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دراسة العلاقة بين التفكير النقدي والتعلم الذاتي المنظم: وجهات نظر بعض أساتذة الجامعات الليبية

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الملخّـــــص :

يُعد دمج مهارات التفكير النقدي في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية أمرًا بالغ الأهمية لتعزيز قدرة الطلاب على تحليل المعلومات وتقييمها وتركيبها بفعالية في السياقات الأكاديمية والواقعية. تبحث هذه الدراسة في العلاقة بين التفكير النقدي والتعلم الذاتي التنظيم في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية بمؤسسات التعليم العالي في ليبيا. وقد لوحظ أن عددًا كبيرًا من طلاب الجامعات لا يدركون أو لا يستطيعون استخدام مهارات التفكير النقدي داخل الفصل الدراسي، مما يؤدي إلى فقدان الطلاب الليبيين لفرصة أن يصبحوا متعلمين منظمين ذاتيًا من حيث حل المشكلات، والتفكير التأملي، والمناقشة. ومن خلال البحث النوعي الذي تضمن مقابلات شبه منظمة مع 12 محاضرًا جامعياً، تتناول الدراسة التحديات التي يواجهها المدرسون عند دمج هذه المهارات، مثل برامج التدريب والقيود الزمنية. وتكشف النتائج أن المحاضرين يقدّرون بشدة إدراج مهارات التفكير النقدي في التدريس، إدراكًا منهم لإمكاناتها في تعزيز التعلم العميق، وتحسين مهارات التواصل، وإعداد الطلاب لمواجهة تعقيدات عالم مترابط وغني بالمعلومات. وأخيرًا، فإن دمج التفكير النقدي في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية لا يعزز الكفاءة اللغوية فحسب، بل يُزوّد الطلاب أيضًا بالأدوات التحليلية اللازمة للتعلم مدى الحياة واتخاذ قرارات مستنيرة.

الكلمات المفتاحيـة: قيمة دمج التفكير النقدي , التعليم في ليبيا وعلاقته بالتفكير النقدي

An Investigation into the Relationship Between Critical Thinking and Self-Regulated Learning: Perspectives from Libyan University Lecturers

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Abstract:

The integration of critical thinking skills into English language curricula is vital for enhancing students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information effectively in both academic and real-world contexts. This paper investigates the relationship between critical thinking and self-regulated learning within English language teaching at higher education institutions in Libya. It is noted that a large number of university students are not aware or able to use their critical thinking skills in classroom .Therefore, Libyan students miss the opportunity to become self-regulated learners in terms of problem-solving, reflection, and discussion. Through qualitative research involving semi-structured interviews with 12 university lecturers, the paper examines the challenges educators face when integrating these skills, such as training programs and time constraints. The findings reveal that lecturers highly value the inclusion of critical thinking in their teaching recognizing its potential to promote deeper learning, enhance communication skills, and prepare students for the complexities of an interconnected and information-rich world. Finally, the integration of critical thinking into English language curricula not only strengthens language proficiency but also equips students with the analytical tools necessary for lifelong learning and informed decision-making.

Key words: The value of integrating critical thinking skills,
 Libyan education in relation to critical thinking.

1- Introduction

The integration of critical thinking skills into English language teaching has gained significant attention in recent years as educators recognize the importance of fostering   critical thinking skills among students. According

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to Liaw (2007:51), critical thinking "involves the use of information, experience, and world knowledge in ways which allow students to seek alternatives, make inferences, pose questions, and solve problems, thereby signaling understanding in a variety of complex ways". Critical thinking involves the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information with an open, reflective mindset. Involving critical thinking in the process of teaching, students can enhance their learning abilities by engaging more deeply in learning. A number of definitions of critical thinking have been provided as Bintang (2024:2) states that "the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information to make reasoned judgments and decisions, plays a pivotal role in language learning and communication". Integrating critical thinking into English teaching offers an approach to language instruction, empowering students to engage more deeply with the language and develop essential cognitive skills (Bintang, 2024). Critical thinking is a method of thinking that involves the ability to analyze, synthesize, and interpret a case or problem (Bachtiar et al, 2024). However, integrating critical thinking into language teaching presents several challenges for teachers and students alike. For instance, educators often face difficulties in designing activities that simultaneously promote language acquisition and critical thinking skills. Additionally, students may struggle with the demands of critical thinking due to limited proficiency or a lack of familiarity with the skills involved. It is believed that teachers spend most of their time teaching English language competence but do not prepare students for life in the real world (Liaw, 2007). Despite these challenges, the integration of critical thinking into language education offers many opportunities as question assumptions, analyze various perspectives, and engage in reasoned discourse, teachers can create a more dynamic, interactive learning environment. Therefore, this paper is very important which highlights the relationship between critical thinking and self-regulated learning from Libyan university lectures point of view. To understand this research, it is essential to discuss the use of critical thinking in Libyan education.

