

Exploring Qualitatively Teachers' Views Of Critical Thinking Teaching: English Language And Literature Department At Setif 2 University, Algeria

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Abstract

The present qualitative exploration aims at investigating how English as a Foreign Language teachers view critical thinking teaching. The inquiry implemented forty to sixty minutes' individual discussions held in 2014-2015 for a month with sixteen teachers representing the half of the whole population teaching Language Science, and Civilization-Literature branches at the English Language and Literature Department at Setif 2 University, ALGERIA. These in-depth discussions revealed that teachers' views of critical thinking teaching were not only heterogeneous, but distorted, and mainly teacher-centered, and this is due to a number of reasons that are highlighted in this research work. Worth noting that this investigation has certain limitations, but its conclusions remain significantly interesting, and even helpful in proceeding to generate hypotheses that could be tested to larger populations, and this is through future experimental researches .

Keywords: Critical thinking teaching, English as a Foreign Language, views.

1.1.Statement of the Problem

In accordance with the above-mentioned question, the present research paper reports on a small scale, an attemptive qualitative investigation conducted in 2014-2015. The inquiry implemented forty to sixty minutes' individual discussions held for a month with sixteen teachers representing the half of the whole population teaching Language Science, and Civilization-Literature branches at the English Language and Literature Department at Setif 2 University. These into-depth discussions revealed interesting details on the problematic of how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers view critical thinking teaching.

1.2. Research Aim

The present inquiry explored the problematic of how EFL teachers view critical thinking teaching. Specifically, this work investigated EFL teachers' viewing toward critical thinking teaching conceptualization, approaches, and contextual importance with reference to the existing challenges and their potential solutions.

1.3.Research Questions

To insight the viewing of the EFL teachers toward critical thinking teaching, one main research question was posed: "how do EFL teachers view critical thinking teaching?". The latter generated sub-questions, like:

I.Introduction

The current decade has witnessed a universal increasing pressure on the different educational institutions and universities, and this is to ensure the gain of : critical thinking, its learning, and mainly teaching as being all regarded essential for both teachers same as learners. However, embracing such ideas require solid bases including at first teachers' views. For instance, at the Algerian educational tertiary level, there is an issue with the research base on how teachers view critical thinking teaching. The Algerian higher education literature on critical thinking teaching is constructed around the fundamental assumption that teachers, same as academicians, and learners as well have certain enthusiasm toward critical thinking, its learning, and mainly teaching ; but if it were the case, then why wouldn't they concretize their conceptualizations? Like Dali Youcef's work (2023), conducted Algerian researches on this question have resulted in the fact that in order to know about the critical thinking teaching experience in the Algerian higher education context, it is essential at first to explore how Algerian higher education teachers view critical thinking teaching, and this is to know about the teaching experiences, and solve the existant misunderstandings, ambiguities, and often noisy debates limiting the academic-intellectual achievements.

ego/socio-centrism. In other words, a well educated critical thinker is someone who analyses, and evaluates his thinking with the care to improve it (Paul & Elder, 2014).

1.6. Critical Thinking Teaching Approaches

Defining critical thinking, and recognizing critical thinkers' characteristics are not enough to experience critical thinking teaching. For Ennis (2011), in any teaching situation for which critical thinking is the ultimate objective, in which the content of critical thinking is taught, critical thinking is whether infused with explicit principles; that is to say critical thinking is taught explicitly with the course content, or immersed with implicit principles, i.e. taught implicitly, or critical thinking is taught eclectically with the mixture of all or some of these approaches.

According to Ruggiero (2012), critical thinking teaching is a classroom process that stands for thinking about thinking in a challenging learning environment. The environment where teachers engage actively their learners which keep them principal actors, questioners, debators, i.e. thinkers (as cited in Murawski, 2014).

1.7. Critical Thinking Teaching Importance, Challenges, and Solutions

According to Mebarkia (2019), world's numerical advancements, information, and communication technology, artificial intelligence, the socio-economic challenges, etc. all in all have made critical thinking more indispensable than ever before, whether for the academic or professional careers of both teachers same as learners. Due to which, the importance of critical thinking teaching in any discipline is on one side improving teachers' professionalism, and on the other side improving learners' thinking skills to succeed their future careers (Mebarkia & Keskes, 2019; Mebarkia, 2019 & Dali Youcef, 2023).

