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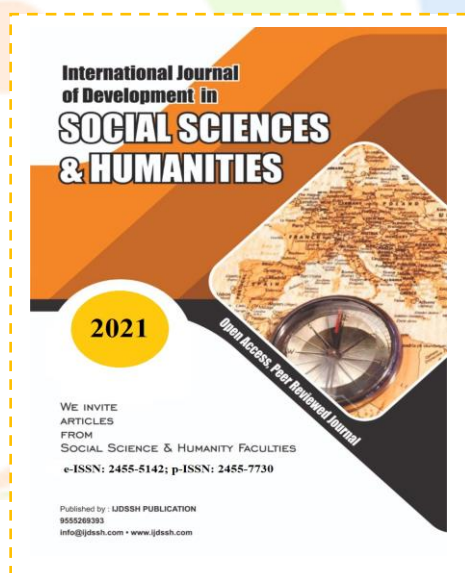
The Relation between Critical Thinking and Iraqi EFL Teachers` Preferred Teaching Style

Riyam Hadi Salih, Dr. Bushara Saadoon Mohammed Al-Noori
University of Baghdad, Iraq

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ABSTRACT

Most of the recent studies in 21st century has started to incorporate the effect of critical thinking and it's relation to the choice of teaching styles used by teachers. Critical thinking as the ability to question, analyze , understand and reach into a solution to a specific problem as used by teachers in language classroom .This paper has focused on EFL teachers teaching English as a foreign language in Iraq and the methods they mostly employed in their language classrooms .For this purpose 40 teachers were selected from Baghdad governorate from Al-Abid School and Al-Fawz secondary school. The two questionnaires were delivered online to the teachers in order to make it easier for them because of the situation of the pandemic. The final results showed there is a strong relation between teachers` critical thinking capacities or intelligences with their teaching styles inside the classroom.

Keywords : *critical thinking , teaching style , EFL , English as a foreign language*

INTRODUCTION

Every day, the information and technology era introduces new obstacles, necessitating the development of unique techniques to achieve effective teaching and education. As a result of these shifts, changes , educational capabilities are being pushed to foster Critical Thinking (CT) as a higher-order thinking capacity. That is, CT improves EFL teachers' thinking skills by allowing them to examine and analyze (Zhang, Yuan, & He, 2020) before forming conclusions or reaching a decision. As a result of better decisions, the future is safer and more prosperous

CT, according to Dewey (1933), the "Father of Modern Critical Thinking," is an active element that aids in making references

based on available facts. In other words it proposes a royal path to thinking (Ghanizadeh & Heydarnejad, 2015). That is, CT, in combination with advanced thinking abilities, moves people from the surface layer of meaning to the deeper layer of meaning incorporating inferences (Renner, 1996), which is important for insightful instruction. CT also provides a high level of intellectual excellence that is necessary for academic and social success (Scriven & Paul, 2004). Therefore, by helping teachers to cultivate CT, the educational system and society are sowing the seeds of a generation with better thinking capabilities.

As a result, offering efficient space for students to think deeply and communicate their perspectives with their peers is one of

the priorities of appropriate instruction. This goal will be impossible to fulfill unless the teachers are critical thinkers in their own right. CT can also be defined as a self-regulatory and mindful appraisal of one's own actions and beliefs (Giancarlo & Facione, 2001). T. A. H. Fatemi, Heydarnejad, and B. Self-regulation, according to Ghonsooly, is defined as the employment of self-assessment and self-awareness procedures (2021)

Teachers' adopted teaching styles, which embody teachers' attitudes, techniques, and behaviors in teaching, are a critical component of effective instruction (Cooper, 2001; Tavakoli & Karimnia, 2017). Furthermore, according to Jarvis (2004), teaching style describes teachers' perspectives and attitudes toward all aspects of teaching and learning. Teaching styles, in other words, are broad ideas as well as educational and administrative tactics for classroom instruction. Different teaching techniques exist because people learn in different ways.

