

Critical Thinking, Questioning and Reasoning as Inclusive Teaching Methods for English Language Learning with Gifted Students

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Abstract Critical thinking is becoming one of the basic foundations of modern teaching and learning: it implies not only complex (meta)cognitive abilities able to forge one's personality, but it can be applied as a key-method during English classes in both receptive and productive skills. In addition, it has been confirmed that verbally gifted students show a high ability of thinking critically: an essential ingredient that, together with a strong questioning and reasoning attitude, can enrich traditional lessons conveying innovative ideas and supported argumentations, investigating facts and theories, nurturing personal criticism. For all these reasons, critical thinking applied to inclusive language learning could be a way to raise language teaching to higher levels, giving each student the possibility of becoming a conscious builder of her/his own knowledge, and not merely a simple receiver.

Keywords Critical thinking. Gifted education. English language learning and teaching. Inclusiveness.

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In questions of science, the authority of a thousand
is not worth the humble reasoning
of a single individual.
Galileo Galilei

1 Introduction: Linguistic Traits of Verbally Gifted Students

Verbally gifted students are a peculiar category of learners which is still not fully considered among modern language teaching and learning theories. The unique features of their creative language capability, together with an excellent language mastery which is years far and beyond that of their peers, can enhance a traditional language lesson in both its content and meaning.

Before moving our steps into the wide basin of critical thinking, it is important to investigate the main features of verbally gifted students and the way they approach (foreign) languages. The following list has the aim to underline, among a wide range of traits, those who are specific and strictly related to the verbal sphere, analysed in both quantitative and qualitative terms.¹

From a quantitative perspective, there are many features closely linked to language development:

- an excellent memory;
- a large vocabulary;
- a very long sentence structure with a complex syntax;
- a wide range of interests, leading to a large quantity of questions, explanations and need of additional information.

From a qualitative analysis, the main linguistic features are:

- the ability to discern and reproduce phonemes and sounds with high levels of accuracy (even in those languages that are unknown to the gifted pupil);
- the ability in code-switching;
- an advanced comprehension of word nuances, metaphors and abstract ideas;
- a keen and/or unusual sense of humour, which verbally results in wit or biting comments even in early childhood;
- a great creativity;

¹ Both quantitative and qualitative features are adapted and enlarged from Leavitt 2017, 48; Novello 2021, 255; 2022, adding some traits found by the Author and reported for the first time in this paper.

- a vivid imagination which leads to tell and narrate fictional stories with imaginary characters (people or animals) that (even if invisible) are omnipresent in everyday life.²
- a frequent and appreciated use of saying, proverbs, idioms, quotes, etc.
- the invention and adoption of completely new languages, words and expressions, shared mainly among the people the child trust the most. This invented language is a sort of ‘parallel’ language, being also used in specific moment of loneliness or difficulty.
- a high sensitivity and a strong sense of justice.
- even when deeply introvert, a gifted child finds the courage to talk or to raise her/his voice in public if she/he has to defend a good cause.

Beyond these traits, while teaching languages (either the Mother Tongue, a First or a Second Foreign Language) to gifted children, it is very important to consider a further aspect which is an intrinsic, sometimes even a leading part of a language lesson.

Indeed, as far as grammar is concerned, in language learning and usage it is important to consider that:

It is something much more than the list of labels and rules found in grammar books, and that grammar is closely tied into meaning and use of language, and is inter-connected with vocabulary. (Cameron 2001, 96)

In this regard, gifted students usually apply inductive reasoning strategies while learning grammar, moving from general phenomena to the rule, as Novello points out:³

Per quanto riguarda la grammatica, una volta reso familiare allo studente il percorso induttivo di riflessione sulla lingua, si dimostra efficace per i ragazzi ad altissimo potenziale intellettivo la proposta di una riflessione semi-autonoma sulla lingua in cui viene a loro richiesto di individuare un obiettivo grammaticale da un testo e, successivamente, di analizzarlo [...] ricavandone i meccanismi di utilizzo. (2016, 117)⁴

2 In this particular regard, the connection between a gifted child and her/his imaginary playmate is so strong that she/he needs to ‘live’ every day with her/him, for example setting a place in the table as a true relative, preparing real food, leaving her/him an empty place in the car, etc.

3 Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author.

