

Exploring the Challenges Encountered by EFL Teachers in Promoting Critical Thinking Skills

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ABSTRACT

It is widely recognized that developing critical thinking skills promotes higher levels of language proficiency and academic success. However, EFL teachers face several obstacles in their institutional and sociocultural context that might prevent them from implementing CT. This study explores EFL teachers' perceptions of obstacles to their efforts in promoting critical thinking skills in classrooms and potential solutions to overcome these perceived obstacles. 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' feedback on the obstacles to developing critical thinking in the classroom. The findings reveal several interrelated challenges, emphasizing the negative washback of the HSC examination, teachers' authoritative roles, students' passive learning styles, a lack of teachers' training in developing CT and institutional discipline, and the arduous language structure of the textbook. This study also suggests that curriculum, assessments, teacher preparation, textbooks, and individual institutions should embrace an integrated thinking approach simultaneously.

Keywords: Critical Thinking; EFL Classroom of Bangladesh, Obstacles; Conventional Content Analysis; Constructivist Approach.

INTRODUCTION

With the technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution (IR) and digital transformation, the importance of developing critical thinking (CT) skills is increasing in educational settings due to its self-directed and self-monitored nature. CT skills allow individuals to gain complex understandings in social and interpersonal contexts where decision-making and problem-solving are crucial. These skills enable individuals to interpret and analyze situations, evaluate information, assess circumstances, and develop creative solutions, ultimately conflict resolution. Furthermore, the application of CT can greatly improve language proficiency in the communication domain (Chapple & Curtis, 2000). This presents a natural opportunity to incorporate critical thinking into the L2 curriculum, and empirical evidence supports the efficacy of developing CT in conjunction with foreign languages (Davidson, 1994, 1995). Like many other countries worldwide, such as England, Hong Kong, Malaysia, China and Singapore, in Bangladesh developing thinking skills was included as a learning goal in educational policy, and the National English Curriculum for Eleven & Twelve (2012) aims "to develop creativity and CT through the English language." However, it is argued that the educational system of Bangladesh places less emphasis on CT facilitation.

Different research suggests that integrating thinking into foreign language instruction has been peripheral (Pica, 2000; Ghonsooly & Showqi, 2012; Li, 2011). Several scholars, including Kutlieh and Egege (2003), Atkinson (1997) and Fox (1994), have argued that CT is an innate characteristic of Western culture's "social practice."

They contend that CT can solely be acquired through an unconscious process of socialization during childhood, rendering it incongruent with EFL instruction, particularly when considering Asian cultural attitudes. Others have disagreed, postulating from different perspectives that CT is not the preserve of Western culture; rather, this uncertainty emphasizes that “such cultural differences are a strong argument for its explicit introduction” and with proper training and guidance, EFL learners can develop CT (Davidson & Dunham, 1997). Yet, several obstacles in their institutional and sociocultural context may prevent EFL teachers from implementing CT (Mok, 2009). Therefore, the obstacles to developing CT in EFL contexts call for exploring the challenges, particularly teachers’ perceptions, that affect the pedagogical practice of CT in EFL classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Thinking Skills and Pedagogical Approaches in Developing the Skills

Due to its complex nature, different views are posited on concepts of CT (Larsson, 2017). However, different scholars assert inclusive perspectives on the CT skills and sub-skills, which comprise the following: (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, 2006).

The CT-integrated pedagogical approaches allow interactions among students, between teachers and students, to promote students' engagement in the learning process to develop higher-order thinking skills that they apply in real-life situations; therefore, the classroom practices are closely related to real-world situations. According to several studies (Albergaria-Almeida et al., 2011; Abrami et al., 2015; Burbules, 1993), problem-based learning, dialogue, questioning, discussion, brainstorming, and simulation are important techniques that help students develop their CT abilities.

