

The Role of Instructional Critical Thinking Skills Training Programs on Improving Teaching Practicability: EFL Teachers Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is conducted to explore Sudanese EFL teachers' standing points on the role and effect of instructional critical thinking training programs in terms of developing EFL teaching practices. Another aim of my research paper was that brought together two factors; language teaching theories and critical language awareness theory. Thus, the research paper tried to prepare Sudanese teachers to be aware of developing students' cognitive and meta-cognitive skills based on scheduled teachers' training programs. This would be highlighted in the critical language awareness theory and therefore the teacher would play a significant role in engaging learners in successful interaction, through creating participation opportunities based on the notion of critical thinking. The main contribution of this research paper is a framework for infusing critical thinking pedagogy across courses in English language skills that are taught to undergraduate students in Sudanese universities in general and at the University of Medical Sciences and Technology (UMST) in particular. Then it urges authorities, administrations and decision makers in Ministry of Higher Education to prepare teachers in order to emphasize processes through which critical thinking pedagogy can foster learning that leads to language learning development. As for quantitative data, a descriptive method has been adopted to conduct this research paper. The required data were collected through questionnaire which was tried out on 50 English language staff teachers at (UMST) University in Sudan. The questionnaire was made to identify in-service teachers' views on the role of critical thinking skills in Sudanese EFL pedagogy and their attitude towards training programs of practical teaching development with regard to critical thinking skills implementation. The obtained information was analyzed by using (SPSS) program and then the researcher provided the required interpretation for the tabulated data. The research paper findings revealed that most of Sudanese EFL teachers (subjects of this research paper) are enthusiastic to be enrolled in training programs related to the implementation of critical thinking skills in EFL classes. The majority of teachers agreed that critical thinking skills can be considered as one of the factors that instill language learning process. They also emphasize the effectiveness of new strategies compared with the poor effect of the adopted classic methods of teaching in terms of reflecting up to date knowledge. As they consider critical thinking skills as an innovative method enable EFL learners to evaluate the learning process and reinforce learning autonomy. Most of participants' responses showed their interest to improve teaching performance by adopting critical thinking and that would be fruitful when it is facilitated by administration supports. Since, critical thinking level would develop cognitive learning, however, traditional methods of teaching are no longer successful in EFL teaching and learning. The large number of respondents reflected the importance of on-going workshops about incorporating critical thinking in EFL teaching professional development. Also, seminars and webinar about the importance of high level of thinking are required to emphasize the success of EFL teaching of language skills. Most teachers ensured that a well trained in-service teacher of adopting critical thinking would improve learners' language skills.

Key words: Instruction, Critical Thinking Skills, Training Programs, Teaching Practicability

INTRODUCTION

The recent direction of English as Foreign/second language EFL/ESL is become learners-centered. Teachers' roles and responsibilities in EFL pedagogy have been changed in the direction of facilitators of the learning and teaching processes. This way, the fundamental issue of classroom interaction occurs between teacher and learners and among the learners dealing with the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas, resulting in mutual/negotiable effects on each other. These suitable ways of developing language for the learners simply provide practice and enlarge opportunities in the classroom through different activities/tasks and thus necessitate the critical thinking skills.

The present paper aims at showing that classroom interaction can be an effective for the learners to learn English as foreign language in (UMST) at College of Languages. This paper is conducted to explore Sudanese EFL teachers' views about the value and effect of instructional critical thinking training programs. The idea behind this investigation is that to enable teachers of adopting mixed methods approach. The researcher assumed that adopting critical thinking in Sudanese EFL context would improve teaching and learning, when it is reinforced with teachers' training programs most likely achieve the utmost professional development. Consequently this trial would enhance language learning environment.

According to Ayde and Shayer, (1994), "teaching and learning centered on critical thinking pedagogies constitute one of the main aims of education recently". Critical thinking implementation in EFL pedagogy contexts has been effective in improving learners' language skills especially in non-Western contexts ((Marin and Halpern, (2011)). Despite the evidence of success of implementing critical thinking in EFL learning in non-Western contexts, still more researches are required because it is an endless process theories of publications. However, a limitation involves on the currently unidentified status of critical thinking in EFL language approaches and methodologies. The critical thinking approach is not mentioned as a well-established approach to language learning in publications on approaches to language teaching and learning despite of its effects, although it is accepted as a valid teaching and learning approach in other disciplines, such as science" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Hinkel, 2011).

The necessity and significance of critical thinking in education might primarily lie in the fact that learners are not passive participants in the learning process since they are no longer engaged in rote memorization of facts; rather, they need to graduate from educational institutions that engage them in learning that improves their thinking skills. Empirical research suggested that benefits accrue to learners who trained to possess the ability to think critically; hence, many institutions need to incorporate instruction oriented toward providing learners with critical thinking skills (Tsui, 1999; Stupnisky et al, 2008) through programmed interventions that vary from the traditional instructional approach (Sanz de Acedo Lizarraga et al, 2009). On the literature part of this paper, I would try to show how the processes critical thinking implementation could be modified and how implementation frameworks could be drawn from such processes and its effects on EFL context would benefit the language classroom, and this is another aim of my paper.

Saleh, Wahid, Jamaluddin, Haslinda, & Nor Azizah, 2006), confirmed that "since the shift of attention away from teaching information and content towards developing thinking skills is quite recent, continuing attempts are observed to find ways to infuse critical thinking into the tertiary curriculum". Similarly, Radin Umar.,(2006), suggested that "there are different approaches in EFL education to develop higher order thinking skills HOTS, such as question-based learning, collaborative learning, problem-based learning and e-learning".

