



***The Application of Critical Thinking in EFL Classrooms
of First-Year EFL Master Students***

***L'application de la pensée critique dans les classes d'anglais langue étrangère
(EFL) chez les étudiants de première année de Master en anglais.***

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Abstract

The acquisition of the capacity to think logically and analytically is crucial for the enhancement of learning outcomes in a variety of global educational contexts. Incorporating critical thinking into classroom environments has been a critical component of the discourse regarding the importance of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). However, critical thinking research has primarily been conducted in fields that are not related to EFL. Consequently, the objective of this quantitative study, which involves seventy-five first-year Master EFL students in the English department of M'sila University, is to investigate the strategies that students use to incorporate critical thinking skills into their EFL courses, and the challenges they face while applying these skills in the classroom. The results suggested that the students who were

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involved in the study implemented specific strategies to foster critical thinking in their learning process. The results also suggested that the utilisation of critical thinking in the learning process was restricted by a variety of pedagogical and administrative obstacles that the participants encountered. Nevertheless, the results of the study indicate that cultivating this type of cognition in 21st-century EFL learners is imperative, not optional.

1. Introduction

Students need to acquire skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, Information Communication Technology (ICT) literacy, leadership, responsibility, and social and cross-cultural competencies as a result of the significant changes in education that have occurred in the 21st century. EFL classes are considered as an excellent environment for the development of these abilities, particularly critical thinking. In the 21st century, critical thinking is considered a critical determinant of success, as it allows students to interpret texts beyond their literal meaning, construct persuasive essays, articulate their ideas with sufficient supporting evidence, and contest opposing viewpoints (Kabilan, 2000; Zhou, Jiang, & Yao, 2015).

It is imperative to cultivate critical thinking among EFL learners (Kabilan, 2000); however, there is disagreement regarding its teachability in EFL contexts. Atkinson (1997) challenges the feasibility of teaching critical thinking to EFL learners, arguing that it is a “social practice” which is fundamental to Western culture and can only be achieved through unconscious procedures of early socialisation. This is refuted by Davidson (1998), who argues that cultural disparities serve as a compelling justification for its explicit implementation.

Empirical research has shown that EFL learners can improve their critical thinking abilities by receiving an appropriate amount of instruction and support (Kabilan, 2000; Liu & Guo, 2006). Researchers argue that a deliberate emphasis on the development and application of cognitive abilities over time results in more effective cognitive outcomes than an unstructured concentration on these skills (Glaser, 1984; Paul, 1993). In accordance with these researchers, the author of this paper aims to illustrate how EFL students who adhere to the critical thinking paradigm can utilize thinking-centered strategies in their learning process. The objective of this investigation is also to examine the challenges that students encounter in their pursuit of “critical thinking” as a 21st-century skill. This investigation was carried out by addressing the following questions:

1. What are the strategies that first-year EFL Master students use to cultivate critical thinking?

2. What challenges do students encounter when engaging into critical thinking in their EFL learning process?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Thinking

The roots of critical thinking can be traced back to Socrates, who used interactive inquiry to encourage reflective thinking among his students. His goal was to develop the capacity to assess ideas, perspectives, and convictions. Seeking evidence, evaluating argumentation, analysing basic ideas, and investigating the implications of individuals' actions and statements were of the utmost importance to Socrates (Rule, 2015). Dewey's concept of analytical thinking (1933) was influenced by Socrates' perspectives, which in turn influenced contemporary education. Dewey (1933) characterised analytical thinking as the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief of supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it... it is a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of reasons" (p. 6). Dewey (1933) endeavours to establish a reasonable conclusion that is not the result of spontaneous action, but rather of deliberate efforts.

There is no agreement on a single definition of "critical thinking". Numerous definitions have been suggested by academics and specialists in the fields of psychology and learning. However, its origins can be traced back to Bloom's (1956, as cited in Bender, 2003) endeavours to investigate the cognitive mechanisms that underpin learning. Bloom (1956) classified cognitive processes into six categories. He defined three of these categories as lower-order thinking skills—knowledge, understanding, and application—and the remaining three as higher-order thinking skills—analysis, synthesis, and assessment. The concept of "critical thinking" has been linked to Higher Order Thinking Skills by specific researchers (Ennis, 1996; Beyer, 1988). Other scholars have broadened this definition to encompass decision-making (Omar & Safinas, 2016) and problem-solving (Mayer, 1992). Facione (1990) offers one of the most widely recognised definitions of critical thinking. He argues that critical thinking constitutes a "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based" (p. 3).