Teachers that are aware of their students' various learning styles and seek to use appropriate teaching approaches to encourage students and boost their involvement in learning are successful. To attain these goals, instructors must have the knowledge and abilities to evaluate and

modify themselves, as well as to plan effective education. Facilitating knowledge and skills, particularly higher-order thinking skills (Zhang, Yuan, & He, 2020), is a difficult endeavor that points to certain areas for further research.

This paper try to answer the following questions :

- 1- What is the relationship between critical thinking and teacher's preferred teaching style?
- 2-What are the most preferred teaching styles ?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Critical Thinking

Socrates, over two thousand years ago, developed the concept of critical thinking, emphasizing reasoning, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating as the foundation of all judgments. According to a survey of the current literature on CT, there is no agreement on a single definition (Fasko, 2003; Fisher, 2001; Halanon, 1995; Minnich, 1990). According to Ennis (1996), CT is a continuous evaluation of concepts in order to make inferences based on the data available. In a similar line, Ivie (2001) defines critical thinking as introspective behaviors that logically link initial assumptions to justified conclusions.

A teacher's capacity to think critically and reflectively is dependent on his or her intelligence and experience (Dewey, 1933). In this context, Jenkins (1998) underlined that CT develops teacher skills and converts a novice teacher into an autonomous one. According to Reynolds (1992), competent teachers assess their actions using higher-order thinking skills (CT and reflective thinking). A critically reflective teacher, according to Mayfield (2001), improves students' critical thinking skills by involving them in critical thinking activities.

Critical thinking abilities and their positive effects on educational attainment (among other things) in EFL situations provide fertile ground for educational research. Bobkina and Stefanova (2016), for example, investigated the advantages of developing a model for teaching critical thinking skills in an EFL classroom. They concluded that critical thinking abilities enable pupils to design their own reflective learning methodologies.

In another study, Kavanoz and Akbaş (2017) concluded that if EFL teachers have appropriate critical thinking skills, they will be able to practice critical thinking in their classrooms. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2020) cited EFL teachers' limited comprehension of CT, as well as the disconnect between their attitudes about CT and their actual class

activities, as reasons for CT's failure to be successfully implemented in EFL classes..

Teaching Style preferences

Individuals differ due to their varied thinking styles, interests, and methods of accomplishing things, all of which influence their behavior (Heydar nejad, Hosseini Fatemi, & Ghonsooli, 2017a). Teachers are no exception; their teaching styles are defined by their attitudes toward teaching and the tactics they apply (Grasha, 2002). To put it another way, teaching style refers to a teacher's personal preferences, knowledge, and ideas about how they convey material to their students and accept feedback (Kaplan & Kies, 1995).

Teachers, like students, can use a variety of teaching and management tactics in the classroom, depending on their personal attitudes, inspirations, ways of thinking, and social backgrounds (Vaughn & Baker, 2001). These approaches, according to Grasha (1996), are like colors on an artist's palette, merge into numerous clusters, and make up the unique ways teachers build educational situations. Studies on teaching styles emerged in the 1970s (Biggs, 2001). An overwhelming number of classifications can be found to represent teaching style preferences in educational contexts. Furthermore, educational and cultural backgrounds as well as teaching and learning

experiences are influential in teaching style adaptation (Faruji, 2012; Nouraey & Karimnia, 2016; Tavakoli & Karimnia, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

The **participants** were selected randomly from Baghdad governorate .The teachers were ages between 22 to 48 with experiences from 1 year into 25 year. 40 teacher were selected and distributed into halves male and females.

In this study, two questionnaires of teaching style and critical thinking disposition scale of Ricketts (Ricketts, 2003) and teaching style preference for teachers were used.

Instrument

The questionnaire included 18 five-choice items on Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) . The maximum and minimum score achievable in this test were 165 and 33 points respectively and had three subscales of creativity, perfection and mental engagement.

As for the teaching style questionnaire , it was distributed online to the same teachers in Baghdad Al-Abid school for girls intermediate level .The items are of five likert options and divided into two sections.

