

## **Teachers' Self-efficacy Beliefs for Teaching Critical Thinking Skills and Practices of Its Strategies**

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The study aimed at exploring the teachers' self-efficacy belief for teaching critical thinking skills and practices of strategies in reading classroom. It also pursued if there is any significant relationship between the two variables. A descriptive survey study used sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach to collect data. The study involved 40 EFL teachers. The survey contained 19 items using five-point Likert scale. Qualitative data were collected via classroom observations. The results of quantitative data showed ( $m=3.3$ ) that the participants implemented the strategies moderately. The findings of qualitative data revealed that most of critical thinking strategies were practiced rarely while participants were instructing reading lessons. However, the responsive strategy of teachers to their students' responses was implemented better than others. Statistical analysis also disclosed a positive high significant correlation between the teachers' self-efficacy belief for teaching CT and its implementation strategies during teaching reading lessons ( $r=0.99$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). In conclusion, as there was a positive strong correlation between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and actual classroom practice of strategies, teachers with

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strong self-confidence may have better experience in implementing strategies that improve students' reading comprehension. This suggests that instructors' strong beliefs to use critical thinking skills may not necessarily ensure its effective implementation of strategies.

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## INTRODUCTION

The process of acquiring a foreign language extends beyond the basic memorization of vocabulary and the strict adherence to grammatical rules. Students are expected to demonstrate the capacity to articulate their ideas, offer substantiated reasoning for their viewpoints, and engage in critical analysis and evaluation of particular situations. The conventional lecture method is not sufficient for achieving this purpose; incorporating critical thinking (CT) abilities into the education of English language receptive skills can facilitate its attainment. Facione (2013) divides fundamental CT skills into cognitive and disposition categories. Cognitive skills are the foundation of critical thinking and include interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation (Facione, 1990). The expert has defined each of these talents as follows:

*Interpretation* is the process of understanding and explaining the significance of different experiences, data, beliefs, or rules. *Analysis* involves identifying relationships between statements and concepts. *Evaluation* involves examining the coherence and logical strength of statements and evidence. *Inference* is about drawing logical conclusions and forming assumptions. *Explanation* is the ability to articulate concepts clearly and logically. *Self-regulation* is monitoring and correcting one's own cognitive activities.

The above key cognitive skills are vital for students in school and life. Today, according to research, CT skills are important for many reasons. First, in this technology age, students seek 21st-century studying skills to handle new world challenges (Sahin, 2009). Halpern (2003) reasoned the importance of CT skills for 21st-century citizens as "The world is becoming more technical and complex, so every generation needs more education" (p.2).

In this regard, researchers like Allen, Rubenfeld, & Scheffer (2004) suggest including CT in the undergraduate curriculum. Paul and Elder (2004) showed how CT skills affect reading comprehension. Cottrell (2005) also noted the benefits of critical thinking. He says it improves students' attention and observation, focused reading, ability to identify key points in a text, ability to respond to appropriate points in a message, knowledge of how to get the point across more easily, and skills of analysis they can use in various situations. Furthermore, Kulekci & Kumlu (2015) noted that without CT skills, English as Foreign Language (EFL) students might struggle to adapt to the global workplace, widen their horizons, and contribute to the global community as innovative and questioning individuals. As to Ennis, (2013), CT is seen as a highly recommended skill in higher education due to its positive impact on students' learning results. Fahim & Sa'eepour (2011) discovered that the instruction of CT skills has the potential to enhance students' language learning in the setting of EFL. Thus, CT aids higher education students and must be gained through EFL reading classes.

To put this concept into practice, it is crucial to examine the specific case of teachers' self-efficacy belief on the implementation of CT teaching strategies within their instructional environments. *Self-efficacy* is a person's belief in their ability to create and complete projects to improve performance. Self-efficacy theory is based on Bandura's (1977) notion that self-perception affects social behavior. Self-efficacy is the ability to evaluate one's abilities and achieve goals via own effort (Bandura, 1986 & Pajares, 1996). Thus, teacher self-efficacy may explain student differences in knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1986) and overall achievement (Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990). People work harder, persevere, and are more resilient when they have high self-efficacy (Mookkiah & Prabu, 2019).

