Criticality in EAP Education in Iran: a missing link

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Abstract

Despite its importance, a review of the related literature reveals not many studies have examined criticality in EAP. Accordingly, in the present study, whether critical approaches were followed in Iranian EAP classes were investigated among EAP teachers and students based on Benesch (1993). To do so, 40 EAP teachers and 150 EAP students were selected based on convenience sampling. The study drew on both qualitative and quantitative approaches as the participants completed a researcher-made questionnaire and attended an interview. The quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and independent-samples *t*-tests and inductive content analysis respectively. The quantitative results indicated that Iranian EAP classes (from both teachers and students' views) suffered low levels of criticality and that there was a significant difference between teachers' and students' perspectives on the existence of criticality in EAP classes. The qualitative findings also confirmed EAP teachers' low familiarity with criticality in EAP courses. The inhibitors and facilitators in the journey towards criticality were finally identified based on the teachers' perspectives.

Introduction

Critical pedagogy (CP) is founded on several theoretical concepts and schools of thought including Paulo Freire's educational philosophy especially the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Foucault's (1980) concepts of knowledge, discourse and subjectivity, the works and ideas of Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. Moreover, increased enrollment in education has led to hot debates over the application of critical issues (Thompson, 2002). Although the critical approach was only concerned with L1 speaking contexts until the 1990s, we have witnessed an increase in the number of studies conducted on criticality in the area of language studies and language education in the last 30 years (Kubota & Miller, 2017).

CP has come to affect other contexts as well including English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Criticality in EAP is referred to as critical EAP, which Benesch (2012, p. 1) defines as 'a kind of pedagogy in which students are helped to navigate through academic discourses and challenge the academic conventions'. According to Benesch, critical EAP sees students as active agents that collaborate with their instructors to make decisions and question unreasonable requirements

A brief review of the literature on criticality shows that few studies have been carried out on criticality in an EAP context. For one, Thompson (2002) designed a six-week summer workshop to promote criticality in EAP students. The aim of the workshop was to encourage the student participants to evaluate their own cultural beliefs working with a variety of genres and cultural perspectives about the origins of Australia's indigenous people. For this purpose, first, the critical approach was explained to the students with the help of Gieve's (1998) notion, based on which the students needed to examine the reasons for their actions, beliefs, and knowledge claims, defend themselves, and question themselves, their peers, their teachers, experts, and authoritative texts. The students were, then, divided into groups to analyze the texts based on the presented criteria and to write a paragraph in response to a topic. The students were to explain the reasons behind their responses. The results showed that the students reacted positively to this activity although some groups found it difficult to write about the paragraphs. In this workshop, the students explored the connection between what they were studying in the classroom and the social and political issues in the broader context of society, which is the main goal of the critical approach. Moreover, the need to develop a critical thinking ability helped them to challenge the foundations of their previous learning experiences.

In another study, Khany and Tarlani-Aliabadi (2016) examined to what extent the EAP curriculum was informed by Iranian students' and teachers' feedback. Data were gathered through a survey and follow-up interviews and the findings indicated that students, teachers and departments rarely interacted to construct the EAP curricula and classroom practices. In addition, students were found to be passive recipients of what had already been developed for them in the educational context.

Another triangulated ethnographic study by Tavakoli and Tavakol (2018) investigated possible sources of problems in Iranian EAP educational context. They used classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, informal talks, focus-group discussions, and the researchers' retrospection. A total number of 217 participants took part in the study including seven EAP teachers, 15 ELT teachers, 195 students (17 graduates and 178 undergraduates).

Content analysis of the collected data showed that deficiencies in needs analysis, inappropriate methodologies, uncertainties in choosing ELT teachers or subject teachers to teach EAP, lack of interaction between ELT teachers and subject matter teachers were among the problems associated with the EAP education in the context of Iran where the students' voices were not heard.

