

Integrating Critical Thinking Skills Into Academic Writing Courses: Perceptions, Strategies, and Challenges

Fatuma Ahmed Abdulkader

English Language Institute, University of Jeddah

Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

E-mail: faabdulkader@uj.edu.sa

Received: July 29, 2026

Accepted: September 11, 2026

Published: October 24, 2026

doi:10.5296/ijl.v18i5.23955

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v18i5.23955>

Abstract

Academic writing in higher education indicates students' cognitive and analytical skills and communication competence. Nevertheless, learners often struggle to produce analytically rich and critically informed written work, largely because Critical Thinking (CT) skills are not systematically embedded within Academic Writing (AW) instruction. In EFL settings, for example, grammar and structure are often taught more than higher-order thinking, resulting in academic writing that lacks coherence, argument strength, and originality. This study followed a mixed methods design to examine (a) Saudi EFL instructors' knowledge of the relationship between critical thinking skills and academic writing; (b) challenges instructors' face in promoting CT skills through AW tasks and ;(c) teaching strategies that can be recommended to strengthen the teaching of CT skills in AW classes. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected, using an in-depth semi-structured questionnaire and interviews as a means of obtaining a full perspective. The findings are anticipated to identify conceptual and instructional shortcomings for successful CT integration. The implications of the study suggest the necessity of targeted professional development and curriculum reform to better connect CT and AW pedagogy. There is a need for further research on classroom-based interventions in which instructors improve teaching strategies, to develop analytic and argumentative academic writing skills in students.

Keywords: Academic writing, Intellectual ability, Analytical thinking, Communication Competence

1. Introduction

English is a popular language in Saudi Arabia serving as the major tool of communication and as well a central pillar of education at the undergraduate level (Al-wossabi, 2024). Well-targeted writing activities have been seen to greatly facilitate critical thinking, encouraging students to question and to assess evidence and to craft rationale for an argument (Jamshidi & Amraei, 2025). In today's higher education environments, it has become relevant to analyse the academic performance of learners' capacity, communication ability and success in learning. Not only does writing serve as a tool of verbal evidence, but the form is also a key marker of language competence and a measure of student reasoning skills, ability to analyse, and capacity to form reasonable argument. Yet studies have found that many students struggle with the production of written work that reflects deep thought and critical analysis of ideas (Al-Herz, 2025). This discrepancy implies that although learners may acquire an understanding of composition mechanics, they do not yet develop a sound understanding of how to integrate these thinking processes into reflective and analytical writing products.

In today's research landscape, these problems are exacerbated by two critical impediments: the way teachers incorporate critical thinking competences in teaching of academic writing, which favours grammar and structure and superficial correctness, at the expense of the cultivation of higher order thinking, such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, which receives less emphasis. Consequently, these interconnected barriers have formed a learning context in which writing has become a routine activity instead of an opportunity for intellectual discovery and enrichment (Al-Herz, 2025). As the demand for more advanced and advanced cognitive and communication skills increases at UJ, and outside university and career settings, the issue of how teachers teach, or not teach, the rapport between CT and AW must be explored. Guided by a strong foundation of international principles and findings, this study focuses on various techniques for developing students' critical thinking abilities in UJ's English academic writing classroom.

2. Significance of Study

Although academic writing is also increasingly recognized as a key competency in academia, many students still fail to write with criticality, clarity, and analytical rigor. The literature review revealed that there exist two main reasons for difficulties in the incorporation of CT in Academic writing courses. These include teachers' low capability to incorporate critical thinking into academic writing instruction; focus on grammar, style, and structuring rather than cognitive processes such as analysis, appraisal, and synthesis, which compose good academic writing. Such imbalance instructional methods show that teachers may have difficulty of understanding of the relationship that development of critical thinking and academic writing should be interrelated, or they may lack pedagogic strategies required to instil this relation effectively. This research, therefore, aims to investigate Saudi EFL instructors' awareness of the link between CT skills and AW. It also seeks to investigate how instructors' pedagogical practices help shape students' ability to use writing thinking as a critical force, through academic writing as a major theme. Ultimately, the study aims to develop sound-based strategies which can benefit the academic writing capacity by introducing suggestions in

teaching methods informed by research techniques as well. This work ultimately seeks to provide evidence-based guidelines and pedagogical recommendations on how to improve teaching approaches that will support the competence of students learning academic writing.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Conceptualizing CT in the Framework of Academic Writings

Critical thinking skills are one of the factors of EFL Learners' academic writing performance. Courses in academic writing offer chances to develop higher order thinking skills. These skills for example, such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, which are important for composing structured, evidence-based, and convincing texts (Hyland, 2019; Stapleton, 2011). Studies also find that embedding critical thinking among students in EFL writing courses, and especially in Saudi settings, facilitates learners in getting beyond mere summarization to engagement with texts and ideas and their process and academic achievement (Alnofaie, 2020; Henau, 2024).

