Developing Critical Thinking through Literature: A Study at Bachelor Level in Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims to develop the critical thinking among bachelor students in ESL classrooms through literature. Finding out the advantages of critical thinking for ESL students in the English Department at the National College of Business Administration & Economics in District Rahim Yar Khan is the sole goal of this study. The ability for independent thought and decision-making is known as critical thinking. The study emphasizes the key components of critical thinking, such as self-awareness, social cognition, problem solving and language use. The study's participants include one English department professor and twenty-eight university students. To assess the efficacy of the four curriculum components of Multiliteracies pedagogy, the researcher used Daniel Dafoe's novel Robinson Cruise (1917). A questionnaire has been used to examine teacher and students' perceptions and beliefs that teaching literature fosters critical thinking. According to the finding analysis, the model is viewed as very successful by both students and the teacher, especially when it comes to self-reflection. However, the present study also suggests that developing critical thinking of English language teachers shall be prioritized before educating that of ESL learners', which is worth reflecting in the long run.

Keywords: critical thinking skills, literature, ESL classroom

INTRODUCTION

In modern days, many linguists and academics emphasize the importance of using literature as a teaching tool in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. (Van, 2009) asserts that literature offers a context that is comparable to real-life circumstances, which makes it extremely helpful in ESL classrooms. According to (Healy, 2010) literature can effectively foster learners' creative capacities and help them gain a critical understanding of the target language and culture.

In English language teaching (ELT) contexts, critical thinking has become increasingly important. Thinking logically and clearly is a cognitive skill (Ennis, 2011). It affects one's capacity to make decisions about what to believe or do. Critical thinking is now seen as one of the key ideas in the field of education, particularly in the language department. According to (Moon 2008), critical thinking is a crucial component of learning and a cornerstone of higher education.

The Institute of Academic Excellence (1997) reported on the connection between critical thinking and literature study. It emphasizes how well literature-based reading fosters the growth of critical thinking. As a result, students have identified the textual patterns that they can connect to other texts and recollected experiences. (Reading for Literature and Critical Thinking, 1997).

While (Irfan, 2002) claimed that the application of literature is necessary for the development of critical thinking skills, Hall, (2005) asserts that the study of literature is relatively distinct from other disciplines, which is why it helps ESL learners develop their critical thinking abilities.

English translation, English literature, and critical thinking was determined to be related by Fahim and Nilforooshan, (2014). They added that in order to improve students' critical thinking skills, teachers should employ techniques that reduce anxiety related to learning a foreign language.

The importance of cultivating students' critical thinking skills in both university EFL courses and higher education has become increasingly apparent to scholars and educators in the twenty-first century. They have been arguing for decades that teaching critical thinking is essential to preparing students to function well in society, make their own decisions, and make judgments in business and other areas of life (Braun, 2004; Fisher, 2001; Kalyczynski, 2001; Willingham, 2007). According to Willingham (2007), a teacher may not be able to develop the critical thinking abilities necessary to properly analyze the material if they are not provided with the necessary background information. Therefore, encouraging students to use critical thinking to apply their previously learned material is closely tied to the development of critical thinking skills. By combining the teaching of factual content with the use of this material critically, EFL teachers can help students develop their thinking skills through a variety of opportunities (Khatib, Marefat & Ahmadi, 2012; Moreno-Lopéz, 2004; Quing, 2013).

Teaching literature to ESL students in the modern era can be difficult if the teaching approach is antiquated or unlikely (Siti Norliana, 2008). Over the past few decades, there has been a growing need in Pakistan for ESL classrooms to employ innovative teaching strategies when it comes to the English language (Normala & Mohamed, 2013). Mendelmen (2007) asserts that the literature is a useful resource for teaching language students how to critically evaluate reading texts (p. 300). The current study thoroughly examines the methods and exercises used to integrate university students' critical thinking abilities into their English curricula.