Variables for Effective CT Instruction

Appropriate instructional techniques have a substantial impact on and positively affect the development of students' CT skills (Ghanizadeh, 2017). The successful implementation of CT is heavily influenced by the involvement of teachers, the incorporation of CT-integrated task activities, the utilization of students' ideas, the provision of ample opportunities, the establishment of a constructivist learning environment, the provision of positive feedback, the promotion of active learning and the facilitation of peer-to-peer interaction, the assessment of CT skills, and the monitoring of metacognition. Researchers suggested several effective variables that affect developing CT explicitly: i. Explicit instruction, detailed explanations and modelling of thinking skill procedures by teachers in every CT-integrated activity (Beyer, 2008; Brookfield, 2011); ii. Engaging students in CT-integrated tasks or activities with ample opportunities (Mathews & Lowe, 2011; Bailin et al., 1999); iii. Preferring interaction among students in discussion and group learning formats (Smith, 1977; Brookfield, 2011); iv. Student assessment process focuses on the demonstration of CT skills (Brookfield, 2011); v. Structuring the curriculum to introduce CT through increasingly complex exercises (Brookfield, 2011); vi. Supportive feedback (instructors’ praise, encouragement or use of student ideas) and continuing coaching (Smith, 1977; Marzouki et al., 2017); vii. A constructivist learning environment and favourable environment where critical enquiry is valued and students are encouraged to think (Bailin et al., 1999; Mathews & Lowe, 2011; Kwan & Wong, 2015) and vii. Making metacognitive monitoring explicit and overt (Halpern, 1998). These factors are essential prerequisites for cultivating CT in classrooms. Conversely, various research studies indicate that the absence of these variables can serve as potential barriers to the development of thinking skills in language classrooms.

Critical Thinking Instruction in the Bangladeshi Context

In the Bangladesh context, though the National English Curriculum for Classes XI & XI, 2012 is congruent with

CT-integrated pedagogical approaches and emphasizes interactive activities among teachers and students, research reveals that the present pedagogical practice is dominated by a teacher-centred approach and students' willingness to communicate is low (Rahman et al., 2018). Moreover, the current high-stakes nationwide language testing, the public examinations of higher secondary level (HSC) excludes the two vital language skills: speaking and listening (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018a, 2018b; Sultana, 2018). The impact of the assessment manifests as a negative washback effect on language teaching in Bangladesh (Sultana, 2018). Studies reveal that the exclusion of the two important skills in the assessments of tests leads teachers and students to be unwilling to practice speaking and listening in the classroom (Rahman & Pandian, 2018a). Additionally, in reading and writing classes, teaching and learning the art of reasoning is not very common (Mohib 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). A report by the World Bank, titled "Bangladesh: Ensuring Education for All Bangladeshis" highlighted that the curricula, teaching approaches, and examination systems focus on rote learning focused rather than developing competencies, CT, and analytical skills, and the student's reading skills are weak (World Bank, 2016). Md. Mohib Ullah et al. (2022) investigated the obstacles EFL teachers faced in promoting CT skills in writing classes of undergraduate low-proficient learners and found that teachers in tertiary-level education did not pay enough attention to enhancing CT and problem-solving skills. However, no research has been undertaken to explore the challenges EFL teachers face in practicing CT at the higher secondary level. This study, therefore, focuses on the contextual challenges and recommended strategies for developing CT in higher secondary English classrooms. Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the research questions,

I. What are the contextual challenges affecting the practice of CT in classrooms?

II. What are the potential solutions to those challenges?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Using purposive sampling, the researchers chose 12 higher secondary teachers of English from six colleges—both government and non-government including a women's college—that were located in urban, semi-urban, and rural areas of Bangladesh's northern division Rajshahi and southern division Khulna. They have been employed for 8 to 20 years; among them, 10 teachers are from the Bangladesh Civil Service; 10 teachers have obtained MAs in ELT; 2 teachers have obtained MAs in English Literature; and 2 teachers have PhDs (teachers are categorized as T1, T2, T12). The participants were selected based on their first-hand, direct experience, and their active participation in the understudied curriculum, which enables the researchers to gather comprehensive data and understand the phenomena under study.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' views on the specific subject - the factors affecting the practice of CT (Smith, 1995). The goal of adopting semi-structured interview was to understand the respondents' viewpoints (Patton, 2002, p. 34).