Alghamdi (2022) examined the development of 21st-century skills among EFL students at a Saudi university, focusing on the 4Cs: communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. The study used a 21-item questionnaire to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from 309 male and female foundation-year students. The instrument included self-report and close-ended items, as well as five open-ended questions. Mann–Whitney U non-parametric tests were used to analyse the close-ended responses, while the open-ended responses were thematically analysed. The findings showed no statistically significant differences between male and female students in their 4Cs competencies. However, frequency analysis indicated that students still lacked several aspects of these skills needed for academic success and future employment. The study highlights the need for curriculum reform in higher education to integrate courses that strengthen students' 21st-century skills and better prepare them for academic and professional demands.

3.2 Academic Writing in Saudi Arabian Context

Writing is a powerful tool for learning and understanding. It helps students develop clear thinking and confidence, as teaching writing also teaches them how to think critically and engage deeply with their ideas (Bean, 1996). In fact, the value of English language teaching and learning impacts educational developments but also goes into many facets of daily life. For example, employers with a certain level of competency in English will assume Saudi applicants have a minimum level of fluency in these areas in private sector institutions such as industry, local and international banking, and the hotel sector (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Both locally and globally, companies are desperate for English-speaking employees. Consequently, English language proficiency has left college graduates in a challenging position to find a job in search of work when not possessing enough English. Moreover, the flow of business transactions among Saudi Arabia and others as the world's main trading partners are made in English and therefore there are real, growing needs for more Saudis to know spoken and written English. And most Saudis appreciate the significance of proficiently speaking and writing in English due to the significance embedded into a modern international business world through business. Overall, there is reason to think that English in Saudi Arabia is used in both

public and private domains in educational and professional settings. Education is encouraged by the government, which has invested 26% of the income in educational infrastructure (MoE, 2012). Nevertheless, despite the intensive efforts by the Saudi government in developing its educational investment in various institutions, the incorporation of CT skills in AW has been mostly neglected. Therefore, the aim of this study was to analyse the level of language instructors' challenges to integrate CT skills in AW courses.

3.3 Application of CT in Academic Writing Courses

Amin & Adiansyah (2018), examined the application of CT in AW courses. They went further and put forth the argument of whether CT skills are cultivated in the current century, with the usage of frameworks or initiatives according to students' needs and expectations. Thus, the study aimed to answer (a) how was the lecturer's perspective toward the students' CT skills development; and (b) what were the barriers obstructing students' thinking skills development. Descriptive quantitative study was adopted in this study for data collection. This study involved lecturers from accredited biology education program with more than three years of teaching experience. Results of the study indicated that the students' difficulties that has been faced with shaping the students' critical thinking skills, included three main factors: Firstly, the lecturers' teaching model and strategies with reduced classroom activities were rooted in teacher-centered approach.

This ultimately led to the ineffectiveness of improving CT in the classroom. Secondly, students have not much knowledge because they do not get interested in reading, according to the study's findings. Also, students have no abilities to advance their analytical skills and argumentative capacity. For instance, (70.68%) of students were unable to offer proper arguments and debate during classroom activities. The third factor that was causing students' critical thinking skills to remain deficient was the institution factor involving insufficient amounts of science workshops, training, and meetings on how to promote the students' CT skills that the lecturers need to improve. Moreover, weak support facilities (e.g., laboratories, libraries) have also been identified. Several investigators also emphasized that properly designed professional development initiatives provide EFL teachers with evidence base teaching techniques to inspire students to think critically in their English lessons (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Borg, 2018). Instructors who are trained to integrate CT strategies, such as argument mapping, Socratic questioning, reflective writing, and problem-based tasks, students show enhancements in their organization of ideas, reasoning, and evidence-based writing (Stapleton, 2011; Yeh, 2015).

In the Saudi EFL context, there are multiple studies (e.g., Alrabai, 2017; Alghamdi, 2021) supporting the perception that teacher preparation regarding CT-oriented writing pedagogy is an important shortcoming in the profession. Often, instructors are product oriented in their approach to writing, with a focus on grammar and structure. Instead, they teach for analytical evaluative and reflective thought. Therefore, having strategies focusing on CT integration can encourage a shift in teachers' practices with regard process-oriented writing, thus enhancing students' argumentative and academic literacy skills. Furthermore, teacher perceptions of training also affect their readiness to adopt novel techniques. Instructional managers that see

CT training as “relevant and practical” use them more frequently in writing classes with a higher likelihood of favourable student consequences (Tishman and Andrade, 2019). Consequently, investment in well-organised and contextually appropriate programs that cater for the requirements of Saudi EFL instructors are crucial if the pedagogy of CT in AW must be developed.