Research Objectives

➢ To explore the role of Literature in English language teaching and learning.
➢ To analyze the perspectives of students and their teacher about the effectiveness of the model of teaching to improve students' Critical thinking and language skills.

Research Questions

The following research questions of the present study report to analyze the role of literature and the effectiveness of the model of teaching to advance the critical thinking skills among learners at bachelor level in an ESL classroom.

➢ What is the role of Literature in English language teaching and learning?
➢ What is the perspectives of students and their teacher about the effectiveness of the model of teaching to improve students' Critical thinking and language skills?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to identify the role of literature in developing critical thinking and analyze the perspectives of students and their teacher about the effectiveness of the model of teaching to improve students' critical thinking and language skills by applying a teaching model proposed by Bobkina & Stefanova(2016). The study will be useful not only in universities but also in colleges and high schools because it has universal implications for all subject areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature is regarded as a potent tool for fostering critical thinking, and since critical thinking depends on an individual's "disposition," it cannot be taught without fostering activities in real classroom discourse (Paul, 1983). "The only academic field that can nearly encompass the entire spectrum of mental characteristics currently thought to make up critical thinking is literature" (Lazere, 1987).

Case, (2005) asserts that by "problematizing" the subject being studied, teachers can help students develop their critical thinking abilities and their ability to understand texts. Reader response theory, critical thinking, and English literature work well together to evoke strong feelings in students. According to Kenndey, (1991), students who read general textbooks are not exposed to the use of critical thinking skills because they do not provide "big ideas, analysis, and challenging questions." Paul, (1990) maintained that literary texts assist learners in applying their own critical faculties, while Facoine, (2010) asserted that critical thinking aids learners in comprehending situations, data, events, judgments, and beliefs.

English instruction's traditional function of teaching literature has been transformed into a significant part of the language curriculum. The importance of literature as an integrated element in ESL classrooms has grown in recent years, according to Stern (1991, p. 344). potentials for learning a second language in terms of culture and aesthetics. Similar to this, Tseng and Wasti, (2016) contend that literature has experienced resurgence in language education in recent years, and that language instruction and learning in English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL)/ESL contexts in particular cannot be disregarded. Language and literature are the two distinct departments into which English language departments at universities across the globe are currently separated. (Tseng, 2010 cites Tucker, 2006). Since "no teacher of literature ignores linguistic problems and no language teacher really wants to leave his students speaking a sterile impoverished version of the language," Thou claims that this division is actually impossible (Smith, 1972, p. 275 as cited in Tseng, 2010). Critical thinking is defined as "the process by which we test claims and arguments and determine which have merit and which do not," with evaluation at its core (Ruggiero, 2012). Thinking is a reasonable cognitive process carried out to resolve any problem, make a decision, or gain understanding. The ability and willingness to ask critical questions, evaluate claims, critically assess the quality of evidence, weigh arguments, and recognize implicit assumptions are all skills that literature is thought to foster. According to DiYanni (2015), it is directed by deliberate reasoning supported by evidence and entails posing "productive questions" (p.4). Students must be provided with opportunities in an open learning environment where they can engage with resources, the teacher, and one another in order to develop these skills and ask lots of questions.

Role of Literature in the development of critical thinking skills

It is commonly acknowledged that one of the fundamental learning tools is the instruction of critical thinking skills. Literary expressions have become somewhat of a "buzz word" in educational settings (Fisher, 2001). Over the past 20 years, the critical thinking approach has gained a lot of traction in educational settings. The logical roots of critical thinking can be traced back to Socrates' teaching methods some 2,000 years ago. Glaser, (1941) offered one of the most widely accepted definitions of critical thinking in modern times, defining it as (1) an attitude to comprehend problems related to one's field of expertise and to thoughtfully come within it. (2) familiarity with the limited approaches to reasoning and inquiry; and (3) some proficiency in using those approaches. (page 5)

