Critical Thinking Instruction in Iran's ELT Curriculum: To Be or Not to Be?

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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the literature on CT to examine the opposing arguments for and against having CT instruction in TESOL, in general, and Iran's ELT curriculum, in particular. Different definitions of CT and related skills are explained. Next, related theoretical and empirical studies are reviewed for the purpose of this study. Then, three stances towards the argument of having CT instruction in TESOL are interpreted and discussed: 1) arguments against, 2) arguments in favor, and (3) somewhere in the middle. The third stance is justified to be preferable for Iran's ELT curriculum in which there is a mismatch between what the policy makers are pursuing and what the teachers and learners need and desire; the policy makers and curriculum planners are after social, cultural, and political conformity whereas the teachers and learners may not necessarily accept what is imposed in the curriculum. This study proposes that CT instruction can be included in Iran's ELT curriculum but with caution and with respect to the learners' sociocultural background and context of use. Finally, some implications are proposed and discussed for policy makers and curriculum planners, teachers, and learners.

1. Introduction

Critical thinking (CT) has been identified as one of the most important skills not only in education curriculum, but also in individuals' personal and social lives (Guiller, Durndell, & Ross, 2008; Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012; Ku, 2009; Lun, Fischer, & Ward, 2010; Marin & Halpern, 2011; Stapleton, 2011;

Talebinejad & Matou, 2012). The reason for this is that "to think critically is essential for success in the contemporary world where the rate at which new knowledge is created is rapidly accelerating" (Marin and Halpern, 2011, p. 1). CT is no more seen as a luxury; it is now considered as a basic skill which is required to survive in the modern world (Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012; Ku, 2009; Lun et al., 2010). The CT skills of judging, critiquing, evaluating and arguing have been regarded as "not only vital for students to perform well in school, but also needed in future workplaces, social and interpersonal contexts where sound decisions are to be made carefully and independently on a daily basis" (Ku, 2009, p. 70). Above all, CT is identified as highly important in academic programs or what Lun et al. (2010) call "tertiary education" (Atkinson, 1997; Bers, 2005; Halpern, 1999; Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012).

Despite the aforementioned consensus on the importance of CT, there is considerable debate in the literature about whether CT has to be taught for all cultures and contexts or not, as it has been identified as "one of the defining concepts of the Western University" (Barnett, 1997, p. 3, cited in Moore, 2013, p. 506). The first scholar who questioned the use and application of CT in TESOL was Atkinson (1997, p. 74) who identified CT as the "self-evident foundation of Western thought" and posed the question: "how might individuals from cultural systems that manifestly differ from mainstream U.S. culture respond to and benefit from thinking skills instruction?" (p. 79). Afterwards, similar and contradictory ideas were expressed in the literature (e.g. Brookfield, 1997; Davidson, 1998; Halpern, 1999; ten Dam & Volman, 2004; Weinstock, Assor, & Broide, 2009; Mathews & Lowe, 2011) and a few experimental studies were conducted to

provide evidence for such claims (Grosser & Lombard, 2008; Lun et al., 2010; Stapleton, 2011). Curriculums in Asia have been blamed for simply encouraging memorizing and not developing the cognitive abilities of the students to have CT (Stapleton, 2011) and Asian students have been identified to "show lower level of CT in comparison to their western counterparts" (Lun et al., 2010: 604).

The present study aims at examining the current position of CT instruction in Iran's ELT curriculum as one of the Asian curricula to see if it can take advantage of CT instruction. In this article, a critical analysis of the application of CT in Iran's ELT curriculum will be presented with respect to a review of theoretical and empirical studies in the related literature of CT. The primary intention is not to question the value and significance of CT in education, but to examine its applicability in the Asian context of Iran's ELT curriculum.

