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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Critical Thinking: EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Barriers

Amal Hassan Essia<sup>1</sup> and Nagwa Mohammed Khallaf<sup>2</sup>✉

<sup>1</sup> English Language Lecturer at Centre for Preparatory Studies, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman

<sup>2</sup> Director of Dhofar University Sustainability Centre and English Language Lecturer at Centre for Preparatory Studies, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman

**Corresponding Author:** Nagwa Mohammed Khallaf, **E-mail:** [nkhallaf@du.edu.om](mailto:nkhallaf@du.edu.om)

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**| ABSTRACT**

This study explores the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers towards critical thinking and the challenges they face in promoting it while teaching. Critical thinking is increasingly regarded as a vital skill for students in today's complex and fast-changing world. Fostering critical thinking in English as a Foreign Language classroom presents several challenges, including rigid curricula, insufficient teacher training, and cultural constraints. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative research design, both a survey and semi-structured interviews were utilized with sixteen EFL teachers at the Foundation program at Dhofar University in Oman. Findings revealed that while educators recognize the significance of critical thinking skills, they encounter substantial challenges such as limited professional development opportunities, exam-oriented teaching focus, and students' resistance to engaging in critical thinking activities. The study highlights the urgent need to institutional support, targeted training programs, and curriculum reforms to empower EFL teachers in effectively nurturing critical thinking skills among their EFL learners.

**| KEYWORDS**

Critical thinking- English Language – EFL Teachers – Perceptions - Barriers

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### 1. Introduction

In today's evolving and complex world, the ability to think critically has become more essential than ever. As students prepare to navigate an increasingly dynamic global landscape, cultivating strong critical thinking skills is crucial. Within the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, critical thinking is widely regarded as a key competence that enables learners to analyse information, evaluate diverse perspectives, and generate original ideas. However, promoting critical thinking skills in EFL classrooms remains a significant challenge particularly in context such as Oman, where traditional pedagogical practices and systematic constraints often impede its effective integration into EFL instruction.

Critical thinking (CT) is essential for university students' success in academic, professional, and personal spheres. Recent trends in education emphasize a move away from traditional pedagogies toward more critical and inquisitive approaches (Taraf, 2017). The 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom demands creative, innovative teaching methods to keep pace with global developments and changes. Given that critical thinking is a teachable skill, there is a need to integrate it into syllabi to enhance student achievement. According to Ennis (2013), effective CT teaching depends on various factors such as class size, teachers' knowledge and understanding, their teaching styles, and their interests. This study aims to examine whether English instructors teach critical thinking skills while teaching English within the Foundation Program.

Teachers' beliefs and perceptions profoundly influence their teaching methods, practices, and decision-making processes in the classroom (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). The differences between Eastern and Western approaches to thinking can also affect the development of critical thinking skills. In Eastern cultures, students often adopt intuitive reasoning and dialectical thinking, which contrasts with Western formal logic (Fischer et al., 2010). This distinction is important when examining how cultural backgrounds influence students' ability to think critically.

This study seeks to examine the perception of EFL teachers in Oman, where the Ministry of Higher Education has acknowledged the importance of critical thinking, regarding critical thinking and to identify the barriers they face in incorporating it into their teaching practices. By understanding these perceptions and the challenges, the study aims to inform policies and the practices that can better support EFL teachers in nurturing critical thinking among their students

### 1-1- Research Questions

The key research questions include:

- Are English teachers aware of the importance of critical thinking?
- Which skill of critical thinking are emphasized in their lesson plans?
- What challenges do teachers face while teaching critical thinking skills?

### 1-2- Literature Review

Critical thinking is commonly defined as the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. It involves analysing information, making reasoned judgments, and solving problems logically and effectively (Facione, 1990). In language education, critical thinking plays a crucial role in helping learners engage with texts, construct arguments, and express ideas clearly and persuasively. According to Paul and Elder (2006), critical thinking involves a set of skills and dispositions, including clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, and logical consistency.