2- Libyan Education in Relation to Critical Thinking

Knowledge of the context of a study is an integral part of social research, providing background information about where the study is conducted. A study by Ahmed (2012) reveals that teaching and learning English language is considered as a special position in Libyan education system. In Libya, Learning English language is focused on rote memorization and the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, with less emphasis on inquiry-based learning, problem-solving, or the development of critical thinking skills. For example, students would to learn different skills as they spend most of their time studying English language through lessons in grammar, reading and writing and followed by drills and exercises. Waragh (2016) states that in fact, Libyan teachers tend to use traditional methods such as the grammar translation method to teach the four language skills. This could reduce or limit the opportunity to integrate critical thinking in the teaching process. Additionally, teachers may have a lack of training knowledge in pedagogical approaches. This may be related to focus on content knowledge rather than teaching strategies that promote critical thinking. As a result, many teachers may not feel equipped to implement teaching methods that foster analytical and critical thought among students. Critical thinking entails critical interpretation and dialogue, both of which are essential to solving problems and making decisions (Bachtiar et al, 2024). Even though university instructors have the choice to select their own teaching materials, however, they do not tend to integrate critical thinking skills in their teaching. It is argued that students need to be supported to discover their abilities and acquire knowledge through life-long learning. Consequently, it is very important to develop the teachers' skills and knowledge in order to deal with changes in the world.

While Libyan educational system attempts to develop critical thinking, it is still not universally integrated within teaching. The key reason is that most of Libyan teachers traditionally prefer to focus on 'what to think' rather than 'how, why to think'. Progress toward promoting critical thinking has been slow, hindered by factors, ongoing political instability, and entrenched educational practices. However, international partnerships, curriculum

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reforms, and changes in societal attitudes offer potential for future progress in cultivating critical thinking in Libyan students. It seems that there is a lack of social science research in Libya; therefore, the current paper aims to add some significant pedagogical insights to the field of English language learning in the Libyan context in order to reflect positively on the development of the education system. Students need to be encouraged to make logical reasons behind every comment or decision they express and oversee these comments/decisions (ibid, 2024)

3-The Value of Integrating Critical Thinking Skills

Integrating critical thinking skills into learning English offers many benefits, for both language teachers and students. For example, critical thinking encourages students to analyze and question which make them more adept at understanding. A critical thinking skill questions the students' minds, and enables them to work with the knowledge being learned (Gandimathi, and Zarei, 2018). In addition, it improves problem-solving abilities and think creatively in using the language. Students need many of the critical thinking skills to become proficient users of English (Liaw, 2007). Further benefit is that critical thinking boosts communication skills among students by presenting arguments, support opinions with evidence, and engage in thoughtful discussion. Independent learning can be fostered by integrating critical thinking skills because students rely on memorization in learning. When learners engage with language content critically, they are more likely to remember and be able to apply it in different contexts. Critical thinking encourages open-mindedness and helps students appreciate diverse perspectives. Finally, critical thinking enhances collaborative skills by enabling students to participate actively in discussions, ask meaningful questions, and offer well-reasoned opinions, thus contributing more effectively to group activities and peer interactions. Students and lectures may work together to understand and analyze the contents of the lesson (Gandimathi and Zarei, 2018). Paul and Elder (2006), critical thinking is a process to improve the quality of thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures integral in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them.

It can be concluded that integrating critical thinking into English learning is not only valuable for improving language proficiency, but it also develops essential cognitive and self-regulated learning. By combining language learning with critical thinking, students are better equipped to navigate complex linguistic and cultural contexts, communicate effectively, and become lifelong learners. Self-regulated learning is discussed below to provide a full picture.

4- Self-regulated Learning

According to Zimmerman (2002), self-regulation is not a mental ability or an academic performance skill; rather it is the self-directive process by which students transform their mental abilities into academic skills. It can be noted that self-regulation skills could increase students' academic success and performance. Therefore, teachers can encourage students to establish specific goals for their academic work or teach explicit study strategies (ibid, 2002). Self-regulated learning could also change students' views of learning as a skill and can be used to analyze learning tasks, set goals, and plan procedures for carrying out those tasks, applying skills, and in particular making decisions about how learning will be carried out (Ghimby, 2023). Critical thinking involves analysis, a student needs to be able to evaluate and justify the topic in discussion (Gandimathi and Zarei, 2018). Kamgar and Jadidi (2016) provide example that self-regulation and critical thinking are two relevant metacognitive reading strategies. However, the low critical thinking ability of students is shown by the presence of students who are embarrassed to ask questions when the material is difficult to understand. Students are passive in education and learning (Ghimby,2023).From this, it seems that there is relationship between critical thinking and self-regulated learning in terms of increase students' ability to discuss, analysis, and make questions. Based on the above discussion of the gap identified in the literature and the importance of developing language lectures' understanding of teaching thinking skills. This paper reports a study conducted with university lectures in Libya with aims to bridge the research gaps that may exist between the theories of teaching thinking in Libya context and actual pedagogical beliefs and practices of language lectures.