Context of Critical Literacy Approach

The critical literacy approach best embodies the notion of applying a critical lens to the development of critical thinking abilities through literature. Students should be encouraged by their teachers to critically examine conventional norms and values in a social setting and how they affect interpersonal relationships.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, (1970) was a major contributor to the critical pedagogy philosophy. He put forth a methodological approach based on problem- posing education with the goal of developing students' critical thinking skills. In class, a variety of problem-posing exercises or scenarios are introduced, and students are urged to consider them and suggest potential fixes. This process is valued by Freire (1970) because it entails acknowledging reality, working toward the growth of consciousness, and then critically interfering with reality. Freire, (1970) proposed this

teaching methodology with the intention of challenging the "banking model" of education, which views students as nothing more than "depositories of knowledge."

According to Carter and Long (1991), in addition to the language model approaches used in EFL classrooms, other approaches such as the **language-based approach**, **cultural model**, and **personal growth model** can also be used to teach literature. There is a brief discussion of each of the three language model approaches. While Kabilan (2013) argued in favor of a communicative approach to enhance the use of the language rather than "learning about the language," Crocker and Bowden (2010) promoted **notional-functional and content-based approaches** to improve learners' cognitive skills (p. 3).

To effectively address literary texts in ESL classrooms, Bobkina & Stefanova (2016) propose a model based on the reader-centered critical reading approach and the critical instruction approach. This approach/model, which can be broadly defined as a set of procedures to work with literary texts to develop critical thinking skills of ESL learners in the EFL/ESL classroom, is made up of the following main dimensions: self- reflection, intercultural awareness, critical awareness, reasoning and problem-solving, and language use (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016, p. 685).
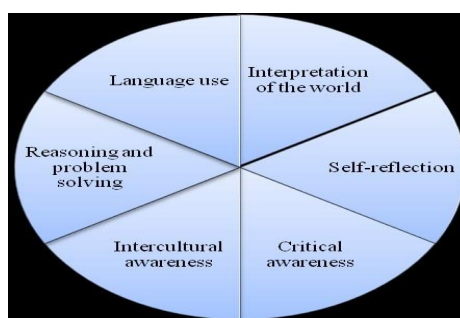

Figure 1. Critical thinking skills Teaching Model (Adapted from Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016)

In order to implement the model, the authors have also addressed the entire spectrum of literacies and created a number of exercises (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; 2013; 2015).
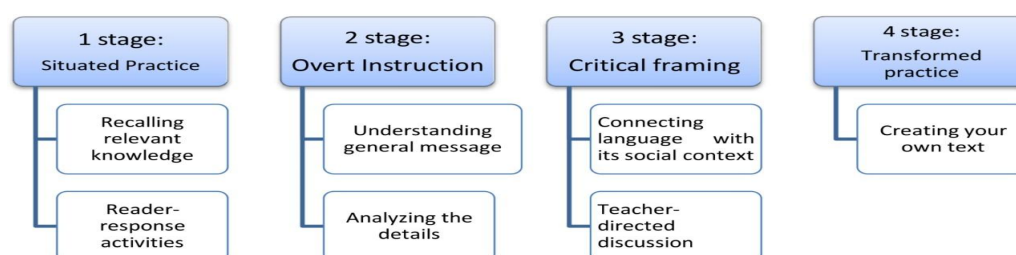

Figure 2. Pedagogical application of the model of teaching critical thinking skills through literature (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016)

The four-stage learning process serves as the foundation for the critical thinking skills teaching model. The model's initial phase consists of a series of pre- reading exercises designed to stimulate students' schemata related to the subject.

Students can express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences after reading the text. Through discussion exercises and general conception questions, the second stage helps the students understand the text in its entirety. Students are better able to understand the literary text's internal logic when they read it. In the third stage, the students use their conscious attention to establish connections between sociocultural contexts and linguistic forms. By analyzing the text's lexical and structural choices, they apply their cognitive abilities to deduce the writer's attitude, point of view, and intentions. The fourth stage, which comes last, encourages students to use their creativity to create original texts. This may involve rearranging the original texts in a similar way across different modes.

