



Universidad de Concepción

Dirección de Postgrado

Facultad de Educación

**“Implementing Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping
and Debate strategies through poems: An alternative
approach to develop critical thinking skills”.**

Tesis para optar al grado de Magíster en Innovación de la Enseñanza,
Aprendizaje y Evaluación del Inglés

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CONCEPCIÓN – CHILE

2021

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Acknowledgements

This project was an amazing experience. However, there were hard times where I had to deal with frustration and stress in a pandemic environment. Fortunately, determination and persistence together with words of encouragement helped me to continue. I am endlessly grateful to all of those who some way or another contributed to this project and provided inspiration.

I would first like to thank my guiding advisor Dr. Claudio Díaz, who is a person I truly admire, not only for being an exceptional teacher but also for being human, empathic and supportive. For that, I will be forever thankful.

Also, special thanks to Dr. María Jesus Inostroza, for her wisdom, empathy and every piece of advice given throughout this program.

I would also like to express my most sincere gratitude to the participants involved in this project, Alan and María José, who since day one were willing to help in anything they could and had the best disposition.

Last but certainly not least, I cannot thank my family enough for believing in me, and most importantly, reminding me that I am capable of achieving anything that I put my mind to; especially my grandmother María, who always cheered me up and supported me whenever I needed it.

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List of Acronyms

CT: Critical thinking

ESL: English as a second language

EFL: English as a foreign language

L2: Second language

L1: First language

TPS: Think, Pair, and Share

MP: Mind Mapping

Abstract

This action research aimed at exploring the contribution that Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate strategies have on pre-service teachers' critical thinking skills development at the moment of using poems. Two 5th year pre-service teachers at their last year participated in the intervention, which was conducted online and consisted of eight sessions, most of them lasted from forty to eighty minutes.

In order to collect data, an analytic rubric was used to assess participants' critical thinking (CT) skills before and after the intervention. Also, three likert scales were used to identify participants' perception about the strategies. During the intervention, the three strategies were implemented through the use of poems, with and without guidance. Findings showed an improvement in participants' CT skills, showing a significant improvement in confidence when delivering thoughts, in their ideas' organization and also, their poems' interpretation was more thoughtful. Moreover, their perceptions about the strategies provided evidence that the use of this proposal seems beneficial in the development of CT.

Key words: Action research, critical thinking, **Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping, Debate**, teaching strategies.

Esta investigación-acción tuvo como objetivo explorar la contribución que tienen las estrategias de Piensa, Trabaja en Pareja y Comparte; Mapas Mentales y Debate en profesores en formación, al momento de usar poemas. Dos profesores en formación de último año participaron en esta intervención, la cual fue llevada a cabo de manera online y consistió en ocho sesiones, de las cuales la mayoría duró entre cuarenta y ochenta minutos.

Con la finalidad de obtener la información, una rúbrica analítica fue usada para evaluar el pensamiento crítico de los participantes, antes y después de la intervención. También, tres escalas Likert fueron usadas para conocer las percepciones de los participantes sobre las estrategias. Durante la intervención, las tres estrategias fueron implementadas a través del uso de poemas, con y sin guía. Los resultados mostraron una mejora en el pensamiento crítico de los alumnos, mostrando una mejora significativa en la confianza al momento de dar a conocer sus pensamientos, en la organización de ideas y también, su interpretación de poemas fue más reflexiva. Además, su percepción acerca de la estrategia evidenció que el uso de esta propuesta pareciera ser beneficiosa en el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico.

Palabras clave: Investigación-acción, pensamiento crítico, **Piensa, Trabaja en Pareja y Comparte, Mapas Mentales, Debate**, estrategias de enseñanza.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Problem Identification

The problem addressed in this project was identified while working at a language center. I could constantly notice that regardless of some students' level of English, vocabulary and even willingness to learn, when it came to give opinions about a certain topic, latest news, etc. I would notice that they would struggle with organizing their thoughts and expressing themselves. Whenever this happened, they would feel frustrated and would tell me that they had many ideas in mind but just could not put them into words. What was interesting for me, was that some of these students did very well in written exams, had plenty of vocabulary and most importantly were interested in learning English. Whenever this happened, I envisioned myself in my students' position, and I remember how the reading of poems and later discussion on these, would help me when expressing myself. Thus, researching, I came across **critical thinking skills**, and how important they could be if they get developed.

There is a lack of studies in the ESL context of CT skills in Chile. However, when taking a look at the English national framework, it was found that it highlights the importance of CT in the process of learning the L2. It is also found that there is a need to develop CT in students, which mainly encourages teachers and students to formulate questions which include specific CT skills, which are included in the national framework.

Additionally, in the English national framework, in elementary years as well as in high school years, it is possible to find guidance to develop CT. It is stated that a key aspect to develop CT in students is found in the questions that the teacher provides in the classroom together with the questions that are formulated by the students.

Critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking in order to make your thinking better: clearer, more accurate, more defensible (Paul, 1992, as cited in Long, 2004). Unfortunately, from what I have seen, some students, despite their level of English, do not have the ability to have a defensible thinking with which they can feel confident and willing to share it with their peers. Some basic skills found in the process of critical thinking are: seeking to understand others' perspective, preparing persuasive arguments, separating facts from opinions, etc. (Mayfield, 2001, as cited in Long, 2004). I believe that most of these characteristics are hardly seen in some students and need to be developed in order to provide them with a more successful learning experience.

1.2. Aims

In order to find an alternative to solve this problem, the following study aims at exploring the contribution that poems taught through **Think, Pair and Share**, **Mind Mapping** and **Debate** strategies have on pre-service teachers' critical thinking skills development, which I believe could be an alternative and an initiative to stimulate students' five CT skills, such as: analysis, evaluation, inference, synthesis and self-reflection. It is intended to motivate participants in the process of how to think instead of focusing on what to think in the language that they are learning to use. If they could be taught to think critically in L2, it will enhance their abilities to read, write and think with clarity in that language (Ponniah, 2007, as cited in Wang & Zheng, 2016).

Moreover, since poetry is a valuable and authentic genre of literature that can be taught successfully in an ESL/EFL classroom, enriching language learning and promoting creativity and inspiration (Freyn, 2017), I personally believe it can be a favorable initiative for students since using literary texts in the English classroom can make a considerable contribution not only to learn a foreign language, but also to inspire CT (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016). In addition to poetry, these three strategies were selected since they have shown to be helpful when fostering CT skills, allowing discussion, generation of ideas, constructing their own arguments, etc.

It is known that there are plenty reasons to why English learners should have well-developed critical thinking skills and that these skills concern different areas, not only the problem that this project is addressing which mainly involves struggling with expressing opinions properly, giving coherent arguments, etc. For example, Shirkhani & Fahim (2011) stated that English learners should be able to reflect, think clearly and rationally in order to make correct decisions individually. Likewise, Lee Bouygues (2018) claims that English learners should also engage with opinions that differ from their own since considering other points of view is a very important exercise. Ideally, language learners should take charge of their own thinking, thus, they could be able to monitor and evaluate their own ways of learning more successfully. Moreover, through critical thinking students are able to expand the learning experience, making the language more meaningful for them (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011). Therefore, considering these points, besides the expectation of getting the problem solved, as stated before, there are plenty of other elements that CT involves, so it is interesting to see what the results are going to be after the implementation.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. What is critical thinking?

With regards to the origin of the term, according to Hughes (2014) “the term ‘critical thinking’ first started emerging in academic circles and literature in the midtwentieth century. Critical thinking is considered a term that have had many definitions, it is even stated that its definition has changed over the past decade (Huitt, 1998).

Some of the definitions that have arose from this term are the following. First, according to Elder & Paul (1994) “critical thinking is best understood as the ability of thinkers to take charge of their own thinking (p.34). In addition to that, the authors also mentioned that “critical thinking, therefore, requires a high degree of continual self-reflection and intellectual discipline” (p.34).

Likewise, Cottrell (2005) sees critical thinking as a process, stating that “critical thinking is a complex process of deliberation which involves a wide range of skills and attitudes” (p.2). Some of the skills that the authors mentions are synthesis, reflection, evaluation, etc.

Furthermore, critical thinking could be defined in terms of a set of qualities and abilities including awareness of a set of interrelated critical questions, ability to ask and answer critical questions at appropriate times and the desire to actively use the critical questions (Brown & Keeley, 2007). Moreover, according to Saleh (2019) “the concept of critical thinking applies to all sorts of knowledge and implies the true engagement of learners in the process of knowledge construction through reflecting and thinking deeply” (p.2). Also, Florea & Hurjui (2014) stated that “critical thinking is a way of approaching and solving problems based on arguments persuasive, logical and rational, which involves verifying, evaluating and choosing the right answer to a given task and reasoned rejection of other alternatives solutions” (p.566).

Similar to what has been stated before, critical thinking could be described as a metacognitive process, consisting of a number of sub-skills (e.g. analysis, evaluation and inference) which, when appropriately used, increases the chances of producing a logical conclusion to an argument or solution to a problem (Dwyer, Hogan & Stewart, 2014).

Uribe, Uribe & Vargas-daza (2017) summarized various features found in definitions from experts in the field which have common aspects such as: “cognitive skills like interpreting, augmenting, inferring, analyzing, evaluating, making proposals, creating, and making decisions according to the context; seeking relevant and reliable information; being adaptable and flexible about changes. Values like prudence, humility, intellectual integrity, and empathy” (p.81).

2.2. What is to be a critical thinker?

According to Saleh (2019) “curiosity and questioning are necessary characteristics of those who think critically as they always try to find answers for the questions they raise” (p.2).

Likewise, Duron, Limbach & Waugh (2006) suggest that “critical thinkers raise vital questions and problems, formulate them clearly, gather and assess relevant information, use abstract ideas, think open-mindedly, and communicate effectively with others” (p.160). The authors, on the contrary, added that “passive thinkers suffer a limited and ego-centric view of the world; they answer questions with yes or no and view their perspective as the only sensible one and their facts as the only ones relevant” (p.160).

In addition, Murawski (2014) stated that “critical thinkers become more adept in their thinking by using a variety of probing techniques which enable them to discover new and often improved ideas. More specifically, critical thinkers tend to see the problem from many perspectives, to consider many different investigative approaches, and to produce many ideas before choosing a course of action (p.26).

Additionally, as Ruggiero (2012) points out, critical thinkers have learned better than poor thinkers on how to take charge of their ideas, to use their minds actively as well as passively. Seven are the characteristics of critical thinkers according to Ruggiero (2012). First, being honest with themselves, acknowledging what they do not know, recognizing their limitations, and being watchful of their own errors. Second, regarding problems and controversial issues as exciting and challenging. Third, striving for understanding, keeping curiosity alive, remaining patient with complexity, and being ready to invest time to overcome confusion. Fourth, basing judgments on evidence rather than personal preferences, deferring judgment whenever evidence is insufficient, and revising judgment when new evidence reveals error. Fifth, being interested in other people’s ideas and so are willing to read and listen attentively, even when they tend to disagree with the other person. Sixth, recognizing that “extreme views” (whether conservative or liberal) are “seldom correct”, so they avoid them and finally, they practice restraint, controlling their feelings rather than being controlled by them, and thinking before acting.

As stated by Uribe, Uribe & Vargas-Daza (2017) “it is time for us teachers to play a decisive role in changing the spoon-feeding education paradigm and help our learners develop critical thinking skills and foster human values. Critical thinking skills and subject matter are not mutually exclusive but complementary. Our world needs people who really care about how to restore integrity, promote welfare, equity and social justice; our world needs critical thinkers” (p.85).

2.3. Critical thinking in Education

It is claimed that CT is a learnable skill. Experts suggest that CT skills should be developed, practiced, and continually integrated into the curriculum. It is also mentioned that developing CT requires active learning situations and it is suggested that instruction should focus on the application of content rather than the content itself. (Snyder & Snyder, 2008).

CT is seen as a major objective in Education. Learning to critically think can help students resolve ambiguity and adapt to social, cultural and technological change (Brookfield, 2005). Additionally, CT skills can help our students to communicate effectively with others, come to well-reasoned conclusions, formulate clear and precise questions, etc. (Paul & Elder, 2006).

Moreover, instructors who teach critical thinking are constantly providing students with the opportunity to understand and take charge of their learning. According to Murawski (2014), “students who implement critical thinking skills approach the courseware in a more thoughtful and effective manner, ask more challenging questions and participate in the learning process more intensely (p.27). Furthermore, the author also addressed that “students who develop critical thinking skills often practice those skills well into latter life. These skills may, in fact, literally change their lives forever. Developing critical thinking abilities translates to both academic and job success. Using these skills, students tend to expand the perspectives from which they view the world and increase their ability to navigate the important decisions in learning and in life” (p.27). However, it is important to bear in mind that in order to improve CT ability, it is important that students become aware of what it is they are supposed to be learning; and likewise; their teachers must also be aware what it is they are supposed to be teaching (Dwyer, Hogan & Stewart, 2014).

According to Hughes (2014), “communicative language tasks require critical thinking. You can teach languages without giving any thought to including elements of critical thinking” (p.5). The author provided the following example: “rote learning with its ‘listen-and-repeat’ patterns requires no critical thinking and at beginner levels the focus can only be on acquiring a basic vocabulary on which to build. However, as soon as students enter in any task using the target language which contains elements such as personalisation, investigation and problem solving then they must think critically” (p.5).

Furthermore, it could be stated that as soon as students are provided with a text such as news, blogs, etc., students need to comprehend meaning, analyze, match arguments with supporting evidence and express their own points of view, being confronted by the need to approach these texts critically (Hughes, 2014).

Additionally, Hughes (2014) explained that “critical thinking, is known as a key study skill at university level” (p.6). Adding that “thinking critically will also help you to create strong arguments of you own. All universities encourage their students to be ‘independent learners’ and critical thinking is central to this” (p.6).

2.4. Critical thinking in the ESL/EFL context

Marin & de la Pava (2017) stated that “the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom has been thought to be a great scenario to develop 21st Century skills such as, critical thinking (CT), creativity, communication, collaboration, ICT literacy, leadership and responsibility, as well as social and cross cultural skills” (p.78). The authors add that “a critical thinker in EFL is characterized by being an active learner who constantly asks questions and searches for information to establish relationships between L2 learning and other aspects of his daily life. It is a person who is capable of analyzing and organizing his thoughts to express them by speaking and writing, always has something to say in relation to the topics dealt in class and puts into practice what has been learned” (p.83).

