Assessing Teachers' Perceptions of Using Criticality-Enhancing English Language Materials inside EFL Classes

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Abstract

Explicit teaching may provide great opportunities for critical thinking to flourish. This paper examines the degree to which the need for developing such a critical view of language learning among English as Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) teachers is rigorously felt and is taken into consideration. To this end, a researcher-made inventory, namely *Criticality-oriented English Teaching Perceptions Inventory (CEPTI)*, was distributed among 150 EFL teachers. The results of the questionnaire and follow-up face-to-face interviews indicated that teachers were still not ready for a change towards explicit teaching of criticality-oriented skills inside the English language classes. Subsequent to assessing teachers' perceptions, Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, Form A (WGCTA-FA) was given to a total number of 100 EFL learners. Findings revealed that learners did not score high on the WGCTA. The pedagogical implications of the study are discussed.

Keywords: critical thinking instruction; CEPTI; WGCTA-FA

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1. Introduction

Critical thinking has received a considerable degree of interest from philosophers, psychologists, and educationists, and has accordingly been conceptualized in many ways. Perhaps the most cited characterization of critical thinking was provided in 1990 by the American Philosophical Association which refers to critical thinking as "the 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 was based." (American Philosophical Association, 1990)

Historically, Dewey (1933) initially refers to critical thinking as 'reflective thinking', and recommends that it should be considered one of the aims of education. In 1962, Ennis provided one of the first definitions of critical thinking as finding the meaning of a statement and deciding whether to accept or reject it (Kazanci, 1989). A similar, oft-cited, definition of critical thinking is the one used by Ennis (1987), who conceives of critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 10). In Ennis' definition, critical thinking encompasses such abilities as formulating hypotheses, alternative ways of viewing a problem, questions, possible solutions, and plans for investigating something. Similarly, Norris (1985) construes critical thinking as "deciding rationally what to or what not to believe" (p. 40). For these educationists, critical thinking pertains to being reflective while making decisions to believe something or do something. A few years later, Norris and Ennis (1990) elaborated on their individual definitions and consequently built up the notion of critical thinking on the basis of logical thinking by stating that critical thinking involves a process of decision making that requires logical and reflective thinking on what to do or what to believe.

In another vein of argument, Paul and Elder (2002) see critical thinking as an intellectually disciplined process of ensuring that one uses the best thinking one is capable of any set of circumstances. This definition primarily points to the idea that critical thinking must be a learned skill. Secondly, it construes critical thinking as a habit of mind (i.e. an intellectual virtue) of being likely to use and accept the results of these reasoning skills. That is to say, granted that critical thinking is seen as a set of intellectual virtues possessed by good thinkers, it may not encompass thoughtless utilization of a set of logical principles 'as an exercise' (Mulnix, 2012). Hence, through evaluating something on the basis of a set of criteria, rules or standards, one transcends the realm of direct experience into the realm of norms and prescriptions. According to this view, a critical thinker is a person who is prepared to make reasoned judgments about the quality of what he has seen, heard or thought about.

Another cohort of educationists tends to conceive of critical thinking as skepticism. For example, McPeck (1981) maintains that the crux of critical thinking relates to "the propensity and skill to engage in an activity with reflective skepticism" (p. 8). In much the same way, Sofo (2004) suggests that thinking critically is about doubting and stopping to reconsider what we normally take for granted. Sofo sees critical thinkers as those individuals who are not only likely to assess their habits to promote the way they do things, but also are open-minded and considerate of other perspectives. Nonetheless, this kind of conceptualization of critical thinking seems to leave out the productive or constructive aspect of this skill which is ultimately of greater significance. The constructive dimension of critical thinking well amounts in the statements by Ennis (1990) and Lipman (1988) who have asserted, respectively, that critical thinking revolves around belief or action, and that it facilitates the making of judgments. What they both agree upon is that critical thinking is that kind of goal-oriented thinking which enhances our cognitive relationship with the world.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Critical Thinking