Accordingly, Riasati & Mollaei (2012) confirm that this method of teaching languages enhances the overall quality of language instruction and the current textbooks. The critical literacy approach and the social nature of language discourse assist students in analyzing literary texts and challenging the social theories they encounter. At the core of the educational curriculum are the ideologically motivated processes of language teaching and learning (Norton & Toohey, 2004). Additionally, Ohara, Saft, and Crookes (2001) recommend that the language curriculum be created with the realities and experiences of the students in mind.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sampling

All English Department students enrolled in BS and Master programs at NCBA& E in district Rahim Yar Khan contribute to the estimated population of the current study. One university teacher and twenty-eight BS program students were chosen for the study by applying a convenient sampling technique.

Participants

The current study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods and takes a case study approach. Twenty-eight students who are learning English as a second language are among the participants, and one professor from the English Department participates in the regular teaching and learning process at the NCBA&E Rahim Yar Khan Campus. The group is up to eighteen or twenty years old on average. Teachers can be up to 35 years old. The participants had never worked with a literary approach before, nor had they ever used any resources or exercises that illustrated the six dimensions of the mentioned critical thinking skills teaching model.

Research Instruments

To gauge the effectiveness of teaching critical thinking skills, two check lists, *Teacher Assessment Checklist* and *Student Self-Assessment Checklist* were shaped to simplify the use of the *Assessment Grid.* These instruments were designed according to Bobkina & Stefanova (2016) critical thinking process model that is characterised by the following dimensions "the explanation of the world, self-cognition, intercultural awareness, critical awareness, reasoning and problem-solving, and language use". These check lists designate each of the dimensions represented in the grid as a list of competence or realization criteria associated with critical thinking skills. Each dimension has a gradable skill with assigned values from 1 to 4.

Procedure

The researcher developed a pedagogical proposal that combined the critical pedagogy approach with a reader-centered critical reading approach. A series of activities with different strategies from these approaches were sequenced the major dimensions of literacy instruction: practice to understand the situation, explicit coaching, critical framing and transformed practice (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015).

Danial Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" an inspiring story of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor who voyaged to sea in 1704 and remained here until he was rescued in 1709. Daniel Defoe interviewed Alexander and he built a story by adding his imaginations, experiences and history of his works. He created the novel for which he became so well-known. Friday is one of the main characters of Daniel Defoe's novel Robinson Crusoe. The black man's character "Friday" is the source of expression used to describe a male personal assistant or servant, especially one who is particularly competent or loyal. A twenty-six-year-old Caribbean native and cannibal who converts to Protestantism under Crusoe's tutelage. Friday becomes Crusoe's servant after Crusoe saves his life when Friday is about to be eaten by other cannibals. Friday never appears to resist or resent his new servitude, and he may sincerely view it as appropriate compensation for having his life saved. But whatever Friday's response may be, his servitude has become a symbol of imperialist oppression throughout the modern world. Friday's overall charisma works against the emotional deadness that many readers find in Crusoe.

The following series of the activities carried out by the selected group of students in the EFL classroom.

Stage I: Situated Practice: Experiencing the new Recalling relevant knowledge

1. Students are asked the key question about the character of Robinson Crouse and after showing the title image of the Novel. They are encouraged to read the historical context of the novel and Robinson's character.

2. Students are provided with reviewed articles related to Daniel Dofoe's biography and the historical context of his novel " Robinson Cruose. The teacher discussed key terms, themes and motives of the novel with the students. Students share their ideas and previous knowledge about humanity, colonialism and contentment vs Desire and Ambition.

Reader-response activities

1. The chapters are divided among four groups of students. The title and text of each chapter was read carefully and critically by the participants. The teacher assigns each pair to change the title by choosing another suitable title and precise the summary in their own words that must reflect the essence of that Chapter.

