


## EXPLORING EFL TEACHERS' FACILITATING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN TEACHING WRITING TO LOW-PROFICIENT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH: A MIXED METHOD APPROACH




 Md. Mohib Ullah<sup>1+</sup>

 Md. Eftekhar Uddin<sup>2</sup>

 Kamol Karmakar<sup>3</sup>

 Md. Saiful Alam<sup>4</sup>

 Tauhidul Islam<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of English Language and Literature, International Islamic University Chittagong, Kumira, Chittagong-4318, Bangladesh.

<sup>1</sup>Email: [mohib@iiuc.ac.bd](mailto:mohib@iiuc.ac.bd)

<sup>2</sup>Email: [efteharu@iiuc.ac.bd](mailto:efteharu@iiuc.ac.bd)

<sup>3</sup>Department of English, Ranada Prasad Shaha University, Narayanganj-1400, Bangladesh.

<sup>3</sup>Email: [kamolkarmakar6@gmail.com](mailto:kamolkarmakar6@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Department of English, World University of Bangladesh, Bangladesh.

<sup>4</sup>Email: [saif@uwc.edu.bd](mailto:saif@uwc.edu.bd)

<sup>5</sup>Ingreji DotCom, Banshkhali, Chittagong-4393, Bangladesh.

<sup>5</sup>Email: [ingrejidotcom@gmail.com](mailto:ingrejidotcom@gmail.com)



(+ Corresponding author)

### ABSTRACT

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Critical thinking (CT) is one of the crucial skills of the 21st century. Nevertheless, in the educational sector of Bangladesh, CT is still not appropriately taught and practiced to develop learners' expertise. This study aimed to investigate how EFL teachers facilitate critical thinking (CT) skills of the undergraduate low-proficient learners and what obstacles they faced in promoting CT skills in writing classes in Bangladesh. It integrated both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve the research goals. To conduct this study, the researchers collected data from twelve teachers from six universities in Chattogram, Bangladesh. The results show that the common challenges teachers face while facilitating CT skills are- their lack of proper knowledge and training, inadequate focus on promoting CT skills in the existing educational curriculum, lack of motivation of both students and teachers, difficulty in transitioning from a 'teacher-centric' to a 'student-centric' classroom, inconvenient classroom environment, and more focus on securing good grades. Findings also show that teachers in tertiary-level education did not pay enough attention to enhance CT and problem-solving skills. However, there are possibilities to enhance teachers' abilities to improve the CT skills of low-proficient EFL learners. The research findings will help tertiary-level EFL teachers understand the current practice of facilitating CT skills in Bangladesh and devise appropriate strategies for better action.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study contributes in highlighting methods how EFL teachers can facilitate critical thinking skills of undergraduate low-proficient learners. It also identifies obstacles that should be removed in order to enhance those CT skills.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The essentiality of CT and an inquisitive mind is perceived from the teachings of the great Socrates to Plato to Aristotle to modern-day American educational reformer John Dewey. Unluckily, we are now in an age where information gets mixed up with intelligence, freethinking is mistakenly put with contention, cramming ability brings us close to the stairs to success, and thinking outside the square is seen as pursuing a lesser-known success

path. Students' proficiency level is a significant aspect of facilitating CT skills at the undergraduate level. Mou (2019) points out, "Students' low proficiency in tertiary level is a matter of concern. This situation is the result of incomplete learning during primary, secondary, and higher secondary level" (p. 223). Moreover, a grade-hunting mindset is also an obstacle to mastering CT skills. Apart from these, problem-based learning and some other strategies which can be helpful to facilitate CT skills are not appropriately implemented while teaching EFL with the Communicative Language Teaching approach (Ningsih, Suherdi, & Purnawarman, 2022; Peng, Nair, & Wider, 2022; Seibert, 2021; Ullah, 2015). To better prepare the next generation of students for this world, we cannot but instill a craving for learning and CT in each of them. According to Martin (1963) "Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity" (chapter. 4).