3.4 Challenges Faced by Instructors in Integrating CT Into Writing Courses

The integration of CT skills in AW courses in Saudi EFL is not easy for many Saudi EFL instructors because of a complex group of pedagogical, institutional and cultural issues. One big obstacle is poor professional training. Numerous teachers have expressed little knowledge in teaching CT, depending on the traditional product focused writing method which focus on grammar and sentence structure rather argument, reasoning, and analytical thinking (Alrabai, 2017; Borg, 2018). Instructors can seem ill-equipped to design tasks that allow students to appraise, adjust, and justify ideas without such focused professional development. Another major challenge is students' limited language proficiency. Because many of Saudi EFL learners lack vocabulary, grammar, and writing structure for sentence writing, teachers often prefer surface level precision to nurture students' ability to analyse, critique, and make arguments (Fareh, 2014; Alghamdi, 2021). This tension between language competence and thinking competence complicates the integration of CT. There are also cultural and educational traditions. In most of Saudi educational context, learning and teaching process mostly focused on rote learning and memorization. This in turn, usually create a conflict with CT-based methods which tended to be more open discussion, questioning, and evaluation of multiple viewpoints of the profession. (Tishman & Andrade, 2019).

In addition to those challenges, instructors are also subjected to limitations due to insufficient time slots, large class sizes, and limited institutional resources to adapt novel teaching strategies (Alghamdi, 2022). Scholars have identified these challenges by proposing that context-dependent teacher training, reforming the curriculum and increasing institutional support would assist educators in balancing language development education and critical thinking practice in academic writing classrooms (Abdulkader, 2016; 2019). The aim of this study is to investigate Saudi EFL teachers' conceptual understanding of the relationship between the critical thinking skills and academic writing. In further exploration, further analysing the pedagogical pitfalls for instructors in a pedagogical setting with respect to the development of critical thinking, the goal of this study is to establish the pedagogical obstacles to the teaching of thinking and a way forward in academic writing, and exploring the various teaching pedagogical challenges they face when teachers teach academic writing. Research on the integration of teaching the CT skills, specifically, in AW courses in the Saudi context is little. Thus, the current research aims to bridge this research gap through investigating the EFL instructors' perceptions, strategies and challenges in a Saudi higher education context.

Taken together, the studies reviewed above reveal three notable limitations that constrain their applicability to the present enquiry. First, much of the existing evidence on critical thinking in Saudi EFL settings is drawn from student-facing instruments such as the self-report questionnaire employed by Alghamdi (2022) which capture learners' perceptions

of their own competencies rather than instructors' understanding of how critical thinking should be taught or assessed within academic writing. Second, foundational work on the pedagogical barriers to critical thinking, notably Amin and Adiansyah (2018), was conducted within a biology education programme; while its findings regarding teacher-centred instruction and institutional resource constraints are instructive, the extent to which they generalize to a language-writing classroom, where critical thinking is inseparable from linguistic competence, remains untested. Third, the cluster of Saudi EFL studies that identify teacher preparation as a shortcoming (Alrabai, 2017; Alghamdi, 2021; Fareh, 2014) tend to infer this gap from broader discussions of writing pedagogy rather than from a direct investigation of how instructors themselves conceptualize the relationship between critical thinking and academic writing.

Consequently, no study to date has examined, from the instructors' own perspective, how Saudi EFL academic writing teachers conceptualize critical thinking, the strategies they judge most effective for fostering it, and the specific challenges they encounter in doing so within their own classrooms. This represents a meaningful gap: without direct insight into instructors' conceptual and practical understanding, curriculum reform and professional development initiatives risk being designed around assumptions inferred from student outcomes or from disciplines other than language teaching, rather than from the lived pedagogical experience of those responsible for delivering critical-thinking-oriented instruction.

The present study addresses this gap directly. By investigating Saudi EFL instructors' conceptualizations, recommended strategies, and challenges in integrating critical thinking into academic writing courses, this research contributes context-specific, instructor-derived evidence that complements and extends the predominantly student-centred or cross-disciplinary findings of prior work. In doing so, it offers a more precise empirical basis for the professional development and curricular reforms called for elsewhere in the literature (e.g., Abdulkader, 2016; 2019), grounded specifically in the realities of the Saudi EFL academic writing classroom. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

3.5 Research Questions

The focus of this study is guided by the following research questions.