2. One group tried to choose their own titles and three of them just précised the summaries of different chapters.

Stage II: Overt Instruction: Conceptualising with theory Understanding general message

The participants of the study have to answer the following general comprehension questions:

➢ How does Mr. Crusoe tell Robinson Crusoe about his brother's misfortune to dissuade him from traveling?
➢ What is the basic themes of the novel they have read?
➢ What is your overall impression? Would you say the novel is pessimistic or optimistic?

The four groups of the students responded these questions comprehensively and also shared their personal opinions about the themes and impressions of the novel.

Analyzing the language details

➢ The students identify the words and expressions are used by the characters of the novel. They examine the lexical density, complex sentences, incomplete clauses, use of modifiers and explicitness from the text which was divided to the groups.

➢ They also examine the grammatical structure of the text, the author's narrative style, cohesion, use of discourse markers, cohesive devices and its effect on the readers' minds.

Stage III: Critical framing: Analysing critically Connecting language with its social context.

The following questions were asked to develop the critical thinking skills from the students:

➢ Explain Robinson Crusoe as the embodiment of British colonial ideology?
➢ What is the critical analysis of this novel according to personal and social cognition?

The students replied these questions critically with reference of other researchers and also submit their analysis according to personal cognition that Robinson is Friday's master because he taught him the way to live ,eat ,talk .He taught him how to survive as a civilized man. As Crusoe doesn't believe that slavery is wrong per se; it's only wrong if the "wrong" people are enslaved.

They answered according to social cognition that religious discourse, logic of capitalism and the dynamic tendency of capitalism are the landmark for fame of the novel "Robinson Crusoe"(Ian Watt). Brett Mclnelly considers colonialism is the central themes of this novel.

Stage IV: Transformed practice: Applying creatively Creating your own texts

➢ The students are asked to write the adventures related to expeditions of their own lives if they have experienced in the narrative style of writing.

➢ Students responses and feedback were very positive and appreciating towards this creative activity. They shared their experiences with the conventions of narrative essays.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The students and the teacher are two main participants in the process of data collection and analysis. The obtained data of the previously mentioned checklists, was presented in tables and graphs, and analyzed briefly. The data analysis of the study showed the complexity of evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed model. A few comparisons were also made within the same data-set. The researcher opted a comparison of overall result of students' perceived improvement of their critical thinking skills and the teacher's assessment of the effectiveness of the model .

Table 1. The results of Students and Teachers Checklists

N=29	Students Responses (Before)	comments	Students Responses(after)	Comments	Teacher's responses (before)	Comments	Teacher's responses (after)	Comments
Interpretation of the world	14.29%	Poor	42.29%	satisfactory	9.13%	poor	39.28%	Below to satisfactory
Self-reflection	28.57%	Below to satisfactory	57.41%	satisfactory	34.22%	Below to satisfactory	78.57	Excellent
Critical awareness	19.41%	Poor	57.21%	satisfactory	7.29%	poor	51.21%	satisfactory
Intercultural awareness	57. 20%	satisfactory	68.32%	Good	46.57%	satisfactory	54.23%	satisfactory
Reasoning and problem Solving	32.12%	Poor	62.20%	Good	57.14%	Satisfactory	63.11%	good

Language use	67.83%	Good	37.11%	Below to Satisfactory	35.71%	Below to satisfactory	42.29%	satisfactory

Table 2 Comparison of the results of Teacher and Students' Pre-checklists

Participants	Interpretation of the world	Self-reflection	Cri tical awareness	rcultural awaren	ning and problems	Language use	Grand Total
Teacher	9.13	34.22	7.29	46.57	57.14	37.71	32.01
Students	14.29	28.57	19.41	57.2	32.12	67.83	36.57
Total	11.71	31.4	13.35	51.89	44.63	52.77	34.29

Table 3 Comparison of the results of teacher and students' post-checklists

participants	erpretation of the wo	Self-reflection	ritical awarenes	rcultural awaren	oning and problem s	Language use	Grand Total
Teacher	39.28	78.57	51.21	54.23	63.11	42.29	54.78
Students	42.29	57.41	57.21	68.32	62.2	37.11	54.09
Total	40.79	67.99	54.21	61.28	62.66	39.7	54.44