Another attempt was made by Author (2016) wherein the perception of needs from the perspective of EAP teachers, EAP students and syllabus designers were investigated. Additionally, the students' satisfaction with their current program was delved into. The participants in the study comprised 831 EAP students and 55 EAP teachers, who filled out two versions of a questionnaire. In addition, 65 (40 student, and 25 teacher) participants sat a semi-structured interview. Moreover, 35 EAP courses were observed to gain a comprehensive picture of EAP education in Iran. The results of chi-square analyses as well as content analysis of the interviews indicated that the stakeholders were found to hold different perceptions about needs which showed that the end-users' (i.e., students') voices were not heard by the authorities. Furthermore, EAP students' weak general proficiency level, improper timing of their classes, and teachers' and students' lack of motivation were among the problems which were raised by the participants.

Recently, Author (2020), adopting focus-group discussions, explored the way Iranian post-graduate students of TEFL (Teaching English as a foreign language), some of whom were also EFL/EAP teachers, conceptualized criticality, the factors they thought prevented them from thinking and acting critically and the elements they believed could help them remove the barriers of criticality. The results revealed that although the participants had basically correct conceptualization of the notion of criticality, they were not, in effect, able to put it into practice due to the existence of such inhibitors as the nation's educational system, sociopolitical and cultural factors, lack of enough time, students' lack of motivation, lack of a strong knowledge base in criticality and some personality factors. The participants reported that the situation could be improved by transforming and reforming the educational system and incorporating the tenets of criticality in it, students' active participation and interaction in the learning-teaching and even decision-making processes, adoption of reflective practice and especially 'questioning' the exiting educational approaches.

Criticality in EAP, however, seems to be an under-researched area. Following the current critical trends in education, which have gained worldwide recognition, we decided to explore the status quo of criticality in Iranian EAP courses from both the teachers' and the students' perspectives. Given the importance of critical EAP and the scarcity of studies concerning the criticality in EAP classes in the Iranian context, the present study thus tried to fill the research gap felt. To this end, the following research questions were addressed:

1. From teachers and students' viewpoints, do Iranian EAP classes follow a critical approach?

2. Is there any significant difference between EAP teachers and students in their views on whether a critical approach is followed in EAP education in Iran?

3. What are the inhibitors and facilitators involved in following a critical approach in EAP education in Iran based on EAP teachers' views?

Material and Method

Participants

The participants in the study included 40 EAP teachers and 150 EAP students selected based on convenience sampling from different universities in the EAP context of Iran. While there were both male and female participants, most of the teacher participants turned out to be male (*N*=32). The student participants were all BA/BSc students of EAP with one to five years of learning general English experience. All the teacher participants held a Ph.D. in their specialized academic fields (e.g., Humanities, Social Sciences, Political Sciences, Agricultural Engineering, Law, Chemistry, and Mathematics). The teacher participants had 11-23 years of experience in teaching EAP at various universities across the country. Twenty teacher participants, selected on a voluntary basis, attended a semi-structured interview in addition.

Instruments

A researcher-made questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were adopted in the present study. The questionnaire was administered through printed forms, google documents and emails and the semi-structured interviews were conducted only with the teacher participants.

The questionnaire on criticality in EAP classrooms

To identify EAP students' and teachers' views on criticality in EAP classes, we first reviewed the related literature on the topic, the results of which revealed that no valid surveys were available. Thus, the researchers developed a 19-item questionnaire entitled 'Teacher Criticality in EAP Classroom Questionnaire' and 'Student Criticality in EAP Classroom Questionnaire' (see Appendix A and Appendix B) for exploring the status of criticality in EAP classes. The researchers took the theoretical background of these questionnaires from the main underpinnings of criticality put forward by Freire and Foucault and from such concepts as power relations, situatedness, dialogue, etc. provided by Benesch (1998)**.**

To ensure the validity of the developed questionnaires, they were first presented to two experts in the field holding Ph.D.s in Applied Linguistics to receive their expert views. Some items were modified accordingly and two others were excluded based on these experts' judgments.