Whereas the above-mentioned perspectives consider critical thinking in terms of reflection-based decisions, utilization of criteria and standards, and skepticism, still others contend that critical thinking, like communication, is also about being appropriate. In view of this, the renowned philosopher Siegel (1988) contends that a critical thinker is the one who is "appropriately moved by reasons: she has a propensity and disposition to believe and act in accordance with reasons; she has the ability properly to assess the force of reasons in the many contexts in which reasons play a role" (p. 23). Making reference to the Australian philosopher John Passmore, McPeck (1981) states that merely forming a habit of questioning is not a reliable indicator that a person has learned to be critical; rather, he contends that to be critical, a person needs to think critically in action. It is clear that Siegel, Passmore, and McPeck consensually agree that, for critical thinking to take place, a person's thinking power has to be exploited in an appropriate manner.

Critical thinking, therefore, is not necessarily about, or limited to, conflicting or looking for negative critics (Kulahci, 1995); rather, it needs logical thinking to provide meaningful associations among independent variables. Such an assertion is most in line with Piaget's notion of 'logical thinking' which refers to the mental procedures that one uses when an unknown situation and/or problem arises (Karplus, 1977). Putting all this together, the development of this skill is said to help individuals utilize their cognitive operations to overcome the difficulties and vicissitudes encountered in their lives and also to make meaningful generalizations and deductions from these experiences (Korkmaz, 2002).

The term 'critical thinking' began to emerge in L2 teaching literature in the 1990s (Day, 2003). Unlike first language contexts, communication in an L2 requires taking more considerations into account, which is quite demanding for most non-native speakers. Given a larger number of linguistic and rhetorical conventions to consider in L2 contexts, communication can be very challenging for learners in that they are expected to use linguistic conventions that vary from those of their mother tongue to make meanings that suit their purposes, situations, and contexts (Connor, 1984; Maier, 1992; Soter, 1985). Therefore, considering the fact that there are more issues to be taken into account in L2 learning (in comparison to L1 learning contexts), for the purpose of becoming effective communicators of English as a global language, L2 learners need to be critical language learners and users. In effect, in L2 teaching contexts, there is a crucial need for teachers to help learners become critical in their language learning as well as in their language use.

Nonetheless, the consideration of the dimensions of critical thinking in language learning could possibly date back to the late 1970s when the communicative language teaching approach began to emerge within the field of English language teaching. Critical thinking in the English teaching literature may have appeared from the fact that there are now many international learners studying in English speaking countries. These learners require not only a high degree of language proficiency, but also they need to adapt their discourse style to suit their new situations and cultural contexts (Briggs, 1999; Wilson, 1998). In effect, they need to employ their critical thinking abilities in new and different ways (Thompson, 2002).

However, throughout the process of improving their L2 competency, learners are confronted with enormous challenges in practicing critical thinking in L2. From a sociocultural viewpoint, when learners verbalize their thoughts in L2, either in the spoken or written form, they not only translate some of their thoughts from L1 to L2, but also they redefine their identities (Lantolf, 1993; Kramsch & Lam, 1999). As Thadphoothon (2005) points out, "expressing one's critical thinking in L2 may require that one adjust one's ways of saying things. In short, it requires both lexico-grammatical competence and socio-cultural competence, which is in accordance with the aims of CLT" (p. 32). The teaching of English for the purpose of communication necessarily encompasses many factors of critical thinking given that it emphasizes both form and meaning. In view of this, the model of communicative language teaching proposed by Jacobs and Farrell (2003) includes a number of interdependent aspects among which are the social nature of learning and thinking skills.

Put another way, a communicative language learning environment can provide an effective venue for learners to obtain and utilize thinking skills. Most importantly, group activities within a communicative language

teaching milieu require learners to communicate with other learners, to assist them and provide each other with constructive criticism, as well as to challenge each other's perspectives. In brief, critical thinking is an integral part of communicative language teaching. Nonetheless, in addition to the communicative approach to L2 education, two other research areas contribute to our understanding of the importance of integrating critical thinking into the process of language learning. These are metacognitive learning strategies and L2 writing research.

