

ESPOUSING THE SOCRATIC PEDAGOGY TO BOOST EFL STUDENTS' HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS AND ORAL PROFICIENCY: UNVEILING PATHWAYS TO A PROFOUND GRASP OF CIVILIZATION

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Abstract: In recent years, the Socratic Method has attracted unprecedented scholarly attention worldwide as an operational pedagogical method for promoting more advanced thinking skills. An increasing bulk of rigorous experimental research has examined the use of this strategy across many educational fields, including medicine, law, and business studies. These studies constantly underline the efficiency of Socratic reasoning in nurturing students' critical thinking, analytical abilities, and thoughtful decision. Within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, the chief purpose of instructors goes beyond simple linguistic ability to incorporate the assimilation of instructive approaches that enable learners to deal significantly with different subject matter while using English as the means of instruction. In this context, the present article explores the theoretical foundations of the ancient Socratic Method and examines its pedagogical applicability in contemporary EFL classrooms. Particular emphasis is placed on how controlled questioning, dialogue, and guided investigation can be used to stimulate learners' cognitive commitment and expand their understanding of historical and cultural content. The study further describes the findings of an experimental study conducted in the Department of English at Oum El Bouaghi University, which aimed to assess the practicality and effectiveness of the Socratic model in improving Second Year Master students' historical thinking skills. Using a quasi-experimental design, the survey evaluated students' ability to analyse historical events, interpret primary sources, and formulate coherent arguments through sustained classroom dialogue. The results show that the implementation of the Socratic Method considerably backed the improvement of students' oral proficiency, critical awareness, and intellectual mindfulness in civilization classes. In general, the findings validate the Socratic model as a powerful pedagogical device that not only enriches language learning but also promotes deeper intellectual engagement and thinking related to a specific field of academic study within EFL higher education contexts.

Keywords: Civilization courses, critical thinking, EFL, historical thinking skills, oral proficiency, Socratic Method

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1. Introduction

In the sphere of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, contemporary students are confronted with myriad sources of information, and the only hurdles seem to be imposed by their skills and interest. As such, Civilisation as a subject matter can present a unique set of challenges. Indeed, most Students exhibit apathy and boredom when dealing with Civilisation due to the fact that the dominant pedagogy often employed is teacher-centeredness, whereby students are a mere depositories of information rather than active participants. Therefore, they inadvertently disparage Civilisation. Furthermore, they rely heavily on rote memorization of historical facts and concepts in their tests.

Nevertheless, nurturing historical thinking among EFL learners has become of a paramount importance in recent decades. Curricula designers and policy makers are now elaborating a shift towards student-centred pedagogy. In doing so, EFL learners will be equipped with a versatile set of historical thinking skills that enable them to draw connections between past events and their contemporary implications. Notably, tackling historical issues through the lens of a language they are still in the process of mastering will fuel a dual cognitive load for language proficiency along with a profound grasp of historical materials.

1.1. Contextualising the Socratic Method in Language Education

The Socratic Method introduced by Athenian philosopher Socrates who lived around 470 BC, offers a promising solution to the contemporary educational conundrum. The ancient method has become a common touchstone in conversations about classroom pedagogy. Knox (1998) pointed out the fundamental component of the method to be “asking well-formed questions and continuing the investigation, not on finding absolute answers” (p.119). Schneider (2013) further perceived the Socratic pedagogy as an antidote to traditional teaching methods (p.625).

Moreover, Knox (1998) postulated that the Socratic Method draws the student and teacher into an intimacy, which cannot be achieved by lecturing, as they both become active participants in the teaching and learning process (p.119). Given this focus, the Socratic pedagogy manifests itself in disciplined dialogues between individuals. At its core, it is based on asking and answering thoughtful questions in order to stimulate ideas and promote an atmosphere of critical thinking.

In contemporary educational settings, more precisely, in EFL civilisation classes the Socratic Method can be employed as an effective pedagogical strategy to encourage students to rethink their assumptions, discard weak evidence and avoid glib answers. It further enables them to construct knowledge through rigorous dialogue. That said, the Socratic Method’s emphasis on questioning and critical analysis aligns well with the goals of both language acquisition and historical understanding.

1.2. Evolution of Critical Thinking in Language Education

In an era marked by unprecedented access to information, the urge to foster critical thinking has become an indispensable asset for navigating the facets of the contemporary world and real-life scenarios. Clearly, the educational sphere is the fundamental foundation upon which individuals erect their thinking skills. In his insightful report entitled: *Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction*, Peter A. Facione (1990) defined Critical Thinking (CT) as “a purposeful, self-regulatory judgment, which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based” (p.2).

John Dewey (1910) defined critical thinking as “an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought” (p.6). Gormley, Jr. (2017) elucidated Dewey’s perspective about critical thinking as “an intense mental activity, not a casual one. It requires alertness, patience and a commitment to accuracy and precision” (p.13). He himself defined CT as “an open-minded inquiry that seeks out relevant evidence to analyse a question or a proposition” (p.27).

Hence, Critical Thinking Skills (CTS) are pivotal assets to acquire in the sphere of education, particularly in second language learning contexts where students learn to think in a non-native tongue. It is worth mentioning that for EFL learners, mastering the incorporation of the core skills highlighted by Facione (the ability to analyse, evaluate, and draw inferences) in history contexts will significantly enhance the understanding of historical materials. In the same line of thought, Facione also assumed that critical thinking skills transcend specific subjects or disciplines. He further argued that exercising them successfully in certain contexts such as historical materials requires domain-specific knowledge, some of which necessitate a certain set of methods and techniques (p.5).

Thus, Facione (1990) gives room for both curricula experts and educationalists to trigger the suitable CTS to any subject matter. To this end, the context of Civilisation education in EFL classes seem to be a prolific realm, in which teachers can impart a potent set of critical thinking skills. Thereafter, students will be able to move beyond a mere regurgitation of memorized facts imposed upon them by the traditional instruction. As El Messaoudi and Larouz (2023) argued, traditional EFL instruction, rife with rote drills and dull textbooks, often leave students disengaged and demotivated (p.1). Thus, the urge to forge a profound grasp of historical events, their causes, and their lasting ramifications has become of a paramount importance in contemporary educational landscape.