Teachers with more self-efficacy belief have more confidence and teach better (Bandura (1986 & 1997, cited in Rashtchi, 2021). Effective classroom procedures depend on teachers' trust in their ability to resolve class concerns. High self-efficacy makes teachers more adaptive, open to new methods, and engaged (Allinder, 1994; Guskey, 1988; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with

stronger self-efficacy belief about CT teaching strategies may feel confident using CT skills in the reading classroom.

Different studies showed that various factors influence self-efficacy beliefs. For example, an individual's cultural background plays a significant role in shaping their belief system, as evidenced by research showing differences in self-efficacy beliefs across cultures (Klassen, 2004). Zusho, Pintrich, and Cortina (2005) and Eaton and Dembo (1997) suggested that Asian students tend to have stronger beliefs in collective self-efficacy, whereas American students tend to have stronger beliefs in individual self-efficacy. Studies have identified additional variables like gender and professional seniority that affect self-efficacy beliefs, emphasizing the need to consider multiple factors in educational and professional settings (Dilekli & Tezci, 2016; Nevgi et al., 2004).

Bandura (1977) argue that there is a significant practical impact of instructors' self-efficacy beliefs on student learning. In addition, teachers should employ CT teaching strategies such as questioning to challenge student's intellect, arranging the classroom for teaching thinking, responding behaviors students' response, and modeling (Costa, 2001). These strategies help teachers to invite, maintain and enhance learners' thinking capacity in the classroom. These strategies boost students' critical thinking skills in EFL classes because CT is essential in language classes and positively related to teaching reading comprehension where English is taught as a second or foreign language (Kabilan, 2000; Shirkhani and Fahim, 2011 ;Karmi & Veisi ,2016). As a result, reading teachers should have a strong self-efficacy belief in implementing CT strategies to teach CT skills in reading classes and assess their students' criticality.

However, the researcher noticed that the instruction of reading skills courses at Ethiopian was not following best practices. Besides, there has been scarcity of research on teachers' self-efficacy belief for using CT teaching strategies at higher education institutions, despite the numerous studies conducted on the concept of self-efficacy. This made this researcher felt there was a research

gap in teachers' self-efficacy belief for teaching CT skills and implementation of strategies to improve students' reading comprehension.

Thus, this study intended to explore the teachers' self-efficacy belief about CT teaching strategies and its practices while teaching reading in the EFL classes to improve the undergraduate students' criticality. It addresses to explores teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about CT skills teaching strategies use, critical thinking teaching strategies do the EFL teachers use most frequently to engage students to think critically, and the relationships between self-efficacy belief CT teaching strategies and their actual practices in reading classrooms.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study examined how teachers see critical thinking and use its teaching tactics to promote reading comprehension. The study used a descriptive survey research design to describe problems and offer solutions (Kothari, 2004). The researchers collected data using mixed methodologies. Quantitative and qualitative data together improve understanding of the study topic and question, according to Creswell (2012). The explanatory sequential design mixed-methods method was utilized. This study collected quantitative data first, then qualitative data to analyze it. The quantitative data provides an overall picture of the study in this strategy, while the qualitative data is needed to clarify, expand, and explain it (Creswell, 2014).

### **Participants and Sampling**

The participants of the study were English language instructors who served more than five years in teaching English as a foreign language at university level. The researchers used formula for sampling technique using Yamane (1967), which was  $n = N / [1 + N (e)^2]$ . Where  $n$  is the sample size,  $N$  is the population size, and  $(e=0.05)$  is the level of precision. From fifty-two active staff members, forty EFL teachers were involved in the study. Among them, 29 had MA degree in TEFL whereas only 8 were PhD degree holders, and 3 were associate professors.

Regarding the gender, 11 of them were female and 29 were male. Additionally, the researchers selected two instructors, who were teaching the reading skills course purposely to conduct classroom observations. Besides, to conduct classroom observations two sections of English majoring students (50) who were taking the reading skills course in the University took part in the study. The students who were involved in this study completed their freshman courses successfully and joined English department for B.ED (Bachelor of Education) program. These students were pre-service teachers learning English as a foreign language.