According to Liaw (2007), “efforts have been made by English language arts, English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL), and modern foreign language educators to integrate the promotion of thinking skills into language curricula” (p.46). Furthermore, EFL students do not necessarily lack the ability to engage in CT. Actually, they do come to L2 classrooms with a variety of CT developed in their L1. Most students need to critically think in L2 since these higher order skills are required for success in a knowledge-based society. It is seen as a responsibility that EFL teachers assist students to learn CT skills while learning the L2 (Liaw, 2007). Moreover, according to Marin & de la Pava (2017), “developing CT in EFL, teachers must be role models of critical thinkers, provide guidelines and plan activities that provide opportunities for students to think critically” (p.84).

In an ESL/EFL context, according to Saleh (2019) “some teachers’ conservative educational ideology with traditional attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning is another serious challenge” (p.4), adding that “this ideology shapes these teachers’ teacher centered approaches of teaching which do not promote critical thinking (p.4). Likewise, Puchta (2012) suggests that “thinking skills and foreign/second language are highly benefitted from tasks that have a real-world purpose such as problem-solving, decision-making, thinking about the consequences of one’s own or other people’s actions and so on” (p. 16).

Similarly, Báez, Pardo & Tellez (2003) in their study about CT activities to foster linguistic competence in an EFL context, concluded that “the role of the teacher is fundamental not only as a guide but also in the interaction that is built in the classroom. In this sense, results indicated that feedback encouraged students to have more elaborated ideas” (p.75).

2.5. Assessing critical thinking

In order to assess CT, this current project is based on the Cambridge Assessment, which has twenty years of experience in testing CT (Black et al., 2008). The Cambridge Assessment (2008) defines critical thinking as “the analytical thinking which underlies all rational discourse and enquiry. It is characterized by a meticulous and rigorous approach” (p.33). Moreover, it is also stated that it focuses on the processes involved in being rational and addresses that these processes include analyzing arguments, judging the relevance and significance of information, evaluating claims, inferences, arguments and explanations, constructing clear and coherent arguments and forming well-reasoned judgements and

decisions. Furthermore, it is important to address that CT emphasizes processes, hence the inclusion in the definition of five of the most significant of the many processes of rationality, which encompass the skills outlined in the taxonomy used in this project, which are: analysis, evaluation, inference, synthesis and self-reflection (Black et al., 2008).

In addition, for the creation of the questions for the pre and post-test, the skills' definitions and processes from Cambridge Assessment, are taken into consideration, as well as to create the analytic rubric which has the five CT skills as criteria. For instance, as for the analysis criterion, one relevant process is recognizing and using the basic terminology of reasoning, therefore, this is included as a descriptor in the analytic rubric (Black, et al., 2008).

Furthermore, for this project, it was decided to use questions in the pre and post test since according to Nappi (2017) "through questioning, Socrates encouraged his students to explore prior-held beliefs and subsequently to build stronger and more scholarly views. What we now refer to as the Socratic approach involves posing a succession of systematic and prearranged questions designed to help students to reflect and therefore improve their thinking and gain a better understanding of their own beliefs and ideas" (p.30).

Additionally, Saiz & Rivas (2012), with the purpose of validating a specific CT test, came to the conclusion that there are four principles in which their test is based on. The first one has to do with including items which are everyday situations, the second one implies that the test should include different domains to integrate all CT skills, the third one is about asking open questions and the fourth one is to implement problem solving situations in order to have unique answers. This project implements these principles in order to adequately assess CT.

2.6. Critical thinking in the Chilean classroom

Reimers & Chung (2016) in their book about teaching and learning for the twenty-first century, explore how six countries, including Chile, define, support and cultivate skills that students need in order to succeed in this current century.

Unfortunately, Reimers & Chung (2016) claim that teachers tend to focus more on the acquisition of basic abilities, instead of critical thinking skills. Moreover, the authors believe that teachers are not given the necessary tools to develop these skills.

Moreover, when taking a look at the English national framework, edited in 2016, it could be found that it includes and highlights the importance of CT in the process of learning the L2, addressing that CT contributes to the discovering of students' needs, skills, and best ways to learn the language, becoming autonomous learners.

Additionally, in the English national framework, in elementary years as well as in high school years, is possible to find guidance to develop CT. It is stated that a key aspect to develop CT in students is found in the questions that the teacher provides in the classroom together with the questions that are formulated by the students. Furthermore, it is also addressed that a critical thinker formulates clear and precise questions, evaluating relevant information,

getting to solutions and conclusions guided by reasoning and reflection, thinks through an open mind and communicates in an effective way. What is relevant to address is that between 70% and 80% of the questions that teacher ask in the classroom correspond to the lower levels which are remembering and understanding information. Thus, it is suggested to use key questions which correspond to a certain CT skill. These are found in every English national framework from any school year.

With regards to the English Open Doors Program (PIAP), which was created in 2004, according to Cronquist & Fiszbein (2017), it has provided students with different activities such as debate contests for high school students, which “have allowed students to develop CT” (p.30).

2.7. Poetry and critical thinking

Blake (2009) in his proposal to teach poetry through a multimodal approach to teaching poetry, concluded that it helped to develop an appreciation of poetry as well as creative and CT. Additionally, it confirmed that his proposal to teaching poetry will improve students' attitudes towards poetry. Additionally, Idek (2016) conducted a study in which a certain technique to facilitate CT in composing short stories and poems was measured. He concluded that “this technique is an effective, feasible and convenient tool that can be used to develop students' creative and critical thinking skills especially in generating and expanding ideas” (p.46).

Aisyah et al (2019) in their study about the role of poems in developing CT, suggest that “through reading English poems, students will interact with others to discuss the poems, develop their abilities to see existing situations in new ways, and explore their ideas in English” (p.243). In addition to that, they state that “students develop critical thinking as they state and justify a point of view and respond to the views of others. Indeed, through reading English poems, the students critically analyse the opinions, points of view, and unstated assumptions embedded in texts (p.243). What the authors concluded was that “it was shown in this research that the low achieving students were able to improve or develop their critical thinking skills after several treatments given by their English teacher using certain strategies. (p.255). They also addressed that students “needed time and multiple opportunities in the form of experiences or training to develop their critical thinking skills described in this research” (p.255).

2.8. Literature and poetry in the ESL/EFL context

In her article about teaching language through literature in an ESL context, Llach (2007) claims that “among the literary genres used in language teaching, poetry is one of frequent appearance. Due to their short length, perfectly suitable for a single classroom lesson, their peculiar structure, their characteristic linguistic features (unusual syntactic patterns, polysemy of words, alliteration, etc.)” (p.11). In addition, the author states that “poems become favorite tools for language teachers. The evocative character of poetry, its imagery, its appeal to feelings and personal experience makes it very interesting and enjoyable for the ESL learner (p.11). She also addresses that “the language teacher should exploit the

deviancies of the poetic language in order to arise the language awareness of the learners towards the way in which language can be adapted or changed to fulfill different communicative purposes” (p.11).

Bobkina & Stefanova (2016) in their study about literature in the ESL classroom, stated that “a personal response to a literary work urges students to interact with the text and with other students in order to communicate their interpretation of the work (p. 680). The authors also added that students “are expected to develop skills to help them understand hidden or implied meanings, separate facts from opinions, examine characteristics of the narrative from different points of view, reconstruct images from details and apply what they have learnt to other aspects of life (p.680).

Freyne (2017) states that “poetry is a specific genre of literature that has been long argued as being too difficult for ESL/EFL learners” (p.80). However, Freyne claims that “poetry is a valuable and authentic genre of literature that can be taught successfully in an ESL/EFL classroom. Poetry can enrich language learning and promote creativity and inspiration. Traditionally, poetry has been taught from a teacher-centered process; however, to better engage students, a learner-centered, multimodal approach should be used” (p.82).

According to Kirkgoz (2008), there are many benefits of using poetry in an ESL/EFL context. He states that “poems provide EFL/ESL students with opportunities to enrich their vocabulary by presenting words not included in L2 textbooks. In many language classes, students are generally asked to learn vocabulary through mere memorization and translation” (p.95).

Omar & Albakri (2016) investigated about promoting CT through literature by using thinking maps. One of their conclusions regarding literature in the ESL context is that “literature reading is a complex process that requires readers to recall, retrieve and reflect on their prior experiences or memories to construct meanings of the text and through the use of thinking maps, students demonstrate the process of critical thinking (p.32).

2.9. Think, Pair and Share as a strategy to enhance critical thinking skills

As stated by Frank Lyman et al. (1981), “**Think-Pair-Share** is a collaborative discussion strategy designed to provide students with time to think and formulate their individual thoughts and ideas about a given topic or concept before forming a pair with a peer to share their thinking” (p.109).

Sampsel (2013) defines the strategy as “a cooperative learning technique which involves presenting students with a task or question and giving them time to think by individually. Then in pairs, they report their individual findings, discuss their own thoughts and then refine their individual work if they see fit in order to come up with a consensus on the question or task” (p.3). The author also mentions that “think-pair-share encourages student participation in discussing and promotes forming and critiquing arguments both in small and large groups” (p.3).

Warliati, Rafli & Darmahusni (2019) conducted a study about discussion and **Think, Pair and Share** strategy as an alternative to enhance EFL students' speaking skill, questioning if CT matters. The authors suggested "that students who learn language especially at the speaking subject should implement the learning strategy mediated by critical thinking to improve speaking skill "(p.137).

Raba (2017) investigated the influence of **Think, Pair and Share (TPS)** on improving students' oral communication skills. In his research, Raba added that the think-pair-share strategy would reinforce students' communication skills since each student takes the chance to speak, discuss and participate, which has many positive effects on the whole group where students feel more self-confident and more active in the class.

2.10. Mind Mapping as a strategy to enhance critical thinking skills

It is stated by Gómez & King (2014) that "this type of strategy can be used with small or large classes to work in an individual or a team environment in order to energize the lesson, support learning differentiation, and enhance vocabulary acquisition" (p.355). One of the mind mapping's advantages is that it provides students with an active interaction allowing them to learn through the use of a central image that works outward in all directions resulting in a productive and organized structure of key concepts and images. Furthermore, mind mapping strategies help students to organize and structure their thoughts by designing a visual representation of an idea or a concept to create connection and understanding, (Gómez & King, 2014).

According to O'connell (2014), "the most important steps in learning and critical thinking are the collecting and connecting of information to create knowledge that can then be analyzed, evaluated and remembered" (p.355). She also mentions that "the graphic nature of visual symbols and displays helps speed up the processes of information absorption, recall and retention as they exploit the brain's ability to rapidly parallel process sensory information like color, shape, size, orientation, and texture" (p.355). Therefore, there is a connection between both CT and the strategy itself since, according to O'connell (2014), "**Mind Mapping** is one visual technique that excels in helping the learner/thinker to collect and connect information, focus on key points, explore alternatives "at one view"¹ and "see" the patterns that turn information into knowledge that is more easily retained and recalled" (p.355).

Omar & Albakri (2016) conducted a study about thinking maps as a strategy to promote CT through the teaching of literature in an ESL context. They concluded that "the teacher's implementation of the thinking maps in their literature lessons indicated positive outcomes as findings demonstrated that the use of thinking maps promotes the generation of ideas, improved students' written and oral language and built their confidence in presentations" (p.32). Adding that "the students' responses showed they were confident when giving their opinions as they became personally involved in the interpretation of the literary text" (p.32).

2.11. Debate as a strategy to enhance critical thinking skills

According to Aclan (2015), “debate is a very important feature is for students to propose a solution to a problem, to argue why such a solution works better than any other solution or to judge the value or the principle of a given problem” (p.10). The author also mentions that “among the host of skills developed by debating aside from communication skills is critical thinking, a very important skill in this highly competitive knowledge economy” (p.9).

Additionally, Aclan (2015) states that “debating is indeed a complex activity that can help students with complex communication and problem-solving tasks in the real world” (p.10). Moreover, Chikeleze, Johnson & Gibson (2018) investigated about using debating to teach CT and communication skills. The authors stated that they were “pleasantly surprised by the growth in students’ confidence, ability to think fast, challenge assumptions, and critically think about complex policy issues. It was truly remarkable. In an era in which persuasion is more important than ever, we believe it was a worthwhile exercise and encourage faculty to investigate its use in their own classrooms” (p. 132).

Iman (2017) conducted a study about debate instruction in the EFL classroom and its impact on CT and the speaking skill. It was concluded that debate improved the students’ critical thinking and speaking skill, adding that “there was a significant mean difference in critical thinking and speaking between the students who were taught using debate and those who were not (p.104).

The author also concluded that “for the pedagogical impact in ELT, debate instruction is very potential to be implemented in EFL classroom context as in the debate activities the students learn not only about how to speak but also about what to speak” (p.104). In addition, Iman stated that “debate also allows the students to think critically about the issues and to work together with the teammate in terms of searching for the information, fact, data, and so forth as well as to speak out about particular issues academically and accordingly. This is ultimately going to make the EFL learners become well-cultivated and competent speaker” (p.104).

Similarly, Asrida (2012) discussed about the use of the debating activities in fostering students’ communication and CT skills, expecting students to be active and creative in the classroom. As a result, she concluded that debating activities can be used as a teaching technique to help the students improve their communication and critical thinking skill, adding that “debate is assumed as a valuable learning activity for teaching critical thinking and improving communication skills. Hence, the students can be motivated to think in a short time and give their arguments” (p.155).

CHAPTER III: METHODS

3.1. Type of Research

This study follows a qualitative paradigm, which comprises explaining and comprehending in depth a particular context (Silverman, 2013). By carrying out this investigation, I am expecting to know what is going to be the contribution that the implementation of three teaching strategies would have on a certain group of students and how it would work. Moreover, this study aims at exploring the contribution that **Think, Pair and Share**, **Mind Mapping** and **Debate** strategies have on pre-service teachers' critical thinking skills development at the moment of using poems. Therefore, the most appropriate design for this study would be action research since it is the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it (Elliott, 1991, as cited in Alrichter, Posch & Somekh). Additionally, this type of design is one of the most popular methods of professional development for teachers. It provides a practical way for teachers to uncover some of the complexities of the teaching process and thereby to improve the quality of their pupils' learning (Alrichter et al., 2005).

This study aims to specifically describe a particular intervention; therefore, it addresses a descriptive scope since the purpose of action research project is to specify properties, characteristics and profiles of participants, groups, and it also focuses on data gathering about a set of issues in order to show (through description) an event, a community, a phenomenon, etc. (Mason, 2002).

3.2. Description of participants

The participants for this action research are two pre-service teachers from the last year of the English Teaching Program at Universidad de Concepción, Concepción. The participants' level of English is upper intermediate. Their ages are twenty-three and twenty-five years old and they come from similar socio-cultural backgrounds.