2.2. Factors Related to Critica Thinking
Studies in the psychology of learning have also considered issues related to critical thinking in language learning. Learners can be trained to exploit many learning strategies that are thought to be useful in the process of language learning (Chamot, 1995; Chamot & O'Malley, 1996; Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Specifically, the proper use of metacognitive learning strategies enables learners to become reflective learners. These strategies comprise three steps: (1) planning, (2) monitoring, and (3) checking outcomes (Wenden, 1985). Successful learners of language take several steps in adjusting their own learning and each step requires that learners be critical thinkers (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Therefore, poor performance on metacognitive strategies may result from lack of self-monitoring and proper planning. Conversely, those learners who use metacognitive strategies more skillfully tend to be more effective learners and good critical thinkers (Thadphoothon, 2005).

Furthermore, it is now well accepted that in an L2 learning context, the four macro skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing all require learners to perform complex tasks that necessitate the use of cognitive and metacognitive skills. As a particular case in point, L2 academic writing demands that learners also practice the promotion of their critical thinking skills, a process which has shown to be very challenging for most learners (Atkinson, 1997, 1998; Atkinson & Kaplan, 1994; Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Briggs, 1999; Pennycook, 1996; Thompson, 2002; Wilson, 1998). To take but one example, Asian international learners of English have been cited as either failing to use critical thinking or employing a variety of inappropriate styles of logic in their writing (Ballard & Clanchy, 1988).

Some researchers have maintained that, given the culture-specific nature of critical thinking, it is very difficult to get learners from some cultures to become critical thinkers in the western sense (e.g. Kramsch, 1993; Pennycook, 1996, 2001, 2004). There is a stereotypical outlook that Asian learners are not able to think critically, a view perhaps backed by the evidence of their L2 writing. However, Briggs (1999) contends that these international learners are as capable of demonstrating critical thinking as native speakers. It is simply the case that these international learners have a

rhetorical style that is different from the host culture, and that they have to learn this new style along with the new language (Carnarajah, 2002).

In view of the above, the major objective of the present study was to investigate teachers' perceptions on the inclusion of critical thinking inside L2 syllabi and whether or not they were ready for such a change. In line with the major purpose of the study, additionally, it was tried in this study to asses a sample of EFL learners studying English at private institutes in Isfahan in terms of their critical thinking abilities. To achieve the given purposes, the following questions were addressed:

1. What are teachers' perceptions towards inclusion of criticality-oriented materials inside L2 classes?
2. What are the levels of critical thinking and its subcomponents among learners of English as a foreign language in Iran?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

3.1.1 Teachers Taking the Criticality-oriented English Teaching Perceptions Inventory (CETPI)

Through availability sampling technique, the researcher selected those teachers who were accessible and willing to take part in this study. Thus, a total number of 150 Iranian English teachers who had studied or were studying at the University of Isfahan, Sheikhbahaee University, Hasht Behesht University, Ferdowsi Univerdsity of Mashhad, Islamic Azad University of Mashhad (IAUM) participated in this study, some of whom taught English in different institutes in Esfahan and Mashhad.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Participants (Teachers)

Gender	N	Major	N	Degree	N	Teaching Experience	N
Male	58	English Teaching	85	BA	27	Less than 2 years	46
Female	92	English Literature	24	MA	73	2-4 years	27
		English Translation	35	PhD	48	5-9 years	43
		English Linguistics	6			10-14 years	25
						15-19 years	3
						20 and above	6
Total							150

Teacher participants who took part in this study were BA, MA, and PhD university students or holders of English Language and Literature, English Linguistics, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), and English Translation degrees and ranged in age from 20 to 52. Moreover, they had a teaching experience in teaching English as a foreign language from less than two years to more than 20 years. The detailed information on the participants

is shown in Table 1. The questionnaire was administered to these teachers either face-to-face (print form) or via an electronic Fillable Word Document.