In the following sections, various definitions and aspects of the CT which have appeared in the literature will be delineated first. Then, the current status of CT instruction in Iran and related studies will be explained to justify, whether or not, CT instruction can be applied to the Asian context of Iran's ELT curriculum. Finally, some implications will be discussed for EFL curriculum planners, teachers, and learners.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Defining CT

There is a general consensus among the scholars of the field that a single, agreed-upon and clear-cut definition of CT is lacking (Atkinson, 1998; Grosser & Lombard, 2008; Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012; Moore, 2013). Although a variety of definitions have been offered over the past decades, the underlying principles are the same (Halpern, 1999). Facione (1990) defined CT as a judgment which is purposeful and self-

regulatory and results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference as well as explaining that judgment evidentially, conceptually, methodologically, and contextually. Ennis (1991) proposed the most well-known definition of CT. He defines CT as "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" and it includes acts such as "formulating hypotheses, alternative ways of viewing a problem, questions, possible solutions, and plans for investigating something" (pp. 1-2, cited in ten Dam & Volman, 2004, p. 362). Chaffee (1992) defined CT as a variety of cognitive activities which include solving problems, brainstorming ideas, evaluating arguments, critically evaluating the logic and validity of information, providing evidence to support views, and a careful analysis of situations from different perspectives. Halpern (1999) proposed a more comprehensive definition of CT:

> Critical thinking refers to the use of cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. Critical thinking is purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed. It is the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions (p. 70).

Liaw (2007) also defined CT as an entity that "involves the use of information, experience, and world knowledge in ways which allow [EFL students] to seek alternatives, make inferences, pose questions, and solve problems, thereby signaling understanding in a variety of complex ways" (p. 51, cited in Talebinejad & Matou, 2012, p. 3).

2.2 CT Research in Iran

The literature on CT in Iran is very recent and not many studies have been conducted during the past two decades. Ghanizadeh (2011) investigated the relationship between self-regulation and CT among Iranian EFL teachers and the findings of her study supported the linkage between CT and self-

regulation. In a similar study, Fahim and Haghighi (2014) investigated EFL learners' academic self-regulation and their CT ability. Likewise, a high and positive relationship was found between the two concepts. As for the affective domain, Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) examined the relationship between CT and emotional intelligence as an affective factor. The results of their study indicated that there was a significant relationship between learners' CT and their emotional intelligence. Soodmand Afshar and Rahimi (2014) also investigated the relationship between CT, emotional intelligence, and speaking abilities of Iranian EFL learners. They found that emotional intelligence and critical thinking were significantly related and emotional intelligence could predict speaking abilities more and above CT.

Most of the studies on CT in Iran were concerned with its relationship with reading comprehension. Fahim, Bagherkazemi, and Alemi (2010) conducted a study to find if there was any significant relationship between test takers' CT ability and their performance on reading. The correlation was found to be highly significant. Similarly, the relationship between critical thinking ability, resilience, and reading comprehension of texts was studied by Kamali and Fahim (2011) who found significant relationship between the three variables. Using Bloom's taxonomy, Barjesteh and Vaseghi (2012) probed the role of CT skills in EFL learners' reading comprehension performance and found that CT could positively affect EFL learners' reading comprehension. In addition, Nour Mohammadi, Heidari, and Dehghan Niri (2012) investigated the relationship between CT and reading strategies used by Iranian EFL learners. The results of their study showed that the correlation between overall use of reading strategies and students' CT was slightly significant. As for the use of

CT reading strategies in EFL classes at university level, Talebinejad and Matou (2012) used observations and questionnaires to find how frequently CT reading strategies and questions are used in Iran. They found that most teachers devote time to questions other than CT reading questions and students had serious problems with such questions. To show how CT strategies can enhance Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension, Alizamani, Khodabandehlou, and Mobashernia (2013) examined the effect of teaching CT strategies on their reading comprehension ability and the results provided evidence in support of the positive effect of CT on reading comprehension.

As can be seen from the studies reviewed above, most researchers conducted correlational studies to investigate the role of CT in language skills and its relationship with cognitive and affective variables. In other words, the possibility of having CT instruction has been taken for granted. According to what was mentioned in the introduction, CT has been defined as a term belonging to the Western thought and culture while some scholars have rejected the claim and continued to apply CT instruction in TESOL. The following section reviews the debate on the possibility and applicability of CT to non-western cultures like Iran to justify, whether or not, CT can be applied to Iran's ELT curriculum.