On search to define main barriers to implement critical thinking skills comes the cultural factor as in (Akhter, S. 2019) in her study of the barriers to critical thinking for the Bangladeshi students who were not able to 'go beyond lower order thinking skills' that is because of cultural factors like reliance on authority and "children are raised in a way to accept everything forced by adults without questioning, so they become "Polly parrot" learners who depend heavily on their teachers and they prefer "indirect expressions' and "avoid directness".

Cultural factors also play a role. In many educational contexts, including Oman, traditional teaching methods that emphasize teacher authority and student passivity may hinder the development of critical thinking skills. Teachers may also feel unprepared or unsupported in their efforts to foster critical thinking, highlighting the need for systemic changes in teacher education and professional development (Brookfield, 2012).

Several studies have highlighted the importance of integrating critical thinking into EFL instruction. For instance, Stapleton (2001) argues that EFL learners benefit from activities that require higher order thinking skills, such as debating, analysing texts, and problem-solving tasks. However, many EFL teachers face challenges in promoting critical thinking due to a lack of training, rigid curricula, and assessment systems that prioritize rote memorization over analytical thinking (Atkinson, 1997; Li, 2011). Similarly, Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2011) reported that Omani EFL teachers acknowledged its importance but struggled with implementation due to systemic constraints.

Additionally, the role of cultural differences in critical thinking development is noted in studies such as those by Fischer et al. (2010), which compared critical thinking skills among New Zealand European (Western) and Asian students. Their findings suggest that cultural background, particularly linguistic proficiency, influences critical thinking skills more than cultural traditions themselves. In EFL contexts, critical thinking enhances language acquisition and promotes autonomy and lifelong learning (Afshar & Movassagh, 2017).

Gilakjani & Sabouri (2017) emphasize the significance of teachers' beliefs in shaping their teaching practices. Teachers' experiences as learners, their personalities, and their education all contribute to the development of these beliefs, which in turn shape their approach to teaching. A study by Taraf (2017) discusses how teachers' awareness of critical thinking affects their pedagogical strategies. The findings show that teachers who are aware of critical thinking skills integrate them into their teaching practices, but barriers such as time constraints, lack of motivation, and students' language proficiency hinder their ability to teach critical thinking effectively.

Some studies conducted in Arab context – particularly Moroccan setting- such as the one by Mrabti, et al. (2023), have explored teachers' perceptions of the barriers to critical thinking. Their study identified four main challenges: students, culture, the education system and the class size. Student-related barriers were reflected in learners' passivity, highlighting a need to reform

the educational system to integrate critical thinking into both pedagogical approaches and institutional policies. Cultural factors were also identified as obstacles, as fostering CT often requires students to take intellectual risks, which may not align with prevailing norms. Additionally, overcrowded classrooms were seen as hindering students' engagement and participation. The study emphasizes that the implementation of CT should start at the elementary level rather than being introduced only at the university stage.

Another study conducted in the Moroccan context by (Aouaf et al, 2023), sought to enhance students' CT which is controlled by factors that connected to "teaching, learning and the education system". The findings depict that the most apparent challenges that face students are those related to "lecturing and the context knowledge "besides the students' language proficiency which can hinder students to be active learners and can stand as a barrier to class discussions and debates. That is followed by their "overreliance on teachers" and their passivity. That is why their learning is described as rote learning because of memorization because they rejected the idea of being responsible for their learning. In this study, students showed dissatisfaction with the methods of teaching which are based on "direct instruction" and the use of lecturing way and knowledge sharing "that slow down the process of critical thinking training".

Aliakbari and Sadeghdaghighi (2013) concluded that beside learners' attitudes and expectancy, lack of teachers' knowledge of critical knowledge is the main barrier to implement critical thinking. This study revealed that the teachers showed "resistance and unwillingness to adapt new strategies" while time constraints and institutional barriers were considered less important. The study suggested that the quality of in-service training and teaching can be used to promote critical thinking among students. Another study by Khalid et al. (2021) suggested the need to make changes in teaching methods courses that are used in preparing programs for pre-service teachers. Moreover, it concluded that there should be workshops and courses that enable teachers to better knowledge of CT implementations.