Adopting semi-structured interview, which is probably the most popular format in qualitative research (Mason, 2002), aims to understand the respondents' viewpoints (Patton, 2002, p. 34) and uncover knowledge through interaction, which Burgess (1984, as cited in Mason, 2002) refers to as a "conversation with a purpose" (p. 62). Before the interview, a set of questionnaires was developed, seeking: i. the restraining factors in practising CT; ii. the problems students face during the practice; iii. the problems teachers face during the practice; iv. the conduciveness of the classroom environment; iv. utility of CT-integrated tasks in the textbook; and v. facilitation of the teachers' training and other resources. Then, a pilot study was carried out to find any unforeseen issues. Before the interview, participants were briefed about the process with an information sheet.

The interview was audio recorded with the participants' written consent, and the participants were asked the same

questions (Patton, 2002). Additionally, interviewees had the opportunity to develop ideas and thoughts (Denscombe, 2001).

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was conducted through both manual and electronic methods. Conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was chosen to avoid preconceived categories and allow the categories to emerge from the data (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). Initially, all the data was transcribed and provided to the participants for verification of their responses. The process involved reading and re-reading each transcription, identifying key concepts, grouping codes into categories based on patterns and relationships, developing central themes, organizing the data for analysis, exploring relationships and variations within the data, and member checking. This qualitative study is grounded in the constructivist research paradigm, which enables a comprehensive understanding of the data by emphasizing the participants' perceptions within a specific context.

FINDINGS

This section presents contextual challenges that might have hindered teachers from integrating CT into their classroom practice. The results obtained from the analysis fall into four categories: i. The backwash of the high-stakes tests; ii. Time limitations; iii. Teachers' Role in Structuring the Classroom for CT; iv. Institutional Facilities, and Rules; v. Textbook contents; and vi. Students' previous learning habits.

The Backwash of the High-Stakes Tests

All of the teachers reported that fostering linguistic knowledge, especially grammar and vocabulary, in students was paramount because of the high-stakes tests and was one of the main reasons these classrooms do not focus on critical thinking skills. They perceived that in the HSC examination, there are no allocated marks for speaking and listening skills, and therefore students are not motivated to engage in group discussion or teacher-led discussion or answer questions in the classroom. They added that the exclusion creates a perceptible lacuna in the perpetual practice of CT. Due to the pressure to prepare students for assessments, teachers focused less on speaking and listening skills because they are not directly evaluated. Because of the exclusion, students find that engaging in thought-provoking discussions in the classroom is 'unnecessary'. Along with this, the pedagogical approaches adopted by the teachers to facilitate CT skills among students are accorded minimal priority. This highlights that the effects of testing predominantly exist in the micro-level teaching-learning process in classrooms, which compelled them to tailor the curriculum. As T12 articulated,

There might be so many tasks and activities (textbook)...but I...um... it is of little significance in my case because I need not teach them in my class to my students because of examination. When I make examination answers, I don't need those types of activities... exam oriented... we are bound to take it.

The teachers also perceived the students' anxiety about obtaining a good grade on the examination, and thought-provoking discussions were 'quite unnecessary' to the students. Consequently, teachers are to focus on only examination-related lessons and questions, narrowing the curriculum as all of the teachers have the same opinion, like T10,

In the classroom, when the discussion turns to practice thinking, students don't feel interested, and 90% of them think that those are unnecessary and the students want only exam oriented lessons. There are a few students who engage in discussion, but I have to consider them all.

Moreover, teachers also think that the broad examination of comprehension questions does not demand and assess students' higher-order thinking skills, and the questions that could stimulate thinking were repeated frequently "as is" in the exam papers of the past years, as T10 stated, "If you see the question papers for graphs and pie charts, you will get 70- 80% of the questions that were repeated in previous years."

Time Constraints

Respondents raised concern regarding time limitations as a major obstacle to engage in activities that foster CT. Teachers noted that at the higher secondary level, students have only around 196 days for classes, including disruptions, which restricts the time for linguistic and thought-provoking discussions. Moreover, every teacher gets only one class per week for each section. This results in teachers feeling rushed to cover the syllabus and prepare students for exams. As T12 acknowledged, that the limited time acts as a barrier to practice,

I practice it in my own way, not in every class, I cannot give them extra time for that thinking; I am to finish my text ...I can't give them extra time for critical discussion in my class. Sometimes I try, but not always, I am in a hurry to complete my lesson.