3.1.2 Teachers Who Took Part in Semi-Structured Interviews

Through purposive sampling, ten EFL teachers were selected for the interview session. In order to select the participants, three criteria were taken into consideration. First, they all agreed to take part in this study voluntarily. Second, they were supposed to fill out the Criticality-oriented English Teaching Perceptions Inventory (CETPI) prior to the interview session. Third, they were to have at least two terms of English teaching experience. The researcher also attempted to choose the interviewees with diverse teaching experiences. The detailed information on the participants in the interview is shown in Table 2.

3.1.3 Learners Taking Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA)

In order to investigate the extent to which EFL learners think critically, Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA) was administered to a convenient sample of 100 EFL learners in Isfahan.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Interviewees (Teachers)

No	Age	Gender	Major	Degree	English Teaching Experience
1	45	Female	English Teaching	PhD	15 years
2	27	Female	English Translation	MA	5 years
3	32	Male	English Teaching	PhD	12 years
4	31	Female	English Teaching	PhD	7 years
5	48	Female	English Teaching	PhD	12 years
6	26	Female	English Translation	MA	2 years
7	27	Male	English Teaching	MA	5 years
8	30	Female	English Teaching	MA	10 years
9	30	Female	English Teaching	PhD	10 years
10	29	Male	English Teaching	PhD	8 years

Although the test has already been translated and its reliability and validity has been estimated (cf. Faravani, 2006), to remove any ambiguity concerning the translated statements, the Persian translation of the test was given to 15 EFL learners in Isfahan. They were asked to read the Persian translation of the test and express their understanding of its items that have possibly been in danger of being misinterpreted by the target participants. Subsequently, a total number of 100 EFL learners from different public and private language institutes in Isfahan including Isfahan Oil Training Center, Jahad Daneshgahi, Pooyesh Insitute, Iran Language Institute, and Language Learning Center of the University of Isfahan were invited to take part in this study. As for the ethical considerations, oral consent was gained from all respondents and ethical confirmation was granted by their class instructors.

The researcher made an attempt to select the participants with different educational backgrounds as well as English learning experiences. Though most participants were BA (BSc) students or graduates, there were a number of participants with Diploma or postgraduate degrees. Their age ranged from 17 to 34 years old. Initially, the test was given to 110 learners. However, 10 respondents were removed from the sample because they did not answer the critical thinking test completely. Learners had different English backgrounds from one to eight years. The full characteristics of the participants are provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Distribution of Questionnaire Participants (Learners)

Gender	N	Age	N	Degree	N	Language Learning Experience	N
Male	53	Below twenties	12	Diploma	9	Less than 1 year	16
Female	47	Twenties	69	BA/BS	71	1-2 years	24
		Thirties	19	MA/MS	20	2-4 years	29
						4-6 years	21
						6-8 years	10
Total	100		100		100		100

3.2. Data Collection Methods

3.2.1 Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA) for Measuring the Critical Thinking Scores

The Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, Form A (WGCTA-FA) was used for measuring critical thinking (see Appendix A). The test encompasses five subsections, namely drawing inferences, recognizing assumptions, making deductions, interpreting evidence, and evaluating arguments, each comprising 16 items with two to five alternatives. The appraisal is not subject-specific and can be completed in 60 minutes. The test-retest reliability of the original appraisal ($r = 0.81$) has been reported by Watson and Glaser (1980), and the reliability coefficient of its Persian adaptation has been estimated by Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.85$) in Faravani (2006). A composite score for the five subscales of the test is obtained with values varying from 0 to 80. In the present study, Cronbach Alpha examined the internal consistency of the whole items as 0.82.