Mebarkia and Keskes (2019) like many other researchers think that teaching critical thinking is not an easy task, and this is because of a number of factors, including: teachers' misconceptions of critical thinking, unawareness and no-interest in, lack of knowledge and training, teacher-centeredness, rote learning or the so-called 'drill-practice' learning, etc. which in all deprive teachers from experiencing critical thinking teaching. Additionally to that, there are other factors which are principally related to the educational management, for example : time limits, class-size, non adjusted frameworks as being conceived for the exams, i.e. elaborated for the purpose to 'teach

- How do EFL teachers view critical thinking teaching as a concept?
- How do EFL teachers view critical thinking teaching in terms of approaches?
- How do EFL teachers view critical thinking teaching importance, challenges, and solutions?

Answering these questions would provide insights and perspectives on the cultivation of critical thinking teaching within the EFL higher education in Algeria.

1.4. Research Significance

The current inquiry could be of great help for not only Languages, but Humanities, Social Sciences, and even Exact Sciences' researchers same as teachers ; those who are mainly interested in critical thinking teaching at different educational levels. To illustrate, the inquiry's findings could be beneficial in proceeding to raise teachers' awareness toward the urgent need to embrace the idea of critical thinking teaching, elaborate a 'sur-mesure' Algerian framework to teach critical thinking, as well as encourage to experience critical thinking teaching to promote the EFL learning.

1.5. Critical Thinking and Critical Thinkers

Bloom's identification of six pyramidal levels of cognitive abilities launched principally the concept of critical thinking. In other words, the concept is related to first, the level of knowing or retaining and recalling information, second, the level of understanding or linking orderly the memorised information, third, the level of using the comprehended information accordingly with the context's norms, fourth, the level of deconstructing the whole's parts by comparing and contrasting them to reach the functionalities, fifth, the level of restructuring the whole of parts, sixth, the level of judging the re-assembled whole to value it (1956). These were Bloom's hierarchical criteria of what critical thinking is.

As far as critical thinkers' criteria are concerned, Ennis (2011) considers the right critical thinker as characterised by being careful about the others same as one's self beliefs to get them correct for clear and honest positions on the basis of clarification, good judgement, and wise inference. Additionally, Paul and Elder (2014) consider someone as being a critical thinker if he is self-directed, disciplined, monitored, corrective, effective communicator, problem-solver, and mainly committed to overcoming his native

The inquiry's unrecorded oral data were noted during the forty to sixty minutes' individual discussions. The timing, time schedules, and duration of the in-depth discussions varied according to the respondents' availability and convenience.

For further information on the target sample in terms of : gender, age, teaching qualifications, and EFL teaching experience, an appendix is available at the end of the present work. The appendix is of four self-made tables within which the EFL teachers' background data were processed through the twenty-third version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The investigation's methodology was modeled on 'how critical thinking teaching is viewed by EFL teachers', involving the analysis of the noted unrecorded oral data on the basis of a coded-themed deduction which stands for which is the thesis of : concept of critical thinking teaching, its approaches, importance, challenges, and solutions.

II.2. Research Delimitations

The present inquiry is delineated in its context, variables, and methodology. First, this 2014-2015 research covered only the half of the EFL teachers at the English Language and Literature Department at only Setif2 University as one of the relatively East state-owned Algerian Universities. Thus, teachers at other Departments, Universities, or even different private or governmental educational institutions were not taken into consideration. Second, the investigation targeted only EFL teachers' views of critical thinking teaching. Third, the inquiry was conducted solely qualitatively through only individual discussions held with conveniently sampled teachers.

II.3. Research Limitations

The limitations recognized during the present investigation are listed below, for example:

- Teachers' convenience and availability: due to time limits, certain teachers were not punctual, whereas others kept postponing the discussions. As a matter of fact, the discussions' time schedules were most of the time overlapped. The solution to this was planning at teachers' convenience individual discussions.
- Teachers' mentality, comprehension, cooperation and collaboration: certain teachers were centre-minded, biased and had impractical aptitude of expression, hesitation, lack of argumentation, negotiation's problem, etc. To remedy such issues, individual

to test' (Mebarkia & Keskes, 2019 & Mebarkia,2019).