4 “As far as grammar is concerned, once the student has been familiar with inductive reasoning applied to language learning, it is meaningful (for gifted students) to propose

In addition, some of the non-cognitive abilities related to gifted students and linked to their social-emotional sphere clearly match to the learning and use of languages. Idealism and a strong sense of justice at early age leads to a subsequent questioning about what is right and what is wrong. Strong concern about general themes (e.g. our planet, pollution, children, people and animals' living condition etc.) is often discussed with adults and the possibility to consider different points of view is highly motivating for gifted students. A deep empathy and the ability of understanding others' feelings is transferred also to people of different nationalities, cultures, and languages.

As David underlines:

Language proficiency is an advantage that contributes to the social life of gifted children also in the long run: they tend to establish deep, sincere connections once they find suitable friends; in many cases they cherish long-life-relationships. (2020, 8)

For all these reasons, it is easy to deduce that a verbally gifted child is keen to learn new languages finding out inferences and association of meanings and she/he appreciates different points of view and experiences.

Indeed, as Okan and Işpinar point out:

Advanced verbal and higher order thinking skills inherent in those learners with a high aptitude for learning suggests a high learning potential for a rapid competence development in foreign languages. (2009, 118)

Another important aspect to consider is that, giving the great ability of verbally gifted student of developing divergent ways of thinking, finding uncommon solutions or proposals, a teacher must be able to accept some points of views which are unexpected, unusual or very elaborated. Silverman (2002) in Lucangeli (2019) underlines that:

Le abilità di *problem solving* e di ragionamento astratto possono permettere al bambino *gifted* di saltare alcuni passaggi usuali dei processi mentali o utilizzare vie di risoluzione complesse molto difficili da comprendere per i pari normodotati. (46)⁵

a semi-autonomous language observation where they are asked to identify a grammar objective from a text and, later, to analyse it [...] finding out the mechanisms of usage”.

5 “The abilities of problem solving and abstract thinking can allow a gifted child to skip some usual passages of mental processes or to use complex ways of resolution which are very hard to understand for the normal peers”.

For this reason, a teacher, beyond being “a talent spotter” (Olszewski-Kubilius et al. 2018, 15),⁶ she/he has to be openminded, flexible in her/his teaching unit plans and highly receptive.

2 Critical Thinking in Gifted Children through a Linguistic Perspective

The ability of thinking critically has been defined by many authors (Dewey 1909; Glaser 1941; Fischer, Scriven 1997 just to mention some) in a very effective way. In the present paper, far from the will of giving a full description of the term with all the shades of meaning mentioned in literature for each different discipline (see Psychology, Philosophy, etc.), the Author is going to focus on the most important definitions according to a linguistic and terminological perspective.

John Dewey defines what was then called “reflective thinking” as: “Active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (quoted in Fisher 2011, 2).

In this definition, Dewey found some keywords of thinking critically; in particular, the adjectives *active*, *persistent* and *careful* imply a cognition which is pondered on the elements in a constant, reasoned, and meticulous way.

A more recent definition of critical thinking comes from Fisher and Scriven (11), bringing innovative aspects to the terminological analysis of the concept: “Critical thinking is skilled and active interpretation and evaluation of observations and communications, information and argumentation”.

In particular, *skilled* (skill) in teaching and learning requires high ability while executing. The interpretation of facts is aware, purposeful, opposed to a passive state of the mind. Finally, the word *evaluation* is a remarkable feature, especially when considering gifted students: indeed, it embodies both the concepts of a careful analysis and judgment of facts, strong and persistent peculiarities not only in class but in the everyday life of this ‘special’ students.

In a very interesting contribution, Lai (2011, 9-11) describes the “area of agreement” of the main critical thinking researchers, which can be summarized as follow:

- ability of analyzing, making inference, judging, evaluating, making decision or problem solving;

⁶ “Make sure that all teachers are trained to be ‘talent spotters’. Recognizing the signs of giftedness and talent within students from diverse socioeconomic, geographical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds and within various domains of talent is a key element of identification” (Olszewski-Kubilius et al. 2018, 15).

- common dispositions such as open-mindedness, propensity to seek reason, desire of being well-informed, respect for others' viewpoints;
- importance of background knowledge.

Comparing these features with the main traits of gifted children mentioned in § 1, it is easy to infer how the match among them is astonishing. For this reason and giving the importance of the cognitive elements involved, the ability of thinking critically should be nurtured in all children (not only gifted) since their early age. To support this statement, a comparative study (Azzalini 2021, 278) between Italian and Israeli educational policy on giftedness, found how, in the latter country: «the embedded tradition of studying and questioning, building knowledge as a community of enquiry» is a central pillar of each child's education, from primary school on. Being Israel one of the first countries in the world to have adopted educational policies on giftedness to nurture its talents (since 1958) and being its tradition shaped on the importance of thinking critically, questioning and reasoning, it can be deduced that the two aspects are strongly interwoven.