3.2.2 Criticality-oriented English Teaching Perceptions Inventory (CETPI)

The researcher-made questionnaire, i.e. the Criticality-oriented English Teaching Perceptions Inventory (CETPI), already assessed in terms of reliability and validity (Ghadiri, Tavakoli, and Ketabi, 2015), was used in this study (see Appendix B). The questionnaire consisted of 17 items scored based on the Likert- type scale of seven points ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree".

3.2.3 Semi-Structured Interview (for L2 Teachers)

In order to gain a thorough and detailed picture of teachers' understanding regarding incorporating criticality-enhancing teaching programs in EFL context, semi-structured interviews were carried out by ten EFL teachers who already filled out the Criticality-oriented English Teaching Perceptions Inventory. Prior to the interview, the interviewees were told that their participation would be voluntary, that they could stop the interview if the questions were inappropriate and that the researcher would notice not to disclose the data, except for the aims of the study. The interviewer did her best to make a friendly relationship with interviewees so that they could provide unreserved explanations concerning their beliefs and teaching practices. The interview questions were intended to elicit teachers' beliefs about the main objectives of an ELT class, their own definition of critical thinking and their practices inside the class in order to raise criticality among learners, the features of criticality-enhancing language tasks in EFL classes, and so on. The questions focused upon in the interview sessions were presented in Table 4.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

Table 4

List of Interview Questions (For Teachers)

No.	Interview Question
1	What do you think the purpose of an ELT class should be?
2	In your opinion, do English classes have the potential to promote critical thinking in learners? Explain.
3	To what extent do you think English language teachers are responsible for promoting learners' ability to recognize and evaluate different assumptions and arguments?
4	Is it possible to teach the abilities of deductive reasoning and making sound judgments in English classes? (i.e. Should language teaching classes be considered places where learners develop the ability to distinguish between strong vs. weak and relevant vs. irrelevant arguments and to explicitly practice making good judgments?)
5	To what extent do you agree with the idea that language teachers should help learners develop an awareness of the foreign language culture?
6	To what extent do you agree with the idea that the awareness of native culture should be practiced through the tasks in language classes?
7	Is there any need to have teacher training courses concerning the promotion of critical thinking in language classes?
8	Please design a language task which specifically aims at promoting critical thinking abilities among learners.

The results of the study were analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistics. To do so, the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was employed. Also, Learners' scores on each of the five critical thinking skills were obtained and compared to see if there was a difference in Learners' scores among the five skills under investigation. Finally, data obtained from

the interviews were transcribed, modified, analyzed and translated into English. The researcher made an attempt to meticulously transcribe the data so that it can precisely reflect the feelings and experiences of the teachers as well as learners.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Teachers' Perceptions towards Inclusion of Criticality-oriented Materials inside L2 Classes

The results of teachers' perceptions on integrating a criticality-oriented materials inside L2 classes are presented both quantitatively (questionnaire results) and qualitatively (interview results).

The results from descriptive statistics (Table 5) revealed that EFL teachers in the given universities put more emphasis on enhancing all three components nearly the same. Since the CETPI was 7-scale Likert, the maximum and minimum scores were 7×1 respectively. As it is shown in Table 5, teachers lent prominence to different components of criticality-oriented instruction from the most to the least as follows: 1) *Critical Awareness of the Foreign Language Culture* (mean: 5.53), 2) *Recognizing and Evaluating Different Assumptions and Arguments* (mean: 5.10), and 3) *Deductive Reasoning and Making Sound Judgments* (mean: 5.00). It should also be noted that the maximum score calculated was 7.

Furthermore, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the CETPI factors and the age, degree and language teaching experiences of language teachers. As shown in Table 6, there was a significant positive correlation between the academic degrees of EFL teachers and their emphasis on the three components of CETPI (*Recognizing and Evaluating Different Assumptions and Arguments $r = .241, p < 0.01$; Deductive Reasoning and Making Sound Judgments $r = .255, p < 0.01$; Critical Awareness of the Foreign Language Culture $r = .171, p < 0.05$*).