### 1.1. Statement of Problem

Critical thinking is one of the essential skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, its facilitation has remained less focused in the educational arena of Bangladesh. Although the undergraduate level is a good stage for promoting CT skills, teachers who are, as Alam, Asmawi, Fatema, Ullah, and Azad (2022) maintain, the most involved subjects (actors) of the teaching activity towards the object of teaching students all kinds of skills including CT, do not facilitate them even at this level. Writing classes that can be a good place for fostering CT skills mostly overlook them by teaching some specific writing items in a segregated way. Apparently, there is a disparity between curriculum, curriculum development, curriculum implementation, and depth in students' production. The negligence in promoting CT skills at this level ultimately results in disappointment for the students because students without critical thinking abilities cannot be assets to society. Though research has been conducted to investigate the facilitation of CT skills and the challenges in this process in different countries, no research has been undertaken to explore how they go with the low-proficiency level undergraduate EFL learners of Bangladesh. So, this study aimed to investigate how teachers facilitate the low-proficiency level undergraduate EFL learners in writing classes in Bangladesh to develop their CT skills and what challenges they face.

### 1.2. Research Questions (RQs)

We designed the following questions in this study to find answers to the problems mentioned above.

- i. How do teachers facilitate CT skills in the writing class of low-proficiency level learners?
- ii. What obstacles do the teachers face in facilitating CT skills?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Critical Thinking Skills

"Critical thinking is thinking that assesses itself" (Structures for Student Self-Assessment, 1996). It, "according to the many existing definitions, includes observation, interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and metacognition" (Nina, 2018). Critical thinking, a process that does not happen in an instant, takes much effort and improves with practice. It is "...the pursuit of relevant and reliable knowledge about the world... [it is] reasonable, reflective, responsible, and skillful thinking ... focused on what to believe or do" (Schafersman, 1991). But "to be a critical thinker does not mean that one has no opinions; rather, it means that one is alert to ideas that may change his or her opinions" (Üstünlüođlu, 2004). If a student, irrespective of his/her multiple identities, can deduce a conclusion from the available information s/he has, and through questioning, if s/he can define the problem, determine the cause, and come up with a solution, s/he indeed has CT skills. According to Siegel (1988) someone who is capable of critical thinking is characteristically inclined to do reason-based things by rejecting arbitrariness and valuing the essential aspects of critical thinking such as intellectual honesty, objectivity, impartiality, sympathetic consideration, etc. Simply put, we cannot develop new knowledge by rehearsing what is already known. This is possible only when we can critically and logically falsify the known.

## 2.2. Significance of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is much more significant because it teaches everyone why not to live life on assumptions but facts. “It is a cornerstone in the journey humankind is taking from beastly savagery to global sensitivity” (Facione, 2015). Apart from promoting creativity, developing a questioning mindset, and exploring all sides of a problem, it helps us communicate with clarity and precision and lets us know that only surface information without depth of knowledge is never enough. If it improves, it can turn an ordinary person into a bias-free thinker who, when exploring alternatives in different situations, will know how to think and form opinions rationally. It makes one question about their previous learning to formulate thoughts or ideas newly. Critical thinkers always have this constant thirst for new knowledge because they become uncomfortable, even in their comfort zone, if they cannot challenge their preconceived views or biases in life. Students have to learn CT skills, or they will lag behind.

According to Dewey (1947) the father of modern-day critical thinking, “If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow.” As Lam (2007) puts, “it is vital to cultivate in students a critical mindset that prompts them to think of reasons both for and (especially) against any judgment that is to be made” (p. 438). Thanks to technology, we are now startled by a never-ending information explosion. Research by Oliver and Utermohlen (1995) supports that students need to “develop and effectively apply critical thinking skills to their academic studies, to the complex problems that they will face, and to the critical choices they will be forced to make as a result of the information explosion and other rapid technological changes” (p. 1). Critical thinking is essential because we need our learners to truly understand things rather than acquire information under the guise of knowledge.