It seems to be the case that this pair of pre-service teachers fails to do enough deliberate thinking since, according to Marin & de la Pava (2017), "a critical thinker in EFL is characterized by being an active learner who constantly asks questions and searches for information to establish relationships between L2 learning and other aspects of his daily life. It is a person who is capable of analyzing and organizing his thoughts to express them by speaking and writing, always has something to say in relation to the topics dealt in class and puts into practice what has been learned" (p.83). The participants are indeed able to get the message across in English; however, they have yet to develop their ability or capacity of defensible thinking with which they can feel confident when speaking and thus be willing to share their ideas with their classmates in a more confident way.

These students were chosen based on the following criteria:

- Their ages are similar.
- Their level of English is also alike, it is upper-intermediate.
- Their critical thinking skills are not well developed.

3.3. Research question and objectives

3.3.1. Research question

How does the implementation of **Think, pair and share, Mind Mapping and Debate** strategies through the use of poems help pre-service teachers to improve their critical thinking skills?

3.3.2. General objective

To explore the contribution that **Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate** strategies have on pre-service teachers' critical thinking skills development at the moment of using poems.

3.3.3. Specific objectives

SO1: To assess the effectiveness of using **Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate** strategies to produce critical thinking on pre-service teachers at the time of reading poems in English.

SO2: To describe participants' perceptions about the use of the **Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate** strategies.

3.4. Research problem

Since this pair of participants, besides having a good level of English, struggled with discussion, reflection, expressing their thoughts properly etc., I started looking for possible causes that might be generating this issue. During the process of searching for solutions, I came across different articles regarding critical thinking; I once read that critical thinking does fit in the language classroom since getting students to think more gets them saying more and this means using language creatively and communicatively (Verner, n.d.). After getting familiar with this topic, it was confirmed that the fact that students do not think critically enough leads them to not being able to communicate properly and express their ideas confidently; therefore, I believe that this is a relevant issue that needs to be addressed since it is fundamental that pre-service teachers could be able to self-reflect on their own practice, generate innovative solutions, make reasonable decisions and eventually engage future students in critical thinking processes.

Even though critical thinking might be crucial for any kind of student since it is fundamental that they are equipped with these thinking skills (Costa, 2001 as cited in Omar & Albakri, 2016), this project is fully dedicated to pre-service teachers who have learned English as a second language. It is essential to mention that according to Ferlazzo (2016), "critical thinking skills have been found to help English Language Learners in language acquisition, particularly through increasing problem-solving abilities, oral communication skills, writing competence, and student motivation; however, teaching critical thinking skills is considered to be a major challenge by many ELL teachers because of a number of issues, including students' lack of vocabulary and, in some cases, students coming from prior school environments where that skill was not promoted". Hence, as mentioned by the author,

working on developing critical thinking skills in ESL students could be challenging since there are some factors that might intervene in the development of these skills.

The problem I will be addressing is that pre-service teachers are not doing enough deliberate thinking. They do not reflect enough, they are not able enough to draw conclusions, analyze information properly and share their ideas confidently. Promoting critical thinking into the EFL classrooms is significant for several reasons; learners can take charge of their own thinking, monitor and evaluate their own ways of learning; students can expand their learning experience, making language more meaningful for them and in fact, language learners who have developed critical thinking skills are capable of doing activities of which other students may not be capable (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011).

Mayfield (2001) states that some basic skills found in the process of critical thinking are: seeking to understand others' perspective, preparing persuasive arguments, separating facts from opinions, etc. (as cited in Long, 2004). Unfortunately, these characteristics are hardly seen, therefore, they need to be improved so that these participants and hopefully future students, could have a more successful learning experience.

3.5. Stages of the action research

This action research lasted two weeks, from May 18th to May 29th. There was a total of eight sessions considering the pre and post-intervention tests. Most of the sessions lasted between 40 min to 80 min. The stages will be summarized below.

Session	Session's objective
1	Participants answered the pre-intervention test
2	Participants were able to express their opinions on a poem with guidance.
3	Participants were able to express their opinions on a poem without any guidance.
4	Participants were able to collect, connect and focus on key points in order to share their opinions on a poem, with guidance.
5	Participants were able to collect, connect information and focus on key points in order to share their opinions on a poem, without any guidance.
6	Participants were able to state their arguments, respond to arguments and formulate conclusions, with guidance.
7	Participants were able to state their arguments, respond to arguments and formulate conclusions, without any guidance.
8	Participants answered the post-intervention test

Table 1: stages of the action research

Before deepening into the stages, it is important to address that critical thinking skills are expected to be improved throughout three strategies that have as a main didactic resource the reading of poems.

In the first session, the purpose of the project was explained, and the participants sat for the pre-intervention test.

During the second session, students were shown the **Think, Pair and Share (TPS) strategy's** background, and the purpose of the lesson was explained. After that, the strategy was modeled step by step and the coronavirus disease topic was used to develop it. During the strategy's steps, guiding questions were used to encourage participants' sharing (all of them including the five CT skills this project is dealing with). At the end of the session, participants read a poem and used the **TPS strategy** to express their opinions on the poem with guidance.

In session number three, students read a poem and used the **TPS strategy** to express their opinions on the poem without any guidance.

During the fourth session, students were presented with the **Mind Mapping (MP) strategy's** background and the lesson's purpose was explained. After that, students read a poem and were shown a mind map template through "Popplet". To help them complete the mind map template, they were asked guiding questions (all of them including the five CT skills this project is dealing with) and when they were finished completing it, they express their opinions on the poem's topic using the already-made template.

In the fifth session, students read a poem and they started creating their mind map without any guidance. After that, they shared their opinions on the poem using their own mind map.

During session number six, students were presented with the **Debate strategy's** background and the purpose of the session was explained. After that, a debate structure was shown to students in detail. Students were given examples and fixed expressions to state, respond and formulate conclusions (all of them including the five CT skills this project is dealing with) To exemplify the structure, the topic "abortion" was used. After the structure was shown, students read a poem, then, they were given their positions and they had to debate on the poem's main topic, the teacher guided them when needed.

During the seventh session, students read a poem and they were given a position. After that, they debated following the structure explained in the previous session.

In the eight session, participants answered the post-intervention test and answered three Likert scales, each one corresponding to a different strategy, in order to collect the data about their perceptions on the strategies.

3.6. Data collection techniques

Five data collection instruments were used in this action research: a pre and a post-intervention test, an analytic rubric and three Likert scales.

3.6.1. Pre and post-intervention test (See Appendix 1 and 2)

In order to assess the effectiveness of using **Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate strategies** to develop critical thinking on pre-service teachers at the time of reading poems in English, a pre and post intervention tests were implemented during the first session and the last (eight) session, respectively. This instrument addressed the first specific objective. These tests were constructed for the purpose of this action research and they contain five open-ended questions that participants answer after reading a poem, each of them measures a different critical thinking skill (analysis, evaluation, inference, synthesis and self-reflection).

3.6.2. Analytic rubric (See Appendix 3)

The second instrument was an analytic rubric to assess data collected in the pre and post-intervention tests, which was constructed for the purpose of this study. It considered the five specific skills: analysis, evaluation, inference, synthesis and self-reflection; and it involves three levels of performance: accomplished, competent, and developing. It is related to the first specific objective.

3.6.3. Likert scale for Think, Pair and Share (See Appendix 4)

The third instrument was a Likert scale. This type of instrument was chosen since they are simple to construct and likely to produce a highly reliable scale (Bertram, 2007). This Likert scale contains three levels of performance (agree, partially agree and disagree) and six criteria: I was able to think individually about a topic, I was able to express my ideas properly, I was able to exchange ideas more easily with my partner, I could improve my reflection, I was able to discuss fluidly and I was able to feel more confident when discussing.

This instrument was constructed for the purpose of this study and it was applied to see whether the Think-Pair and Share activity helped them to have a fluid, and well-structured discussion; thus, it is related to the second specific objective.

3.6.4. Likert scale for Mind Mapping (See Appendix 5)

Likewise, another Likert scale was used in order to collect data about participants' perceptions on the MP strategy and identify whether or not mind maps helped them expand on the topic and order their ideas. This is related to the second specific objective. This instrument was constructed for the purpose of this action research and it involves three different levels of performance (agree, partially agree and disagree). It also included the following criteria: I did not have trouble organizing my ideas, I could expand on the topic, I could connect my ideas easily, I could share my points fluidly, I felt more confident when

sharing my points and I was able to understand others better. According to Bertram (2007), this type of instrument is easy to read and complete for participants.

3.6.5. Likert scale for Debate (See Appendix 6)

Another Likert scale was used to identify the participants' perceptions of the debate strategy. This instrument is related to the second specific objective.

This instrument was created for the purpose of this study and it contains three levels of performance (agree, partially agree and disagree) and six criteria: I was able to state arguments properly, I was able to respond to arguments properly, I was able to formulate better conclusions, I could discuss fluidly, I felt more confident when sharing my points and I felt more confident when discussing.

3.7. Data analysis techniques

In order to analyze the data that was gathered from the five instruments mentioned above, the following data analysis techniques were used.

3.7.1. Frequency analysis

Regarding the analysis of the three Likert scales, the frequency analysis technique was used, providing descriptions for the data interpretations. This technique was used in order to study the frequency of the participant's answers.

With regards to the Likert scales of participants' perceptions on the **Think, pair and share, Mind mapping and Debate strategy**, this technique was implemented to study the frequency of every answer given by the participants following six specific criteria and three levels of performance (agree, partially agree and disagree).

3.7.2. Descriptive statistics

To analyze the information obtained from the pre and post-intervention tests, descriptive statistics was used. According to Dörnyei (2007), "these statistics help us summarize findings by describing general tendencies in the data and the overall spread of the scores" (p. 213). To assess these pre and post-intervention tests, I used an analytic rubric which was analyzed in order to see if there was an improvement in the participants' critical thinking skills.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

In this chapter, the data that has been collected before, during and after the intervention will be presented according to each specific objective.

4.1. SO1: To assess the effectiveness of using Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate strategies to produce critical thinking on pre-service teachers at the time of reading poems in English.

To achieve the first specific objective, a pre- and post-intervention test was implemented. These pre- and post-intervention tests consisted of five different questions which participants had to answer orally after reading a poem. Each of the questions correspond to a different critical thinking skill. These tests were assessed using an analytic rubric which consisted of five critical thinking skills as criteria: analysis, evaluation, inference, synthesis, and self-reflection; and three levels of performance: partially accomplished and developing, each of them scoring 3, 2 and 1 respectively. In total, the global score is fifteen.

Figure 1 shows that there was an improvement in the participants' scores. Participant A obtained a total of eight points in the pre-test whereas in the post-test, he obtained fourteen points. The same occurs with participant B, she obtained nine points in the pre-test, however, in the post test she increased her score and got the maximum one, fifteen points.

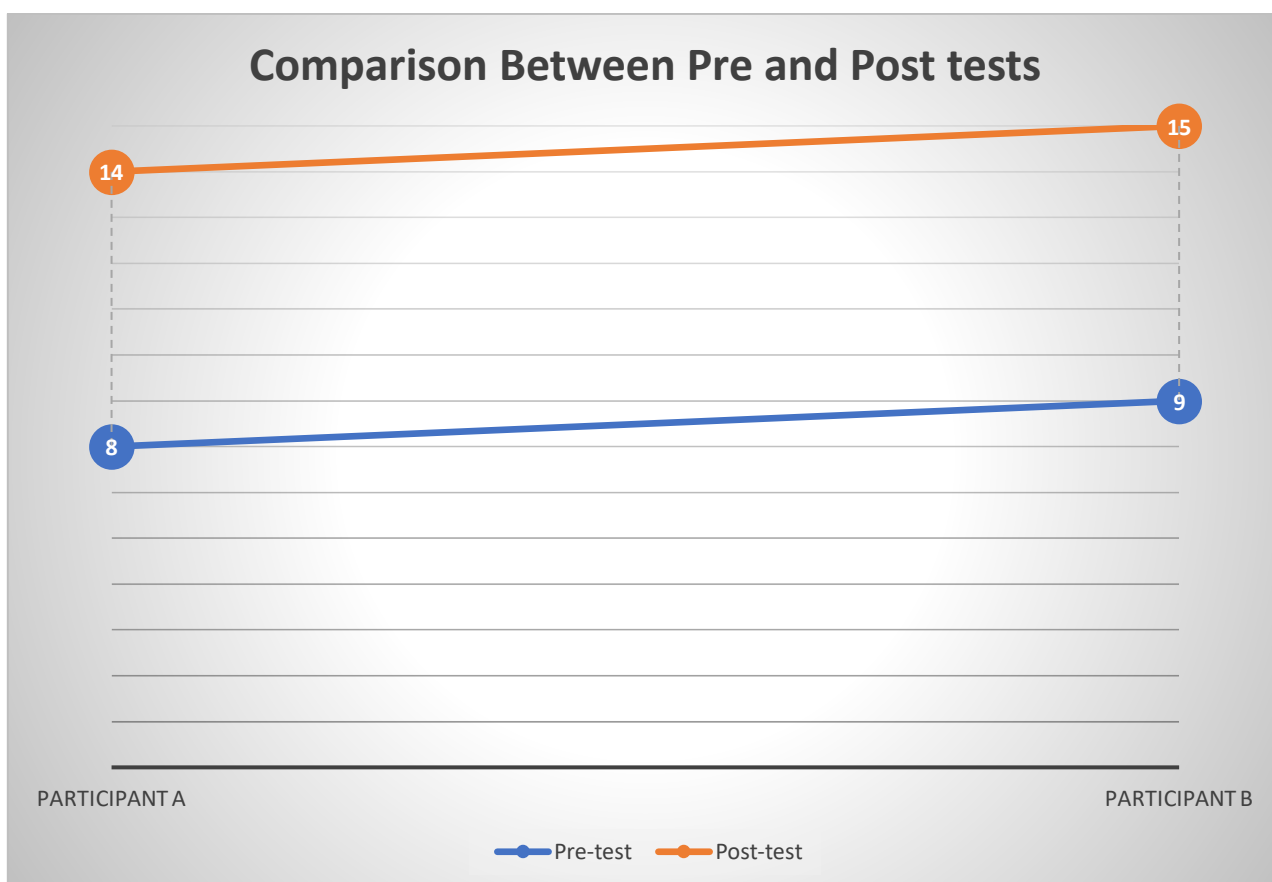


Figure 1: Comparison between pre and post tests

Below you will find the results from both pre- and post-intervention tests, according to each criterion.

4.1.1. The analysis criterion

There is a progress in the analysis criterion for both participants, Figure 2 shows the results for both participants regarding their analysis skills.

