People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University of Chadli Bendjedid –El Tarf –

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of English

Civilization and Critical Thinking: How Cultural Content Shapes Analytical Skills for EFL Learners: A Case Study of Master 2 EFL Students at the Department of English, Chadli Ben Djedid University, El Tarf

A Dissertation submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Master's Degree in "Didactics of language"

SUBMITTED BY

Ms. Doha Yamina Larousse

Ms. Racha Belkhiri

Ms. Lyna Meriem Zaidi

SUPERVISED BY

Ms. Soumaya Allaoui

BOARD OF EXAMINERS

President: Mr. Amine Medjabra	MAA	Chadli Bendjedid El-Tarf University
Supervisor: Ms. Soumaya Allaoui	MAA	Chadli Bendjedid El-Tarf University
Examiner: Dr. Abir Bensetita	MCB	Chadli Bendjedid El-Tarf University

Academic Year

2025/2026

Dedication

"No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude." – **Alfred North Whitehead**

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful**,** I wholeheartedly dedicate this work:

To my beloved mother, **Mrs. Nadjet Tlili**, whose unconditional love, endless sacrifices, constant encouragement, and sincere prayers have been my greatest source of strength. Thank you for believing in me, supporting me through every challenge, and for being the heart of our family. I am forever grateful for everything you have done for me. May Allah bless you and reward you abundantly.

To my beloved father, **Mr. Laid Larrous**, whose hard work, dedication, wisdom, and unwavering support have inspired me throughout my life. Thank you for always encouraging me to pursue my dreams and for providing me with the strength and confidence to achieve my goals. May Allah protect you and grant you good health and happiness.

To my second mother, **Tata Nadia**, thank you for your kindness, care, support, and endless affection. Your presence, guidance, and encouragement have always meant so much to me. I am truly blessed to have you in my life.

To my dear brother, **Mohamed Nadir**, thank you for your love, support, and for always standing by my side. I am grateful to have a brother like you.

To my beloved sister**, Dalila Larrous**, whose love, care, and companionship bring joy to my life. Thank you for always being there for me. I cherish and love you more than words can express.

To my fiancé, thank you for your patience, support, motivation, and for believing in me during every step of this journey.

To my best friend and partner in this research, **Ms. Lyna Meriem Zaidi**, thank you for everything. Your friendship, support, understanding, and cooperation made this journey easier and more meaningful. I am grateful for every moment we shared throughout this experience.

A special tribute and peaceful prayer to the soul of **Zakaria Belkhiri**, beloved brother of my partner Belkhiri Racha. May Allah grant him His infinite mercy and admit him into His vast Paradise.

السلام على روح الفقيد بلخيري زكريا، رحمه الله رحمة واسعة وأسكنه فسيح جناته.

Finally, I dedicate this work to everyone who supported me, believed in me, taught me a valuable lesson, or prayed for my success.

Douha Yamina Larrous

"What we once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us." **Helen Keller –**

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, first and foremost, I dedicate this work to the cherished memory of my beloved brother, **Zakaria Belkhiri.** No words can truly express how much I miss you. Though you are no longer by my side, your presence remains alive in my heart, in my memories, and in every achievement I accomplish. I wish you were here to witness this moment with me, to share the joy of reaching this milestone. This work is dedicated to your pure soul with all my love and longing.

السلام على روح أخي الغالي بلخيري زكريا رحمه الله رحمة واسعة، وجعل قبره روضة من رياض الجنة، وأسكنه الفردوس الأعلى. سيبقى ذكرك محفوراً في قلبي ما حييت.

To my beloved father, **Mr. Ahmed Belkhiri**, thank you for your endless sacrifices, guidance, and unconditional support. Your strength and dedication have always inspired me to move forward and strive for success.

To my beloved mother, **Mrs. Nadjette Abdi**, thank you for your infinite love, patience, prayers, and encouragement. Your support has been my greatest source of comfort and motivation throughout this journey.

To my dear brothers, **Adem and Yahia**, thank you for your love, support, and for always standing beside me. I am grateful to have you in my life.

To my lovely sister, **Dr.Ayette**, thank you for the happiness, affection, and encouragement you have always brought into my life.

To my dear aunt, **Dr. Yamina Abdi**, thank you for your valuable advice, kindness, and continuous support. Your encouragement has meant a great deal to me.

To all my family members, thank you for your love, prayers, and belief in my abilities. Your support has helped me overcome every challenge along the way.

To my wonderful partners in this research, **Ms. Larrous Douha Yamina and Ms. Zaidi Lyna Meriem**, thank you for your cooperation, dedication, support, and friendship throughout this academic journey. Sharing this experience with you has been both meaningful and memorable.

Finally, I dedicate this work to everyone who supported me, believed in me, and prayed for my success.

Racha Belkhiri

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

Eleanor Roosevelt –

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, I dedicate this work with deep love, gratitude, and appreciation to the people who have been a source of strength and inspiration throughout my journey.

To my beloved parents, **Mr. Faouzi Zaidi** and Mrs. **Samia Chebouni**, thank you for your endless love, sacrifices, patience, and encouragement. Your support has always been my greatest motivation, and this achievement would not have been possible without your guidance and prayers. I am forever grateful for everything you have done for me.

To my dear brother and sister, thank you for your affection, support, and for always believing in me. Your presence has been a constant source of comfort and happiness.

To all my family members, thank you for your love, encouragement, and sincere prayers that accompanied me throughout this academic journey.

To my best friend and partner in this research, **Ms. Douha Yamina Larrous**, thank you for your friendship, kindness, understanding, and unwavering support. Sharing this journey with you has been a memorable experience, and I am grateful for every challenge and success we faced together.

To my partner and dear friend, **Ms. Racha Belkhiri**, thank you for your dedication, cooperation, and positive spirit throughout the completion of this work. It has been a pleasure working alongside you.

A special thought and heartfelt prayer are dedicated to the memory of **Zakaria Belkhiri**, beloved brother of my partner Racha. May Allah surround him with His mercy, grant him eternal peace, and reward him with the highest ranks of Paradise.

السلام على روح الفقيد بلخيري زكريا، رحمه الله وأسكنه فسيح جناته.

To my dear friend Dorbani Asma, thank you for your friendship, encouragement, and the beautiful moments we shared throughout this journey.

To my dear aunts Amel and Naouel thank you for your valuable advice, kindness, and continuous support. Your encouragement has meant a great deal to me.

To all my family members, thank you for your love, prayers, and belief in my abilities. Your support has helped me overcome every challenge along the way.

Finally, I dedicate this work to everyone who supported me, inspired me, and believed in my ability to achieve my goals.

Lyna Meriem Zaidi

Acknowledgements

"The essence of all beautiful art, all great art, is gratitude."

-Friedrich Nietzsche -

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our supervisor, **Ms. Soumaya Allaoui**, for her continuous guidance, support, and valuable advice throughout this work.

We are also deeply grateful to the members of the jury, **Mr. Amine Medjabra** and Dr. **Abir Benstita**, for accepting to evaluate our research and for their insightful feedback and remarks.

Our special thanks go to the Master 2 students who kindly gave us their time to respond to our questionnaire and contributed to the completion of this study.

We would also like to thank all the teachers of the English Department who generously participated in our questionnaire and shared their valuable input.

Finally, we express our appreciation to everyone who supported us directly or indirectly for the realization of this work.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CCR: Critical Cultural Reflection

CT: Critical Thinking

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

H1: Hypothesis 1

H2: Hypothesis 2

HOTS: Higher-Order Thinking Skills

ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence

LOTS: Lower-Order Thinking Skills

N: Number of Participants (used in sample notation)

Q1: Question 1

Q2: Question 2

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

UK: United Kingdom

US: United States

Abstract

This dissertation explores the extent to which cultural content instruction within the Civilization module contributes to the development of critical thinking and analytical skills among EFL postgraduate learners at the Department of English, University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf, focusing on Master 2 students and their instructors. Given that the integration of higher-order thinking within foreign language education remains underexplored in the Algerian academic context, this research carries significant relevance for EFL didactics. It examines how both learners and instructors perceive the cognitive dimension of civilization teaching, and whether existing instructional practices adequately meet the analytical expectations of postgraduate study. A mixed-methods design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative data gathered through two structured questionnaires administered to a student sample and a group of university lecturers. The findings reveal a notable contradiction: while both populations express a strong preference for analytical engagement over rote memorization, the current module design — heavily structured around factual content and memory-based assessment — continues to hinder the realization of those analytical aspirations. Based on these results, context-sensitive recommendations are proposed for lecturers, students, and educational policymakers, alongside directions for future research including longitudinal studies, multi-institutional comparisons, and the development of culturally adapted critical pedagogy models for the North African EFL context.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, EFL, Civilization Module, Cultural Content, Analytical Skills, Algeria, Intercultural Competence, Curriculum Reform.

ملخص

تسعى هذه الأطروحة إلى استكشاف مدى إسهام تدريس المحتوى الثقافي في مقياس الحضارة في تنمية مهارات التفكير النقدي والكفاءات التحليلية لدى طلبة الماستر المتخصصين في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة الشاذلي بن جديد بالطارف.نظرًا لمحدودية الدراسات المتعلقة بدمج التفكير النقدي في تعليم اللغات الأجنبية بالسياق الجزائري، يكتسب هذا البحث أهمية بالغة في مجال تعليمية اللغة .وهي تتناول الكيفية التي يُدرك بها الطلبة والأساتذة البُعد المعرفي لتعليم الحضارة، وما إذا كانت الممارسات التعليمية الراهنة تستجيب فعلًا للمتطلبات التحليلية للدراسات العليا.اعتُمد منهج بحثي مركب يجمع بين البيانات الكمية والكيفية، من خلال استبيانين موجَّهين لعينة من الطلبة ومجموعة من الأساتذة .وقد كشف تحليل البيانات عن تناقض لافت :فبينما يُعرب الطرفان عن تفضيل واضح للتحليل على الحفظ، يظل تصميم المقياس الحالي —القائم على المحتوى الوقائعي والتقييم القائم على الذاكرة —عائقًا أمام تحقيق هذه التطلعات التحليلية.استنادًا إلى هذه النتائج، صِيغت توصيات بيداغوجية موجَّهة إلى الأساتذة والطلبة وصانعي القرارفي التعليم، فضلًا عن مقترحات لمسارات بحثية مستقبلية تشمل دراسات طولية ومقارنات بين مؤسسات متعددة وبناء نماذج تربوية نقدية ملائمة للسياق الشمال أفريقي.

الكلمات المفتاحية :التفكير النقدي، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مقياس الحضارة، المحتوى الثقافي، المهارات التحليلية، الجزائر، الكفاءة الثقافية، إصلاح المنهج

Chapter One

Introductory Chapter to the Research

Introduction

Learning a language in modern EFL education proves inseparable from understanding its civilization. Beyond grammar and vocabulary, engaging with cultural content allows learners to encounter diverse worldviews and social structures. This interaction provides a unique opportunity to develop Critical Thinking, a vital skill that enables students to analyze and evaluate information rather than just absorbing it.However, in many academic settings, Civilization is often taught as a collection of dates and facts to be memorized. This descriptive approach limits the potential of cultural content to act as a catalyst for cognitive growth. When students are not encouraged to question the "why" and "how" behind historical and cultural shifts, their analytical capacities remain underdeveloped.This research aims to bridge this gap by investigating how cultural content can be used to shape the analytical skills of EFL learners. By exploring the relationship between cultural knowledge and critical inquiry, the study seeks to highlight how Civilization modules can foster a more independent and intellectually engaged generation of students.

This chapter includes the statement of the problem, the aims of the study, the significance of the study, the research questions and hypotheses. It also provides a general overview about the adopted methodology and the general structure of the whole dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the essential role of Civilization in foreign language curricula, there is often a significant disconnect between the delivery of cultural content and the development of Critical Thinking skills. In many educational settings, the study of civilization is reduced to the rote memorization of historical dates, names, and events. This traditional, descriptive approach treats culture as a static body of knowledge rather than a dynamic field for inquiry.

As a result, learners often struggle to move beyond surface-level comprehension. They may acquire a vast amount of cultural information, yet they lack the analytical tools to compare

perspectives, evaluate biases, or understand the underlying causes of societal shifts. The core problem lies in this pedagogical gap: while cultural content is rich with opportunities for analysis, it is rarely utilized as a tool to stimulate the learners' higher-order thinking skills. Unless the focus shifts from "what" happened to "how" and "why" it shapes reality, the potential for cultural studies to produce analytical and independent thinkers remains largely unfulfilled.

Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this research is to investigate how cultural content can be strategically utilized to enhance the analytical skills of EFL learners. This study specifically seeks to explore the relationship between cultural knowledge and the development of critical inquiry, while identifying the necessary pedagogical shifts to move Civilization modules from a descriptive, fact-based approach toward a more analytical one. Furthermore, it aims to highlight the importance of cultural themes in fostering intellectual engagement and independence among students, ultimately bridging the gap between historical information and cognitive growth.

Research Questions

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

Q1. To what extent do EFL teachers and learners have a positive attitude toward the integration of critical thinking skills within Civilization modules?

Q2. Does the transition from a descriptive, fact-based approach to an analytical one enhance the learners' ability to engage critically with cultural content?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the above-mentioned questions, this research tries to explore the validity of the following hypotheses:

H1. Both EFL teachers and learners maintain a positive attitude toward incorporating analytical tasks in Civilization lessons, recognizing them as essential for cognitive growth.

H2. Shifting the pedagogical focus from rote memorization of historical facts to the critical evaluation of cultural themes allows learners to develop more advanced analytical and evaluative skills.

The Significance of the Study

Recognizing the vital role of culture in language education, this research gains its importance by challenging the traditional reliance on memorization in Civilization modules. Rather than treating cultural content as a collection of fixed historical facts, this study highlights its potential as a powerful tool for developing students' analytical and critical thinking. For educators, this work provides a new perspective on how to move toward more interactive teaching methods, while for EFL learners, it offers a way to engage with the language through deep inquiry and evaluation. Furthermore, this investigation contributes to the field of EFL by suggesting how cultural themes can be integrated into the curriculum to foster a more independent and intellectually capable generation of students.

Research Design and Methodology

To achieve the aims of this study and test the formulated hypotheses, a mixed-methods research design was adopted. This approach combines both quantitative metrics and qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive understanding of how cultural content can enhance the analytical skills of EFL learners. The target population consists of Master 2 students and university professors at the Department of English, University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf.

Data collection was carried out through two primary instruments. First, a Students' Questionnaire was administered to a sample of twenty (20) postgraduate students to evaluate their learning strategies, cognitive engagement, and perceived curricular challenges within the Civilization module. Second, a Teachers' Questionnaire was distributed to ten (10) EFL professors to cross-reference the students' experiences with current instructional practices, exam designs, and pedagogical objectives. The quantitative data gathered from these questionnaires was analyzed statistically, while the open-ended responses were subjected to thematic qualitative analysis.

Structure of the Study

The present dissertation is structurally organized into five main chapters, transitioning systematically from theoretical frameworks to the practical investigation:

Chapter One: General Introduction. This chapter provides an overview of the research background, statement of the problem, aims, significance, research questions, hypotheses, methodology, and the overall layout of the thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. This chapter explores the theoretical foundations of the study, reviewing the literature on critical thinking skills, their historical development, and the pedagogical role of culture and Civilization modules in foreign language education.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology. This chapter details the practical framework of the study, describing the mixed-methods research design, the target participants, the development of the data collection instruments, and the procedures used for data analysis.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Results. This practical chapter presents the systematic presentation and statistical analysis of the findings gathered from both the Students' and Teachers' Questionnaires.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations. This final chapter synthesizes and interprets the main findings in light of the research hypotheses, suggests pedagogical recommendations for EFL curriculum design, and addresses the limitations of the study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this introductory chapter has established the foundational blueprint of the research project. By identifying the critical gap between traditional factual memorization and the analytical potential of cultural modules, the study sets a clear direction for investigating cognitive growth in EFL classrooms. Through the outlined mixed-methods methodology and the five structured chapters, this dissertation aims to provide systematic analysis and findings on how shifting toward analytical tasks can transform Civilization lessons into an effective tool for independent and critical thinking.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

The present chapter provides an extensive and critical review of the theoretical frameworks, pedagogical principles, and historical paradigms governing the integration of Critical Thinking (CT) within cultural content curricula. The focus falls specifically on the Civilisation module in EFL higher education. In the contemporary, rapidly shifting landscape of global academia, foreign language instruction has fundamentally transcended the traditional, structuralist emphasis on purely linguistic mechanics, such as syntactic accuracy, phonetic precision, and morphological control. While these foundational elements remain necessary, they are no longer sufficient to prepare advanced learners for the complex cognitive demands of an interconnected, globalized world. Consequently, foreign language education at the university level has undergone a major paradigm shift, transitioning from the passive acquisition of linguistic competence toward the active development of cognitive empowerment, intellectual maturity, and critical intercultural awareness (Byram, 2021).

To establish a thorough, scientifically rigorous foundation for this empirical investigation, this chapter is structurally divided into three comprehensive, deeply analyzed sections. Section One delves into the historical and philosophical genealogy of critical thinking, investigating the dialectical tensions between various cognitive and educational paradigms, analyzing the landmark Delphi Consensus, exploring the cultural universality debate, and providing a highly detailed deconstruction of both core cognitive skills and affective dispositions. The second section addresses the evolution of cultural pedagogy within foreign language departments, tracking the transition from a traditional, static, fact-based descriptive model to the dynamic framework of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) proposed by Michael Byram (1997), while critically examining the systemic and institutional obstacles to its real-world implementation. The third section explores the pedagogical and conceptual intersection where cultural content serves as an active cognitive

catalyst for analytical inquiry, supported by contemporary models such as the Critical Cultural Reflection (CCR) framework, while scrutinizing the challenges of transitioning from memory-based instruction to analytical pedagogy.

By critically synthesizing these diverse academic perspectives, exposing systemic gaps in existing empirical scholarship, and explicitly aligning the theoretical constructs with the specific local realities of the Algerian higher education system, this chapter establishes the definitive analytical blueprint necessary to investigate the current status and future potential of fostering independent, reflective, and critical mindsets among EFL university students within the Department of English at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf. It provides the empirical background needed to move away from unreflective instructional methods toward comprehensive cognitive skill acquisition, ensuring that advanced learners can effectively process structural socio-political knowledge.

Section One: Critical Thinking in EFL Education

Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Critical Thinking

In order to appreciate the pedagogical significance of critical thinking within university level content modules, it is essential to trace its extensive historical, philosophical, and sociological development. Critical thinking is not a recent discovery or a passing educational trend; rather, it represents the accumulation of long-standing philosophical inquiries into the nature of truth, reason, and human consciousness (Lipman, 2003). The foundational architecture of critical inquiry traces back to the Socratic method of dialogic questioning developed in ancient Athens approximately 2,500 years ago. Socrates pioneered a revolutionary intellectual stance by demonstrating that individuals — whether political leaders, scholars, or citizens — could not rely on established authority, traditional dogma, or superficial social consensus to claim genuine, objective knowledge (Paul & Elder, 2007). His pedagogical methodology relied on systematic, disciplined questioning designed to expose hidden contradictions, challenge unexamined premises, and deconstruct ethnocentric biases (Paul & Elder, 2007). The Socratic tradition established a permanent academic truth: that true intellectual growth requires a continuous, uncomfortable process of self-examination

and logical verification (Lipman, 2003). This intellectual tradition highlights that human knowledge is perpetually incomplete unless subjected to rigorous analytical validation (Lipman, 2003).