1.3. The Present Study in Context

By nurturing historical thinking skills, EFL educationalists will not only forge an aptitude to tackle more complex historical concepts, but also simultaneously boost students' language proficiency through a nuanced incorporation of the suitable techniques and methods. Thus, the focus of this article is to re-frame the Socratic pedagogy and put it into practice in tertiary education; more specifically, in civilization classes in order to instil historical thinking skills along with English language mastery.

In light of this, this study operates under two main hypotheses. Firstly, it is hypothesized that the incorporation of Socratic pedagogy in civilization courses will significantly boost EFL students' historical thinking skills, enabling them to analyse historical events more critically. Secondly, the study assumes that the systematic application of Socratic questioning and dialogue will lead to a marked escalation in students' oral proficiency, as evidenced by increased fluency, more sophisticated vocabulary usage, and enhanced ability to articulate complex historical concepts in the target language.

2. Literature Review

In the 21st century, the globe is witnessing an unprecedented urge for a paradigm shift in education, one that places critical thinking skills at the forefront, empowering learners to embark on a relentless journey towards autonomous learning, away from being mere recipients of information. Thus, the adaptation of the Socratic pedagogy in contemporary educational settings seems to have promising teaching/learning outcomes.

2.1 Origins of the Socratic Method and philosophical underpinnings

The Socratic Method, a cornerstone of western philosophical tradition, has significantly ignited the understanding of knowledge, learning, and critical thinking. Athenian philosopher Socrates who lived around 470 BC first introduced it. Some scholars also refer to Socrates's approach to teaching as 'maieutic questioning'. The word *maieutic* is derived from the Greek word *maya*, which means midwife. In Plato's writings, he resembles Socrates's endeavours to extract ideas from his students to midwifery of the mind. Through his probing questions, Socrates explains that he assists souls in delivering ideas. His midwifery of the soul is even more difficult than general midwifery because it is challenging to distinguish an error from a truth. Wilberding (2019) argued that the questioner helps the other person give birth to his or her ideas (p.32).

Socrates himself did not write anything, because he distrusted the written word (p.21). Wilberding (2019) assumed that his students Plato and Xophon wrote his dialogues and literary works. However, they conversed with Socrates and acquired a profound understanding of his unique method of questioning. Both wrote many dialogues in which Socrates is the protagonist, like the Republic, Meno, Gorgias, and Symposium (p.21).

At its essence, the Socratic pedagogy revolves around a dialectic form of asking questions. Robinson (2018) defined the term 'dialectic' as the method for arriving at the answer, which is valid as true and real. Dialectic is not questioning, but rather recollection (p.120). That is, the process of reaching truths by the exchange of valid arguments. He further argued that the main aim of dialectic is to provide criteria of answer hood (p.114).

Fischer (2019) postulated that Socrates did not walk around as a know-it-all dispensing information. In so doing, his students could not passively receive knowledge from him (p.14). Hence, the questioner becomes a guiding observer but not the purveyor of knowledge. That said, Socrates was not teaching an answer, he was teaching the method of investigation itself. He did so mostly by questioning: first driving his collocutors into self-contradiction (*elenchus*) and thus freeing them of their false preconceptions and then helping them deliver the true knowledge (Knezic et al., 2013).

Given this focus, the philosophical underpinnings of the Socratic Method manifest themselves in self-examination and scepticism. However, Socrates saw knowledge not as a static set of accumulated facts, but rather as an inquiry-based journey to seek the truth. This Socratic approach to philosophy has had a lasting impact on how individuals revised their convictions, re-evaluate their assumptions, and erect their critical thinking skills.

2.2. The Maieutic Dialogue as a Pedagogical Approach in Modern Education

Schneider (2013) defined the Socratic dialogues as a relatively modern invention with various interpretations (p.614). Wilberding (2014) had also postulated that the Socratic Method surfaces in philosophy, but it embraces and finds expression in many other domains (p.25). In the context of modern education, the maieutic dialogue serves as a vital tool for engaging students in learning by helping each one to find a voice in a supportive community that focused on education (Greene, 2005, p.52).

Many prominent scholars perceived maieutic dialogue as a time travelling product that can be employed into a variety of domains to promote active learning. Not surprisingly, then, the 20th century marked an unprecedented momentum for the Socratic pedagogy as a ground breaking instrument in the sphere of pedagogical science (Schneider, 2013, p.622). He further assumed that schools of law might be the most consistent self-identification of Socratic instruction over the past 100 years (p.625).

Peter Boghossian was the first to incorporate the Socratic pedagogy to infuse critical thinking skills in inmate education. In his 2006 article entitled “Socratic Pedagogy, Critical Thinking, and Inmate Education”, Boghossian examined the stages of the Socratic Method guided through an in-depth analysis of transcriptions of conversations with inmates. Admittedly, Socrates offers a model, which does not limit educators but, rather, points a way towards advancement in higher education. Higher education and society today can still use people who follow the example of Socrates (Knox, 1998, p.125).

The three tenets upon which a nuanced Socratic pedagogy can be implemented are questioning, metacognition and the role of the teacher. Firstly, as Naussbaum (2003) pointed out: “a life of questioning is not just somewhat useful; it is an indispensable part of a worthwhile life for any person and any citizen” (p.21), let alone in educational settings where learners tailor their thinking skills. Moreover, asking students concise and open-ended questions can highly influence their willingness to participate in the back and forth dialogues in the classroom. Adding to that, the more thoughtful the questions the more students are likely to articulate their ideas freely and spontaneously, which will create a climate of intellectual autonomy and critical thinking. However, the metacognition tenet of the Socratic Method is, in essence, the process of ‘thinking about thinking’. In other words, as Green (2005) elucidated that the metacognitive level, raises the question: “How will I know that I know?” (p.52). In other words, the metacognitive level enables students to tailor awareness of their own thinking process.