In Oman, curriculum reforms have attempted to embed critical thinking through textbook activities and student-centered approaches. Yet, empirical evidence suggests a gap between policy and practice (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). Moreover, training for EFL teachers often lacks depth regarding how to teach critical thinking explicitly. Another study in Omani context, at Sultan Qaboos University was carried out by Tuzlukova, et al. (2017) aiming to explore the English teachers' perspective of critical thinking and whether it is connected to the used teaching methods in teaching English different skills. The study findings assured that the majority of the surveyed teachers believed in the significance and importance of incorporating critical thinking in their teaching as it is the teachers' duty "to provide students with an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills". They noted that students were able to use the language in a creative way and to "solve problems" and to deal with higher order questions. However, teachers showed discrepancies in defining critical thinking, that is why the researchers suggested the need of professional development in the field of critical thinking using practical examples.

## **2- Materials and Methods**

### **2-1- Data Collection Tools:**

Data was collected using a questionnaire and interviews.

- A questionnaire: designed to gauge teachers' understanding and perceptions of critical thinking. It included Likert-scale and open-ended questions.
- Interviews: Focused on practical classroom challenges, teaching strategies, and institutional support. The interviews were carried out to check teachers' understanding of critical thinking, their strategies for integrating it into their teaching, and the challenges they encountered.

Data were transcribed and analysed thematically using an inductive approach. The themes were identified based on recurring patterns and insights across the interviews.

### **2-2- The Experimental Design: Exploratory Mixed Methods**

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative research design. The study involved both a survey and semi-structured interviews. A purposive sample of 16 EFL teachers from Foundation Program, Dhofar University a private university in Oman participated. Teachers were interviewed for follow-up based on their willingness and teaching experience.

### **2-3- Participants of the Study:**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixteen EFL teachers at Dhofar University a higher education institution in Oman. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure a range of teaching experience and backgrounds. The

participants included 16 English instructors (9 females, 7males) from various nationalities (Indians, Arabs, and Americans), with teaching experience ranging from 2 to 28 years.

### 3- Analysis and Discussion:

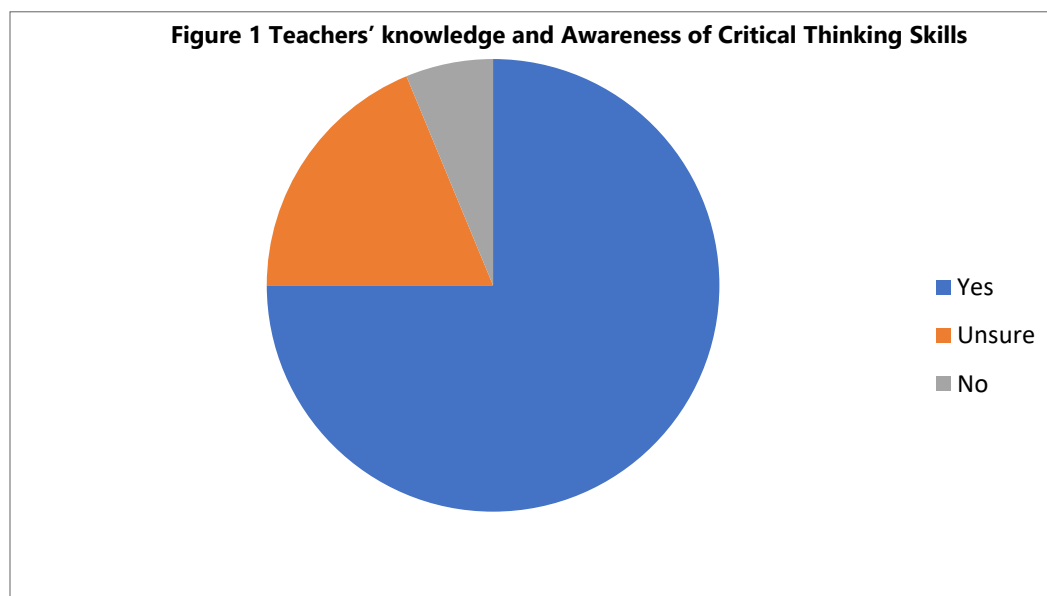
Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data from interviews were examined thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) method.