### **Instruments**

#### *Questionnaire*

The researchers used structured survey questionnaire that has two parts. The researchers administered 15 five-point Likert scale items to explore the EFL teachers' basic perceptions about CT skills and nineteen items to identify CT strategies teachers use. The researchers adapted the standardized questions for teachers' surveys from the relevant literature such as (Costa, 2001); Nicole, Stedman, and Adams (2012); Facione, 2020). The reliability measure for the questionnaire Cronbach's Alpha output had shown  $\alpha \approx 0.85$ .

#### *Classroom observation*

The non-participant classroom observation was held to investigate how the teachers nurturing students' CT skills effectively that improve their reading comprehension. The observations focused on critical thinking teaching strategy use namely- the teachers' questioning, arranging the classroom for teaching CT, responsive and modeling skills while teaching reading skills. Each session took two hours of the classroom stays; the size of the classroom was small. The researchers conducted six classroom observations of reading skills lessons in each of the two available sections. All the observation sessions were video recorded and transcribed to audit the occurrences of teachers' uses of CT strategies.

## Data Collection Process and Analysis

The researchers obtained both quantitative and qualitative data and analyzed in this study. To analyze the quantitative data, the descriptive statistics such as frequency, percent, mean, standard deviation and correlation were employed using SPSS version 24. Besides, the researcher adapted the cut-off point from literature (Ustün, 2011; as cited in Arcagok & Yılmaz, 2020) that determines the range of strongly disagree=1.00-1.80, disagree=1.81-2.60, neutral=2.61-3.40, agree=3.41-4.20 and strongly agree=4.21-5.00.

Regarding the classroom observation, first, the researchers got the consent from instructors who were teaching reading skills course. Then, the teacher-students interaction in reading classroom was video and audio recorded. After that, it was transcribed and the strategies teacher used were tallied and audited to point out how often the teachers were employing critical thinking teaching strategies to improve their students' criticality. Moreover, it attempted to answer which strategies implemented frequently in the reading classroom. Finally, a non-parametric test was computed to investigate the correlation between the teachers' self-efficacy belief about critical thinking strategies and their actual classroom practices.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs of strategy use

**Table 1.** Teachers' self-efficacy belief about CT skills teaching strategy use

Items	N	R	S	Of	V.O	M	SDV
Q1. Employing questions that challenge students to apply prior knowledge to new context	0%	5%	20%	65%	10%	3.80	.687
Q2. Engaging students with controversial topics	2.5%	20%	42.5	35%	0%	3.10	.810

Q3. Modeling appropriate use of the concepts and language use	0%	7.5%	17.5%	67.5%	7.5%	3.75	.707
Q4. Making students to recognize insufficient evidences in their spoken or written report	5%	25%	45%	25%	0%	2.90	.841
Q5. Using small group discussions with specific tasks assigned	0%	0%	25%	55%	20%	3.95	.677
Q6. Using writing assignments with specific goals focusing on a particular kind of thinking	2.5%	15%	42.5%	37.5%	2.5%	3.23	.832
Q7. Requiring students to justify their positions with examples and evidence, both in verbal and written analysis	0%	17.5%	27.5%	50%	5%	3.43	.844
Q8. Encouraging students to articulate an argument focusing on writer's a point of view	2.5%	20%	35%	40%	2.5%	3.20	.883
Q9. Evaluating students using in-class creative projects that involve a variety of reference	12.5%	25%	35%	25%	2.5%	2.80	1.043
Q10. Providing tasks that enable students to judge accuracy, adequacy, clarity, credibility, worth, etc. of ideas in the passage	7.5%	17.5%	47.5%	27.5%	0%	2.95	.876