By incorporating metacognitive practices within the Socratic Method, educators can significantly enhance students' critical thinking skills. This combination encourages learners to not only engage with complex ideas but also to reflect on and improve their own cognitive processes. This leads to more vigorous and adaptable thinking skills. Lastly, the role of the teacher as catalyst is one of the core principles of the maieutic pedagogy. Delić and Senad (2016) argued that the teacher is an observer, a helper, a guide but not the purveyor of knowledge (p.513). They further elaborated that when a great professor does the questioning process correctly, the Socratic Method can actually produce a lively, engaging, and intellectual classroom atmosphere (p.514). In essence, the teacher in maieutic pedagogy, just like Socrates, acts as a midwife to ideas, helping students give birth to their own understanding with the goal of fostering independent, critical thinkers.

2.3. The Paideia (Socratic) Seminar as a Teaching Technique to Foster Historical Thinking

The Socratic seminar, which is often referred to as ‘Paideia seminar’, constitutes an adaptation of the Socratic method in contemporary educational settings. Given its importance as a teaching method and its ability to foster historical thinking skills, the Paideia seminar has become a key subject of many research works.

2.3.1 Definition of Paideia Seminar

Billings and Roberts pointed out that the term ‘Paideia’ is inspired by ancient Greek educational ideal that general learning should be the possession of all human beings (as cited in Alder, 1982, p.38). Dr. Mortimer Alder was among the first researchers who reframed the concept of ‘Socratic seminar’ to fit in modern classrooms. His late 20th century book, entitled *the Paideia Proposal*, provided solid guidelines for pedagogues to prepare and incorporate different seminars to create a holistic teacher-student experience. Alder is the co-founder of the National Paideia Centre (NPC), one of the oldest, continually active school reform organizations in the USA. Its main aim is to provide equity in education through intellectual and creative rigor for all students. The Paideia Principles are the core teaching pedagogies in the centre (“Our story” n.d.).

In the National Paideia Centre (NPC), the Paideia Seminar is defined as a collaborative intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about a text (“Paideia Socratic Seminar”). As such, Fischer (2019) further illustrated the Socratic Seminar as a structured classroom practice and philosophy that promotes critical and creative thinking, intellectual curiosity, collaboration, and scholarly habits of mind (p.10).

Given this focus, in his widely acknowledged book *The Power of Paideia Schools: Defining Lives through Learning*, Terry Roberts (1998) defined Socratic seminar as:

The culmination of any unit of study in a Paideia classroom. It is the formal learning event in which students are led to develop and explore their own reaction to a body of information, personalizing learning to a degree that would be otherwise impossible. Furthermore, the seminar is designed to foster a depth of understanding in students that is rare in any school setting, leading to improved ability to think abstractly and problem solve successfully in collaboration with others (p.11).

In other words, Socratic seminars can engender a climate of critical thinking as well as a profound grasp of the content under study. Additionally, the collaboration among learners during the seminars will enable them to forge their abstract thinking problem solving skills. Admittedly, both intellectual and social skills are crucial learning objectives for the Paideia Seminar. That said, each well-elaborated seminar would enhance proficiency in thinking along with communication skills.

2.3.2. Core Components of the Paideia Seminar

In his insightful book entitled *The power of The Socratic Classroom*, Charles Ames Fischer (2019) identified six core components of a Paideia Seminar:

a) Pre-seminar (Pre-reading). This stage can be likened to warm-ups that athletes do prior to sporting events (p.51). During pre-seminar activities, students become both mentally and physically prepared to delve into the seminar discussion. Fischer further elaborated that the main goals behind any attempted seminar ought to:

- Generate initial interest in the text under discussion.
- Activate prior knowledge.
- Focus on curiosity and investigation.
- Identify bias and viewpoint.
- Organize or reorganize information.
- Maximize potential items, themes, issues, or ideas to discuss.
- Clarify expectations and procedures.
- Increase comprehension.
- Set personal or group goals.
- Increase student interest and investment. (p.55)

In fact, in this stage, close reading and annotation are proved the most effective classroom activities.

b) Textual Focus. Choosing a text or “artifact3 (p.72) can be a daunting task. Fischer (2019) defined a selected “text” for the Socratic Seminar as any artefact or piece that will be the focal point for inquiry and dialogue. Nearly anything with complexity, ambiguity, implicit meaning, and/or levels of thought should work well (p.76). In other words, it should contain important and powerful ideas and values that relate to “big ideas”. It is significant to note that the text should be at the appropriate level for students in terms of complexity and should relate directly to core concepts of the content being studied

c) Questions. They are the cornerstone of a successful seminar. Notably, a good opening question can immediately provoke and engage most students, and would ultimately lead to conversation anchored in the text (p.97). Henceforth, each question is the potential start of an entire discovery process (p.95). Thus, for teachers, the quest is to find questions that put a charge in students. Fischer accentuated that the core hope in any Socratic classroom is to put the students “in charge” of their own learning’ (p.95).

d) Students. The play several crucial roles. Firstly, active participation where they indulge in thoughtful discussion and critical analysis of a text under discussion. Next, learners are expected to listen attentively to their peers and ask probing questions to elevate the quality of the discussion. Moreover, students ought to articulate their own interpretations and insights. In so doing, they have to support their arguments with evidence. Lastly, students take on the responsibility of building on each other's ideas, and working collaboratively to explore complex concepts. In this regard, Wilberding (2014) identified nine key roles of students in successful Paideia seminar: “students become autonomous and critical learners, expressing opinions, listening to others, agreeing or disagreeing for specific motives, searching for clarity, weighing evidence. They have the opportunity to participate in candid exchanges and to learn tolerance and how to build on one another's contributions” (p.89).

e) Facilitator. Facilitating a seminar follows the principle of gradual release of responsibility, or helping students take on responsibilities so they can own more of the process (Fischer, 2019, p.118). In this way, teachers have to mindfully craft questions that have multiple “right” interpretations (p.119).