As it was observed the mean scores of critical thinking disposition of teachers surveyed was 129.47 out of a total score of 165. According to the mean values achieved in passive and active teaching styles, it is can be said that the mean scores of active style of teachers surveyed were higher compared to those obtained for passive style. For the purpose of assessing critical thinking disposition, highest and lowest scores were 165 and 33, respectively and the median score was 99. For the component of creativity, the highest and lowest scores were 55 and 11, respectively and the median score was 33. For the component of cognitive maturity, the highest and lowest scores were 45 and 9, respectively and the median score was 27. In examination of component of mental engagement, the highest and lowest scores were 65 and 13, respectively and the median score was 39 (Aminkhandaghi, Pakmehr, Amiri, 20011).

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate critical thinking and its influence in secondary school teachers' preferred teaching method. The data analysis revealed a strong relationship between teachers' critical thinking and active learning style preferences . The findings also revealed that among the components of critical thinking disposition, creativity had the highest correlation with

active teaching style preference among teachers, the lowest correlation with mental engagement component, and no significant relationship with cognitive maturity components.

The relevance of this link leads to the conclusion that teachers with more creativity have stronger analytical skills, reasoning, and evaluative power, which is surely beneficial in the selection of an active teaching style.

Another interesting conclusion from this study is that active teaching style preference was greater than passive teaching style preference. In other words, teachers who preferred an active teaching style were more likely to use it than teachers who did not. This is in line with the findings of Amin Kandaghi and Malihe Rajaei (Amin Kandaghi, Malihe Rajaei, 2011), who investigated the inclination of student instructors toward various teaching styles and came to the same conclusion (a larger tendency toward active teaching style).

Most teachers prefer to be facilitators and cooperative while the students are more independent and responsible for their learning.

This also suggests that a teacher's critical thinking disposition is linked to and influences their teaching style, as well as the educational system's ability to change and

evolve the learning process, as scholars in the field of education agree that teachers are critical to the system's success and effectiveness..

Given the significant relationship between critical thinking disposition and teaching style, it is recommended that required powers be given to teacher training university students to promote critical thinking, and that professors give challenging assignments to make students aware of their capabilities. Assignments must clearly be demanding and somewhat over their capabilities, not too easy or too difficult and complex, as this would significantly lower their enthusiasm.

On the other hand, considering the importance of critical thinking in teacher education programs, it is suggested that a course titled "critical thinking training" be included to the curriculum or that a separate course be offered on the subject for them. Finally, given the findings of numerous studies showing that active learning methods and problem solving can lead to a positive attitude toward critical thinking among students, active teaching methods should be included in teacher training programs and in-service training courses as another effective factor in developing critical thinking disposition.

On the other hand, because a variety of factors might be linked to a teacher's teaching style and critical thinking disposition, it is recommended that these factors be identified and analyzed. Overall, given the desirable critical thinking disposition level among teachers and their inclination toward active teaching style, the education system and authorities should tap into teachers' potential by involving them in decision-making and giving them more power, thereby propelling the country's education to excellence

