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Research Article

Exploring Higher Secondary EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Critical Thinking and Its Development: A Critical Reflection

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Abstract: It is widely recognized that developing critical thinking skills promotes higher levels of language proficiency and academic success. However, teachers' perceptions of critical thinking have a significant impact on pedagogical practices, students' learning, and achievement; therefore, a meticulous understanding of teachers' perceptions is the prerequisite for the enhancement and effective implementation of critical thinking skills. Against this background, this exploratory study uses a constructivist approach to employ semi structured interviews with 12 EFL teachers at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh to address the research gap in understanding EFL teachers' perceptions of critical thinking and its practice. The findings revealed that teachers' knowledge of critical thinking is limited and fragmented, and there is a gap between their perception and the generically recognized concept of critical thinking. This suggests that there is a need to develop teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to promote critical thinking skills in EFL classrooms at higher secondary levels.

Keywords: critical thinking; EFL classroom of Bangladesh; perceptions; conventional content analysis; constructivist approach

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, critical thinking (CT) has become increasingly prominent as a learning skill aimed at students' academic success, educating for critical, democratic citizenship (Fong et al., 2017; ten Dam & Volman, 2004). Different research also suggests that developing CT skills promotes higher levels of language proficiency (Liaw, 2007; Tarone, 2005; Yang & Gamble, 2013). Kabilan (2000) suggests that to be proficient, language learners need to be able to think critically while using the target language, not just understand it. Therefore, developing CT was included as one of the goals of the National English Curriculum for Eleven & Twelve (2012) in Bangladesh to provide her students with the information and abilities needed to prosper in the contemporary world, as well as the ability to communicate effectively in everyday circumstances. However, foreign language teachers find it challenging to implement CT skills due to insufficient knowledge about the concept of CT (Li, 2016).

To develop students' critical thinking skills, educators must first acquire a conceptual understanding of critical thinking, acknowledge its significance, and be able to integrate such skills. There is a lack of empirical research in the literature on how precisely English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Bangladesh conceptualize the term "critical thinking" and how they incorporate it into their teaching, particularly at the higher secondary level. Against this background, the present research aims to investigate how English language teachers at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh perceive critical thinking, what their pedagogical considerations are to promote the skills in their teaching, and how the skills are manifested in their practice. In this exploratory study, we seek to address the following research questions:

(i) How do EFL teachers perceive the concept of CT and the necessity of practicing CT skills?

(ii) What are the teachers' perceptions on the practice of CT skills in the EFL

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classrooms?

(iii) What are their perceptions of students' CT abilities?

(iv) What are their perceptions of teachers' role in fostering critical thinking?

The potential implications of this inquiry are, firstly, that an in-depth understanding of teachers' conceptions and their professional practices of CT skills may enhance EFL teachers' awareness about the importance of developing CT among their students; secondly, it may motivate teachers to further their understanding of CT and its application in EFL classrooms; and third, it will lead to a more comprehensive and informed discourse on critical thinking and its status and practices in education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Defining Critical Thinking

CT can be defined and interpreted from three viewpoints: philosophical, psychological, and educational. From a philosophical perspective, CT is often associated with the Socratic method, involving asking probing questions, evaluating and analyzing arguments, beliefs, and ideas, recognizing biases, and engaging in reflective and independent thought to stimulate critical examination of a topic (Paul & Elder, 2008). Psychologists view critical thinking as a cognitive process that objectively assesses information, considering multiple perspectives, to make reasoned judgments using skills of analysis, synthesis, and problem-solving, emphasizing the importance of metacognition (Halpern, 1998). The educational theories are a mixture of the two that underscore specific teaching strategies and questioning techniques, along with the development of a conducive environment. So, there are three broad perspectives on defining and conceptualizing CT.

Facione (1990) presents a consensus definition of CT obtained from a panel of 46 CT experts in the Delphi report, comprising panelists affiliated with Philosophy (52%), Education (22%), the Social Sciences (20%), and the Physical Sciences (6%): "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, an inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based" (Facione, 1990, p. 2). For the instructional and assessment strategies of effective learning, the Delphi report suggests CT skills and sub-skills along with the affective dispositions of a critical thinker. The skills and sub-skills include (i) interpretation (categorization, decoding significance, clarifying meaning), (ii) analysis (examining ideas, identifying arguments, analyzing arguments), (iii) evaluation (assessing claims, assessing arguments), (iv) inference (querying evidence, conjecturing alternatives, drawing conclusions), (v) explanation (stating results, justifying procedures, presenting arguments), and self-regulation (self-examination and self-correction).Besides possessing those abilities, CT dispositions encompass clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, propensity to seek reason, rational thinking, accuracy, reasoning, open-mindedness and fair-mindedness (Facione, 1990; Paul & Elder, 2019).