1. How do Saudi EFL instructors conceptualize the role of CT in fostering AW skills?
2. What teaching strategies can be recommended to strengthen the teaching of CT skills in AW classes?
3. What challenges do Saudi EFL instructors encounter in promoting CT skills through AW tasks?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

A mixed methods approach was used to gain a full understanding of the research questions. A semi-structured questionnaire following Alshammari (2022) was adopted to obtain information of instructors' knowledge of the essential capabilities of critical thinking and its relationship to academic writing, the methods that they use when teaching, and the obstacles encountered in utilizing these skills. To validate the content, the first draft was reviewed by 3 assistant professors and 2 experienced EFL teachers and influenced to some extent by their comments. This instrument included questions employing Likert-scale and non-Likert questions to gain quantitative breadth and qualitative depth. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were performed to confirm the reliability and rationality of the data (Creswell & Clark, 2018). This combined method allowed for richer interpretation of the participants' perspectives and enhanced the overall validity of the study's findings.

4.2 Participants

The data for this study were collected from the English language Institute (ELI) in a Saudi Arabian University. The target population consists of (n=46) Female English language and academic writing teachers who are involved at the foundation or preparatory year programs. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who have experience teaching academic writing and are involved in developing students' critical thinking skills. As such, semi-structured interviews were administered to the participants who revealed their readiness to participate (n = 5) instructors to obtain rich information about introducing a critical skills-oriented perspective to academic writing courses (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

4.3 Data Collection

4.3.1 Questionnaire

In this study, two instruments (questionnaire and semi-structured interview) were developed for the instructors. The questionnaire was organized along with recent literature. The questionnaire items were adapted and transformed based on previous studies according to instructors' perceptions of the integration of critical thinking skills in academic writing courses. The questionnaire includes 35 questions with 5-point Likert-scale responses: 1, strongly agree 2, agree, 3 neutral 4, disagree and 5, strongly disagree.

4.3.2 Interviews

To validate and triangulate study participants' perceptions and for further explorations of the results of the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were performed with (n=5) English language instructors. The semi-structured interviews were also carried out with selected respondents to gather in-depth understanding of how teachers understand CT in AW courses and the reflections of this, which in turn, provide insights on the obstacle's teachers perceived through the process of the integration of CT in writing course. Recommendations and suggestions for an improved academic writing skills according to the instructors were also considered.

4.4 Data Analysis

Subjective responses from closed-ended questionnaire items were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to report similar trends and observed weaknesses. In the context of the qualitative data interview transcripts were analyzed through thematic analysis. Data coming from the questionnaires was then compared to the aims of the investigation. The interview protocol emphasized participants' views of the study's purpose. We conducted a process of data coding to observe recurring patterns and themes that appeared consistently in data, group ideas into broad categories (e.g. conceptual holes, implementation difficulties, training and development) and interpret themes considering the target problem.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

For validity, the questionnaire and interview protocols were validated by (n=3) voluntary experts in TESOL and Applied linguistics. The use of data from different sources (questionnaires, interviews) used triangulation. Reliability was supported by continued adherence to protocols for data collection and clear coding processes. Ethics consent was granted from the appropriate institutional appraisal board. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Participants provided written consent. Furthermore, all data have been securely stored and used for research purposes only. Semi structured interviews were conducted in this research. Additionally, the questions in interviews were developed in the pre-survey to meet the study's research purposes (Zoltán, 2007).

5. Results and Discussion

This portion reports the empirical results of the users' questionnaires and interviews. The data is analyzed and discussed in the next section based on the study research questions. The qualitative and quantitative results are presented in a structured way by means of each question. The investigation of Saudi EFL instructors (n=46) understanding of CT and academic writing done for this study is conducted in accordance with the process and purpose described in this literature review.

5.1 Research Question One: How Do Saudi EFL Instructors Conceptualize the Role of CT in Fostering AW Skills?

The first research question focused on the participants' understanding of critical thinking-based promotion to develop academic writing skills. Figure 1 below shows the findings gained from the participants regarding research question one.