## 2.3. Writing Classes as Good Means to Facilitate CT

Generally speaking, classrooms which have a substantial intended focus on CT development may ultimately result in the development of many sub-skills of CT. Browne and Freeman (2000) for instance suggest that “a critical thinking classroom commonly reflects the following attributes: frequent questions, developmental tension, fascination with the contingency of conclusions and active learning. These attributes reinforce one another to provide developmental stimuli for enhanced critical thinking” (p. 301). More specifically, communicative language activities, precisely the productive skills that engage learners in authentic communication, always require CT skills. “Language classes are particularly appropriate for teaching critical thinking owing to the richness of material and the interactive approaches used” (Üstünlüoğlu, 2004). Without being opinionated, learners learn how to evaluate things in writing if critical thinking is facilitated in writing classes and the classroom is the best place for learners to develop truth-seeking and open-mindedness: two of the essential reflective attitudes. Moonma and Kaweera (2022) in their research on Thai students, emphasize that writing classes can be an excellent channel to facilitate critical thinking skills.

## 2.4. Justification: Why Writing Class

To justify why writing classes are suitable means to facilitate CT, we can give the following thought experiment a try. Imagine you, as a language teacher of English in secondary education, asked a few of your star learners to write about the psychological factors behind academic failure or English phobia among most rural area students when it comes to learning a foreign or second language in particular. To shed light on such a topic, the learners must dive deeper into some critical thinking. They have to interpret, analyze, evaluate, infer and explain the following terms—academic failure, psychological factors behind academic failure, English phobia, rural area students, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL), and so on. Writing classes are the best means we know of to facilitate CT because in writing classes, through collaboration with peer students, learners can learn to improve their critical thinking, become language experts, and sort out all the whys, hows, and what happens ifs. Since this critical thinking ability is the key to academic success, writing classes should place a

high value on critical thinking for the learners. Unluckily enough, “Among the different language skills, writing has received relatively less attention from researchers” (Soodmand Afshar, Movassagh, & Radi Arbabi, 2017).

### *2.5. Facilitating CT in Bangladeshi Context*

“The ability to think critically is crucial for students living in a country with political and socio-economic problems, for it will help them to look at issues from different viewpoints and become independent thinkers and responsible citizens” (Shaila & Trudell, 2010). Unfortunately, teaching and learning the art of reasoning in reading and writing classes in Bangladesh’s tertiary-level education is still not so common (Ullah & Fatema, 2013). Critical thinking is an essential feature for the improvement of teaching and learning. Incorporating CT skill courses in the honors curriculum is no longer an option but a compulsion. As CT is one of the most demanded skills in the workplace, and it empowers people, inspires them to raise questions, or improves their chances of success, we have no option but to incorporate this in tertiary education compulsorily.

### *2.6. Facilitating CT in Writing Class in Bangladesh*

Writing classes in Bangladesh can be an important place to facilitate critical thinking skills. Bean and Melzer (2021) from their experience of teaching writing courses, argue that integrating teaching both writing and critical thinking skills has a significant impact on learners. But in Bangladesh, learners mostly write on exam scripts in the conventional chalk-and-talk teaching method. Critical thinking does not take place until learners start questioning their earlier beliefs or what they are being consistently taught and advised to read. Unless a classroom is activity-based, the whole learning becomes monotonous. And activity-based learning has played a significant role in recent years of education. The Marshall and Rowland (1998) study thinks that critical thinking produces “joy, release, relief, and exhilaration as we break through to new ways of looking at our personal, work, and political worlds” (p. 34).

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

This part will discuss the research methodology, including the research setting, instruments, participants, data collection and analysis process, findings, etc. To avoid the difficulties in collecting the data and eliminate the weaknesses of a particular method, we used a mixed approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods. To carry out the research, we used data from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

### *3.1. Sample / Participants*

Twelve (12) representative teachers from different public and private universities of Chattogram participated in our questionnaire survey. Since there were some differences between the nature of the public universities and that of the private universities of Bangladesh, we included participants from both types of universities. All the teachers were very experienced in teaching; some had been in the teaching profession for more than two decades. Purposive sampling was used while selecting our participants. It was noted that in higher educational institutions, some teachers were reputed to promote critical thinking in language classes. On the contrary, there were a large number of teachers who were less interested or less informed about essential practices of thinking in the language classroom. That is why; both types of teachers were included to get an unbiased result. Also eight (08) teachers were interviewed from those twelve teacher participants. A set of open-ended and semi-structured questions were formed to interview them.