The fact that critical thinking is a peculiarity of gifted students is further underlined by Parks (in Kettler 2014):

The evidence that gifted students demonstrate more developed critical thinking skills than their general education peers suggests that strength in critical thinking could be a strong and desirable characteristic of gifted students. This supports the inclusion of developing critical thinking as a gifted education program goal. (133)

Hence, the development of critical thinking during regular classroom and in different languages can be a strategy to improve student's linguistics production, lifting the levels of interests and motivation, which are essential in language learning.

2.1 Some Examples of Linguistic Production in a 4-year-old Gifted Child with High Critical Thinking Ability: a Case Study

Verbally gifted children usually approach and develop language earlier than their peers. As David underlines:

A gifted child, even when very young, has usually a larger vocabulary than their peers; can express themselves more clearly, and if they don't suffer from behavioural or emotional problems - will choose, usually at a much younger age than expected, to speak rather than get involved in physical acting-out. (2020, 8)

As previously mentioned, language is related to its cultural and social content and it is common, for gifted students, to use what Fisher (2011) defines: “An extended ‘language of reasoning’ (including *evidence, opinion, inference, support, proof, refute, fallacy* and so on)” (Fisher 2011, 34, italics in original).

Considering that verbally gifted children, as already mentioned, speak or write in complex ways, love to tell articulate stories, to describe fictional/non-fictional characters, to debate about important issues, their pieces of reasoning are linguistically well sustained since their early age.

In the present paper, the case study considered concerns a gifted young child of 3 and 4 years: sentences are translated into English but transcribed also in the mother tongue language (Italian), where the original flow is not altered by the translation. Data have been collected through the observational method, recording spontaneous sentences in the domestic (natural) environment of the child. Indeed, covert direct observation: “provide a window on real behaviours of interest [...]. These can be defined consistently and reliably by the researcher” (Gardner 2000, 186). The aim was to observe and write down some significant sentences of the child in her ongoing speaking process, as they emerged from the everyday experience, without any forced or inducted environment.

From the data, the critical thinking attitude of a gifted child could be expressed as in the examples below.

- (1) Using pieces of reasoning in their linguistically simplest form, following the structure proposed by Fisher (2011, 35):
<Reason> so [conclusion]
Child (4Y): “We keep in our hands books, so trees” / “Teniamo in mano libri, quindi alberi”.
Child (4Y): “We live on Earth, so in Space” / “Viviamo sulla Terra, quindi nello spazio”.
- (2) Inferring and transferring with lucidity a fact from the “real world” to an abstract, further or deeper concept.
Adult: “This is the best cheese in the world!” / “Questo è il formaggio più buono del mondo”.
Child (4Y): “Do you really think the world is good?” / “Ma ti pare buono il mondo?”.
- (3) Using “chains” of reasoning:
Child (4Y): “My hair is attached to my head and my head is attached to my skeleton. So, if I move my hair, I move my skeleton” / “I miei capelli sono attaccati alla testa e la mia testa è attaccata allo scheletro. Quindi, se muovo i capelli, muovo lo scheletro”.

- (4) Using (metaphorical) sentences which imply irony or sense of humor:
Child (4Y): “I’m going upstairs to have a meeting!”/ “Sto andando di sopra a fare una riunione!”.
(with a value of: “I’m going to my room to do something important”)
Child (4Y): “Mum, is it true that, after we die, we go to heaven?”/ “Mamma, è vero che dopo morti andiamo in cielo?”.
Mum: “Yes!”/”Sì!”.
Child (4Y): “Yes, but first, we have to last!” / “Sì, ma prima però dobbiamo durare!”.
Child (4Y): “I miss Giuseppe Conte!”/ “Mi manca Giuseppe Conte!”.⁷
- (5) Making deductions:
Child (4Y): “The problem is that I can put on this shoe by myself. So that’s a non-problem problem!”/ “Il problema è che so mettermi la scarpa da sola. Quindi è un problema non-problema”.
- (6) Using synaesthesia to express uncommon feelings or states of mind. Siaud-Facchin defines synaesthesia as (translated) «A sensorial crossroads based on a perceptive overlapping» (2019, 47). It is important to underline that gifted children physically feel this overlapping of senses, as in the examples below:
Child (4Y): “This food is so disgusting that I have ear ache” / “Il sapore di questo cibo non mi piace proprio, tanto che mi fanno male le orecchie”.
Synaesthesia is also able to create beautiful, almost poetical linguistic expressions, as in:
Child (4Y): “To clean the noise”/ “Pulire il rumore”.
Child (4Y): “To paint the rest”/ “Dipingere il riposo”.
- (7) Creating spontaneously new words, considered to the child more appropriate than some existing words:
[Untranslatable] Scrivere in *granduscolo (maiuscolo)

