the task, the student had to be objective and the text had to contain a well elaborated structure. For instance, the explanatory high order cognitive skill of the learner as well as the register, cohesion, range, spelling, content, etc. all of these features of good writing were required to achieve the tasks successfully.
However, this text shows that there are prominent language mistakes in the construction of the paper, which in spite of their severity do not impede the access to the content, but do reveal that learners are still under language development processes and so require more study of the target language.

An important fact to report is the evolving nature of language competence (Pineda, 2004; 70). Certainly, CT communicative tasks created the environment for English language usage. However, it is most notable that the language competence of the learners still needs development and instructional encounters. Parallel to Pineda’s (2004) findings, the students of the present study were exposed to tasks that modified their discourse and encouraged undergraduates to use speech in successful ways, but the nature of language development (i.e. continuous speech change and refinement) reveals that there is a lot of progress to be made. As the researcher states, language learning is an on-going process where outcomes cannot be assessed in brief periods of time, the implementation stage of this study consisted of few sessions to expect higher levels of proficiency in relation to the time of exposure to the language and CT instruction.

Then again, such as in this oral encounter, two students begin to use the target language over a discussion on social network likes:

Teacher journal entry (comments from a video recording 9th April 2011)

The idea of facing debates makes students complaint, reject, create conflict towards the other's position, students are entangled in a responsive debate because they want to defend what they believe in.
Transcript sample students debating about the social network twitter 5.00"

St1: You only have… you can only use 140 characters!

St2: …Nooo! and you like that?

St1: Yes! Because…

Because students chose most of the topics, they resulted attracting and encouraged the learners to mire in controversial discussions proving the objectiveness and different points of view of the individuals, all of these, opportunities for undergraduates to use the target language and compromise their HOTS so as to attain the goals of the tasks.

Semi-structured interview Nº 1 focal student:

Luisa: [...] cuando estamos en los niveles más abajo [...] a uno siempre lo ponen es del libro, entonces cuando tú haces una lectura es solamente sobre ese tema y tú te basas en tus respuestas de lo que leiste del tema y se acabó o el profesor dice lo correcto y se acabó, en cambio cuando hicimos la discusión tú tienes que buscar la manera de hacerte entender ante los demás, tú opinión, no solamente basado en lo que tú leíste, si no en tus vivencias, en lo posible, entonces eso lo forza a uno más todavía para expresarse con los demás.

Noting the compelling nature of this evidence, these interviews suggested that learners were aware of the challenges that CT tasks displayed for them and because of it, they had to use English to achieve the purpose of the tasks, additionally, interviews brought out the chances that tasks offered for students to present their opinions and beliefs regarding the topic dealt at hand by using the target language and so learning from the experience.

Data from this finding assert on the fact that CT tasks were part of the EFL classroom as an innovative procedure that enhanced the usage of the English language and the cognitive skills related to criticality. Furthermore, these practices rendered the content so that critical thought could step into the
Critical thinking applied in communicative tasks

sessions. Provided that criticality is in its nature dependant on content for it to take place, cited in Kabilan (2000) from Mirman and Tishman (1998); there must be a link made to the subject matter, which in this study was the teaching/learning of English as a foreign language, for instance the content and tasks that were set to activate higher order thinking skills in the learners followed the aims of the upper-intermediate English course; the curricular goals and linguistic competence were addressed successfully as the essential objectives of the sessions.

What this implies is that critical thinking was embraced by communicative language tasks that supplied the content for learners to use higher order thinking skills and at the same time use the target language to work through them. It is pertaining to this finding to frame the features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) so that the bond between CT and CLT could be depicted and how the name “CT communicative task” was attributed.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) point out that Communicative language teaching (CLT) refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of teaching and language learning and that can support a variety of classroom procedures. (p.172) The principles that these linguists denote are: 1) learners learn language through using it to communicate; 2) authentic and meaningful communication are the goals of classroom activities; 3) fluency as an important dimension of communication; 4) communication involves the integration of different language skills; 5) learning is a process of creative
construction and involves trial and error. As remarked across this finding, the CT tasks prioritized and encouraged interactive processes of communication; moreover, all of the features of CLT mentioned previously align unanimously to the material presented in the language sessions defined as CT tasks. For this reason, the communicative nature of the CT tasks and how they proved to promote language usage were determining factors to refer to them as “critical thinking communicative tasks”. These were fundamental materials which influenced the quality of interaction and language use by as Howatt (1984) claims: using English to learn it.

Critical thinking tasks are unfamiliar practices that resulted challenging for undergraduate students.

Another prospect pertaining to the present study was the students’ insights of the tasks and the teacher’s view on how the performance of the learners was affected under critical praxis.