Q11. Asking open-ended questions	0%	7.5	12.5	65%	15%	3.88	.757
Q12. Checking students' understanding about the material/paper they presented in the class	2.5%	7.5%	12.5	67.5%	10%	3.75	.840
Q13. Posing questions for students to identify the strength and weakness of each other's' arguments	0%	20%	42.5	30%	7.5%	3.25	.870
Q14. Asking students to evaluate evidence from multiple perspectives	2.5%	17.5%	55%	20%	5%	3.08	.829
Q15. Asking students to make comparisons, find similarities and differences, and draw conclusions	2.5%	12.5	42.5	40%	2.5%	3.28	.816
Q16. Using cooperative learning and helping students to accomplish a common goal	2.5%	22.5%	20%	50%	5%	3.33	.971
Q17. Giving projects students work together and providing feedback and suggestions to them	0%	22.5%	32.5	40%	5%	3.28	.877
Q18. Asking students to identify strengths and weakness of their own thesis and argument	0%	40%	32.5	25%	2.5%	2.90	.871
Q19. Providing group works to solve problems that have	0%	12.5%	40%	47.5%	0%	3.35	.700

multiple solutions	
Overall finding	3.33

*1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4= often, 5=very often*

The results of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on the utilization of instructional strategies to promote critical thinking skills in reading classes are displayed in Table 1. The average score for strategy utilization is 3.33. This suggests that educators sometimes employ teaching strategies of critical thinking skills when instructing reading skills lessons. For example, 45% of respondents reported that they sometimes use tasks that enable students to recognize insufficient evidences in their spoken or written report while 25% use them often. In addition, 55% of respondents ask students to evaluate evidence from multiple perspectives sometimes whereas, 2.5% ask these questions very often and 25% ask often. Moreover, 40% the participants reported that they rarely ask students to identify strengths and weakness of their own thesis and argument, 32.5% ask sometimes, 25% often and 2.5% very often. This reveals the participants' self-efficacy belief about the implementation of the self-regulation skills in reading skills classrooms was insufficient.

Similarly, the utilization of evaluation skills was insufficient in the reading classroom. For instance, 40% of the respondents replied that they rarely implement activities that help students to identify strengths and weakness of their own thesis and argument, but 32.5% implement it sometimes and 25% use it often.

Nevertheless, explanation, previewing and modelling strategies were often implemented in the reading classrooms. In other words, a significant proportion of the respondents, precisely above 55%, reported regular instances of cooperative learning, explanation, and modelling strategies were being employed in instructing reading skills course.

### **Questioning strategy to challenge students' critical thinking skills**

**Table 2.** Teachers' questioning strategy use

<b>Teacher behaviour that invites and enhances students' critical thinking</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>mean</b>
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<b>Analysis</b>	5	17.85	0.42
Seeking evidence for stated claims by asking students to clarify and justify their responses (e.g. Asking why you think so?).	1	8.3	0.08
Requires students to recognize elements/main ideas, etc.	2	16.7	0.167
Requires students to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant evidence	2	16.7	0.167
Asks students to distinguish between facts and opinions	0	0	0
<b>Interpretation</b>	8	28.6	0.67
Asking students to summarize the main idea of the text after reading	2	16.7	0.167
Asks questions like “Why do you think so?”	3	25	0.25
Encourages students to ask each other thought provoking questions	1	8.3	0.08
Asking students to identify the purpose of the author based on the text.	2	16.7	0.167
<b>Explanation</b>	7	25	0.58
Asking more than one student to express solutions/evidence	2	16.7	0.167
Asking the questions that require students to expand on answers	3	25	0.25
Asking students to express their opinions according to the text	1	8.3	0.08
Encouraging students to write comments on the information given in the text	1	8.3	0.08
<b>Evaluation</b>	3	10.71	0.25
Encourages students to transfer/ relate cognitive input/skills to everyday life/social context.	0	0	0
Encourages students to reflect on their thought processes and work orally and in writing (e.g. using rubrics, rating scales, etc.)	1	8.3	0.08
Posing questions for students to identify the strength and weakness of each other’s argument	0	0	0
Asks students to judge accuracy, adequacy, clarity, credibility, validity, worth, value, etc.	2	16.7	0.167
<b>Synthesis/inference</b>	5	17.85	0.42
Asking students to predict the main idea of reading text from title or subtitles			
deduce the meaning of the phrases from the reading text	2	16.7	0.167
Asking students to write a concluding sentence	0		
Enquiring students to apply past knowledge or experience	1	8.3	0.08
Invites students to think hypothetically and creatively (e.g. posing “what if” or “suppose that” questions)	1	8.3	0.08
Asks students to formulate designs, conclusions, stories,	1	8.3	0.08