### 3.2. Instruments

Teacher feedback questionnaires and a semi-structured interview as instruments were included in this research to find out the ways and challenges of implementing CT skills. The questionnaire included structured, scaled, open-ended, and mixed questions.

### 3.3. Data Collection Process and Analysis

To collect quantitative data, the questionnaires were mailed to the selected teachers and requested them to submit their responses in two weeks. Moreover, appointments were made with some expert teachers to collect qualitative data. The questionnaire and the semi-structured interview were designed to elicit responses from the teachers that helped analyze the research questions and achieve the study's objective.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Results on RQ1 and Discussion

Responses to the questionnaire received from the teachers indicate that most of them try to facilitate CT skills in writing classes in one way or another though not regularly. The following Table 1 shows a summary of the teacher questionnaire as to how they facilitate CT skills.

Table 1. Teachers' facilitating CT skills in writing classes (%).

S/N	Query	Always	Sometimes	Neutral	Never
1	Giving students writing tasks that require them to think critically and write from their own	66%	34%	0%	0%
2	Involving them in brainstorming before starting the writing tasks	58%	42%	0%	0%
3	Designing writing activities following Bloom's Revised Taxonomy	41%	59%	0%	0%
4	Using rubrics to make them think critically while writing	41%	41%	9%	9%
5	Asking them to exchange their writing tasks to check and give critical feedback	16%	75%	9%	0%
6	Asking them to reflect on and edit their writing tasks after the first draft	58%	33%	0%	9%

Table 1 shows that the teachers use common activities and techniques to facilitate CT skills in their writing classes. The majority of the teachers, i.e., 66%, regularly give debatable topics to their students to write on to promote CT skills, while 58% of them regularly involve their students in brainstorming before starting writing tasks. Moreover, 41% of the participants use Bloom's Revised Taxonomy and rubrics, and 58% of them ask the students to reflect on and edit their writing tasks after the first draft.

#### 4.1.1. Analysis of the Semi-Structured Interview

According to the teacher participants, among the ways and techniques they follow to promote CT skills are: giving students debatable topics to write on, brainstorming, allowing self-correction, activities based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, free questioning, making of opinions, problem-solving, or case studies, enabling critical feedback by peers, using rubrics, activities based on distinguishing facts from opinion, etc.

When the teachers were asked how they facilitate CT skills in the writing classes, these are some of the responses they gave:

"As a facilitator, I do motivate them to practice writing on any topic. I also try to choose such topics for the students where there is a chance to apply their faculty, think critically, and encourage them to develop write-ups

following systematic processes—brainstorming, listing points, drafting, editing, reviewing, finalizing, etc.” Noted one teacher participant (T-1).

Another teacher (T-2) pointed out, “I try to place the students at Bloom’s higher-order thinking stratus. I ask my students to read Bengali literature and critical essays and ask them to impose a question to themselves, i.e., “why” across the lines and ideas. I do it as a means of self-generation of students’ schemata. I also engage students in debates, which lead to students’ diversity of thoughts and counter thoughts. I have found it useful.”

Teachers can facilitate CT skills in writing classes with many practical activities. Hughes (2014) mentioned activities like cultivating critical thinking, making an opinion, free questioning, analyzing context, writing effective headings, etc. To promote CT skills, these strategies are worth following. Then, rubrics may be used to assess students’ work, plan lessons, and design activities with Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. Teaching how to adeptly use “Think-Time” and “Wait-Time” in the classroom may also be a good CT skill. To learn to think critically, learners must know how to distinguish facts from opinions.

#### 4.1.2. *Cultivating Critical Thinking Skills*

Regular and everyday thinking happens automatically; however, critical thinking occurs deliberately. But critical thinking can also happen automatically if learners learn the ways because it can be known through self-improvement.