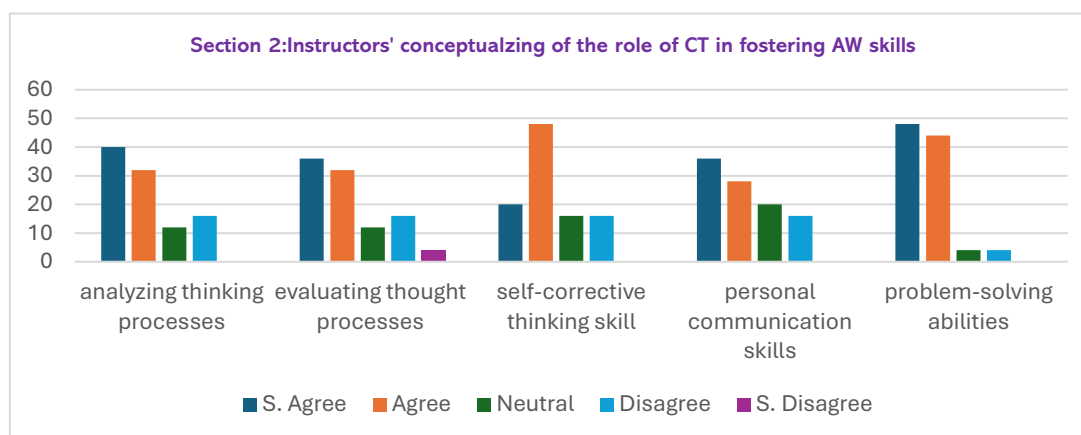


Figure 1. Instructors' conceptualizing of the role of CT in fostering academic writing skills (N=46) presented the following result

According to the instructor and questionnaire results presented in Figure 1, 72% of instructors strongly agree and agree regarding CT as the process of analysing thinking process in the direction of improvement whereas 12% of the instructors are neutral with the statement, meanwhile there is 16% of them who disagreed with the statement. For the statement, CT is self-corrective thinking, 68% agree highly and agree well and 16% agree neutral with the statement of 16%. Responses from the instructors' interviews, also stated that:

"Incorporating critical thinking skills into academic writing courses has many benefits. Students can learn how to support their topics with various sources to back up their argument and decision" (T2).

Another instructor added the following comment:

"Critical thinking skills are very important for academic skills in every subject and for life also beyond university studies. I strongly believe that helping students with these skills is beneficial also to guide them as highly functioning citizens" (T4).

This part focuses on Saudi EFL educators' interpretations of the importance of CT skills to develop the learners' academic writing skill. The instructors obviously knew that the CT skills were a core factor of academic writing courses, and this was confirmed by the results of both the questionnaire and interview findings. For example, within the interview process, instructors stated that the purpose CT to generate text is seen by all in writing as important for

their students' reasoning and argumentation development process. Moreover, the analytical data confirmed that it is beneficial for instructors to introduce CT skills into academic writing courses to foster students' analysis, evaluation and synthesis skills. Thus, they can create highly structured/evidence-based /structured effective and persuasive writing. These findings therefore, resonate with the paper published by (Alnofaie, 2020; Henau, 2024), which argued that the teaching of CT skills in the academic writing classroom in general and in the context of Saudi writing more especially, allow students to progress from mere surface summarization to become more sensitive to texts and thinking, for this reason helps cultivate their development and academic success.

5.2 Research Question Two: What Teaching Strategies Can Be Recommended to Strengthen the Teaching of CT Skills in AW Classes?

Students were also queried as to what forms of a teaching strategy need to be recommended as recommended to support the enhancement of the teaching of CT in AW classes. Results obtained from the participants in this research question two are shown in Figure 2.