The researchers have become convinced of the importance and effect of critical thinking in the language learning success and performance. The need for research concerning critical thinking's relationship with and impact on different language skills and tasks has become greater than ever before. Therefore, this paper will turn the attention of ELT practitioners to the necessity of such factor of EFL learning. Both EFL teachers and EFL learners would benefit of this experience. This research paper is accordingly a revelation of observations during the long term experience of a teacher as both researcher and teacher in our attempt to design and implement a critical thinking-based approach to the teaching of English in Sudanese universities context.

THE CONCEPT OF COGNITIVE SKILLS

Cognitive skills are the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses. It encompasses processes such as knowledge, attention, memory and working memory, judgment and evaluation, reasoning and "computation", problem solving and decision making, comprehension and production of language, etc. Human cognition is conscious and unconscious, concrete or abstract, as well as intuitive (like knowledge of a language) and conceptual (like a model of a language). Cognitive processes use existing knowledge and generate new knowledge.

The processes are analyzed from different perspectives within different contexts, notably in the fields of linguistics, psychiatry, psychology, education, philosophy and logic. These and other different approaches to the analysis of cognition are synthesized in the developing field of cognitive science, a progressively autonomous academic discipline. Within psychology and philosophy, the concept of cognition is closely related to:

- Understanding of intellectual analysis, ability to divide important intellectual constructs into constituent parts.
- Understanding of intellectual evaluation, ability to evaluate the quality of each part or element of thought.
- Seeking intellectual improvement, to correct weaknesses and improve strengths identified through analysis and evaluation.
- Seeking to develop intellectual traits, or characteristics of mind that are both necessary for the development of critical thinking and need to be developed through critical thinking. This is guard against sophistic or manipulative thinking.
- Seeking knowledge of the problematic of thinking, or natural tendencies, such as egocentrism and socio-centrism, which cause deep and systemic problems in human life.

Furthermore, these dimensions can be applied in various contexts:

- To thinking generally (one's own thinking, the thinking of a professor, colleague, friend, politician, theoretician, parent).
- To subject disciplines (each of which has its own forms of analysis and evaluation) (Brown, John, Allan Collins, & Duguid (1989).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CRITICAL THINKING

The word critical is derived from the ancient Greek "kritikos" which means discerning judgment. Critical thinking originates from the Western philosophical traditions of ancient Greece. From this ancient Greek tradition emerged the need, for anyone who aspired to understand the deeper realities, to think systematically, to trace implications broadly and deeply, for only thinking that is comprehensive, well-reasoned, and responsive to objections can take us beyond the surface. Socrates and his followers including Plato and Aristotle are credited with establishing critical thinking. Socrates saw dialogue as useful even if it did not

solve a problem or produce a specific result. Dialogue which fosters critical thinking can clarify problems and bring solutions closer. However, Socrates did not understand himself as a teacher, but as a midwife easing the birth of critical self-reflection (Halpern, (1999., p. 9).

Socrates established the need to empower oneself by thinking profoundly over matters and not easily accepting others' thoughts, particularly those in authority. He gained a reputation as the ideal critical thinker through his method of questioning and cross-examination of positions (Canagarajah, (2005).

The ability to think critically has been identified as one of the learning outcomes of university education. Since critical thinking is so significant in education and the real world of life, it is worth exploring the different ways the term is used. However, like all abstract concepts, critical thinking is hard to define and results in different interpretations in different contexts. As such, critical thinking is also open to definitions from multiple perspectives: philosophical, psychological and educational. This research paper is an attempt to highlight this concept in education particularly EFL pedagogy. Some definitions were broad and some others were narrow. Attempts to define this complex thinking began over 100 years ago and its meaning has evolved since then. "One of the earliest definitions was developed by John Dewey who is known as the „father of the modern critical thinking tradition. He defined it as an 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. Thus, in this definition he emphasizes reflective thinking, asking oneself questions about what to believe through evaluating reasoning, and considering the implications of one's beliefs" (Facione and Facione, (1992). This research paper, however did not attempt to delve into Socrates" and his followers' philosophical ideas of critical thinking as the research interest was mainly on the development of the critical thinking skills via the continuous training program to improve EFL pedagogy.

CONCEPTIONS OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Scriven and Paul (2004, p. 1) viewed critical thinking skills as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action". Those scholars propose an active and skillful use of a set of information processing skills to guide belief and action. "In yet another definition, knowledge is stressed as the basis for the development of alternative ideas and assumptions" (Ibid). Similarly, Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal introduced this concept as "(1) an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experience; (2) knowledge of the methods of logical enquiry and reasoning. (3) some skills in applying those methods" (Glaser, 1994, p. 5). Compared to Dewey's definition, which stresses the act of thinking, Glaser identified three elements of critical thinking: having an attitude of being thoughtful when dealing with problems; knowing; and being able to apply the methods of logical enquiry and reasoning.

An international expert consensus definition of critical thinking was determined and is published in the APA Delphi Report entitled *Critical thinking: A statement of consensus for purposes of educational assessment and instruction*.