Across findings CT tasks probed to be reflective practices in the language classroom that have impacted the learners in multiple ways regarding their language usage and cognitive skills (see findings Pgs. 59, 66, 73, 79). Nevertheless, data suggested that CT tasks were unfamiliar routines in the ELF sessions that challenged students’ performance because of the alterations they brought to the language classes.
The following classroom artifact exposes the analysis an undergraduate made to a text: Classroom artifact Nº2. *The change society needs.*

The types of enquiry used in the instrument above were questions from the critical thinking standards (Paul and Elder, 2001) which served to analyse the logic of articles. Questions were carefully adapted so that learners engaged in reading procedures where other than understanding the text, students were capable of analysing the content and register their conclusions in the format they were given. This procedure demanded the student to use the target language to understand the text and to explain his conclusions in the artifact. So far, the language features evidenced in the answers of the student, were accurately achieved in terms of form *(e.g. grammar usage, range, punctuation, spelling, etc.)*, on the contrary, the content that reflects the analysis made by the learner, lacks elaboration and depth. Indeed, critical thinking abilities and language usage were triggered through the process; nevertheless, the analytic and explanatory skills of the learner did not reach the level of expectancy and goal of the task.

Similarly, students’ journal entries describe the challenges that students encountered during the development of the tasks:
Student Journal April 16th 2011.

…The most challenging aspect is to talk fluently and express my point of view without shyness of my mistakes, all the material was good because it help to do it better…

Student Journal April 30th 2011.

[…] the most challenging was understand the opinion of some classmates, to can give an opinion and defend my position.

Data drops important information to understand that the communicative nature of the tasks was also a challenge for the learners, in other words, what this implies is that the aims of the tasks were not strictly focused to study linguistic items but that undergraduates had to produce language objectively so that their oral and written production were fairly supported with arguments and relevant information related to the area discussed.

The following interview reports the process of construction of arguments; in this section it is relevant to note the role that the learners’ native language (L1) played in the process.

Semi-structured interview Nº 1 focal student Eduardo

Eduardo: […] diferenciar entre, como le explico, ehh, cuando usted va a defender su idea, crear los argumentos, usted puede tener los argumentos en español pero cuando quiere decir los argumentos en inglés se le complica un poquito las cosas, entonces usted empieza a pensar como digo esto, y lo otro, como digo esto para que me lo entiendan los otros, […]

Evidently, the learner perceives the importance of being clearly understood and objective as possible to state his arguments. However, there is the impediment of the language. What makes the task to be challenging is not only that students have to be critical in the production but also the fact that they
have to state the results in the language they are learning. Hence, the **combination** of criticality and language development added to be a challenging component for undergraduates.

*Semi-structured interview Nº 2 focal student Maria*

(M)aria: el vocabulario que no deja de ser, pero más quizás que eso, las preguntas que se presentaron, lo que dije ahorita todas esas me llevaron a realizar un proceso, porque eran complicadas, porque uno se acostumbra a responder sí, no, tal vez, y a ver las que están ahí y seleccionar, entonces aquí uno tenía que generar una propia opinión y llevarla a cabo, entonces me costaron trabajo las preguntas…

Maria also commented about how she was used to close questioning procedures and the challenge it was for her the critical process prompted by critical enquiry. This added with the necessity to express her answers in the target language, demanded students' high performance on the sessions.

One last aspect is the pace of the sessions, critical routines demanded more time than expected because students were not used to these practices before. Sergio comments about this unexpected characteristic that emerged from the instructional development.

*Semi-structured interview Nº 1 focal student Sergio*

S: Eh… lo principal es como la, poder entender, pues captar rápido la idea del texto, esa es la, pues para uno poder responder rápido las preguntas por eso a veces nos demoramos pues más del tiempo que usted nos da, entonces esos son, pues como lo más…
Evidence frames the discussion on the aspect of timing in CT tasks encounters. Generally, the tasks to which learners were exposed took considerable more time than expected, that was because as Sergio expressed, they required more time to develop, the thinking process plus the fact that students had to register their answers on the target language, increased considerably the time needed for each task. Therefore, the pacing of the lesson was a considerable issue for the teacher, who found the relevancy of this matter in critical encounters. However, he did not recognize a pattern for the time each task required, that was due to the lack of experience in CT tasks by the teacher and students’ side, which at the end gained significative importance in this study.

Most of this finding encompassed the debate around the area of challenge in language tasks. Now, what this finding proposed is that CT tasks (as in Dewey 1933, cited in Thadphoothon 2002) had the role of disrupting the routine by introducing a difficult obstacle or challenge that forced to stop drifting and think what one was doing and the what will be done. Withal, the inclusion of criticality in foreign language development added up to increase the demands of language tasks and therefore the performance of undergraduates. In addition to this, most data revealed that learners were unfamiliar to the CT tasks as routines that broke the traditional EFL sessions to which they were regularly exposed. It is important to remark that these CT language tasks mentioned previously were challenging because they triggered processes of thought, all of these, involving HOTS (higher order thinking skills) through questioning procedures; Facione (1998) and Scrivener and Paul (2003) note that mentioning the HOTS (or six core critical thinking skills) does not mean one can
apply them. Thus, a good thinker must know at first hand how to implement these skills and have, of course, the opportunities to use them.