This hindering set of factors could be considered as challenging more than causing hinderance as it can be solved. Solutions are at first in teachers' open-mindness to critical thinking teaching as an alternative to teacher-centeredness (Karen & Thoms,1998-99). Second, in motivation, enthusiasm, and readiness to afford interest, time, and efforts to experience critical thinking teaching (Mebarkia,2019). Third, critical thinking is possibly teachable in the appropriate educational context where time-schedules, class-size, teaching frameworks are managed and adjusted according to teachers' willingness toward critical thinking teaching (Mebarkia,2019 & Dali Youcef,2023).

II. Research Methodology

The present research work is a qualitative inquiry that was conducted in 2014-2015 for a month with sixteen teachers as the target sample, representing the half of the whole population teaching Language Science, and Civilization-Literature branches at the English Language and Literature Department at Setif2 University, ALGERIA.

II.1. Setting and Sample

It has to be noted that the time-place settings were purposefully targeted, whereas the target sample was conveniently sampled due to the followings :

- The inquiry's academic year 2014-2015 was a special year because of Paul and Elder's publication under the title of 'Critical Thinking : Concepts and Tools'. Paul and Elder'work remains one of the most remarkable chefs-d'œuvre in the universal literature of critical thinking. This master piece elicited, to a great extent, the conceptualization of the present work's investigation on EFL teachers' viewing toward critical thinking teaching.
- Lack of qualitative explorations' base on EFL teachers' views on critical thinking teaching at the English Language and Literature Department at Setif2 University ;
- EFL Teachers' convenience and availability resulted in sixteen EFL teachers, representing the half of the population instead of the whole;
- EFL Teachers' mentality, i.e. mindness state, comprehension, cooperation and collaboration.

consuming, exhausting, and possibly not accountant in the Algerian education of English as a Foreign Language because of a large set of unfavorable conditions due to which critical thinking teaching is viewed as a mirage which remains unreachable, i.e. undoable, or unteachable.

The question ‘How do EFL teachers view critical thinking teaching in terms of approaches?’ revealed interesting responses of the sampled teachers. To illustrate, some sampled EFL teachers questioned the conceptualization of the idea to teach critical thinking as ‘how could it be possible to teach, and even assess something which couldn’t simply be defined?’. Others doubted the implementation of the idea in inadequate teaching, and classroom management conditions, like: absence of professional trainings on critical thinking teaching, lack of the adequate teaching frameworks, ignorance of the critical thinking teaching process’s infusion-immersion-mixture approaches, time limits, large size classes, etc. Those teachers could not even grasp the idea of teaching critical thinking, and expressed their disinclination to experience it. Another category recognized the idea, and even its implementation; but claimed unready to give up the teacher-centeredness doctrinal approach to adhere to critical thinking teaching approach; because this would mean leaving their comfort zone. Another category representing the enthusiastic teachers showed optimism and even readiness to embrace the doctrine of critical thinking teaching, and adopt its approaches; as they were still novice and wanted to try curiously critical thinking teaching as being innovatively new for them. However, a part among this optimistic category showed a certain amount of prudence by conditioning their adhesion; as they asked for ‘knowing more about this doctrine’, ‘how to adapt it’, and mainly ‘getting trained on it’. Additionally, one another part among these asked for funding a solid, pragmatic, practical, and most importantly mentality and mental viewing base for the critical thinking teaching experience before even launching it; because they thought that the problem is not with the conceptualization of the idea nor its implementation, but with EFL teachers themselves and their mentality viewing as being teacher centered, and mainly good optimizers of the idea of ‘teach to test’.

The question ‘How do EFL teachers view critical thinking teaching importance, challenges and solutions?’ In general, EFL teachers could not witness against the world’s recognition of critical thinking teaching importance. However, they acknowledged consensually the potential set of challenges facing the experience of critical thinking teaching, including: EFL teachers’ prior

discussions were opted instead of the pair or even focus-group discussions.