According to Hager, Sleet, Logan and Hooper (2003), the most widely accepted characterisation of critical thinking as incorporating abilities and dispositions is due to Robert Ennis (a co-author of other widely used critical thinking test instruments: the Cornell Critical Thinking Test (1985) and the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test (1985)). Underpinning

these dispositions and abilities is Ennis' conception of critical thinking as "reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and do" (Ennis, 1985, p. 54). This definition has been considered the generic definition by many critical thinking scholars (Huitt, 1988; Fisher, 2001; Jenicek & Hitchcock, 2005).

Despite the consensus achieved by this large group of experts and the various earlier definitions of the critical thinking concept, attempts to define it still continue as part of the critical thinking tradition to suit the current topic pertaining to the higher order cognitive skills.

THE EFFECT OF CRITICAL THINKING IN EDUCATION

Critical thinking is a broad term when it comes to its implementation as being influential factor in many disciplines. This section reveals the effect of critical thinking in education. The notion of critical thinking in education has been introduced as "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based" (Facione and Facione, 1992. p. 2).

The introduction of critical thinking into education has recently become a global aim. The implementation of critical thinking as language pedagogy in the field of EFL has started recently, and it consequently requires further investigation. "Some scholars claim that critical thinking is a Western concept and could not be applied for foreign language education in non-Western contexts. Findings from research reveal that critical thinking pedagogies have been effective for developing language learning in non-Western contexts, too. Despite this evidence of success in implementing critical thinking as one element the number of existing studies is limited, and most of these studies have focused on the development of learners' reading and writing skills. The number of existing studies is limited, and most of these studies have focused on the development of learners' reading and writing skills" (Atkinson, 1997). Tsui (2003), pointed that "critical thinking, in a university environment, as involving students' abilities to identify issues and assumptions, recognise relationships, make correct inferences, evaluate evidence or authority, and deduce conclusions".

According to Yancher and Slife (2003), critical thinking is a cognitive ability that: (1) requires knowledge of the assumptions and underlying world views of a particular discipline or field of inquiry and (2) involves developing ideas and assumptions that are alternatives to existing views.

Ennis, (1987), claimed that "critical thinking is superior in education because it includes the following features (1) a focus on belief and action; (2) makes statements in terms of things that people actually do or should do; (3) includes criteria to help us evaluate results; (4) includes both dispositions and abilities; and (5) is organised in such a way that it can form the basis for a thinking-across-the-curriculum programme as well as a separate curriculum-specific critical thinking course at the tertiary level. While there are many other definitions of the concept of critical thinking the definitions generally show clearly that critical thinking has both cognitive and affective domains. Cognitive domains can be represented in language structures and skills. Affective domains can be represented in psychological correlations; emotions, attitudes, morals and values". Therefore, this classification is contributing directly to improve EFL teaching. Since, these elements offer many linguistic benefits. It helps to stimulate analyzing information and helps students to develop critical abilities. Above all, it increase students' language awareness and develop deeper understanding of the subject matters. On the other hand, through critical ability, students would grasp a language in terms of recognizing different

parts of language skills, different types of structures and other elements of language in a given task.

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

This section is presented with discussion about the meta-cognition skills in EFL pedagogy and its contribution to Knowledge transfer in relation to the concept of critical thinking. Staib (2003) and James (2006) pointed out the importance of discussing topics relevant to learners' lives when transfer is the aim of teaching". "Transfer can be of two types: 'near' (e.g., within the same type of problem in the same subject domain) or 'far' (e.g., between domains). Another classification is related to the processes of transfer: 'low road' transfer, which results from extensive practice, and 'high road' transfer, which results from learners' understanding of a concept" (Perkins and Salomon 1987: 290). Marin and Halpern (2011) highlighted the importance of transfer as a key component of the critical thinking approach and identify transfer as the ultimate goal of this approach as used in education. The transfer of thinking skills relies mainly on the explicit teaching of these skills. Carraher and Schliemann (2002) claimed that transfer has failed in many studies because identifying evidence of transfer is not a straightforward process. However, a few studies have identified such evidence. Resnick and Collins 1994). Wade and Reynolds (1989) suggested that transfer does not occur when meta-cognition is excluded. This indicates that transfer should not be rejected as a component of the critical thinking approach, nor should it be excluded from studies that investigate this approach. It should be noted that teaching meta-cognitive skills, which is a requirement for transfer to occur, can be challenging, although some studies have succeeded in introducing meta-cognition. This task seems to be more challenging in contexts where reflection is excluded from educational policies and curriculum, as might be the case in Saudi Arabia (Alabdelwahab, 2002).

Transfer of learning is our use of background knowledge when learning something new and the application of that learning to both similar and new situations...Transfer of learning...is the very foundation of learning, thinking and problem solving.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN EFL PEDAGOGY

Hatcher, (2000), stated that "a clear conception of critical thinking Skills is integral to education. This is especially because the conception might differ according to the context of language in which it is used whether ESL or EFL. Without a clear understanding of the concept of critical thinking, difficulties await educators who endeavor to teach and measure it". In writing, for example, Flateby (2011) argued that a clear understanding of how critical thinking applies and relates to writing is important before both critical and writing skills can be developed and assessed. How critical thinking is conceptualised determines the content of a course and the course assessment. What to include and exclude from a course in critical thinking tends to vary if there is no agreement among teachers over what constitutes critical thinking. Assessment will also be adversely affected as the disagreement will lead to difficulty in setting standardised tests to measure how much critical thinking learning has taken place. In actuality, assessment should reflect what is taught. If the ability to make inductive or deductive reasoning is to be taught then measurement of this specific cognitive skill should be undertaken. If critical thinking dispositions are to be developed, the measurement should be geared to measuring them and in accordance with the pre-defined context (Ab Kadir, 2007). Therefore, The term pedagogy is related directly to the teaching and learning. Since, the two words 'teaching' and 'learning' have broad implications.