The conceptualisation of critical thinking has been substantially influenced by Robert Ennis, a leading philosophical thinker in the field. Ennis (1993) defines critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 180). Furthermore, in order to elucidate the concept of critical thinking, he recommends an exhaustive list of thirteen critical thinking traits and a collection of cognitive skills. Ennis (2011) argues that the mere possession of

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the essential critical thinking skills for astute inference, sound judgement, and elucidation is insufficient; an exceptional critical thinker must also be prepared to employ these abilities.

2.2 Strategies and Barriers to Critical Thinking

The significance of integrating critical thinking into English language pedagogy is underscored in the literature on foreign language instruction (Gunning, 2008; Tung & Chang, 2009). EFL instructors should foster higher-order thinking and transform the classroom into a community of intellectuals. According to Brown (2004), language curricula should not only enhance the linguistic proficiency of learners, but also enhance their critical thinking abilities. Teachers can play a crucial role in the development of these skills, as they have the ability to enhance the knowledge and skills of students.

Beyer (1988), De Bono (1985), and Marzano (1992) are among the educators who have developed programs to teach critical thinking and reasoning abilities that are applicable to all content areas. A group of scholars headed by John Kendall was embraced by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) in Colorado. Their objective was to identify the fundamental thinking abilities and intellectual processes that are common to all subject areas. Marzano and Pollock (2001) categorise these abilities as “identifying similarities and differences”, “problem-solving and troubleshooting”, “decision-making”, “hypothesis testing and scientific inquiry” and “use of logic and reasoning” (p. 33). This suggests that students have the opportunity to utilise a diverse array of learning strategies to improve their cognitive abilities.

Questioning is one of the most effective strategies for developing critical thinking abilities. The exploration of alternatives, reflection, and inquiry is fostered by questioning, which is a significant component of critical thinking courses (Gunning, 2008; Orlich et al., 2013). The questions are thought-provoking and encourage discussion, addressing multifaceted issues that lack an obvious answer. In this regard, they are exceptional sources of learning that can be used to enhance the cognitive abilities of students.

In addition, reading serves as an effective method for understanding issues and enabling the development of ideas in EFL instruction (Campbell, 2015). EFL learners can identify sources that promote introspection, such as reading reflectively short stories that are suitable for their language proficiency, which would enhance their analytical and reasoning abilities (Rashtchi, 2019).

Another learning strategy that encourages critical thinking is cooperative learning, which is based on Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural views. The ability to operate at a high intellectual level is improved through collaboration. According to Bruner (1985), cooperative learning techniques promote critical

thinking, as students encounter many viewpoints during negotiation and engagement, prompting them to examine situations from several angles. Cooperative learning fosters a community where learners engage in attentive listening, pose questions, examine issues, and evaluate perspectives (Campbell, 2015).

Group discussions are also considered an effective method for promoting knowledge and critical thinking among EFL learners, as they compel them to articulate and refine their ideas while also exposing them to diverse viewpoints and experiences through the exchange of thoughts (Dallimore, Hertenstein, & Platt, 2008). Simultaneously, the development of critical thinking among English learners is dependent on the selection of suitable conversation topics. Instructors are required to choose engaging subjects that are relevant to learner' experiences and may pique their interests. This requirement can be effectively met by discussing cultural differences, disputable topics, contemporary events, and ethical issues (Gunning, 2008).

Moreover, information organisation processes are essential for the development of cognitive abilities. Students ought to practice the arrangement of data into meaningful classifications in order to create connections and relations. These "organisational tasks" would enhance learners' concentration on both cognition and knowledge (Rashtchi & Pourmand, 2014).

In Algeria, the pedagogy of EFL is gradually incorporating strategies to promote critical thinking; however, their operationalisation is still impeded by a variety of obstacles within the classroom. Unfortunately, research has demonstrated that EFL instructors are promoting the traditional approach's principles, such as rote memorisation and a superficial comprehension of the learning content (Alnofaie, 2013; Lee, 2014). This ideology is accountable for the teacher-centered teaching methods that instructors employ, which do not foster critical thinking skills. The instruction provided by these instructors is typically rigidly regulated, lacking possibilities for autonomous learning or exploration (Daniela, 2014). Paul and Elder (2019) assert that this traditional approach of teaching has received criticism for its failure to equip university graduates with skills for handling complicated problems, since it presumes learners will cultivate critical thinking abilities only through textbooks, lectures, and notes. It also resulted in students learning with disinterest in subjects, passively receiving information instead of engaging in critical thinking and exploring knowledge. The learners were mostly unmotivated to critically evaluate the learning content, pose enquiries, and acquire new information (Ghaemi & Mirsaeed, 2017).