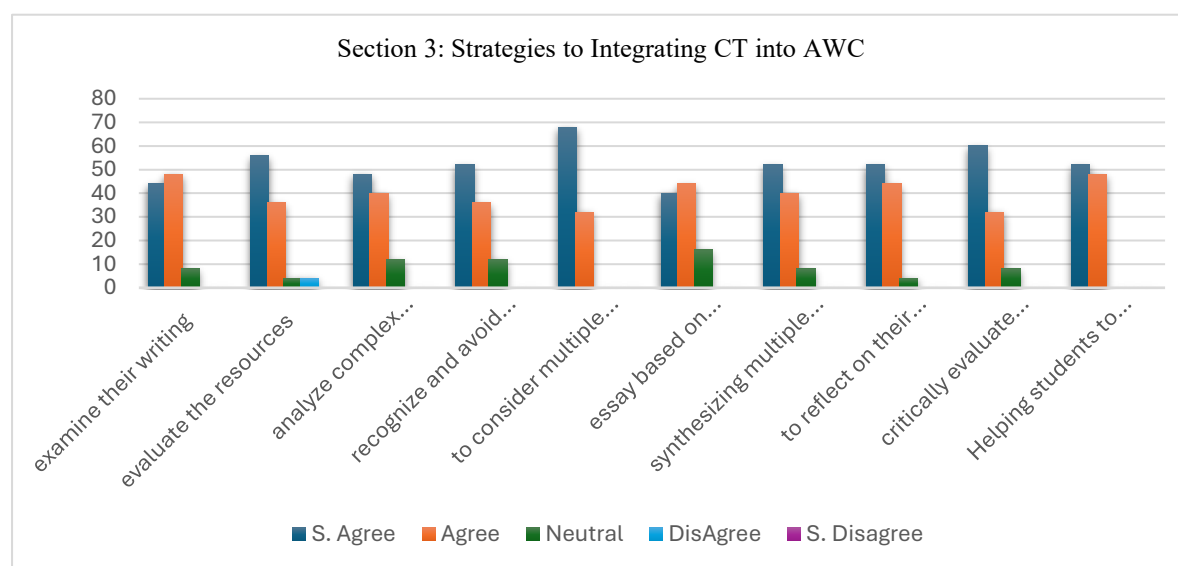


Figure 2. Summary of integrating CT skills strategies into AWC

Of the above-mentioned strategies, most English language instructors (92%) strongly agree with (Figure 2). It reflects that these strategies promote the skills of academic writing by allowing students to understand how to improve by thinking critically over their work and providing them feedback of this type. While only 8 percent of the educators believe this statement to be neutral. In addition, the instructors rate teaching students how to evaluate the source of information they use in support of their writing as strongly agree and agree with 92% and 4% neutral and only 4% disagree with that statement, respectively. In addition, educators noted in interviews that they believe CT skills are also critical in stimulating engagement of

students in the classroom and forming additional concepts about certain topics. They went on to note that students could also participate in some cognitive and problem-solving processes that can improve their overall learning experience. As an example, instructor (T1) and (T3) explained:

“We need to encourage our students to be more confident in writing by teaching them how to make their arguments logical. This can happen by infusing critical thinking as a teaching strategy which makes students more independent and active writers” (T1).

Another instructor added

“We as language instructors need to understand that critical thinking promotes independent learning. Thus, we need to teach students how to question information critically, make reasoned decisions, and articulate their perspectives more effectively, preparing them for complex problem-solving beyond the classroom” (T3).

Although critical thinking skills are believed to play an influential role in academic writing courses, participants feel that the current programme fails language students completely in terms of the strategies they require to learn in academic writing courses as a pedagogical system. In addition, one of the instructors asserted that at the ELI, programme leaders/curriculum designers should collaborate with the academic writing instructors to determine few types of classroom activities to include in the academic writing courses before the academic studies. The study also found another pair of important aspects which show faculty know that such skills are necessary skills in writing courses. In a nutshell, instructors are suggesting that adding critical thinking skills to writing courses at university can directly help students to analyse critically the information presented, teaching them not only in a textbook the ways of questioning information critically and how to critically study a world outside an academic environment but also how to solve problems in complex and multiple perspectives in real life. Hence, the findings of this study are steady with Amin & Adiansyah (2018) who stated that in the current century, the promotion of CT skills in teaching has been enhanced by adopting approaches or models that meet students' academic needs and expectations (Amin & Adiansyah 2018); applying models or approaches to the usage of CT skills as a teaching strategy has also been encouraged.

5.3 Research Question Three: What Challenges Do Saudi EFL Instructors Encounter in Promoting Critical Thinking Through Writing Tasks?

The third research question was used to describe the types of challenges of promoting critical thinking in academic writing tasks that they face. The findings obtained from the respondents according to the research question 3 are given in Figure 3.