Seedhouse, (2010), suggested that any study on language acquisition or learning should clearly define these two words in order to clarify which aspects of language and learning the study is

examining. According to Cook (2010) "language can refer to various concepts: language as a species-specific system, language as a set of abstract ideas, language as a unit of sentences, language as the shared practice of a community, language as action and language as cognitive knowledge". The last meaning is relevant to the scope of this research paper as result of processing the new information in contrast with the individual's background knowledge. The meaning of language as cognitive knowledge refers to individual's competence in communicating with native or non-native communities. Therefore, this definition of language includes both language as a community practice and language as a mental process.

Learners' Autonomy

Learners' autonomy has been the issue of the modern teaching methods. Hence, the teachers' role has been changed from fronted-teacher who dominates the process of learning to facilitator of learning. This section provided learners' and teachers' roles in the modern EFL pedagogy. On the table below Breen & Candlin (1980, p. 96) & Leeser et al. (2004), described the role of students and teachers in CLT classrooms as follows

Students' Role	Teachers' Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The learner-centered characteristic of CLT and the new type of classroom activities imply different roles in the language classroom for teachers and learners than from those found in more traditional second and/or foreign language classrooms. - Learners in CLT classrooms are supposed to participate in classroom activities phases that are based on a collaborative rather than individualistic approach to learning. - Students are portrayed as active participants in the language learning process. It uses communication as a means to reach the goal, which is also communication. - Students' roles in CLT classroom have a dynamic feature, and thus they tend to vary all the time. - Students in CLT classroom are supposed to be "those of negotiators for meaning, communicators, discoverers, and contributors to knowledge and information. - students are vigorously involved in expression, interpretation, - 	<p>CLT alters the role of teacher to merely mentor. The role of the teacher in CLT classroom, notes the following central roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. - The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. - A third role of the teacher is that of a researcher and learner, with much to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities, actual and observed experience of the nature of learning and organizational capacities. The roles of the teacher in CLT consist of coordinator and manager of activities, language instructor, the source of new language, consultant when needed, as well as a participant. it is typical in CLT classroom that it is not merely the teacher, but everyone present who manages the classroom performance. - The teacher takes on more of a facilitator and participant role in the language classroom.

The types of learners' roles seem to vary from one discipline to another. In the field of EFL classroom interaction, researchers have discussed how learning opportunities can be created. For instance, Walsh, (2002), recognized the negotiation of meaning as a learning opportunity. Similarly, Waring, (2011), identified taking the initiative as an opportunity. Also, Spolsky, (1989), mentioned conditions that can develop language learning, and some of these conditions include opportunities for analysing the new language in students-students phase. The learning opportunities identified by these researchers require learners to apply their cognitive skills (think crtcally0 in order to participate. This indicates a close link between participation and thinking. Creating learning opportunities that encourage learners to apply

their high level of thinking skills HOTS might increase their participation in the learning process and develop the quality of their learning.

Learning Incentive

There exists number of factors which motivate learners to learn a foreign language. We as ELT practitioners would reinforce these factors to meet their potential. Indeed, motivation is one of the key factors that influences the rate and success of foreign language learning. It provides the primary impetus to initiate EFL learning and later remains the driving force that sustains this long and often tedious learning process. Many EFL luminaries and pedagogues agree that the cognitive development in EFL instruction provides situations that motivate learners to learn. The critical thinking level helps in instilling EFL learners' motivation to learn through mentally challenging tasks that are interdisciplinary in nature. Such skills also encourage EFL learners' active involvement with the target language and content in a real, authentic situation. With such advantages and benefits for EFL teachers and learners, it is however not surprising that the demand for cognitive and meta-cognitive skills to support both teaching practices and learning processes in EFL context. Thus, integrating critical thinking concept in EFL pedagogy would help in bringing changes to the traditional teaching and learning environment in order to create what is termed as more authentic and dynamic learning environment and teachers ought to be both creators of learning opportunities and utilisers of learning opportunities created by learners (Kumaravadivelu,1994:33).

Since this research paper explores ways of enhancing the quality of teaching practices in terms of implementing the critical thinking pedagogy, Critical thinking skills would increase learning motivations to develop better understanding of EFL pedagogy by examining how these interlocutors interact with one another to enable learners of communicating particular views and verbalise their thinking. The focus in EFL pedagogy recently is turned on what might be considered to 'learning opportunity. Therefore, I encourage teachers and educators to provide learners with more tasks that require mental process and provide enough time for learners to expose new language.