What the paragraph above implies is that critical thinking practices must allow the learners to understand when to use thinking skills and how to use them. CT embeds a process of ceaseless usage of HOTS, which in this study were just triggered, but the practice of criticality states that once one of the skills is acquired there is an intellectual commitment that prompts the usage of criticality. (Scrivener and Paul, 2003) For instance, the instruction to which students were exposed allowed them to raise awareness about the skills in EFL settings and how to apply them in language tasks. It is irrelevant to claim that undergraduates became critical thinkers in the time they were exposed to the CT tasks; this finding seems to corroborate that of Pineda (2004). She suggests the term “embryonic critical thinking” in a metaphorical sense to imply that there is not evidence on the study to claim that there were strong rational thinking, on the other hand, what data disclosed was evidence of nascent criticality in the undergraduates’ thinking process. Students were able to provide rational arguments calling forth aspects of CT such as open-mindness, empathic thinking, fairness in arguments, objectiveness and creativity, and intellectual perseverance (Paul and Elder, 2008)

It is then under these bases that one of the aspect to clarify is that this study never intended to form critical thinkers, but rather to observe how the instruction of criticality impacted a group of undergraduate students of English. Moreover, it is irrational to expect that students can become critical thinkers in four instructional sessions, as refuted in a citation of Pineda (2004) from
Scrivener and Paul (2003) “becoming a critical thinker is not a task that can be mastered overnight. It is an on-going and never-ending process” (p.63)

Conclusively, CT tasks are unfamiliar to most learners of English because they entailed different processes to those that undergraduates are normally exposed in EFL classes. Hence, these tasks proved to be challenging routines that because of the language and cognitive demands encouraged the learners to use the target language in discussions about the real life, Thadphoothon (2002) emphasizes on this quality in EFL setting as he states that CT in language sessions enrich the process because the learners, “rather than [just] learning grammatical rules […] engage in reality where there is a broad range of phenomena and circumstances […] to confront, contrast, and contest their existing perceptions with the current perceptions of the real world (Lian, 2000)” (Pg.15) Therefore, undergraduates raise awareness about their voice as individuals; as Alagozlu (2007) points out, the integration of CT at all levels of education make students believe that their ideas/thoughts, decisions, evaluations are of great value in their education both in the mother tongue and in a foreign language.
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The constant reflective cycle of action research was essential to understand the limitations encountered in the development of the study. Factually, the lack of experience regarding the A.R. approach unchained a sensation of data build-up. Given that the mentioned approach is fluid and dynamical and so calls for constant analysis (Burns, 1999), the time constrains due to marking and planning lessons for other courses not related to the study, restricted the amount of time for analysis of the data between each cycle. Although the cycle was carried out successfully, assistance help (another observer involved) or more time destined to the evaluation of data could have dropped deeper aspects about the instructional patterns used and possibilities of changes. This implies that in action research, the more time spent on analysis of the on-going data collected, the better results one can get from the reflective cycle.

Likewise, there were time constrains embodied in lessons. Indeed, time management is a crucial aspect when following a lesson plan, but one as a professional teacher must also understand the need for flexibility when enriching encounters that spark spontaneously in the language classroom (Harmer, 2009). In other words, critical thinking sequences in the language classroom are provided with plenty of moments that because of their controversial nature require more time for development. On the one hand, CT tasks actively engaged students resulting in controversial moments of language interaction that were considered as benefiting for learners' language
development and so they were left out to carry on with the task no matter how long it lasted. On the other hand, CT tasks (as depicted on the findings of this study) were challenging practices that required more time for development, different to what the instructional design proposed (see appendix 2).

Finally, the present research project encompassed the inclusion of an innovation such as critical thinking instruction. However, above all it was extremely important not to interrupt the aims and goals of the language syllabus that the institute of modern languages provides for the upper-intermediate English courses. To this end, the CT tasks and critical practices did not show up throughout the whole lesson period of 5 hours (see in appendix 2 lesson plans), that was because there were other important elements to take into account when teaching a foreign language (e.g. pronunciation). Consequently, the time of instruction in critical thinking went through a short-term period of time which limited the in-depth information of how critical practices impact the EFL classroom.
CONCLUSIONS

The inclusion of critical thinking instruction in the EFL setting conducted in the present study comprehended the continuous cycles of an action research approach, each of them dropped relevant data that revealed a positive impact in the process. The communicative tasks that enhanced higher order thinking skills development were determinant tools that encouraged learners to use the target language and simultaneously trigger cognitive skills of the undergraduates.

To this extent it is not possible to determine precisely how much did the cognitive skills of undergraduates were developed throughout this process. This would have required tests related to the thinking area and its development. Since this study took place in a context where the teaching/learning of the English language was the core intentional purpose, I did not specify on measuring how the cognitive skills of the learners progressively developed but just how the interaction with CT tasks affected the practice and learners' relation with learning a foreign language.

The inclusion of critical procedures to the EFL classroom proved to be a promoter of reflection that allows learners to raise awareness on their thinking and because in this case they were entangled in language classes, undergraduates raised awareness about their language usage and the notable aspects to improve. This goes in hand with the strategies of learning a foreign language, in which metacognition is essential for students to improve their proficiency in the target language. Furthermore, the reflective type of the tasks and procedural nature of action research and CT are crucial for the teachers to
understand what students demand and need regarding language items and content. The teacher has the opportunity to listen to the students’ voices and construct along a repertoire of situations that students enjoy and can value, which after all, leads to motivating classes that seek creativity from the students and the teacher’s side.