2.3 Justifying CT Instruction in Iran

2.3.1 Arguments Against

The first author who criticized and questioned the application and instruction of CT in TESOL was Atkinson (1997) who argued that CT is a cultural notion and may be more of a social practice. He cast doubt on the possibility of having CT instruction in cultures different from mainstream U.S culture. Atkinson (1997) pointed out that the notion of the individual is socially constructed in non-western cultures while in the Western context, the locus of thought is assumed to be within the individual and not necessarily in conformity with the overall thought of the society. He referred to a few studies conducted in Japan to argue that in non-western contexts, the individuals tended to appeal to social norms and conformity instead of developing their own voice and individuality. Clancy (1986) for instance, showed how Japanese infants are socialized in a way to follow the social values and conform to them. As an example, when a mother wants to indicate that her child's speech or actions are socially deviant, she might say: "there's no one who says things like No!" (p. 237, cited in Atkinson, 1997, p. 80). This primary socialization, as pointed out by Atkinson (1997), affects individuals' lifelong and continues to higher education as well.

Similarly, in Iran there is a social conformity which is a barrier to CT and prevents it to be practiced. The sociopolitical norms and mass media encourage conformity against the Western culture and identify it as a cultural invasion. The members of the society are required to conform to the national Iranian-Islamic norms and cannot be critical of the current mainstream education system. As found by Atai and Mazlum (2013), ELT curriculum planners in Iran are required to use grand documents like Imam Khomeini's directions, instructions and views; Ayatollah Khamenei's recommendations, instructions and views; and Iran's constitution. To put it in a nutshell, Iran's ELT curriculum does not welcome CT on the part of the teachers and students and the policy makers require them to conform to what is taught and practiced (Atai & Mazlum, 2013). This shows that like Japan, there is a tendency for a social conformity in Iran at the policy making level which leads the whole

ELT curriculum. This kind of national socio-political view, though may not be accepted by people, prevent the curriculum from having a solid and practical CT instruction.

More recent studies also have illustrated that CT is part of the Western culture (Baek, 2002; Joh, 2002; ten Dam & Volman, 2004; McGuire, 2007; Weinstock et al., 2009; Mathews & Lowe, 2011). They asserted that teachers should be aware of cultural differences since culture can make a difference in CT instruction. As mentioned by ten Dam & Volman (2004, p. 375), "critical thinking is an essential competence required by citizens to participate in a modern, democratic society". They meant that CT may not be applied to developing countries and societies such as Iran which has its own sociopolitical conditions. Moreover, Weinstock et al. (2009, p. 139) claim that "democratic schools encourage their students to express critical and independent opinions much more than regular schools". They expect that students in these schools would make more autonomous judgments since "democratic schools emphasize critical thinking over fact learning and memorization" (p. 140). Consequently, they believe that other regular schools in countries which are not democratic, may not and cannot have CT instruction.

In the Asian contexts, Joh (2002) and Baek (2002) asserted that Korean students prefer a social conformity and have a strong desire for interdependence and harmony as opposed to the individualistic orientation evident in the Western culture. They believed that Korean students are socialized to conform to social norms and traditions. Also, McGuire (2007) argues that CT pedagogy is associated with Anglo-American patterns of socialization and CT movement clashes with Korean culture. Moreover, he points out that Korean educators have not "embraced CT pedagogy as an instructional methodology or

educational philosophy" (p. 225). All these arguments are related to the effect of context and sociocultural norms and values within a society that can affect CT instruction. Mathews and Lowe (2011) also believed that contextual factors are effective in encouraging or discouraging the use of CT strategies.

What really counts in CT instruction is the thus the context and/or culture of use which can facilitate or debilitate the process of CT instruction. As for Iran, the ELT curriculum is not based on the students' target needs and interests (Atai & Mazlum, 2013) and CT is not practiced. The reason behind this ignorance, as mentioned before, is the social conformity which policy makers are pursuing and do not encourage stake holders at the lower levels to think critically. Notwithstanding, Iranian researchers are still conducting studies to find the role and effect of CT in language skills. The following section reviews the studies in favor of CT instruction in TESOL.

2.3.2 Arguments in Favour

After the questionable argument of Atkinson (1997) about CT instruction in TESOL and considering the notion of CT as cultural thinking, other scholars started questioning him for being too narrow in his argument (Benesch, 1999; Davidson, 1998; Ennis, 1996; Gieve, 1998; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Davidson (1998, p. 121) argued that the "Western" modifier which Atkinson (1997) used for CT, is not acceptable since without a doubt, "many societies discourage criticism in some contexts, such as the religious and political spheres. This does not mean that critical thinking is entirely absent from these societies". He further questioned the "social" component of CT in Atkinson's (1997) definition with reference to Ennis (1996) who mentioned that CT is just as applicable to group decision making as it is to individual decision making. Ennis (1996)

argued that CT is evident in all cultures and all people are, to some extent, critical of their surrounding context, though some cultures may discourage it. In addition, Gieve (1998) questioned Atkinson's (1997) arguments for being contradictory and dependent on "a narrow range of case study evidence" (p. 127). More recently, Kumaravadivelu (2003) has argued that CT is not just inherent in the Western culture as he has experienced the opposite in Asian countries where he used to teach.