IMPEDING FACTORS BASED ON THE RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

This section sheds light on the challenges that face the implementation of critical thinking approach in EFL context. Based on my observations, reflections and long term experiences in EFL teaching practices, I can state that the main challenge that encounters the integrating critical thinking in my current teaching context is related to the previous professional relationships between teachers and teaching methods. Some teachers are unfamiliar with collective methods of EFL teaching and thus stick with classic ones. The learners' reluctance to voice their own opinions coheres with this old teaching practice, a reluctance that may be further strengthened by our positioning as researcher and teacher. Therefore, to address this possible power imbalance, Teachers' lack of enrolling in professional development would not end up with making reflective discussions, conducted in an egalitarian atmosphere to be helpful for learners. However, during reflection sessions, we discussed many issues that we had encountered in the class, including those in my modeled lessons. Such programs can be reinforced by their expertise and experience as a teacher who had been engaged with these students for some time and reminded him that we would use this opportunity to learn from each other. On the other hand, there would be a power imbalance between the learners' ages and the adopted teaching methods. These could set up a barrier preventing them from expressing their own critical opinions. Although we did not discuss this possible power imbalance directly through this research, it may have influenced some aspects of our interaction. Since, the matter of learners' age with respect to social and educational status is strongly encouraged in thinking critically. For example, the learner seldom has been offered

criticism in his/ her modeled lessons, as this could have been interpreted as being disrespectful. Further when the learner is asked to verbalize his/ her opinions, he/ she would often scare to death to express certain point. Although through learners' participation may have achieved a high level of critical literacy understanding, they may still have preferred to remain modest and polite about this.

THE VALUE OF ADOPTING CRITICAL THINKING IN MY CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

In order to make broader view of critical thinking approach, it is noteworthy to state that critical thinking approach would be a real nature of learners and teachers' condition in the classroom for developing cognitive learning. This will indicate that teachers help/support learners to develop their cognitive and meta-cognitive skills and learners themselves practice the language in the classroom creatively. Therefore, the effective classroom interaction is one of the principal subject senses in the teaching and learning contained English (Dixon, Kuhlhorst & Reiff, 2006). Critical thinking in the classroom, schools would have become more student-centered and offer more individualized learning than ever before. In face-to-face learning, the learners' mental image of language learning should be well prepared to pave the way of what ought to be learned, self-monitoring and problem solving. However, in some situations, such as distance learning, learners may never actually meet the teacher since all of the work for the class is completed online.

Billing, (2007), "examined in details the conditions that should be met to achieve language learning, more particularly the transfer of problem solving skills. One of the conditions for enhancing transfer is learning principles and concepts should receive more emphasis than learning facts. Self-monitoring can enhance the learning of concepts. Another condition is for learning to take the form of cooperation among all members of the class as open-discussion, including the teacher, accompanied by his/her feedback. Also, providing learners with training examples can increase transfer opportunities, particularly when accompanied by reflection".

These different conditions indicate that critical thinking level of learners would facilitate the knowledge-constructed classroom in my current environment. Many researchers view critical thinking as having a positive influence on the cooperative learning and so individual learning in terms of making independent learners. Learner autonomy is seen as one of the most important elements of today's EFL pedagogy. It has been widely discussed in the research literature. It is generally defined as an ability to take charge of one's own learning. Learner autonomy as it is mentioned on the previous section, occurs when the learner has the "capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action". Independence and individual responsibility are core notions of language acquisition. With the increased use of modern communications (email, discussion groups) and co-operative approaches to learning, most noticeably in critical thinking, the notion of learner interdependence (between a group of learners and teacher) has emerged (Dixon, Kuhlhorst & Reiff, 2006). Therefore, in the traditional classroom situation as in my environment, all the learners must follow the teacher and often language learning is not encouraged. The task to be learnt is decided by the teacher, who also controls the pace of a lesson. This makes it hard on many learners, whose ideal learning pace is different from that established by the core teacher. Unlike with critical thinking approach, learners would work on their own pace. The learner can spend more time on those topics that are causing difficulty. Information can be reviewed and tasks can be repeated until the learner is happy to move on to a new topic. The learner would feel in control and that usually enhances satisfaction levels with the learning process.

According to Brown, (2001), learners are the members of a team and should be able to think together and see one another, to talk with each other (in English) and should not make to feel like they just walked into a military formation.

Similarly, I believe that the fundamental issue of EFL learners' language practice occurs between teacher and learners. Then most importantly among the learners dealing with the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas, resulting in a mutual/ negotiable effects on each other inside classrooms. Consequently, I would like to recommend the adoption of critical thinking approach and prepare teachers in my current teaching environment to do so. This would probably represent suitable way of developing language efficiency for our learners simply provide practice opportunities in the classroom. However, learners are unable to practise their language skills in the classrooms due to the restricted teaching methods that have been used. The teachers' role and responsibility would then change in the direction of facilitator of the learning and teaching processes to end up with developing cognitive and meta-cognitive skills.

Questions of the Paper

1. To what extent can in-service Sudanese EFL teachers be ready to adopt critical thinking skills in their EFL classrooms?
2. Are in-service Sudanese EFL teachers anxious about adopting modern teaching methods in their EFL classrooms instead of classic ones that impede cognitive skills development?.
3. To what extent can continuous development training programs of critical thinking skills be desirable by the majority of in-service Sudanese EFL teachers?
4. In what way does development training program of critical thinking instill its implementation in Sudanese EFL pedagogy?.

Hypotheses of the Paper

1. In-service Sudanese EFL teachers possess positive attitude towards incorporating critical thinking in their EFL classrooms.
2. In-service Sudanese EFL teachers employ classic teaching methods (prompting) in their EFL classrooms in which impede cognitive skills development .
3. On-going development training programs of critical thinking skills are prerequisite among the majority of in-service Sudanese EFL teachers.
4. Development training program of critical thinking instills its implementation in Sudanese EFL pedagogy to achieve better learning outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

The current section gives an account of the methodology and procedures that will be adopted to investigate and explore the students' academic writing production. This is based on teachers' perspectives and students experience. The teachers' perspectives will be highlighted by well structured questionnaire. And likewise, the students experience will be checked by a designed test. The overwhelming design of the study is experimental methods that includes experimental and control group of students. Furthermore, an analytical method will be used to interpret the quantitative data. Therefore, this design of the current study is mainly exploratory-mixed methods. "The main purpose of exploratory studies is that of formulating a problem for more precise investigation or of developing the working hypotheses from an operational point of view"(Gieve, (1998)). As for data collection, the researcher chooses two data gathering tools which are questionnaire and test. All obtained data will be analyzed via computer systems then an interpretation can be provided by the researcher.