During the Enlightenment era, Western philosophical thought further formalized the principles of rationalism and empiricism, which dramatically reshaped human epistemology (Paul & Elder, 2019). Thinkers such as René Descartes, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant pushed the boundaries of critical inquiry by shifting the source of intellectual authority from divine revelation and institutional tradition to human reason and empirical observation (Paul & Elder, 2019). Descartes, through his method of radical doubt, established that every claim must be systematically questioned and logically validated before being accepted as true. He argued that the mind must actively break down complex realities into smaller parts to eliminate deceptive premises. This Cartesian approach laid the structural groundwork for analytical frameworks in higher education (Paul & Elder, 2019). Concurrently, Immanuel Kant advanced the understanding of human intellectual autonomy by asserting that true critique involves examining the limits and structures of reason itself, encouraging individuals to think independently and break away from self-incurred cognitive immaturity (Kant, 1784/1996). This philosophical shift directly laid the groundwork for modern scientific inquiry and objective analysis, establishing that knowledge is not a static property to be inherited, but a dynamic construct to be rigorously investigated, cross-examined, and verified through structured evidence (Kant, 1784/1996; Paul & Elder, 2019).

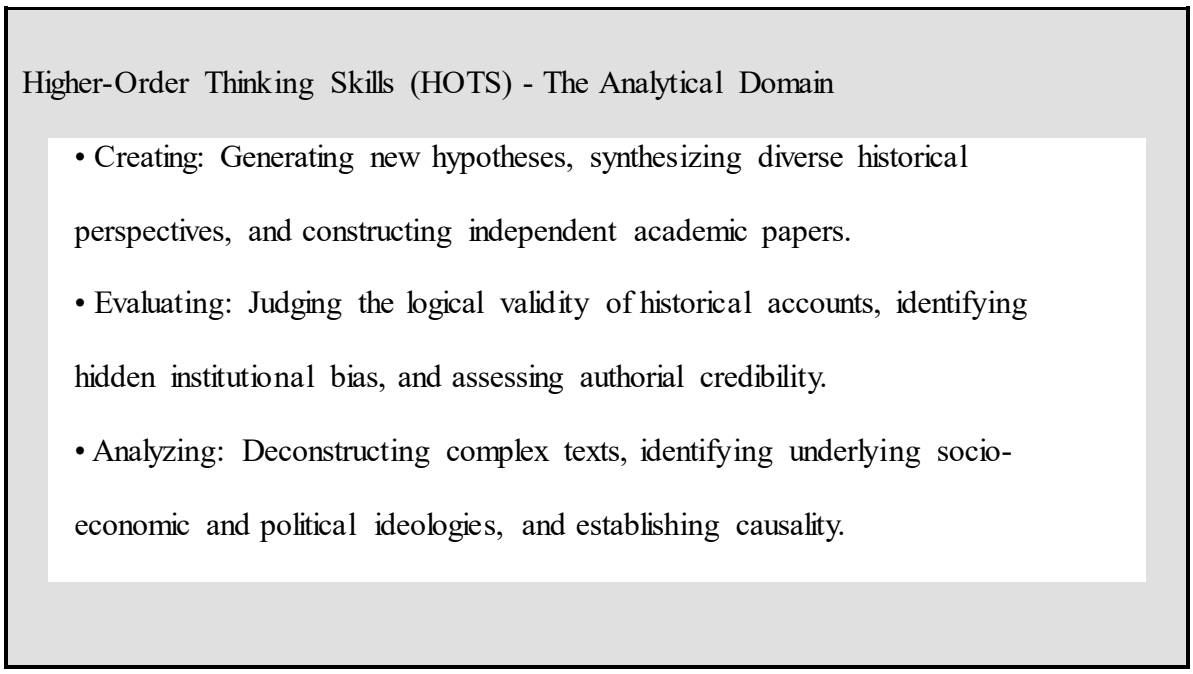
In the early 20th century, the American pragmatic philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey (1910) successfully translated these extensive philosophical traditions into modern educational psychology through his seminal work on "reflective thinking." Dewey defined reflective thinking as the active, 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. Dewey made a critical distinction between a mind that merely absorbs pre-packaged information and a mind that actively processes, questions, and tests reality. He argued that unreflective education turns classrooms into static storage facilities, which damages a student's natural cognitive curiosity. For Dewey, the primary purpose of formal education was not to train students for passive

social conformity or mechanical vocational tasks, but to foster habits of reflective inquiry, problem-solving, and intellectual independence that he regarded as the ultimate safeguards of a democratic society. He firmly believed that learning is an active psychological reconstruction of experience rather than a collection of uninterpreted facts, meaning that information must be continuously re-evaluated in light of changing social contexts.

In the mid-to-late 20th century,the emergence of Critical Theory, pioneered by the Frankfurt School (including Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas), and subsequently adapted to education by the Brazilian theorist Paulo Freire (1970) helped in the critical inquiry of both the sociological and political dimensions. The Frankfurt School scholars argued that modern institutions often employ instrumental reason to maintain social control and ideological dominance, requiring a form of critical critique that uncovers structural inequalities. Freire launched a radical critique against traditional, authoritarian education systems, which he famously characterized as operating on the "banking concept of education." In this traditional paradigm, teachers assume the role of active depositors, while students are reduced to passive, empty accounts designed to receive, store, and recall deposited facts during high-stakes examinations. Freire argued that this methodology actively dehumanizes learners, domesticates their minds, and reinforces existing socio-political inequalities. As an alternative, he conceptualized "problem-posing education," an approach that empowers students to critically analyze their socio-historical realities, deconstruct dominant political ideologies, and develop their own genuine intellectual agency. In the context of EFL higher education, critical pedagogy implies that language learning is never a politically neutral act; rather, it is a process of developing the cognitive tools to read both the "word" and the "world," allowing students to voice their own positions within global discourses and challenge essentialist representations of foreign cultures.

Simultaneously, cognitive and educational psychologists sought to operationalize these philosophical and sociological ideals into structured pedagogical taxonomies. The most influential of these developments was Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom et al., 1956), which systematically categorized the cognitive domain into hierarchical levels. This framework was

later revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) to reflect a more dynamic, action-oriented understanding of cognition. The taxonomy explicitly separates cognitive processes into Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS: remembering, understanding, and applying) and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS: analyzing, evaluating, and creating) as shown in the figure below. Critical thinking theory operates directly within these higher-order cognitive domains. Academic success at the university level requires students to move rapidly beyond the descriptive levels of LOTS—where information is simply recalled and described—toward the analytical and evaluative levels of HOTS, where knowledge is broken down, critically evaluated, and intellectually reconstructed. This cognitive shift is vital for university students who must process multiple layers of sociohistorical data, moving beyond the simple reproduction of textbook definitions to the independent generation of nuanced academic arguments.



↓ Figure 1: *The Hierarchical Cognitive Shift from Descriptive LOTS to Analytical HOTS*

Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) - The Descriptive Domain

- Applying: Implementing standard grammar rules and utilizing basic historical terms in highly predictable classroom contexts.
- Understanding: Explaining the surface meaning of a historical text or summarizing a teacher's lecture handout without deep evaluation.
- Remembering: Rote memorization of historical dates, names of monarchs, political treaties, and geographical boundaries for exam recall.

The Landmark Delphi Consensus: Peter Facione's Conceptual Framework

As critical thinking became a primary objective of modern educational reform, the academic community faced significant challenges due to conceptual ambiguity. Different scholars, researchers, and departments used the term "critical thinking" to describe fundamentally different cognitive operations, leading to fragmented teaching methodologies and inconsistent assessment tools. To resolve this lack of consensus, the American Philosophical Association commissioned a comprehensive, systematic, multi-year Delphi consensus study led by Peter A. Facione (1990). This landmark project utilized a structured, qualitative research methodology that brought together forty leading experts from various fields, including cognitive psychology, philosophy, computer science, and educational research, to produce a definitive, cross-disciplinary definition and operational framework for critical thinking.

The resulting document, widely known as the Delphi Report, produced a powerful definition that serves as the theoretical anchor for the present study. The report asserts that critical thinking is: "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" (Facione, 1990, p. 2).

This definition reveals that critical thinking is not an instinctive, effortless, or accidental mental activity; rather, it is an intentional, highly disciplined, and metacognitive process. A critical thinker

does not simply react to information or accept claims passively; instead, they remain in a continuous state of active self-regulation—monitoring their own cognitive processes, identifying personal biases, correcting logical errors, and evaluating the evidential foundations of their own beliefs. It requires what cognitive scientists refer to as "metacognition," or thinking about one's own thinking. In higher education, this framework establishes that a student cannot be considered a critical thinker simply because they are highly intelligent or academically successful within a memory-based testing system; true critical thinking requires the conscious, systematic application of objective, criteria-based judgment. Without this self-regulatory mechanism, cognitive processing remains prone to personal, environmental, and cultural preconceptions that compromise the validity of intellectual inquiry.

Furthermore, Scriven and Paul (1987) expand this definition by describing critical thinking as an intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information gathered from, or collected from observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. When this framework is applied directly to content-based EFL university modules, such as British or American Civilization, its pedagogical implications are profound. It means that an advanced student must completely abandon the role of a passive consumer of historical facts. When presented with a historical document, a political speech, or a contemporary cultural narrative, a critical student does not accept it as an objective, neutral, and absolute representation of historical truth. Instead, the student approaches the text with intellectual skepticism, treating it as a subjective claim or an ideological representation that must be actively investigated, contextualized, and evaluated against counter-arguments, alternative primary sources, and logical reasoning. This active engagement changes the classroom from a venue of transmission into a seminar of ongoing discovery.

The Cultural Universality Debate: Dwight Atkinson's Critique

While the cognitive psychological and philosophical frameworks established by the Delphi Report and the Foundation for Critical Thinking enjoy widespread global dominance, they are not without significant academic challenge. Scholars working within the fields of sociocultural

linguistics, post-colonial education, and critical pedagogy have raised serious questions regarding the institutional assumption that Western-centric models of critical thinking are universally applicable across all cultural and educational contexts. The most influential counter perspective was advanced by Dwight Atkinson (1997) through his landmark paper published in *TESOL Quarterly*. Atkinson pioneered a sharp critique, arguing that critical thinking—as it is traditionally conceptualized and practiced in Western universities—is not a culturally neutral, purely objective cognitive skill. Instead, he views it as a deeply embedded "social practice" and a cultural product of the Western Enlightenment tradition, which highly prioritizes individualism, direct questioning of established authority, public intellectual debate, and individualistic, argumentative writing styles. He warns that treating critical thinking as an innate biological skill ignores the profound cultural conditioning that shapes how human minds express reasoning.

Atkinson (1997) suggests that in many non-Western societies — where collectivist social structures, high-context communication styles, deep respect for elders and teachers, social harmony, and a long tradition of rote memorization are central to the educational and cultural heritage — the direct, unadapted introduction of Western critical thinking models can cause severe cognitive friction, socio-cultural discomfort, and identity conflict for both students and instructors. In high-context educational environments, openly challenging a professor’s perspective, publicly criticizing a historical figure, or aggressively deconstructing a traditional national narrative can be perceived as socially disruptive, morally disrespectful, or culturally inappropriate. Consequently, students from these backgrounds may exhibit resistance, not because they lack the cognitive capacity to think deeply, but because they are operating under different, deeply internalized socio-cultural norms of communication and academic decorum. This insight highlights the need to build cross-cultural bridges in teaching methodologies rather than enforcing rigid Western behavioral outcomes, allowing non-Western learners to find their analytical voice within their own linguistic and socio-cultural parameters.

This cultural universality debate is highly relevant to the contemporary Algerian higher education context. The Algerian educational landscape presents a fascinating socio-cultural

intersection: while university EFL programs are explicitly designed to adopt modern communicative and critical methodologies, the primary and secondary educational systems that shape students' cognitive habits remain heavily teacher-centered, instruction-heavy, and exam-oriented, deeply rewarding factual memorization and passive compliance with authority (Baghoussi, 2021). When these students suddenly transition into advanced university EFL programs, they are immediately confronted with academic expectations demanding independent analysis, critical evaluation, and individual intellectual autonomy (Ouhiba, 2022). This structural and cultural gap raises a crucial question for the present study: Can Western-centric critical thinking skills be effectively integrated, taught, and assessed within Algerian EFL classrooms without undergoing a comprehensive process of pedagogical and cultural adaptation designed to fit the local socio-cultural realities? The present study explicitly addresses this tension by analyzing both student and teacher perceptions at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf, aiming to find an adapted pedagogy that honors local values while enhancing higher-order cognitive capacity.

Comprehensive Deconstruction of Core Cognitive Skills

To transition from broad theoretical concepts to a practical, measurable pedagogical framework, we must analyze the specific cognitive skills that constitute critical thinking. According to the Delphi consensus (Facione, 1990), there are six core cognitive skills. Within the specific context of university EFL students analyzing historical, political, and institutional documents in the Civilization module, four specific skills are of paramount pedagogical importance and require an extensive theoretical and practical deconstruction.

Analysis

Analysis is defined as the cognitive ability to identify the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, concepts, descriptions, or other forms of representation intended to express beliefs, judgments, experiences, or reasons (Facione, 1990). In the context of a university Civilization module, analysis requires students to look past the surface-level narrative of a historical text and break it down into its core components to investigate how power, socio-economic class, religious ideology, and geopolitical interests shaped the construction of that narrative. For instance, when studying a major historical milestone like the "Industrial Revolution" in Great Britain, a student operating at a purely descriptive level (LOTS) would simply memorize the exact date of James Watt's steam engine or the names of the industrial cities. In sharp contrast, a student utilizing advanced analytical skills (HOTS) will actively deconstruct the underlying socio-economic causes, the forced displacement of agrarian laborers through the Enclosure Acts, the rise of industrial capitalism, and the subsequent exploitation of child labor that redefined the entire British class structure. Analysis involves uncovering the hidden structural logic, unstated premises, and ideological assumptions of historical documentation, forcing the learner to see text as a complex construction of historical interests rather than a neutral record of absolute truth.

Evaluation

Evaluation includes the assessment of an individual’s perception, experience, or judgment in terms of their logical credibility of statements, descriptions, or accounts as well as evaluating the logical strength of the actual or intended inferential relationships among statements or descriptions (Facione, 1990). In the current digital age, where university students are continuously exposed to historical revisionism, online misinformation, political propaganda, and highly biased media narratives, Scriven and Paul (1987) emphasize that evaluation serves as a learner's primary cognitive defense mechanism against ideological manipulation. In a Civilization classroom, evaluation is actively triggered when students are presented with conflicting primary sources regarding a single historical event—such as a British colonial official's paternalistic administrative report on the colonization of India versus an Indian nationalist's personal journal entry documenting

economic exploitation. A critical student applies evaluation by systematically questioning the reliability, institutional motive, potential bias, and historical limitations of each source, judging the strength of their claims based on logical evidence rather than emotional or nationalistic preferences, thereby establishing a standard of objective, self-aware scholarship.

Inference

Inference refers to the cognitive ability to identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form hypotheses and conjectures; and to consider the information needed to determine the logical consequences of beliefs, statements, or representations (Facione, 1990). It is the academic capability to "read between the lines" and uncover what is left unsaid within a text. EFL learners must utilize inference to look beneath the explicit language of historical and political texts to discover the implicit worldviews and cultural values of a foreign society. For example, when analyzing the founding documents of the United States, such as the Declaration of Independence or the early drafts of the US Constitution, a student relying on inference will notice how the explicit rhetoric of universal liberty and equality coexisted with the systemic omission of rights for women, enslaved people, and indigenous populations. Inference enables the critical student to connect these textual omissions to the socio-political and economic hierarchies of the era's ruling elite, rather than accepting the text at face value as a flawless democratic milestone, building a sophisticated layers-of-meaning approach that enhances interpretive mastery.

Explanation

Explanation is the capacity to clearly present, defend, and justify one's reasoning in a coherent, logically rigorous manner (Facione, 1990). This skill requires stating the results of one's cognitive operations, justifying the underlying reasoning in terms of the evidential, conceptual, and contextual considerations upon which it was based, and presenting arguments in a highly structured, clear format. Within Master-level academic writing, it is entirely insufficient for a student to simply express a personal opinion, an emotional reaction, or an intuitive feeling during a class discussion or on a written exam. A critical thinker must be capable of constructing well-structured, evidence-based academic arguments, utilizing precise terminology, logical transitions, and appropriate

historical data to demonstrate exactly how they arrived at their conclusions. Explanation is the expressive tool of critical thought, turning internal cognitive analysis into external academic discourse, ensuring that insights can be peer-reviewed and academic consensus can be built logically within the broader scholarly community.

Affective Dispositions: Fostering the Mindset of a Critical Thinker

A persistent error in educational design is to treat critical thinking as a purely mechanical set of cognitive skills that can be turned on and off like a computer program. Educational psychologists emphasize that possessing the cognitive capacity to perform analysis, evaluation, and inference is completely useless if the student lacks the internal willingness, motivation, and intellectual character to apply those skills in real-life, ambiguous situations. Therefore, the Delphi Report (Facione, 1990) places equal emphasis on affective dispositions, which represent the internal values, attitudes, and mindset of a critical thinker. Fostering these dispositions is a primary goal of advanced higher education, especially within intercultural modules. These core dispositions include:

Open-mindedness: This disposition refers to an active, conscious willingness to listen to, respect, and seriously consider diverse, unfamiliar, or conflicting viewpoints. It requires an appreciation for alternative cultural perspectives and a readiness to accept the possibility that one's own deeply held cultural assumptions, nationalistic narratives, or historical beliefs might be incomplete or wrong. In an intercultural classroom, open-mindedness is the primary tool for overcoming subconscious ethnocentric bias and prejudice, allowing for genuine dialogue across cultural differences without institutional alienation.

Inquisitiveness: This represents a perpetual, healthy curiosity and an internal desire to understand the deeper, complex "why" behind human events, rather than settling for simple, surface-level explanations. An inquisitive student is never satisfied with simply memorizing a timeline of historical facts; instead, they continuously question historical causation, social motivations, and systemic power structures, pushing their research deeper into archival and secondary literature to uncover the root causes of contemporary global trends.

Cognitive Maturity: This is the explicit understanding that real-world historical, social, and cultural issues are exceptionally complex, open to multiple valid interpretations, and rarely have simple, binary "black-and-white" answers. A cognitively mature student is comfortable navigating academic ambiguity, understands that knowledge is often conditional and context-dependent, and avoids making hasty, emotional judgments based on incomplete evidence, developing patience in intellectual synthesis.