2.2. Critical Thinking and ELT

A multitude of studies have confirmed the undeniable role of CT in improving language proficiency (Liaw, 2007), writing ability (Kusaka & Robertson, 2006; Rashtchi & Khoshnevisan, 2020), and speaking proficiency (Malmir & Shoorcheh, 2012; Sanavi & Tarighat, 2014), and empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of teaching CT along with foreign languages. Language proficiency encompasses both cognitive and linguistic elements; cognitive language proficiency is associated with the language that is necessary to understand and discuss the lesson in classrooms (Cummins, 2008). The cognitive skills of CT, such as analyzing, evaluating, and reasoning, are necessary to understand the language and discuss the content in the classroom. The meta-cognitive skills of critical thinkers enable learners to monitor and evaluate their learning successfully; therefore, language learners can take charge of their thinking; they can monitor and evaluate their learning. Moreover, CT skills expand the learning experience of the learners, making the language more meaningful to them.

CT-integrated pedagogical approaches allow interactions among students, between teachers and students, to promote their engagement in the learning process, highlighting real-life situations that align with the student-centered approach. Research suggests that the key strategies that enhance students' CT skills include dialogue, questioning, and discussion (Zhao et al., 2016).

2.3. Teachers' Perceptions of Critical Thinking

The APA Dictionary of Psychology defines 'perceptions' as "the process or result of becoming aware of objects, relationships, and events by means of the senses, which includes such activities as recognizing, observing, and discriminating. These activities enable organisms to organize and interpret the stimuli received into meaningful knowledge and to act in a coordinated manner." Richardson (1996) views teachers' perceptions as "mental images or cognitive maps of the classroom, shaped by a teacher's beliefs, experiences, and cultural background." Various factors shape teachers' perceptions, including teachers' own personal experiences, beliefs, and values; their professional training and knowledge; and the school culture and context in which they work. Teachers' perceptions have a significant impact on pedagogical practices, students' learning, and achievement. Therefore, teacher cognition and classroom practice exist in 'symbiotic relationships' (Foss & Kleinsasser 1996). The explicit instruction of CT requires teachers to have a clear and comprehensive understanding of its relationship with language. However, different studies revealed that most teachers have a limited understanding of CT skills, and the limited 'substantive concept' of CT skills makes it difficult to engage students in CT-integrated activities in classrooms (Paul, 2005; Ridho, Wardani & Saptono, 2021).

Within the extensive research on teacher cognition, certain scholars have specifically explored EFL teachers' perceptions and beliefs related to CT. Li (2023) investigated the broad overview of 182 EFL teachers' conceptions, and the findings reveal that teachers currently have a fragmented understanding of these concepts, and they need to acquire these skills to effectively implement CT skills into English language activities. Teachers need to acquire pedagogical awareness, skills, and techniques to promote CT skills in their classrooms. Abu Ayyash (2022) explored 22 EFL teachers' perceptions of CT, its importance in EFL classes, and its teachability and found there was some ambiguity and confusion among the teachers regarding the precise understanding of the CT concept and its teachability that suggested teacher training in CT instructional methods. Zhang et al. (2020) investigated Chinese university EFL teachers' perceptions of CT and its teaching, and the findings reveal that though the teachers agree that CT should be an essential element of the EFL curriculum and classroom teaching, they do not have sufficient professional knowledge of CT and lack the ability to implement it in their classes. Mok (2009) revealed in a study that in Hong Kong teachers lacked knowledge of teaching methods and skills that could be used to develop students' CT skills in class. Ullah et al. (2022) examined how EFL teachers support CT skills for undergraduate low-proficient learners in writing classes in Bangladesh. Their findings showed that tertiary-level educators did not give enough thought to improving CT and problem-solving abilities. Previous research has shown that EFL teachers recognize the significance of CT skills, but they may not have a clear understanding of what CT entails and how to integrate it into their teaching. However, literature shows that EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of CT instruction at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh have not been examined yet.