#### 3-1- Questionnaire Results

##### 3-1-1- Teachers' Awareness and Perceptions of Critical Thinking Skills

The first section of the questionnaire tried to identify teachers' knowledge and awareness of critical thinking skills.

**Figure 1 represents Teachers' knowledge and Awareness of Critical Thinking Skills.**



Analysing teachers' feedback to the questionnaire revealed that 75% of teachers have the knowledge and the awareness of critical thinking skills, while 18.75% are unsure about possessing this awareness, and 6.25% are not aware. See (Table 1).

**Table 1: Teachers' Awareness and Perceptions of Critical Thinking Skills**

Statement	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
Critical thinking is necessary in the curriculum.	16	0	0
Teachers are responsible for teaching critical thinking.	11	3	2
Critical thinking enhances students' academic performance.	16	0	0
Critical thinking is necessary for reading, writing, and speaking.	16	0	0

All teachers unanimously agreed that critical thinking is essential for student success and must be integrated into the curriculum.

#### 3-1-2- Critical Thinking Skills:

The second part of the questionnaire tried to identify the frequency of critical thinking activities in the classroom used by teachers. The findings suggest that teachers frequently employ critical thinking activities such as cognitive tasks and group discussions. The most used activity was "describing the purpose of the activity" as 15 out of 16 teachers confirmed that this is the highly used activity. Other activities, like using discussion-based tasks, were less common.

#### 3-2- Qualitative Data Analysis:

Qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews with 16 EFL teachers was analysed using thematic coding for identifying, organizing and interpreting patters within qualitative data. This approach enabled a deeper understanding of

participant's experiences, perceptions, and beliefs regarding the promotion of critical thinking skills in EFL classrooms. The analysis followed these key strategies:

- Familiarization with the Data: phase one involved transcribing the interviews and reading the transcripts multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of the content. This step provided a foundation for identifying preliminary insiders and key issues raised by the participants.
- Initial Coding: after familiarization, open coding was conducted to label and categorize segments of data that captured significant ideas. Both manual techniques and qualitative data software were used to identify keywords and phrases related to critical thinking and instructional practices.
- Theme Development: as coding progressed, patterns and recurring ideas began to emerge. These were organized into coherent themes and reflected commonalities across the data. The themes were refined and grouped into broader categories to capture the core findings of the study. The main themes identified from the interview data included the following:
  - o Awareness and importance of critical thinking
  - o Barriers to teaching critical thinking
  - o Teachers' self – perceptions of their role
  - o Cultural and linguistic factors
  - o Strategies for promoting critical thinking.
- Theme Analysis and Interpretation: each theme was then analysed to determine its relevance to the research questions and its impact on teachers' ability to teach critical thinking skills.

### **3-2-1- Results of Thematic Coding:**

#### **3-2-1-1- Awareness and Importance of Critical Thinking**

Teachers consistently affirmed that critical thinking is an essential skill for students' academic and professional success. This was particularly relevant for students in the Foundation Program, who are transitioning to more advanced academic work. While many educators expressed a strong understanding of the value of critical thinking, especially in enhancing students' problem solving and decision-making abilities, this awareness didn't always translate into consistent classroom activities.

One participant said *'I believe that critical thinking is essential, but I don't always have the time or the resources that I need to fully incorporate it into every lesson.'*

Sub themes: the following sub themes were noticed:

- **Acknowledgment but not fully implemented:** although teachers recognised the importance of critical thinking, they often struggled to apply it systematically in their teaching practices.
- **Selective Incorporation:** some educators reported integrating critical thinking activities primarily in writing or reading comprehension lessons, with less emphasis on speaking or listening skills.

#### **3-2-1-2 Barriers to teaching critical thinking:**

Several challenges were cited as impediments to effectively teaching critical thinking in EFL classrooms. These barriers were commonly associated with:

- **Lack of Professional Development:** many participants indicated that they had not received adequate training or guidance on how to teach critical thinking skills effectively.
- **Time Limitations:** the pressure to cover course content within tight timeframes often prevented deeper exploration of critical thinking skills.
- **Student resistance:** teachers observed that students were sometimes reluctant to engage in critical thinking, possible due to unfamiliarity with open-ended tasks or fear of making mistakes.
- **Cultural and Educational Norms:** some educators pointed out that the traditional emphasis on rote learning and the teacher-centred instruction limited opportunities to foster independent thinking.
- **Students' Limited Language Proficiency:** it was cited by many teachers that language proficiency is a significant barrier. Students' limited vocabulary and understanding of complex sentences often hindered their ability to engage in higher level thinking activities.