Other linguistic features of verbally gifted children using strong critical ability usually include: overcorrection of words used by peers/adults if not really precise or appropriate to the context, questioning tales, fantasy characters which the most part of peers takes for granted, proposing different and personal interpretation of facts, events and, inside a classroom, of teacher’s assignments and instructions.

⁷ The child here refers to the resignation of the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte to the following Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi in 2021, after the political events happened during the Pandemic disease.

2.2 Some Examples of Linguistic Production in a 3- and 4-year-old Child implying Questioning and Reasoning: a Case Study

Using questioning and reasoning is quite common for verbally gifted students, which are usually moved by a strong sense of curiosity and need of understanding the world. Paraphrasing Zanetti (2019, 41) while she explains the difference between a 'brilliant child' and a 'high potential child', she points out that the former "knows the answers," while the latter "makes questions," and that is a key-point to keep in mind while teaching to gifted students.

From a purely linguistic perspective, Fisher (2011) describes in *The Language of Reasoning* the elements which are directly involved in the reasoning process. The author discerns among conclusion indicators (e.g. *therefore, so, hence, consequently*, etc.) and reason indicators (e.g. *because, since, for, the reasons are*, etc.), referring to both as argument indicators, marking the structure of the reasoning through some meaningful linguistic chunks.

Linguistically, questioning and reasoning in a young, gifted child could be expressed as in the sentences below:

- (1) Explaining reasons with because (for a conclusion or as causal explanation):
CHILD (4Y): "Trees strive to make paper for us (human beings) because the world is big and there are many human beings".
"Gli alberi fanno tanta fatica a fare la carta per noi esseri umani, perché il mondo è grande, e ci sono tanti esseri umani".

- (2) Making real-world questions:
Child (3Y): "How does electricity work?"/ "Come funziona la corrente elettrica?".
Child (4Y): "How does hunger happens in children's stomach?"/ "Come succede la fame nello stomaco dei bambini?".
Child (4Y): "What happens if I take anti-flu medicines when I don't have the flu?"/ "Cosa succede se prendo le medicine per l'influenza quando non ho l'influenza?".

- (3) Making abstract questions:
Child (3Y): "X, do you think the same things I think?"/ "X, ma tu pensi le stesse cose che penso io?".
Child (4Y): "What do you like the most about this world?"/ "Cosa ti piace di più di questo mondo?".
With complex/unknown objects the question is never: "What is it?" but rather "How does it work?," implying that if you know how an object works, you can deduce what it is.

Each question, besides curiosity, shows deep sensibility and concern about the world, further typical and common features of gifted children.

3 How Critical Thinking, Questioning and Reasoning could become Inclusive Teaching Methods for English Language Learning with Gifted Students

Critical thinking is becoming one of the basic foundations of modern teaching and learning, as Wagner (in Kettler 2014, 127) underlines:

Effective communication, curiosity and critical thinking skills are no longer only desirable outcomes of elite liberal arts education, but the essential competencies for life in the 21st century.

The problem of traditional teaching and learning is that it is mainly sequential (in its procedures, teaching units, rules, resolution of problems, etc.) while critical thinking and, in general, creativity, do not follow a strict path being highly personal and self-built. That is why teachers should leave behind a strict content organization or teaching plan divided into 'blocks' of knowledge and mechanical exercises, following instead multiple ways in approaching a precise subject or topic.

Critical thinking linked to English language learning and to a high-quality teaching could become very effective for the whole class (hence both for gifted and non-gifted students), as Azzalini (2021, 45) points out:

L'insegnante di lingue dispone di uno strumento influente e poliedrico per poter insegnare in maniera efficace ai ragazzi gifted ma anche, nell'ottica inclusiva, a tutti gli altri profili di apprendente. L'obiettivo di una didattica di alta qualità è che innalzi il livello non solo dei soggetti più dotati, ma dell'intero gruppo classe.⁸

In the following paragraphs some inclusive teaching methods (implying critical thinking, questioning and/or reasoning) for English Language Learning and Teaching with gifted students are briefly discussed.