Intellectual Honesty and Courage: This is the unwavering commitment to pursue truth and logical accuracy, even when the empirical evidence directly contradicts one's personal, political, or cultural comfort. It requires students to possess the courage to challenge dominant social stereotypes and to represent opposing viewpoints with absolute fairness and academic integrity, maintaining standard scientific transparency and ethical accountability throughout their educational progress.

If an EFL university student possesses advanced linguistic skills but remains highly ethnocentric, dogmatic, or closed-minded, their personal prejudices will act as an impenetrable cognitive barrier. This barrier prevents them from analyzing a foreign civilization objectively, reducing complex academic discussions to emotional debates rather than genuine intellectual inquiry. Thus, a primary task of the Civilization instructor is to nurture both the cognitive skills and the affective dispositions simultaneously, building a holistic intellectual character that can navigate global cross-cultural environments responsibly.

Section Two: Cultural Content and Intercultural Competence

Paradigm Shifts in Cultural Education within Foreign Language Departments

In order to understand the current role of critical thinking within cultural modules, it is necessary to examine the historical and pedagogical paradigm shifts that have occurred in cultural education over the past half-century. Historically, within foreign language departments worldwide, culture was treated as an auxiliary element, completely secondary to the primary task of mastering linguistic structures such as grammar, syntax, and vocabulary (Byram, 1997). Foreign language learning was heavily influenced by structural linguistics, which assumed that language proficiency was merely the mechanical mastery of an abstract code. When culture was taught, it was strictly

conceptualized through two highly limited approaches: “Big C” culture and “little c” culture (Tomalin &Stempleski, 1993). The “Big C” culture approach focused exclusively on high achievements, such as classical literature, fine arts, architecture, and the lives of great political leaders or monarchs, while the “little c” culture approach focused on lifestyle features such as daily customs, traditional food, holidays, folklore, and popular hobbies (Tomalin &Stempleski, 1993). Both approaches shared a fundamental flaw: they treated culture as a static, homogeneous, and unchangeable finished product, completely detached from the ongoing political, dynamic, and economic realities of the target societies (Byram, 1997).

Within this traditional framework, the “Civilization” module was explicitly structured as a rigid content course aimed at transmitting an authoritative body of factual knowledge (Kramsch, 1993). The dominant teaching methodology was almost entirely descriptive, teacher-centered, and lecture-heavy, where students were expected to sit passively, take dense notes, and use rote memorization to recall timelines of historical dates, royal successions, institutional declarations, and geographical boundaries. This descriptive approach received intense criticism from sociolinguists and critical applied linguists during the late 20th century (Pennycook, 1999). Critics argued that teaching culture as a list of static facts actively promotes cultural stereotyping, national essentialism, and ethnocentric attitudes among learners (Kramsch, 1993). It ignores the deep internal diversity, social conflicts, class struggles, gender dynamics, and continuous cultural evolution that take place within any living society, presenting an idealized, monolithic, and superficial version of the target country. As a result, cross-cultural learning was reduced to tourist-level consumption that failed to trigger critical mental processing (Pennycook, 1999).

Furthermore, Byram (1997) argued that an encyclopedic approach to culture is entirely insufficient for language learners who must interact within a globalized and multicultural world. Knowing the exact date of a historical treaty does not provide a learner with the cognitive flexibility required to navigate a real-time cross-cultural misunderstanding, nor does it prepare them to identify subtle ideological shifts in political discourse. This realization initiated a major paradigm shift toward Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), redefining cultural content from a

body of facts to be memorized into a dynamic process of meaning-making, identity construction, and critical negotiation, where learners can actively mediate their own cultural positions relative to the global context.

Michael Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

According to Byram (2021), the ultimate goal of cultural education within foreign language programs must not be to transform students into "walking encyclopedias" of historical data, but rather to develop reflective "intercultural speakers." An intercultural speaker is an individual who can critically analyze, mediate, and interpret the complex relationships, differences, and hidden misunderstandings between their own native society and the target society. To make this abstract ideal practically applicable within higher education classrooms, Byram (1997) developed his highly influential "Savoirs" Framework as shown in the figure below, which operationalizes intercultural competence into five distinct but deeply interconnected cognitive and affective dimensions:

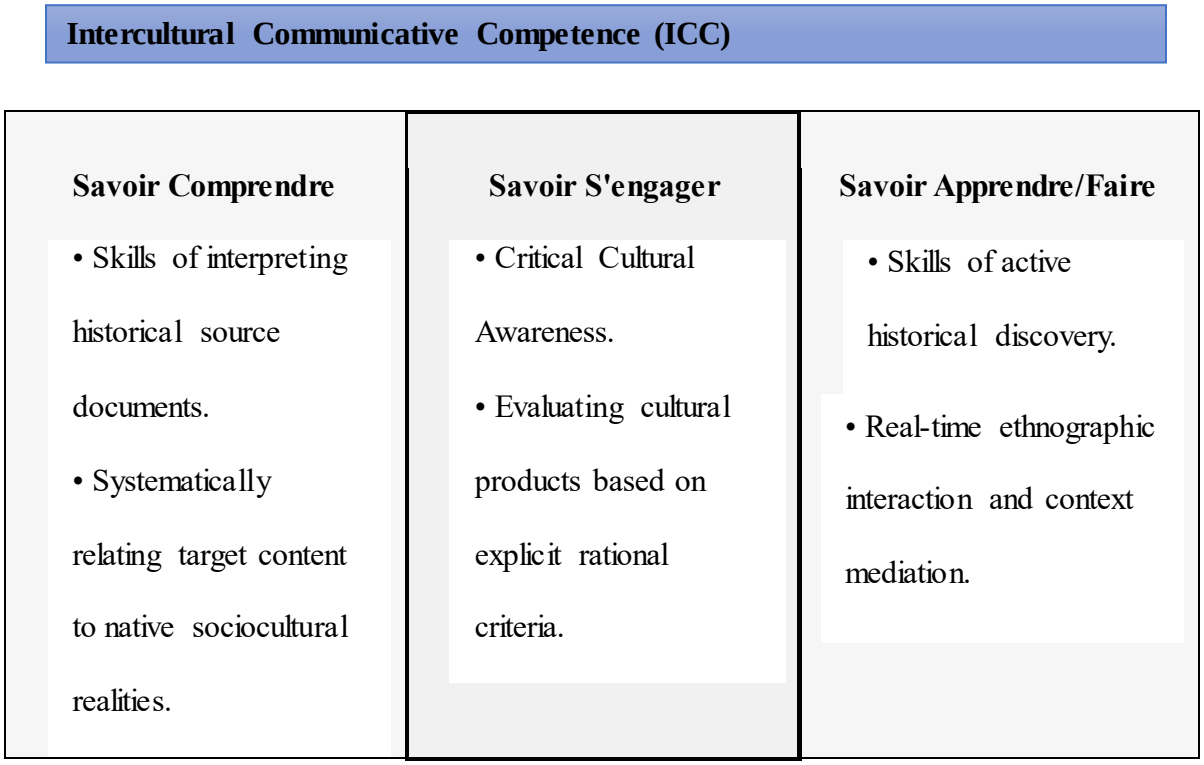


Figure2: T*he Structural Interlocking of the Savoirs Framework within Byram's ICC Model*

Savoirs (Knowledge)

This dimension encompasses a comprehensive knowledge of social groups, their historical products, institutional structures, and daily practices within both one's own country and the country of the interlocutor, as well as a deep understanding of the general psychological and sociological processes of societal interaction. It offers the necessary contextual information that helps in the operation of critical analysis and serves as the raw content background for advanced intellectual processing (Byram, 1997).

Savoir Apprendre/Faire (Skills of Discovery and Interaction)

This refers to the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices under the strict constraints of real-time communication and interaction. It requires the university student to act as an active cultural investigator or ethnographer—knowing how to locate reliable primary sources, conduct independent inquiries, and construct new cultural understandings rather than waiting for the instructor to provide pre-digested summaries, thus significantly boosting research autonomy and academic resilience (Byram, 1997).

Savoir Comprendre (Skills of Interpreting and Relating)

This is the active cognitive ability to interpret a historical document, a contemporary cultural artifact, or a political milestone from another culture, explain its internal ideological logic, and systematically relate it to documents, historical events, or social values within one's own native culture. This skill is directly linked to higher-order critical thinking, as it prevents students from viewing the target culture in isolation, forcing them to engage in continuous comparative, relativistic, and historical analysis, which helps contextualize both worldviews and exposes common cross-cultural human patterns (Byram, 1997).

Savoir Être (Intercultural Attitudes)

This dimension involves curiosity, open-mindedness, and a profound readiness to suspend belief about other cultures and beliefs about one's own. It requires a willingness to undergo a process of "decentering" — the cognitive capacity to step completely outside of one's own internalized cultural frame of reference, view one's native society from an external vantage point, thereby dismantling deeply rooted ethnocentric assumptions and enabling learners to engage with foreign cultural content in a measured, intellectually objective manner rather than through emotionally charged or culturally defensive responses (Byram, 1997).

Savoir S'engager (Critical Cultural Awareness)

This is the core cognitive-political dimension of Byram's model, defined as "an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, p. 53).

Savoir S'engager represents the exact point where advanced critical thinking and cultural education merge (Byram, 1997). It demands that university students establish explicit, rational, and logical criteria for evaluating cultural practices — whether foreign or native — and engage in a reflective process that avoids both uncritical admiration of the target culture and ethnocentric rejection of it (Byram, 1997). It transforms the learner into an intellectually independent citizen capable of engaging with global diversity in an ethically responsible manner, serving as a vital pillar

of modern university education objectives that link cognitive expansion to active intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2008).

Systemic and Institutional Obstacles to Implementing Intercultural Competence

Despite the widespread global adoption of Byram's model in theoretical literature, its practical implementation within university classrooms faces significant systemic and institutional obstacles. Piatkowska (2015) points out that the ICC framework is frequently criticized for being overly idealistic, highly theoretical, and exceptionally difficult to operationalize and assess within real-world classrooms. This difficulty is magnified in highly centralized, bureaucratic, and exam-oriented educational systems, where standardized written tests remain the primary, nonnegotiable method of assessing student performance and determining institutional pass rates. These structural constraints often reduce learning to a survival exercise for passing grades rather than an opportunity for long-term cognitive transformation.

In these challenging educational environments, university teachers are placed under immense administrative pressure to cover a massive, over-packed syllabus within a highly restricted semester timeline (Piatkowska, 2015). This pressure naturally forces instructors to prioritize the traditional descriptive transmission of factual data — which can be easily measured through standard written exams — over the time-consuming, highly complex development of intercultural reflection and critical cultural awareness. Furthermore, university students transitioning from a secondary school system that heavily rewards passivity often bring entrenched academic expectations, frequently exhibiting active resistance or severe anxiety when required to engage in independent research, critical analysis, or open-ended discussions, viewing these active methodologies as a failure of clear instruction (Baghoussi, 2021). This structural resistance, combined with a severe lack of standardized, practical rubrics for grading analytical performance, creates a systemic barrier that forces many well-intentioned university instructors to revert to a traditional, memory-based descriptive approach, neutralizing modern reform attempts and preserving pedagogical passivity (Deardorff, 2006).

Section Three: The Intersection between Civilization and Critical Thinking

The Conceptual and Pedagogical Intersection between Content and Cognition

The systematic integration of Critical Thinking (CT) into the university Civilization module represents a crucial pedagogical intersection where content-based learning and cognitive development merge. Historically, language departments operated under a fragmented division: content courses such as Civilization, Literature, and Linguistics were designed exclusively to transmit bodies of factual knowledge, while language skills courses such as Written Expression and Oral Skills focused on developing linguistic proficiency (Stoller, 2004). Critical thinking was rarely addressed as an explicit learning objective, under the flawed assumption that advanced cognitive skills would develop automatically or by accident as a byproduct of studying a subject (Halpern, 2014). This compartmentalization led to linguistically advanced but analytically unguided graduates who struggled to construct deep independent arguments when faced with complex social phenomena.

Modern educational research has thoroughly deconstructed this traditional division, proving that content courses cannot be mastered through rote memorization, and cognitive skills cannot be developed in an intellectual vacuum (Willingham, 2008). The Civilization module provides a uniquely rich, multi-layered, and highly contested content base that is perfectly suited for the practice of higher-order cognitive skills, as the figure below shows. Conversely, critical thinking provides the necessary analytical tools to understand the complexity, internal contradictions, and ideological underpinnings of historical developments, moving students away from surface-level learning toward deep academic mastery (Paul & Elder, 2014). It shifts the module from an exercise in historical storytelling to a laboratory of social science analysis, allowing the target culture to be understood through structured conceptual lenses rather than superficial memorized descriptions.

CIVILIZATION CONTENT CATALYST	CRITICAL THINKING OPERATIONS
Contested Historical Accounts: Events documented from multiple, conflicting national, class, and colonial perspectives. Dynamic Cultural Evolutions: Societies shaped by ongoing internal conflicts, shifts in values, and identity construction. Ideological Structures: Institutional values driven by powerful underlying political and socio-economic philosophies.	Textual Deconstruction: Breaking down narratives to identify hidden socio-political structures and author motives. Bias Detection & Evaluation: Assessing source credibility and distinguishing between empirical facts and ideological judgments. Metacognitive Comparison: Engaging in systematic, reflexive comparison between target paradigms and native values.

Figure 3: The Conceptual Intersection and Dialectical Matrix between Content and Cognition

The Critical Cultural Reflection (CCR) Model: A Framework for Integration

To provide a structured, actionable framework for this pedagogical integration, modern applied linguistics relies heavily on the Critical Cultural Reflection (CCR) model proposed by Rezaee and Saleh (2023). This model argues that critical thinking must never be treated as an external set of exercises to be added onto a lesson; rather, it represents an intrinsic and inseparable part of engaging with cultural components. The CCR model operates on the principle that genuine, transformative cultural learning can only occur when university students undergo a continuous, reflective cognitive cycle designed to challenge their internalized assumptions. The CCR framework operationalizes this integration into three progressive, highly defined developmental stages:

The Identification Stage: The student identifies a specific cultural element, political institution, or historical narrative, utilizing baseline interpretive skills to comprehend its explicit, surface-level

meaning and socio-historical context within the target civilization, ensuring absolute factual accuracy as a baseline.

The Deconstruction Stage: The student applies core higher-order cognitive skills (analysis and evaluation) to actively deconstruct the implicit ideologies, power relations, class interests, and systemic biases that drove the construction of that narrative. The student is prompted to ask critical questions: Why was this specific historical narrative constructed? For whom the economic or political interests are protected? What perspectives have been systematically silenced? This stage successfully strips away the aura of absolute objectivity from textual representations, exposing how knowledge is actively managed by ruling classes.

The Reconstruction Stage: The students systematically compare this deconstructed foreign narrative with their own native cultural values, national history, and socio-political background. Through this comparative and reflexive juxtaposition, the student reconstructs their understanding of both the foreign and native culture, developing advanced cognitive flexibility and achieving genuine critical cultural awareness (*Savoir S'engager*), transforming how they view global relationships and preventing automatic ethnocentric alignment.

By systematically implementing the CCR model, a university Civilization classroom is successfully transformed from a passive space of information transmission into an active academic seminar, encouraging the simultaneous growth of linguistic sophistication, cognitive maturity, and intercultural competence, establishing a high-quality educational environment that prepares students for independent postdoctoral research paths.

The Pedagogical Divide: Descriptive vs. Analytical Approaches in Practice

Translating theoretical models into daily classroom reality requires a clear understanding of the deep pedagogical divide between the descriptive approach and the analytical (Stoller, 2004).Scriven and Paul (1987) warn that critical thinking skills do not develop automatically or by accident as an unguided byproduct of studying a subject; they must be explicitly, intentionally, and systematically taught through explicit curriculum mapping. When an instructor relies on a descriptive approach, the classroom environment remains strictly passive, teacher-centered, and lecture-heavy, leaving

students with little room for independent intellectual engagement (Stern, 1992).The instructional focus is restricted to answering simple, low-level cognitive questions: What happened? Who was involved? When did it take place? This approach treats historical and cultural knowledge as a finished, unchangeable consumer product, encouraging students to rely on rote memorization to pass exams. Consequently, students view the module as an overwhelming, stressful burden of dates and names, resulting in surface-level learning that is quickly forgotten after the final examination, leaving no trace of cognitive enrichment or intellectual maturation.

In sharp contrast, an analytical approach shifts the entire pedagogical focus to higher-order cognitive questions: How did this event unfold? Why did it happen under these specific conditions? What are its long-term structural consequences? It treats historical knowledge as an ongoing process of inquiry, open to interpretation and critical reconstruction (Pennycook, 1999). An analytical approach systematically structures the classroom to encourage students to deconstruct longstanding cultural myths and nationalistic narratives, identify the underlying socio-economic, political, and philosophical forces driving major events, and analyze how historical power relations shape the recording of history. By shifting from a memory-based environment to an analytical pedagogy through student-centered strategies — such as primary source analysis, structured debates, and comparative research projects — instructors can successfully cultivate independent, critical mindsets, turning students into active producers of historical knowledge rather than passive reproducers of authoritative textbook summaries (Giroux, 2011).

Identified Research Gaps in Contemporary Scholarship

Despite the rich international literature surrounding both critical thinking theory and intercultural competence models, several critical, systemic gaps remain in contemporary scholarship. The present study is explicitly designed to address these gaps within the local Algerian higher education context:

The Severe Scarcity of Empirical Classroom Research:The vast majority of existing literature on critical thinking integration remains heavily theoretical, conceptual, and descriptive (Halpern, 2014). There is a documented lack of classroom-based, empirical investigations that measure the

actual, quantifiable impact of explicit critical pedagogy interventions on EFL students' analytical performance, written exam outcomes, and cognitive development (Abrami et al., 2008). Most guidelines remain abstract manifestos rather than measurable experiments, leaving a serious gap in empirical baseline parameters and reliable classroom-based evidence (Behar-Horenstein&Niu, 2011).

Socio-Cultural Contextual Blindness of Existing Models:Almost all dominant theoretical frameworks — including the Delphi Report, Byram's ICC model, and the CCR model — have been designed, developed, and tested within Western, industrialized, and democratic educational contexts (Atkinson, 1997). Very few empirical studies have investigated how these models operate or fail when directly introduced into non-Western educational environments, specifically North Africa and the Algerian university setting, where traditional cultural norms, centralized educational structures, and high-stakes testing systems historically favor rote memorization, respect for consensus, and absolute teacher authority (Baghoussi, 2021). This transfer frequently results in massive systemic mismatches that remain unresolved in applied linguistics and language pedagogy (Ouhiba, 2022).

The Direct Absence of Practical Assessment Tools:While scholars continuously emphasize the importance of developing and testing critical cultural awareness (Savoir S'engager), existing literature frequently fails to provide clear, standardized, and practical rubrics that university instructors can utilize to evaluate and grade analytical skills in written examinations (Deardorff, 2006). Consequently, assessment methods in Civilization modules remain heavily restricted to measuring factual recall, a practice that actively penalizes analytical risk-taking and obscures genuine student cognitive growth (Scarino, 2010).