#### **Example quotes:**

- 'Students' lack of interest and their cultural expectations of education make it hard to engage them in critical discussions.'
- 'Sometimes students just want to be told the answer, they aren't used to being asked what they think or why'

#### **Sub Themes:**

- **Curriculum constraints:** teachers noted that the rigid syllabi and the exam-focused instruction left little room for critical thinking skills.

- **Language Barriers:** non- native speakers were often unable to grasp the complexity of critical thinking this is because of vocabulary and grammar limitation.

### 3-2-1-3 Teachers' Self – Perceptions of Their Role

Teachers' perceptions of their own role in promoting critical thinking varied. Some teachers viewed themselves as facilitators of critical thinking, while other felt their role was more about transmitting knowledge. Teachers' self-perception was shaped based on their educational backgrounds, their understanding of pedagogy, and their teaching practices.

**Example Quote:** *'I see myself as a guide who encourages students to think critically, but I know some of my colleges feel it's not their job.'*

#### Sub Themes:

- **Facilitator versus Knowledge Transmitter:** teachers who saw themselves as facilitators believed in creating environments where students could independently explore and challenge ideas. Those who saw their role as knowledge transmitters were more focused on providing correct answers and ensuring students passed exams.
- **Responsibility for Critical Thinking:** some teachers believed that it was their responsibility to explicitly teach critical thinking while others felt it was an inherent skill that students should develop independently.

### 3-2-1-4 Cultural and Linguistic Factors

The cultural context in which students and teachers operate was a significant influence on critical thinking practices. Teachers from different cultural backgrounds had varied experiences with teaching critical thinking. Those from western educational systems, where critical thinking is often emphasized, found it more natural to implement these strategies. In contrast, teachers from Eastern background sometimes struggled to reconcile the emphasis on critical thinking with their own educational experiences, which were more traditional and hierarchical.

**Example Quote:** *'in my culture, students are taught to accept what the teacher says without questioning it, so teaching them to challenge ideas is a real challenge.'*

#### Sub Themes:

- **Cultural Reluctance to Question Authority:** the cultural respect for authority often hindered students' willingness to engage in critical dialogue or challenging information.
- **Adaptation to Different Cultural Norms:** teachers had to adapt their teaching styles to suit students from diverse cultural backgrounds, which sometimes led to difficulties in fostering critical thinking.

### 3-2-1-5 Strategies for promoting critical thinking.

Despite the challenges, many participants had developed strategies to encourage critical thinking in the classrooms. These strategies included:

- **Use of Questioning Techniques:** teachers emphasized the importance of asking open-ended questions to stimulate critical thinking
- **Group Work and Discussions:** collaborative activities were frequently referred as valid ways for encouraging students to think critically by sharing and debating ideas.
- **Incorporation of Real-World Issues:** teachers found that connecting lessons to real-world problems helped students engage with the content and apply critical thinking skills.

**Example Quote:** *'I use case studies and group discussions to make my students think critically about real-world issues they can relate to.'*

#### Sub Themes:

- **Active Learning:** teachers were more likely to use active learning techniques, such as role-playing, debates, or problem-solving tasks, to engage students in critical thinking.
- **Application to Real-Life Scenarios:** teachers also mentioned that students were more likely to engage in critical thinking when they could see the relevance of the activity to their daily lives.

### 3-3- Conclusion of Qualitative Analysis

The thematic coding of interview data revealed several key insights about EFL teachers' perceptions of critical thinking and the barriers they face in teaching it. The most prominent themes were related to the teachers' awareness of critical thinking, the barriers they encounter (e.g., time, language proficiency, cultural factors), and the strategies they use to promote critical thinking. These findings underscore the need for targeted professional development, more time in the curriculum, and a pedagogical shift towards fostering critical thinking in a culturally responsive manner.

