

Iraqi EFL Teachers' Critical Thinking and the Quality of their Performance: Methodological Perspective¹

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ABSTRACT

Today's society bombards us with too much information, and there are far too many individuals attempting to persuade us. As a result, developing critical thinking skills is becoming an increasingly important part of teacher and student education. The goal of the current study was to support the link between the effectiveness of EFL teachers and their capacity for critical thought. 53 Iraqi EFL instructors were included in the sample for the study; they were all selected from various Baghdad-area schools. The Honey's Critical Thinking Questionnaire and a job performance questionnaire were the two tools employed. The questionnaires were scored and analyzed by SPSS software. As the design of the study, it was ex post fact correlation alone; therefore, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was run in order to determine the relationship between two variables. The findings indicated significant, positive correlations between teachers' critical thinking ability and their performance.

Keywords: *Critical Thinking ability; Quality of Job Performance; EFL teachers; Critical Thinking skills.*

INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that teachers are an essential component of good education, if not the essential component altogether (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Suwantee, 1995). They also play a critical role in the implementation of educational reform. This is valid for both general education and language learning in particular. Therefore, it is not unexpected that a wide spectrum of language education research has focused on the traits of effective language instructors and the means by which programs for training future language teachers might encourage the development of such traits. Some of these research aimed to produce a more comprehensive understanding of teacher performance than one that just gives weight to managerial and linguistic competence. This boom in language education research has examined the effects of various language instructors' cognitive, affective, and personality traits on their teaching methods and career performance in an effort to stay up with advancements in psychology and cognitive science. EFL instructors' multiple intelligences (Pishghadam & Moafian, 2007), emotional intelligence (Hashemi, 2008), and self-efficacy (Moafian & Ghanizadeh, 2009) are a few of the topics that have been studied. The capacity of L2 teachers to think critically is another pertinent area in which to research the idea of teacher performance in foreign and second language teaching programs, continuing this line of investigation..

In a constantly shifting environment where almost nothing can be accepted on trust for extended periods of time, critical thinking seems to be the answer. Students must master critical thinking in order to succeed not only in educational systems but also in future workplaces, social settings, and interpersonal interactions (Paul, 1985; cited in Longman, Atkinson, & Breeden, 1997). Critical thinking is defined as the capacity to discipline and control one's thoughts in order to process information more easily, effectively, and efficiently.

In addition to acquiring knowledge, students must also learn how to judge information, assess competing facts, and argue persuasively (Ku, 2009). Therefore, educators must prioritize developing pupils' critical thinking skills. The majority of critical thinking research has focused on how to develop this skill in students (e.g., Dantas-Whitney,

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2002; Faravani, 2006), but has neglected to examine how it relates to the effectiveness of teachers and teacher preparation programs. It seems obvious that teachers must be able to think in these terms themselves in order to educate pupils for the kinds of thinking that will be required of them.

It is still unclear how teachable critical thinking is and how much modern EFL/ESL teacher preparation programs explicitly or indirectly rely on it. In addition, critical thinking is a mode of thinking in which the thinker improves the caliber of his or her thinking by skillfully examining, evaluating, and rebuilding it in relation to any topic, thing, or circumstance. Critical thinking is also self-directed, self-controlled, self-monitored, and self-correcting thinking. One more important factor in becoming a successful leader. This essay makes an effort to look at the connection between instructors' critical thinking and their work output.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Thinking