CT can be used to uncover and question the power relations in any society (Brookfield, 1997). If we look at CT this way, it is deemed necessary in any context including the Iranian ELT curriculum. Moreover, Brookfield (1997) believes that CT is essential to uncover the hegemonies which are embraced by non-western societies. CT can help the members of the society to deal with these power relations both individually and socially. To put it in a nutshell, CT should not be taught only in classroom; we must have CT instruction in all layers of a society.

As for the Asian contexts, Shui Che (2002) examined a CT project in Hong Kong for secondary school students and found that the curriculum of Hong Kong schools focus on memorization and factual knowledge. The author suggested that in the age of information and technology which many messages and propaganda are imposing, "there is a need for our students to be able to make independent judgments in their daily lives" (p. 83). More recently, Stapleton (2011) examined the attitudes of secondary school teachers towards CT in Hong Kong and found that the teachers were in favor of CT instruction in curriculum, but they thought they should be trained before starting to teach CT.

2.3.3 Somewhere in the Middle

The arguments for and against CT instruction in TESOL were discussed in the previous sections. However, there are also some studies that have considered both sides and preferred a position somewhere in the middle (Chan & Yan, 2007; Durkin, 2008; Evers, 2007; Lun et al., 2010). Evers (2007) asserts that reasoning or CT tasks are seen in much the same way across cultures and non-western societies, but such contexts need more cognitive scaffolding. Chan and Yan (2007) agrees with Nisbett, Peng, Choi, and Norenzayan (2001) in claiming that CT "is not something homogeneous: there are different ways or forms of reasoning, and they are often adaptive strategies in response to particular problems in human life" (p. 400), but disagrees with them that East Asians are non-logical. Their argument was that the Eastern style of thinking can be found in the Western thinking style as well with reference to some studies which found that in some cases, American students were more dialectical than Chinese students (see Huss, 2004). The authors suggested that we should choose the middle way which "is a thinking strategy that is adaptive to a social environment which treasures harmony" (p. 400). Similarly, Norenzayan, Smith, Kim, and Nisbett (2002) found that the differences between Asian and Western classrooms regarding CT ability may lie in the pedagogical emphasis on CT in Western classrooms. They further argued that dialectical thinking and CT are linked but the Asian students tend to "seek a 'middle way' between apparent contradictions more than their Western counterparts (Peng & Nisbett, 1999, 2000) and to choose intuitive reasoning over formal reasoning" (cited in Lun et al., 2010, p. 2). In addition, Durkin (2008) investigated the learning experiences of East Asian students in dealing with Western academic norms of CT and found that the

majority of students did not welcome full assimilation into Western norms for academic argumentation and preferred a "middle way" instead.

More recently, Lun et al., (2010) examined differences in CT between Asian and New Zealand European students and found that New Zealand students performed better on CT measures than Asian students. The authors argued that although cultural differences were evident in CT, it should be promoted among international students; however, they suggested that CT should be included in international education very cautiously.

In Iran, CT instruction has been taken for granted since no studies have been conducted to examine the possibility of having CT instruction in the context of Iran which has cultural norms and thoughts different from those of the Western ones. However, Davidson (1998) has argued that "even if one grants the point that critical thinking is less practiced in cultures that value silence, imitation, submission, and conformity, this fact does not preclude the teaching of critical thinking to members of these cultures" (p. 121). All of these arguments point to the significance of CT even in EFL contexts like Iran in which dialectical thinking seems to be more prevalent. To sum up, Benesch (1999, p. 579) believes that "not only can critical thinking be taught through the encouragement of greater awareness, but choosing not to teach critical thinking may result in unquestioning acceptance of prevailing conditions, limiting possibilities for dissent and change". Therefore, this study takes the third stance which takes into account both arguments and require the EFL contexts to have CT instruction but cautiously and with regard to the learners' background, interests, target needs, sociocultural norms and thought patterns. Accordingly, some implications are proposed and discussed in the following section for policy makers and curriculum planners, teachers, and learners.