2.4. Critical Thinking Instruction in the Bangladeshi Context

In Bangladesh, the National Curriculum for Classes XI and XII is congruent with CT-integrated pedagogical practices. It emphasizes interactive activities between teachers and students and between students and students and highlights that "the skills practice would be done in meaningful contexts, i.e., practice in language use should go beyond the textbook and include real-life situations." It aims "to develop creativity and CT through the English language." Nonetheless, it is uncommon to teach and learn the art of reasoning in English reading and writing classes (Ullah & Fatema, 2013). Instead, both teachers and students opt for higher grades in pedagogical practices, which leads to memorizing the course contents and superficial outcomes (Hamid et al., 2009). The gap between the goal and outcome becomes evident in a report of the World Bank on "Bangladesh: Ensuring Education for All Bangladeshis" highlighted that the curricula, teaching approaches, and examination systems are rote learning focused rather than developing competencies, CT, and analytical skills, and the student's reading skills are weak (World Bank, 2016). This study addresses the gap in research, understanding the EFL teachers' perceptions of CT and its practice at the higher secondary level.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Participants

The researchers selected 12 higher secondary English language teachers from six

colleges, both government and non-government institutions, from urban, semi-urban, and rural areas of the Rajshahi and Khulna divisions of Bangladesh using purposive sampling. Their service length ranges from 8 to 20 years, and among them, 10 teachers are from the Bangladesh Civil Service; 10 of them have an MA in ELT; two of them have an MA in English Literature; and among them, two teachers hold PhD degrees (teachers are coded as T1, T2…T12). The participants were chosen due to their direct and first-hand experience and active engagement with the understudied curriculum so that researchers can obtain thorough information and comprehension of the studied phenomenon. As this research is grounded on constructivist paradigm, therefore the reality is constructed and mind dependent. As a result, constructed knowledge is experience-based and subjective. However, this research is conducted with values including respect for participants, cultural sensitivity, and ethical considerations to improve educational practices. Before the interview, participants were briefed about the process with an information sheet, and a consent form was provided. With their written consent, the interview was audio recorded, and all of the participants were asked the same question (Patton, 2002). Interviewees were given chances to develop ideas and thoughts (Denscombe, 2001).

3.2. Data Collection

Data was collected from semi-structured interviews to gain a detailed picture of the respondents' beliefs or perceptions of the particular topic of CT (Smith, 1995), the purpose was to enter into the person's perspective (Patton, 2002, p.34). For conducting the interview, a list of questionnaires was prepared (Gray, 2009) seeking participants' perception of: (1) the CT definition; (2) the necessity of teaching CT skills and teaching strategies; (3) students' CT abilities (4) teachers' role in fostering critical thinking and (5) practice of CT strategies. A pilot study was conducted to identify unexpected problems. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis was done manually and electronically. Conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was selected so that preconceived categories could be avoided and those could flow from the data (Kodracki and Wellman, 2002). For this, first of all, all data were transcribed and provided to the participants to check their responses, reading each transcription from the beginning again and again, coding by identifying the key concepts of the data, grouping the codes into categories based on patterns and relationships, developing themes that represent the central ideas, organizing the data to facilitate the analysis, exploring the relationships and variations within the data, and member checking. The constructivist research paradigm serves as the foundation for this qualitative study. Because it allows us to understand data comprehensively, highlighting the participants' perceptions based on their constructions within a context.

4. Results

This section reports on the main findings regarding the teacher's perceptions in relation to the concept of CT and its development through English language teaching. The results obtained from the analysis shows that the teachers emphasized that critical thinking is a crucial skill in their educational practice. The analysis can be categorized into the following subsections: Teachers' perception of (i) definition of CT and its necessity; (ii) practicing CT; (iii) students' CT abilities; and (iv) teachers' role in fostering CT.

4.1. Teachers' Perception of Critical Thinking

They perceive that it involves not only the application of knowledge, but also the ability to analyze and evaluate information, make connections between different concepts, and think independently. Teachers believe that critical thinking enables students to approach challenges with confidence, make informed decisions, and adapt to various real-world scenarios. They recognize that fostering critical thinking skills in students is essential for their academic success and future professional development. Findings reveal that teachers' perceptions fall into two categories: (i) the CT definition and (ii) the necessity of teaching CT skills.

4.1.1. Teachers' Perception of the Definition of Critical Thinking

The results of the analysis showed that six of them defined CT as the ability to apply previous knowledge and experience to solve problems and cope with real-life situations. As T12 stated,

I think critical thinking means problem-solving strategies by a man, in solving

> any problem, how does he apply his or her knowledge; and this knowledge is the outcome of his previous knowledge and previous experience.