5- Significance of the Study

Recently, education increasingly emphasizes student autonomy, problem-solving, and lifelong learning, understanding how these two constructs interact is crucial for enhancing teaching practices and learning outcomes. This paper is significant as it investigates the essential relationship between critical thinking and self-regulated learning. It is noted that a large number of students who have a lack of asking questions, problem solving and analysis which reflect negatively on their self-regulated learning. By investigating this relationship, the paper provides valuable insights into how students can be supported in becoming more reflective, analytical, and self-directed students.Furthermore, the findings contribute to the broader field of educational psychology by clarifying how critical thinking skills may influence a student's ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning. The paper also holds practical implications for educators and curriculum developers, offering guidance on how to integrate instructional strategies that foster both critical thinking and self-regulation. In this regard, EFL researchers can then conduct further research in this area based on the findings from this paper. Furthermore, university lectures and students will have a better understanding of the relationship between critical thinking and self-regulated learning.

6- Research Methodology

6.1.Data Collection Procedure and Participants

The main aim of this research is to investigate the integration of critical thinking skills into English language teaching. This qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. A total of 12 university-level English language lecturers in Libya participated in the study. The interview questions were designed to explore participants' perspectives on the importance of critical thinking skills, how they incorporate these skills into their teaching practices, the challenges they encounter, and self-regulated learning. As Cohen et al. (2007:461) note, "qualitative data is often gathered from smaller numbers of people, yet the

data tend to be detailed and rich", which aligns with the objectives of this research. The interviews provided in-depth insights, and the subsequent analysis revealed key themes. These themes were categorized into two main areas: the benefits of integrating critical thinking into English language teaching, and the challenges associated with this integration.

6.2. Research Questions

This paper answers the following overarching research question:

- How do Libyan university lectures perceive the relationship between critical thinking and self-regulated learning?

7- Findings and discussion

This section presents the findings and the discussion of the integration of critical thinking skills into English language teaching. The primary goal is to identify common themes as perceived by the educators who participated in the study. Semi-structured interviews with 12 university lecturers generated rich qualitative data, which were analyzed to uncover recurring patterns and insights. To ensure confidentiality, anonymized labels such as L1, L2, L3, and so on are used to refer to the participants. The analysis followed a thematic approach, where categories and concepts emerging from the data were grouped into descriptive themes. Concepts with similar meanings were clustered together, while differences were also examined to provide a nuanced understanding. It is important to note that these themes are interrelated rather than discrete, and must be interpreted as interconnected elements of the participants' lived experiences, rather than presented in a linear or isolated manner. Each theme is supported by direct quotes and interpretations from the participants' responses. The following sections elaborate on these themes with illustrative examples and discussion in relation to the existing literature.

7.1. Critical Thinking and Self-regulated Learning

A majority of the lecturers (9 out of 12) emphasized the essential relationship between critical thinking and self-regulated learning in shaping students' overall academic performance and cognitive development. They believed that integrating critical thinking into English language is crucial for preparing students to navigate the complexities of modern academic and professional environments. According to L1, *I make mini-presentation to inform the students about critical thinking*. For example, these lectures utilized classroom discussions to encourage students to think critically about course material, asking probing questions and promoting debate. Critical thinking skills are self-improvement (Subiyanto et al, 2025). As critical thinking involves analysis, a student needs to be able to evaluate and justify the topic in discussion (Gandimath and Zarei, 2018). They state that students who have critical thinking skills can become self-regulated students to analyze information, forming opinions, and expressing themselves effectively.

Other three lectures stated that their students are not required to focus on this skill and their role was only to receive the information. A study by Subiyanto et al (2025) indicate that many teachers complain that students do not use their critical thinking skills sufficiently and they tend to accept experts' ideas without analyzing them properly. This is likely because most of Libyan students previously studied at primary and secondary schools which typically applied teacher-centered approach. It is suggested that university lecturers should prioritize the professional development of teachers to better integrate critical thinking into the curriculum. Suggestions included providing workshops, offering more training on pedagogical strategies, and improving access to resources. They also recommended that the curriculum be more flexible to allow for the inclusion of critical thinking-focused activities. That thinking skills should be a key element of English language teaching and their overall positive attitudes

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7.2. Challenges in Integrating Critical Thinking Skills

Several factors that affected lectures in using critical thinking were found. The themes generated from the analysis of data under this heading were: lectures' awareness, the time given for critical thinking and lectures' training. These factors are analyzed by their importance for lectures.