The Undefined Practical Role of the Teacher as Facilitator: While Byram (1997) theoretically defines the teacher's role as a "facilitator," there is little practical guidance, training, or pedagogical modeling on how to effectively prepare university EFL instructors to transition from traditional lecturing to active, facilitator-based critical instruction, leaving many instructors unguided and unequipped in their pedagogical methods.

In the light of the previously mentioned review of the literature, the present research work tends to cover these significant gaps by investigating the integration of CT-Civilization in the specific non-Western EFL context at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf. It relies on a mixed-methods research design to analyze both student and teacher realities, trying to build a balanced, contextualized model for foreign language departments across the nation, ensuring that academic evolution matches international standards while respecting local values.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the comprehensive theoretical and pedagogical foundations of integrating Critical Thinking (CT) into the Civilization module within the EFL context. Through a detailed review of the literature, it has been established that shifting from a traditional, descriptive, and fact-oriented pedagogy to an analytical, inquiry-based approach is essential for modern language learners who wish to navigate complex global arenas successfully. However, this review has also highlighted critical limitations in current scholarship: an over-reliance on Western-centric models, a lack of empirical classroom-based research, and a severe absence of practical assessment tools. By identifying these gaps, this study emphasizes that while frameworks like Byram's ICC and the CCR model offer valuable starting points, their applicability in non-Western EFL contexts remains unverified. It is therefore concluded that further empirical classroom investigation is urgently needed. These theoretical insights and identified gaps provide the necessary grounding for the following chapter, which describes the research methodology designed to investigate the practical reality of these concepts in the EFL classroom, establishing the empirical tools to address these systemic deficits.

Chapter Three

Method

Introduction

The present chapter details the practical framework ofthis study,systematically addressing the methodological approach used to investigate there search problem. It outlines the strategies and empirical procedures employed to explore how cultural content in the "Civilization" module influences and shapes the analytical and critical thinking skills of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Additionally, this chapter provides a comprehensive breakdown of the core methodologicalelements of the inquiry, specifically focusing on theresearch design, participants andsamplingprocedures,data gathering tools, and data collection protocols. By presenting a clear, step-by-step description of these components, the chapter establishes a transparent and rigorous foundation for the subsequent data analysis and discussion.

Research Design and Method

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical research design that is structurally integrated within an inductive framework.This approach allows the researchers to systematically identify, explore, and analyze the attitudes, perceptions, and cognitive experiences of both university instructors and advanced postgraduate learners regarding the incorporation of higher-order cognitive skills within content-based lectures. To achieve a comprehensive look at the research objectives, the investigation is built upon a mixed-method approach as the overarching methodology. This is achieved by embedding both quantitative and qualitative data collection metrics within a single, integrated research strategy, which relies on a set of dual questionnaires specially designed for teachers and students.

In this descriptive framework, both quantitative and qualitative data types are used simultaneouslytocomplementeachother.The qualitative data is vital as it allows the investigators to discover, capture, and deeply analyze the personal views, structural preferences, and open-ended comments expressed by the participants regarding the shift from rote memorization to analytical processing. This qualitative focus helps distinguish the deep conceptual attitudes constructed by learners and teachers during instruction. Conversely, the quantitative data is used to measure the statistical distributions, baseline frequencies, and exact percentages of specific student habits and teacher instructional practices. By combining quantitative frequencies with qualitative narratives the study achieves empirical triangulation, ensuring a well-rounded and academically secure investigation that avoids the limitations of single-method research designs.

Research Framework

Sampling and Population

Students as Participants

The first participant cohort consists of postgraduate Master 2 students currently enrolled in the Department of English at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf, Algeria. The sample size comprises twenty (20) learners who were selected via target-specific, purposive sampling due to their advanced status and extensive academic exposure to university-level content modules. Since the Master 2 level represents the culmination of the advanced EFL curriculum, these students have historical experience with the "Civilization" curriculum across multiple semesters. Consequently, the chosen participants are regarded as ultimately suitable for the attainment of the study's objectives. They possess the required cognitive maturity and academic background to reflect on whether current instruction reinforces memory-based lower-order thinking or fosters analytical higher-order thinking skills.

Teachers as Participants

Regarding the instructors as participants, the sample comprises ten (10) university teachers of English who are responsible for planning, designing, and delivering the "Civilization" modules within the Department of English at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf. The selection of

this targeted sample was based on the practical consideration that these specialized instructors would benefit the research and serve the study's scientific objectives by sharing their first-hand pedagogical experiences. These participants provide a crucial perspective on the structural challenges of implementing modern analytical frameworks within a centralized educational environment. The selection ensures that the research accounts for the pedagogical realities and institutional constraints faced by the faculty when introducing critical thinking tasks.

Data Gathering Tools and Procedures

The current study relies on a dual-instrument framework consisting of a specialized Students' Questionnaire and a corresponding Teachers' Questionnaire. This operational framework is built on the principle that questionnaires provide participants with the valuable chance to express themselves and describe their opinions, pedagogical challenges, and conceptual reactions freely without institutional pressure or direct observer bias. This research tool is chosen to explore both students' and teachers' responses to the integration of critical thinking within cultural content modules. Following an integrated mixed-method structure, both questionnaires are engineered to collect and balance quantitative percentages alongside descriptive qualitative text within a single data-gathering phase.

Teachers' Questionnaire

The Teachers' Questionnaire consists of both closed-ended and open-ended questions designed to systematically gather data from the participants. In the closed-ended questions, teachers select the appropriate box for fast, standardized, and easy answers, which generates the numerical data needed for statistical frequency analysis. The open-ended questions are added to provide deeper explanations, academic justifications, and detailed descriptions of their instructional realities. To ensure validity, the investigators took into consideration the phrasing of instructions on how to answer, making sure that the respondents encountered no ambiguity or structural difficulty with the text. The teachers were fully informed about the specific research aims to facilitate a better understanding and professional response. Furthermore, the researchers explicitly informed the

participants that their identities would remain completely anonymous to ensure bias-free responses and maintain professional confidentiality.

The questionnaire was delivered to ten (10) Civilization instructors and is structurally divided into two primary sections. The first section targets the core pedagogical approaches and curriculum layouts utilized by the instructors, directly contrasting descriptive, fact-oriented strategies against analytical, cause-and-effect methods. It also examines their awareness of specific theoretical models, such as Byram's model, and assesses whether current university testing rewards analytical processing or factual recall. The second section features comprehensive, open-ended qualitative prompts. These questions focus on the core challenges teachers face, asking them to describe the best ways to stop students from just memorizing and start making them analyze more, while exploring the structural and psychological difficulties encountered when attempting to foster cross-cultural open-mindedness toward foreign worldviews.

Students' Questionnaire

The Students' Questionnaire is similarly structured as a mixed data collection tool containing a balanced combination of closed-ended and open-ended items that is distributed to 20 Master 2 students. The closed-ended multiple-choice questions allow for the quantitative calculation of percentages regarding student study habits, exam-preparation strategies, and frequencies of classroom participation. To complement this data, open-ended reflective prompts are integrated to capture qualitative, descriptive insights allowing students to explain their educational experiences in their own words without being restricted by pre-determined choices.

The content of the questionnaire is divided into three sections designed to analyze student interaction with the "Civilization" module. The first section targets their cognitive study habits and learning styles, exploring whether they study for exams by memorizing handouts exactly as they are or by attempting to understand the underlying historical logic. It also measures their self-perceived capacity to identify text bias and "read between the lines." The second section focuses on classroom dynamics and pedagogical interaction, evaluating how often instructors encourage opinion-sharing, student comfort levels with academic disagreement, and their interest in alternative analytical

assessments like debates. The final section gathers qualitative synthesis data, asking students to describe their experiences and sum up the Civilization module in a single sentence. This open-ended feedback provides descriptive, qualitative depth that serves as an effective replacement for active classroom observation within the constraints of the current semester timeline.

Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has provided a detailed, step-by-step outline of the descriptive analytical methodology used to answer the core research questions and test the stated hypotheses of this study. By outlining the specific mixed-method design of the dual questionnaires and describing the 20 Master 2 students and 10 EFL instructors, the chapter establishes a reliable structure for the investigation. The next chapter will focus on presenting the quantitative and qualitative data analysis to achieve the objectives of this research work.

Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the systematic analysis and findings of the data collected to investigate the pedagogical relationship between cultural content instruction within the Civilization module and the development of critical thinking and analytical skills among EFL learners. To establish a reliable and comprehensive diagnosis of this phenomenon, a mixed methods research design was implemented, gathering both quantitative metrics and descriptive qualitative insights from the academic community at the Department of English, University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf.

The operational framework of this data analysis is structured into two primary divisions. The initial section provides a rigorous analysis of the Students' Questionnaire (N = 20), focusing on their cognitive engagement, study strategies, and perceived curricular challenges. The subsequent section contains a newly integrated, exhaustive evaluation of the Teachers' Questionnaire (N = 10), designed to cross-reference learner experiences with instructional practices, systemic conditioning, and institutional objectives. By integrating and synthesizing the perspectives of both populations, this chapter aims to reveal the key pedagogical variables that influence higher-order thinking within the EFL civilization classroom, providing an empirical baseline for the discussion in Chapter Five.

Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

Question 01: How do you usually study for the Civilization exam?

This question was formulated to identify the predominant learning and cognitive processing styles among postgraduate students when preparing for evaluations,

distinguishing between passive rote memorization and active critical conceptual understanding.

Table 01

Study Approaches for the Civilization Exam

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
I memorize the handouts exactly as they are.	1	5%
I try to understand the logic and explain it in my own words.	19	95%
Total	20	100%

Based on the statistical distribution in Table 01, an overwhelming majority of the students' sample (95%) asserts that their primary approach to studying historical content involves processing the internal logical structure and rephrasing information using their own linguistic tools. Conversely, only a minimal percentage (5%) reports a reliance on the verbatim memorization of course handouts. This indicates a strong subjective readiness among Master 2 students to perform deep-level textual and conceptual transformation rather than superficial copying.

Question 02: In class, does the teacher ask you to give your own opinion?

This inquiry seeks to determine the degree of student-centered interactivity and dialogic exchange maintained within the lecture space, evaluating whether students are prompted to formulate individual critical stances.

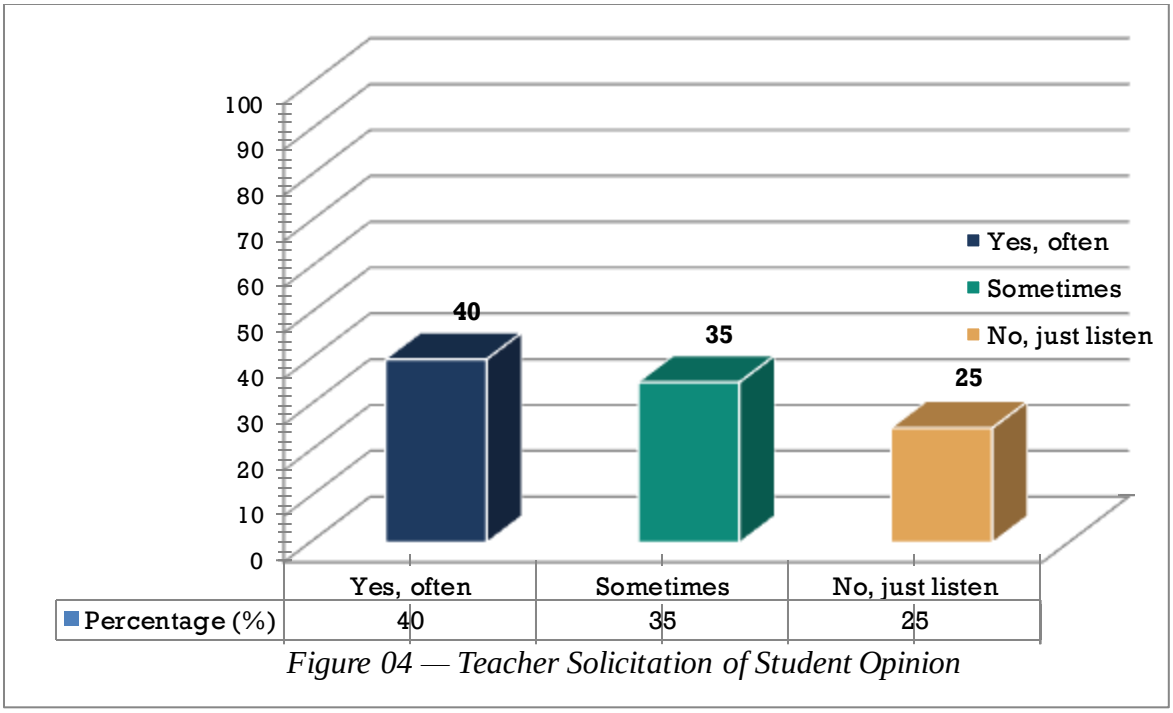


Figure 04 — Teacher Solicitation of Student Opinion

The data presented in Figure 04 outlines that 40% of the respondents are frequently encouraged to voice personal perspectives, and 35% experience this opportunity occasionally. However, a significant 25% of the students indicate that lectures remain entirely teacher-dominated, restricting their role to passive listening and note taking. This reveals that while communicative and exploratory methods exist, a traditional lecture-delivery format continues to occupy a substantial portion of the academic environment.

Question 03: Do you feel the module has too many dates and names to memorize?

This query diagnoses students' perceptions regarding the syllabus load and design, explicitly checking whether the structural nature of the content overemphasizes factual recall at the expense of thematic critique.

Table 02

Student Perceptions of Information Load in the Civilization Module

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
Yes, it has too much.	16	80%
No, it is okay.	4	20%
Total	20	100%

The numerical values compiled in Table 02 illustrate a clear consensus: 80% of the surveyed postgraduate students experience the Civilization module as heavily congested with factual dates and historical figures. Only 20% evaluate the existing volume as manageable. This implies that the current configuration of the syllabus creates significant information overload, which can inadvertently compel students to prioritize low-level memory retention simply to pass institutional tests.

Question 04: When you learn about a historical event, do you ask "Why" it happened?

This question is designed to gauge the students' intrinsic cognitive drive toward causal inquiry, evaluating whether they actively look for historical explanations or passively accept accounts without questioning.

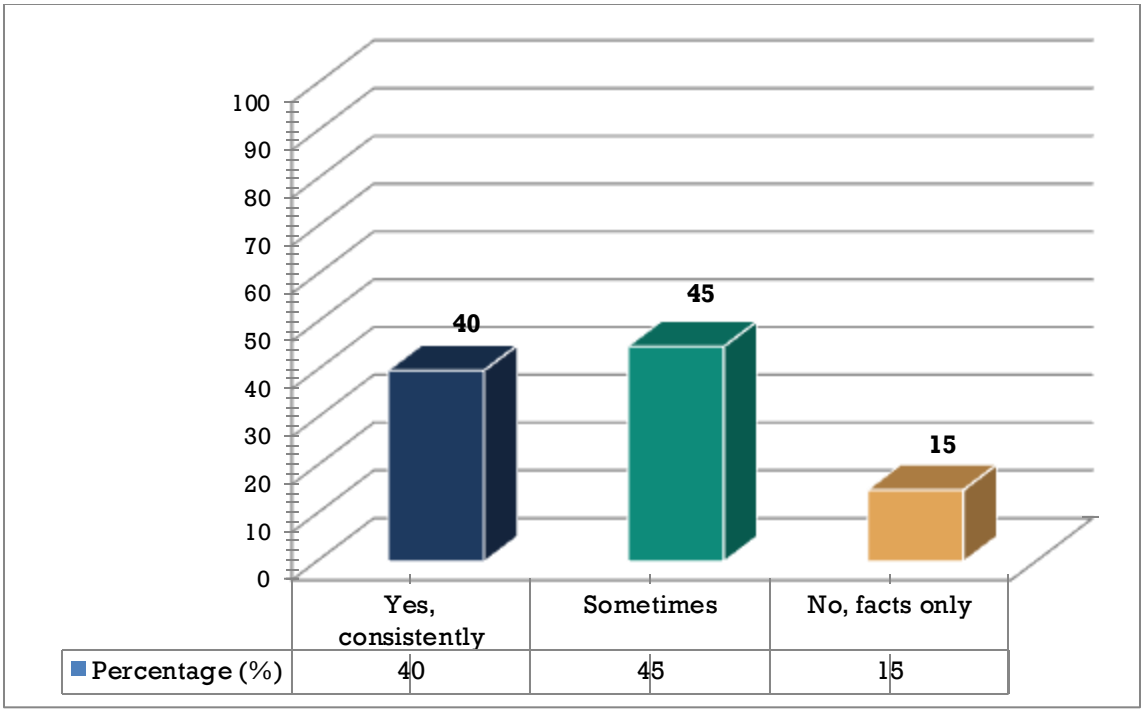


Figure 05: Student Engagement with Causal Inquiry ("Why")

The statistical breakdown illustrated in Figure 05 establishes that 40% of the participants consistently investigate the socio-political factors and root causes behind historical developments, 45% perform this analytical query sporadically, and 15% completely isolate their learning to the absorption of explicit facts. The combined metric of 85% demonstrates a strong baseline of analytical curiosity among advanced language learners, which can be further enhanced through targeted pedagogical interventions.

Question 05: Can you tell if a historical text is biased (one-sided)?

This question directly examines a fundamental critical thinking sub-skill: the capacity of the learner to identify subjectivity, text bias, and ideological framing within historical primary and secondary documents.

Table 03

Student Self-Assessed Ability to Identify Bias in Historical Texts

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
Yes, I can.	7	35%
I am not sure.	12	60%
No, I believe what is written.	1	5%
Total	20	100%

The data compiled in Table 03 identifies a noticeable gap in critical text analysis skills. While a minimal 5% of the students express uncritical trust in written texts, a prominent majority of 60% are uncertain of their ability to distinguish objective facts from text bias. Only 35% declare full confidence in their analytical reading skills. This demonstrates that although students are generally aware of critical thinking, they lack systematic training to deconstruct discourses and identify underlying ideologies effectively.

Question 06: Do you compare the UK/US history with our own Algerian history?

This prompt targets the application of intercultural comparative analysis, verifying if students actively link target historical events with their native heritage to discover broader sociohistorical parallels.