It is under these bases that critical pedagogy applies to multiple contexts where the voice of learners steps into the design of tasks and the spirit of collective construction. Thus far, it does not mean that critical thinking processes are the mere reason to why democracy was attained in language lessons, but that the essence of criticality provides fruitful practices for collective agreement about the aims and decisions taken in the classroom.

Criticality as an innovation in the language classroom are challenging practices that as any innovative situation demands the students and the teacher to engage in instructional routines that after a period of time become familiar, and therefore they could be fulfilled without major procedural problems. However, most important it is, the challenge imparted by the necessity to use the target language and think critically about the topics that students like to deal with in their language sessions, promotes the usage of the target language and at the same time to use cross-disciplinary thinking skills such as the ones related to the domain of critical thinking.

Whereas for the action research approach, it provides the guidelines for teachers to carry out investigative projects around the areas they are most interested or are having problems with. This project revealed that once the role
of teacher-researcher is embodied, the teacher raises in depth awareness about the situations of the classroom, the development of learners, students’ needs, their instructional practice and so becoming a compromised professional in search of alternatives for a better practice of language teaching.
RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Critical thinking instruction across disciplines has been one of the most discussed issues in education at the present. Primarily because higher order thinking addresses the purpose of education and becomes useful in almost any practice that students have to do. The present research project draws key data in the inclusion of criticality in the EFL classroom and how this innovation attests enriching moments for students to develop language competences, and concurrently activate cognitive abilities to solve problems, provide opinions, argument their points of view, evaluate others’ conception, and self-monitor the way they think and learn a foreign language.

This study depicted how instructional innovations ensue motivation from the students and teacher side, furthermore the double role of teaching and investigating provides relevant information for the facilitators to get a global view of the happenings in their lessons; that is, about their own performance and students’ performance. Action research, as validated in this project, is recommended for teachers who desire to include particular pedagogical innovations in their lessons and follow systematically the impact and results of such innovative procedure.

Critical thinking instruction processes are extensive and require practitioners to be deeply contextualized about the thinking area and how to prompt students’ cognitive abilities. As opposed to my beliefs, there is vast information to consult about the area of critical thinking, which does not happen to the one related to critical thinking in the English as a foreign language
Critical thinking applied in communicative tasks

classroom. Hence, more research around these two major constructs (CT and EFL) should be carried out, since each context and population provides enriching data for facilitators who are likely to include critical pedagogy elements in their language classroom.

Since higher order cognitive skills development has started to be a prior concern in the EFL settings, and there is lack of information related to it, methodology and strategical instruction on how to conduct critical practices should begin to be addressed in the University programs of English language teaching. Namely because undergraduates enrolled in language teaching programs should know about methods and strategies for learners to develop language skills, display creativeness, and understand critically the reality that surrounds them, after all, language teachers have the dual responsibility of guiding learners to develop their language competences, but also, to guide humans towards proposals of a better society.

Further research should be done in relation to the role of L1 (students’ native language) in processes of critical thinking. Granted that students conceive critical practices as challenging events, mainly because the learners are in the process of learning a different language and so they have to use it to validate their arguments and analyse the information to which they are exposed. Participants related to this study expressed that many of the times when dealing with CT tasks they recurred to their native language (Spanish), that is why the role of the L1 to construct arguments in higher order thinking processes should be further investigated in a qualitative study that describes L1 usage and the
impact on learners’ foreign language and Higher Order Thinking Skills development.

Finally, the implementation of CT tasks on the present research project endured for a period of 6 English sessions, this revealed important data that showed learners’ progress on critical thinking processes. However, it is important to understand that criticality as well as language development is not a matter that could be attained in a such a short term, one of the most important conceptions to understand is that critical thinking is a life-long endeavour and one does not become a critical thinker under periodical session of instruction but it requires a cognitively disciplined process that demands individuals to constantly use skills in various situations and for different subjects and purposes.
REFERENCES


Critical thinking applied in communicative tasks

APPENDIX 1

Stimulating input for language development activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology trends and sciences</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex as a cultural issue</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your University program issues</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment issues</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other societies and cultures</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current cultural issues in Colombia</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom situations and experiences</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern and literary texts</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activities that students find useful to improve their English proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening to songs</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role plays</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving activities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing about personal experience</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debates/discussions</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching videos and developing tasks</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

Daniel Murcia Quintero.

LESSON PLAN  Class: 10-02.


Date: Saturday 16th of April 2011.