Therefore, the teachers felt the necessity of a designated and distinct class time, the teacher observed a keen inclination among her students to participate in dialogues yet faced limitations in affording them sufficient cognitive space for honing their CT abilities. T8 mentioned,

They enjoy to be engaged in group discussions, but they get little time, so they need the thinking time. I think they should have a different class; to develop CT or speaking, they need another practicing class except for exam-oriented text classes.

Additionally, T2 felt the necessity of successive classes of one teacher per week to maintain the continuity of the lessons.

Teachers' Role in Structuring the Classroom for Critical Thinking

Teachers have reported that the classroom setting significantly impacts students' engagement in CT exercises, with teachers playing a crucial role in establishing an environment conducive to such practice. However, these teachers also acknowledge that the current classroom atmosphere lacks the necessary elements for fostering CT, thereby hindering students' development of CT abilities. Furthermore, the teachers' insufficient preparedness and expertise to facilitate thought-stimulating teaching serves as an additional barrier to the cultivation of CT skills. As T4 stated,

All the teachers are not equally prepared to engage them in a CT environment, and it depends on the teacher's interest. Even many more teachers do not have proper knowledge about CT because they do not get enough training and environment to learn about CT properly... they feel less interested in such types of activities. All these barriers from teachers' point that hinder the students CT activities. The students even do not get proper inspiration and encouragement from those teachers.

The teachers also reported that The current classroom environment is not conducive to CT practice due to non-professional behavior exhibited by some teachers, lack of encouragement towards individual thoughts and ideas, and limited engagement with students through questioning. T6 stated,

I think our teachers don't encourage students to ask questions because they don't want questions from learners; they feel bored or don't like it, and students know they don't like it, our teachers don't like questions, so the habit of curiosity about asking questions diminishes one day.

T9 also thinks in the same manner that: They are not getting support from teachers; it is one of the reasons... They are humiliated by teachers too. that... "You are a student of intermediate, but you don't know this?" ...I think training can benefit in this regard.

All of the teachers reported that they did not receive any training on how to foster CT; neither were they provided with any Teachers' Guides nor did they follow any documented lesson plans. T12 says,

Training, no, I did not receive any training on increasing critical thinking among the students. I don't know whether in Bangladesh this ever happened.

Institutional Facilities and Rules

In terms of institutional regulations, as teachers reported, students do not feel it is obligatory to be present in every class since there are no fixed rules; therefore, they miss the continuation of understanding the lessons. After skipping the classes, students fail to get back on track with the lessons. Emphasizing the regularity of students' attendance in the classes.

As T6 and T2 expressed

Student attendance is also important because if the student attends classes for 1 or 2 classes and gives up attending the next 2 or 3 weeks or 1 week, he will not be able to maintain the continuation of the classroom activities, and in that case, whenever we come after two or one week, he will find that what I am teaching is irrelevant and is not helpful for getting success or getting good marks.

Similar to their counterparts, participants T3, T4, T5, and T6 highlighted the significance of an institutional environment that is helpful to foster CT. Furthermore, they emphasized the necessity of contemporary technology-driven resources to effectively manage a crowded and disruptive classroom. Unfortunately, four colleges were found to lack the necessary provisions to accommodate these requirements.

Textbook Contents

T4, T5, T6, T10, and T3 reported that culturally unfamiliar and philosophical topics are challenging for HSC students to grasp, comprehend, and engage with, hindering the development of critical thinking skills. Without understanding, higher-level CT is unattainable. As T5 stated, there are some lessons, suppose, there is a poem in HSC level textbook which is very difficult, not related to the real-world, there are some poems which are related to imagination I think in that case the students of HSC level feel some barrier T9, a teacher with twenty years of experience, has encountered the same thing.

They can't understand the hidden meaning when we try our level best to make them understand poems on 'Beauty', that poems are highly ambitious, they are not groomed up from their childhood, from earlier classes; suddenly, those hard poems for them are very ambitious.

T10 observed that the linguistic complexity employed in the HSC textbook poses challenges for students at the higher secondary level in terms of comprehension. The text exhibits an initially arduous language structure, which gradually transitions to a more accessible form, which should be a reversal of this pattern, as he stated,

The gap between the language used in the SSC textbook and the HSC textbook is considerable. For instance, the first sentence of Nelson Mandela's (Unit 1 Lesson 2) long sentence- the words shackles, apartheid, multi-racial democracy, embody, reconciliation- all those words are very difficult for their level of understanding.