Table 5
The Mean of Factors Obtained From Descriptive Statistics (CETPI)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Recognizing and Evaluating Different Assumptions and Arguments	150	5.10	1.14
Deductive Reasoning and Making Sound Judgments	150	5.00	1.14
Critical Awareness of the Foreign Language Culture	150	5.53	1.41

Data obtained from self-report survey analyses were integrated with the analysis of audio-recorded conversations with ten English teachers. In this connection, a qualitative analysis of interviews helped the researcher identify a number of general trends as to whether and under what conditions

criticality oriented components might be included in the English teaching syllabus:

• All the teachers agreed upon the fact that the primary focus of EFL classes should be learning a language for communication and cognitive abilities including critical thinking though necessary should be in service of learning a foreign language. Three of the teacher also stated that raising foreign cultural awareness should be practiced inside EFL classes.

• Teachers generally (eight out of ten) believed that critical thinking skills should be involved inside EFL classes. However, explicit instruction of these skills inside EFL classes still seems to be considered peripheral. Teachers generally put forward the view that cognitive skills are activated implicitly through language learning tasks.

• Teachers mostly (seven out of ten) considered language teachers accountable for developing students' abilities in recognizing different assumptions and evaluating arguments. However, in the situation where neither teachers are capable of critical thinking nor students are aware of the sound structure of these skills, raising students' cognitive abilities in this regard seems out of place.

• All teachers believed that language teaching classes are considered places where learners develop the ability to infer the hidden clues, make sound conclusion and have logical interpretation of the evidences presented. Since these skills will enhance the easy and effective communication.

• Seven teachers accepted that awareness of foreign language culture, cultural differences, cultural shock, etc. should be tapped upon inside EFL classes. However, they all stated that the culture should be stated to the extent that it does not lead to westernization.

• Half of the teachers agreed upon the fact that native culture is explicitly practiced inside EFL classes to the extent that it does not hinder communication in a foreign language.

• It is worth mentioning that all the teachers supposed teacher training courses necessary for the promotion of critical thinking in language classes.

• In designing language task which aims at enhancing critical thinking, teachers generally failed. Four teachers proposed reading comprehension as a way to raising criticality of learners. However, no technique was suggested in this regard. Two of the teachers referred to class discussion as a means of building critical thinking modules in learners. However, it seemed that they mixed up the argument evaluation skills with mere agreement or disagreement.

Generally speaking, it seems that teachers are not still ready for such a change inside EFL classes, i.e. moving towards criticality. In addition, cognitive abilities, though are considered crucial, should be in service of effective communication in language classes.

Table 6

Correlations between Language Teachers' Demographics and Their Criticality-Oriented English Teaching Perceptions

		Age	Teaching Exp	Degree	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.623[**]	.360[**]	.083	.144	.024
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.314	.078	.768
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150
Teaching exp	Pearson Correlation	.623[**]	1	.371[**]	.024	.101	-.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.767	.217	.943
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150
Degree	Pearson Correlation	.360[**]	.371[**]	1	.241[**]	.255[**]	.171[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.003	.002	.036
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150
Factor1	Pearson Correlation	.083	.024	.241[**]	1	.790[**]	.530[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.314	.767	.003		.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150
Factor2	Pearson Correlation	.144	.101	.255[**]	.790[**]	1	.565[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.078	.217	.002	.000		.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150
Factor3	Pearson Correlation	.024	-.006	.171[*]	.530[**]	.565[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.768	.943	.036	.000	.000	
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.2 The Level of Critical Thinking and its Subcomponents among Learners of English as a Foreign Language

The results from descriptive statistics for the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, Form A (WGCTA-FA) revealed that EFL learners who took part in the study did not display high scores on the WGCTA. As it is displayed in Table 7, learners scored on critical thinking subcomponents from the most to the least as follows: 1) *making deduction* (mean: 8.16), 2) *interpreting evidence* (mean: 7.93), 3) evaluating arguments (mean: 7.63), 4) *identifying assumptions* (mean: 7.10), 5) *making inferences* (mean: 6.33).