The difference between the teacher's and students' perceived critical thinking skills before and after completing the suggested set of exercises using the literary text of a chosen novel is displayed in Table 1. Prior to using the literary text teaching model, the majority of students rated their level of self-reflection, critical awareness, intercultural awareness, and reasoning and problem-solving as below satisfactory and at a low level. However, after working with the text, they achieved a satisfactory level of confidence. They must raise their critical awareness to an exceptional level even though it appeared that many students had somewhat improved their critical awareness, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. After completing the project's four phases, it would be accurate to say that a significant portion of the students felt competent. According to the results, 19.41% of the students had a very low opinion of their critical awareness competence, and this opinion increased to 57.21% on the post- test checklist. This indicates a significant difference between the pre and post results of the check lists following the use of the four stages of the teaching model. As a result, the teacher's pre-checklist rating for students' critical awareness was 7.19%, but the post-checklist results demonstrated the effectiveness of the teaching model by applying the four stages to literary texts from a chosen novel, Robinson Crusoe, in an ESL classroom. In absolute terms it is not a high level result, however, the positivity can be observed in the sense that the proposed activities of the model made students aware of the need and significance to develop critical thinking skills in ELT context by using literature.

The results of the teacher and students' pre-checklists on self-reflection, intercultural awareness, and world interpretation showed a notable discrepancy from the results of the teacher and students' post-checklists. For instance, on how the world is interpreted In self-reflection, students evaluated their ability up to 28.57%, which is below to satisfactory, but they received a score of 34.22% from their teacher, which also indicated their level below to satisfactory. In contrast, 14.29% of the students evaluated their achievement at low level (poor), and the teacher gave 9.13% of the students below to low level. Even though this result indicates a difference, it has no bearing on the model's implementation outcome, which showed that these dimensions' levels ranged from satisfactory to good

to excellent, receiving scores of 42.29%, 39.28%, 57.41%, and 78.57%, respectively. This significant difference suggests that students have a very favorable and positive attitude toward the critical thinking skills teaching model and the range of activities they completed in class.

According to the results of the pre-checklist, students achieved a score of 67.83% on the six dimensions of language use, which was lowered to 37.11% on the post- checklist. According to the pre-test checklist, the students thought their language skills were excellent, but the post-test results showed that they were less proficient in the lexical items of the literary texts they worked on than they were in the more common vocabulary they use in everyday conversation. The use of English in class activities that don't call for critical thinking abilities formed the basis of their perception.

Table 1 clearly illustrates the slight difference between the teacher's pre- and post- checklist results. The comparison showed that the teacher's language use was 37.71% on the pre-checklist and increased to 42.29% on the post-checklist.

Table 4 Comparison of overall result of teacher students' pre and post Checklists

	Comparison of the overall results of Teacher and Students check list	
Pre-Checklist	34.29	**44.37**
Post Checklist	54.44	
G. Total	**44.37**	
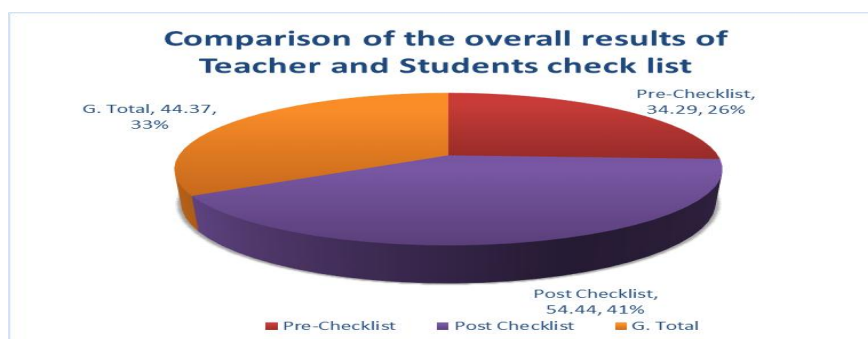
Using the four stages of the teacher model of critical thinking skills proposed by Bobkina & Stefanova (2016), the overall results of the teacher and students' pre and post-checklists showed a 33% difference between the perceived opinions of the teacher and students and the opinions following their work with literary texts. The outcomes have also demonstrated how well this model works to improve a