Definition

An overwhelming There are several definitions of critical thinking in the literature, all leading up to Mizner's wellknown statement: "I respect faith, but doubt is what gets you an education." (Vaughn, 2008; referenced). "Learning how to ask and answer questions of analysis, synthesis, and assessment" is how Paul (1985, p. 37) defines critical thinking. Similar to this, Brookfield (1987, p. 229) asserts that critical thinking involves two related processes, including "identifying and disputing assumptions, as well as imagining and investigating others." Pithers and Soden (2000) claim that critical thinking requires a variety of abilities, including the ability to recognize problems and the underlying assumptions behind them, to focus on the issue at hand, to analyze, comprehend, and apply inferences, to use both inductive and deductive logic, and to assess the reliability and validity of data sources and assumptions. . According to Siegel (1988), critical thinking is "the educational cognate of rationality," and critical thinkers are "appropriately moved by arguments" (p. 32). Following Paul (1990), Longman, Atkinson, and Breeden (1997) use the acronym MIND to denote the elements of the critical thinking process. They claim that a critical thinker can start anywhere in the circle as long as he covers every piece. Ku (2009) maintains the development of the conceptualization of critical thinking from one that has a cognition-focused feature to one that has both a dispositional and cognitive aspect, taking a more holistic approach of critical thinking. Simply said, in addition to having the capacity to engage in cognitive processes, "a critical thinker must have a strong intention to realize the importance of excellent thinking and the initiative to seek improved judgment" (p. 71). There are several qualities that describe a critical thinker when taking into account these and other definitions of the term: A critical thinker is someone who recognizes the value of good thinking,

- recognizes challenges, focuses on pertinent themes and concerns, distinguishes between sound and faulty findings, and suspends judgements and choices in the absence of sufficient data.
- recognizes that one's knowledge is limited and that there are different levels of belief;
- makes a distinction between facts, views, and assumptions;
- keeps an eye out for authoritarian influences and phony arguments; and
- considers the effects of potential courses of action.

Language teachers, language education, and critical thinking

Critical thinking is one of the prevalent ideas in today's educational reform. Nowadays, a large majority of educators are aware of the value of critical thinking in learning, especially in higher education. Every education should teach students both "what to think" and "how to think," according to Schafersman (1991). He is concerned, however, that the majority of education has been devoted to teaching and acquiring facts and information, and that the complexity of the concept of critical thinking has prevented students and teachers from understanding its significance. The need for learning and teaching methodologies for gathering, comprehending, and evaluating knowledge does, however, arise with the expansion of domains. Atkinson (1997) asserts that the idea of critical thinking has already had an effect on language teaching. However, he doubts that it can be accepted at face value and believes that language teachers should carefully consider its relevance to their line of work. He provides four justifications for his theory: Critical thinking may be more on the order of a non-overt social practice than a well-defined and teachable pedagogical set of behaviors;

(a) Critical thinking has been criticized for being exclusive and reductive in the past, it can be difficult to teach thinking to non-native speakers due to cultural differences, and once learned, thinking abilities do not seem to be transferred well outside of the specific contexts of instruction. In response to Atkinson's claim,

Davidson (1998) makes reference to what Siegel (1989) terms a "self-reflective justificatory strategy," which implies that in order to build a case against critical thinking, one must first accept its validity, i.e., be a critical thinker. When it comes to the cultural burden of critical thinking, Davidson (1998) quotes Ennis (1996) as noting that the issue for educators is not whether critical thinking is valuable for individuals from non-Western cultures but rather how and when critical thinking should be used. The role of the English instructor, he argues, is to prepare students for communication with native speakers who respect direct criticism, shrewd critique, and intellectual statement. We L2 instructors have a solid reason to impart critical thinking skills to higher level students, perhaps even more so than the L1 teacher. If we don't, our pupils can have trouble using critical thinking skills, especially in a classroom setting (p. 121).

However, Davidson admits that for critical thinking to be effective in TESOL, it needs to be clearly defined and culturally appropriated. In a pilot study using a critical thinking essay test, a treatment group of Japanese college students who received additional training in critical thinking skills significantly outperformed a control group who only received content-based, intensive academic English instruction (Davidson & Dunham, 1997). The results show that critical thinking can be taught to ESL/EFL pupils. A word of caution about the confusion between critical thinking in TESOL and critical approaches to TESOL; Pennycook (1999) clearly summarizes the difference: Critical approaches to TESOL have to deal with a political perspective of the topic. Critical thinking is often an apolitical way to fostering a type of questioning mentality in pupils. (p.341). The issue is how to implement a critical thinking-based education and what qualifications and responsibilities language instructors should have in this process given the enormous body of research suggesting that critical thinking can be taught. By utilizing teachers' critical thinking and instructional skills, Lin (1999) shows via her research how different approaches to teaching English in Hong Kong may either reinforce or eliminate class-based inequality. Similar to this, Ruminski and Hanks (1995) contend that instructors should have a solid knowledge of critical thinking before starting to teach and assess.