Moreover, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the WGCTA factors and the

academic degree, age, and language learning experiences of language learners. As shown in Table 8, significant positive correlations were found between age and degrees of language learners and their scores on WGCTA (age r = .233, p < 0.05; degree r = .327, p < 0.01). However, no significant relationship was observed between the number of years learners studied English and their critical thinking indices.

Table 7
The Mean of Students' Scores in WGCTA

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Inference	100	2.00	16.00	6.3300	2.31837
Assumption	100	2.00	12.00	7.1000	1.89364
Deduction	100	3.00	14.00	8.1600	2.33429
Interpretation	100	2.00	13.00	7.9300	2.59469
Argument	100	3.00	14.00	7.6300	2.32967
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Table 8
Correlations between Learners' Demographics and Their Scores in WGCTA

		Total	Age	Degree	Learning Experience
Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.233[*]	.327[**]	-.145
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.020	.001	.150
	N	100	100	100	100
Age	Pearson Correlation	.233[*]	1	.468[**]	-.311[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020		.000	.002
	N	100	100	100	100
Degree	Pearson Correlation	.327[**]	.468[**]	1	-.121
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000		.229
	N	100	100	100	100
Learning Experience	Pearson Correlation	-.145	-.311[**]	-.121	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.150	.002	.229	
	N	100	100	100	100

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

5. Conclusion and Implications

The study reported in this paper explored a number of concerns in Iran regarding the necessity of incorporating critical thinking abilities in the curriculum in the form of criticality-oriented syllabi. Initially teachers' perceptions towards the use of criticality-oriented English language program were assessed. Subsequent to assessing teachers' perceptions, Watson-Glaser

Critical Thinking Appraisal, Form A (WGCTA-FA) was given to a total number of 100 EFL learners studying English at different public and private institutes in Isfahan.

Given the firm support that the teaching of critical thinking has received from educational authorities, not to mention the support it received from the Iranian EFL teachers in the present study, it is startling that implementation of this kind of programs is severely felt.

The findings of this study suggested that explicit teaching of the thinking skills bear more results in comparison to the implicit practice of the skill in service of other language components.

Therefore, some implications from the results of this study can be summarized as follows. First, the results of this study may be a sort of consciousness-raising for the ELT professionals who should recognize the necessity of teaching critical thinking abilities explicitly in language classes and set the scene for the integration of critical thinking courses into the whole ELT curriculum. Moreover, ELT practitioners should become familiar with different techniques and materials that can help facilitate the enhancement of learners' critical thinking abilities. In addition, materials developers are invited to design criticality-oriented parts for different course books and/or textbooks that are being taught in private language institutes and universities in Iran. Materials developers can make use of the findings of this study and design such sections in which the learners are prompted to explicitly focus on the thinking skills. Therefore, it is recommended that materials developers include exercises and activities in their materials which require the learners to practice thinking skills activities inside and outside the classroom. Besides, by virtue of the interdisciplinary nature of ELT, it is suggested that there should be a close interaction between English teachers and psychologists to provide great opportunities for the promotion of criticality among language learners.

Like many other scientific studies, this research is not without its weaknesses and limitations that may impede the generalizability of the results. Therefore, it is important not to overlook the fact that the results of the present research should be discussed and interpreted within certain limitations and reservations. In selecting the participants of the study, purposive as well as availability sampling techniques were used. Thus, participants were not randomly selected and assigned to different groups. This may limit the findings of the study. Moreover, it was not possible for the researcher to control the demographic variables of the respondents, both teachers and students, as learners and teachers of English were from different demographic background and homogenizing them based on their demography seemed impractical. Further research may examine teachers' understanding of, and attitudes towards, critical thinking instruction in other

contexts in order to come up with a solid understanding of the status of this construct among L2 teachers. Other studies using a larger sample of language teachers may better delineate the nuances of difference in the conceptions of language teachers with different levels of teaching experience.

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