Fischer (2019) categorised nine main roles of the teacher in seminars and grouped them into three clusters:

Norming Roles: Questioner, Clarifier, and Coach.

Performing Roles: Invisible, Midwife, Participant, and Mentor.

Constant Three:

Sentinel: It involves upholding basic classroom decorum and enforcing the school rules

Evaluator: He provides feedback and often must produce grades for the students.

Bloodhound: He relentlessly chases ideas in the seminar all the way to rewarding moments (Fischer, 2019, p.122-123).

f) Post-seminar and Evaluation. He serves as a reflective capstone to the discussion. This involves tracking, assessment, and grading (p.209). After the Socratic seminar ends, learners engage in a structured debrief to assess both individual and group performance. This critical phase often involves written reflections, peer feedback, and self-assessment using predetermined rubrics. Educationalists can mentor their students to identify areas for improvement in critical thinking, active listening, and articulation of ideas. The post-seminar evaluation not only strengthens learning competence but also fosters students' meta-cognitive skills, enabling them to become more self-aware and effective participants in future seminars.

3. Methodology

The study employed an experimental design to investigate the efficacy of the Maieutic pedagogy in fostering EFL students' oral proficiency and historical thinking skills in civilization courses. It notably focused on their critical thinking and oral aptitudes to articulate their insights about the given historical content. The research adopted a quantitative approach, utilizing an experimental model with both a control group and an experimental group to exhibit a scientific rigor as well as a validity of outcomes.

The experiment was implemented over the duration of one academic semester (12 weeks). The study's population consisted of thirty EFL students enrolled in the second year of Master's program in English literature and civilization. Participants were randomly assigned into two groups: a control group (15) received a traditional instruction that relies mainly on lecturing (the teacher-centred approach), whereas the experimental group (15) was instructed using the Socratic Method (a student-centred approach). Eventually, the design for this research is pre-test/post-test model.

The independent variable in this study is the Socratic Method, which will be implemented to affect the dependent variables, namely the historical thinking abilities and oral proficiency. The main aim is to investigate whether incorporating the core principles of the Socratic pedagogy through well-elaborated seminars can help students forge potent historical thinking skills along with oral proficiency. This experimental design enables a rigorous, empirical investigation of the causal relationship between the instruction via Socratic seminars and the enhancement of historical thinking and oral skills in civilization courses.

3.1 Tools of Measurement

This paper incorporated the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA) as the main measure for students' critical thinking skills in both before and after the experiment. The selection of this instrument particularly is because it is perceived as one of the oldest and most widely used critical thinking measurement tools (Bernard et al., p.15). Two American scholars developed this tool in 1925: Goodwin Watson and Edward Glaser. The assessment has undergone multiple revisions by rigorous academics and remains of a paramount importance in evaluating cognitive aptitudes and critical thinking skills.

The WGCTA, in essence, encompasses five major subscales: inference, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation, and evaluation of arguments. Research has consistently indicated the WGCTA's reliability and validity across various educational and professional spheres. As such, Gadzella and others (2013) found significant correlations between WGCTA scores and academic performance for student pursuing a teaching career. Likewise, El Hassan and Madhum (2007) also validated the WGCTA on a sample of private university students enrolled in various majors, and provided empirical evidence about the significant positive correlation between WGCTA results and students' academic achievements, notably in analytical subjects. Their findings were ground-breaking as they not only accentuated the WGCTA as a predictor of academic success but also proved its feasibility in non-Western educational settings.

Building upon the foundational principles of the WGCTA, this paper incorporated an adaptation of the given instrument to assess historical thinking skills among EFL students. The adaptation encompassed the core components of WGCTA to fit historical contexts in EFL settings. The WGCTA test did not only serve as an assessment tool but also as a pedagogical framework for developing historical thinking skills in EFL classrooms.

Given this focus, the pre-test was administered to participants of the experimental and control groups, and required no prior knowledge of any historical events, dates or figures. Rather, it contained general questions related to history, whereby respondents were given statements (sometimes passages) along with multiple-choice questions. The pre-test was tailored according to WGCTA's five aspects of critical thinking. In retrospect, the test consisted of twenty questions and forty-five minutes to complete. Afterwards, data were collected and statistical analysis was performed.

Clearly, the post-intervention test was also administered for both groups. However, it contained historical questions related to the content that was instructed throughout the duration of this experimental study. Similar to the pre-intervention test, it revolved around the five core components of WGCTA.

In fact, another tool of measurement was carried out in this survey. The oral proficiency Interview (OPI) introduced by ACTFL (American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages). The ACTFL's OPI is a valid and reliable assessment of speaking proficiency. Its validity and reliability have been validated by many studies since its implementation in 1982 (e.g. Dandonoli and Henning (1990); Stansfield and Kenyon (1992); Kuo and Jiang (1997); Surface and Dierdorff (2003). Nevertheless, the assessor is required to elaborate prompts that encompass all core OPI's factors which are:

- a) Function.** Evaluating the ability to successfully accomplish the given tasks by utilizing the functions outlined in the Guidelines. See whether participants are capable of engaging in tasks relating to asking questions, narrating, describing, and supporting opinions.
- b) Accuracy.** How well is a respondent understood while articulating his/her thoughts. Elements such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic competence can significantly shape the overall comprehensibility of the message.
- c) Content and Context.** Assessing the appropriateness of a student's response. Is the response aligning with the topic? Is it proportionate for the context of the prompt?
- d) Text Type.** Considering how much language a respondent can produce and how well it is organized. In light of this, these assessment factors are not evaluated in isolation; rather, the student's speaking competence is holistically rated according to his/her overall performance. A proficiency rating is reached based upon how all the four factors contribute to the description of a participant's global proficiency. ("Oral Proficiency Interview OPI", n.d.)