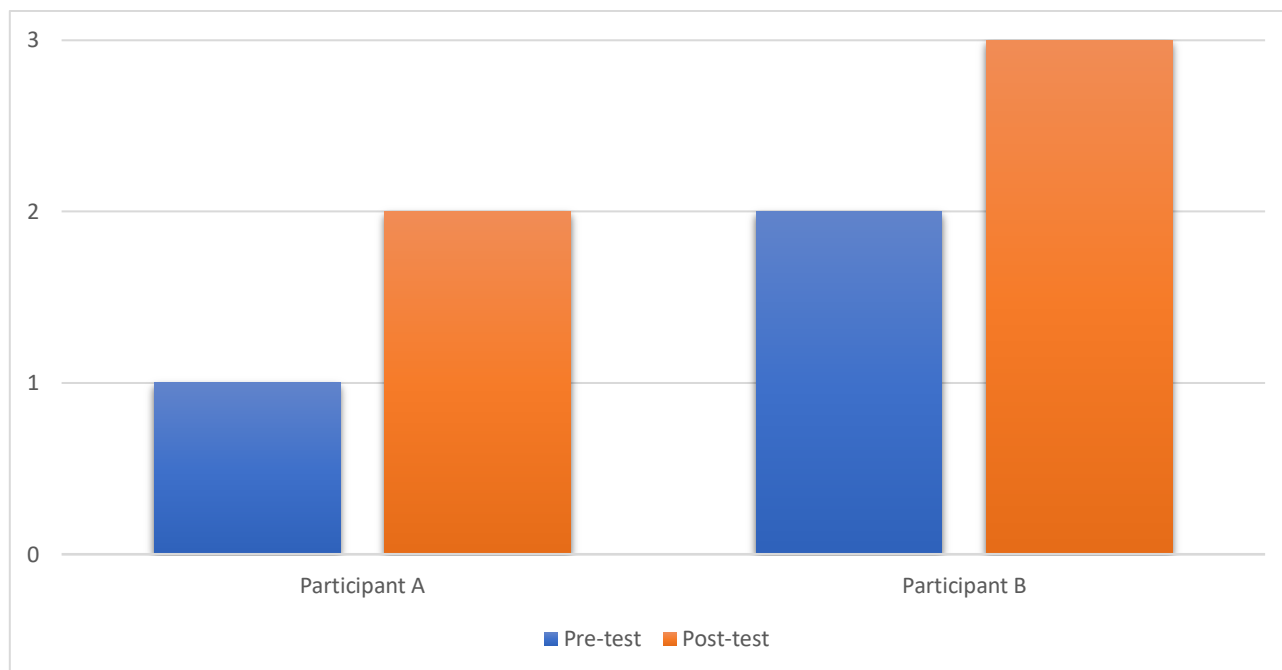


Figure 2: Results in participants' analysis skills.

Participant A:

In the pre-test, Participant A obtained developing which scores 1. First, it is shown that the participant does struggle with using basic reasoning terminology, ideas were randomly said without a proper introduction and connection, as noticeable in this following extract: **I think that uhmm is about the people who work on those hmmm unrelatable works and maybe hmmm sometimes, unwanted... works, and the family behind, I mean the feelings hmmm, of the family behind those works.** Moreover, he could provide a straight answer and showed understanding when providing his interpretation, however, there was not relevant evidence found in his answer. Furthermore, little hesitation could be found at the end of his response, showing that he did not have their points of view clear.

On the other hand, in the post test, Participant A obtained 2 points, partially accomplished. He provided a straight and non-hesitant answer. Basic terminology of reasoning could be found, he was able to interpret the poem and extract meaning for that. However, he was expected to support their ideas with relevant evidence. Moreover, he was able to properly connect his ideas, no random thoughts were found. The answer was short, however, confidence and precision when providing the answer could be seen.

Participant B:

In the pre-test, participant B obtained partially accomplished and scored 2. The response was rather precise, some basic reasoning terminology could be found. Even though the response to the question showed clear interpretation, as Participant A, some hesitation was found when responding since there were some problems with connecting ideas as shown in this extract: **I think the theme of the poem is related to a memory childhood? ... of the narrator and the theme would be the father? hmmm, like, memories from the father? how hmmm, describing how the father was.** Examples as evidence were expected to be found as well as a better flowing of ideas.

In the post-test, Participant B obtained 3 points, accomplished. She provided a straight answer. She used the basic terminology of reasoning giving a proper introduction and could connect her ideas in a good way. She was able to interpret the poem giving evidence, referring to the narrator as in the following extract: **We normally have two options, as the author mentions, he had to paths.** At the end, she provided a straight conclusion that reaffirmed her thoughts.

4.1.2. The evaluation criterion

In this criterion, there is also a progress for both participants, Figure 3 shows the results for both participants regarding their evaluation skills.

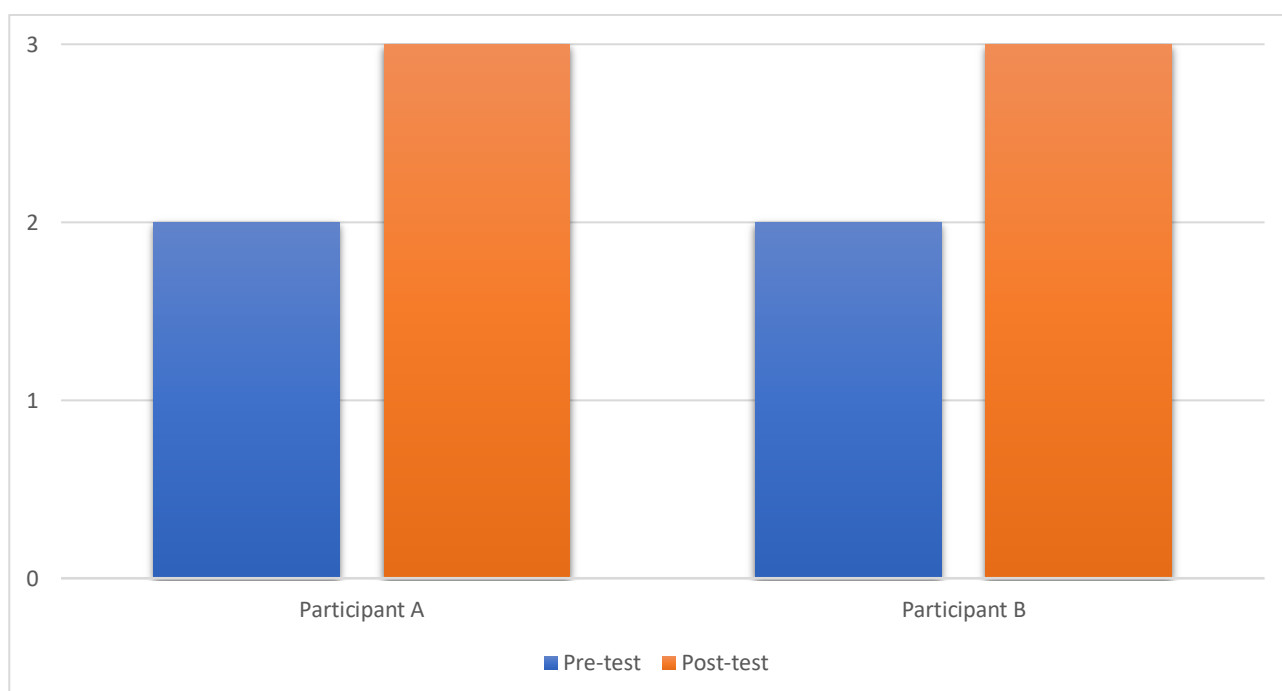


Figure 3: Results in participants' evaluation skills.

Participant A:

In the pre-test, Participant A obtained a score of 2, partially accomplished. He was somehow able to judge the significance of the phrases taken from the poem to support his argument. Even though he recognized and mentioned literal examples taken from the poem, phrases such as **I don't know**, were repeated and showed hesitation when determining relevance of these examples, to accurately support his idea, as in this following extract: **there are some key words, I don't know, ache hands? ... it seems the narrator is kind of obnoxious. About, I don't know, hmmm if it's the father of the master or someone who it's, I don't know, a learner? Of these workers.** Accurate significance and relevance were expected at the moment of responding.

As for the post-test, Participant A obtained 3 points, accomplished. He was able to judge the relevance and significance of the phrases and words found in the poem, expanding on the topic, as in the following extract: **the narrator is feeling puzzled about his decisions; also, he is sorry that he could not take both paths, this is because we often tend to regret taking decisions over other ones.** Participant A could determine the relevance of these phrases to support his arguments, as seen in the following extract: **the narrator feels satisfied with his decision of taking the "less-traveled road" because it was a decision that he made by himself, not a decision that others took for him; and that is what makes the difference.**

Participant B:

In the pre-test, Participant B got 2 points, partially accomplished. In this case the participant was able to judge the relevance together with the significance of the phrases and words she found in the poem to accurately support her ideas. **The words the narrator uses implies that he feels nostalgic about the father's memory, I would also say that he remembers his father with a little bit of fear, but he remembers him in a good way; he mixes up those feelings of those times, when he uses the expression "speaking indifferently to him, he regrets it a little bit, I think.** In the previous extract, the thoughts that the participant included are clearly stated and are well supported. She did not obtain three points since ideas could have been better connected and integrated.

On the other hand, in the post-test, participant B obtained 3 points, accomplished. She was totally able to judge the relevance and significance of different phrases and expressions found in the poem. At the moment of providing her response, she supported her arguments, relating them to the narrator. **At the end, I get this idea that he doesn't know if he took the path he's walking because he wanted or because he didn't want to go to the other one because it was the popular one; so, he is being a little bit ambiguous.**

4.1.3. The inference criterion

A progress could be seen in this criterion for both participants, Figure 4 shows the results for both participants regarding their inference skills.

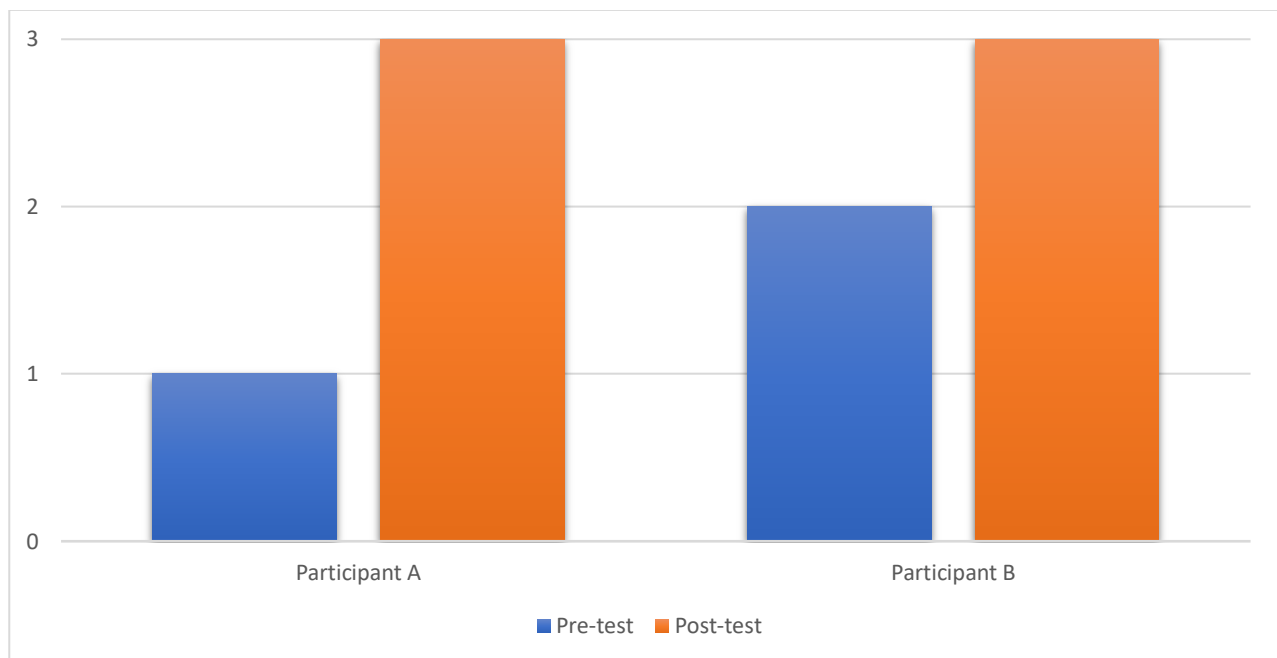


Figure 4: Results in participant's inference skills.

Participant A:

As for the pre-test, Participant A, scored 1, developing. He struggled presenting his points of view, the word **maybe** was repeated several times, demonstrating that he did not have his points clear, as showed here: **...the narrator maybe hmmm, maybe...he could be a familiar, hmm could be a learner? From this work?** He was not able to draw conclusions properly, there were random, unsupported thoughts. The participant's suppositions, besides from lacking support, did not get to an ending conclusion.

In the post-test, participant A obtained a score of 3, accomplished. He was able to present his points of view in a clear way and without any redundancy. These arguments were coherent, well connected and had enough support. Conclusions were found as seen in this following extract: **I think that the narrator is a clear reflection of what our decisions can make; he felt puzzled, then sorry and finally proud of himself for taking the less traveled road.**

Participant B:

In the pre-test, Participant B obtained 2 points, partially accomplished, since she presented her points of view and suppositions in a clear and coherent way, having enough support. **I conclude that the narrator is an adult because he's remembering something from the past, something from his childhood; also, the father's probably dead, because the narrator is remembering him.** However, even though the thoughts were clear and coherent

they were somehow redundant at the end of the response, as we can notice with the following extract: **well, I would say that the father is not alive anymore, so he's remembering the father but from before.**

Regarding the post-test, Participant B obtained a score of 3, accomplished. She was able to present her points of view in a clear way, without redundancy as it could be noticeable in the following extract: **I think being a poet in any time is not normal, it's not common for people to become a poet or even a writer, so I think he's talking about that, he's talking about his own life when he took his path.** Appropriate and well-connected ideas in the conclusions were found. Confidence and no hesitation could be seen.

4.1.4. The synthesis criterion

In this criterion, a progress could be observed for both participants, Figure 5 shows the results for both participants regarding their synthesis skills.