By addressing these barriers and focusing on practical strategies, institutions can better equip teachers to integrate critical thinking into their teaching practices effectively.

#### **4- Discussion**

The findings show that there are different obstacles to teaching critical thinking, like the cultural factors that align with some other studies like the one by Akhter, S. (2019) that hinder students from arguing or joining debates as a kind of respect to authority represented in their teachers who they trust to be the only source of knowledge. That leads to learners who depend on memorization and rote learning.

The study agrees with the studies by Brookfield (2012), Gilakjani & Sabouri (2017), and Taraf (2017) that teachers should be aware of their role in teaching critical thinking skills and that their beliefs are very important in incorporating critical thinking skills in their teaching.

The findings of this study align with existing literature on the difficulties of promoting critical thinking in EFL settings such as lack of time, insufficient student motivation, and cultural challenges. That all are aligned with the literature review in Mrabti, et al., (2023), Aouaf et al, (2023), Aliakbari and Sadeghdaghighi (2013) and Khalid et al. (2021). While EFL teachers in Oman recognize the value of critical thinking, systemic and institutional barriers hinder its integration into everyday teaching. The emphasis on exams, lack of training, and cultural expectations regarding teacher and student roles contribute to these challenges. However, teachers also expressed a belief that, with appropriate training and guidance, students could be taught to think critically, even if they lack strong language proficiency.

Teachers' perceptions of their responsibilities also varied, with some believing that critical thinking is an essential part of their role, while others felt it was not. That also agreed with the study by Aliakbari and Sadeghdaghighi (2013) where teachers were not about their role in teaching critical thinking. These discrepancies highlight the need for clearer guidelines and professional development in this area. To address these issues, it is essential to provide teachers with targeted professional development focused on practical strategies for fostering critical thinking. Curriculum reforms that prioritize analytical and creative thinking over rote memorization are also necessary. Furthermore, institutional leadership must actively support initiatives that cultivate a culture of critical thinking within educational institutions.

It is witnessed that teachers involved in the study who came from different backgrounds and different experiences were not sure about their own role in teaching critical thinking skills, although they agreed that critical thinking has become very important in the 21st century world which needs people to use their minds and skills creatively not through rote learning. Most studies state the barriers to be mostly students centre shown in their low proficiency level and their deep dependence on their teachers, but when this barrier does not exist like in the study by Tuzlukova, et al. (2017), we can see how it is easy to implement critical thinking skills in the teaching and learning processes shown in the students' ability to debate, discuss and evaluate. While the teachers involved in the study used skills that suit the low level of the students as the learners were not able to get involved in debates and discussions because of lack of language proficiency and because it was their first time to deal with critical thinking skills as the educational system depends on knowledge transmission not creating the knowledge. That is why it is recommended that teaching critical thinking skills should start earlier in all stages of education by reforming the educational system. Moreover, teachers should be equipped with proper knowledge of critical thinking, its skills and the ways to implement them in daily teaching and learning processes otherwise they will be another barrier to be added to other barriers that hinder teaching critical thinking. That align with the recommendations of Tuzlukova, et al. (2017) to provide teachers with professional development opportunities through "practical examples" not theoretical ones.

#### **3- Conclusion and Recommendations:**

##### **5-1- Conclusion:**

The findings of this study underscore the need for a more systematic and holistic approach to teaching critical thinking in EFL classrooms. While teachers are aware of the importance of critical thinking, there are significant challenges that prevent them from fully implementing these practices. By focusing on teacher training, curriculum design, and policy changes that prioritize critical thinking, institutions can create an environment where both students and teachers can thrive in the development of this crucial skill. The questionnaire analysis and the thematic coding of interview data provided valuable insights into EFL teachers' perceptions of critical thinking and the obstacles they face when attempting to teach it. While teachers recognize the importance of critical thinking, there is a significant gap between this awareness and its implementation in the classroom. Barriers such as time constraints, students' language proficiency, cultural expectations, and limited motivation hinder the effective incorporation of critical thinking practices. Additionally, teachers varied self-perceptions regarding their role in promoting critical thinking further complicate its integration into EFL instruction.