Given this focus, a pre-test and post-test were implemented to both groups to evaluate the progress in which students articulate their ideas in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context ("ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines"). In so doing, the assessment of oral proficiency in this paper specifically tailored to accommodate the unique demands of historical discourse within EFL learning. Inspired by the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Guidelines, the assessment model was modified to evaluate students' ability to engage in meaningful historical discussions.

The oral proficiency evaluation was administered to both groups as a pre-test (Pre-intervention) that does not require any prior historical knowledge. At the end of the experiment, another post-test (post-intervention summative assessment) was elaborated to evaluate again students' oral proficiency after the exposure to the same historical content. The scoring phase was implemented through the specialized rubric of the ACTFL's guidelines. Both instruments employed in this research ascertain a comprehensive evaluation of both linguistic improvement and historical thinking skills throughout the duration of the experiment.

4. Results

The present study was carried out to uncover the impact of the Socratic pedagogy on the historical thinking skills of EFL students as well as oral proficiency. Once the duration of the experiment ended, a nuanced collection and analysis of data was performed. In fact, both groups underwent a pre-test using the reframed Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA) as well as ACTFL's OPI assessment prior to the start of the study. However, after the exposure to the same historical content, other post-tests were administered to both groups. This enabled the measurement of any changes in students' historical thinking skills and oral proficiency compared to their baseline performance.

A thorough analysis of the outcomes obtained from the two measures is presented in this section. Nevertheless, the main aim is to determine whether employing the Socratic pedagogy into EFL second year master civilization course will improve students' oral proficiency and historical thinking skills.

4.1 Results of the WGCTA

Table 1

The Experimental Group's Pre-test and Post-test Mean and Standard Deviation (N=15)

Test	Min-Max Score (out of 40)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	15-22	18.40	2.22
Post-test	23-29	27.00	1.81

Table 1 shows statistically the experimental group's accomplishment on the pre-test and post-test. The pre-test scores varied from 15 to 22, with a mean score of 18.40 and a standard deviation of 2.22, specifying a reasonable range of scores around the mean. Conversely, the post-test score varied from 23 to 29, with a higher mean score of 27.00 and an inferior standard deviation of 1.81. The rise in the mean score from pre-test to post-test indicates a perceptible progress in students' achievement. In addition, the drop in standard deviation shows that the post-test scores were more reliable, displaying less inconsistency among students. On the whole, these results imply that the experiment had an effective result on learners' attainment.

Table 2*The Experimental Group's Pre-test Scores*

N	Inference	Recognition of Assumption	Deduction	Interpretation	Evaluation of Arguments	Overall Score/40
1	4	3	5	3	3	18
2	5	4	3	3	4	19
3	6	3	2	3	5	19
4	5	5	4	3	2	19
5	4	4	4	3	4	19
6	3	3	2	5	4	17
7	5	4	3	5	4	21
8	3	4	5	6	4	22
9	3	4	5	4	3	19
10	2	2	3	5	5	17
11	3	4	3	6	5	21
12	2	4	2	4	3	15
13	4	3	2	4	2	15
14	3	4	2	3	3	15
15	3	5	3	5	4	20

Table 2 indicates that the experimental group's pre-test achievement was mostly modest, with total scores going from 15 to 22, demonstrating differing levels of critical thinking aptitude before the test. Students did relatively better in identifying suppositions, while lower and imbalanced scores were perceived in inference and deduction skills. In general, the outcomes show that students had not yet entirely acquired critical thinking skills at the pre-test phase, underlining the necessity to perfect these skills.

Table 3*The Experimental Group's Post-test Scores*

N	Inference Section	Recognition of Assumption	Deduction	Interpretation	Evaluation of Arguments	Overall Score/40
1	4	4	7	4	7	26
2	5	5	6	5	8	29
3	6	5	7	4	7	29
4	6	5	7	4	6	28
5	5	4	5	3	6	23
6	6	5	6	5	7	29
7	5	4	6	5	8	28
8	4	5	6	6	7	28
9	4	4	8	5	6	27
10	4	3	7	5	7	26
11	5	4	7	6	7	29
12	4	4	8	4	7	27
13	4	4	7	4	6	25
14	4	4	7	6	8	29
15	4	6	6	5	7	28

Table 3 shows that the experimental group's post-test achievement upgraded markedly, with total scores varying from 23 to 29, revealing clearer critical thinking skills. Learners exhibited advanced attainment across all sub-skills, mainly in deduction and evaluation of arguments, where scores were mostly high. On the whole, the results reveal that the teaching method was effectual in boosting students' critical thinking aptitudes.

Figure 1

The Experimental Group's Pre and Post-test Results

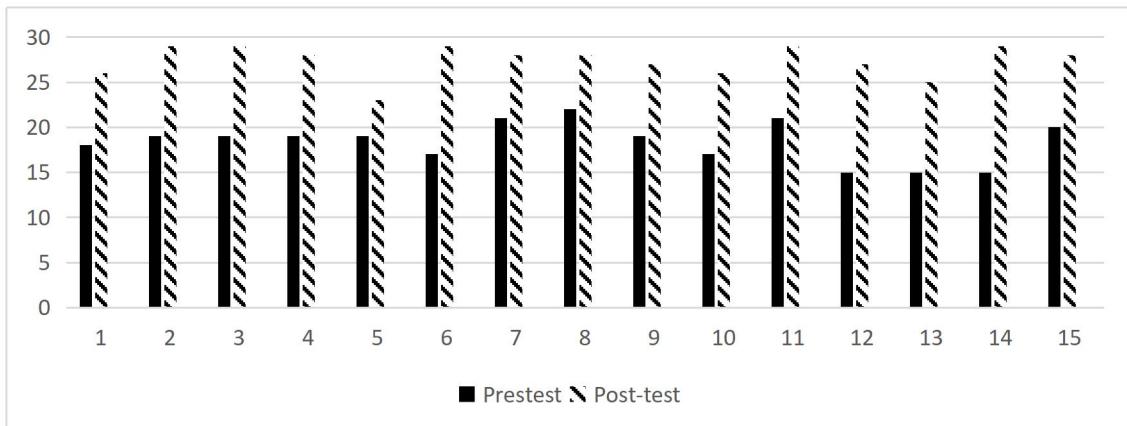


Figure 1 explains an obvious progress in the experimental group from the pre-test to the post-test. The post-test outcomes are steadily higher than the pre-test scores, illustrating noteworthy improvement through the measured skills. By and large, the figure endorses the positive influence of the teaching approach on students' achievement.