- Teachers’ data: the investigation’s oral data were not unfortunately recorded; because the respondents did not permit it. They were skeptical toward taking records of the discussions. To solve the case, the respondents were each time reassured about preserving their identities’ anonymity, oral data words, and confidentiality rights as well.

In accordance with the up-mentioned limitations, the current investigations’ data remain private, and mainly not replicable.

II.4. Ethical Considerations

In the present work, ethical considerations were at the centre, and this was to avoid any possible harmful misconduct to the research participants, for instance the research respondents were assured of the followings :

- The research complied with their conditions, requirements, and requests. The inquiry complied as already required, for example, with the condition of holding unrecorded individual discussions instead of pair or focus-group ones;
- The research nature as well as aim ;
- The voluntary participation ;
- The withdrawal rights at any time and without anticipated penalties ;
- The possibility to decline to answer any question;
- The fair interpretation of their responses.

Worth to note that the research respondents were promised to preserve their identities’ anonymity, oral data words, and confidentiality rights as well.

III. Results and Discussions

According to Meliani (2012), Algerian higher education teachers’ views of how to teach derive from their own interpretations rather than from the pedagogic theories, which creates a context full of misunderstandings, ambiguities, and limitations to the academic-intellectual achievements, for instance:

The question ‘How do EFL teachers view critical thinking teaching as a concept?’ gauged EFL teachers’ conceptualization of critical thinking teaching as being a complex teaching process of higher-order thinking skills, like: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. That is to say, for the EFL teachers, the process is demanding, time-

III.2. Pedagogical Implications

After discussing the current investigation's findings, it has been deduced that certain measures, and principally priorities need to be considered by University EFL teachers.

First, University EFL teachers need a definite, realistic, pragmatic, objective, representative, and mainly alternative teaching mentality viewing that would practically engage them in reviewing their teaching practicalities by proceeding to professional trainings, innovative frameworks' designs, and classroom management recoveries, etc.

Second, University EFL teachers need to understand that being enthusiastic toward innovative teaching doctrines is not enough. They need to understand that their embraced doctrine does not any more cope with the present day worldwide changes, Algerian context's challenges, Algerian higher educational expectations. Teachers need to remedy their syndromes of 'teacher-centeredness', 'teach to test', 'success depends on tests', etc.

Third, University EFL teachers need to reason gradually the substitution of teacher-centeredness ; and this is by opening up their viewing to the worldwide experience of critical thinking teaching. A teaching that could contribute significantly to the promotion of the EFL education in terms of knowledge, language skills and dispositions, teaching-learning methodologies, strategies, frame-works and training practices, and assessing-testing evaluations, feedback and follow-up, professionalism, etc.

In the end, worth to mention that the Algerian higher education needs not only teachers' mentality refreshments, urgent revisions, as well as reforms of the current curriculum, but mainly encouragement and concrete actions to support teachers' enthusiasm.

III.3. Suggestions for Further Research

The present research explored EFL teachers' views of critical thinking teaching, but further inquiries could identify the role, link, or effect of critical thinking teaching whether in/with/on the EFL teachers' performance, EFL learning, or both. To illustrate:

- As this work is qualitative, further qualitative exploratory researches on the Algerian visualization toward critical thinking teaching could be feasible.

knowledge, biases, teacher-centeredness mentality, dispossession of adequate teaching frameworks, lack of training, 'teach to test' syndrome, time constraint, large size classes, etc. Regarding the possibility to face these challenges, EFL teachers' views were heterogeneous, and distorted. Some approved the impossibility to remedy any of the challenges, whereas others disproved optimistically this impossibility as they believed in the experience. However, other optimistic EFL teachers reasoned prudently the possible balance between the challenges and their solutions. For them, the one important vital solution was to teacher-centeredness challenge. These EFL teachers considered teacher-centeredness as not only a traditional approach but an inherited pedagogical mentality that was implicitly dominating not only the classroom pedagogical practices, but teachers-learners mindness. Thus, experiencing the implementation of critical thinking teaching would require the gradual eradication of teacher-centeredness through open-mindedness, teacher-learner interactionism, learner centeredness, classroom community, and citizenship awareness.