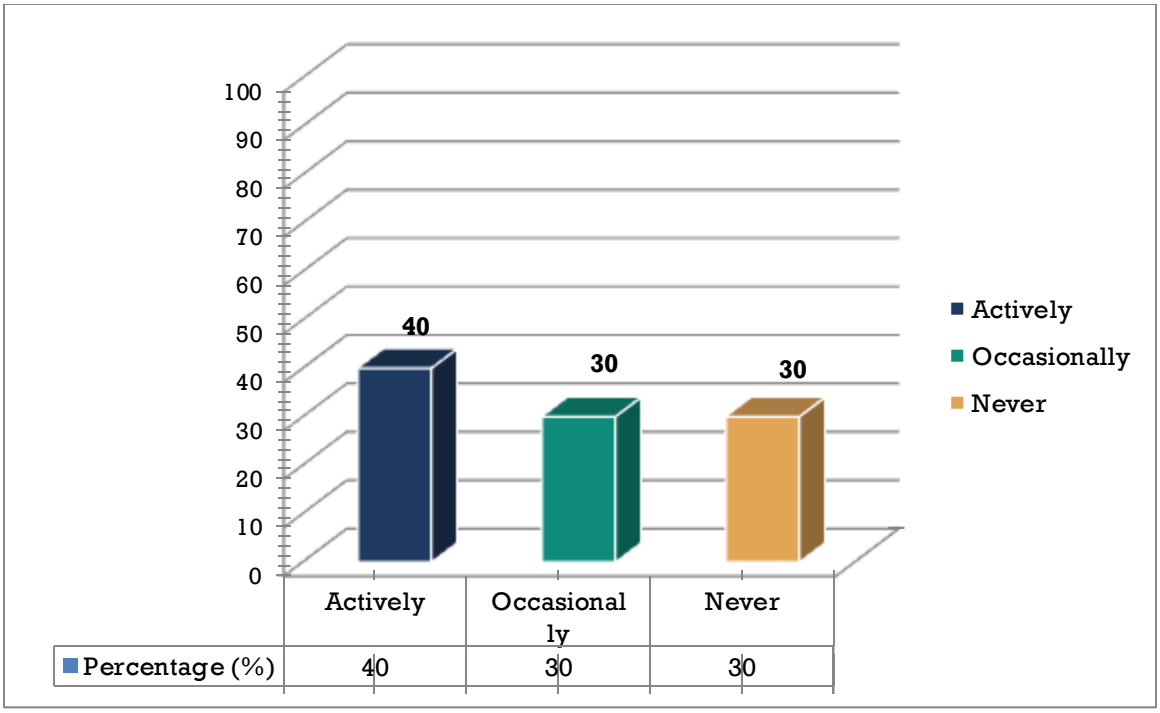


Figure 06: Frequency of Student-Initiated Intercultural Comparative Analysis

As shown in Figure 06, 40% of the student population actively implements cross-cultural historical comparison, 30% engages in this occasionally, and an equal 30% never contextualizes the target history with their domestic background. This dynamic shows that while 70% of the sample has an inclination toward comparative analysis, nearly one-third analyzes Western civilization in isolation, missing opportunities for deep intercultural reflection.

Question 07: Does the Civilization class help you "read between the lines"?

This question examines the capacity for textual inference, exploring whether the academic delivery of the module equips students with the tools required to uncover unstated socio-political context and subtexts.

Table 04

Student Perception of the Module's Effect on Reading between the Lines

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
Yes, a lot.	8	40%
A little bit.	12	60%
Not at all.	0	0%
Total	20	100%

The responses collected in Table 04 indicate that 40% of the students feel the module significantly advances their capability to infer implicit historical meanings. Concurrently, 60% report only partial improvement, while 0% find it completely ineffective. These outcomes show that while the module carries clear intellectual value, its current delivery provides only moderate cognitive development, indicating a need for more explicit instruction in text analysis.

Question 8: Do you think memorizing is more important than analyzing to pass the exam?

This query evaluates how students perceive evaluation standards, exploring whether they believe institutional success is achieved through rote factual duplication or through original critical argument.

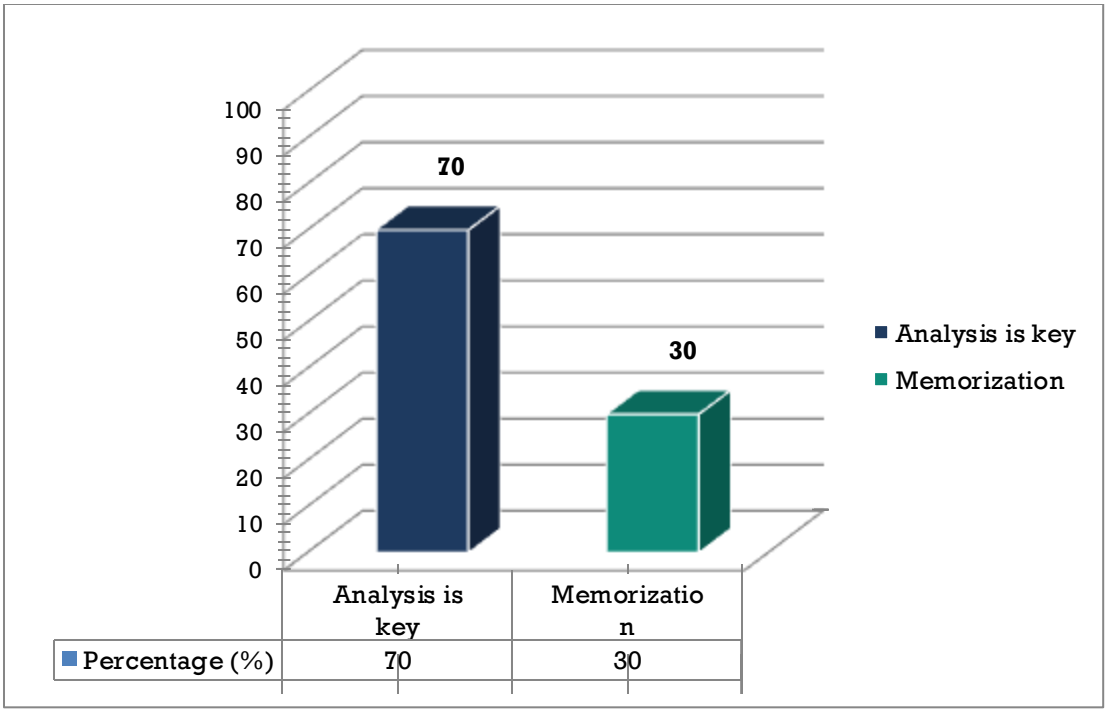


Figure 07: Student Perceptions of Exam Assessment Criteria

The graphic distribution in Figure 07 demonstrates that a strong majority of 70% of the Master students recognize that advanced analysis is the key to passing their examinations, whereas 30% still assume that factual memorization is the definitive factor for success. This finding reveals a positive alignment: most students understand that high-level university studies require critical thinking, even if curriculum structures sometimes conflict with this expectation.

Question 09: Do you feel comfortable disagreeing with a point of view in class?

This prompt addresses the affective and psychological safety dimensions of critical thinking, investigating whether the classroom climate allows students to challenge established historical viewpoints openly.

Table 05

Student Comfort Level with Expressing Disagreement in Class

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
Yes, very comfortable.	15	75%
No, I prefer to keep quiet.	5	25%
Total	20	100%

The empirical data in Table 05 indicates that 75% of the respondents feel confident enough to express disagreement or alternative perspectives during academic discussions. In contrast, 25% experience discomfort and prefer to remain silent. This shows a generally supportive classroom environment. However, the one-quarter minority who choose silence highlights the presence of psychological or communicative barriers that need to be addressed to foster inclusive critical debate.

Question 10: Does this module make you more open-minded toward other cultures?

This item evaluates attitudinal growth and empathy, examining if learning about Western historical development reduces ethnocentrism and broadens intercultural open-mindedness.

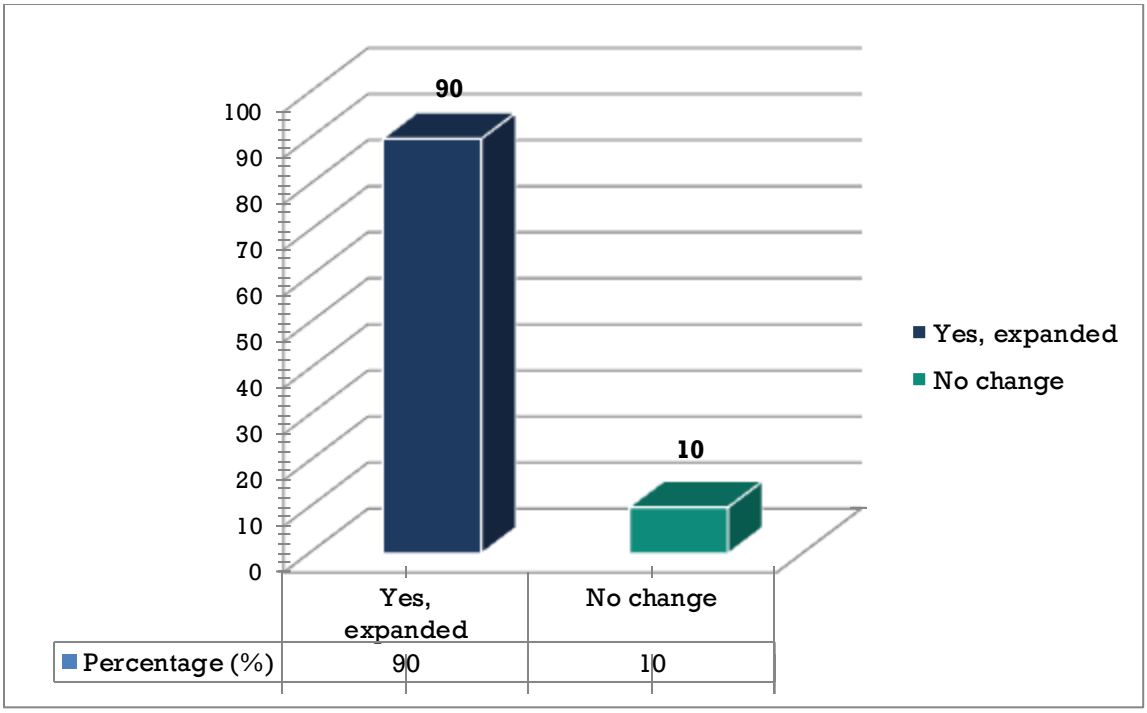


Figure 08: Impact of Civilization Studies on Intercultural Open-Mindedness

The visual data displayed in Figure 08 shows that an overwhelming 90% of the student sample states that the module has directly expanded their intercultural tolerance and open-mindedness. Only 10% report no attitudinal change. This highlights that cultural content serves as an effective tool for reducing cultural bias and developing broader cross-cultural understanding among EFL learners.

Question 11: Do you feel that our educational system makes us prefer "memorizing" over "thinking"?

This question evaluates macro-level educational background, examining whether students feel their previous schooling has conditioned them toward rote memorization rather than independent analytical thinking.

Table 06

Student Perception of Educational System Conditioning Toward Memorization

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
Yes, we are used to memorizing.	14	70%
No, we like to think and analyze.	6	30%
Total	20	100%

As outlined in Table 06, a substantial 70% of the postgraduate students acknowledge that their prior educational background has strongly conditioned them to prioritize rote memorization over critical thought. Conversely, 30% feel oriented toward independent analysis. This systemic habit presents a major pedagogical challenge for university instructors: they must actively work to deconstruct years of passive learning habits to foster genuine critical thinking skills.

Question 12: If the exam was a "debate" instead of a "written test," would you like it?

This question evaluates the students' openness to progressive, student-centered assessment formats that evaluate live argumentation and critical thinking over conventional memory-heavy exams.

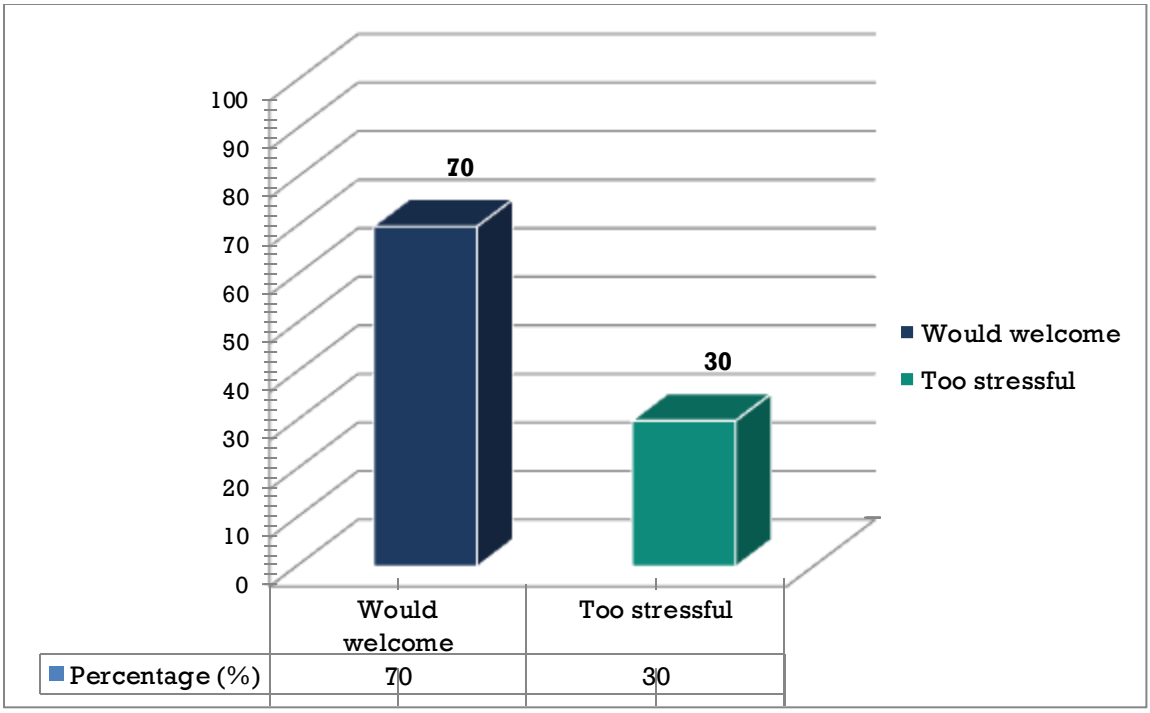


Figure 09: Student Acceptance of Alternative Debate-Based Evaluation

According to Figure 09, 70% of the students would welcome a transition toward communicative, debate-style exams, while 30% view this change as overly demanding or stressful. This demonstrates strong student interest in interactive formats that require real-time argumentation and critical thinking, highlighting an opportunity to transition away from traditional written exams toward dynamic assessment models.

Question 13: In your opinion, what is the biggest problem in this module?

This inquiry acts as direct problem-identification metric, allowing students to select what they perceive as the primary obstacle to optimal learning within the Civilization module.

Table 07

Student-Identified Problems in the Civilization Module

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
Too much memorization.	12	60%
Not enough discussion.	7	35%
The topics are not interesting.	1	5%
Total	20	100%

The diagnostic metrics presented in Table 07 locate the core difficulties within pedagogical implementation: 60% of the sample identifies excessive memorization requirements as the main issue, and 35% highlights the lack of discussion space. Only 5% expresses dissatisfaction with the content itself. This indicates that the core challenge lies not in the historical subject matter, but in its pedagogical delivery and assessment structure, which lean too heavily on factual recall rather than active dialogue.

Question 14: Please write your own comment about this module:

This final open-ended item provides qualitative depth to complement the preceding quantitative data, capturing the students' authentic reflections on their learning experiences and curriculum constraints in their own words.

A qualitative review of the written remarks provided by the twenty participants reveals three core themes: First, Appreciation of Content Interest and Intellectual Curiosity, where students described it as "a very interesting module that feeds your curiosity toward different cultures". Second, The Burden of Information Overload and Rote Learning, where learners noted there are "too many dates and names" and "too

much information that requires a lot of memorization." Third, Individual Variations in Motivation and Difficulty, capturing comments ranging from strong enthusiasm to substantial difficulty, noting it is "very difficult to understand and needs a lot of memorization and students who like extensive reading."

Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

This section provides a rigorous statistical and descriptive analysis of the data collected from university lecturers (N = 10) who actively instruct the Civilization module. The objective is to evaluate instructional orientations, analyze pedagogical structures, and discover how teachers perceive and respond to the cognitive habits of their postgraduate students.

Question 01: How do you usually teach Civilization in your classes?

This question investigates the primary methodological framework adopted by teachers of the civilization module, distinguishing whether instructors structurally configure their sessions to prioritize descriptive factual dissemination or analytical critique.

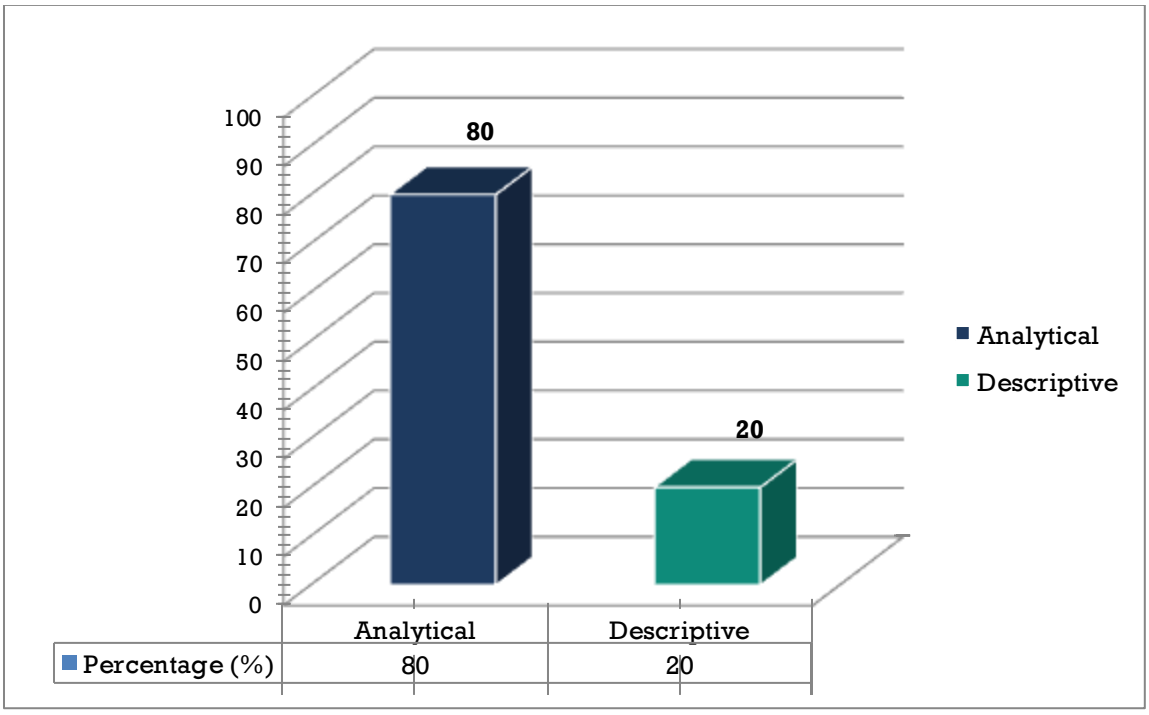


Figure 10: Predominant Instructional Approaches Maintained by Faculty

The empirical distribution presented in Figure 10 demonstrates that a significant majority of the surveyed teachers (80%) declare a strong alignment with an analytical instructional design, focusing explicitly on why historical events unfolded and the complex socio-political ideas behind them. Conversely, 20% of the sample reports maintaining a descriptive instructional approach that focused on names, dates, and explicit historical timelines. This shows a high level of theoretical readiness among faculty to foster critical thinking, although it reveals an operational friction when compared against students' reports of heavy factual accumulation.