Table 4

The Control Group's Pre-test and Post-test Mean and Standard Deviation

Test	Min-Max Score (out of 40)	Mean Score	Standard of Deviation
Pre-test	15-22	18.00	2.83
Post-test	14-25	19.00	2.65

Table 4 displays that the control group's attainment stayed comparatively constant from pre-test to post-test. While there is a minor rise in the mean score from 18.00 to 19.00, the variation is slight. The standard deviation diminished a little, signifying less inconsistency in post-test scores. Specifically, the results propose that the control group did not undergo important advance without the experimental teaching method.

Table 5
The Control Group's Pre-test Scores

N	Inference Section	Recognition of Assumption	Deduction	Interpretation	Evaluation of Arguments	Overall Score/40
1	4	5	3	3	4	19
2	2	4	3	2	4	15
3	3	6	2	3	3	17
4	1	3	3	4	4	15
5	3	4	5	2	1	15
6	5	5	4	3	2	19
7	4	6	5	3	4	22
8	6	3	2	4	5	20
9	3	5	4	2	1	15
10	5	5	4	5	5	24
11	2	6	5	4	5	22
12	3	2	4	5	4	18
13	2	4	5	4	3	18
14	3	4	5	4	2	18
15	1	3	4	4	5	17

Table 5 exposes the control group's pre-test scores through the five critical thinking sub-skills and the general score out of 40. The fallout presents that students' whole achievement was largely average, with scores varying from 15 to 24, showing visible variation in critical thinking capacity at the beginning. Results throughout sub-skills were disproportionate, with comparatively upper scores detected in recognition of assumption and evaluation of arguments, whereas inference and interpretation were weaker for some students. In general, the table proposes that, before teaching, the control group exhibited diverse and immature critical thinking skills, offering a reference point on which post-test attainment can be compared.

Table 6*The Control Group's Post-test Scores*

N	Inference Section	Recognition of Assumption	Deduction	Interpretation	Evaluation of Arguments	Overall Score/40
1	3	5	4	2	3	17
2	4	3	4	3	3	17
3	3	4	3	4	5	19
4	2	1	4	5	5	17
5	2	5	4	3	4	18
6	4	4	5	4	3	20
7	3	5	6	4	3	21
8	5	3	2	4	4	18
9	3	4	3	3	4	17
10	5	4	5	5	6	25
11	2	6	4	4	5	21
12	3	3	5	5	4	20
13	4	2	5	3	5	19
14	2	2	4	5	3	16
15	1	3	3	3	4	14

Table 6 offers the control group's post-test scores through the five critical thinking sub-skills and the whole score out of 40. The total scores range from 14 to 25, designating continuous unevenness in students' achievement after teaching. Measured up to the pre-test results, only small progresses are perceived in some sub-skills, particularly deduction and evaluation of arguments, although inference and recognition of assumption persist fairly weak for numerous learners. Mostly, the table insinuates that the control group revealed little headway in critical thinking skills, supporting the opinion that the lack of experimental teaching led to slight improvements.

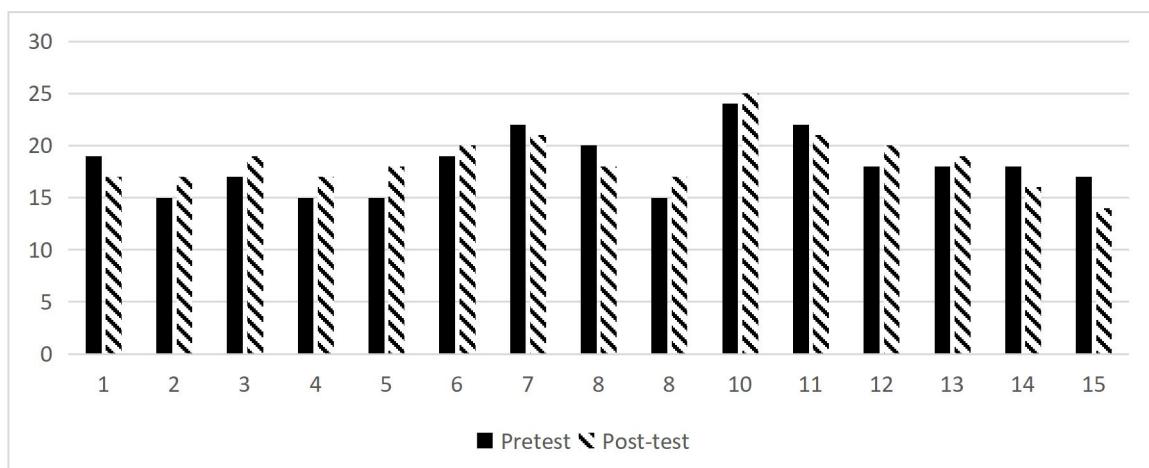
Figure 2*The Control Group's Pre and Post-test Results*

Figure 2 reveals that the control group's pre-test and post-test results are comparatively identical, with only minor variances between the two series of scores. While a slight advance can be seen in some post-test results, the whole change is negligible. This figure proposes that, distinct from the experimental group, the control group did not undergo ample amelioration in achievement over time.