To carry out this activity, teachers can pen an unsettled topic like the following on the classroom board to see which side of it the students get on. “Monarchy should end worldwide.” Learners can be asked to write whether they support or oppose the topic. Teachers can use a list of probable replies to the topic for the learners to choose from: a) Not sure about it, b) Supporting the topic, c) Opposing the topic, d) Supporting/opposing the topic because [...] After the learners choose their responses, they need to know the meaning of those responses. Teachers may suggest to the learners with the response (a) that they do not have to be sure or unsure about it. They have to have their point of view on the topic because when they practice critical thinking in class, they cannot remain inactive in the discussion. Then, learners with options (b) and (c) may be told that their stance on the topic is praiseworthy, but they must amalgamate their reasons with opinions. And learners with the option (d) are sure one step closer to doing something.

#### 4.1.3. *Making of Opinion*

Teachers can ask students to write reasons in opinion pieces. This will teach them how to support ideas with proper explanations and evidence. If they look lost, sentences like the following may be given to them to complete as instances:

- I believe that gay relationships are against nature because \_\_\_\_\_.
- I think that religious fanaticism or believing in fierce nationalism can both be dangerous because \_\_\_\_\_.

#### 4.1.4. *Free Questioning*

For this activity, teachers may ask learners to change some close-ended questions into open-ended ones. Do you think humans will colonize Mars in the next 50 years? Are you happy with your experience with us? To make this activity happen, teachers may write some interrogative words on the classroom board.

The activity might go like this:

- Learner 1: Are you happy with your experience with us?
- Learner 2: Yes, I am.
- Learner 1: How would you describe your experience with us?



— Learner 2: I had a great experience with you since the menu was right for me, the food packaging was unparalleled and innovative, and last but not least, there is nothing better than getting your meal faster than expected. So ...

If the learners can grow their attitude by asking and answering questions, it will make them dig deeper into things and think critically.

#### 4.1.5. Analyzing Context

This activity can go through a close analysis of an image. With this one, learners can enhance their observation and interpretation skills. Teachers can use any visual media, such as a piece of art, photograph, or video clip in class for this activity. The image must reflect a particular opinion in order that it becomes worthwhile for analysis. It can be shared with students by projecting or displaying it in the classroom. For the students to think and write, the teacher may instruct them to observe the images carefully. Later, the learners can discuss the interpretation of the images with their acquaintances. If they can have a fruitful discussion, they may write what the artist of the images is trying to say or who they think the intended audience is.

#### 4.1.6. Writing Effective Headings

There are two ways for the teachers to do this activity – a) students can read a good piece of writing from books, journal articles, or newspaper articles, and b) they can listen to recorded conversations, YouTube videos, audiobooks, Television commercials, weather reports, movies & TV, radio, and so on to analyze the essential meaning of the text they have read or listened to. In listening activity, learners may listen to the texts more than once to better understand if they somehow missed one opportunity. Once their reading or listening is done, they can be asked to write what it was about. They can be asked to give effective headlines summarizing the text.

#### 4.1.7. Planning Lessons and Designing Activities with Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy

Bloom’s taxonomy, a method that “was created by Wilson (2001)” to order the levels of cognitive skills, is indeed an essential tool to teach CT skills to learners (Bloom’s Taxonomy, 2021). This method is unique for effective learning and critical thinking because it takes learners through a constructive and worthwhile thought process, from recalling information to generating new thoughts, opinions, or solutions. It’s necessary to introduce learners to Bloom’s taxonomy so that they can think about thinking, know about knowing, and be aware of their awareness. A revised version of the Bloom’s Taxonomy which was collaborated by the multi-disciplinary contributors including those from cognitive psychologists, instructional researchers, curriculum theorists, testing and assessment experts can apparently explain at what specific levels of cognition CT actually takes places (Krathwohl, 2002):