AIM: At the end of the session, Ls will be able to:

• Agree or disagree, and give support to do so. (Emphasis on the reading & speaking skills)
• Listen to and understand (fragments of) a conference provided I have previously been exposed to the topic being presented.
• Write a report which develops an argument systematically, making emphasis on significant points and relevant supporting detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated problems</th>
<th>Anticipated solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Classroom doesn’t have electricity.</td>
<td>-There will be a gap of replacement of classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage | Procedure | aim |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date and fluency</td>
<td>Continue emphasizing on Ss’ fluency by allowing one volunteer St to greet and introduce the session. [The St presents the aims of the session]</td>
<td>-Establish a communicative environment for the session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.05-8-10 a.m.</td>
<td>Ss watch the Simpsons clip of Homer voting. - Ss are encouraged to reflect if such situations happen on reality.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ss watch the report of CNN and comment about the situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political campaigns</td>
<td>Pre-teach the following vocabulary: Revenue, out-of-date, wage, sector, wealth, under-funded, under-resourced, decline,</td>
<td>-Engage Ls in the politics language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10-8.45 a.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
corruption.

Ss gather in groups of 4 and receive a worksheet of Mendia’s profile. As politicians from Mendia, Ss prepare their political campaign speech of two minutes based on the necessities of the country.

Ss can use any resource and present their speech. At the end, Ls decide which political group will be elected.

Ss go to Pg. 44 and identify the function of the sentences.

Ss listen to the T.P and put the numbers 1-6 in the correct picture. [Ss answer the questions from Pg.45 following the interactive pattern of the classroom i.e. Tomas, do you know...]

Ss emphasize on grammar practice on Pg. 46, they must choose the correct form in the pair of sentences. (Ss check with the recording)

- Study the grammatical structure of future forms.

Studying language items

[future forms]

8.45-9.15 a.m.

How do you see your future?
Critical thinking applied in communicative tasks

Reading and Speaking
Nobody Listen to us 9.15-9.45 a.m.

Inferencing Ideas from the Text

[Classroom artifact] Analysing an Article

1. Ls are exposed to the title and infer what the topic is about.

2. Ls go to exc. 2 and rank the social issues young-adult care about.
   - The W.G. states and confirms their guesses.

3. Ls go to exc.3 and answer the questions.

4. Ls read the text and answer the analysis questions on the worksheet.

Which is the most precious Colombian natural resource?

1. Ls read the biography of Nicholas Negroponte. (allow Ls remember the movie watched on the last session)

2. F presents one laptop per child idea.

http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/nicholas_negroponte_takes_olpc_to_colombia.html

Start the notion of young-adults as political voices to be heard.
### Critical thinking applied in communicative tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>DEBATE</strong>&lt;br&gt;The changes society needs Part 1.&lt;br&gt;9.45-10.25 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>BREAK TIME</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>DEBATE</strong>&lt;br&gt;The changes society needs part 2.&lt;br&gt;10:55-11:35 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>EVALUATING THE CONSEQUENCES, EXPLAINING, ARGUEMNTING AND SELF-REGULATING THOUGHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mind brake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MAZES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Ss</strong> watch the lecture from Nicholas Negroponte and the Colombian Project. [<em>In duos Ls answer the questions from the worksheet point 2]</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Ls</strong> go to exc. 3 of the worksheet. They choose the issue they find as a solution. Once they chose it, <strong>Ss</strong> gather in the like-minded student groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>- Each group of 4 (max) has individual roles: A) Discussion leader, B) Registrar, C) Speakers&lt;br&gt;- Neutral-minded students sit in a board which has the role of summarizing and providing weaknesses and strengths to the points of view of the <strong>Ss</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>A final conclusion is given after gathering all the arguments from the Ss.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>F</strong> blindfolds himself and chooses two people to guide him to a St. (exaggerate with the instructions of the <strong>Ss</strong>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Ss</strong> revise some words to guide people. One</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 11:35-11:50

Volunteer St follows the same procedure to check the usage of words.

[write the instructions on the board]

- Ls gather in groups of 3 and decide one blind chicken and two guides.

F distributes the markers and then asks for a competition to solve the maze as quick as possible.

F sticks the mazes with a number assigned to each one and Ss must find the appropriate maze and guide the chicken to it and solve it.

### JOURNAL WRITING & interview to focal students.

11:50 - 12:15 p.m.

- Developing trust in the Ss.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE Ss: (Journal)

**How did you feel in the activities presented today?**

E.g. Studying future forms, debate about the changes society needs, etc.

**Which were the most challenging aspects in these types of activities?**

**What negative and positive aspects did you perceive from the material presented today?**

**Any other comment? What's next?**

---

[TO REPORT IN MY JOURNAL]

**Group 1: 12:20-12:40**

**Group 2: 12:40-1:00**
Daniel Murcia Quintero.

LESSON PLAN  Class: 10-02.


Date: Saturday 7th of April 2011.