Others perceived CT as an in-depth understanding of any issue from different perspectives and levels to generate new ideas. T4 emphasized 'connecting' previous ideas to 'generate' new ideas, as he stated,

> To understand and comprehend the issues, the students need to connect their previous ideas the need to generate new ideas, they have to think over the matter, so, in this case, critical thinking plays a vital role in understanding to comprehending the syllabus, the textbook and finally, to do good in the examinations.

Unlike them, one participant, T9, perceives critical thinking as 'creative imagination' with individuality. T9, thinks it goes beyond thinking and rather perceives it as creative imagination with individuality, as she stated,

> CT is for students… coming out of a given situation…um… involve themselves in different activities. They will… try to explore the potentiality in terms of…um…imagination and creative imagination, involve themselves in… that is regarding all the all types of atmosphere, they will ignore it, and they will…that is…show their more individuality, okay! ...Think independently, individually, without being guided by outer force…

Among the participants, two of them considered it a disposition, and others considered it a capability or skill. For example, T12 considers CT skills are associated with tolerance or being open-mindedness,

> sometimes I try to observe their writing skills and after finishing that I read, I ask other students how many of them agree and disagree and there is a discussion among the groups, about why they do it I think this type of discussion increases individuality, helps them to be tolerant and they learn to respect other groups.

4.1.2. Teachers' Perceptions of the Necessity of Practicing CT Skills

The majority of teachers exhibited positive attitudes toward imparting CT skills and firmly believed in the importance of critical thinking skills. They perceive critical thinking as an essential skill that helps develop active and effective learning processes. Their response also underscores the relationship between critical thinking and language use, emphasizing the importance of selecting appropriate expressions based on context. Emphasizing the distinguishing ability of critical thinking, T2 and T8 expressed the appropriateness of vocabulary mechanics,

> Unless you have a critical mindset, you will not be able to distinguish between right and wrong, will not be able to identify which one, which word, which salutation is appropriate and applicable to which place, how to start writing.

In contrast, T6 feels that language acquisition does not require critical thinking. As he puts it,

> In English language learning, critical thinking for the language purpose… of learning a language critical thinking is not a must. We can learn a language without critical thinking. We can just talk; we can listen, understand, write, and read; it is not a must to understand language.

They also perceive that CT should be taught in real-world contexts. T5 feels it is important because

> If the students can practically understand what is happening in the world and if there is a link between the happening in real-life and the text of the textbook, the combination can lead them to understand.

4.2. Teachers' Perception of Practicing CT

This subsection reports on what they perceive as effective strategies to facilitate CT skills and what they practice in reality. Analysis shows that the teachers view themselves as facilitators who need to incorporate critical thinking skills into their teaching methods, using diverse approaches to encourage analysis, problem-solving, and independent thinking among students. Moreover, these findings also reveal that how they assess and evaluate students CT abilities. Therefore, the results obtained from the analysis fall into three categories: Teachers' Perception of (i) Effective strategies to practice critical thinking; (ii) Practicing CT skills and (iii) Evaluation of student's CT ability.

4.2.1. Perception of Effective Strategies to Practice CT

Though all of the participants have diverse viewpoints, they concur that both individual and collaborative tasks foster CT. Teachers believe that only thoughtfully advanced students, in individual tasks, perform better in creative thinking, particularly in writing. Whereas, in group tasks, students may apply an array of thinking techniques to get to conclusions by tying ideas together. As T4 stated,

> I think that both of the ideas are important; actually, no single method is justified or proper I think the combination of them should be the motto of the teachers' tools and tricks.

Emphasizing the advantages of group task T2 stated,

> When they are engaged in group work, they can share their opinion, and advanced students can take the weaker one somewhat forward.

Teachers believe that asking questions, having discussions, and receiving feedback, debate, and presentation are effective ways to foster critical thinking. However, T5 emphasizes establishing an association with students to bridge the interpersonal relationship that exists between the students and their teachers before any successful technique. They also concur that in the tasks and activities of the textbook, English for Today has scope to foster CT.

4.2.2. Perception of Practicing CT Skills

Teachers reported that most of the time they applied discussion, asking questions on agreement and disagreement, point of view, opinions, evaluating others' opinions, giving examples, imaginary thinking, and connecting students' daily lives, but not frequently. However, they pointed out that they hardly engaged their students in group tasks. T10 and T12 ask for agreement and disagreement, saying, "I read and ask other students how many of them agree and disagree, and there is a discussion among the groups." T4 asked students to provide their opinions on understanding a lesson. T9 applied informal debate, though 'very rare', asking two groups of students' opposite points of view on a topic and asking other students to judge two opposite groups. Despite the presence of CT-integrated task activities in the textbook, all respondents reported their main focus was fostering students' linguistic knowledge, particularly vocabulary and grammar, in reading comprehension. T9 stated

> Task and activities are thought-provoking but we do not focus on those activities… students are not in the habit of doing it… (showing the tasks and activities) No, we do not ever practice those, as those are not examination questions.