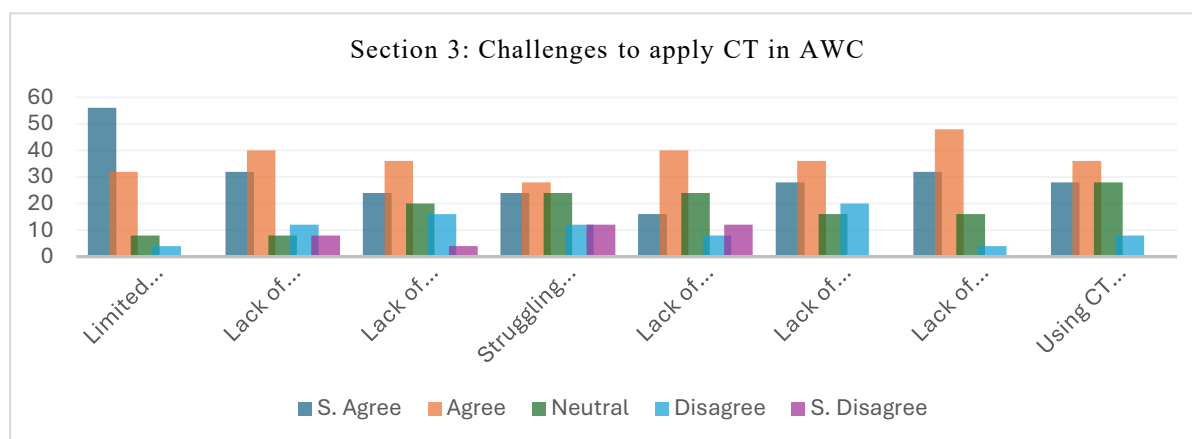


Figure 3. Summary of challenges encountered instructors in applying CT into AWC

As evidenced by results of students' questionnaire in Figure 3, most (88%) of the instructors think that having only very limited time to systematically go through different sources in the classroom prevents them to implement the necessary critical thinking skills into the writing class, where 8% of the instructors considered neutral while just 4% chose to disagree. The second largest proportion of the challenges experienced by teachers in applying CT in AW was 80%, indicating the absence of vocabulary proficiency of the students' skill to apply critical-thinking skills in academic writing courses (16% of teachers chose neutral), whilst only 4% took disagree. Teachers were asked for how much the absence of using CT skills in writing academically was experienced. 64% strongly agree and agree and 20% are neutral and 16% of the instructors disagreed with the statement.

Also, during the interviews, the instructors noted that there are additional challenges, as opposed to the language concerns of the students. Example: One instructor explained:

"Current English language courses have more than 30 students in class, and instructors were requested to teach, correct and providing feedback on students' tasks in the class." (T2).

Another instructor added:

"Most of the students lack motivation during classroom activities, more particularly in academic writing session due to their previous stage of weak preparation of English language learning" (T5).

Three from the five instructors mentioned that there emerged a significant factor involved that creates most of the difficulties in the implementation of CT skills in AWC. The comments below, for example, suggest that the role and significance of critical thinking ability in writing classes does not get paid attention by academic managers. These instructors explained that:

"We did not attend once specifically designed workshop engaging instructors on how to integrate CT skills in AW strategies. Most of our professional development

seminaries lack of training and techniques regarding the integration of critical thinking skills in most of our language courses” (T1, T3, and T4).

Qualitative and quantitative data exposed that participants were interested in evolving the ability to implement critical thinking skills in their AW course ahead of providing the course to the students. Nevertheless, the study found that students' writing ability did not appear to meet the expectations of the instructors because of several barriers that instructors were confronted with during the implementation of the integration process. Most of the instructors contended that well-designed training specifically on how to apply a variety of strategies in academic writing courses should take precedence in teaching students to be good writers. In contrast, teachers are under pressure to become effective in their teaching profession. For example, in the interview, instructors had highlighted that teaching time was the predominant problem in most classes, with the high number of students attending the course compared to the work that needed to be done simultaneously. So, the study summarized the three prominent challenges that occurred throughout the teaching process. These are the lack of training and planning implemented in the process of teaching CT skills by the instructors, high number of students in class and short of instruction time, which make teachers' ability to use them in class a challenge, and students' weak language learning proficiency mainly due to their training from previous classes. As stated in section (2.4), this in turn also indicates that a planned allocation of supplementary time and continuous professional development dedicated to embedding the CT skills into the AW course is imperative if the teacher can be successful. Hence, the results found from this study correlate in the work of Alghamdi, (2022) and Borg, (2018) for the fact that language instructors are faced with time limits, large classes/student load and lack of education and practices that hinder them to implement new teaching methodology.

6. Conclusion

To enhance the integration of CT skills within AW instruction, educational institutions should adopt pedagogical approaches that explicitly combine analytical reasoning, argumentation, and evidence-based writing practices. Writing tasks should be designed to promote inquiry, evaluation of multiple perspectives, and reflective judgment, while assessment frameworks should incorporate clear CT criteria. Furthermore, professional development programs should equip instructors with effective strategies for fostering critical engagement through writing, thereby enabling learners to develop both advanced academic literacy and higher-order thinking skills.

7. Suggestions for Future Research

Looking forward, potential lines of enquiry, two main points of future research were made on how critical thinking skills can be integrated into academic writing courses in a Saudi EFL context. First, it is recommended to increase the extent of the studies range to include a wider and more heterogeneous sample of EFL teachers and learners from several education institutions in Saudi Arabia. “It’s an exploration that aims to provide a more rounded and holistic understanding of the multi-dimensional perspectives and issues of the challenges of CT and AW and its variability with regard to institutions as well as the different perspectives

of several populations and groups of learners”. Second, the researchers need longitudinal research designs for future studies. That, it means keeping an on-going record of participants' impressions and experiences throughout time. With that they have possible knowledge to contribute to the work of educator, institution's decision-making and policy to improve EFL education quality in the Kingdom.

8. Limitations, Further Research and Implications

The current study group was consisted of 46 female EFL teachers. As with the gender-segregated in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it was impossible to expand and have male teachers in this study which would lead to a larger and more representative sample. It would also have been expected that more female teachers would be interested to undergo interviews. Furthermore, an increased inclusion of applied linguistics lecturers as a key field in study would have resulted in a greater data richness regarding selection associated with the teaching style, an area that still requires development. In addition, although this study utilised multiple sources and mixed methods, the results would have been improved if the material could be examined through actual classroom observation and linked to them through the interview results and performance of instructors.

