Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices about Integrating the Critical Thinking Skills in Libyan EFL Public High Schools: the Literacy or the Challenge

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This study aims at:
1. Exploring better possible teaching methods and strategies which can provide good opportunities for Libya high school students to use their critical thinking skills
2. Trying to avoid using the old traditional teaching methods such as translating to Arabic which can prevent students from using their critical thinking skills
3. Integrating more critical thinking skills at high schools when learning English language.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Do Libyan as a foreign language (EFL) teachers use any critical thinking skills?
2. What are the Libyan teachers perceptions of critical thinking skills?
3. Do Libyan teachers introduce their students to critical thinking skills?
4. How can EFL Libyan teachers use critical thinking skills?

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
In the field of language teaching and learning many educators as well as researchers base their arguments and suggestions on second language acquisition theories (SLAT). For this research, as the purpose of this work is to increase the awareness of Libyan EFL teachers towards the importance of integrating the critical thinking skills in their classrooms, the skill acquisition theory can confirm the significant role of critical thinking skills in improving the English language skills of Libyan EFL students. According to Taie (2014), this theory provides the potential opportunities for teachers to implement both explicit and implicit learning in SLA. Also, this theory highlights the role of practice, engagement and performance for students in order for them to get improved in language skills particularly the productive skills. More importantly, it entails the utilization of declarative knowledge followed by procedural knowledge. According to Richards & Schmidt (2010), “declarative knowledge is conscious knowledge of facts, concepts or ideas that can be stored as propositions. And procedural knowledge refers to unconscious knowledge of how an activity is done”.

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW
Critical thinking skills have been differently defined, for example, according to Elder and Paul (1994) state, “critical thinking skills are defined as the ability of individuals to take charge of their own thinking and develop appropriate criteria and standards for analyzing their own thinking”. Moreover, as Norris (1992) states, “critical thinking skills aims at achieving understanding, and evaluating different perspectives, and solving problems. For the challenges encountered by Libyan EFL teachers in the integration of critical thinking skills, Pathan and et al (2010) stated that the difficulties faced teaching English across Libyan schools are consistent; these are motivation, large classroom, low achievement rates, insufficient time to teach curriculum, and teacher training. Teachers of English in secondary schools are only Libyan and their level of proficiency in the English language may not always give confidence in encouraging and motivating the students as they tend to focus on explaining the declarative knowledge such as grammar rules and vocabulary asking their students only to memorize instead of practicing them. Critical thinking skills have positive effects on the language teaching process.

They have been introduced and they have gained a special attention in many foreign language teaching (FLT) settings so
that nowadays enhancing critical thinking skills of students is considered one of the foreign language teachers tasks at schools. The manipulation of critical thinking skills into the FLT classrooms is very important to improve the performance of EFL students to the English language skills for several reasons. First, if students can take charge of their own thinking, they can monitor and evaluated their own ways of learning more successfully. Second, critical thinking skills expand the learning experience of the students and makes the language more meaningful for them. Third, critical thinking skills have a high degree of correlation with the students achievements. Different studies have confirmed that the role of critical thinking in improving EFL writing performance, language proficiency and oral communication skills. Students may become proficient language users if they have motivation and are taught the ways of displaying critical thinking skills in foreign language usage. Which signifies that the students must have reflection on their production of ideas and they may critically support those ideas with logical details. Educators have emphasized the importance of developing higher-order thinking skills in foreign language classrooms (Chamot, 1995; Al-Arishi and et al, 1991). Students who have developed critical thinking skills are capable of doing activities of which other students may not be capable.

VII. RESULTS

This study revealed that there is a misunderstanding of critical thinking skills meaning by Libyan EFL teachers. Also, Teachers focus more on teaching The grammar rules, vocabulary and memorization of the syllabus. Additionally, teachers are more concerned with students’ grades rather than their performance. On the other hand, the Libyan curriculum of English provide many chances of using these critical thinking skills such as reflecting on the reading passages by sharing students’ experience. Much research is required to clearly investigate the teaching methods used by Libyan teachers. This study recommends offering more training programs to improve teachers’ teaching methods, particularly integrating critical thinking skills which can help in improving students’ levels of English skills.

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