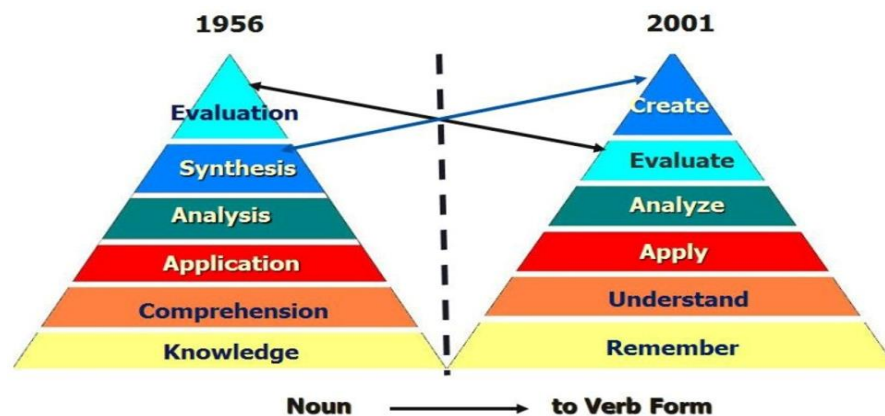


Figure 1. Changes in Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956) vs. Anderson et al. (2001); Wilson (2001).

Figure 1 illustrates the positioning of CT skills in Bloom's taxonomy, adopted from (Wilson, 2001).

A read from a Bronx Community College Library article suggests that the learning of Bloom's Taxonomy can be used in the following way for the facilitation of CT skills.

Thesis Statement: Why was Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech so inspiring to the Bengali people?

Creation: Construct an outline of what this country would look like without a healthy democracy.

Evaluation: How would Bangabandhu have reacted to today's Bangladesh if he were still alive?

Analysis: What changes would Bangabandhu bring to this country if he were still alive?

Application: How may the Bengali people build a 'Sonar Bangla' as dreamt by Bangabandhu?

Understanding: Why did Bangabandhu make this galvanizing speech?

Remembering: When did Bangabandhu make this historic speech? At which point has the speech touched people's hearts?

By providing learners with these kinds of thesis statements, teachers can make them think critically and write logically on the low-order thinking skills and the high-order ones.

#### 4.1.8. Using Rubrics to Facilitate Critical Thinking

Using analytical rubrics is a type of an academic support that facilitates students' CT development. According to Hohmann and Grillo (2014) uses of rubrics facilitate students' critical thinking skills including intellectual perseverance, effective questioning ability, intellectual autonomy, etc. Mariyam, Kabir, and Ullah (2015) emphasize on using rating scale while evaluating learners' writing at the Tertiary level in the context of Bangladesh. As such, implementing rubrics in writing classes is a bright idea to inspire better student performance and make students think and write logically. Rubrics are good assessment tools and helpful not just for teachers but also for students. They tell the students what is expected of them, how they will write their assignments, and how they can earn total points.

#### 4.1.9. Skillful Use of "Think-Time" and "Wait-Time" in the Classroom

Waiting time is the time a teacher gives students to think of the answer and is a critical instructional tool. Teachers need to increase teacher wait time and allow learners to think more deeply in their writing classes. "The concept of "wait-time" as an instructional variable was invented by Rowe (1972). Teachers must avoid unfortunate habits like interrupting and self-answering to improve students' CT skills. Recently, Stahl (1990) constructed the concept of "think-time," defined as a distinct period of uninterrupted silence by the teacher and all students so that they both can complete appropriate information-processing tasks, feelings, oral responses, and actions.

#### 4.1.10. Distinguishing Facts from Opinion

Distinguishing facts from opinions is one of the many useful ways to build CT skills. Students can be asked to highlight the facts and underline the opinions : Technically speaking, distinguishing facts from opinions is a type of diagnosis which involves explicit teaching (Rosenshine, 1986) and critical linguistic evaluation of facts as opposed to opinions (Graney, 1997). CT is an ability that makes students (as readers and writers) able to conclusively sort out the facts from perceptions (Schell, 1967). Precisely, distinguishing ability is deemed to be a sub-skill of CT in a writing class.

#### 4.2. Results on RQ2 and Discussion

Critical thinking skills make students confident without dependence on others. It has been seen that it drives away learners' submissiveness and prone to plagiarism; however, the facilitation of CT skills is difficult because there are multiple barriers to it, and it is tough to get around those barriers. While facilitating CT skills, teachers



face some common problems and challenges. Table 2 summarizes the teacher questionnaire on what challenges teachers face in promoting CT skills.