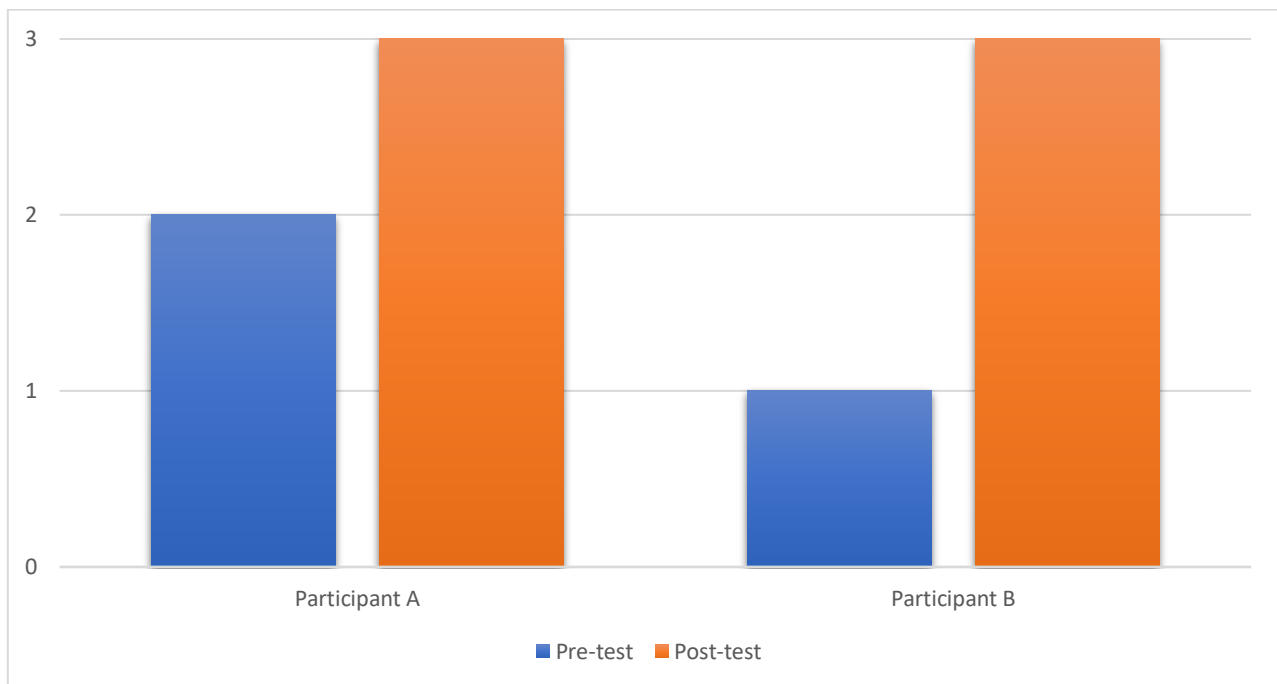


Figure 5: Results in participants' synthesis skills.

Participant A:

As for the pre-test, Participant A obtained 2 points, partially accomplished. He was able to construct a relevant argument and predict: **As he grew up, he could now relate to these workers and he is the voice of those persons who work for these offices.** In the previous extract we could notice a prediction since the participant is envisioning the narrator as a **voice** of those people. However, he did not get 3 points since now of responding, a lot of hesitation was found; connecting and integrating information could not be seen totally accomplished as it can be noticed in the following extract: **as he grew up hmmm, as the**

narrator grew up, he wasn't sure or hmmm he didn't want to hmmm..., like work, or not work; he didn't know why he is doing that kind of work.

About the post-test, Participant A obtained 3 points, accomplished. In his response, he was able to construct a coherent and relevant argument which contains a prediction. He formed well-reasoned arguments and properly supported his arguments connecting ideas in a proper way as in the following extract: **the narrator would feel satisfied with his decisions, but then again, through the poem, he also wonders what would happen if he took the other road, so; maybe, he would regret the path he chose; it's up to the future what the narrator would feel for the decisions he made"** Confidence and no hesitation were found in his response.

Participant B:

In the pre-test, Participant A obtained 1 point, developing. First, she started saying that she did not understand the question. **In this question, what do you mean? Guessing something from the narrator?** As we could notice in the previous extract, she did not know what to respond, but she somehow managed to provide an answer. There was a struggle with predicting and constructing a coherent and relevant argument. She somehow interpreted the poem and came to different conclusions, but she did not take arguments further and struggled at forming well-reasoned judgments since usually at the end of her ideas she mentioned: **something like that**, showing her struggle at making herself understood. At the end, she mentioned: **when the father was alive, he was not aware of that, he didn't realize he liked his dad that much.** Here, a prediction could be implicitly found, since it might be understood that she intended to say that since in his childhood he did not realize his love for his father, from now on, he realizes how much he loves him. However, it was expected the participant to explicitly state that.

Regarding the post-test, Participant B obtained a score of 3, accomplished. She provided a straight answer without hesitation or doubts, on the contrary of what happened in the pre-test. She was able to clearly predict, construct a coherent and relevant argument, showing support and connecting her ideas properly. She took arguments further and related to the poem as we can see in this extract: **he is happy and confident in some way; he says at the end that the path he has taken has made all the difference for him, he is not regretting taking this path, that is what I think.**

4.1.5. The self-reflection criterion

There is a progress in this criterion for both participants, Figure 6 shows the results for both participants regarding their self-reflection skills.

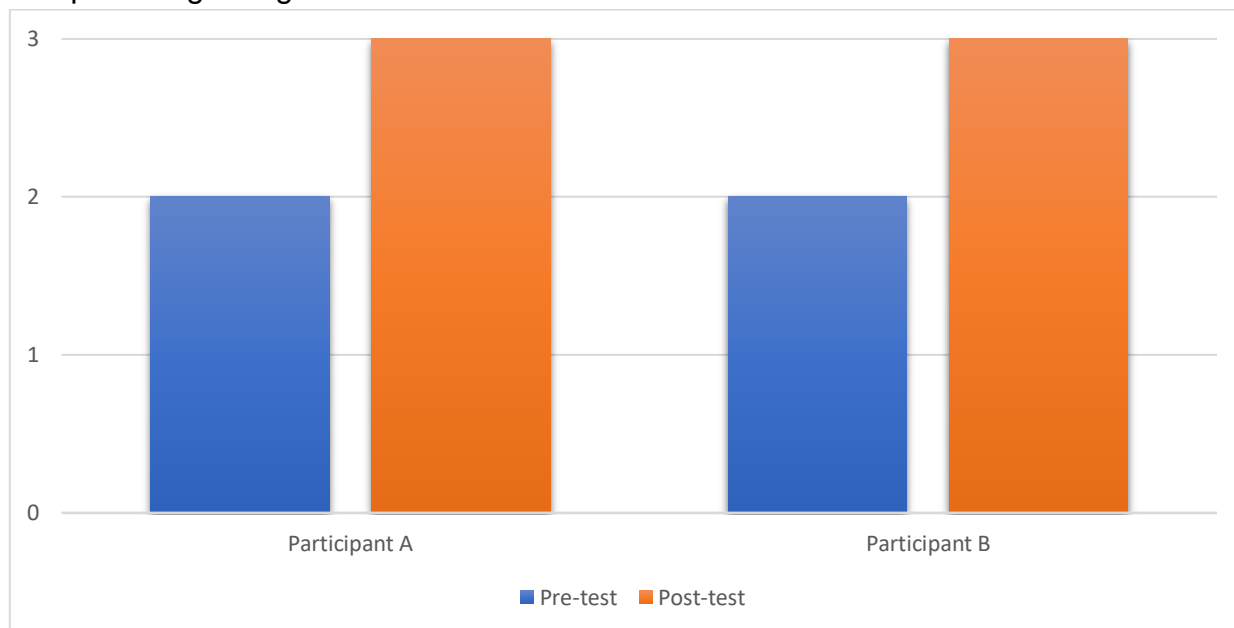


Figure 6: Results in participants' self-reflection skills.

Participant A:

Regarding the pre-test, Participant A obtained a score of 2, partially accomplished. He was able to respond with a clear argument, but hesitation and lack of accurate connection and integration of ideas were found. Moreover, He was able to show awareness of his presuppositions as he mentions: **that is a common mistake that we have, that a person who grew up an entire life by our side, is not going to leave.**

In the pre-test, Participant A obtained the maximum score of 3 points, accomplished. He responded this question stating clear and non-hesitant arguments. The connection and integration of ideas were proper. He questioned his own preconceptions and at the moment of justifying, he was able to show awareness of his suppositions as we can notice in the following extract: **there will be times in which we will regret the decisions we make, but then again, as the narrator says, we should feel proud about the decisions we're making until now and also, we should consider the ones we make and not what others make... it's crucial because it can guide us for the right path, for the rest of our lives.**

Participant B:

In the pre-test, Participant B obtained a score of 2, partially accomplished. She responded a straight and clear answer, however, even though the ideas were visible at the time of justifying, there were some problems with connecting these ideas. The connector **like** was repeated and phrases such as **I don't know how to explain that**, were found; and these show difficulties when expressing what she wanted to say. Nonetheless, she showed

awareness of her presuppositions: **I don't know why we don't appreciate people when they are alive, I feel it's very common.**

Regarding the post-test, Participant B obtained a score of 3, accomplished. She stated clear arguments, did not hesitate, connected and integrated her ideas properly and at the moment of justifying, questioned her own preconceptions; showing awareness of her thoughts as seen in this extract: **I believe making decisions is crucial, it's not something we should do without thinking that much; when we make these decisions, we need to think a lot and be very sure that we are doing what we really want.**

4.2. SO2: To describe participants' perceptions about the use of the Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate strategies.

To achieve specific objective 2, three Likert scales were used to keep a record of the participants' perceptions towards the three different strategies. The data was gathered after the participants performed each of the strategies without any guidance. Each Likert scale consisted of six different statements depending on the strategy. The statements were divided into two dimensions. Three of the statements involve specific characteristics that each of the strategies aims to achieve and three other statements are general views on the strategies. It also contains three levels of agreement: Agree, partially agree and disagree. The findings of the participants' perspectives about the use of the different strategies are explained below.

4.2.1. Dimension 1: Specific perceptions of the strategies

This dimension involves the specific perceptions of each of the strategies. It is essential to bear in mind that these three statements are different in all three Likert scales, since they are thought upon the strategy. It is important to consider that even though each strategy aims to have an impact on students' critical thinking skills, their objectives are different. The findings of the participants' responses are explained below.

Strategy 1: Think, pair and share

Regarding the three specific statements presented in the **Think, Pair and Share's strategy's** Likert Scale, both participants agreed on their responses to each of the statements. Based on the participants' views, this strategy allowed them to be able to think individually about a topic, express their ideas properly and through this strategy, they were also able to exchange ideas more easily with their partner. Since both participants agreed, it is concluded that the participants' specific perspectives towards the **Think, Pair and Share strategy**, are positive.

The above-mentioned analysis of each specific statement of the **Think, Pair and Share strategy** is summarized in the figure below.

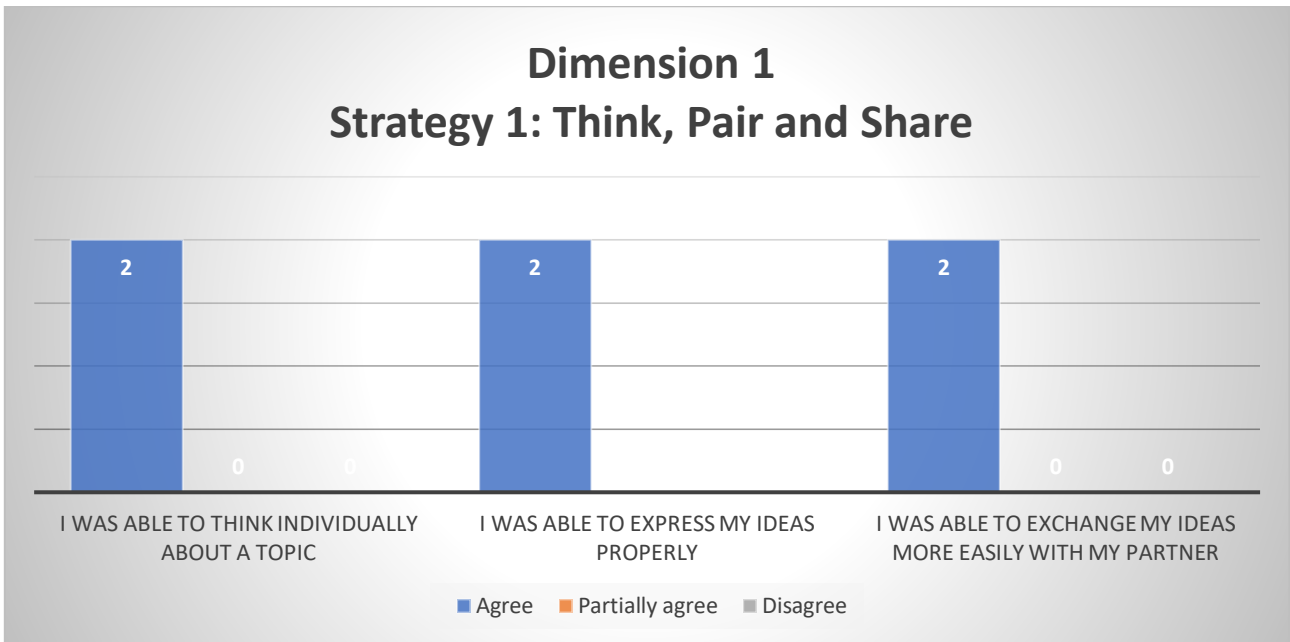


Figure 7: Summary for Dimension 1, Strategy 1.

Strategy 2: Mind mapping

About the three statements exposed in the **Mind Mapping**'s Likert scale, a few differences in the responses were found. Considering their responses, one of the participants did not have trouble organizing ideas, whereas the other one may have had some difficulties organizing them. Moreover, participants could expand on the topic and they could also connect ideas easily. Positive specific perspectives towards this strategy are shown.

In Figure 8 below, the analysis of each specific statement of the **Mind Mapping strategy** is summarized.