References

- Abdulkader, F. (2016). An investigation of Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions of the appropriateness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in a Saudi Context. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(6), 42-68.
- Abdulkader, F. (2019). Exploring Saudi EFL Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions Regarding the Application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the English Language Classroom. *Unpublished PhD thesis*, University of Northumbria.
- Alghamdi, A. (2021). The Impact of EFL Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices: Communicative Language Teaching in a Saudi University Context. *English Language Teaching*, 14(12).
- Alghamdi, A. (2022). Empowering EFL Students with 21st-Century Skills at a Saudi University: Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development*. <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijeld.2013/vol10no3pp.39-53>
- Al-Herz, J. (2025). Developing Critical Thinking Skills Through English Writing Assignments at King Faisal University. *World Journal of English Language*, 15(8). <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n8p350>
- Aljaafil, E., & Beyhan, Ö. (2022). EFL students' language needs assessment in general English classes. *Research on Education and Psychology (REP)*, 6(2), 152-171.
- Al-Qahtani, S. A. (1995). Teaching Thinking Skills in The Social Studies Curriculum of

Saudi Arabian Secondary Schools. College of Education, King Saud University Abha Branch, Saudi Arabia. *Int. J. Educational Development*, 15(2), 155-163.

Alrabai, F. (2017). Exploring EFL teacher beliefs and classroom practices for critical thinking. *System*, 66, 100-113.

Al-Seghayer, K. (2014). The Actuality, Inefficiency, and Needs of EFL Teacher-Preparation Programs in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.3n.1p.143>

Alshammari, H. A. (2022). Investigating the Low English Proficiency of Saudi EFL Learners. *Arab World English Journal*, 13(1), 129-144. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no1.9>

Al-wossabi, A. S. (2024). College English Teaching in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Solutions. English Language Institute, Jazan University, Jazan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 14(1).

Amin, A. M., & Adiansyah, R. (2018). Lecturers' perception on students' critical thinking skills development and problems faced by students in developing their critical thinking skills. Retrieved from <https://ejournal.umm.ac.id/index.php/jpbi/article/view/5181/pdf>

Borg, S. (2018). *Teacher cognition and language education*. Bloomsbury.

Fareh, S. (2014). Challenges in teaching academic writing in the Arab EFL context. *English Language Teaching*, 7(6), 93-104.

Hamadouche, M. (2013). Intercultural Studies in the Arab World from a Contrastive Rhetoric Perspective. *Arab World English Journal. Special Issue on Translation*, 2, 181-188.

Hellalet, N. (2021). Critical thinking in Moroccan University students' writing: The case of Chouaib Doukkali University. *Journal of Applied Language and Culture Studies*, 4, 179-194.

Henau, J. D. (2024, October). The Impact of Academic Skills Development on Student Outcomes in Higher Education – Literature Review.

Imaniar, F., Lies Amin Lestari, L., & Munir, A. (2018, August). The Teaching and Learning of Academic Writing Involving Critical Thinking in Higher Education. *Journal of English Language and Literature*, 10(1). Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu>

Indah, R. N., & Kusuma, A. W. (2016). Factors Affecting the Development of Critical Thinking of Indonesian Learners of English Language. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 21(6), 86-94. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2106088694>

Jamshidi, A., & Amraei, S. (2025). A Model of Critical Peer Feedback using Patterns of Pair Interaction to Improve Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Skill. *Applications for Language Studies*.

Mok, J. (2009). Developing Students' Critical Thinking in Hong Kong Secondary School English Writing Classes. Retrieved from <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav>
<http://REL.sagepub.com>

Nickerson, R. S. (1987). *Why teach thinking. Teaching Thinking Skills: Theory and Practice*, pp. 27-37. W. H. Freeman and Company, New York.

Phyu, K. (2023). Critical Thinking Skills in English Academic Writing: An Exploratory Interview Study of the Perceptions, and the Experiences of EFL Tutors at a Hungarian University. *Working Papers in Language Pedagogy*.
<https://doi.org/10.61425/wplp.2023.18.103.123>

Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers*. Cambridge University Press.

Stapleton, P. (2011). A survey of attitudes towards critical thinking among EFL writing instructors. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 20(4), 295-310.

Tishman, S., & Andrade, A. (2019). Teaching thinking dispositions in writing classrooms. *Educational Leadership*, 76(5), 40-46.

Yeh, Y. (2015). Teaching critical thinking through argumentation in EFL writing classes. *ELT Journal*, 69(1), 40-50.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)