In a similar spirit, Oster (1989) applauds the Western educational system for being tolerant of a variety of opinions and emphasizing creativity and analysis over memorization and citation. He contends that if students are to study at an American or European institution, they must be taught to think in the manner that will be expected of them, to avoid taking culturally bound concepts as universal truths, to feel free to express their opinions and experiences, and to see the value in doing so. For this reason, he advises using reading and evaluating literature in the target language as a safe and encouraging setting for foreign or second language learners to develop their critical thinking skills. Given the importance of critical thinking, which has been highlighted above, and the apparent misunderstanding of this concept among EFL instructors' success researchers, the current study sought to determine whether Iranian EFL teachers' performance was significantly impacted by their capacity for critical thought.

Job Performance

Inayatollah and Jehangir (2016) found a strong and favorable correlation between teachers' motivation and their job performance in their study, Teacher's Job Performance. Although research on the effect of motivation on performance have been conducted, there have been few on the interactions between instructors in public and private schools in KPK. The gap seems to be narrowed by the studies. The study will help organizations (schools, colleges) motivate teachers, which will lead to better work performance. Amin et al. (2014) suggested that the results of this study should be used in the hiring and training of secondary school teachers in their paper titled, Teachers Job Performance at Secondary Level in Khyber Pakhyunkhwa, Pakistan. and for current school teachers, in-service training programs should be made available to improve teachers' performance. Omieri (2009) focuses on influence of in-service training on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Manga Sub-County of Kisi County. Omieri also believes that educational institutions should devote more resources to educating their employees in order to develop human capital with the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities effectively. The more training is embraced on a regular basis, the more people can improve their skills in order to do duties more efficiently. According to the preceding literature, there are various needs that must be completed during the self-actualization process. Individuals can and must be equipped with these requirements, according to Hanlon (1968, p. 24). It is important to understand that full self-actualization of individuals is unattainable without education. A true image of the self within the world, as well as a set of self-actualizing goals, give the impetus for willing, planning, evaluating, and solving problems. Today's educational system appears to be lacking in terms of envisioning and operationalizing a comprehensive approach to education.

The tremendous pressure of good academic success has frequently left students to their own devices in terms of psychological nurture, personal growth, and overall well-being. Despite the existence of long-standing selfactualization educational ideas, this vision has yet to find its way into current educational policies and practices. Furthermore, it is critical for our educational system, which is currently affected by a variety of behavioral and academic interventions, to study interventional strategies that support students' personal growth and well-being in addition to their academic and behavioral learning. The development and application of general critical thinking is one of these educational strategies. The appeal of critical thinking in educational contexts stems from the hope that it will help students become self-sufficient and effective learners. We all know that critical thinking, effective communication, and problem solving are skills that can be learned in school and at work. In addition, approaches allow for the measurement of these competencies in the workplace.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The total number of participants were 53 Iraqi EFL teachers (N=53) between the ages of (25-50) years old, all of them have teaching experiences from 3 years to 24 years. Among these participants, 24 are male and 29 are female.

Materials and Instruments

Peter Honey's Critical Thinking Questionnaire (CTQ)

The test was developed by Honey (2000) as an instrument to measure L2 learners' levels of CT ability. It's important to note that he made some further changes later on to make it more acceptable for the intended uses. In terms of the CTQ's format, it consists of 30 items in the form of brief statements that aim to assess L2 learners' skill in several CT abilities. The CTQ response format uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), with Always being the highest score and Never being the lowest. Because CTQ has a high readability index, it is estimated that it will take about 15 minutes to complete (e.g., Honey, 2000). The purpose of the critical thinking ability questionnaire is to assess the participants' understanding, analysis, and evaluation abilities. It is a 30-item, 5point Likert scale questionnaire that assesses the participants' abilities in summarizing, paraphrasing, questioning, notetaking, classifying, researching, discussing, comparing and contrasting, inductive and deductive reasoning, outlining, distinguishing, inference, and synthesizing on a scale of 1 to 5.