Given the findings, it is evident that fostering critical thinking in EFL classrooms requires a multi-faceted approach. To bridge the gap between awareness and implementation, the following actionable recommendations are proposed for teacher training, curriculum design, and policy changes.

## 5-2- Actionable Recommendations

### 5-2-1- Teacher Training and Professional Development

- **Focus on Practical Strategies for Critical Thinking:** Teacher training programs should provide EFL teachers with practical, classroom-tested strategies for integrating critical thinking into their lessons. These strategies should include questioning techniques, collaborative learning activities, and the use of real-world issues that encourage critical engagement.
- **Workshops on Overcoming Barriers:** Teachers should be trained on how to overcome the common barriers identified in the study, such as time constraints and students' language limitations. This could include training on how to incorporate critical thinking into existing curricula without overwhelming the students or teachers.
- **Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptation:** Given the cultural factors influencing the perception of critical thinking, teacher training should include sessions on how to adapt critical thinking practices to different cultural contexts. Teachers should be trained to foster an environment where questioning and independent thinking are encouraged, even in culturally conservative contexts.
- **Ongoing Professional Development:** Continuous professional development through workshops, peer collaboration, and reflection on teaching practices will help teachers stay updated on the latest methods of integrating critical thinking in EFL classrooms.

### 5-2-2- Curriculum Design and Teaching Materials

- **Integrating Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum:** Curriculum developers should ensure that critical thinking is not an isolated part of the syllabus but is woven throughout all aspects of language teaching, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Critical thinking should be incorporated into task-based learning, problem-solving activities, and discussions that require students to analyse and evaluate information.
- **Flexible and Contextualized Curricula:** The curriculum should allow teachers with flexibility to adjust lessons according to students' proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds. This flexibility would enable teachers to cater to the diverse needs of their students while promoting critical thinking in ways that are accessible and relevant.
- **Incorporation of Real-World Content:** Teaching materials should integrate real-world issues and case studies that encourage students to apply critical thinking skills. By linking lessons to real-life contexts, students will better appreciate the relevance of critical thinking and its role in both academic and professional environments.
- **Time Allocation for Critical Thinking Activities:** Curriculum developers should allocate sufficient time for activities that foster critical thinking, such as group discussions, debates, and reflective writing tasks. Time must be explicitly set aside for these types of activities, allowing teachers to give students the space to explore ideas critically.

### 5-2-3- Policy Change

- **Curriculum Reform at the Institutional Level:** Educational policymakers should advocate for curriculum reforms that prioritize critical thinking as a core competency. This includes revising assessment methods to evaluate not only students' ability to memorize information but also their capacity for critical analysis, problem-solving, and decision-making.
- **Support for Teachers:** Policies should be put in place to support teachers in their efforts to integrate critical thinking. This may include providing additional resources, reducing class sizes to allow for more personalized instruction, and allocating time for professional development.
- **Promote a Shift in Educational Culture:** Educational policies should support a shift in the overall culture towards valuing critical thinking as an essential skill. This includes creating a national or institutional mandate for the teaching of critical thinking in all disciplines, not just language learning, and encouraging teachers across subjects to collaborate in fostering this skill.

### 5-2-4- Assessment and Feedback Systems

- **Incorporate Critical Thinking in Assessments:** Assessment systems should move beyond traditional rote memorization and include methods to assess critical thinking skills, such as open-ended questions, case studies, and project-based assessments. This will encourage students to engage deeply with the material and demonstrate their ability to analyse and evaluate information critically.
- **Feedback on Critical Thinking Development:** Teachers should be encouraged to provide regular feedback on students' critical thinking progress, highlighting areas for improvement and offering suggestions for further



development. Feedback should focus not only on the content but also on the thinking process, encouraging students to reflect on their reasoning and decision-making.

Through the implementation of these recommendations, EFL teachers can be better equipped to foster critical thinking in their students, leading to improved academic outcomes, enhanced problem-solving abilities, and a more engaged and independent student body. In the long run, fostering critical thinking will not only benefit students in their academic careers but also prepare them for the complexities of the globalized world, where critical analysis and decision-making are essential in every field.

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**ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0034-7544>

**ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8341-4246>

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