**Table 2.** The obstacles that teachers face in facilitating CT skills (%).

S/N	Query	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Facilitating CT skills at undergraduate level writing classes is challenging in the Bangladeshi context	0%	17%	0%	58%	25%
2	Most of the language teachers are unaware of the importance of promoting CT skills in the writing classes	8%	8%	9%	50%	25%
3	Most of the students at the undergraduate level are not capable of thinking critically	0%	33%	10%	41%	16%
4	Most of the undergraduate students struggle to write simple and easy sentences, let alone present their critical thinking through writing	9%	0%	0%	50%	41%
5	Most of the students are not interested in developing their CT skills	0%	16%	17%	34%	33%
6	Students' critical questions while delivering lectures are disturbing and unwelcome in my class	58%	42%	0%	0%	0%
7	Teachers do not have enough time and training to create content and provide materials that can promote critical thinking in the writing classes	0%	0%	25%	58%	17%

Table 2 shows that 83% of the teacher participants agreed on the point that facilitating CT skills is challenging in the context of Bangladesh. 57% of them agreed that most of their undergraduate students are incapable of thinking critically, while 91% said that most of their students are weak in writing. However, all the teacher participants disagreed with the statement that critical questions are unwelcome in their writing classes. This means; all the teachers are willing to promote CT skills in their writing classes.

#### 4.2.1. Analysis of the Semi-Structured Interview

The challenges the teacher participants face are: lack of students' motivation, poor writing skills, negative teacher attitude, lack of proper curriculum, fear of criticism, cultural issues, large class size, etc. One teacher said, "To me, the lack of appropriate course books, students' reluctance, the big classroom size, insufficient class time, and students' exam-bound study are some of the major challenges, including many other minor ones," One of the teachers commented (T-3). Another teacher reported, "Most students lack language efficiency, and some cannot also think critically. The education in both secondary and higher secondary level is inadequate to prepare them for university education, and it also varies from institution to institution" (T-4).

However, most teacher participants agree that they welcome critical questions and discussions in their classes, meaning they are willing to promote CT skills at tertiary education. The responses from the participants also suggest that if the students and teachers can simultaneously mitigate their negative attitude toward CT skills, it will be easier to overcome other challenges. In addition, it is apparent from the interviews that there should be a unified curriculum to teach CT skills.

#### 4.2.2. Egocentrism

Egocentrism is when students see everything that happens as it relates to them. Piaget (as cited in Heo, Han, Koch, and Aydin (2011)) have maintained, "Egocentrism is related to language learning as an inner speech and can effect on

differentiation in cognitive development". Reasoning and Logical thinking in young learners develop when egocentricism declines (as cited in [Doran and Cowan \(1975\)](#)). Because of this, they don't realize that the opinions of other people can be different from theirs. From children to pre-teens to teenagers to adults, everyone has difficulties overcoming egocentrism. If teachers can ensure an environment in the classroom that practices critical thinking, learners will for sure get rid of the obstacles to learning these skills.

#### *4.2.3. Teachers' Lacking Depth of Intellect*

This is one of the biggest obstacles to facilitating CT skills. At first, teachers have to be critical thinkers if they teach critical thinking. They must be introduced to modern approaches to teaching and learning because teaching tertiary-level students in the traditional chalk-and-talk method or the jug-and-mug theory no longer works. [Ehsan \(2021\)](#) remarks that the "Continuous supply of qualified teachers is another major concern of ensuring quality education at Tertiary education institutes. The concern applies to both public and private universities" (p. 57). The teacher-centered educational approach has turned into student-centered learning, and teachers nowadays spend less time talking in class. As teacher talking time (TTT) is decreased and student talking time (STT) is increased, students ask questions and actively participate in the discussion. If teachers lack the depth of intellect in the subjects or courses they are assigned to, the whole process of teaching becomes challenging.

#### *4.2.4. Intolerance*

Intolerance is when the power of thinking decreases; consequently, finding the solution to a silly problem becomes impossible, or there is confusion about how to best handle difficult situations. While investigation if critical thinking can be a cultural fabric in Kazakh education system, [Burkhalter and Shegebayev \(2012\)](#) have mentioned intolerance as one of the factors that hinders critical thinking in learners. When young learners can't tolerate behavior that differs from theirs, they cannot think fast and talk smart. They behave thoughtlessly in response because creativity gets blocked by intolerance.