Data Collection Tools

This study has adopted one instrument for collecting data which is a questionnaire that has been made to address (50) EFL teachers at (UMST) in Sudan (see appendix A)..

Questionnaire Reliability

To ensure the reliability of my questionnaire I have adopted the Split-half Method to decide the degree of its reliability. This was carried out through handing the questionnaire to targeted subjects. Then the correlation between each half of the questionnaire was calculated. The values of the "odd" numbered statements were calculated into group (x) and the "even" numbered statements into group (y). Then the total value of (x) and (y) were calculated by applying the Pearson's product Correlation to find the relationship between the two halves of each group:

$$r = \frac{N \sum x y - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N \sum X^2 - (\sum x)^2] [N \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

The formula symbols are interpreted as follows: -

r = correlation coefficient.

X = values of the odd numbers.

Y = values of the even numbers.

When (x) and (y) values were calculated the correlation coefficient between the two halves of the teachers' questionnaire; (r) was found (0.80).

$$r = \frac{24 * 58426 - (1184) * (1165)}{\sqrt{[24 * 59444 - (1401856)] [24 * 57909 - (1357225)]}} = 0,80$$

Therefore, by applying the above formula, the correlation coefficient for the questionnaire would be read (0.80). It is a high rate of reliability for the instrument on which harmony judgments can be made.

Questionnaire Validity

The items of the questionnaire were sixteen statements which were divided into two sections each of which encompasses eight statements. All statement were made to guard against possible failings such as inappropriate method, poor instructional methods, and other problems. Then, specialists' consultation was sought in terms of clarity and validity of the items and their relevance. In the light of these experts' judgments about the relevance of the items to the purpose for which they were defined, the number of items was 21 and it was reduced to be 16 in final versions as I have mentioned earlier. The irrelevant statements were dropped, whereas complicated or ambiguous ones were reworded and simplified in order to make them concise and precise.

Pilot Study

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire a pilot study was given to a small number of teachers comprising (10) from (UMST). It is worth noting here that the piloting questionnaire was given to teachers who had experience in EFL/ESL teaching particularly Arabic speaking countries. However, the teachers who answered the pilot questionnaire were not involved in the formal questionnaire of the study. Thus, the aim of the pilot questionnaire was to examine

the clarity of the statements and to estimate the time that each teacher needed to answer all statements in the questionnaire.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The electronic questionnaire link was sent to the subjects. The subjects were given five days online to fill in the questionnaire. Descriptive and interpretive analysis was used to analyze data. The obtained data were analyzed by using basic descriptive statistics and factor analysis, using SPSS as illustrated below as follows:

Section One: The Respondents' General information

Table (1) Qualifications of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	BA	4	8.0	8.0
	MA	30	60.0	60.0
	PhD	6	12.0	12.0
	Other	10	20.0	20.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

By having a look at the table (1), about (8.0%) of the respondents hold Bachelor degree, (60.0%) of them hold Master degree and (12.0%) of the sample hold PhD degree. With regard to these percentages, it is true to say that the peak rate of sample hold MA degree in English language in addition to, (12.0%) were PhD holders. That is to say the obtained opinions will be supportive thereof.

Table (2) The Respondents' Years of Experience

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5	22	44.0	44.0
	6-10	17	34.0	34.0
	11-15	9	18.0	18.0
	16-21	2	4.0	4.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

At first glance, the table (2) manifests that large percent (44.0%) of respondents possess from 1–5 years of experience, (34.0%) have 10 years and (18.0%) have 15 years while few respondents (4.0%) only possess 21years. This indicated that all respondents obtained enough years of experience to contribute in providing useful opinions support the researcher's hypotheses.

Section Two: Teachers' Views on Critical Thinking Skills Training Program

This part showed the analysis of questionnaire statements.

Keys: SD: Means Strongly Disagree, D: Means Disagree, N: Means Not Sure, A: Means Agree, S A: Means Strongly Agree

Table (3) S1: Classic methods of teaching are no longer attractive in EFL teaching and learning.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SDA	2	4.0	4.0
	DS	8	16.0	16.0
	N	8	16.0	16.0
	A	20	40.0	40.0
	SA	12	24.0	24.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0

As it can be seen from table (3) a majority of respondents (40.0%) agree and (24.0%) strongly agree that classic teaching methods are less attractive in their classes while few sample are strongly disagree (4.0%) and (16.0%) disagree. Meanwhile, (16.0%) of respondents are not sure about this statement. Consequently, this large rate of acceptance reflects the unpopularity of the above statement among teachers (subjects of research paper).

Table (4) S2: Critical thinking skills as an innovative method enable EFL learners to evaluate the learning process.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SDA	9	18.0	18.0	18.0
DS	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
N	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
A	16	32.0	32.0	32.0
SA	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

As the table (4) displays a majority of respondents (32.0%) agree upon the above statement while few respondents (4.0%) disagree and so (4.0%) not sure. A number of respondents strongly disagree with this statement (18.0%).