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assumptions, etc.			
Self-regulation/meta-cognition	0	0	0
Asks students to recognize insufficient evidence	0	0	0
Asks students to revisit their work before the reporting to the class	0	0	0
<b>Overall mean</b>	28	100	2.33

*1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=very often*

The table 2 illustrates the manner in which how often EFL teachers' implemented critical thinking strategies using inviting or questioning tactics. The mean score is 2.33. This shows the implementation of teachers' questioning skills to foster learners' CT skills was infrequent. On the contrary, the findings from the classroom observation also indicated that an increase in the frequency of some higher-order thinking tasks. For example, the data indicated that the reading teachers had a higher frequency of questioning behavior of interpretation (8/28.6%) and explanation skills (7/25%) compared to other abilities during the observation sessions. In the context of the reading classroom, the instructors also incorporated tasks that necessitated the students' utilization of their analytical and inferential skills, accounting for 5 out of 28 or 17.85% of the overall classroom activities. Ultimately, the findings indicated that the presence of meta-cognition or self-regulation skills was not observed within the context of the reading classroom. Overall, this finding presents a contradiction to the outcomes obtained from the teachers' questionnaire regarding their overall opinions of CT skills.

### **Responsive strategy to improve students' CT**

This subsection examines the ways in which teachers' response behaviors are manifested in reading classrooms. This section aims to explain the behavior in which educators allocate time for learners to provide responses. This pertains to the duration in which a teacher allows their students to respond to questions, contemplate alternative solutions, acknowledge and reward students for engaging in open-ended discussions, and provide supportive comments to encourage incorrect student responses. Furthermore, it involves accepting students' responses,

including reflections, opinions, and thoughts, without passing judgment in order to foster an environment that promotes exploration of various possibilities.

**Table 3.** Teachers' responsive strategy to maintain students' criticality

<b>Teacher response behaviour</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>mean</b>
Allows wait time (at least 10 seconds) for students' answers/responses before restating or redirecting the question	13.15	5	0.42
Allows time to consider/think about alternatives/points of view	10.52	4	0.33
Rewards students for responding to open-ended questions	26.31	10	0.83
Encourages incorrect student responses with supportive comments	7.9	3	0.25
Accepts students' responses (reflections, opinions, thoughts, etc.) without judgment to encourage exploring possibilities	7.9	3	0.25
Requires students to expand on answers	10.52	4	0.33
Encourages more than one student to give points of view / solutions	23.7	9	0.75
Overall findings	100	38	3.16

The overall mean of the observed teachers' responsive behavior is 3.16. It shows the teachers sometimes practice this strategy in the reading classroom. The most frequent strategies observed during the classroom observations were 'rewarding students for responding open-ended questions (10/26.3%) and requiring students to expand on answers (9/23.5%).

### **Structure the classroom for teaching critical thinking skills**

**Table 4.** Structuring classroom strategy

<b>Enhancing behaviours: Structuring the classroom</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>mean</b>
Encourages students' interaction and cooperation to solve a problem or complete a task	17.6	3	0.5
Encourages students to ask each other thought-provoking questions	0	0	0
Uses different class groupings for different activities to solve a problem or complete a task	5.9	1	0.167
Uses a variety of visual media (e.g., charts, chalkboard, maps, pictures, gestures) to develop cognitive strategies	11.8	2	0.33
Structures time and energy in classes	29.4	5	0.83
Clarifies verbal and written instructions for students	23.5	4	0.67

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Displays creative works of students around the room (LCD)	11.8	2	0.33
	100	17	2.8

Table 4 displays the methodologies employed by the participants in organizing the classroom environment to facilitate the instruction of CT abilities. The average value across all observations is 2.8. This finding suggests that participants exhibit infrequent engagement in structuring the classroom environment. For example, the utilization of diverse visual media facilitates the cultivation of cognitive strategies among students. However, it is worth noting that this particular method was noticed only two occasions throughout the classroom observation sessions. Moreover, the implementation of the practice of fostering students' engagement in asking intellectually stimulating questions to one another has been completely absent. Nevertheless, the participants demonstrated superior utilization of time and energy management techniques in the classroom compared to alternative tactics, as it accounted for 29.4% of the overall structuring strategies employed.