On the basis of the discussions' analysis and interpretations, it can be deduced that the EFL teachers' viewing is caught between domination of challenging contextual higher education realities, teacher-centeredness, and enthusiasm toward critical thinking teaching which in its totality assents to Meliani's attitude toward Algerian higher education teachers' distortions (2012). Moreover, the responses' interpretations revealed that the novicity of EFL teachers, and that their views lacked maturation of and consensus on the fundamentals of critical thinking teaching.

Worth to note that this ascertainment disagreed with Dali Yousef's findings (2023) whose research outcomes were mostly promising witnessing Oran's EFL teachers' open-mindedness toward critical thinking teaching and its potential in the EFL education. To mention that the comparison between this 2014-2015 inquiry's findings and Dali Yousef ones of 2023 is contrasted probably because of the setting's divergence in terms of time and place, teachers' background, qualification, experience, and teaching mentality.

In brief, the current discussion's resolution is in pointing qualitatively out EFL teachers' views of critical thinking teaching, and the importance of considering this viewing in reference to the intellectual achievements, and mainly to the EFL teaching-learning promotion.

reforms of the current curriculum to support teachers' keenness to refresh their mentalities and practices. Worth noting that this research has certain limitations, but its conclusions remain significantly interesting, and even helpful in proceeding to generate hypotheses that could be tested to larger populations, and this is through future experimental researches.

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- For probing the existence of any link between critical thinking teaching and the EFL teaching-learning, correlational researches would be of great help.
- Generate hypothesis-researches on the potential effect of critical thinking teaching on teachers' performance, or learners' learning that could be tested to/with larger populations through future true, or even quasi-experimental researches are highly recommended.

Worth noting that conducting triangulation of designs through qualitative and quantitative data collection means could be efficiently practical at other Algerian Departments, Faculties, Universities' settings and levels, whether governmental, private, early childhood, primary, middle, secondary, or tertiary educational.

IV.Conclusion

The present inquiry addressed qualitatively the question of how English as a Foreign Language teachers view critical thinking teaching in terms of: concept and characteristics, teaching approaches, importance, challenges and solutions. The investigation implemented forty to sixty minutes' individual discussions held in 2014-2015 for a month with sixteen teachers sampled conveniently, representing the half of the whole population teaching the Language Science, and Civilization-Literature branches at the English Language and Literature Department at Setif 2 University, ALGERIA. After discussing by analyzing, and interpreting the unrecorded oral data of the in-depth discussions, it was deduced that teachers' views of critical thinking teaching were not only heterogeneous, but distorted, and mainly teacher-centered, and this is due to teachers' teaching mentalities, biases, lack of interest and demotivation, prior knowledge, novicity, implementation of inadequate and only traditional approaches, absence of critical thinking teaching frameworks as well as trainings adapted for the English as a Foreign Language higher education, classroom ill-management, 'teach to test' syndrome, etc. Though certain teachers showed their enthusiasm toward critical thinking teaching, yet this remains unsubstantial; teachers need to take actions that would speak louder than their enthusiasm. Besides this, the Algerian higher education needs urgent revisions, and mainly

Appendices: This part was exploited in the discussion

Table 1. Teachers' Gender Distribution

	Frequency	Percent
Female	14	87,5
Male	2	12,5
Total	16	100,0

Source: The table is Self-made. The SPSS 23rd version was used for the statistical data.

Table 2. Teachers' Age Distribution

	Frequency	Percent
25-35	14	87,5
35-above	2	12,5
Total	16	100,0

Source: The table is Self-made. The SPSS 23rd version was used for the statistical data.

Table 3. Teachers' Qualification

	Frequency	Percent
BA	15	93,8
MA (Magister)	1	6,3
Total	16	100,0

Source: The table is Self-made. The SPSS 23rd version was used for the statistical data.

Table 4. Teacher's Experience in Teaching English as Foreign Language

	Frequency	Percent
1-5years	10	62,5
5-10years	6	37,5
Total	16	100,0

Source: The table is Self-made. The SPSS 23rd version was used for the statistical data.