Teachers also pointed out that students felt bored with the topics of the textbook; rather, they liked story-based learning.

Students' Previous Learning Habits

The teachers unanimously agreed that students' previous learning habits and experiences, especially at the SSC level, do not align with the style required for a thought-provoking class making them less accustomed to CT or active learning. Instead, the students are accustomed to passive learning, which makes it challenging for them to suddenly engage in active learning. T6 stated that they are just not grown up with this kind of attitude; this is the first reason, in their previous levels, in school levels, primary school levels, they were not cared of, and they were not inspired to think critically. And suddenly, if I ask them to think critically, they fall into a problem; they fall into a fix.

Teachers have also reported that students seemed to struggle with expressing themselves and had difficulty with language. The language barrier made it hard for them to convey their thoughts in English. As a result, it posed a

barrier to developing their CT and writing skills. T 10 also believed that they did not have reading skills either. Most of the students face a language barrier; they are not that skilled in language, though they can think they can't express that but can express it in Bangla. ...Among 70 students, almost 7 or 8 students can express themselves in writing.

T8 and T10 perceived that students did not participate in classroom discussions due to their 'unwillingness' to think seriously, their inhibition, lack of courage, and fear.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal, firstly, teachers have identified a test-focused approach in classrooms as a major obstacle, with high-stakes testing significantly affecting the teaching and learning process. This approach emphasizes the development of linguistic knowledge while deeming CT skills less important. Teachers believe that the lack of specific evaluation criteria for oral communication skills, such as speaking and listening abilities, in the HSC examination hinders students' engagement in collaborative discussions, teacher-led conversations, and participation in classroom activities. To fulfil the test requirements, English teachers' preference and choice of chapters and topics got priority in classroom teaching and learning. The findings aligned with previous studies (Maniruzzaman & Hoque, 2010; Rahman et al., 2019; Sultana, 2019). Additionally, teachers are likely to skip and ignore some of the test-excluded lessons and CT-integrated task activities (Rind & Mari, 2019; Asma et al., 2014). This indicates that there is an incongruence between the curricular objective and the focus of the test. So, the participants emphasized the need to review the testing system, where the content of the tests should not merely focus on linguistic knowledge but on the application of critical thought and the creation of knowledge.

Secondly, another finding revealed that, though teachers unanimously concurred that CT skills are necessary to develop language proficiency, they also perceived that the classroom culture was not conducive to practising CT. This was attributed to teachers' discouragement to promote questioning and students' lack of interest in raising questions or contributing to class discussions. This was attributed to a reluctance among teachers to encourage questioning and a lack of engagement from learners in asking questions or participating in discussions. Teachers observed that students' learning styles are shaped by their past educational experiences, particularly in primary and secondary education, leading to the development of passive and inhibitory learning behaviors. Students were frequently observed to engage in rote learning, which impeded their active participation in the classroom. This indicates that students tended to see themselves as passive recipients of knowledge, with teachers being viewed as the primary source of information. With such perceptions, in language education classrooms, rote learning is often considered the most effective strategy by learners, and the perceptions would determine their reactions to CT-integrated activities as well as their conceptions of classroom participation. Consequently, engaging those learners in CT-integrated activities would be a laborious task (Jamiai & El Karfa, 2022). Moreover, in the findings, the teacher's role is not interactive; it is rooted in authority, and participants identify it as a hindrance. This indicates that cultural factors are hindering the implementation of CT in classrooms. Khalid et al. (2021) also reported the negative impact of culture on CT implementation in classrooms. However, the whole process is inconsistent with the principles of CT education. Because, CT practising needs a constructivist and favourable learning environment where critical inquiry is valued and students are encouraged to think (Bailin et al., 1999; Mathews & Lowe, 2011; Kwan & Wong, 2015). Engaging students in CT necessitates that teachers possess the relevant skills and dispositions, but they are not trained to model CT-integrated activities professionally. Essentially, to train learners with basic thinking strategies, teachers need to better understand the process of critical thinking.