Additionally, learners' reluctance to the critical thinking model and its activities, such as group work, was reported as a major obstacle to critical thinking implementation in various research findings (Kim and Pollard, 2017; Ketabi, Zabihi, & Ghadiri, 2012). Koosha and Yakhabi (2013) identified this aspect as a cause of the unsuccessful application of critical thinking in foreign language environments. To address this issue, Brookfield (1997) emphasized the significance of

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connecting learners with others who engage in critical thinking inside the classroom setting, as this can foster the development of comparable mindsets and practices.

Alnofaie (2013) and Li (2011) identify many impediments to enhancing critical thinking abilities. The difficulties include learners' abilities, instructional methodologies, and large class sizes. Furthermore, Eastern culture is one of the impediments. Alnofaie (2013) maintains that it is disrespectful to query individuals in positions of authority and that critical thinking is devalued in these cultural contexts. The institutional administrations were identified as another hurdle that do not foster critical thinking. Additional challenges encompass the inadequacies of teacher training programs that overlook critical thinking courses. The final barrier encountered was the teaching curriculum. Li (2011)'s study concludes that most of the teaching curricula are not suitable for the development of critical thinking and instead emphasise the memorisation of information.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The present research is based on data gathered from seventy-five first-year Master's EFL students who were enrolled in the English Language and Literature department at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila. The age of these participants ranges from 22 to 27 years, and they either majored in Linguistics or Civilisation and Literature. The female participants comprised 68% of the total (N = 51), while the remaining 32% (N = 24) were male.

3.2 Instruments

The researcher utilised the questionnaire to gather data in accordance with a quantitative research design. The questionnaire that the researcher designed in conformity with the literature (e.g. Facione, 1990; Ennis, 1993; Marzano & Pollock, 2001; Orlich et al., 2013) was submitted to the relevant participants for completion. The questionnaire is composed of two primary sections. The first section attempts to investigate the extent to which EFL students use strategies to foster critical thinking abilities. The second section investigates the obstacles students encounter when engaging in critical thinking in their EFL learning process. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, with values ranging from 1 to 5 (1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= neutral; 4= agree; 5= strongly agree). In order to pre-test the questionnaire content and solicit the participants' interpretations of the items, the questionnaire was piloted with a sample of 10 EFL students. The internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding satisfactory values for every section ($\alpha = 0.98$ and 0.94 , respectively). Descriptive statistics (Means, standard deviations, and percentages) provided by

the questionnaire data provide a comprehensive understanding of the critical thinking application of first-year Master's EFL students.

4. Results

The study findings are systematically organised and analysed according to the categories derived from the respondents' replies to the questionnaire. The results are organised chronologically according to the primary questions addressed to the respondents. The initial section delves into the application of critical thinking strategies in EFL classrooms. The second section addresses the challenges that students encounter as they integrate critical thinking into their learning process.

4.1 EFL Students' Strategies for Critical Thinking Development

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on strategies employed by students to foster critical thinking

		SA	A	N	D	SD	M	S.D																																																																																																															
1. I recognize the importance of critical thinking abilities in my EFL learning process.	F	28	31	13	3	0	4.12	.83																																																																																																															
	R.F	37.3	41.3	17.3	4	0			2. I consistently use critical thinking strategies and involve in cognitive activities throughout my journey of learning.	F	19	42	14	0	0	4.06	.66	R.F	25.3	56	18.7	0	0	3. I differentiate between the actual facts and perspectives.	F	15	41	19	0	0	3.94	.67	R.F	20	54.7	25.3	0	0	4. I collect and evaluate pertinent information in the course of my EFL studies.	F	12	17	18	25	3	3.13	1.16	R.F	16	22.7	24	33.3	4	5. I analyze complex concepts to develop logical conclusions during the learning process.	F	0	3	20	37	15	2.14	.78	R.F	0	4	26.7	49.3	20	6. I utilize my prior knowledge to develop novel learning experiences during my educational journey.	F	4	24	40	7	0	3.33	.72	R.F	5.3	32	53.3	9.3	0	7. I ask and answer questions critically during my learning process.	F	10	40	25	0	0	3.80	.65	R.F	13.3	53.3	33.3	0	0	8. I collaborate with my peers to resolve an issue or fulfill a particular learning task.	F	22	33	19	1	0	4.01	.77	R.F	29.3	44	25.3	1.3	0	9. I employ cognitive abilities such as organizing,	F	3	6	31	21
2. I consistently use critical thinking strategies and involve in cognitive activities throughout my journey of learning.	F	19	42	14	0	0	4.06	.66																																																																																																															
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classifying, contrasting, analyzing, and constructing information.	R.F	4	8	41.3	28	18.7		
10. I reflect on my cognitive processes and demonstrate them in both my oral and written English.	F	17	41	17	0	0	4.00	.67
	R.F	22.7	54.7	22.7	0	0		
11. I present evidence and arguments for the claims by explaining and justifying my ideas.	F	0	5	20	22	28	2.02	.95
	R.F	0	6.7	26.7	29.3	37.3		
12. I comprehend the concept of insufficient and poor evidence and try to avoid it in my written or spoken discourse.	F	3	13	47	12	0	3.09	.70
	R.F	4	17.3	62.7	16	0		
13. I engage in thoughtful group discussions and debates in the classroom.	F	22	35	18	0	0	4.05	.73
	R.F	29.3	46.7	24	0	0		
14. I read with a critical and reflective mindset to understand ideas and acquire new knowledge.	F	2	9	12	23	29	2.09	1.12
	R.F	2.7	12	16	30.7	38.7		