AIM: At the end of the session, Ls will be able to:

* Presenting points of view with convincing information. (Writing for talking as an exercise to speech)
* Review the usage of the modal auxiliary verbs and their polite structures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated problems</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Classroom doesn’t have electricity.</td>
<td>-There will be a gap of replacement of classroom.</td>
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</table>

Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>aim</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date and fluency</strong> 8.05-8-10 a.m.</td>
<td>Continue emphasizing on Ss’ fluency by allowing one volunteer St to greet and introduce the session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Arranging the camera man space]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playing for change ↓ [war/no more trouble] 8.10-8.30 a.m.</th>
<th>1 Ss are introduced to the song &amp; the foundation which is producing the album.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Ss watch the video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 F:[What was the main topic of the song?]Ls ask themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Ls receive the lyrics and they must organize them in the correct parts, Ls are aware of the differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Ls discuss the differences found on the song and the lyrics. {Ss listen to the song again}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Critical thinking applied in communicative tasks

Constructing our song
8.30-8.50 a.m.

W.G. defines the following elements:
1-Topic of the song.
2-Characters if any.

1. Ss gathered in the same group must construct a part of the song according to their role in the song i.e. 1st stanza, 2nd stanza, etc.

[Lg. items]

10 things men - shouldn’t/ mustn’t- do at a toilet.
8.50-9.00 a.m.

Ss have under their seats sentences and modal auxiliary replacements. Ss must stand up and find their correspondent partner to do the dialogue.

1. Ls must report as a W.G. the 10 things men shouldn’t do at a toilet.

Modal verbs
9.00-9.10 a.m.

F presents the structure of a song. Ss gather in groups of 5 and get a structure of the song.

-Each group identifies the main idea of the every part of the song and writes it on the board.

1. Ls revise the use of both modal verbs and watch the video.

-Encouraging Ss to speak on the session and work as a group.

2. Ls are divided in two groups[appr13]

Listen to the rec of the fight. Pg. 62.

-W.G. has the discussion with a good intonation.

3. Ls on the partners assigned practice one of the negotiations on pg.63.

-Engage in the Study of the modal aux verbs.
### Providing spice to the language

**9.10-9.45 a.m.**

Only some Ss come out to represent the conversation.

1. F chooses some Ss to sit in the front and hands them the paper with the instructions of the family.

2. F calls Laura gives her the paper and makes her stand in front of the audience.

3. The audience goes to Pg. 64 and develop as far as they can the exercise 5 [discussing grammar]

4. Ss express the problem to the rest of the audience and they must construct some suggestion, advices, or any other comment about the situation.

Laura in America.

**9.45-10.05 a.m.**

1. Raise awareness on Ss conceptions of what they are going to see. Ls work in duos revealing the information on exc 1.

2. Ls watch the video and establish Hitler’s point.

3. F presents the language items to state a point. [F emphasizes the stress of the words in the statements]

- **BREAKE TIME**

- **Classroom Artifact**

Making a point

**10.35-11.00 a.m.**

1. Ls are presented the Cheap Christopher talk. Ls process the information on pg. 120 exc.3.

2. Ss then register the expressions on the classroom artifact point 2.

3. Ss gather in the groups to state their motion of the survey Ss are planning.

-Identify how Ss interact when mixed groups

-Use modal verbs in negotiation with an accurate pronunciation.

-Rise awareness on the importance of making a point

-State a point of view and advise partners.
| **Arguing my survey**  
* (Writing for talking)  
**11.00-12:50 p.m.** |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ls understand the slide with the rubrics of the motion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ls use the language items to construct their motion with a limited time of 2 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ls use the classroom artifact to question their progress of the motion structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. W.G. has the motion and in a closed circle. [Ss speak and advise the others]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To finish Ss process the information of the point3 class artifact.-and hand it in for analysis of the teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-trigger Ss higher order thinking through questions and a motion talk.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Critical thinking applied in communicative tasks**

**APPENDIX 3**

1. What BIASES do you have about this ideology?  
   Full name: ____________________

2. Have you consulted information to contrast your biases?  
   Why? _______________________

---

**USE THIS CHART TO CONSTRUCT A LOGICAL MOTION TO THE COMMITTEE**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Purpose</strong></td>
<td>What is my central aim? My purpose?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **2. Information** | What experiences have I had to support my claim?  
What Information do I need to settle my conclusions? |
| **3. Concepts** | Is the main idea clear for both members who’ll conduct the survey? |
| **4. Assumptions** | Is there anything I am taking for granted? |
| **5. Implications and consequences** | If someone accepted my position what would be the implications? |
| **6. Points of view.** | What considerations should I take from the committee’s point of view? |

---

**WRITE THE ANSWERS BASED ON THE OPINIONS OF THE COMMITTEE AND FROM WHAT YOU DISCOVERED AFTER THE MOTION**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Purpose</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>2. Information</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3. Concepts</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Implications and consequences</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Points of view.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Critical thinking applied in communicative tasks

Use this space to take notes and register arguments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AM I ARGUMENTING THIS ISSUE FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES?</th>
<th>FAIRNESS OF THE ARGUMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOW DOES THAT HELP US WITH THE ISSUE?</td>
<td>RELEVANCE OF THE ARGUMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW DOES THAT RELATE TO THE PROBLEM?</td>
<td>KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSTRUCT ARGUMENTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4

Full name: _________________________________

Interest and likes (diagnostic) questionnaire.

This questionnaire is a diagnostic instrument implemented by the facilitator of the course to identify students’ likes and interest regarding English language learning. The answers of this questionnaire will help the facilitator to design the materials for the course so that the tasks seem appealing for you as an English learner.