Job Performance Questionnaire

The job performance level among the respondent's will be tested. Questions which are based on factors that lead to job satisfaction were selected and the respondents were requested to answer the questions confidentially and they were also allowed to take their own time to complete the answers within a week. Because all of the respondents worked in the same industry, they were all asked the same set of questions. Respondents were just need to circle their choice of answer and follow the instructions given in order to answer the questions. This section has 40 questions about the following topics:

- i. Workplace stress level (10 questions)
- ii. Employees' views on their workload (10 questions)
- iii. Compensation (10 questions)
- iv. Working conditions (10 questions)

The respondents' responses were measured and evaluated using the Likert scale.

The Likert scale is a rating scale that assesses the degree to which people agree with a statement (Phillips, 2003). The choices of responses for each of the statements designed in this section were constructed using the 5point Likert scale. The questions were selected and modified from the online job satisfaction questionnaire (Gobi,2012) and (Chandran,2005).The type of rating scale used is 'Agreement' and the rating scales are as follow:1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Not Sure, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.

Data Analysis

The researcher applied a Pearson product-moment test to analyze and compute the probable positive correlation. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) determines the degree to which quantitative variables in a sample are linearly connected. Scores on two quantitative factors are required for each individual or situation (i.e., continuous variables measured on the interval or ratio scales). The significance test for revalues determines if the two variables in the population have a linear connection. The suitable correlation coefficient is determined by the measurement scales of the two variables that are being correlated.

RESULTS

All the participant were English teachers and their ages (25-50), 53 participant were the whole number, they divided into 29 female nearly (54,7%) and 24 male nearly (45,3%), as illustrated in Figure 1.

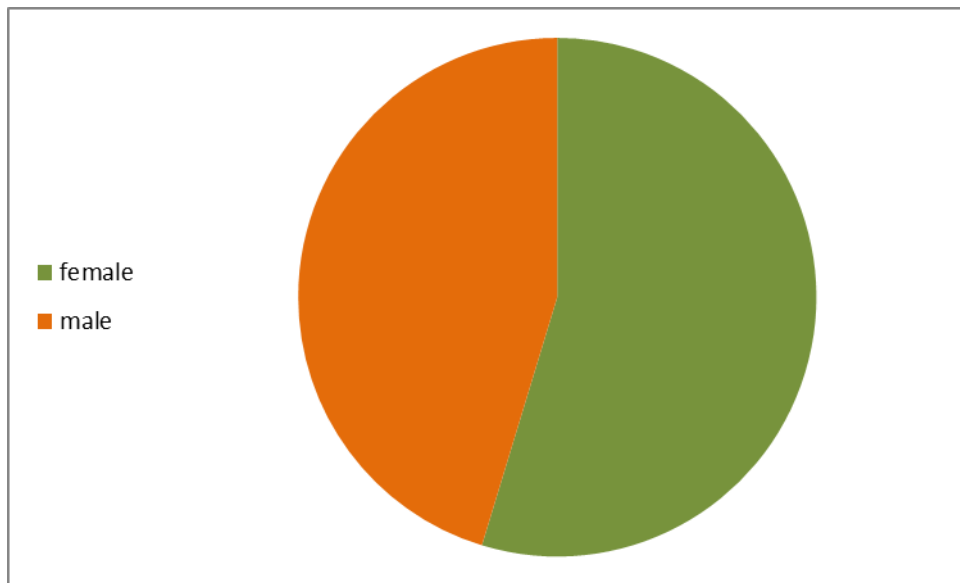


Figure 1. Respondents' gender of study

From the female 27 teacher that nearly (93%), and 22 teacher of the male nearly (91%), believe that the critical thinking have important role in their performance, as illustrated in Figure 2.