quency, R.F: relative frequency, SA: strongly agree, A: agree, N, neutral, D: disagree, SD: strongly disagree, M: mean, S.D: standard deviation.

With regard to the strategies and methods employed by Master one EFL students to foster critical thinking in the learning process, the participants acknowledged the importance of critical thinking skills in their learning journey (item 1, $M=4.12$, $SD=.83$). As indicated by the data provided, the students reported that they regularly used critical thinking strategies and engaged in cognitive activities during their learning process (item 2, $M=4.06$, $SD=.66$). In particular, the results of Item 13 suggest that 29.3% ($n=22$) of the participants strongly affirmed that they participated in thoughtful group discussions and debates in the classroom ($M=4.05$, $SD=.73$). 44% ($n=33$) of students reported their collaboration with peers to resolve an issue or fulfill a particular learning task (item 8, $M=4.01$, $SD=.77$). Subsequently, 54.7% ($n=41$) of participants in Item 10 affirmed their ability to reflect on their cognitive processes and demonstrate them in both oral and written English ($M=4.00$, $SD=.67$). Additionally, a significant number of 54.7% ($n=41$) of participants asserted in their responses to Item 3 that they differentiated between the facts and perspectives ($M=3.94$, $SD=.67$), and 53.3% ($n=40$) reported that they ask and answer questions critically during the learning process (item 7, $M=3.80$, $SD=.65$).

With reference to high cognitive strategies that have the potential to enhance students' complex critical skills, no high average scores were observed in the responses of the participants. In fact, the average response value of many items did not exceed 2. This implies that students seldom integrate

high-level critical skills into their EFL learning process. The table indicates that 28% (n=21) of the respondents do not utilize cognitive abilities, including organizing, classifying, contrasting, analyzing, and constructing information, during the learning process (item 9, M=2.50, SD=1.01). The majority of their responses to items such as “I analyze complex concepts to develop logical conclusions during the learning process.” (item 5, M=2.14, SD=.78) and “I read with a critical and reflective mindset to understand ideas and acquire new knowledge.” (item 14, M=2.09, SD=1.12), and “I present evidence and arguments for the claims by explaining and justifying my ideas.” (item 11, M=2.02, SD=.95) range between “disagree” and “strongly disagree”. This indicates that the EFL students are not employing sophisticated strategies that can assist them in the development of higher-order thinking skills as frequently as they are expected to. This might be attributed to the various obstacles that these students may have encountered during their learning process.

4.2 Obstacles to the Development of Critical Thinking Skills

Table 2. EFL students’ perceived obstacles to critical thinking abilities

Challenges	M	S.D	Rank
1. The efficient incorporation of critical thinking abilities in EFL learning is influenced by the teachers’ limited pedagogical knowledge and lack of experience.	2.10	.90	7
2. The traditional teaching approach employed is ineffective in the development of students’ critical thinking skills.	4.33	.68	1
3. The teaching curriculum’s content does not promote the integration of critical thinking abilities in EFL learning process.	4.18	.71	3
4. The efficient incorporation of critical thinking skills in EFL learning is significantly hindered by the language competence level of the learners.	2.37	.83	6
5. Learners lack motivation and interest in activities that enhance their critical thinking abilities.	4.20	.59	2
6. Instructors are unable to allocate sufficient time to activities that foster critical thinking.	4.00	.63	5
7. The large class size does not facilitate the development of critical thinking abilities.	4.14	.63	4

Note: M: mean, S.D: standard deviation.