Table7
Control Group's Pre and Post OPI Results

N	Pretest	Post-test
1	Novice	Intermediate
2	intermediate	Intermediate
3	intermediate	Intermediate
4	Novice	Novice
5	advanced	advanced
6	intermediate	Intermediate
7	Novice	Intermediate
8	Novice	Novice
9	intermediate	Intermediate
10	advanced	advanced
11	intermediate	Intermediate
12	intermediate	Intermediate
13	intermediate	Intermediate
14	intermediate	Intermediate
15	intermediate	Intermediate

Table 7 offers the control group's Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) pre-test and post-test levels. The outcomes indicate that a majority of participants stayed at the same proficiency level from pre-test to post-test, especially those at the intermediate level. Few students progressed from novice to intermediate, whereas those originally at the advanced level kept their proficiency. On the whole, the table shows narrow progress in oral proficiency for the control group, revealing that consequential improvements were marginal without the experimental teaching.

Figure 3
Control Group's Pre-test and Post-test Performance

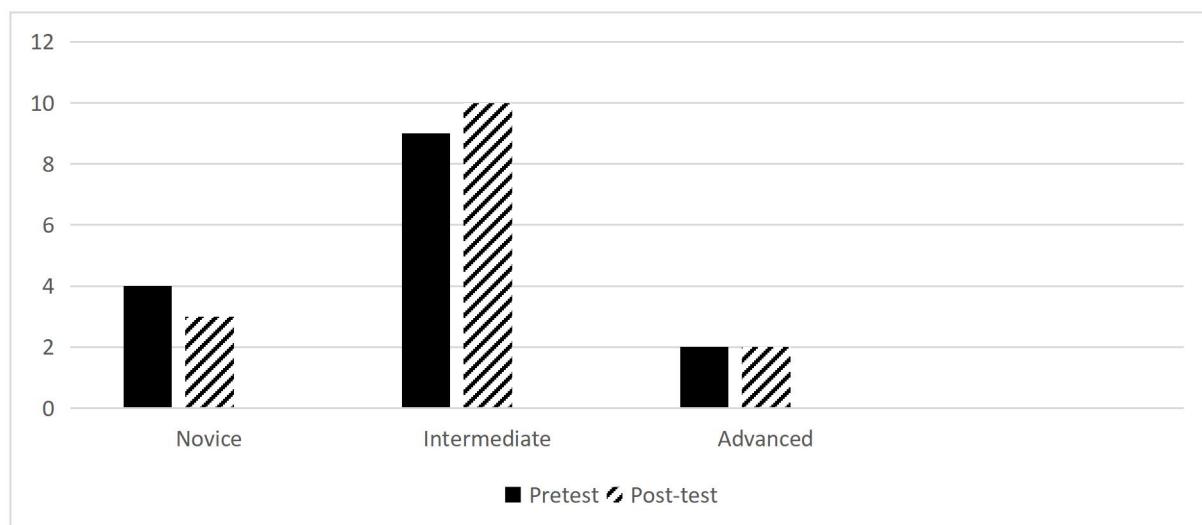


Figure 3 clarifies the control group's pre-test and post-test achievement, presenting minor variation between the two evaluations. The majority of students upheld their preliminary levels, with only a few displaying minor progress. In general, the figure specifies that the control group felt narrow evolution in attainment over the study period.

Table 8

Experimental Group's Pre and Post OPI Results

N	Pre-test	Post-test
1	Advanced	Advanced
2	intermediate	Advanced
3	intermediate	Advanced
4	advanced	Advanced
5	Novice	Intermediate
6	Novice	Novice
7	intermediate	Intermediate
8	advanced	Advanced
9	advanced	Advanced
10	advanced	Advanced
11	intermediate	Intermediate
12	intermediate	Advanced
13	advanced	Advanced
14	Novice	Intermediate
15	intermediate	Intermediate

Table 8 stages the experimental group's Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) pre-test and post-test outcomes. The table indicates remarkable amelioration in a number of students, with many shifting from intermediate to advanced and some from novice to intermediate. Those firstly at the advanced level preserved their proficiency. Taken as a whole, the table shows that the experimental group made noteworthy acquisitions in oral proficiency, signifying a fruitful effect of the experimental teaching method.

Figure 4:

Experimental Group's Pre and Post OPI Results

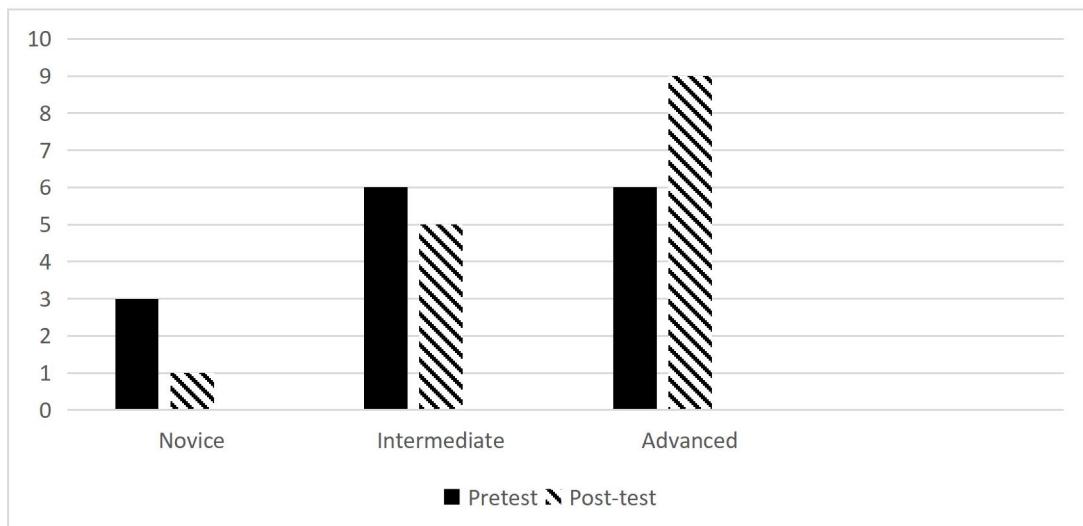


Figure 4 elucidates the experimental group's pre-test and post-test OPI results, indicating strong enhancement in oral proficiency. Quite a few learners progressed from novice or intermediate levels to higher levels, whereas those initially at the advanced level conserved their attainment. Chiefly, the figure high-points the constructive outcome of the tested teaching method on the experimental group's oral proficiency.