Question 02: How often do you ask your students to compare the target culture (e.g., UK/USA) with their own culture?

This question assesses the implementation frequency of cross-cultural comparative didactics; looking at how often, teachers prompt students to link target Western history with native Algerian heritage to expand intercultural reflection.

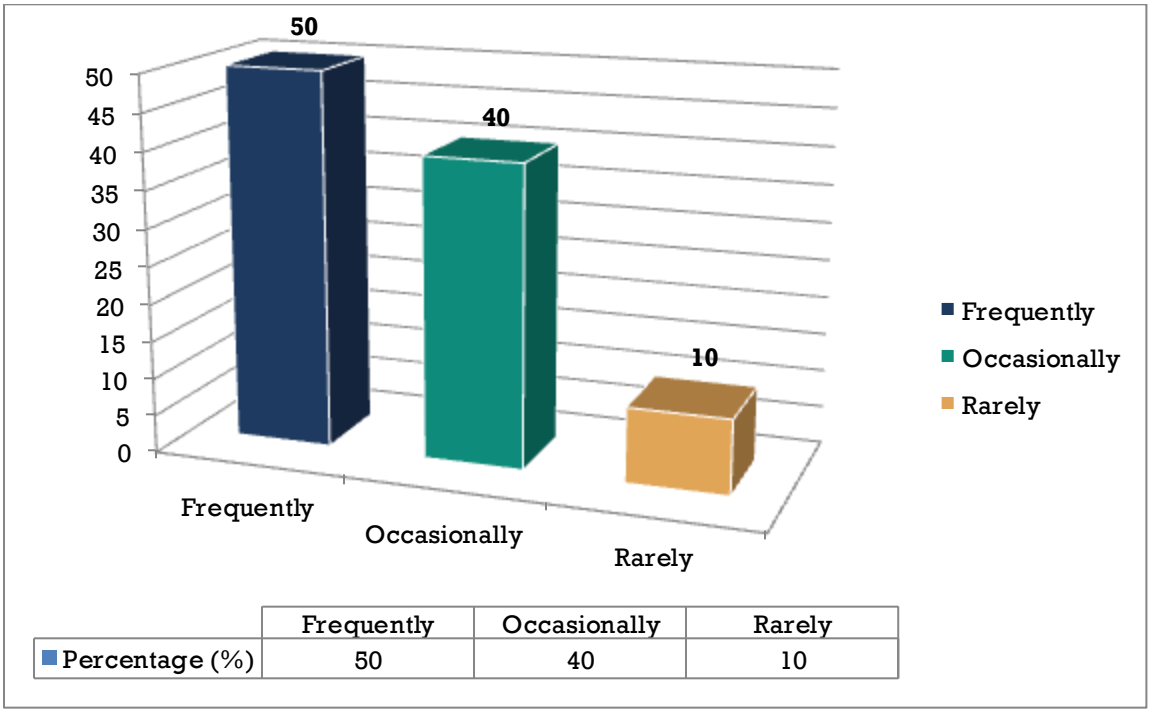


Figure 11: Frequency of Teacher-Prompted Intercultural Comparative Analysis

The metrics illustrated in Figure 11 establish that 50% of the instructors frequently integrate cross-cultural comparisons into their lesson delivery, 40% utilize this strategy occasionally, and a minor 10% rarely cross-reference historical movements with the domestic background. This data indicates that 90% of the faculty acknowledges the value of comparative pedagogy, creating a clear parallel with the student questionnaire data where a combined 70% reported performing these cross-cultural connections.

Question 03: Do you feel that students struggle to think critically because they are too used to memorizing lessons?

This prompt evaluates whether teachers notice the regressive impact of historical rote learning conditioning on their students' current capacity to engage in high-level independent reasoning.

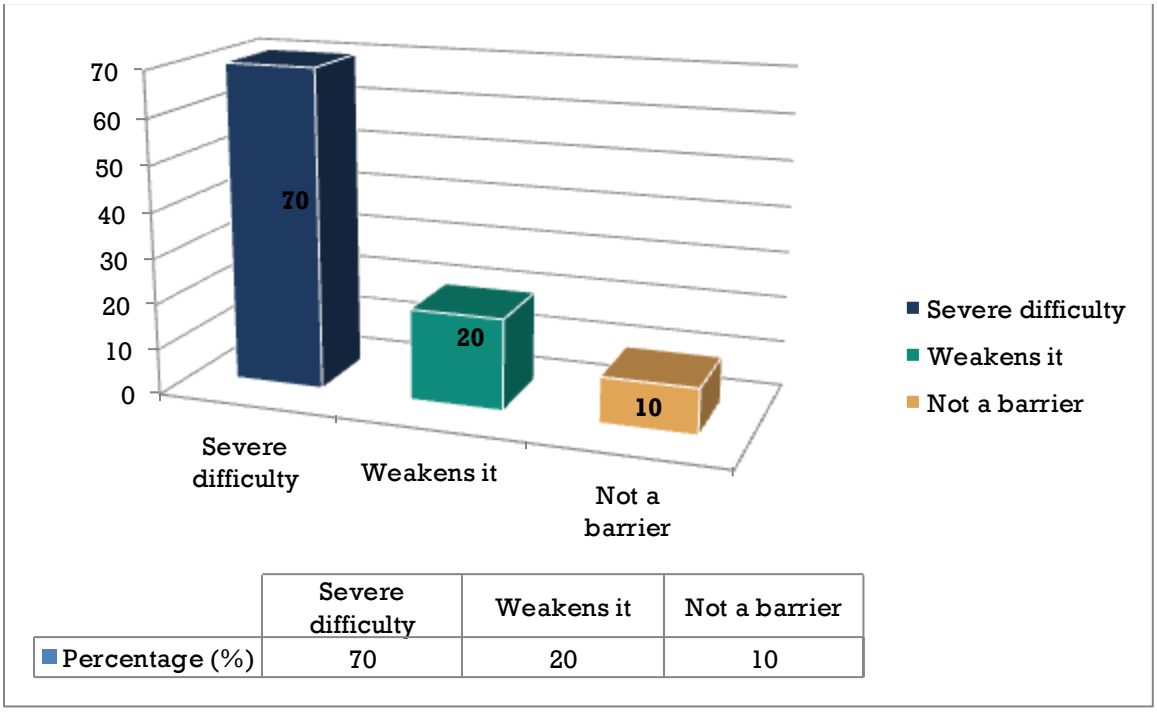


Figure 12: Teacher Perception of Rote Memorization Habit Interference

As shown in Figure 12, a prominent 70% of the faculty explicitly reports that students experience severe difficulties in critical processing due to deep-seated factual

memorization habits. Additionally, 20% notice this interference weakens their critical thinking, while only 10% state that it does not pose a major barrier. This high consensus (90% combined) strongly cross-references the students' own admission in item 11, where 70% felt heavily conditioned by prior schooling toward memorization, highlighting a substantial systemic challenge inside the university classroom.

Question 04: Do you agree that language students should be taught how to "think" about the content, not just learn the language?

This question explores the faculty's pedagogical philosophy, explicitly testing if teachers perceive cultural content modules as cognitive laboratories for thought development or merely as passive tools for linguistic acquisition.

Table 08

Teacher Agreement on Teaching Critical Thinking in EFL Courses

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
I agree.	10	100%
I do not agree.	0	0%
Total	10	100%

The perfect consensus (100%) documented in Table 08 reveals that all surveyed lecturers explicitly reject an isolated, purely structural approach to language teaching. They firmly agree that advanced EFL education must integrate cognitive training, treating the processing of content as a vital catalyst for independent intellectual maturation rather than simple linguistic practice.

Question 05: When you discuss a topic like the "Industrial Revolution," do you focus more on the socio-economic reasons than on just the dates?

This question serves as an operational test of the instructors' analytical focus, using a core historical milestone to examine whether lesson plans center around deep causal networks or descriptive timelines.

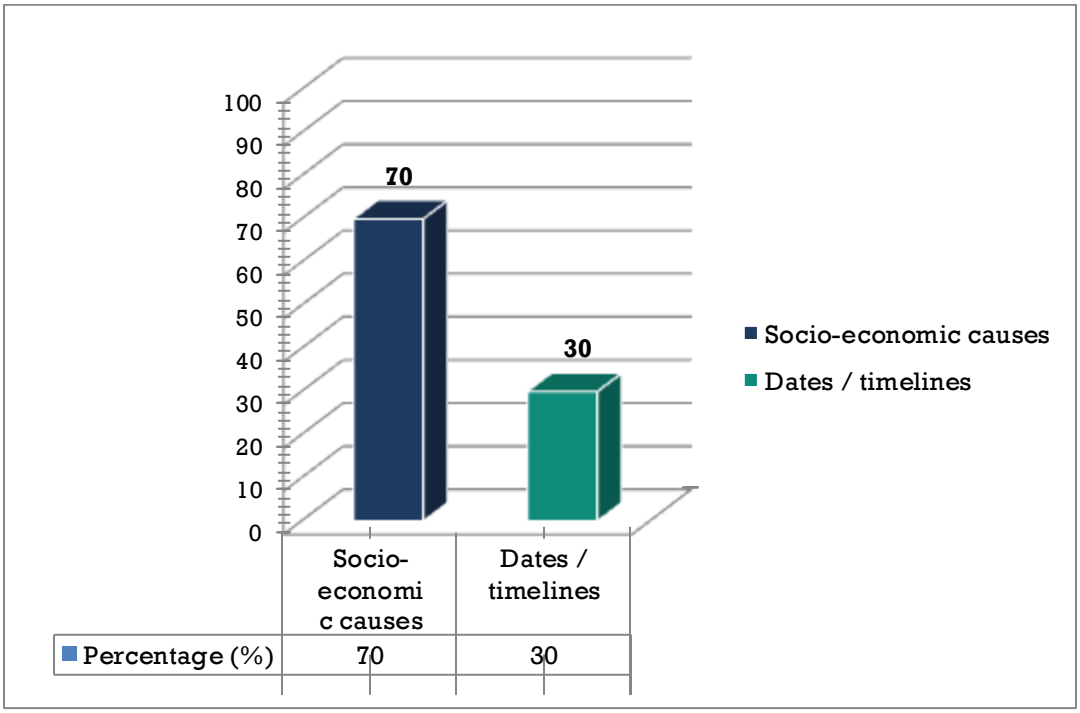


Figure 13: Instructional Focus Partition During Milestone Topics

According to Figure 13, 70% of the faculty members confirm that their teaching focus centers explicitly on the underlying socio-economic causes, class conflicts, and ideological shifts of historical movements rather than simple date accumulation. However, 30% acknowledge a structural focus on explicit timelines and factual events. This reveals that while thematic critique is highly valued, descriptive chronological constraints still influence a near third of the instructional delivery.

Question 06: Do you follow a specific model (like Byram's model) when you plan your Civilization lessons?

This query investigates the theoretical foundation of the teachers' instructional planning, testing if faculty systematically utilize established intercultural didactics models or rely on intuitive course assembly.

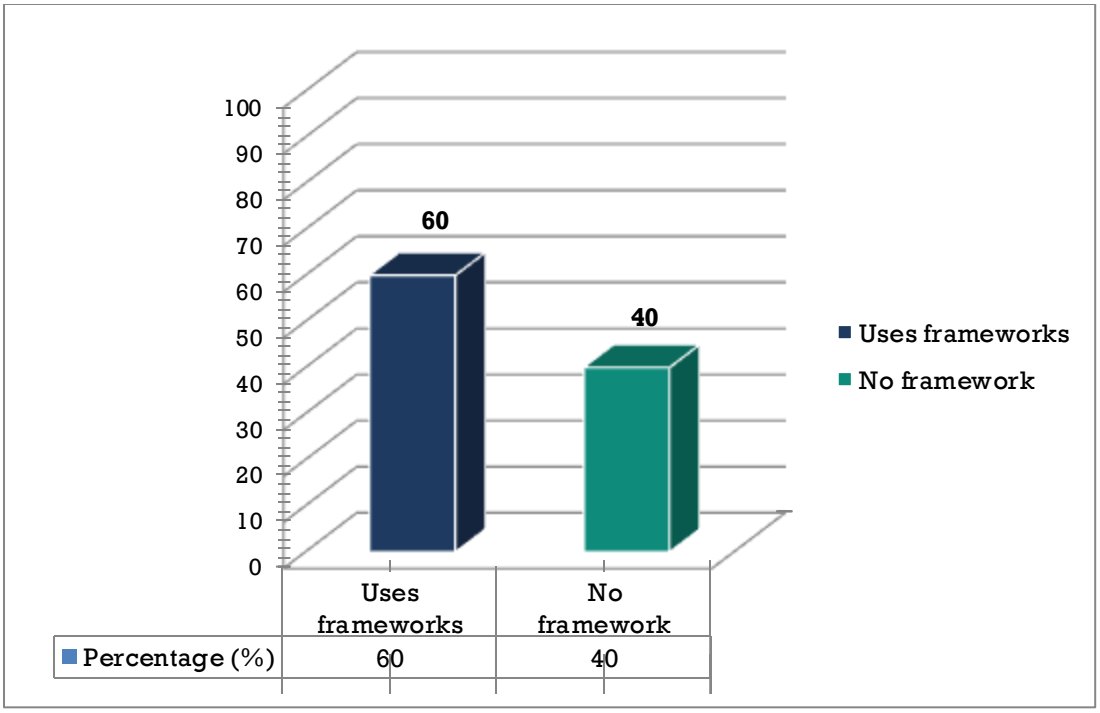


Figure 14: Utilization of Standardized Intercultural Didactics Models

The metric shown in Figure 14 shows an interesting division: 60% of the lecturers actively base their lesson structures on standardized pedagogical frameworks (such as Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence model), while 40% plan their lectures without relying on explicit theoretical structures. This reveals a need to strengthen systematic, model-driven didactics training across the department to ensure uniform critical outcomes.

Question 07: How do you perceive your students' ability to check if a historical source is biased or credible?

This question cross-references the student text-analysis diagnostics, asking faculty to provide an objective evaluation of their learners' practical ability to detect ideological bias and source subjectivity.

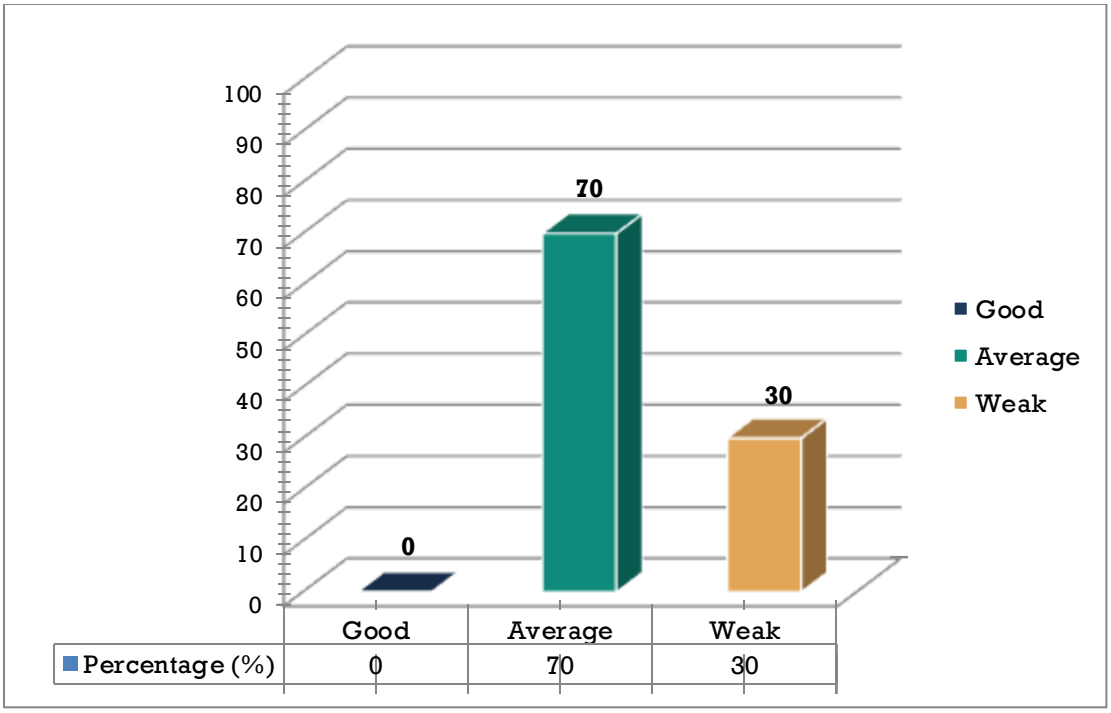


Figure 15: Faculty Evaluation of Student Source Verification Skills

The diagnostic values illustrated in Figure 15 demonstrate that 70% of the teachers rate their postgraduate students' source verification capacities as merely average, while 30% evaluate it as definitively weak. Critically, 0% of the instructors evaluate their students as possessing good text-bias detection skills. This pattern strongly confirms the students' own feedback in Table 03, where 60% confessed uncertainty regarding text-bias identification, demonstrating an urgent need for targeted training in critical reading sub-skills.

Question 08: In your exams, do you give marks for "how the students analyze" rather than just what they remember?

This question analyzes assessment design, examining if institutional marks are structurally awarded for critical processing and argumentative synthesis or for factual reproduction.

Table 09

Teacher Assessment Practices: Rewarding Analysis over Memorization

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
Yes	9	90%
No	1	10%
Total	10	100%

As detailed in Table 09, a dominant majority of 90% of the faculty asserts that their grading matrices explicitly reward the depth of student analysis, logical reasoning, and independent argumentation. Only 10% reports prioritizing factual precision. This high proportion aligns with the students' perception in Figure 07, indicating that both groups recognize analytical depth as the primary expectation for postgraduate academic success.

Question 09: Do you think that doing deep analysis in class actually helps students improve their English (vocabulary/grammar)?

This item checks for a positive correlation between higher-order cognitive processing and linguistic enrichment, verifying if deep analysis advances core communicative capacities.