3. Implications
3.1 Policy Makers and Curriculum Planners

The ELT curriculum in Iran, as mentioned before, is not based on a systematic needs analysis and the policy makers focus on some grand documents "as their starting points in all their educational policy making and planning" (Atai & Mazlum, 2013, p. 397). These grand documents are based on the Islamic-Iranian identities and norms and pursue a social conformity at all layers of the society including the ELT curriculum. Above all, Atai and Mazlum (2013) found that the ELT curriculum planners are chosen based on their "commitment and loyalty to Islam and Islamic Revolution" (p. 399). In other words, Iran's ELT curriculum is based on a social and religious conformity which is against the "democratic" feature (ten Dam & Volman, 2004; Weinstock, et al., 2009) of CT. Moreover, at the practice level, they argue that Iran's ELT textbooks are not well-tuned to the cognitive and affective needs of the learners and "textbooks deal primarily with lower-order cognitive skills in all grades" (Atai & Mazlum, 2013, p. 400). Consequently, we can suggest with caution that Iran's ELT curriculum needs modifications at higher policy making levels since there is a mismatch between what is done at the higher levels of planning and what is needed and desired at the lower levels of practicing.

As for CT, Iran's ELT policy makers and curriculum planners are recommended to revise the curriculum so that it clearly illustrates the plans and means of instruction that support CT. As pointed out by Stapleton (2011), "curriculums should also encourage teachers to mindfully highlight the quality of reasoning and evidence in answers to problems" (p. 21). To do so, we need to start

from the policies that are governing the curriculum and move towards the stakeholders at the lower levels including the curriculum planners, materials writers, head teachers, practicing teachers, and learners. The ELT textbooks should also include CT instruction and practice which relates to higher-order cognitive skills that are currently lacking in our textbooks (Atai & Mazlum, 2013). More recently, Soodmand and Rahimi (2014) have suggested that ELT material developers and textbook designers should "develop and design materials and textbooks which incorporate ways of enhancing critical thinking" (pp. 78-79).

3.2 Teachers

As mentioned before in this article, Iran's ELT curriculum focuses on lower-order cognitive skills and factual knowledge which is against the principles of CT. Therefore, EFL teachers should incorporate CT instruction in their classes which may not be a simple task for them. The reason is that teachers in the first place should be competent enough in CT to teach it. Grosser and Lombard (2008) point out that CT skills and the understanding of how to teach them are lacking among practicing teachers. Thus, "if teachers are not effectively educated in the skills of critical thinking, it follows naturally that they will not be able to teach them to their learners" (p. 1372). In addition, Yeh (2009) believes that teachers need sound CT skills to teach CT effectively. Consequently, if we want to have CT instruction in Iran's ELT curriculum, we should begin with teaching our teachers using pre-service and/or in-service courses which should be planned by curriculum planners.

Even though the policy makers and curriculum planners are following some other criteria and pursue social conformity, as mentioned before, the teachers can do something themselves. As Pettis (2002, cited in Talebinejad & Matou, 2012) mentions, teachers are change agents and King (2003) believes that teacher quality is highly influential in predicting students' academic performance and success. Langer (1997) has suggested that teachers should welcome new ideas and creativity and the fact that "truth" may be dynamic and context-dependent. The author mentioned that learners need to "develop more control and independence over their own learning" (cited in Pithers & Soden, 2000, p. 243). In addition, Raths, Wasserman, Jonas, and Rothstein (1966) asserts that some teachers' behaviors like simply agreeing or disagreeing, demonstrating, cutting off students' responses, preventing the learners from expressing new ideas, and using simply recall questions should be avoided to enhance CT. Teachers should also pay attention to the cultural backgrounds of the students, promote active learning, stimulate interaction and teach on the basis of real-life situations (ten Dam & Volman, 2004). Similarly, Sharma and Hannafin (2005) and Yeh (2009) found that scaffolding can facilitate the CT ability of the students and this scaffolding requires the support of the teacher as an expert.