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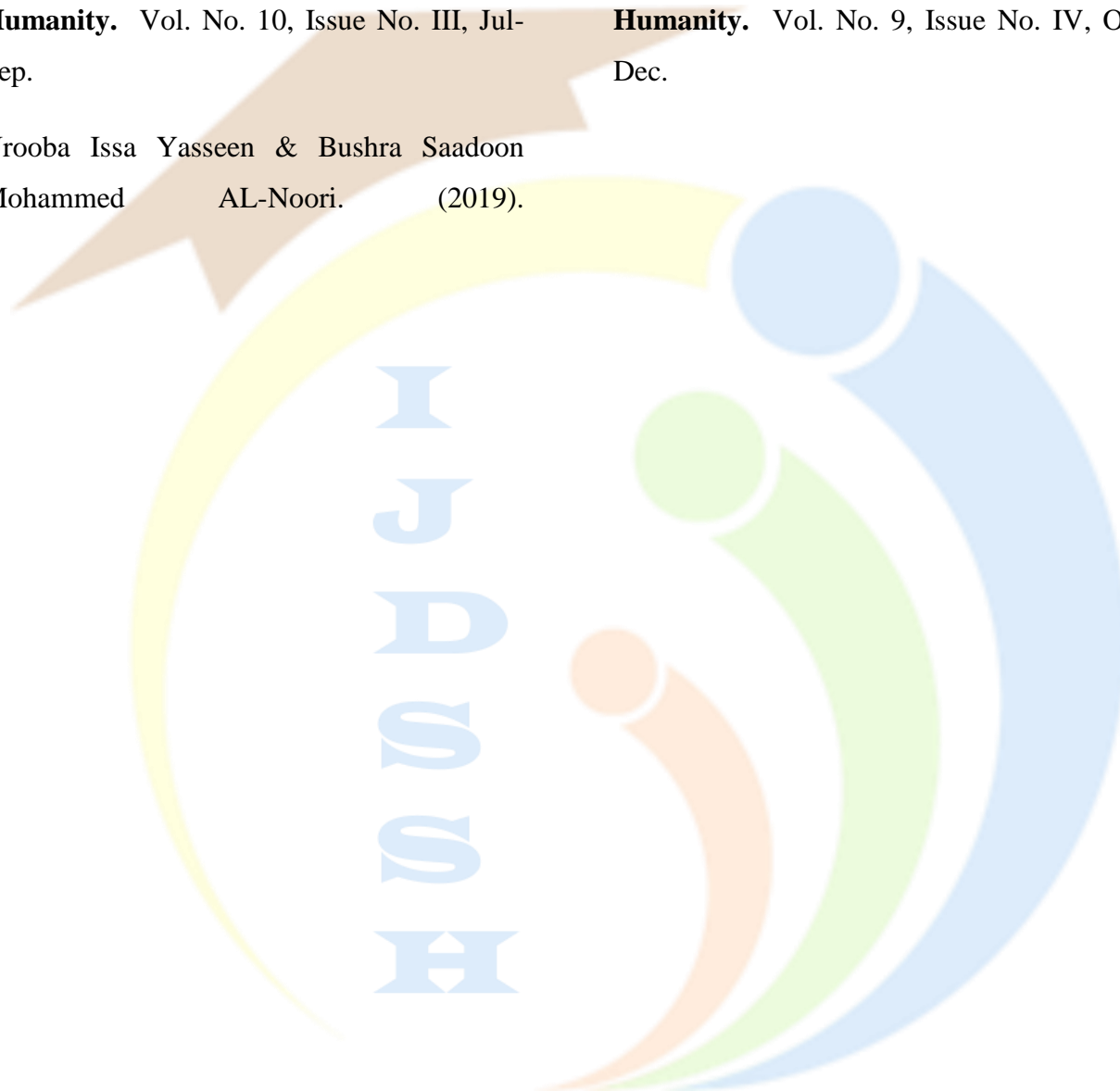
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Appendix : Critical Thinking disposition questionnaire of 18 items selected

SD- D – A –N -SA

1. Fair and objective attitude
2. Avoiding existing cognition to hinder my judgments
3. Seeking evidence
4. Accepting different views
5. Seeking solutions from many aspects
6. Finding the truth
7. Making a decision wisely and prudently
8. Avoiding the negative effect of mental set
9. In-depth thinking
10. Making a comprehensive analysis of a problem actively
11. Breaking habitual thinking patterns
12. Logic thinking
13. Active thinking
14. Avoiding occasional indication to waver my thinking
15. Distinguishing truth from falsehood
16. No blind faith in authority
17. Viewing the problem in many
18. Sifting the true from the false

Appendix 2 :**Teaching style questionnaire for teachers.**

How often do you use the following teaching methods?

Whole Class Activities	Very often	Often	Some-times	Hardly ever	Never
Lecture/Teacher talk					
Question & Answer					
Demonstration					
Watching a video/film					
Notice board style displays					
Overhead projector					
White/blackboard					
Teacher led whole class discussion					
Free flowing whole class discussion					
Dictation					
Individual Activities	Very often	Often	Some-times	Hardly ever	Never
Essay writing/formal reasoning					
Exam paper questions					
Worksheets or other individual work					
Self produced handouts					
Commercially produced handouts					

Homework/private study					
Individual assignments					
Individually negotiated activities					
Experiments/Investigations - "recipe" type					
Regular tests					
End of year/course tests					
Library research/ information seeking					
Demonstration					
Practical					
Visits/visitors					
Interviewing/surveys/questionnaires					