4.2.3. Evaluation of Student's CT Ability

Teachers reported that they evaluated their students' CT skills based on how they generated ideas for questions and presented various viewpoints on a given subject. As T4 reported,

> Most of the time, from idea generation, new ideas from groups in discussion, and creating new stories in writing stories in this way, I assess students' CT.

Another participant, T2, evaluated his students' CT skills by observing the manner of the responses they provide, which include a variety of viewpoints and contents.

> Usually, I ask them some brief questions in which the answer is specific and sometimes, can be answered from different perspectives. If the student tries to answer, their manner of speaking, and the content of the answer show how much they have been able to integrate themselves.

4.3. Teachers' Perception of Students' CT Abilities

Teachers perceived that a small percentage of students are capable of thinking critically and expressing their ideas; T10 assumed that, out of 70 students, approximately 7 or 8 can express themselves. However, T12 thought that students were able to think and relate their lessons to real-world situations, and with the help of the teachers, they could express themselves. In the case of problem-solving, T4 shared his observation that many students in his classes demonstrated problem-solving abilities.

> We ask the students to solve the same problem. There are many students who solve the problem very nicely. There are some students who even do not know how to solve the problem. They have no idea of that context, definitely varies from student to student.

Despite having thinking capabilities, T8 highlighted students' unwillingness to think; to them, thinking is "very boring for them; sometimes, the effort of thinking something seriously appears to them very boring." Like T1, T6, T2, T10, T4, T5, and T3 also think that students

are not yet ready to think critically, as they are not habituated to this type of thinking because their earlier learning stages involved the practice of CT skills, and they think that it is a challenge to suddenly engage them in this practice.

4.4. Perception of Teachers' Role in Fostering Critical Thinking

All teachers perceived that to practice CT in the classroom, their role was the most important factor to guide their students. As T5 stated,

> It is the duty of the teachers to let the students think critically; it is our bound duty, and our duty will be successful if we can direct or lead the students to think deeply.

They also thought teachers can make the classroom more engaging for the learners, depending on their capabilities, T6 stated

> When do they feel interested? when we can take classes… we can make classes interesting… then they are interested more, it also depends on our capability to engage them… it's our capability, our skill, to make them interested in my class… I have found them interested.

Teachers' have varied perceptions of students' current abilities in critical thinking, with the observation that with the help of teachers, students demonstrate CT skills in a better way. This highlights the crucial role teachers have to play in promoting critical thinking. Teachers also view themselves as facilitators who need to incorporate critical thinking skills into their teaching methods, using diverse approaches to encourage analysis, problem-solving, and independent thinking among students. These findings underscore the necessity for targeted professional development and adjustments to the curriculum in order to better prepare teachers to effectively promote critical thinking.

5. Discussion

Several key issues emerged from the analysis of the data in this study. First of all, the result shows that the most common concepts the participants attributed to perceiving CT are (i) the application of learned knowledge in problem-solving (ii) in-depth understanding from different perspectives; (iii) generating new ideas; (iv) creative imagination; and (v) coping with the practical situation. The participants emphasized the social constructivist perspective of gaining and applying students' experience and previous knowledge, thus creating new knowledge to develop CT. Furthermore, their emphasis on knowledge as a prerequisite for the CT process reveals that critical thinkers create their new knowledge through the thinking process based on accurate information they have learned. These findings align with the findings of Zhang et al. (2020) and Choy and Cheah (2009), who separately investigated Chinese university EFL teachers' perceptions of CT. Secondly, teachers feel that the young students' limited knowledge base – which they view as the cornerstone of CT skills – could prevent them from developing because of their lack. Thinking of knowledge as a prerequisite is consistent with the perspectives of Thomas and Lok (2015) and Halpern (2014).

Thirdly, in their definition, neither they perceive CT as a systematic cognitive skill coupled with a set of affective dimensions nor did they enunciate the cognitive process that leads to the mentioned results of CT, such as recognizing facts from opinions, reasoning with evidence, detecting inconsistencies, and hypothesizing solutions with alternatives, which are the core components of CT, and so forth.