Teachers must be able to "use key teaching strategies such as higher-level questioning and problem-based tasks; and create a learning environment which encourages the development of thinking strategies, including critical thinking, analysis, reflection, evaluation, problem solving, judging, justifying and interpretation" (South Africa, 1996, cited in Grosser and Lombard, 2008, p. 1372). In addition, they should praise the value of students' opinions and encourage them to contribute to classroom discussions (Chiu, 2009). Teachers should fully understand the characteristics of a classroom, value the

voices of the students, their interests, and preferred learning strategies instead of requiring them to memorize some facts and simply covering the materials (Mathews & Lowe, 2011).

3.3 Learners

So far, we discussed some implications for policy makers, curriculum planners, and teachers. Although the learners are at the bottom of this hierarchy and receivers of any policies and materials, they have a key role in the development of their CT ability. This is more evident in the context of Iran where the policies are not compatible with the learners' needs and interests (Atai & Mazlum, 2013). In other words, part of the responsibility for CT development is for the students to contribute to the CT enterprise. As mentioned by Pithers and Soden (2000, p. 243), "the students must learn to teach themselves to reflect and refine the strategies, to develop their metacognitive knowledge and skills". The students are also suggested to work on their CT ability in the context of their school/college subjects which are related to their real-world needs (ten Dam & Volman, 2004). Similarly, van Gelder (2005) argues that students will never improve in CT competence unless they engage in CT itself. He believes that to learn about CT is not enough; learners should stimulate CT discussions and practices. In other words, higher level learners are expected to go beyond the surface structures and engage in reasoning and CT questions (Talebinejad & Matou, 2012). This becomes more important in EFL contexts where the cultural norms and values may be against the CT enterprise.

4. Conclusion

This study reviewed the literature on CT to examine the opposing arguments for and against having CT instruction in TESOL, in general, and Iran's ELT curriculum, in particular. The discussion of arguments and the importance of CT in education, regardless of the cultural norms and values, led us to take a stance which considers both sides of the argument. Although cultural differences were argued to be effective in CT and it has been identified as one of the exclusive features of democratic societies (Atkinson, 1997; Mathews & Lowe, 2011; McGuire, 2007; ten Dam & Volman, 2004; Weinstock et al., 2009), some other studies questioned this belief (Benesch, 1999; Davidson, 1998; Ennis, 1996; Gieve, 1998; Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and pointed out that CT is not cultural thinking. However, some other studies have suggested that both sides should be taken into account since we cannot claim that CT is totally absent in EFL contexts (Chan & Yan, 2007; Durkin, 2008; Evers, 2007; Lun et al., 2010).

This study took the third stance which considers the sociocultural values of the context and simultaneously, agrees, with caution, to have CT instruction in Iran as an EFL context. The reason for this inclusion is that CT "appears to be something more universally relevant than just a social practice" (Davidson, 1998, p. 122). Even though some cultures differ in their ability to think critically, it does not mean that they don't have any degree of CT and "part of the task of the ESL/EFL teacher is to prepare students for the world outside their societies" (p. 122). Benesch (1999) also asserts that CT instruction is deemed necessary for all contexts since the contrast might lead to a fixed status of mind and society and leaving all conditions unchanged and unquestioned and no society can ever change and develop without critique and CT.

As for Iran's ELT curriculum, the policy makers and materials writers are pursuing a social conformity which is against the principles of CT. It was previously mentioned that there is a mismatch between what the policy makers and curriculum planners tend to achieve and what the

learners and teachers desire and need (Atai & Mazlum, 2013). The teaching model of Iran's ELT curriculum is that of the coverage model which focuses on "the transfer of information from teacher to student" (Chaffee, 1992, p. 26). Consequently, this study suggests that CT can be taught in Iran's ELT curriculum, but with a clear understanding of the context, students, their background, proficiency level, and their target needs.

The present study aimed at reviewing the related literature to examine the possibility of having CT instruction in Iran's ELT curriculum and the arguments against and in favor of that. Therefore, one of the most serious limitations of this study is not having any experiments to conclude accordingly. Notwithstanding, the review and discussions of this article can be used for further studies which can examine the argument in a more objective way. Future studies can conduct experimental studies, surveys, or case studies to have a more in-depth analysis of the present condition of CT instruction in Iran's ELT curriculum and provide more reliable findings. Moreover, classroom discourse analyses can be conducted to examine the discourse of EFL teachers and learners to see if CT is taught or not and how EFL learners react to this instruction.

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