#### *4.2.5. Assessment Challenges for Teachers*

The methods or approaches to teaching Bangladeshi teachers apply don't go hand in hand with the facilitation of critical thinking. The reliability of the test is, at times, disputed. A lot of the time, the tests lack content validity as well. According to [Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman, and Khan \(2014\)](#) we see learners using memorization strategies during the learning process, and there is doubt as to whether our tests measure what they are supposed to measure. All the students care about is higher grades, as many of them, unfortunately, believe that only high-GPA (Grade Point Average) students become successful in the future. Test timing, test format, and test scoring definitely give our teachers a hard time in teaching. One of the teacher participants in the interview points out that "Most teachers teach to the tests and are pressed for time to complete the syllabus in a stipulated time" (T-5). This is why, even at this point, expecting students to be critically thoughtful, creative, and analytical could be nothing short of building castles in the air.

#### *4.2.6. Negative Student Attitudes*

Many researchers have argued that there is a strong relationship between actions and attitudes ([Ajzen, Fishbein, Lohmann, & Albarracín, 2018](#); [Azizinezhad, Hashemi, & Darvishi, 2013](#); [Shahrehabaki & Notash, 2015](#)). When learners possess a negative attitude toward practicing CT, teachers willing to facilitate the practice of CT face barriers to its implementation. In the context of Bangladesh, the negative attitudes that the students nurture such as their inability to assist associates, failure to interact with others, refusal to take responsibility, emotional instability, discourteous behavior, impoliteness, demotivation, and laziness are the main reasons for degrading their CT skills. Even weak or culturally different students making strenuous efforts can become critical thinkers. Also,

teachers' job of developing positive attitudes of learners towards learning becomes challenging if the learners are reluctant to involve themselves in different learning activities.

#### 4.2.7. Negative teacher Attitudes

Traditionally, learners in the Bangladeshi context do not ask questions in class, provided they are shy or fearful of peers. Notably, some teachers do not give learners the space or time to ask questions because they feel threatened by learners' queries. Still, they hold the authority in class though Communicative Approach to teaching English, which argues for learner-centered class, has replaced the traditional Grammar-Translation Method (Mariyam et al., 2015). Over-talking teachers might think they are working pretty hard and filling time with maximum instruction for their students, but it is not helping to establish the right learning culture. Unless learners are motivated and challenged and the classroom is welcoming, they will always remain hesitant when asking anything. The educator, according to Paul (1993) should display intellectual virtues of critical thinking, which are independence of mind, intellectual curiosity, courage, humility, empathy, integrity, perseverance, faith in reason, and fair-mindedness. If educators display critical thinking, the students are bound to learn through role modeling.

Teachers who listen to their learners are open-minded and facilitative of critical thinking. Students at the undergraduate level in Bangladesh have pre-existing knowledge of the English language; five years in primary, three years in junior secondary, two years in secondary, and two years in the higher secondary level. They are here to build on it. If unfortunately, teachers treat the students as they were treated in the conventional classroom, as if it had only been the teachers who were supposed to be filling the empty mugs with water, then the learners would remain inattentive, distracted, or mentally remote.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The undergraduate-level education in Bangladesh has a lot to do with critical thinking skills. A vital part of this level is that students must have the ability to think decisively. Students should be taught critical thinking courses so that they can incorporate their caliber in teaching and learning and not base their thinking on incorrect information. To make the students more thoughtful and engaged, and to improve their creative competence through quality learning, facilitating this skill in classes is a must. In this regard, revising the existing syllabus and curriculum is vital for teachers and learners. The more language teachers can implement this in class; the more students will be benefitted. As mentioned earlier, CT is a process, and it can be taught and learned. Although it is a time-consuming procedure, with time and practice, it can be mastered. However, further research is needed for the validation of this research work because it is done in a particular setting which doesn't represent the whole picture of the tertiary level education in Bangladesh. And, not too many research studies exist among the existing ones on critical thinking skills from the perspective of low-proficient undergraduate students of Bangladesh. So, the key question, which still remains, is how students at the undergraduate level in Bangladesh can improve their CT and all-round abilities.

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