1) Which of the following activities do you find useful for improving your English in the classroom?

Circle the appropriate answer.

1) Listening to songs
2) Role Plays
3) Oral presentations
4) Problem-solving activities
5) Using the internet as a learning resource
6) Writing about personal experience
7) Debates/discussions
8) Reading
9) Watching videos and developing a particular writing/speaking task

2) Which of the following subjects would best call your attention as stimulating input for language development activities? Tick (✓) the appropriate boxes (you can choose as many as you want).

- Modern and literary texts. (e.g. J.R.R Tolkien, J.K. Rowling, Animal farm, Alice in wonderland, Gulliver travels, etc)
- Classroom situations, experiences, and issues. (e.g. Students learning styles, strategies for learning, multiple intelligences, etc)
- Current cultural issues in Colombia. (e.g. The liberation of hostages from las FARC, the floods in Colombia, etc)
- Other societies and cultures. (e.g. Different customs around the world, Polygamy, etc)
- Entertainment issues (e.g. Music, theater, movies, etc.)
- Your university program issues. (e.g. Subjects at the university, competitiveness of your program, your field of action in the market, etc)
- Sex as a cultural issue. (e.g. Homosexuality, women discrimination, human trading, etc)
- Technology trends and sciences (e.g. Google market, Apple company and its products, Facebook, etc)
- History (e.g. USA independence day, British colonization, slave trading, etc)
- Sports (e.g. Different sports around the world, the finances and tourism of sports, the FIFA, etc)
3) What other topics/subjects, not mentioned in 2, could be dealt with on in this English language course?

4) What is your learning style? For each of the questions below circle either "a", "b" or "c" to indicate your answer. Please choose only one answer for each question. If more than one possible answer seems to apply to you, choose the one that applies more frequently.

*(These situations also apply in Spanish activities)*

1. When I spell …
   A. I try to see the word.
   B. I pronounce the word or remember the sound.
   C. I write it down to see if it looks right.

2. When I am studying for a test…
   A. I become distracted by untidiness or movement.
   B. I become distracted by sounds and noises.
   C. I become distracted with actions that happen around me.

3. When I see someone from the past…
   A. I forget names but I remember faces and/or I remember where we met.
   B. I forget faces but I remember names and/or what we talked about.
   C. I remember what we did together.

4. When I read…
   A. I like descriptive scenes and I pause to imagine the actions.
   B. I enjoy dialogues and conversations, I like when the characters talk.
   C. I prefer action stories or I am not an intensive reader.

5. When I need help with a computer application…
   A. I seek for pictures and diagrams.
   B. I call the help desk or ask another person to help me.
   C. I keep trying to do it or I try in other computers.

Thank you very much for your honest contribution!
APPENDIX 5

FOCUS GROUP SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Purpose of research: Critical thinking encounter through communicative tasks session 1.

Objective: Identify the impact of the communicative tasks which included critical thinking in the focal group of the study.

Participant’s name: ______________________________________

1. ¿Cómo consideras las actividades que se desarrollaron hoy en la clase? ¿Cómo describirías la experiencia de hoy?

2. ¿Cuál fue el impacto de estas actividades en su aprendizaje? (Describa elementos como: su emoción, su actitud, su disposición, etc.)

3. ¿Qué opinas del material que se utilizó durante la sesión, (aspectos positivos y negativos)

4. Teniendo en cuenta el impacto de su aprendizaje y el desempeño del profesor, ¿Cuáles fueron sus fortalezas y que le recomiendas para las próximas sesiones?

5. ¿Considera usted que este tipo de actividades ayuda al desarrollo de la lengua inglesa? Si la respuesta es sí ¿Qué beneficios en términos del aprendizaje de una lengua se percibe en este tipo de actividades?

Utiliza este espacio para escribir notas que sirvan de ayuda en el momento de la entrevista.
FOCUS GROUP SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Purpose of research: **Critical thinking encounter through communicative tasks final interview.**

Objective: Identify the impact of the communicative tasks which included critical thinking in the focal group of the study.

Primera fase:

Explicación del estudio y terminología clave.

**Terminología clave:**

**Pensamiento crítico:**

Es un proceso intelectualmente disciplinado y con gran compromiso que implica el uso constante de un grupo de habilidades que permiten revelar un propósito, procesar y generar información y creencias al responder cierto tipo de preguntas con argumentos objetivos. (Murcia, 2012)

**Habilidad cognitiva de alto orden:**

La criticidad pretende impulsar el pensamiento del sujeto a procesos de alto orden cognitivo como son: la interpretación, el análisis, la evaluación, la inferencia, la explicación, y la autorregulación/evaluación.

**Nombre del participante:** ________________________________________________

1. ¿Cómo describirías las actividades desarrolladas durante el curso en relación al proceso de aprendizaje del inglés?

2. ¿Encuentra alguna diferencia en la forma en la que normalmente ha recibido sus clases de inglés y en la forma como se orientó este curso? ¿Si/No? ¿Cuáles? De ejemplos.