dimension that is broadly applicable to other subject areas and directly improves students' capacity to solve problems in the real world.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study demonstrated the value of literature, the efficacy of the critical thinking skills teaching model, and the range of exercises the students completed using Danial Defoe's novel "Robin Crusoe" as a literary text in class. Additionally, the results derived from the chosen data provide answers to the research questions. The first question, which concerns the role of literature in teaching and learning English, was answered by the researcher using data analysis and a clear difference between the pre- and post-checklist results for teachers and students. Students become aware of the different ways language is used in different kinds of texts. For instance, reading a novel is very different from reading newspapers and magazines. It improves students' lexical competence and linguistic reportire in addition to pleasing the reader's aesthetic sense. Literature is an excellent way for many students to expand their vocabulary and develop their critical thinking and language skills. From the perspective of the language teacher, literature plays a very beneficial role in ELT classes since it helps students develop their critical thinking and intercultural awareness while also enabling them to understand the world through appropriate language use. The second research question concerns the opinions of both students and their teacher regarding how well the teaching model enhances students' critical thinking and language skills. The response to this question can be examined by looking at the comments made by students on their checklists, where they indicated that stimulating questions and activities encouraged them to learn more about the subjects covered in class. They also mentioned that they read other works by the same author, which sparked their interest in transnational literature and improved their critical thinking skills.. They also acknowledged that talking about the literary text- related activities in groups helped them comprehend the ideas of colonialism and capitalism in addition to helping them recognise their own strengths and shortcomings. From the perspective of teaching languages, it is also noted that novels can serve as an effective tool for fostering the development of both critical thinking and linguistic structures. It can help students learn more about the customs and cultures of other people. In addition to encouraging creativity, it enhances students' capacity for critical thought.

Considering the second research question the findings demonstrate that both students and their teacher perceive and remark the model as highly effective as well as operative. The main limitations of this study is the short period of time for the implementation of the model and the restricted population of a private university.

For future research, the researchers can intend to guide the language teachers for the implementation of the model with the other genres of literature on university and college students in ESL classroom. The next step would be to establish the criteria for the selection of a literary text as it is an important element in the implementation of this model. It is also suggested that the educationists should make an appropriate selection from literature to meet the learner's needs, stage, ability and interests at all stages. While selecting a novel the instructor should choose an interesting story with particular themes, motifs, ideas and context that motivates the entire language class.

Generally, Novel reading may seem like a dull activity to some undergraduate students, but with the right exercises and instructional techniques, it can be a powerful tool for vocabulary development and reading comprehension. In actuality, the students help them become more self-aware, develop critical thinking abilities, learn a practical contextualized language, and memorize basic proverbs, wisdoms, and literary quotations.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated the importance of literature in the teaching and learning process of ESL and examined the efficacy of using literature to teach critical thinking in an ESL classroom in Pakistan. It also gave useful information about the advantages and challenges of putting the model that the investigation is based on into practice. According to the analysis, students reported feeling more motivated and having a better understanding of the subtleties in lexical items and proper language usage. The study is based on a limited sample, a four-stage model for teaching language and critical thinking, and a series of engaging exercises. Through the use of language in cognitive practice and intellectual training, literature can foster critical thinking abilities. ESL students should be taught analytical skills that are accurate, understandable, useful, and well-reasoned by their English teachers. It is necessary to teach literary courses with a specific focus; teachers must guide students from the most basic cognitive skill thinking to the most complex.

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