7.3. Awareness of Critical Thinking Skills

Awareness of critical thinking skills refers to an individual's ability to recognize and consciously apply logical reasoning and analysis. The current study shows that most of lectures are aware of critical thinking skills but they do not encourage their students to use it. This is may be related to the fact that lectures focus on memorization as L4 stated that *many lectures do not ask their students to apply it*. One key factor influencing awareness is a lack of training and also, lectures emphasize memorization over inquiry-based learning. This may not students develop their habits of questioning or reflecting. Subiyanto et al (2025) highlight that institutions have faced obstacles such as limited resources and insufficient training for educators. In conclusion, raising awareness of critical thinking skills is essential in education and everyday life. With greater awareness, individuals are better prepared to solve problems, analyze information, and think independently in an increasingly complex world. Gandimathi and Zarei (2018) confirm that the questions asked and answers given reflect on one's thought which promotes higher-level thinking. It is suggested that lectures need to consider this by encouraging and motivating students to increase their awareness towards critical thinking. In conclusion, raising awareness of critical thinking is essential not only in educational contexts but also in everyday life. Individuals with a strong awareness of critical thinking are better in self-regulated learning to solve problems, analyze information critically, and think independently in an increasingly complex world. As Gandimathi and Zarei (2018) confirm the nature of questions asked and responses given reflects one's cognitive engagement, thereby promoting higher-order thinking skills. The next section presents time as a challenge for lectures to integrate critical thinking in classroom.

7.4. Time Constraints

Time constraints emerged as a significant challenge cited by all lecturers. Due to a heavy curriculum load and limited lecture time, incorporating deep discussions and critical thinking activities proved difficult. A study by (Li, 2016) highlights that time limitations and a rigid reliance on the curriculum were the two main barriers to implementing thinking-based approaches in the classroom. The present study shows that lecturers expressed concern that students have minimal opportunities for discussion, analysis, or debate. As one lecturer (L5) explained, *class time is limited because I focus on covering content rather than skill-building.* This theme highlights the importance of shifting from content-heavy teaching to approaches that prioritize active student participation and become more self-regulated learning in problem-solving, discussions, and reflective practices—essential elements for deeper learning and knowledge retention. Bachtiar et al (2024) indicate that teachers have a lack of time to use critical thinking in classroom. This implies that more time is required for implementing critical thinking with limited number of students. Lectures may include more time in their lesson plan for critical thinking.

7.5. Lecturer Training

All of the current lecturers reported a lack of a particular training programs on how to effectively integrate critical thinking into their teaching practices. (L7) noted, *training offers a great opportunity to enhance critical skills for students because they are able to think beyond surface-level information*. Professional development activities—such as workshops, seminars, and peer collaboration—are identified as valuable tools to support lecturers in incorporating critical thinking strategies into their instruction. These findings align with the study by Bachtiar et al. (2024), which found that teachers often have limited knowledge of critical thinking, as it remains a relatively new concept for many. The study also highlighted that a major barrier to promoting critical thinking in Indonesia is the inadequate training received by English language teachers (ibid). It is essential to emphasize the importance of fostering positive attitudes among Libyan lecturers toward the

concept of critical thinking. To ensure the success and sustainability of such initiatives, robust policy support is necessary to institutionalize training programs and promote continuous professional development. Lecturers need to be trained to shift from teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogical approaches. This is supported by Bachtiar et al. (2024), who noted that many educators still rely on teacher-based methods that emphasize content learning over process learning. The transition can be further supported through the implementation of metacognitive strategy training, as suggested by Panggabean and Triassanti (2020).

8. Conclusion

The integration of critical thinking skills into English language curricula is viewed by the lecturers as essential for fostering deeper learning and enhancing students self-regulated learning. Despite facing challenges such as awareness and time constraints, the majority of lecturers expressed a strong commitment to incorporating critical thinking into their teaching. They highlighted the positive impact on student engagement, communication, and problem-solving skills, while also suggesting improvements in resources and training to further enhance the effectiveness of critical thinking integration. It is recommended that curriculum developers collaborate closely with lecturers to co-develop context-relevant strategies for fostering critical thinking in diverse classroom settings. Integrating critical thinking objectives explicitly into course content and assessment criteria will help ensure consistency and practical application across teaching environments. Policymakers can play a pivotal role by allocating sufficient time within curricula to allow for the meaningful incorporation of critical thinking without overwhelming educators. Additionally, supporting institutional frameworks that prioritize learner autonomy and higher-order thinking skills will help sustain long-term improvements in language education.

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