Thirdly, teachers perceived time limitations as another restriction. As students had difficulty with language, teachers spent most of the time in class explaining and translating the texts, and teachers felt rushed to prepare the students for the examination. Moreover, students' irregular attendance and lack of consecutive classes with the same teacher for a class impede the comprehensive understanding of topics. Therefore, the tightly packed curriculum allows them to hardly make room for practicing CT, allowing 'wait-time'. To produce creative thought, students need 'wait-time' against an asked question which is a significant constituent for meaning co-construction and promoting students' engagement (Li, 2016). Feng (2014) argues that teachers should provide

adequate 'wait-time' for students to formulate reasoned responses. According to Li's (2011) research, opportunities for students to develop their CT skills were restricted when they were not given the time and space in the classroom. In this case, the participants emphasized, that ensuring students' regular attendance and consecutive classes with the same teacher would be beneficial.

Fourthly, given their age and immaturity, teachers found that students find it difficult to understand and engage with several philosophical (poems) and culturally foreign contexts, which impedes the development of CT abilities. Moreover, students face difficulties with linguistic complexity and comprehensive capability, especially with the arduous language structure employed in the HSC textbook. Teachers believed that the textbook's language complexity was higher than that of secondary textbooks. Comprehending or understanding are the lower-order thinking skills that leverage the higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, students' inability to comprehend complex texts will cause them to successively face difficulties in formulating reasoned arguments, engaging in analytical reasoning, and participating in class discussions. Nonetheless, teachers can assist students in navigating and overcoming their difficulties with linguistic complexity and comprehensive capability by implementing appropriate teaching strategies that allow them to successfully engage with the arduous language structures of the textbook which will help them to develop their CT skills. Before that, it necessitates that teachers possess the relevant skills and dispositions.

Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) provides valuable insights into understanding the cognitive challenges experienced by these learners. According to CLT, for processing information, learners have a limited cognitive capacity; thus, due to their linguistic deficiencies, the students face a high intrinsic cognitive load in comprehending and analysing complex language structures, particularly in thinking critically (Sweller et al., 2019). According to CLT, cognitive load is increased when superfluous demands are imposed, inadequate teaching strategies to educate students about a subject and instructional methods that emphasize subject information that is intrinsically complex. Therefore, to develop CT skills for learners, the necessary step is that by adopting adequate teaching strategies the materials should be appropriately scaffolded in classrooms and properly adjusted to their language proficiency level.

The factors essential for the effective development of critical thinking, as discussed in section 2.2, diverge from the dominant contextual realities. The findings also revealed that neither the teachers are trained in developing CT, nor have they been provided with a Teachers' Guide or lesson plan. Essentially, therefore, teachers' specialized training on CT pedagogy and assessment to teach CT effectively are emphasized (Ennis, 2018; Widana et al., 2018). Additionally, institutions need to provide more CT-based resources to teachers.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper sets out to investigate the challenges of practising CT in EFL classrooms at the higher secondary level. The challenges include the negative washback of the HSC examination, teachers' authoritative roles, students' passive learning styles, a lack of teachers' training in developing CT and institutional discipline, and the arduous language structure of the textbook as the main barriers, and these factors are closely interrelated. Overall, this study reveals the gaps among the curriculum objectives, the practice of CT, and the testing system. Therefore, changing just one aspect of practice will not be enough; instead, curriculum, assessments, teacher preparation, textbooks, and other materials need to adopt an integrated thinking approach. From here, one strand of future research could focus on understanding the nature of thinking skills and their reflection in classroom practice. Furthermore, in-depth qualitative research from the viewpoint of the students is also required, as these findings were only reported from the perspective of the teachers.

In Bangladesh, developing a curriculum and its implementation is a top-down process where teachers do not get the opportunity to express their views (Ali & Walker, 2014). Therefore, the educational significance of this research lies in providing root-level data from this group of stakeholders, especially from outside of the capital city of Dhaka.

The study may be able to inform policymakers, educators, and researchers interested in the developing and learning of thinking skills in EFL settings. Additionally, the pedagogical issues of this study regarding the

contextual obstacles to implementing CT into practice and the potential ways out may be useful for policymakers, educators, and researchers who are interested in the developing and learning of thinking skills in EFL settings and analogous situations. Finally, developing CT abilities is essential to creating global citizens. But without addressing the challenges, it is less likely that we will be able to successfully nurture flexible, creative, and democratic global citizens.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this research or publication.

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