Table (5) S3: There is mutual relationship between the learners critical thinking level and language learning taxonomy

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SDA	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
DS	12	35.0	24.0	24.0
N	12	24.0	24.0	24.0
A	12	24.0	24.0	24.0
SA	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

As it is presented in table (5) that (24.0%) of respondents agree, (24.0%) disagree and (24.0%) not sure upon the above statement. Meanwhile, (12.0%) strongly disagree and (16.0%) strongly agree. However, these equal percentages of the three scales indicate that the above statement is controversial for the teachers.

Table (6) S4: I have personal interest to develop my teaching performance by adopting critical thinking under administration facilitations.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
N	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
A	32	64.0	64.0	64.0
SA	8	16.0	16.0	16.00
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

As it can be seen from the above table (6) a large percent of the sample (64.0%) agree and (16.0%) strongly agree that administration support is needed to guarantee in-service teachers professional development. However, (20.0%) of respondents are not sure about the above statement.

Table (7) S5: Critical thinking skills guarantee the notion of learner-centeredness.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SDA	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
DS	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
N	12	24.0	24.0	24.0
A	19	38.0	38.0	38.0
SA	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

From the table above (7) most of respondents (38.0%) agree that the success of learner-centeredness notion would be affected by learners' critical thinking level while few respondents are not sure (24.0%) and other respondents disagree with this statement (12.0%).

Table (8) S6: Critical thinking skills reinforce the notion of learners' ability of problem solving.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SDA	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
DS	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
N	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
A	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
SA	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

As the table (8) presents a majority of respondents (26.0%) agree upon the above statement while few respondents are not sure (14.0%) and large number of respondents disagree with this statement (30.0%).

Table (9) S7: The impact of critical thinking level would appear in learners' self-rating of developing cognitive learning.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SDA	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
DS	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
N	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
A	25	50.0	50.0	50.0
SA	11	22.0	22.0	22.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

The table (9) manifests that a number of respondents (50.0%) agree upon **critical thinking level would appear in learners' self-rating of developing cognitive learning**. While few respondents are not sure (20.0%) and other respondents disagree with this statement (6.0%).

Table (10) S8: The more learner critical thinker is a key to better learning out comes.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SDA	11	22.0	22.0	22.0
DS	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
N	11	22.0	22.0	22.0
A	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
SA	25	25.0	25.0	25.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

The table above (10) shows that the majority of respondents (50.0%) strongly agree that **the more learner critical thinker is a key to better learning out comes.** while few respondents are not sure (22.0%) and likely same percent (22.0%) strongly disagree. However, other respondents are agree with this statement (2.0%).

Section Three

Teachers' Views on Critical Thinking Skills Training Program

Table (11) S9: Collective methods of teaching are attractive in EFL teaching and learning.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
N	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
A	20	40.0	40.0	40.0
SA	27	54.0	54.0	54.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

The table (11) presents that extremely large percent of the respondents (54.0%) strongly agree and (40.0%) agree that collective methods of teaching are attractive in EFL teaching and learning. (6.0%) of respondents are not sure of this statement.

Table (12) S10: I believe, workshops about incorporating critical thinking are necessary in EFL teaching development.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
DS	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
N	6	12.0	12.0	22.0
A	19	38.0	38.0	38.0
SA	20	40.0	40.0	40.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

As it can be seen from the table (12), majority of sample (40.0%) strongly agree and agree that workshops about incorporating critical thinking are necessary in EFL teaching development. Few respondents (10.0%) disagree whereas (12.0%) are not sure.

Table (13) S11: Seminars (webinar) about the importance of high level of thinking are required to emphasize the success of EFL teaching of language skills.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
DA	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
A	18	36.0	36.0	36.0
SA	22	44.0	44.0	44.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

The table above (13) displays that a big percentage of the respondents (44.0%) strongly agree and (36.0%) agree. While few respondents (20.0%) of respondents disagree upon the above statement. Thus, the overwhelming respondents (80%) agreed that **seminars (webinar) about the importance of high level of thinking are required to emphasize the success of EFL teaching of language skills.**

Table (14) S12: Critical thinking skills should be part of teachers' education.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid SDA	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
DS	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
N	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
A	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
SA	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

As it can be seen in the table (14) a number of subjects reach (26.0%) agree upon the above statement while few respondents are not sure (14.0%) and the largest number disagree with this statement (30.0%). Therefore, it seems to be that PYP learners are unable to draw distinction between L1 and L2 past tense system.

Table (15) S13: Critical thinking skills training program implementation in EFL setting would generate professional teaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid N	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
A	32	64.0	64.0	64.0
SA	8	16.0	16.0	16.00
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

As it can be seen from the above table (15) the biggest percent of the sample (64.0%) agree and (16.0%) strongly agree that training program related to critical thinking skills implementation would generate professional teaching in EFL setting. Meanwhile (20.0%) of respondents are not sure of this statement.

Table (16) S14: A well trained in-service teacher of adopting critical thinking would improve learners' language skills.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid SDA	9	18.0	18.0	18.0
DS	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
N	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
A	16	32.0	32.0	32.0
SA	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table (16) displays a majority of subjects (32.0%) agree upon the above statement while few subjects (4.0%) disagree and so (4.0%) not sure. A big number of them strongly disagree with this statement (18.0%).