### Modeling Strategy

**Table 5.** Teachers' modeling strategies use

Modelling	%	No	Mean
Uses cognitive languages (e.g., compare, analyze, classify, predict, create)	37.5	3	0.25
Shows interest for challenges and complex tasks requiring higher order thinking skills	0	0	0
Uses clear/real examples to facilitate/explain/teach logical thoughts	62.5	5	0.42
Overall finding	100	8	0.67

The outcomes of the instructional techniques employed by teachers to demonstrate the modeling strategy are depicted in Table 5. The observed frequency of the modeling technique reflects an incredibly poor overall mean score of 0.67. This strategy allows students to learn effectively from their teachers through imitation. However, it has been noted that this method has been implemented only a few times in the classroom with the intention of fostering students' CT skills. The observation did not reveal any significant interest among

teachers in utilizing modeling tactics that involve hard and complex activities that require higher order thinking skills. In addition to this, the participants were subjected to observation throughout six sessions, with 5 occurrences (62.5% of the total sample) utilizing explicit examples to elucidate their logical reasoning. This shows that modeling strategy was not executed properly.

### **The relationship between Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and practices**

To test the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about CT teaching strategies and its practices in the reading classroom, first, the mean scores of the teachers' self-efficacy belief and classroom observation were computed. Then, their correlations were computed using SPSS version 24 as follows:

**Table 6.** Non-parametric correlations

		TS-EBSU	CP CTS
Self-efficacy belief about strategy use	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.986**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
	N	19	6
Classroom practice of CT Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	.986**	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
	N	19	6

Table 6 presents the non-parametric correlations. The Spearman's rho result for the ordinate correlations indicated the presence of associations between teachers' self-efficacy about the utilization of strategic approaches and their actual implementation of critical thinking teaching strategies that promote and foster students' critical thinking abilities. The association between the variables has a positive direction and a strong strength, with a correlation coefficient of  $r=0.98$ . This correlation is statistically significant, as indicated by a p-value of less than 0.05. Additionally, the Spearman's rho coefficient also shows a correlation of 0.98, with a p-value of 0.000.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the EFL teachers' self-efficacy belief about CT strategies that nurture students' criticality. Therefore, this study investigated the beliefs of reading teacher about the CT strategies that nurture students' criticality in reading classroom. The first research question targets at investigating the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about CT skills teaching strategies. The findings revealed from 19 five-point Likert scale questionnaire showed the teachers implemented the strategies sometimes (mean=3.33). Majority of participants, specifically over 55% believed that they implemented cooperative learning, explanation and modeling strategies frequently in the reading classroom. Similarly, within the realm of questioning strategies, the participants believed that the tasks of explanation and analysis were employed frequently in the reading classroom. However, in terms of evaluation, inference, interpretation, and self-regulation skills activities, it was found that less than 25% of the participants engaged in regular practice within the classroom setting. This suggests that the use of CT teaching tactics was conducted to a moderate extent in order to foster students' CT skills.

The second research question focused on identifying what CT teaching strategies the instructors' use most. To seek the answer for this question, the classroom observation was conducted. The results from the classroom observation revealed that reading teachers only occasionally used CT teaching strategies during their instruction. The overall mean score for strategy implementation was 2.33. "Teachers' instructional efforts are governed by what they believe they can accomplish" (Gibson and Dembo, 1984, p.240; as cited in Bandura, 1977). However, the findings of this study showed that the participants had limited use of instructional techniques aimed at developing higher-order cognitive skills such as evaluation, inference, interpretation, and self-regulation. This implies that the participants did not practice the strategies in the reading classroom due to low self-efficacy belief for integrating CT skills.