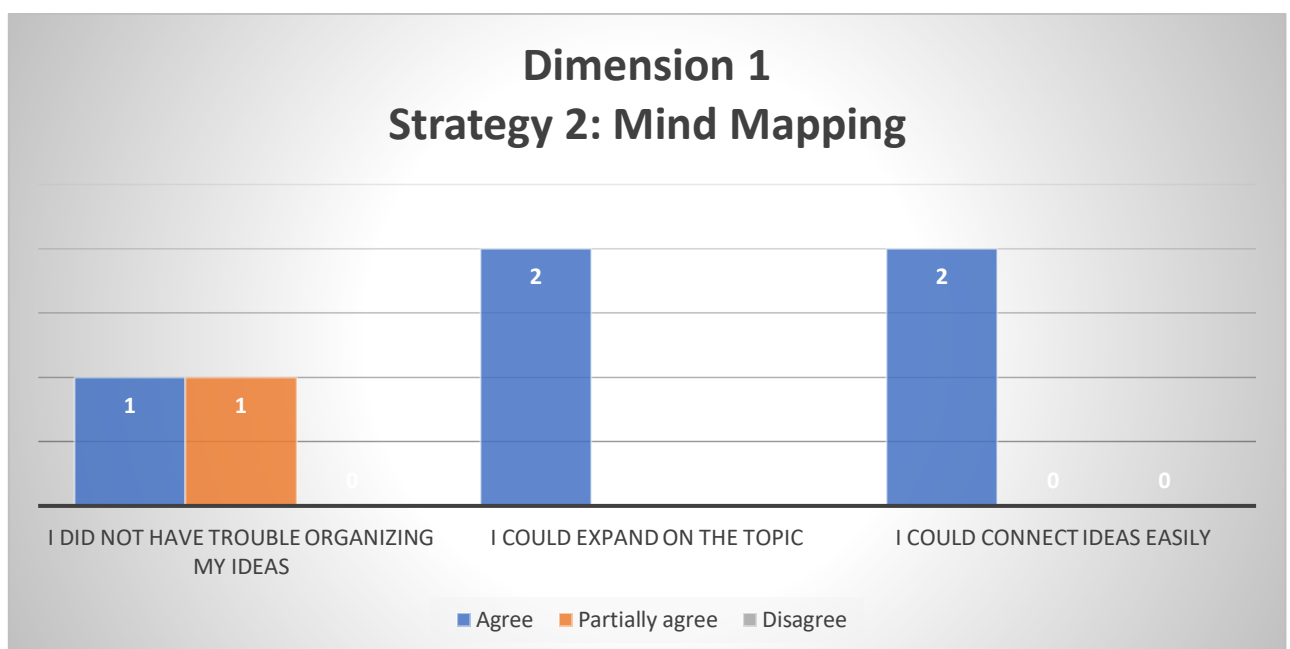


Figure 8: Summary for Dimension 1, Strategy 2.

Strategy 3: Debate

Considering the three statements which involve specific perceptions of the strategy, slightly different responses were found. Both participants were able to state arguments properly and both were also able to formulate better conclusions. However, one of them was able respond to arguments properly whereas the other one might have struggled a bit.

Below, in Figure 9, the analysis of each specific statement of the **Debate strategy** is summarized.

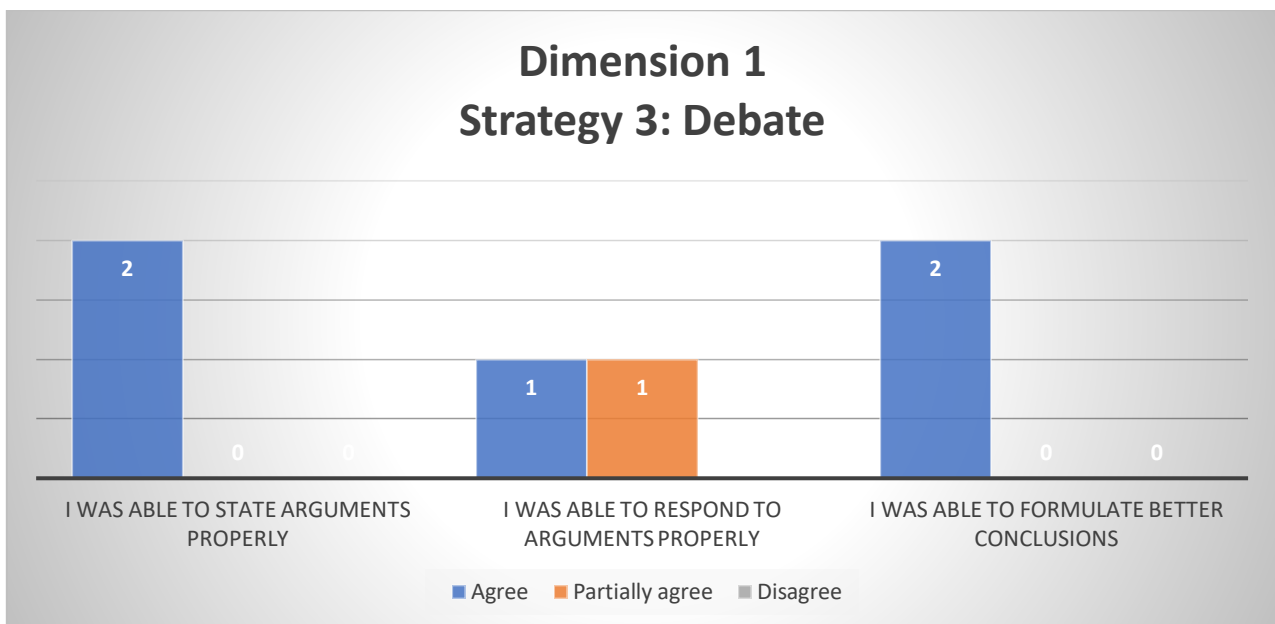


Figure 9: Summary for Dimension 1, Strategy 3.

4.2.2. Dimension 2: General perceptions of the strategies

This dimension involves the general perceptions of each of the strategies. Just as explained in the previous dimension, the statements were created considering each one of the strategies' objectives. Below are the findings according to the participants' responses.

Strategy 1: Think, pair and share

Considering the three other statements which involve general perceptions of the strategy, both participants could improve their reflection, they were able to discuss fluidly and they were able to feel more confident when discussing. Therefore, since both participants designated these three general statements as with the highest level of agreement, it can be concluded that, considering their responses, they do have positive general perceptions on the **Think, Pair and Share strategy**.

The previous analysis of each general statement of the **Think, pair and Share strategy** is summarized below.

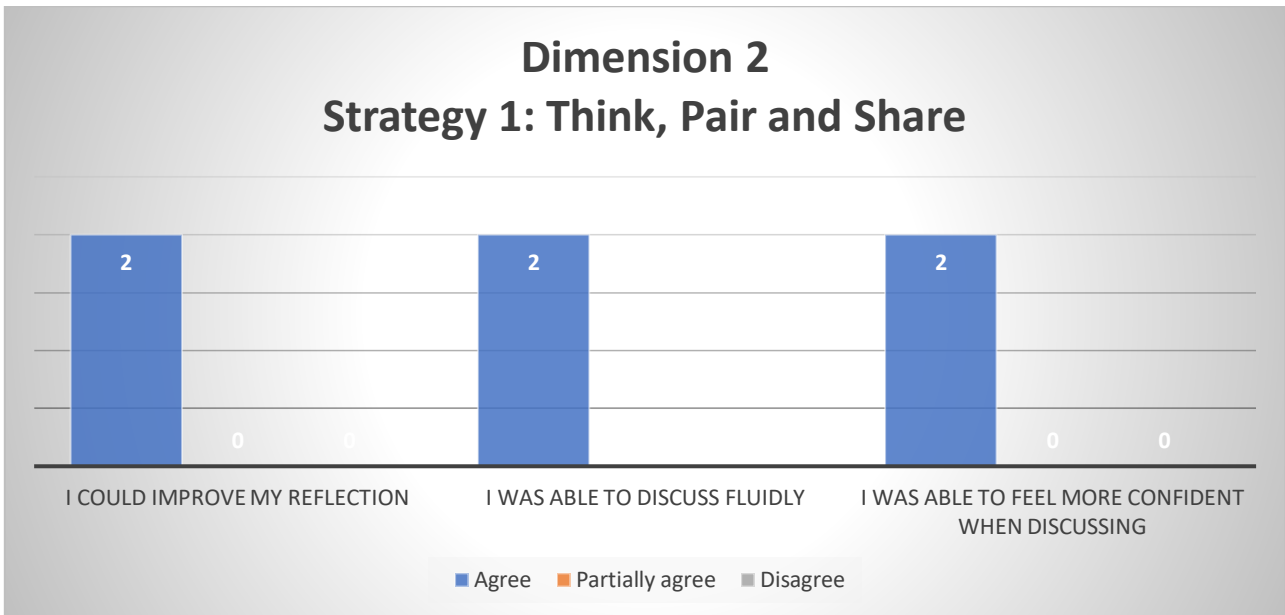


Figure 10: Summary for Dimension 2, Strategy 1.

Strategy 2: Mind mapping

Regarding the general perceptions of the **Mind Mapping strategy**, only one slight difference could be found. Participants could share their points fluidly, they were able to understand others better through the use of mind maps; however, only one of them could feel more confident when sharing points, the other seemed to have had slight difficulties. Concluding, even though one participant struggled with feeling totally confident, there was a tendency of having positive perspectives towards this strategy.

Below, in Figure 11, the analysis of each general statement of the **Mind Mapping strategy** is summarized.

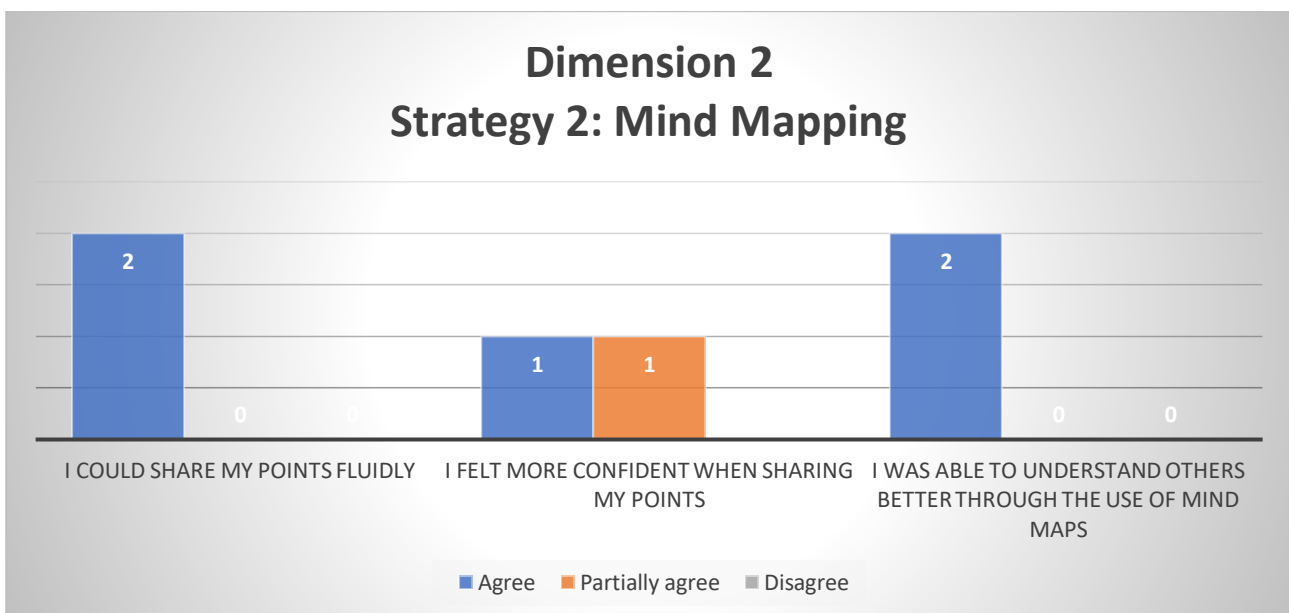


Figure 11: Summary for Dimension 2, Strategy 2.

Strategy 3: Debate

Concerning the three general statements presented in this strategy's Likert scale, there were found some slight differences. Based on the participants' perspectives, they were able to discuss fluidly; however, both seemed to struggle a little with confidence at the moment of discussing. Moreover, one of them felt confident when sharing points whereas the other had little difficulties.

In Figure 12 below, the analysis of each general statement of the **Debate strategy** is summarized.

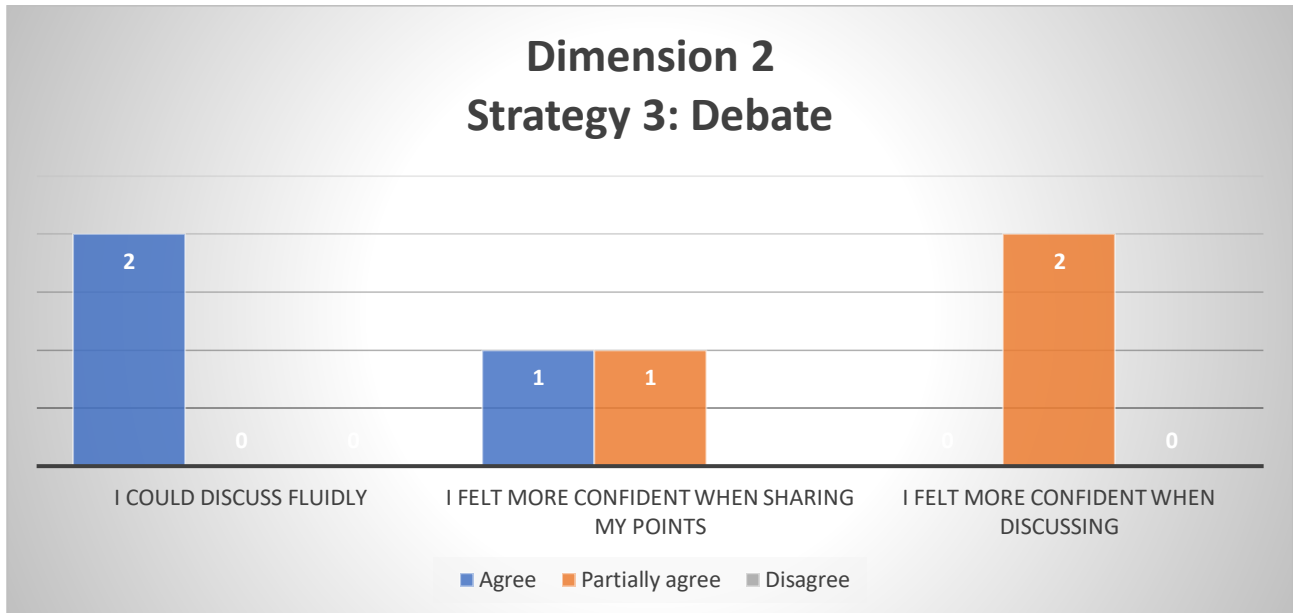


Figure 12: Summary for Dimension 2, Strategy 3.