8 "A language teacher has an influent and multifaceted tool at her/his disposal, to teach in an effective way to gifted teens but also, inclusively, to every learners' profiles. The aim of a high-quality teaching is to raise the level not only of the most talented students, but of the class as a whole".

3.1 Critical Thinking in Writing: Open Tasks VS Close Tasks

In open tasks (essays, open questions, dissertations...) critical thinking is an essential ingredient for a full and personal analysis of texts, facts, articles, etc. With gifted students (as well as with every student) it is important to give place to ideas and argumentations, to investigate facts and theories, to nurture a personal criticism⁹ about a character, an historical event or a recent fact.

This is opposed to close tasks (grammar cloze exercises, word-formation, fill-the-gap exercises, etc.) which can be proposed during English or language classes, but not in an (almost) exclusive way. An efficient strategy able to nurture critical thinking is *Type 2 Enrichment* proposed by Renzulli and Reis (2014, ch. 8). According to the Model, activities can be divided into three steps based on the growing complexity of tasks and the increasing interest of (a group of) students. After the first step (or Type 1 Enrichment), which follows regular classroom curriculum, the second step (or Type 2 Enrichment) directly involves creative/critical thinking and problem-solving activities. Students have to deal with investigative projects or research, critical analysis of facts and source of information, and self-assessment. In this way they are directly involved in the 'building' process of their personal knowledge, without just receiving information in a passive way. Type 1 and Type 2 Enrichment are inclusive, hence suitable to all pupils according to their specific abilities, while Type 3 Enrichment (mainly based on self-interest long-term projects) is just for students who are really motivated, brilliant or gifted. It is important to underline how Renzulli considers "very motivated students," enhancing them to the most complex Enrichment level: indeed, motivation to learn (or *task commitment*, in his own words) can become one of the most important levers to talent.

3.2 Critical Thinking in Reading

Gifted students are autonomous readers and enjoy reading over normal school assignments. A reading which implies critical thinking goes beyond 'literal' understanding: "Critical reading consists not only of learning certain skills, but also includes a critical attitude toward what we read" (D'Angelo 1971, 946).

During regular English lessons, the reading phase is usually followed by the comprehension of a text. In order to be meaningful, the

⁹ The word 'criticism' has to be intended as: "the work or activity of making fair, careful judgments about the good and bad qualities of someone or something, especially books, music, etc." (www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com).

process of comprehending a text has to include appealing cognitive strategies such as making predictions using prior knowledge, making inferences or deductions, discussing about causes and effects, and so on. As Novello (2016) underlines, the reading phase:

non è seguita da domande banali o griglie da completare che la rendono artificiale e/o noiosa, ma da attività quali la richiesta di un commento critico, la ricerca di link di approfondimento, lo svolgimento di attività creative a partire dal testo. (117)¹⁰

As far as the content of reading is concerned, it is important to offer gifted and non-gifted students high-quality authentic materials, previously and carefully selected by the teacher, such as biographies of eminent people of the present and of the past (e.g. Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking or Malala Yousafzai just to mention a few), newspaper articles/videos from reliable sources (e.g. The BBC, CNN, etc..) or excerpts from original books. The importance of authentic materials is further underlined by Santipolo (2014):

grazie alla sua grande variabilità, [il materiale autentico] è un potente antidoto alla noia (che può invece incombere quando si impieghino esclusivamente il libro di testo o comunque materiali poco stimolanti perché poco autentici o verosimili. (16)¹¹

where the problem of boredom and lack of interest is even more real and evident when speaking about gifted children. High-quality authentic materials also allow *differentiation*, which is a key concept while teaching a foreign language to gifted students but also to students with Specific Learning Disorders (SLD), for example, without reducing their high expectations on the content. (Daloi-so 2017, 85)

Giving sometimes students (gifted and non-gifted) the choice of selecting books, excerpts and articles is a further way to let them expressing their preferences, developing their own critical awareness and tastes.

10 "It is not followed by predictable questions or grids (tables) to complete which make it artificial and/or boring, but by activities such as to ask for a critical comment, or for the search of in-dept links, or the development of creative activities starting from the text".