Fourthly, the teachers are aware of the advantageous role of CT in language acquisition for utilizing appropriate grammar and making careful selections of words and expressions based on the given context. The participant's idea aligns with the notion that CT contributes to communicative competence. Participants also acknowledge the necessity of teaching CT in a real-world context to practice handling different contexts and situations that students face. This notion aligns with Ennis (1985), who emphasizes the practicability and transferability of CT.

The results show that though teachers think that both group and individual tasks by asking questions, holding discussions, providing feedback, debating, and presenting any thought-provoking topic are effective methods of fostering CT, they only practice, though not frequently, discussion, asking questions on agreement and disagreement, point of view, opinions, evaluating others' opinions, giving examples, imagining thinking, and connecting students' daily lives, that exclude addressing various subskills of CT such as organizing information, inferring, distinguishing between facts and opinions, determining the author's point of view, drawing reasonable and fact-consistent conclusions, identifying the problem,

hypothesizing potential solutions, and practicing self-regulation in asking questions in classrooms. The analysis reveals that despite recognizing the importance of CT activities as cognitive stimulation for learners' overall academic success, in reality, teachers are not adequately fostering thinking activities beyond recall and comprehension skills (Brookhart, 2010; Choy & Cheah, 2009).

Furthermore, no teacher thought that inviting thought-provoking questions from students, as well as encouraging them to ask reciprocal peer questions, could be useful tactics for fostering students' CT abilities (Simpson, 1996). This indicates the teacher's role is not interactive but rooted in authority. Teachers have to explicitly instruct students to ask and answer questions through reciprocal peer questioning (Berkeley & Barber, 2015). Therefore, on CT, their understanding is fragmented and insufficient, which might consequently affect the cognitive development of the students. This inference can be substantiated when teachers indicate that, despite the inclusion of CT-integrated tasks in the textbook, there are limited opportunities to practice CT. The primary emphasis during classes is predominantly on fostering linguistic proficiency, specifically in vocabulary and grammar from reading comprehension. Therefore, the fragmented and insufficient understanding of CT emerges as one of the reasons why language learning is perceived as acquiring linguistic knowledge only rather than using language to mediate, communicate, collaborate, and employ in real-life contexts.

Another pertinent finding revealed that teachers perceived that a small percentage of students possessed adequate agency in CT because they lack the necessary skills, are not motivated, and have a limited knowledge base. They deduced this by evaluating the students' capacity for idea generation, their range of thought content, and their speaking style. Alongside, few teachers believe that students can express CT with their guidance. This suggests that, due to limited opportunities to practice CT, students' abilities are not fully developed and exposed.

More importantly, the participants acknowledge the teachers' prime role in promoting CT in classes and believe that it depends on the teachers' professional capabilities and sense of responsibility. Engaging students in CT necessitates that teachers possess the relevant skills and dispositions. Several studies on teacher cognition have highlighted the importance of teacher knowledge (Li, 2013; 2016), and the primary responsibility of the teacher is to create, develop, manage, and navigate the space for thinking through the use of selective repair, employing referential questions, lengthening wait times, and minimizing interruptions.

6. Pedagogical Implications and Conclusion

This paper investigates teachers' perceptions about teaching CT skills in EFL classrooms at higher secondary level in Bangladesh to address the research gap identified in the literature. The focus is on how the teachers conceptualize CT and its implications in a specific context. The findings suggest that teachers' knowledge is limited and fragmented, and there is a gap between their perception and the generically recognized concept of CT and its development. This suggests that there is a need to develop teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to promote CT skills in EFL classrooms at higher secondary levels. Moreover, explicit instruction should be adopted for the enhancement of CT skills among students so that teachers can model CT activities before asking the students to do.

The study also highlights that, despite holding a positive attitude towards developing CT skills, participant teachers rarely focus on the development in the classroom. All the major focus converges at a focal point in developing linguistic knowledge, keeping aside its critical applications in real-life situations. Consequently, it appears that fostering CT skills through the curriculum has been curtailed to a general, nebulous objective. From here, one strand of future research could be exploring the significant factors that restrict the effective implementation of CT at this level. Moreover, future research could focus on classroom observation to provide an onsite picture of the practice of CT. Enhancement of CT skills is a global demand, but a meticulous understanding of teachers' perceptions is the prerequisite for the effective implementation of CT skills in classroom practice. This awareness is necessary to develop global citizens equipped with CT skills and dispositions.

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