The implementation of teachers' questioning strategy to foster students' critical thinking was rare, and there was no evidence of activities aimed at enhancing self-regulation skills among the questioning tactics. This finding is in line with the findings of Muslem et al.,(2017) which state that the lower level of use of critical thinking is self-regulation. Instead, their instructional practices predominantly focused on lower-level thinking activities. Besides, the occurrence of structured classroom practices among the participants was infrequent. These findings align with the conclusions drawn by Aliakbari and Sadeghdaghighi (2013), which suggest that educators in higher education lack awareness of the significance of critical thinking skills. This suggests that teachers need to focus more on incorporating these skills into their questioning techniques.

The utilization of teachers' questioning strategies to cultivate students' critical thinking skills was found to be rare, with a lack of emphasis on activities aimed at improving self-regulation skills through questioning tactics. This discovery is consistent with the research conducted by Muslem et al. (2017), which highlights the underutilization of critical thinking skills, particularly self-regulation. Instead, instructional practices primarily centred on lower-level thinking tasks. This indicated that teachers' did not help students to develop the capacity of independent learning skills. Hence, it is imperative for teachers, lecturers, and educators to cultivate critical thinking skills among students in the classroom setting (Schafersman, 1991).

Additionally, structured classroom practice was observed infrequently among the participants as indicated by the mean score of 2.8. This means that teachers need to work on creating a more structured learning environment to support students' critical thinking. This finding was in line with the finding by Aliakbari and Sadeghdaghighi (2013), indicating a lack of awareness among educators in higher education regarding the importance of critical thinking skills. It is evident that teachers should prioritize the practices of these skills into their classroom techniques to facilitate students' learning of CT skills.

In terms of teachers' responsive behavior, the average score obtained was 3.16. While this method was sometimes observed among educators in the reading classroom, there is room for improvement. The most common techniques observed were rewarding students for their participation in open-ended questions (10/26.3%) and expecting students to elaborate on their replies (9/23.5%).

On the other hand, the modeling method had not been widely adopted, with an average score of 0.67. This method is crucial for teachers to effectively use cognitive language, present clear ideas, and logically present information. However, it was noted that this method was sparingly used in the classroom to foster students' critical thinking skills. This contradicts the claim made by Choy and Cheah (2009, 205) that teaching critical thinking requires extensive knowledge and understanding of how to integrate these skills into instruction. Teachers should focus on incorporating more modeling tactics that challenge students and require higher-order thinking skills.

The last research question attempted to indicate the associations between the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and the practices of CT teaching strategies. A non-parametric test was conducted to specify the correlation between the two variables. The results revealed a strong positive relationship between instructors' self-efficacy belief for teaching critical thinking skills and classroom practices of instructional strategies. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) between the variables was determined to be 0.98, indicating a highly significant association. Furthermore, the  $p$ -value associated with this correlation was less than 0.05 (specifically,  $p=0.00$ ), confirming the statistical significance of the observed connection. These findings highlight a positive and highly significant association ( $r = 0.98, p < 0.05$ ) between the two variables.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Promoting critical thinking skills among learners is a key focus in higher education institutions these days. Attaining appropriate level of teachers' self-efficacy belief for teaching critical thinking skills and practising its strategies can significantly enhance students' ability to think critically and improve their reading

comprehension in EFL reading classes. Implementing these strategies empowers students to engage critically in knowledge, encouraging them to analyze information from multiple perspectives. To effectively incorporate critical thinking skills into the reading classroom, teachers must properly utilize strategies such as posing higher-order thinking questions, creating a conducive classroom environment, responding thoughtfully to student inquiries, and modeling critical thinking skills. This necessitates teachers to have a strong sense of self-confidence in order to implement strategies that foster and enhance students' critical thinking abilities. However, it is important to recognize that an excessive level of self-efficacy belief does not guarantee the successful implementation of teaching strategies aimed at improving students' cognitive skills. Further research is needed to explore how the implementation of critical thinking teaching strategies impacts students' reading comprehension.

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