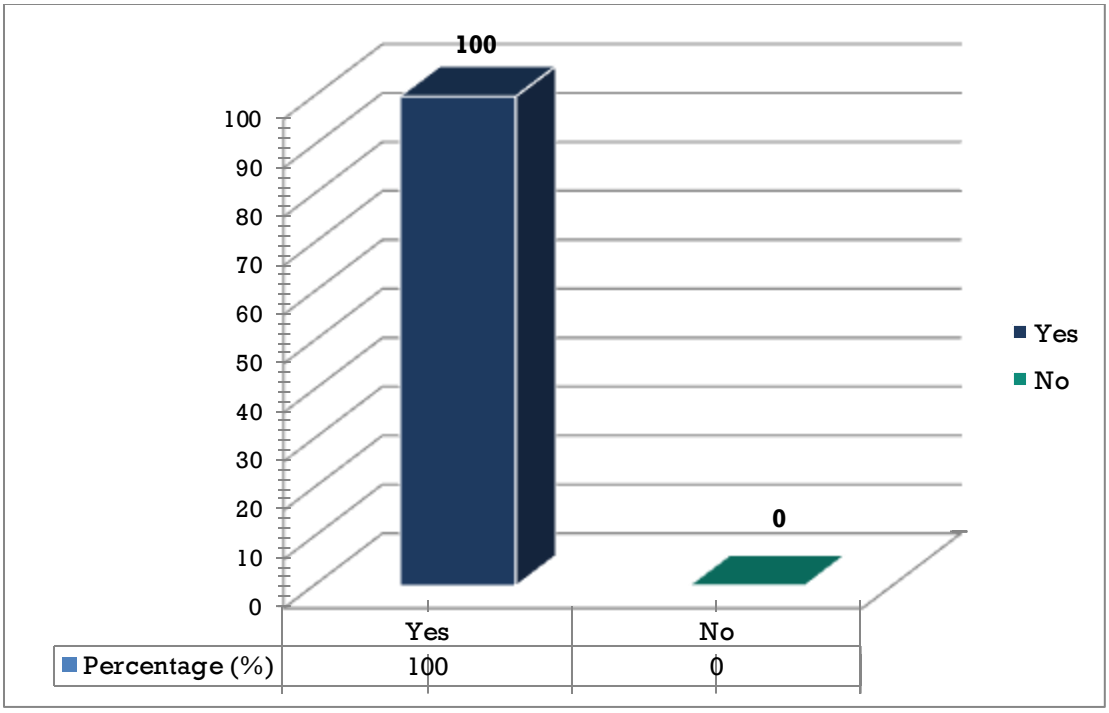


Figure 16: Teacher Perception of Cognitive Analysis as Improving Linguistic Proficiency

The total consensus (100%) displayed in Figure 16 proves that faculty members strongly endorse the cognitive approach to language acquisition. They maintain that processing complex, multi-dimensional historical arguments provides an excellent context that pushes students to naturally master sophisticated vocabulary, advanced syntax, and academic grammatical structures far better than isolated language drill methods.

Question 10: Do you think we need to change "Western" ways of critical thinking to make them fit our local students better?

This question addresses the socio-cultural adaptation of pedagogy, exploring if instructors perceive a need to modify Eurocentric critical models to align with the local sociocultural and religious background of Algerian learners.

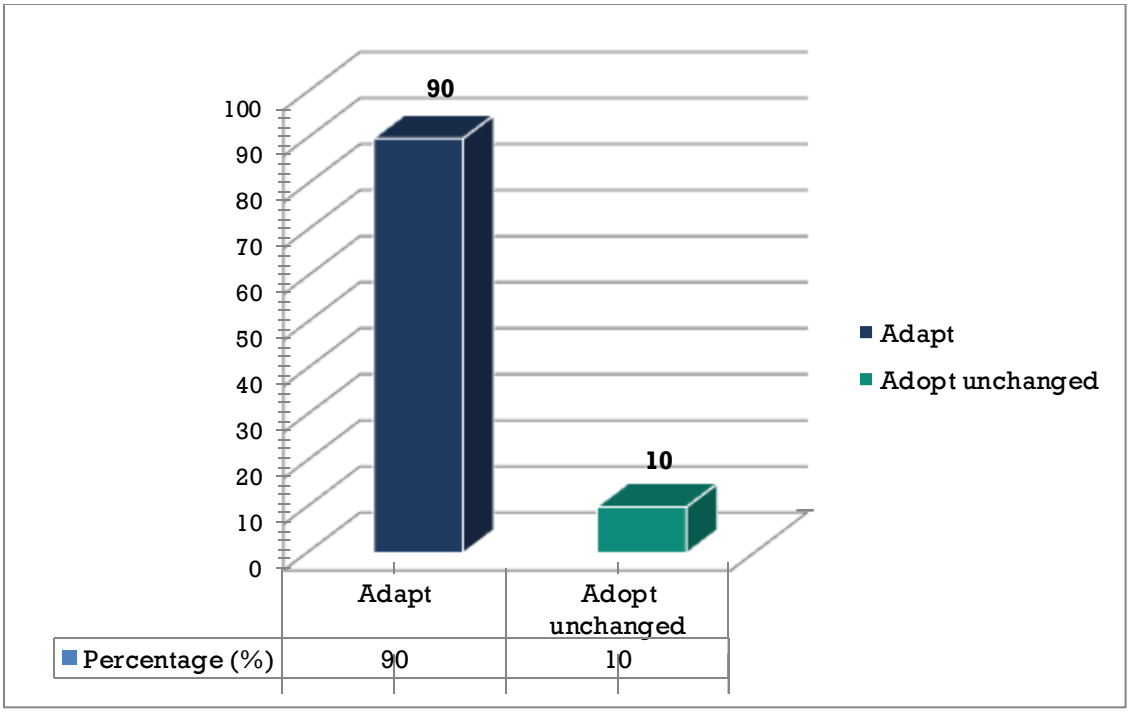


Figure 17: Perceived Necessity to Adapt Western Critical Frameworks

The statistical feedback in Figure 17 establishes that 90% of the instructors believe that standard Western critical thinking models must be adapted to fit the local sociocultural reality of Algerian students, while 10% support adopting these models unchanged. This shows that the majority views critical thinking not as a rigid Western template, but as a flexible skill that must respect the local context to be effectively received.

Question 11: Do you prefer to act as a "facilitator" who helps students to find the answers by themselves?

This final quantitative item gauges the teachers' preferred professional identity, evaluating their willingness to replace traditional lecture delivery with an active student-centered, guiding role.

Table 10

Teachers' Preferred Professional Role in the Classroom

Options	Frequency (*N*)	Percentage (%)
Yes	10	100%
No	0	0%
Total	10	100%

The complete agreement (100%) recorded in Table 10 demonstrates an unanimous professional preference among the faculty to serve as strategic facilitators of learning rather than absolute sources of knowledge. This absolute preference provides an ideal foundation for implementing progressive, student-centered didactics within the department.

Question 12: In your opinion, what is the best way to stop students from just "memorizing" and start making them "analyze" more in Civilization class?

This open-ended qualitative question allowed the ten lecturers to suggest practical solutions for breaking students' rote learning habits and fostering robust analytical engagement.

A qualitative thematic analysis of the faculty's responses reveals a primary emphasis on Assessment Overhaul and Redesign. A prominent lecturer provided a comprehensive blueprint, stating:

'The best way to shift students from memorizing to analyzing is to change the questions I ask from 'What happened?' to 'Why did it matter?' and 'Could it have gone differently?' Redesigning assessments is crucial—if tests still reward memorization, nothing will change. Once students realize that knowing dates alone won't earn them a good grade but using those dates to build a case will, the entire classroom culture shifts naturally."

Other instructors reinforced this strategy, suggesting that departments must *"stop direct questions in exams"* and actively "ask critical and analytical questions while allowing necessary documents" (open-book testing). Furthermore, teachers emphasized the integration of Inquiry Based and Active Pedagogies, advocating for "opening debates to let students discuss aspects from the lecture," utilizing "problem-solving techniques and inquiry-based methods that give freedom of interpretation," and "establishing classroom discussions, encouraging presentations, and incorporating roleplay debates where historical knowledge becomes evidence for an argument rather than an endpoint."

Question 13: What is the most difficult thing for you when you try to teach students to be open-minded toward a foreign culture?

This final open-ended prompt explores the primary cultural, cognitive, and systemic obstacles teachers face when trying to cultivate intercultural empathy and open-mindedness among learners.

Thematic review of the data reveals that the most prominent obstacle is *Sociocultural and Religious Boundary Friction*. Instructors explicitly noted that the biggest difficulty lies in "teaching students to objectively understand and analyze foreign customs, traditions, and routines that may directly contradict Islamic faith and ethics." Faculty highlighted that students often operate with "very limited religious beliefs as teenagers and an inability to comprehend the meaning behind some cultures." A lecturer thoroughly deconstructed this socio-cognitive barrier, noting:

The most difficult thing is breaking through the instinct to judge other cultures by one's own cultural standards—students almost automatically label foreign practices as 'strange' or 'wrong' before trying to understand them in context. Getting them to separate understanding from agreeing is a constant battle, because many feel that

empathizing with a foreign culture means betraying their own values. The hardest wall to break is the emotional comfort of certainty, the feeling that their own culture's way is simply the natural, obvious, or correct way to be human.

To counter this, teachers noted the difficulty of "making them aware that to be open-minded towards a foreign culture is not necessarily adopting its moral values" and that learners must be guided to "focus on accepting cultural diversity and living in harmony" without experiencing identity friction. Finally, secondary factors such as a general "reluctance to change, awareness gaps, lack of resources," and the challenge of getting students to "think in English, not Arabic" were highlighted as persistent operational difficulties.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present chapter has provided a detailed analytical examination of the civilization classroom by integrating and cross-referencing the perspectives of both Master 2 students (N = 20) and faculty instructors (N = 10) at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf. The data reveals a profound, systemic alignment accompanied by a significant operational paradox. Both student and teacher populations maintain an exceptionally positive attitude toward the integration of critical thinking, explicitly recognizing analytical processing as the definitive pillar for advanced academic development, thereby validating the foundational hypotheses of this study.

However, the data also highlights an institutional challenge: while 100% of the teachers prefer a facilitating role and 95% of the students desire logical processing, learners remain heavily blocked by an information-heavy curriculum and a prior schooling background that conditioned 70% of them toward rote recall. This friction is most apparent in the text analysis diagnostics, where 70% of the teachers rate

student source verification skills as merely average and 60% of the students confess uncertainty in detecting ideological bias. Ultimately, these findings establish that transitioning away from traditional descriptive structures requires a systematic overhaul of exam parameters and curriculum design. This dense descriptive and analytical foundation will serve as the direct baseline for the theoretical interpretations, pedagogical implications, and actionable stakeholder recommendations for the next and final chapter.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter serves as the interpretive and applied culmination of the present dissertation. Having established a robust empirical foundation through the quantitative and qualitative data analyzed in Chapter Four, the discussion that follows aims to situate the findings of this research within the broader scholarly landscape of EFL pedagogy, intercultural education, and critical thinking theory. The central concern of this investigation has been to examine whether and how cultural content instruction within the Civilization module contributes to the cultivation of higher-order analytical competencies among EFL learners.

This chapter is structured around four interconnected objectives. First, the core research questions and their corresponding hypotheses are revisited and evaluated against the empirical evidence gathered from both student and teacher questionnaires. Second, the pedagogical implications arising from those findings are examined in terms of their practical consequences for classroom instruction. Third, concrete and context-sensitive recommendations are formulated for three distinct stakeholder groups: university lecturers, postgraduate students, and educational policymakers at the institutional and ministerial levels. Fourth, avenues for future academic inquiry are identified, and the boundaries of the present study are transparently acknowledged. Together, these components aim to translate empirical observation into actionable pedagogical insight.

Discussion of the Research Questions and Hypotheses

First Research Question and Hypothesis One

The first research question asked to what extent do the EFL instructors and learners at the postgraduate level hold favorable attitudes toward the deliberate integration of critical thinking within Civilization modules? The corresponding hypothesis predicted that both groups would demonstrate a strong, affirmative orientation, viewing analytical engagement not as a peripheral curricular feature but as an essential academic requirement.

The data collected from the student questionnaire provides compelling support for this hypothesis. A striking 95% of Master 2 participants reported that their preferred approach to studying historical content involves reconstructing the internal logic of events and expressing that understanding through their own linguistic formulations, rather than reproducing course materials verbatim. This finding reveals a learner profile that demonstrates a distinct, self-reported inclination toward conceptual depth rather than surface-level reproduction. Consequently, these results challenge the widespread assumption that EFL learners, particularly those operating in non-Western educational contexts, are inherently passive or rote-oriented by disposition.

This orientation is further reinforced by the students' attitudes toward assessment formats. When asked whether they would prefer a debate-style examination over a conventional written test, 70% expressed clear enthusiasm for the communicative, argument-driven format. This preference is pedagogically significant: it signals that learners are not merely receptive to critical thinking instruction in theory, but are actively seeking institutional structures that reward genuine intellectual engagement. From a didactic standpoint, this readiness constitutes a valuable starting

point for curriculum reform, since motivational alignment between learner expectations and pedagogical design is widely recognized in the literature as a prerequisite for effective higher-order skill development.

On the teacher side, the parallel evidence is equally unambiguous. All ten surveyed lecturers unanimously agreed that language instruction at the advanced level must extend beyond structural linguistic competence to encompass the explicit development of critical reasoning. Furthermore, 100% declared a professional preference for a facilitative rather than transmissive pedagogical role, indicating that the faculty's theoretical orientation is fully compatible with the shift toward student-centered, analytically driven instruction. Hypothesis One is therefore empirically validated: both populations not only accept the value of critical thinking within the Civilization module but actively advocate for its prioritization.

Second Research Question and Hypothesis Two

The second research question examined whether transitioning from a fact-centered instructional model toward one grounded in critical analysis genuinely enhances learners' capacity to engage with cultural and historical content at a higher cognitive level. The associated hypothesis proposed that replacing rote memorization with thematic, evaluative inquiry allows students to develop the analytical and evaluative skills required for advanced academic performance.

Evidence confirms the validity of this hypothesis in principle while simultaneously exposing a substantial implementation gap that prevents it from being realized in practice. The student questionnaire data reveals a clear fragmentation in learners' analytical habits: when asked whether they actively question the underlying causes of historical events, only a minor proportion of 40% responded affirmatively, while 45% engaged in this causal inquiry only occasionally. Crucially, a notable 15%

of respondents explicitly stated that they never question historical developments, preferring instead to restrict their learning to purely descriptive factual retrieval. This statistical distribution indicates that while an implicit curiosity exists among some learners, a major segment of the student population remains heavily anchored in passive, memory-based learning habits, highlighting an urgent need for structured pedagogical interventions.

On the other hand, the structural conditions of the current curriculum actively inhibit the expression of this latent analytical capacity. Eighty percent of the surveyed students identified the factual density of the Civilization syllabus as excessive, reporting that the volume of names, dates, and historical timelines creates a cognitive overload that compels them to revert to memorization strategies simply to meet assessment demands. This tension between the students' preferred learning approach and the curricular structure they are required to navigate produces what might be described as a pedagogical contradiction: learners who aspire to think analytically are systematically conditioned by the institutional environment to think factually.

The most telling evidence of this contradiction emerges from the text-analysis diagnostics. Despite being Master-level students enrolled in an advanced humanities program, 60% of the participants reported uncertainty about their practical ability to identify bias, ideological framing, or subjective positioning within historical texts. Only 35% expressed confident proficiency in this area. This finding is not merely a data point; it represents a meaningful diagnostic failure. The capacity to read critically — to interrogate the assumptions embedded in a historical account, to distinguish evidence from interpretation, and to recognize the sociopolitical interests that shape the construction of knowledge — is arguably the most fundamental skill that a Civilization module should cultivate. Its widespread absence among postgraduate

learners indicates that the current curriculum is not fulfilling this foundational pedagogical purpose.

The data collected from the teachers'questionnairecorroborates this diagnosis. When asked to evaluate their students' ability to verify source credibility and detect ideological bias, 70% of faculty rated it as average and 30% as weak. Notably, no instructor assessed their learners as performing well in this domain. This cross-population consensus underscores that the problem is structural rather than individual: it is not a question of student ability or motivation, but of a curriculum that has not been designed to systematically build these competencies. Hypothesis Two is therefore validated as a pedagogical imperative — the transition to an analytical framework would demonstrably enhance learner outcomes — while the data simultaneously makes clear that achieving this transition requires deliberate, coordinated intervention at the curricular and institutional levels.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings presented above carry significant implications for how Civilization modules are conceptualized, delivered, and evaluated within Algerian university English departments. These implications extend beyond questions of classroom technique to challenge the foundational assumptions that currently govern the design of postgraduate humanities education.

The purpose of cultural content instruction represents one of the most significant implications. The data reveals that the Civilization module, as currently implemented, operates primarily as a vehicle for historical information transfer rather than as an environment for the development of critical cultural literacy. When students accumulate extensive knowledge of historical events but remain unable to interrogate the ideological assumptions embedded in those accounts, the module is

producing graduates who are historically informed but not analytically equipped. In an academic context that increasingly demands the capacity for independent scholarly reasoning, this represents a significant gap between institutional output and professional expectation.

A second implication concerns the role of the educator. The unanimous preference expressed by faculty for a facilitative pedagogical identity — a preference that all ten surveyed teachers endorsed — stands in productive tension with the lecture-dominated delivery format that currently characterizes a substantial portion of classroom time. If 25% of students report that their sessions leave no room for the expression of personal perspectives, then the facilitative ideal articulated by instructors has not yet been translated into consistent facilitative practice. Bridging this gap requires more than individual pedagogical commitment; it demands a structural reconfiguration of how classroom time is allocated, how participation is incentivized, and how the affective climate of the learning environment is managed.

A third and particularly significant implication concerns the sociocultural dimensions of critical thinking instruction in the Algerian context. The finding that 90% of faculty members believe that Western critical thinking frameworks require local adaptation before they can be effectively applied reflects an awareness that cognitive pedagogy is never culturally neutral. Algerian students bring to the classroom a specific set of epistemological habits, value systems, and identity commitments that shape how they engage with foreign cultural content. Instructors who reported that students sometimes struggle to separate analytical understanding from personal or religious agreement are identifying a genuine pedagogical challenge that cannot be addressed through curricular redesign alone. It requires the cultivation

of a classroom culture in which intellectual engagement and personal identity are understood as distinct — and in which exploring an idea does not imply endorsing it.

Finally, the data points to a systemic implication regarding assessment. The persistent gap between the analytical orientation that faculty claim to reward and the memorization-driven behavior that students continue to exhibit suggests that the evaluation instruments currently in use are not effectively signaling the cognitive priorities that instructors endorse. If assessments continue to reward factual recall, students will continue to invest their study time in memorization, regardless of what they are told in lectures. Meaningful pedagogical change therefore cannot be achieved through instruction alone; it must be accompanied by a fundamental reform of how learning is measured and credentialed.

Recommendations

Recommendations for University Lecturers

Given the findings outlined above, the following recommendations are addressed to instructors responsible for delivering the Civilization module at the postgraduate level. These suggestions are grounded directly in the empirical evidence gathered from both student and teacher questionnaires and are intended to be practically actionable within existing institutional constraints.

Integrate systematic critical reading instruction into the syllabus of the module. Since 60% of students and 100% of teachers agree that learners lack reliable skills for detecting textual bias and evaluating source credibility, explicit training in discourse analysis should become a recurring feature of the Civilization classroom. Rather than limiting instruction to factual content transmission, educators should explicitly train students to uncover implicit assumptions in texts, critically examine the ideological orientations shaping historical narratives, and draw clear distinctions between what is

objectively reported and what is subjectively interpreted. Practical activities such as comparative text analysis, source triangulation exercises, and guided close reading of primary documents can serve as effective instructional tools for this purpose.