3. ¿Considera que las actividades desarrolladas durante el curso impulsaron procesos cognitivos de alto orden? (Ej. La inferencia por medio de preguntas guías sobre la conferencia de Adolf Hitler) Si la respuesta es afirmativa: ¿Qué impacto tuvieron estas actividades en su aprendizaje en general?

4. Marque con una X las actividades que lo/la conllevo a procesos cognitivos de alto orden:
   - Lectura sobre los jóvenes y la política con preguntas guías.
   - Debate sobre los cambios que la sociedad necesita (con apoyo del video “one laptop per child”).
   - Entradas escritas en diario académico.
   - Escritura de recetas y presentación.
- Reflexión sobre la validez de las encuestas.
- Rellenar el modelo de encuesta en el libro guía del curso (organic hamburguers).
- Creación de una canción.
- Solución de un problema familiar a través del show “Laura en América”.
- Diálogo sobre las concepciones del nazismo.
- Estructuración del punto de vista del discurso sobre los trabajadores de Adolfo Hitler.
- Planeación de la moción y justificación de la encuesta.
- Presentación de la moción y actividad de retroalimentación.

a. ¿Qué opina del material usado para impulsar procesos de pensamiento crítico?

b. ¿Cuál diría usted que fueron los aspectos más desafiantes al interpretar y desarrollar este tipo de actividades? Marque con una X las opciones que considere apropiadas.
- El vocabulario. (Uso de palabras y expresiones en textos, videos o diálogos)
- Las preguntas que se presentaron.
- El tema propuesto.
- La duración de las actividades.
- La extensión (cantidad) de actividades.
- Las instrucciones escritas y del profesor.
- La guía de procesos fuera de clase.

Otros:________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

5. En actividades como: Debate sobre los cambios que la sociedad necesita (con apoyo del video “one laptop per child”). Planeación de la moción y justificación de la encuesta. Presentación de la moción y actividad de retroalimentación. ¿Cuál era su papel o función para su desarrollo?

6. Desde su perspectiva, ¿Cuál era el papel o función del profesor en este tipo de actividades?

Utiliza este espacio para escribir notas que sirvan de ayuda en el momento de la entrevista.
March 9, 2011

Mrs,

-------

I am seeking your consent to get the group --- 10-02 involved in a study that will be carried out to fulfill a requirement for the degree of B.A in the teaching of English as a foreign language. The study is intended to describe the impact of instructing critical thinking through communicative tasks in the teaching of English as a foreign language. The study will be mainly focused on the teacher’s and students’ performance regarding this innovation in the EFL classroom. It will involve video and audio recording of the English sessions, journal writing and interviews among others. Everything will be aimed to provide a structured description of the implementation of communicative tasks that involve Critical Thinking.

As part of an ethical approach to this study I assure you that:
- Students will not be forced to participate in the study.
- The study will not disturb the teacher’s and student’s duty.
- Students’ names will not be revealed during the study so that they can freely express opinions and participate in the study.

To ensure confidentiality and protection of the students I promise that:
- Tapes will only be used for research or educational purposes.
- You may ask to see and be informed about the data collected through this study.
- You may request that parts of the study not be shown or socialized.

Thank you for considering this. If you wish to speak to me further about this project, please contact me at my email dmurcia@utp.edu.co Cellphone number: 312-307-4217.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Murcia Quintero
Student of last semester of Licenciatura en lengua inglesa.

---
Coordinator of --

--------------------------------------------
Daniel Murcia Quintero
Responsible for the research study

--------------------------------------------
Research Project Informed Consent
March 12th 2011

Title of project: Critical Thinking instruction through communicative tasks in the EFL classroom.

Daniel Murcia Quintero of Universidad ---------------- (Telephone: 312-307-4217) is conducting research on the above topic.

The aim of the research is to explore students’ responses to communicative tasks that involve critical thinking in an English as foreign language class. The purpose of the research is to investigate how these tasks impact a group of students and what contributions can be made from an in-depth reflection of the process to the field of English as a foreign language teaching and learning.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a written survey and be part of a focus group interview with other students to discuss how you respond to group work. The focus groups will be audio-recorded. These recordings and the notes I take during the interview will be used as information for the project.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing from the research and there will be no negative consequences if you decide to withdraw. Before the final report for the project is prepared, I will send you a summary of what I have written about the surveys and interviews and will ask you to comment on any descriptions or interpretations that you believe are inaccurate or mistaken. When I report on the research, I will ensure that you are not identified. No reference to personal names will be used. I am the only person who will have access to the data collected for the project. Any data I use in reports or publications will be for illustration only. If you wish to have a copy of the final report sent to you, I will arrange for this to be done.

Participant consent
The participant has been given a signed copy of this form to keep.
I agree to participate in this research.

Signed: ___________________ Date: ___________________

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Department of Humanities and languages (B.A. in the teaching of English as a foreign language program) -----------. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the department through the English language teaching program office (Telephone: 3137201 )

Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Thank you for considering this and your participation.

Name of researcher: ___________________
Critical Thinking instruction through communicative tasks 127