5. Discussion

5.1 WGCTA Findings Discussion

The incorporation of Socratic pedagogy in the EFL's civilization course yielded significant augmentation in students' historical thinking aptitudes. Analysis of the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA) pre and post-intervention scores of the experimental group revealed substantial escalation in participants' analytical abilities. Notably, their skills in deduction (30% of students scored over the average of 8 in the pre-test deduction section, all students scored over the average in the post test). Additionally, the evaluation of arguments (40% scored under the average, all students scored over the average in the post-test).

The mean scores and standard deviation demonstrated a marked increase from the initial assessment ($M = 18.4$, $SD = 2.22$) to the final evaluation ($M = 27$, $SD = 1.81$), indicating a statistically significant reinforcement of critical thinking skills. Whereas the control group's scores in the pre-test and post-test demonstrated no significant improvement. That said, the mean and standard deviation in the pre-test phase were ($M = 18$, $SD = 2.83$), thereafter, the post-intervention scores indicated ($M = 19$, $SD = 2.65$) which indicates that the group that was instructed using the seminars outperformed the group that was taught by the traditional method.

It is worth mentioning that respondents of the experimental manifested a capacity to draw valid inferences from the given historical content, identify assumptions and make rational interpretations. This enhancement exhibited most prominently in their ability to determine the strength or the weakness of arguments. Thus, they become more competent in reaching valid conclusions.

In this regard, statistics revealed a remarkable consolidation of deductive reasoning aptitudes in the experimental group (135%). Participants also showed enhanced abilities in evaluating arguments (100%). Students of the control group, on the other hand, exhibited no significant improvement in terms of deduction skills (only 3%), and a 50 % increase in their ability to evaluate arguments. The above-mentioned empirical findings suggest that the Socratic Method is an effective teaching pedagogy that scaffolds EFL students' historical thinking abilities.

5.2 OPI Findings Discussion:

The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) results demonstrated divergent patterns of language proficiency development between the control and experimental groups. However, each group consisted of 15 students, and their proficiency levels were assessed before and after the intervention.

Participants' performance in the control group's pre-intervention test were as follows: four students (26.7%) at novice level, nine students (60%) at intermediate level, and two students (13.3%) at advanced level. Post-test results showed minimal changes: three students (20%) at novice level, 10 students (66.7%) at intermediate level, and two students (13.3%) remaining at advanced level. This represents a modest improvement of one student moving from novice to intermediate level.

Clearly, experimental group performance, which were instructed using Socratic Seminars, revealed an augmentation that is more substantial. Initially, the pre-test showed three students (20%) at novice level, six students (40%) at intermediate level, and six students (40%) at advanced level. Post-intervention results revealed notable improvements: only 1 student (6.7%) remained at novice level, five students (33.3%) at intermediate level, and nine students (60%) achieved advanced level. This represents a considerable shift toward higher proficiency levels, with three additional students achieving advanced status.

Comparative analysis between the outcomes of both groups, proved the positive efficacy of Socratic on oral proficiency development. While the control group showed minimal change (6.7% improvement, with one student advancing from novice to intermediate), the experimental group demonstrated progress that is more substantial. Notably, the experimental group showed:

- A reduction in novice-level students by 13.3% (from three to one student),
- A slight decrease in Intermediate-level students by 6.7% (from six to five students), indicating upward movement to Advanced level,
- A significant increase in Advanced-level students by 20% (from six to nine students).

In fact, the respondents of the experimental group exhibited remarkable improvements in both fluency and accuracy when discussing historical topics. Students' articulated statements showed development in vocabulary usage, grammar and pronunciation. The most substantial gains were observed in their ability to construct and articulate extended, complex and continuous statements demonstrating improved coherence in expressing historical concepts and engaging in analytical discussions. Respondents of the control group, on the other hand, did not manifest any noticeable increase in the OPI subscales. It is noteworthy that some students in the control group participated mainly due to prior English language experience in the teaching/ learning domain. (Most of second-year Master students are teachers of English in either middle or high school).

It is worth mentioning that during the course of the seminars conducted in this survey, some passive students had remarkably changed their attitudes. Initially, many of the students seemed hesitant to volunteer their thoughts and opinions with their peers. However, as the seminars progressed, a noticeable shift occurred. As such, students began raising their hands with increasing frequency, keen to articulate their perspectives and insights. Furthermore, the influence of the often fluent and eloquent students on their peers was significant.

As Such, the meta-discourse markers such as: in fact, certainly, it is unfortunate, as well as some historical concepts like: nationalism, secularism, imperialism, historical trauma, collective memory, have been remarkably memorized and articulated by other novice and intermediate students during discussions. The latter demonstrated a strong impact of the seminars on the escalation of oral proficiency of students. Not surprisingly, then, that what started as tentative participation gradually transformed into an engaged, thoughtful discussion, with students building upon each other's comments and actively delving in the course material. This shift proved that the seminar format and teaching approach were effectively nurturing an environment that prioritizes critical thinking and oral proficiency.

6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this paper examined the impact of the Socratic pedagogy on EFL students' historical thinking skills and oral proficiency. The findings proved the substantial benefits of incorporating the Socratic seminars into EFL civilization courses. Intrinsically, the improved analytical abilities of historical content as well as the willingness to engage in long

fruitful discussion have accentuated the feasibility of Socratic seminars as a teaching technique.

In the same line of thought, the remarkable shift from teacher information sharing towards an autonomous construction of knowledge, has demonstrated that the pedagogy, if well-elaborated by civilization teachers, can greatly create a climate of purposeful teaching/learning of civilization. It goes without saying that the versatile acquired aptitudes will not only foster EFL students' academic arsenal, but also lay a solid foundation upon which they embark on their citizenry journey.

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