Redesign assessment instruments to prioritize analytical performance over factual recall. The persistent gap between students' stated preference for conceptual understanding and their actual examination behavior reflects the powerful influence that evaluation forms the primary expectation at the postgraduate level.

Allocate structured time within each session for student-led dialogue and debate: Given the finding that only 40% of students consistently employ analytical strategies to question historical causation, explicit instructional changes are required. Replacing traditional, memory-based exam questions with open-ended analytical prompts — such as asking students to evaluate competing historical interpretations, construct an evidence-based argument, or assess the ideological positioning of a given source — would send a clear and consistent signal that critical engagement is the primary benchmark for academic success, effectively forcing the remaining majority of learners to abandon passive reproduction.

The finding that students are only occasionally invited to express personal perspectives, and that 25% report experiencing purely teacher-dominated sessions, indicates that dialogic practice is not yet systematically embedded in the instructional routine. Incorporating structured debate segments, Socratic discussion formats, or student-led seminar presentations would create regular opportunities for learners to practice articulating, defending, and revising their analytical positions in real time.

Cultivate a psychologically safe classroom environment that normalizes intellectual disagreement. The fact that one quarter of students prefer to remain silent rather than voice alternative perspectives suggests the presence of affective barriers

that limit critical participation. Instructors can address this by explicitly modeling respectful disagreement, inviting challenges to their own interpretations, and framing intellectual conflict as a productive feature of academic inquiry rather than a source of interpersonal tension.

Draw deliberately on cross-cultural comparative pedagogy by connecting target historical content to students' native Algerian heritage: The questionnaire data reveals that while 40% of students consistently compare Western history with their own, a notable 30% do so only occasionally, and another 30% analyze Western civilization in complete isolation. To address this, instructors should systematically prompt students to examine parallels and contrasts between British or American historical developments and the Algerian historical experience. Moving beyond sporadic comparisons and integrating structured intercultural tasks would deeply enhance analytical engagement, helping the 60% of shifting or passive learners make abstract historical processes personally and culturally meaningful.

Expand the range of instructional materials to include diverse, multi-perspective sources. Relying exclusively on a single textual handout limits students' exposure to the variety of interpretive frameworks through which historical events can be understood. Incorporating documentary footage, political speeches, editorial cartoons, and secondary sources representing contrasting scholarly positions would enrich the analytical environment and equip students to navigate the interpretive complexity that characterizes serious historical scholarship.

Recommendations for Postgraduate Students

The following recommendations are directed at EFL learners enrolled in Civilization modules. They are premised on the recognition that meaningful

intellectual development requires active, self-directed engagement that extends beyond the formal boundaries of the classroom.

Adopt an interrogative stance toward all historical texts encountered in the course. Rather than treating written sources as transparent records of what occurred, students should habitually ask who produced a given account, under what historical and ideological circumstances, and in whose interest the narrative was constructed. Developing this habit of critical inquiry is not an optional intellectual refinement; it is a foundational competency for postgraduate-level scholarship.

Invest in building independent reading habits that go beyond assigned course materials. Students who consult a wider range of historical sources — including scholarly articles, edited primary document collections, and secondary literature offering divergent interpretations — are better positioned to develop the kind of multi-perspective thinking that advanced academic work requires. Forty percent of students already engage consistently in causal inquiry; expanding the reading environment would give that curiosity richer material to work with.

Participate actively and consistently in classroom discussions rather than defaulting to silence. The 25% of students who reported discomfort with expressing disagreement should recognize that intellectual risk-taking is an essential component of academic development. Voicing a tentative or unconventional interpretation, even imperfectly, contributes more to critical skill formation than passive attendance. Academic discourse is, by nature, a practice domain, and competence in it is developed through repeated participation rather than observation.

Practice connecting Western historical content to the Algerian national experience as a deliberate analytical strategy. Drawing parallels between, for instance, the socioeconomic dynamics of industrialization in nineteenth-century Britain and the

transformations produced by the French colonialism in Algeria is not merely an exercise in local relevance; it is a methodologically sound form of comparative historical analysis that sharpens both critical thinking and intercultural awareness.

Approach examination preparation as an exercise in argumentation rather than memorization: Given that an overwhelming 90% of faculty members explicitly affirm that they award marks for how students analyze historical content rather than what they merely remember, learners must fundamentally shift their study habits. Students who invest their preparation time in constructing coherent interpretive frameworks, practicing the articulation of evidence-based arguments, and anticipating counterpositions align themselves directly with teacher expectations. Conversely, relying exclusively on committing names and dates to memory risks academic underperformance, as the vast majority of evaluators systematically prioritize analytical depth over factual reproduction.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Higher Education and University Administration

The structural conditions that shape instruction in the Civilization module are ultimately determined at the institutional and policy level. The following recommendations are therefore addressed to university administrations and the Ministry of Higher Education, whose decisions regarding curriculum design, faculty development, and assessment policy have system-wide consequences.

Initiate a comprehensive and evidence-based revision of the official Civilization module curriculum. The current canvas, as perceived by 80% of surveyed students, imposes a factual burden that leaves insufficient space for analytical inquiry. The revised curriculum should explicitly incorporate critical thinking benchmarks as terminal learning outcomes, define the analytical competencies that students are

expected to demonstrate upon module completion, and reduce the volume of descriptive content that currently dominates the syllabus.

Establish institutional frameworks that officially authorize and encourage alternative assessment formats. If individual lecturers who wish to replace conventional written examinations with oral debates, research portfolios, or analytical project assignments are constrained by administrative inflexibility, the pedagogical reforms recommended above cannot be sustainably implemented. Department administrations should create formal pathways through which progressive assessment models can be adopted, evaluated, and scaled.

Fund and organize regular professional development programs for EFL faculty members focused specifically on critical pedagogy, intercultural didactics, and student-centered instructional design. The finding that 40% of instructors do not base their lesson planning on explicit theoretical frameworks indicates an unevenness in pedagogical preparation that systematic training could address. Workshops designed around models such as Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence framework, or structured around the practical implementation of inquiry-based and Socratic methods, would strengthen the theoretical and practical toolkit available to instructors across the department.

Increase the number of specialized faculty available to teach the Civilization module. One of the structural constraints identified in this study was the limited pool of instructors with specialized expertise in this domain, which restricts both the diversity of instructional approaches and the feasibility of conducting large-scale comparative research. Recruiting and retaining qualified specialists is a prerequisite for the sustained improvement of module quality.

Promote research into the relationship between Civilization module outcomes and broader postgraduate academic performance. Institutional investment in internal research that tracks how analytical skill development in content modules relates to thesis writing quality, literature review competence, and overall academic achievement would provide evidence-based justification for the curricular reforms recommended above and strengthen the case for their prioritization within the university's strategic agenda.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The present investigation, while yielding a rich and internally coherent set of findings, is necessarily bounded by specific methodological, temporal, and institutional parameters. The following research directions are proposed to extend, deepen, and generalize the insights generated by this study.

Future researchers should design and implement longitudinal experimental studies that introduce structured critical thinking frameworks — such as the Paul-Elder critical thinking model or Richard Paul's elements of reasoning — into Civilization classrooms over an extended instructional period. Employing pre-test and post-test measures, such studies would allow for the direct empirical assessment of cognitive growth, providing evidence that the current investigation, as a cross-sectional diagnostic, was not designed to generate.

A multi-institutional comparative study conducted across English departments at universities distributed across the different regions of Algeria would be of considerable value in determining whether the pedagogical paradox identified at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf represents a localized institutional pattern or a national systemic condition. Such a study would require coordinated data collection

instruments and a sufficiently large and geographically diverse sample to support statistically robust generalizations.

Researchers should investigate the specific relationship between critical reading competencies developed within the Civilization module and postgraduate students' performance in the academic writing and research methodology dimensions of their Master thesis work. Given that literature review writing, source evaluation, and argumentative synthesis are central requirements of postgraduate research, understanding the extent to which Civilization instruction either supports or fails to support these capacities would have significant practical implications for curriculum alignment.

A qualitative ethnographic study incorporating sustained classroom observation, student learning journals, and in-depth teacher interviews would provide a level of descriptive granularity that questionnaire-based research, by design, cannot achieve. Such a study would be particularly well suited to examining the sociocultural and affective dimensions of critical thinking instruction in the Algerian EFL context — dimensions that the present study has identified as significant but has only been able to analyze at a surface level.

Given the near-universal faculty consensus that Western critical thinking frameworks require adaptation to fit the local sociocultural reality of Algerian learners, there is a pressing need for theoretical and empirical work that specifically addresses the construction of culturally responsive critical pedagogy models for Arabic and North African EFL contexts. Such research would contribute not only to local educational practice but also to the broader international literature on the cultural position of critical thinking instruction.

Limitations of the Study

Any research project conducted within real institutional conditions is subject to constraints that qualify the scope and generalizability of its findings. The present study is no exception, and intellectual honesty requires that these limitations be acknowledged explicitly rather than minimized.

The most significant methodological limitation concerns sample size and institutional scope. The student sample (N = 20) and teacher sample (N = 10) were drawn exclusively from a single academic department at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf, during a single academic year. While the data generated within this bounded context is internally rich and analytically productive, the localized nature of the sample makes it inappropriate to generalize the findings directly to the national population of Algerian EFL postgraduate learners. The patterns identified here should be treated as contextually specific diagnostic indicators rather than statistically representative conclusions.

A second limitation concerns the restricted availability of specialized Civilization faculty within the target department. The small number of instructors with dedicated expertise in this module meant that the teacher sample, while sufficient for exploratory purposes, did not provide the breadth of methodological diversity that a larger and more varied faculty population would have enabled. This constraint also limited the feasibility of conducting a comparative analysis of different instructional styles within the same institutional setting.

Third, the study relied primarily on self-reported data gathered through closed and open-ended questionnaire items. Self-report instruments, while widely used and methodologically legitimate, are subject to well-documented limitations including social desirability bias, the potential gap between stated beliefs and actual behavior,

and the interpretive constraints imposed by fixed response categories. Students who reported preferring analytical engagement, for instance, may not consistently enact that preference when examination pressure incentivizes memorization. The absence of a classroom observation component means that the relationship between reported and enacted practice could not be directly assessed.

Finally, the time constraints of the academic research calendar prevented the integration of an experimental design or a longitudinal follow-up phase. The study therefore captures a synchronic snapshot of the pedagogical situation rather than a dynamic account of change over time. These limitations do not undermine the validity of the findings within their appropriate scope but do define the boundaries within which these findings should be interpreted and applied.

Conclusion

This chapter has brought together the empirical evidence gathered across the investigation to construct a coherent and practically oriented interpretive account of the relationship between cultural content instruction and critical thinking development in the EFL postgraduate context. The analysis has confirmed that bothstudents and their instructors at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf share a clear and genuine commitment to the value of analytical engagement within the Civilization module. This convergence of pedagogical values between learners and teachers is a resource of real significance; it establishes the motivational and attitudinal foundation upon which meaningful curriculum reform can be built.

At the same time, the data has exposed a structural contradiction of considerable urgency. The aspiration toward critical thinking that students and teachers alike articulate is systematically frustrated by a curriculum that remains organized around the accumulation of factual information and an assessment architecture that has not

been sufficiently redesigned to reward the analytical capacities it nominally endorses. The most concrete manifestation of this contradiction is the widespread inability of postgraduate learners to identify bias and ideological framing in historical texts — a deficiency confirmed independently by both the students' self-assessments and the faculty's pedagogical evaluations.

Resolving this contradiction is not a task that can be accomplished through isolated pedagogical adjustments at the level of individual classroom practice. It requires coordinated action across multiple levels of the educational system: a willingness among instructors to restructure their sessions around genuine dialogic inquiry; an institutional readiness to authorize and support progressive forms of assessment; and a policy commitment at the ministerial level to revise the official curricular guidelines that currently define the module's scope and learning outcomes. When these conditions are met, the Civilization module can fulfill its true academic potential — not as a repository of historical knowledge, but as a laboratory for the cultivation of the independent, critically informed thinking that postgraduate education in the humanities is ultimately designed to produce.

This dissertation has aimed to contribute to that larger project by providing an empirically grounded, contextually sensitive, and practically actionable account of the pedagogical challenges and possibilities that currently characterize the Civilization classroom in one Algerian university department. It is hoped that the findings, recommendations, and research directions presented here will prove useful to the scholars, educators, and policymakers who are working, in their respective capacities, toward a more analytically enriched future for EFL education in Algeria and beyond.

References

Abrami, P. C., Bernard, R. M., Borokhovski, E., Wade, A., Surkes, M. A., Tamim, R., & Zhang, D. (2008). Instructional interventions affecting critical thinking skills and dispositions: A stage 1 meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, *78*(4), 1102–1134.

Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. Longman.

Atkinson, D. (1997). A critical approach to critical thinking in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, *31*(1), 71–94.

Baghoussi, M. (2021). Critical thinking in Algerian secondary school EFL classes: Expectations and reality. *Arab World English Journal*, *12*(3), 97–110.

Behar-Horenstein, L. S., & Niu, L. (2011). Teaching critical thinking skills in higher education: A review of the literature. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, *8*(2), 25–41.

Bloom, B. S., Engelhart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook I: Cognitive domain*. David McKay Company.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2008). *From foreign language education to education for intercultural citizenship: Essays and reflections*. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence:*

Revisited. Multilingual Matters.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 10*(3), 241–266.

Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. D.C. Heath and Company.

Facione, P. A. (1990). *Critical thinking: A statement of expert consensus for purposes of educational assessment and instruction (The Delphi Report)*. American Philosophical Association.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder and Herder.

Giroux, H. A. (2011). *On critical pedagogy*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Halpern, D. F. (2014). *Thought and knowledge: An introduction to critical thinking* (5th ed.). Psychology Press/Routledge.

Kant, I. (1784/1996). An answer to the question: What is enlightenment? In M. J. Gregor (Ed.), *Practical philosophy* (pp. 11–22). Cambridge University Press.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Lipman, M. (2003). *Thinking in education* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Ouhiba, N. M. (2022). The role of literature in boosting EFL university students' critical thinking: Case of first-year students in Algeria. *Arab World English Journal, 13*(1), 477– 485.

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2007). Critical thinking: The art of Socratic questioning, Part III.

Journal of Developmental Education, *31*, 34–35.

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2014). *Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your professional and personal life* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2019). *Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your professional and personal life* (3rd ed.). Pearson.

Pennycook, A. (1999). Introduction: Critical approaches to TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, *33*(3), 329–348.

Piatkowska, K. (2015). From cultural knowledge to intercultural communicative competence: Changing perspectives on the role of culture in foreign language teaching. *Intercultural Education*, *26*(5), 397–408.

Rezaee, A. A., & Saleh, E. (2025). Critical thinking in the cultural components of EFL textbooks: CCR model and its application. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, *57*, 101782. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.101782

Scarino, A. (2010). Assessing intercultural capability in learning languages: A renewed understanding of language, culture, learning, and the nature of assessment. *The Modern Language Journal*, *94*(2), 324–329.

Scriven, M., & Paul, R. (1987). *Defining critical thinking*. Foundation for Critical Thinking. https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766

Stern, H. H. (1992). *Issues and options in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Stoller, F. L. (2004). Content-based instruction: Perspectives on curriculum planning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *24*, 261–283.

Tomalin, B., & Stempleski, S. (1993). *Cultural awareness*. Oxford University Press.

Willingham, D. T. (2008). Critical thinking: Why is it so hard to teach? *Arts Education*

Policy Review, *109*(4), 21–32.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Teachers' Questionnaire

1. **How do you usually teach Civilization in your classes?**

A. Focusing on facts, dates, and historical events (Descriptive).

B. Focusing on analyzing "why" things happened and the ideas behind them (Analytical).

2. **How often do you ask your students to compare the target culture (e.g., UK/USA) with their own culture?**

A. Often.

B. Sometimes.

C. Rarely.

3. **Do you feel that students struggle to think critically because they are too used to memorizing lessons?**

A. Yes, a lot.

B. A little bit.

C. Not really.

4. **Do you agree that language students should be taught how to "think" about the content, not just learn the language?**

A. I agree.

B. I do not agree.

5. **When you discuss a topic like the "Industrial Revolution," do you focus more on the socio-economic reasons than on just the dates?**

A. Yes.

B. No.

6. **Do you follow a specific model (like Byram's model) when you plan your Civilization lessons?**

A. Yes.

B. No.

7. **How do you perceive your students' ability to check if a historical source is biased or credible?**

A. Good.

B. Average.

C. Weak.

8. **In your exams, do you give marks for "how the students analyze" rather than just what they remember?**

   A. Yes.

   B. No.

9. **Do you think that doing deep analysis in class actually helps students improve their English (vocabulary/grammar)?**

A. Yes.

B. No.

Appendix 2

Student's Questionnaire

Dear Students,

The present questionnaire is part of our study under the title"Civilization and Critical Thinking: How Cultural Content Shapes Analytical Skills in EFL Learners" at the University of Chadli ben Djedid El Tarf. Your participation will be in total anonymity; just for collecting data for our research findings.We gratefully appreciate your own contribution.

1. **How do you usually study for the Civilization exam?**

A. I memorize the handouts exactly as they are.

B. I try to understand the logic and explain it in my own words.

2. **In class, does the teacher ask you to give your own opinion?**

A. Yes, often.

B. Sometimes.

C. No, we just listen and take notes.

3. **Do you feel the module has too many dates and names to memorize?**

A. Yes, it is too much.

B. No, it is okay.

4. **When you learn about a historical event, do you ask "Why" it happened?**

A. Always.

B. Sometimes.

C. Never, I just learn the facts.

5. **Can you tell if a historical text is biased (one-sided)?**

A. Yes, I can.

B. I am not sure.

C. No, I believe what is written.

6. Do you compare the UK/US history with our own Algerian history?

A. Yes, I do.

B. Sometimes.

C. No, never.

7. Does the Civilization class help you "read between the lines"?

A. Yes, a lot.

B. A little bit.

C. Not at all.

8. Do you think memorizing is more important than analyzing to pass the exam?

A. Yes, memorizing is the key.

B. No, analysis is more important.

9. Do you feel comfortable disagreeing with a point of view in class?

A. Yes, very comfortable.

B. No, I prefer to keep quiet.

10. Does this module make you more open-minded toward other cultures?

A. Yes, definitely.

B. A little bit.

C. No change.

11. Do you feel that our educational system makes us prefer "memorizing" over "thinking"?

A. Yes, we are used to memorizing.

B. No, we like to think and analyze.

12. If the exam was a "debate" instead of a "written test," would you like it?

A. Yes, that would be great.

B. No, that would be too hard.

13. In your opinion, what is the biggest problem in this module?

A. Too much memorization.

B. Not enough discussion.

C. The topics are not interesting.

14. Sum up the Civilization module in one sentence.

_____

Thank you for your Collaboration