Table (17) S15: There is reciprocal relation between critical thinking skills and communicative approaches.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid SDA	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
DS	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
N	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
A	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
SA	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

As the table (17) presents a majority of respondents (26.0%) agree upon the above statement while few respondents are not sure (14.0%) and large number of respondents disagree with this statement (30.0%).

Table (18) S16: There is a relation between critical thinking and the creation of an interactive framework for language learning.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SDA	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
DS	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
N	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
A	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
SA	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

The table (18) above manifests that the equal percent of sample (30.0%) agree and disagree upon the relation between critical thinking and the creation of an interactive framework for language learning. and also equal percentage (6.0%) of respondents are not sure and strongly disagree upon the above statement. Therefore, it is true to say that this statement can be considered controversial.

REPORT DISCUSSION

The aim of my research paper was to provide learners with opportunities to enjoy using the English language for functional and creative purposes, demonstrating confidence to communicate in a variety of situations for different purposes. Furthermore, it enables them to understand and appreciate the importance of English as an international language of communication and one that is continuously evolving. It is an attempt to develop intercultural competencies and promote critical thinking skills.

Through this paper, we have explored the role of instructional critical thinking skills training in improving teaching practices in terms of Sudanese EFL teachers' views. The results of the research paper revealed that such training sessions would positively affect most of teachers (subject of the research paper) and their learners in exchange. As for in-service teachers, when enrolled in this program, they would perform their job efficiently. And likewise, the learners would not only be mere language learners, but rather observers of their own language progress through achieving different tasks properly.

The findings indicated that innovative methods of EFL teaching are prerequisite among the majority of Sudanese EFL teachers. Based on (40.0%) of teachers' opinions as in table (2), this is due to the effectiveness of the innovative methods of EFL teaching and the less popularity of the classic ones. However, there exist challenges on the way to fulfill teachers' potentialities of having up to date teaching environment. Whereas, only (24.0%) of teachers support the classic teaching methods. Perhaps, such teaching trends may not be time-consuming, and they are easy to conduct in terms of organization and material production. It is noteworthy to state that the majority of teachers (64.0%) and (50.0%) strongly confirmed the necessity of critical thinking training program. Thus, they would be ready to incorporate this concept with any teaching practices of language skills. (32.0%) of teachers agreed that critical thinking skills as an innovative method enable EFL learners to evaluate the learning process and so strongly agreed with (18.0%).

Based on the research paper findings, critical thinking skills can be considered as one of the factors that instill language learning process. Last but not least, we can state that Sudanese EFL

teachers possess positive attitudes towards undertaking training programs related to the implementation of critical thinking skills in EFL classes. The findings of this research paper can be applied in Sudanese universities or any similar teaching environment. In accordance with the findings, the researcher recommended some points for recovery.

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APPENDIX A

University of Medical Sciences and Technology (UMST) English Language Department

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Colleague,

The below questionnaire will take few minutes to complete. Thank you for your time and effort in helping to make this work possible. I am currently doing a research paper in applied linguistics which requires the collection of valuable data from my esteemed colleagues. I am looking at EFL teachers' views and perception of their teaching practice.

I would be very grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and submit or hand it back to me. Although I have asked you to provide your name (optional) on the questionnaire and even though, this data will be kept confidential and will only be used for study purposes.

Please provide your answers sincerely and do not leave anything unanswered. Again your help is so much appreciated.

Dr. Zeinab Hassoun

PAPER TITLE:

The Role of Instructional Critical Thinking Skills Training Programs on Improving Teaching Practicability: EFL Teachers Perspectives

Section1: Respondents' Profile

Please read each question carefully and circle or write your answer.

1. Name: (optional)	
2. Qualifications	PhD () MA () BA () Other
3. Years of Experience	1-5 () 6-10 () 11-15 () 16-20 () 21-more ()

Section 2. Teachers' Views on the Role of Critical Thinking Skills in EFL Context

Please read each statement carefully and circle a number from 1 to 5 that mostly matches your level of agreement.

Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5

No	The statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	Critical thinking skills is hard to be applicable in EFL pedagogy.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Critical thinking skills as an innovative method enable EFL learners to evaluate the learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
3	There is mutual relationship between the learners critical thinking level and language learning taxonomy.					
4	I have personal interest to develop my teaching performance by adopting critical thinking under administration facilitations..					
5	Critical thinking skills guarantee the notion of learner-centeredness.					
6	Critical thinking skills reinforce the notion of learners' ability of problem solving.					
7	The effect of critical thinking level would appear in learners' self-rating of developing cognitive learning..					
8	The more learner critical thinker is a key to better learning out comes.					

Section 3. Teachers' Views on Critical Thinking Skills Training Program

9	Classic methods of teaching are no longer attractive in EFL teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I believe, workshops about incorporating critical thinking are necessary in EFL teaching development. .	1	2	3	4	5
11	Seminars (webinar) about the importance of high level of thinking are required to emphasize the success of EFL teaching of language skills.					
12	Critical thinking skills should be part of teachers' education.					
13	Critical thinking skills training program implementation in EFL setting would generate professional teaching.					
14	A well trained in-service teacher of adopting critical thinking would improve learners' language skills.					
15	There is reciprocal relation between critical thinking skills and communicative approaches.					
16	There is a relation between critical thinking level and the creation of an interactive framework for language learning.					

If you have any inquiries about the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact me on z.hassoun@hotmail.com. Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. To reiterate, this data will be treated confidentially, will only be used for study purposes and a pseudo-name will be used in place of your name.