In Figure 13 below, both dimensions' summaries are presented:

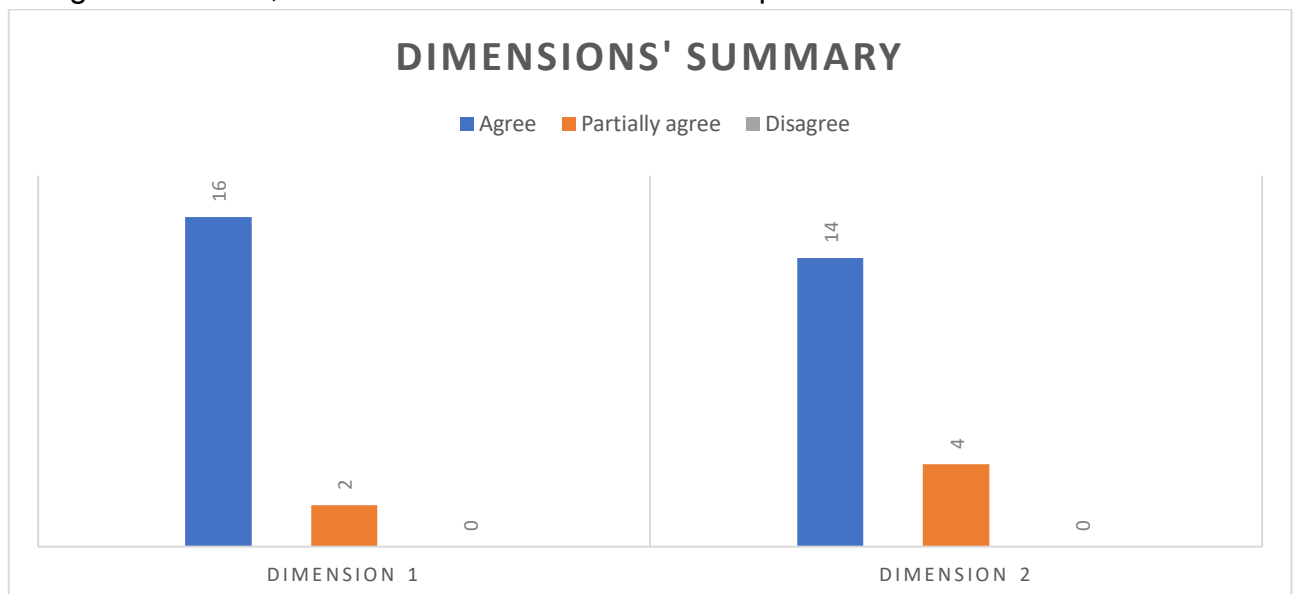


Figure 13: Both dimensions' summary.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

5.1. Examining the results

In this chapter, the data from this research will be discussed according to each specific objective. The limitations and implications for further investigations are provided as well.

5.1.1. SO1: To assess the effectiveness of using Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate strategies to produce critical thinking on Pre-service teachers at the time of reading poems in English.

The first specific objective aimed at assessing the effectiveness of using **Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate strategies** at the time of reading poems, using an analytic rubric. The findings showed that there was an improvement in their critical thinking skills. Below, the analysis of each criterion will be shown.

The analysis skill

Regarding this skill, for the pre and post-test, participants answered the following question: **what is the theme of the poem above?** The most noticeable improvement was in using basic terminology of reasoning, using proper transition phrases and connectors. It could be seen that this helped both participants to better connect their ideas, and therefore, they could make themselves understood more easily. I believe that in this case, the **Debate strategy** played an important role to help participants develop this skill; at the moment of guiding them with this strategy they constantly used fixed expressions and connectors to help introduce, develop and conclude an argument. Regarding this point, Asrida (2012) conducted a study which aimed at using debate activities to foster students' communication and critical thinking skills, and it was concluded that debate could be used as a teaching technique to help students improve their CT skills as well as their communication skills since students get motivated to think in a short time and give their arguments.

In the pre-test both participants could extract meaning from the poem, however, in the post-test, the interpretation of the poem for both of the participants was clear and more thoughtful. This could be related to the fact that they were able to connect their points of view in a better and more logical way. Moreover, at the moment of interpreting the poem, particularly in Participant B, it could be seen that she could interpret the poem giving constant evidence, this could not be seen in the pre-test. Furthermore, it is important to mention that at the moment of providing their answers, both seemed to be more confident when giving their opinions. Regarding this topic, these results could be compared to Gómez (2018), who conducted a case study in which poetry was integrated through a transactional reading approach in an EFL classroom. During the intervention, participants read and discussed five poems in three weeks. Gomez (2018) concluded that "poetry was a powerful material to improve the four language skills, because it enabled students to be critical readers and better speakers and writers to develop arguments based on evidence (p.374).

Finally, I believe both of the participants could evidently improve their analysis skills, since in the post-test both showed the capacity to analyse the poem in a proper way; taking into

consideration that part of critical thinking is the ability to carefully examine something, understand what it means, interpreting, questioning evidence, etc. (Doyle, 2020).

The evaluation skill

For this skill, in the pre and post-test, participants answered the following question: **how can you determine the narrator's feelings after reading the poem?** The improvement found in the evaluation skill was directly related to the capacity of both participants to determine the relevance of phrases, words or expressions found in the poem. In the post-test, both participants were able to expand on the topic, clearly supporting their arguments and relating them to the narrator, this was not evident in the pre-test. Also, it is relevant to mention that as well as in the previous skill, both participants seemed to be more confident and the connection of ideas was clearly improved. In fact, it could be found that in the question containing this skill is where Participant A showed more hesitation and constantly repeated words, however, in the post-test he had a major change in relation to that. Moreover, I could notice how participants took certain features from the three strategies and incorporated them into their answers; in this case, the **Mind Mapping strategy** played an important role since ordering ideas was a struggle for both of them. Furthermore, with regard to this skill, Pally (1997), in her proposal to develop CT skills through a "sustained content study", constantly refers to the evaluation skill as one which should not be left out, suggesting that "in order to succeed at the university and in today's workplace, and to understand the political/economic factors that affect their lives, ESL students must be able to identify the central points and methodology of a range of material, question and evaluate them, and organize persuasive responses in English" (p. 306).

Finally, even though the evaluation skill is not a simple one since it does not only involve judging relevant versus irrelevant, but also entails judging the degree of relevance of a particular interpretation (Black, Chislett, Thomson, Thwaites & Thwaites, 2008), I believe both participants had a notorious improvement. Even though at the end, one participant could accomplish it and the other could partially accomplish it, I believe both had a relevant improvement in their responses and could demonstrate their capacity to better evaluate a poem.

The inference skill

With regard to this skill, in the pre and post-test, participants answered the following question: **what can you conclude about the narrator from what you have read?** I believe it is one of the skills in which they showed the most improvement. Besides the fact that both participants obtained the maximum score, I could notice their confidence and precision at the moment of responding. First, in the post-test both stated their hypothesis and suppositions in a clear way, coherently and without redundancy, whereas in the pre-test both struggled at stating their thoughts. Furthermore, in the pre-test both participants struggled to come to a final conclusion, especially Participant A, some arguments did not get to a final conclusion and they also lacked support. On the other hand, in the post-test, both participants were able to draw appropriate conclusions and provide different ones.

What I can highlight the most is that, here, it is reaffirmed that the capacity of the participants to better organize and connect their ideas helped them to better express their opinions. Carter (2020) presented a discussion that is related to these previous points since she discussed the importance to develop CT in the ESL classroom and some of her conclusions were that the development of CT skills does not only support language acquisition but also increases ease with communication, if good CT skills are developed.

The synthesis skill

Regarding the synthesis skill, in the pre and post-test, participants answer this question: **what can you predict from the narrator?** In the pre-test, both participants showed hesitation when responding, especially Participant B, she did not even understand the question and asked for clarification. The question contained the word “predict” which might be confusing if the previous question had the word “conclude”. They might be difficult to differentiate and indeed it was, for one of the participants. First, it is important to mention that during the intervention this difference was not exposed, and no clarification was provided. Participant B managed to understand it on her own and came to a response, which was not that accurate. What is surprising is that in the post-test, she could actually predict showing no hesitation whatsoever. Participant A could also predict and came to an accurate conclusion. Both participants, after the intervention, had the capacity to better think of the question and pose arguments. Concerning what I just mentioned, Kabilan (2000), in his article about CT in the language classrooms, focused on what teachers need in order to develop creative and CT skills, claiming that using the language and knowing the meaning is not enough, since to become proficient in a language, learners need to use CT. I could find a relation between his article and this current study since one of his most relevant ideas is that teachers should facilitate and encourage creative and critical thinking skills by viewing students in a different way from what they had presumed and that most teachers tend to ignore the capabilities of their students and if they continue to disregard their views or suppress them without ever giving them the chance to express themselves, then they would not be able to train and use their thinking skills (Kabilan, 2000).

Finally, I believe that the **Think, Pair and Share strategy** had a lot to do with this improvement since participants were able to have time to think, discuss and then have a discussion; allowing themselves to go deep into the question and construct their own argument (Sampsel, 2013).

The self-reflection skill

For the last skill, the questions that participants answered are different because they are specific for each poem. In the pre-test, participants answered this question: **do you believe it is common not to appreciate people when they are alive? Why?** And in the post-test, participants answered the following question: **based on your experience, do you think making decisions is crucial? Why?** The major improvement could be found in that participants had the capacity to show awareness of their suppositions at the moment of responding. As in the previous skills, again, both of them could better connect their ideas, in a logical and coherent way. Both expanded on the topic more than in the pre-test and had more profound reflections. This, was the skill that I believed showed the most improvement. I was able to see features from the three strategies in both of the participants' responses. First, **Mind Mapping strategy's** features were present since both of them extended their thoughts, ordered their ideas better and allowed themselves to sometimes, change their minds. Also, **Think, Pair and Share strategy's** features could be noticed since both took enough time to think about the question and expose them in a clear way, and finally, features from the **Debate strategy** were present since at the time of providing their arguments, they were able to use basic terminology of reasoning and they could communicate their thoughts in a proper way.

In a similar way as in this project, Bobkina & Stefanova (2016) proposed a model of teaching CT skills which focused on the reader's response to a poem. The authors designed a series of activities related to the poem and their aim was to develop thinking skills (one of them being self-reflection) to provide students with critical tools for self-knowledge and personal growth. They concluded that "critical thinking skills have enormous value for students as they not only enable them to interpret and understand different viewpoints in the context of EFL classroom but also offer them an opportunity to create their own reflective learning styles" (p. 692). It is interesting that both developed this skill in a relevant way, allowing themselves to gain awareness and evaluate their own pre-conceptions (Sampsel, 2013).

5.1.2. SO2: To describe participants' perspectives about the use of Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate strategies.

The second specific objective is related to the participants' perspectives about the use of each of the strategies, using Likert scales to collect the data.

In relation to the specific perceptions:

Regarding the specific perceptions, in the **Think, Pair and Share strategy**, I could notice that participants felt confident when using this strategy, therefore, they both agreed in the three statements. During the intervention I believe this was helpful for them since they had different stages to think and listen, so at the end, their confidence and motivation at the moment of sharing their thoughts was evident. Regarding the previous ideas, Reynolds and Shih (2015) conducted a study in which they investigated the usefulness of Think, pair and share strategy in the L2 context, combining it with reading strategy instruction. Results

indicated that both of the strategies seemed to be more effective in increasing motivation than a traditional approach. Moreover, Reynolds & Shih (2015) stated that “in this study, a traditional EFL reading class was transformed by integrating think-pair share with reading strategies instruction. The intention was to provide an environment that could better prepare adolescents for the type of critical thinking, analysis, and discussion of academic texts that they will later encounter at university” (p. 231).

With regard to the **Mind Mapping strategy**, I believe that the participant who voted for “partially agree” in the statement: **I did not have trouble organizing my ideas**, might have struggled a little with that because they were dealing with a poem and since it does have many interpretations, that might have been one of the probable causes which had the participant struggle with organizing thoughts. This participant had less confidence than the other. Regarding this point, Yunus & Chien (2016) conducted a study which aimed at investigating students’ perceptions on the use of mind mapping strategy. Even though the study was not focused on how this strategy could improve CT skills, I believe it is important to address it since it was designed to integrate this strategy in an ESL context and addresses students’ perceptions of it. What is most relevant here, is that even though the majority claimed that this strategy was useful in planning and organizing their writing and gaining understanding, there were still some participants who claimed that the creation of mind maps is difficult, boring and time-consuming and does not benefit their writing, therefore, they disliked creating mind maps. Yunus & Chien (2016) stated that this could be true when using this strategy, for example, in an exam situation where they might have difficulties to familiarize themselves with the concept of the mind mapping strategy in such conditions.

Lastly, about the **Debate strategy**, I realized a noticeable difference in the participants’ personalities, I remember Participant A, being more timid than the other and I also noticed he would get a little nervous when responding to arguments. Hence, I believe that might have been one of the causes that might have influenced his decision to partially agree on that statement.

In a similar way as in this project, Iman (2017) explored debate instruction in the EFL classroom and its impact on the critical thinking and speaking skills. In this study, the sample consisted of 48 senior high school students, which were divided into two groups of 24 students, the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group was given a pre-test, a treatment by using World Schools Debating Championship and then the post-test; whereas the control group was only given the pre and post-test without any treatment. As in this action research, an analytic rubric was used to assess CT. Even though the criteria used are not the same as in this study, they involved aspects of CT which are similar, such as identifying issues, evaluating assumptions, evaluating evidence, conclusions etc. What Iman (2017) concluded is that debate instruction is very potential to be implemented in the EFL classroom since students learn not only how to speak but what to speak and “it allows students to think critically about the issues and to work together with the teammate in terms of searching for the information, fact, data, and so forth as well as to speak out about particular issues academically and accordingly; this ultimately going to make the EFL learners become well-cultivated and competent speaker” (p.104).

In relation to the general perceptions:

With regard to the general perceptions, in the **Think, pair and share strategy**, both of the participants, again, agreed with all of the statements as well as in the specific perceptions. I believe this was the strategy they felt more confident and somehow helped them develop their thoughts in a better way. To support these points, Warliati, Rafli & Darmahusni (2019) conducted a research project in which they aimed at investigating the influence of learning strategies such as TPS mediated by CT towards the speaking skill. Warliati, Rafli & Darmahusni (2019) suggested that “students who learn language especially at the speaking subject should implement the learning strategy mediated by critical thinking to improve speaking skill. Students will habitually think critically to investigate the information from an informant” (p. 137).

When analyzing the results from the **Mind Mapping strategy**, it could be found that, again, this participant who partially agreed, is the one who had struggled with confidence since the beginning, therefore, his vote was expected. The relevant point is that he had a noticeable improvement that could easily be developed over time. I can relate this to Omar & Albakri (2016) who conducted a study about thinking maps to promote CT through the teaching of literature. It is interesting to address this since in their study, they also used poems to generate these thinking maps, claiming that “the thinking maps provided opportunities for them to generate ideas as well as justify their answers. Although the students took some time to discuss and complete the maps, they were involved in the thinking process of generating ideas” (p.30).

The authors concluded that “the teachers’ implementation of the thinking maps in their literature lessons indicated positive outcomes as findings demonstrated that the use of thinking maps promotes the generation of ideas, improved students’ written and oral language and built their confidence in presentations” (p. 32).