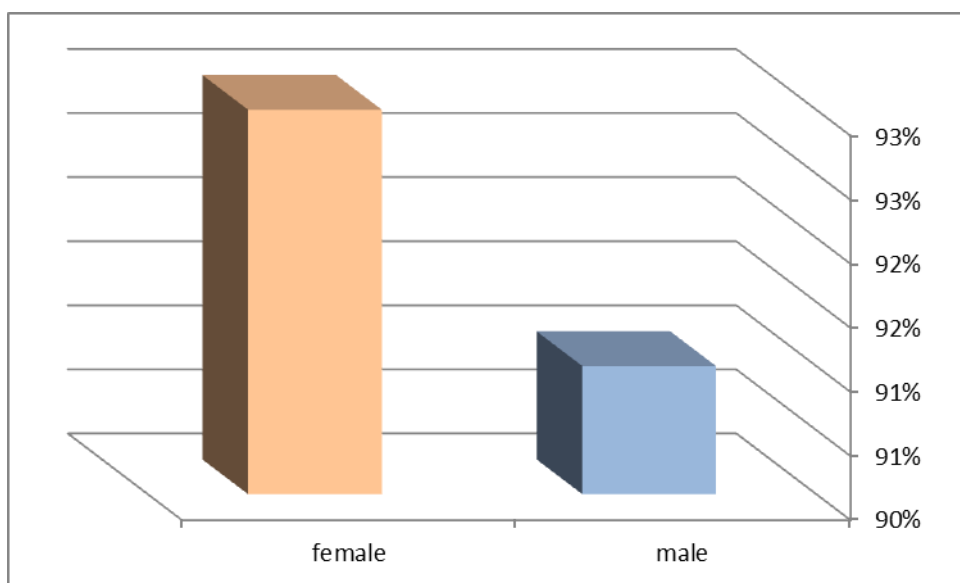


Figure 2. Teachers' belief of critical thinking

This means the result is 49 that nearly (92,4%) believe the critical thinking have important role in their performance as teachers. On the other hand, the rest of the sample are 4 teachers nearly (7,6%) who believe that there is not an important role to critical thinking in their work as teachers, as illustrated in Figure 3.

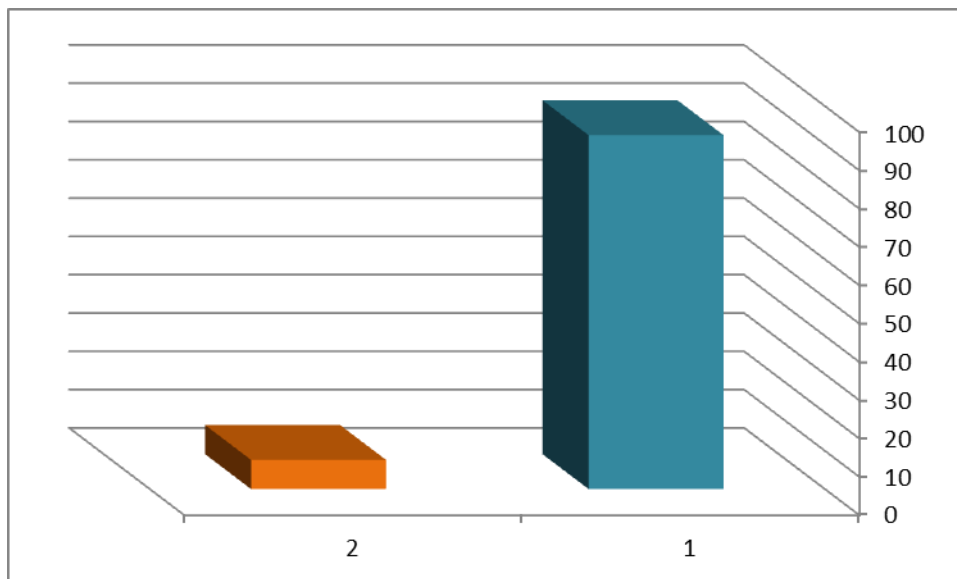


Figure 3. Final result of teachers' opinion of critical thinking

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the assumed relationship between critical thinking and job performance among English teachers in Baghdad. The results revealed that critical thinking correlated with job performance and have important relationship with it.

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