

A Developmental Approach to the Use of Critical Thinking Skills in Writing: The Case of Moroccan EFL University Students

Nourddine Amrous

Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Humanities
Mohamed V University, Rabat, Morocco

Nabila Nejmaoui

Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Humanities
Mohamed V University, Rabat, Morocco

Abstract

Training students to think critically is one of the most serious challenges that face Moroccan higher education, with experts being in unanimous agreement that critical thinking should be part of any instructional practice. In actual fact, a number of studies have come to the conclusion that students who have the ability to provide a critical assessment of the knowledge and information they receive—be they inside or outside of the classroom-- can become critical thinking individuals, successful professionals, and, in the long run, active citizens. Given the importance of critical thinking in EFL teaching, the present paper purports to investigate the extent to which academic level affects the development of critical thinking skills among Moroccan EFL learners. In order to come up with a developmental account of critical thinking among these learners, two tests were administered to 60 students that were divided into three groups of 20 students. The first test, the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test, targeted *argument evaluation* skills, while the second test, argumentative essay writing, targeted *argument construction* skills. The results have been quantitatively analyzed so as to (i) provide tentative understanding of the current state of critical thinking in Moroccan higher education in general and among Moroccan EFL students in particular, and (ii) examine the influence that academic level and language proficiency have on the progress of critical thinking. The analysis will help us draw implications for EFL teaching methods and curriculum development in Moroccan higher education. Suggestions are made with regard to the integration of critical thinking in EFL instruction.

Key words: argument evaluation, argument construction, Critical thinking, EFL students. Language proficiency