11 "Thanks to its great variability, [authentic material] is a powerful antidote to boredom (which can instead appear when the textbook or other not exciting materials, nor much authentic nor real, are applied in an exclusive way".

3.3 Critical Thinking in Listening

As well as for reading, listening activities are meaningful if related to dialogues from real-life situations and/or authentic narrations. It is important to expose gifted and non-gifted students to a wide variety of styles, registers, accents, etc. so they could become versatile in recognizing different pronunciations. As already mentioned, gifted students are keen to discern and reproduce different sounds in different languages and varied listening activities during the lesson could be a very challenging and captivating experience. On the other hand, if this can be an obstacle to students with SLD, for example, a teacher can use some “phonological awakening” strategies able to elicit particular sounds of the language before starting the activity (Daloiso 2017, 84). These strategies are helpful for the whole heterogeneous class as the awareness of phonological properties in a foreign language is still not considered in depth while teaching English.

3.4 Critical Thinking in Speaking

When referring to verbally gifted students, speaking is the activity they like the most: this is confirmed by a research study conducted by Novello (2022) on 35 students with high abilities:

Per quanto riguarda il parlato, la risposta è stata molto positiva, difatti, in una scala da 1 (pochissimo) a 10 (moltissimo), gli studenti hanno espresso come valori di gradimento principali 8 e 10. (51)¹²

The benefits of discussing and making purposeful dialogues between teachers and students are important both for children and teenagers, and their intrinsic value goes beyond the borders of a language classroom. There are several speaking techniques which are innovative and inclusive, such as the *Socratic Circles* (that precisely, involve both speaking and listening). As explained by LaVonda (2018):

Socratic Circles consist of two concentric circles – a smaller, inner circle of students that discuss and debate a topic, and a larger, outer circle of students who listen to the discussion and provide evaluative feedback following the activity. (51)

12 “As far as speaking is concerned, the answer has been really positive: indeed, in a scale from 1 (very little) to 10 (a lot), students have expressed a satisfaction rating of 8 and 10”.

During the English session of a Socratic Circle, it would be important to have a mother-tongue teacher as a Moderator, in order to reach a better language accuracy. In any case, Socratic Circles are suitable for students with at least a B1/B2 level according to the European Common Framework of Languages. Another methodology that matches critical thinking and giftedness through inclusivity is the *Creative Problem Solving* (CPS). Indeed, CPS:

Provides a framework to apply creative thinking processes to solve problems. Embedded in the model are tools and strategies that, when placed in the hands of students, allow them to engage in a process of thinking both creatively and critically. (Cassalia 2018, 73)

In particular, the second step of CPS which concerns the ‘generation of ideas’ can flow into a productive debate among students who join their competences in order to solve a common problem pursuing the same objective.

4 The Other Side of the Coin: when an Excess of Critical Thinking in Gifted Students Can Obstruct Regular Lessons

Verbally gifted students, eloquent speakers and with a good mastery of criticism, could (often) obstruct and interrupt regular lessons. Indeed, if a brilliant student is used to go along with teachers’ assignments posing interesting questions, a gifted student often contrasts teachers’ ideas with divergent questions and, sometimes, she/he prefers to leave a required task if it doesn’t meet their interests. Indeed, very often *underachievement* and/or school *dropout* could become dangerous features of this kind of ‘special’ students. In other cases, in order to reach high levels (that is high marks at school), a gifted student has to learn some (not easy) adaptation strategies, containing her/his impulsive divergency.

For all these reasons, it is important to recognize, follow and help gifted students to find their way, according to their cognitive peculiarities and, if necessary, adapting and enlarging regular curriculum to their learning style and complex personality. Therefore, within regular class further strategies such as *peer counselling*, *qualitative feedbacks* by the teachers and *self-evaluations* could be useful instruments to support gifted students, strengthening not only their cognitive but also and especially their socio-emotional sphere.

5 Conclusion

The ability of thinking critically has to be nourished since a child's early age, becoming an important tile for building one's personality. For verbally gifted children, the deep introspection they have of the world and the early mastery of language lead to a strong critical analysis of facts from the real and abstract world since they are very young.

As well, critical thinking, but also questioning and reasoning strategies, are an important tile in education, especially when teaching and learning a language such as English. Indeed, it can be applied to both receptive (reading and listening) and productive (speaking and writing) skills within a regular class, in an inclusive way. The importance of making purposeful dialogues, of consulting high-quality authentic materials and of debating on important issues using questioning and reasoning are indeed ways to raise both levels of language teaching and learning.

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