The table above reveals that instructors’ pedagogical knowledge and experience are not considered a significant barrier to the implementation of critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom (item 1, M=2.10, SD=.90). Moreover, most students contended that their language competence level, although significant, does not serve as a substantial barrier to the enhancement of their critical thinking skills (item 4, M=2.37, SD=.83). This suggests that the respondents do not regard language proficiency as a significant obstacle, as learners are able to express their thoughts with limited language competence. Table 2 indicates that students’ low motivation and disinterest are significant impediments to the development of critical thinking abilities, since the majority of responses fell between “agree” and “strongly agree” (item 5, M=4.20, SD=.59). Student participants indicated that studying in large class sizes hindered their engagement in the learning process, suggesting

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challenges in developing abilities such as critical thinking within large classes (item 7, $M=4.14$, $SD=.63$). Participants also indicated that a significant difficulty is the infrequent instruction of critical thinking in EFL classes, attributed to teachers' insufficient time for activities that promote such skills (item 6, $M=4.00$, $SD=.63$).

This study's major finding is that numerous EFL teachers continue to utilise the traditional teaching approach (item 2, $M=4.33$, $SD=.68$), wherein they convey content and learners passively absorb and memorise it, resulting in a deficiency of critical thinking skills among Master one EFL students, who primarily aim to memorise answers from handouts. Furthermore, the participants contended that the teaching curriculum's content does not promote the integration of critical thinking abilities in EFL learning process (item 3, $M=4.18$, $SD=.71$). The curriculum employed by EFL instructors prioritised the subject matter knowledge over process learning and prioritised linguistic proficiency over critical thinking. Consequently, the students' principal emphasis was on the course score.

5. Discussion

Incorporating critical thinking into English instruction within the Algerian EFL setting appears to be an ambitious objective for learners and a challenging endeavour for EFL instructors. The majority of participating students reported a variety of experiences regarding the application of critical thinking strategies in their learning process. However, they also recognised the existence of substantial obstacles that impede the effective implementation of critical thinking in their classrooms. This result has been supported by prior research (Alnofaie, 2013; Kim & Pollard, 2017).

Concerning the essential critical thinking strategies employed by EFL master's students, the participants' responses clearly articulated relevant strategies, including engaging in thoughtful group discussions and debates, collaborating with peers to address issues or achieve specific learning objectives, reflecting on cognitive processes and expressing them in both oral and written English, and critically asking and answering questions throughout the learning process. The literature consistently emphasised the same critical thinking strategies and techniques (Campbell, 2015; Gunning, 2008; Orlich et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, the responses of the participants did not demonstrate the application of sophisticated cognitive strategies. The participants recognised their lack of engagement with higher-order thinking skills and indicated that they are not being effectively utilised in the EFL classroom. The survey results revealed that most of the respondents did not employ cognitive skills, including organising, categorising, contrasting, analysing, and constructing knowledge, during the learning process. A lack of engagement in the examination of complex ideas, critical and reflective reading, and the presentation of facts and arguments to support their beliefs was reported by the majority of

participants. This suggests that EFL instructors should prioritise the development of learners' advanced cognitive abilities, which is the primary objective of language acquisition. Prior research also yielded comparable suggestions (Brown, 2004; Kim, & Pollard, 2017). Kabilan (2000) highlighted the importance of language resources that enable learners to participate in activities that demand profound thought and reflection, and they advocated for language instructors to incorporate this mode of thinking into their pedagogy.

The findings suggest that in order to foster a profound level of critical thinking engagement among students, teachers must incorporate additional activities that stimulate their critical capacities. It is positive to observe that EFL instructors continually cultivate opportunities for the integration of critical thinking in their classes, particularly focusing on inquiry, assessment, reasoning, and reflection, which research has indicated are effective for enhancing critical thinking (Gunning, 2008; Orlich et al., 2013). As a result, it is necessary for institutions to provide teachers with training programmes and seminars on the effective incorporation of critical thinking in EFL instruction. It is also imperative to underscore the importance of fostering teachers' favourable attitudes towards critical thinking skills.

