

Self-Assessment of Critical Thinking Skills in EFL Writing Courses at the University Level: Reconsideration of the Critical Thinking Construct

Youssef Nadri

Faculty of Law

University Hassan II, FSJES Ain Sebaa, Casablanca, Morocco

Adil Azhar

Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures

Ecole Normale Supérieure, Mohammed V University

Rabat, Morocco

Abstract:

The Critical Thinking (CT) component has by now secured a key place within EFL curriculum aims and objectives. The integration of a CT dimension into the teaching of the writing skill in particular has received considerable attention in research. However, research has also pointed to the failure of assessment practices to evaluate CT development. It is within this context that the present work advocates a standard based approach to the assessment of CT in EFL writing that aligns assessment criteria to the critical abilities articulated in the learning outcomes (i.e., standards). This fosters a conception of CT measures that associates components of CT with higher order writing skills. Accordingly, the first objective of the study is to empirically test the relationship between CT dispositions and metacognitive strategy use in an attempt to establish a model of writing (self-)assessment that combines these two dimensions. As assessment is viewed as a formative evaluation process subservient of learning, the study also targets the students' self-assessment strategies during the writing process. To this purpose, a questionnaire has been designed, and administered to 100 students at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences in Rabat to tap their perceptions and use of CT skills. The data analysis revealed that critical thinking development and assessment are metacognitive in nature; it follows that metacognitive skills such as planning, self-evaluating and reflecting are to be used as an essential vehicle in the development of Critical Thinking skills. This points to the paramount role of CT-informed formative (self-)assessment practices in benefiting ELT writing learners.

Key words: critical thinking skills, metacognitive skills, L2 writing, self-assessment