Regarding the **Debate strategy**, it is the first time that both participants voted for partially agree in one of the statements, specifically in: “I felt more confident when discussing”. First, I believe that this could be expected in a way since at the moment of debating, they were given their position to be against or for a certain topic, therefore, it could be assumed that that might have influenced their ability to have a proper discussion and feel confident at the moment of developing it. Also, the participant who had been struggling with confidence partially agreed with the other statement: **I felt more confident when sharing my points**, this again, was expected since it is a process that needs more time to be developed. Even though both participants partially agreed with the same statement, I believe this strategy was helpful since during the intervention, it worked in the sense that it forced the participants to think about the multiple sides of an issue and to interact with one another (Halvorsen, 2005).

Concerning the previous points, Carter (2020) conducted a study in which she presented a discussion of the importance to develop CT skills in ESL students. In her article, she presented different activities which encourage CT, one of them was debate. According to

Carter (2020) debate activities that facilitate interaction and collaboration foster CT. She also mentioned that “working together with others requires significant communication, creativity, and innovation. Therefore, teachers should work to design activities that require purposeful and meaningful interaction and collaboration between students in the ESL classroom” (p.48).

5.2. Limitations

When it comes to limitations, it could be stated that this project involved only two participants. Even though it is considered an option for small-scale action research, it could be interesting if other projects could be done with more participants to have more reliable results.

Also, it is important to take into account that these participants are preservice teachers that somehow had been exposed to the development of CT skills before and had dealt with poems and literature in the past, during their teaching program, therefore, their CT skills were not a hundred percent lacking. Maybe, if their CT skills would have been lower, a more noticeable change could have been shown.

5.3. Implications

This action research deals with a subject matter that is relevant for the target group that this research is focused on, which are pre-service ESL teachers, but also, it could be useful as well if we think about developing CT skills in ESL students. It is of great importance that preservice teachers could develop CT skills in order for them to be better prepared to work with their students. It is important to address that CT skills have been found to help ESL students in the acquisition of the language through problem solving abilities and oral communication skills, however, teaching these CT skills is considered a major challenge because of students’ lack of vocabulary, or students’ lack of exposure to these skills (Ferlazzo, 2016). Hence, as ESL teachers, being aware of the importance to first develop these skills ourselves and also to provide our students with them, is something we need to at least consider and hopefully introduce in our class. As Kabilan (2000) presented in his article about CT in language classrooms, the change of teachers’ views of themselves is needed, since they are not only providers but thinkers who constantly think of what could be done to encourage creative and critical thinking in their learners.

Finally, it is intended that this project might contribute to other ESL teachers to work with literature in the class. It is proven that literature, specifically poetry is a good alternative to express feelings, they can create a context for enhancing learners’ understanding of cultural values, which is part of gaining fluency in the L2 (Kyrkgoz, 2008).

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Summary of main findings

This action research aimed at exploring the contribution that poems taught through **Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate** strategies have on pre-service teachers' critical thinking skills development.

With regard to specific objective 1, to assess the effectiveness of using **Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate** strategies to develop critical thinking on Pre-service teachers at the time of reading poems in English, it can be concluded that the implementation of these three strategies had a positive impact on the participants' CT skills development. To start with, it is important to address that their scores in the post-intervention tests went up. For Participant A, it went from eight points to fourteen points and for Participant B, from nine points to the maximum one, fifteen points.

As a summary, there are three concepts that I believe had a notorious improvement for both of the participants. First, their **confidence** at the moment of expressing their thoughts drastically changed. In the pre-test, they significantly hesitated at the moment of responding, they seemed as if they were not sure about what they were saying, constantly adding to their responses **I don't know or I'm not sure**. In the post-test, it could be seen that they felt confident when sharing their ideas and less nervous. I would also say that they seemed to trust themselves more, they were able to defend their opinions with relevant arguments. Second, the **connection of ideas** was improved. In the pre-test, it could be seen that they had many ideas in mind, however, it was hard for them to express these ideas properly. They would start saying something and then change that idea for another one, they would constantly make pauses and would think something different in the middle of their response. This changed in the post-test, since in the majority of their answers, before saying anything, they knew beforehand what they were going to respond. They took more time to think and ordered their ideas before speaking. This, I believe, is directly related to their confidence at the moment of talking since there was a better organization of ideas. Finally, I believe that the **poem's interpretation** had a major improvement. As the intervention went by, they were getting more and more familiar with poems since in every session we dealt with a different one. I noticed it was getting easier for them to interpret poems since they could relate to the narrator in a better way, they could also reveal the mood or attitude that the poem attempted to convey, they constantly related the phrases or words with situations and own experiences. They also seemed to get more creative, providing thoughtful responses, giving more than one interpretation. The discussions created a great environment, full of different points of view. I believe that this was very interesting and rewarding as well, since these were my expectations as a researcher.

Concerning specific objective 2, to describe participants' perceptions about the use of **Think, Pair and Share, Mind Mapping and Debate** strategies, it could be shown that participants had positive perceptions on these three strategies. For **dimension 1**, which is related to the specific perceptions of the strategies, participants almost agreed with all of them except for two statements. There are nine statements in total, three about each strategy. One participant partially agreed with one of the **Mind Mapping** strategy's statements which was: **I did not have trouble organizing my ideas** and the same participant, partially agreed with

one of the **Debate** strategy's statement which was: **I was able to respond to arguments properly**. It is important to mention that these perceptions were from the same participant who seemed to struggle with organization of ideas and responding to arguments since the beginning. The other participant, for the specific perceptions, agreed in all nine statements.

Moreover, as for **dimension 2**, which is about the general perceptions of the strategies, it could be concluded that participants also had positive perceptions. As in the first dimension, here, there are also nine statements in total, three about each strategy. Participants showed agreement in most of the statements, however, Participant A partially agreed with three of them, and Participant B, only partially agreed with one of them. One belongs to the **Mind Mapping** strategy, which is: **I felt more confident when sharing my points** (Participant A partially agreed), the other two statements belong to the same strategy, **Debate**, these are the following: **I felt more confident when sharing my points** (Participant A partially agreed) and **I felt more confident when discussing** (both of the participants partially agreed). As for the three statements, I understand their decisions to partially agree, since, again, the participant who partially agreed with the three of them, had been struggling with confidence since the beginning, much more than the other participant. I also understand Participant B's decision to partially agree with the **Debate** strategy's statement, since I noticed she didn't feel that confident discussing, since their positions against and for were designated, therefore, I understand that she might have felt uncomfortable with her position.

Finally, I can conclude that it could be seen that participants enjoyed being part of these strategies. Furthermore, their decisions to agree or partially agree were expected in each statement and lastly, the fact that they did not choose to disagree with any statement, shows that these strategies had a positive impact on them.

Regarding the research question of this study, how does the use of poems taught through **Think, pair and share, Mind Mapping and Debate** strategies help pre-service teachers to improve their critical thinking skills? It can be concluded that the implementation of these strategies at the moment of reading poems helped participants to improve their CT skills. Even though participants had been exposed to these kinds of strategies in the past, and their CT skills were not that low, I believe there was an improvement in the five CT's subskills that this project dealt with, which clearly helped them to better express themselves, to communicate more fluidly, to better organize their ideas and to come up with thoughtful responses. In addition to the importance of these three strategies, I also want to address the relevance of combining them with poems. I believe that these pieces of literature were a great combination to these strategies since they helped them to expand their thoughts, to have space for thinking and understanding others' points of view, to imagine new realities, new situations and experiences. They were able to put themselves in the narrator's shoes and interpret the poem the best they could, analyzing phrases, making inferences, relating words to certain moods, etc.

6.2. Personal reflections

When I started working on this project, I knew that I wanted poems, short stories or some form of literature to be involved, since I have experienced myself how beneficial it is not only for the acquisition of the language itself, but for allowing discussion in class, expressing our opinions in a proper way, understanding others' feelings and emotions, etc., which was the problem that was addressed in this project. I always saw literature as a resource, which can somehow **open minds**; which I later concluded that this concerns critical thinking skills.

At first, I had in mind to focus this study on regular English learners, who could be high school or university students. However, when I was offered to work with pre-service teachers, I thought it was a great opportunity, because, first, they presented the problem of lacking critical thinking skills and, at the same time, as they were going to be teachers, this could be of great help for their teaching practice. As the project was developing, they had great perceptions on these strategies and they realized the impact they had on their CT skills, which may influence them to implement these strategies and most importantly, be aware of the importance to work on these skills because they have experienced the benefits themselves.

Finally, the present investigation helped me to understand how important it could be to work on our students' CT skills. I have had students who do very well on the written tests, who are motivated and willing to learn, who are responsible and study hard; however, when it comes to expressing themselves, I have seen that, regardless of their English level, even if they have good vocabulary or great ideas inside their minds, they get frustrated since it is hard for them to put their thoughts into words. Moreover, as a teacher, it gets me motivated to find solutions for the issues that come to mind, therefore, I have enjoyed every step of this project and I would love that other teachers could benefit from this.

6.3. Recommendations

As teachers, we should not leave critical thinking skills behind. I truly believe that the development of these skills could be a booster for building confidence and have a much more enjoyable learning experience. I hope that this action research could raise awareness of the need to incorporate these kinds of strategies into our classrooms and use poetry to complement them. I believe what is most fundamental about this project, is that it can get to reflect upon our own practice as teachers, and in this way, other issues may arise and together we can help each other to have a better teaching experience.

Moreover, for further research, as this study's sample are pre-service teachers, it would be interesting to see how this work with regular English learners who have a much lower development of their CT skills. Also, I believe it would be interesting to know what would happen if this is done in a longer period of time.

Finally, what I also believe would be a contribution, is the search for other similar strategies that might foster the improvement of CT skills, taught through poems or through other literary texts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Pre-intervention Test

PRE-INTERVENTION TEST

Instructions: Read the following poem carefully, then read the questions below. Have three to five minutes to think about them and then answer them orally.

Robert Hayden - Those Winter Sundays

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

1. What is the theme of the poem above?
2. How can you determine the narrators' feelings after reading the poem?
3. What can you conclude about the narrator from what you have read?
4. What can you predict from the narrator?
5. Do you believe it is common not to appreciate people when they are alive? Why?

Appendix 2

Post-intervention Test

POST-INTERVENTION TEST

Instructions: Read the following poem carefully, then read the questions below. Have three to five minutes to think about them and then answer them orally.

Robert Frost - The Road not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

1. What is the theme of the poem above?
2. How can you determine the narrator's feelings after reading the poem?
3. What can you conclude about the narrator from what you have read?
4. What can you predict from the narrator?
5. Based on your experience, do you think making decisions is crucial? Why?

Appendix 3 Analytic Rubric

ANALYTIC RUBRIC TO ASSESS PRE AND POST-INTERVENTION TESTS

C.T Skill	Accomplished 3	Partially accomplished 2	Developing 1	Score
Analysis	Participant recognizes and uses the basic terminology of reasoning. Participant is able to interpret information to determine meaning and to extract relevant evidence. Participant can draw connections among ideas.	Participant somehow recognizes and uses the basic terminology of reasoning. Participant somehow interprets information to determine meaning and to extract relevant evidence. Participant is slightly able to draw connections among ideas.	Participant struggles with recognizing and using the basic terminology of reasoning. Participant also struggles interpreting information to determine meaning and to extract relevant evidence. Participant struggles with drawing connections among ideas.	
Evaluation	Participant is able to judge the relevance and significance of phrases, words, expressions; and determines its relevance that might be used to support an argument.	Participant is somehow able to judge the relevance and significance of phrases, words, expressions; and somehow determines its relevance that might be used to support an argument.	Participant struggles with judging the relevance and significance of phrases, words, expressions; and also struggles determining its relevance that might be used to support an argument.	
Inference	Participant presents his/her points of view, hypothesis and suppositions clearly and without redundancy. coherently. Participant is able to draw appropriate conclusions.	Participant somehow presents his/her points of view, these somehow lacks coherence. hypothesis and suppositions. Participant is somehow able to draw appropriate conclusions.	Participant struggles with presenting his/her points of view, these are not clearly stated and lack coherence. hypothesis and suppositions. Participant is not able to draw appropriate conclusions.	
Synthesis	Participant is able to clearly predict and construct a coherent and relevant argument. Participant takes arguments further, forms well-reasoned judgments. Participant accurately supports an argument, connecting and integrating information.	Participant is somehow able to predict and construct a coherent and relevant argument. Participant somehow takes arguments further, forms well-reasoned judgments. Participant, somehow, supports an argument, connecting and integrating information.	Participant struggles with predicting and constructing a coherent and relevant argument. Participant does not take arguments further and struggles with forming well-reasoned judgments. Participant struggles with supporting an argument, failing at connecting and integrating information.	
Self-reflection	Participant is able to respond stating clear, non-hesitant arguments, well connected and integrated ideas. questioning one's own pre- conceptions. He/she, at the moment of justifying, shows awareness of her/his presuppositions	Participant is somehow able to respond with clear, non-hesitant arguments, well connected and integrated ideas; and somehow questions one's own pre-conceptions. He/she, at the moment of justifying, somehow shows awareness of her/his presuppositions	Participant struggles giving clear, non-hesitant arguments, well connected and integrated ideas; and also struggles at questioning one's own pre-conceptions. He/she, at the moment of justifying, finds it difficult to show awareness of her/his presuppositions	

Final score: /15

Appendix 4

Likert Scale for Think, Pair and Share

LIKERT SCALE FOR THINK, PAIR AND SHARE STRATEGY

Read the following statements. Please indicate whether you agree, partially agree or disagree with them, marking with an X.

Through the think, pair and share strategy...	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
I was able to think individually about a topic.			
I was able to express my ideas properly.			
I was able to exchange ideas more easily with my partner.			
I could improve my reflection.			
I was able to discuss fluidly.			
I was able to feel more confident when discussing.			

Appendix 5

Likert scale for Mind Mapping

LIKERT SCALE FOR MIND MAPPING STRATEGY

Read the following statements. Please indicate whether you agree, partially agree or disagree with them, marking with an X.

Through the mind mapping strategy...	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
I did not have trouble organizing my ideas.			
I could expand on the topic.			
I could connect my ideas easily.			
I could share my points fluidly.			
I felt more confident when sharing my points.			
I was able to understand others better through the use of mind maps.			

Appendix 6
Likert scale for Debate

LIKERT SCALE FOR DEBATE STRATEGY

Read the following statements. Please indicate whether you agree, partially agree or disagree with them, marking with an X.

Through the debate strategy...	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
I was able to state arguments properly.			
I was able to respond to arguments properly.			
I was able to formulate better conclusions.			
I could discuss fluidly.			
I felt more confident when sharing my points.			
I felt more confident when discussing.			