The application of critical thinking in EFL instruction is significantly impeded by substantial constraints and obstacles. This issue was highlighted by all student participants, who reported their experiences with specific obstacles. They attributed the unsatisfactory integration of critical skills to a variety of factors, such as a lack of interest and motivation in cognitive tasks, excessive class sizes, insufficient time dedicated by instructors to critical activities, a conventional teaching approach, and the curriculum's content. The majority of participants perceived their enthusiasm for critical tasks as inadequate, which complicates the implementation process for instructors. This challenge may be attributed to the passive learning style that students have developed over the course of their academic learning. Students were not accustomed to engaging in debates or problem-solving activities, nor were they accustomed to questioning their instructors' ideas or conclusions. Koosha and Yakhabi (2013) also observed the detrimental effect of this factor on the implementation of critical skills in EFL instruction.

The study findings revealed that the traditional teaching approach that is currently in place is the primary challenge to the application of critical thinking. This approach requires instructors to adhere to a standardised curriculum, which restricts the potential for critical thinking. The same findings were revealed in numerous studies. According to researchers, instructors' capacity to prioritise critical thinking skills in the classroom is impeded by the standardisation of curriculum and the focus on conventional teaching practices (Alnofaie, 2013; Li, 2011).

Additionally, the implementation of strategies that encourage critical thinking and the use of learning materials that require students' participation in problem-solving or argumentation were

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impeded by the large class sizes. Numerous studies have underscored the large classroom setting as a challenge to the adoption of critical thinking (Alnofaie, 2013; Li, 2011). It is not anticipated that instructors will incorporate critical thinking into their pedagogy as a result of the large class sizes. Therefore, it is essential to initially reduce the number of students in courses before implementing critical thinking-based learning into EFL instruction.

The incorporation of critical thinking into the students' learning process was also impeded by the inadequacy of EFL instructors' time for cognitive activities, as identified by the majority of student participants. While the research literature does not identify time as a challenge to the application of critical thinking, the instructors' time constraints can be clarified by investigating the influence of the teaching curriculum's content on their practices. The curriculum syllabus places a burden on teachers to present a predetermined list of courses within a specified number of sessions, frequently resulting in the negligence of cognitive tasks in classrooms. Similar conclusions were drawn by the research conducted by Daniela (2014) and Ghaemi and Mirsaed (2017), which indicated that instructors' emphasis on linguistic competence hinders the integration of critical thinking in EFL instruction.

A significant implication derived from this study is the necessity of teacher training programs. It is crucial to incorporate critical thinking in all courses of teacher training programs. It is of the utmost importance to improve the pedagogical expertise of instructors in the application of reasoning skills in EFL classrooms. This is particularly relevant to novice instructors, who are more susceptible to the teaching pressures than their more experienced counterparts. In addition, it is advised that EFL instructors facilitate students' tracking and assessment of their cognitive processes by encouraging metacognition and independent learning in classrooms. Teachers should create educational experiences that foster and direct learners in the development of their knowledge (Brown, 2004; Gunning, 2008).

Prior to conclusion, it is important to acknowledge that the findings of this study may be constrained by several factors, particularly the extremely short time taken for the conduction of the research. Consequently, it is strongly advised that future research prioritise the long-term examination of critical thinking skills in order to improve the reliability of findings. Moreover, the results derived from this study mostly rely on the perspectives of a limited cohort of EFL students. Although their significance is indisputable, perceptions alone are inadequate for assessing the efficient integration of critical skills in the EFL setting. Consequently, the study's reliability would have been improved by utilizing classroom observation as an additional data collection method. The exclusion of instructors is an additional limitation of the research. Teachers' perspectives on factors that improve their instruction are crucial, as they play a critical role in the learning process. It is imperative for

future researchers to investigate the perspectives and implementation of critical thinking skills of EFL instructors in order to develop a more profound comprehension of the subject matter.

6. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of a research paper needs to summarize the content and purpose of the article. Critical thinking is an indispensable skill for EFL students in the 21st century. An optimal environment for the application of critical thinking skills can be provided in EFL classes. EFL instructors can incorporate critical thinking into several facets of their teaching process, such as learning resources, classroom activities, and evaluation procedures. The optimal approach to foster this type of thinking in EFL learners is involve them in activities that need cognitive reasoning, evaluation, and reflection, as well as to present them with a model of critical thinker teacher in their learning process. Nonetheless, some pedagogical and administrative obstacles impede the integration of critical thinking in EFL instruction. To overcome these challenges, it is imperative to create an environment that is conducive to the development of critical thinking in EFL classrooms, as well as to promote collaboration and mutual comprehension among all participants in the educational process.

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