Then, both the teacher and student questionnaire items were put into a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (= strongly disagree) to 5 (= strongly agree). The final drafts were subjected to a pilot study and factor analysis with 100 EAP teachers and 100 EAP students possessing characteristics similar to those of the present study.

The results of Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 *KMO and Bartlett's Test for the Participants' Perspectives on Teachers' Questionnaire*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.757
	Approx. Chi-Square	779.043
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	171
	Sig.	.0.0

As is evident in Table 1, the KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.۷۵, above the recommended value of 0.60, and also Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found statistically significant (X^2 (۱۷۱) = ۷۷۹.۰۴۳, $P < 0.05$). In addition, the communalities and factor loadings of teachers' questionnaire are presented in Appendix C which indicates that the communalities were all above 0.4 confirming that each item shared some common variance with the other items. Moreover, the analyses yielded two main factors explaining a total of 42.83 percent variance for the entire set of variables.

In addition, using Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability of the teachers' questionnaire in the present study was estimated to be 0.۸۵ as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 *Reliability Statistics for Teachers' Questionnaire*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.838	.859	19

Furthermore, the student questionnaire was administered to 100 EFL students and an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted. The results of KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 *KMO and Bartlett's Test for the Participants' Perspectives on Students' Questionnaire*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**.728**
	Approx. Chi-Square	**876.461**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	171
	Sig.	.0۰0

As is evident in Table 3, the KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.۷2, above the recommended value of 0.60, and also Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found statistically significant (X^2 (۱۷۱) = 876.461, $P < 0.05$). In addition, the communalities and factor loadings of the students' questionnaire are presented in Appendix D.

As shown in Appendix D, the communalities were all above 0.4 confirming that each item shared some common variance with other items. Moreover, the analyses yielded two factors explaining a total of 42.81 percent variance for the entire set of variables.

In addition, using Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability of the Students' Questionnaire in the present study was estimated to be 0.۸۳ as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Reliability Statistics for Students' Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.825	.832	19

Procedure

First, the Teacher and Student Criticality in EAP Classroom Questionnaires were developed and validated by the researchers in the pilot study phase with 100 EAP students and 100 EAP teachers as explained above. Before distributing the questionnaire, the purpose of the study was described, the participants were ensured that the data would be kept confidential and would only be used for the purposes of the present study and the informed consent of the participants was obtained before the study began. Then, the importance of participating in the study, and the guidelines on how to respond to the questionnaires were explained. Afterwards, the participants filled in the questionnaires. A follow-up interview was conducted with twenty of the teacher participants on their views about the inhibitors and facilitators in following criticality in EAP classes. The interview sessions were audio-recorded and then fully transcribed. After collecting the required data, quantitative and qualitative data analyses were carried out.

Data Analysis

The required data for the first research question were collected through the criticality questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics. The data gathered for the second and third research questions were analyzed through independent samples *t*-tests and the inductive content analysis respectively.

Results and Discussion

The first research question of the study set out to investigate whether EAP courses in Iran followed a critical perspective, the results of which are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics for Iranian EFL Teachers' and Students' Perception on Whether EAP Courses in Iran Followed a Critical Perspective

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perception on Critical Approach in EAP Education	190	23.00	70.00	49.53	12.64
Valid N (listwise)	190				

As shown in Table 5, 190 Iranian EFL teachers and students took part in the study. As indicated in Table 5, the mean and standard deviation of the participants' perceptions on whether EAP courses in Iran followed a critical perspective were 49.53 and 12.64 respectively. The ultimate score was computed in the possible range of 19 to 95. Moreover, the minimum score gained by the participants was 23 and the maximum score was 70. It can be stated that the findings showed that the participants did not have high familiarity with criticality in this context, i.e., Iran.

This result seems to be in accordance with the findings of Tavakoli and Tavakol (2018), who held that the current EAP educational system with uninformed choices of materials and methodologies suffered from certain shortcomings due to the lack of criticality in the system.

They, in fact, felt the need for fundamental transformation towards creating a critical educational system for EAP education in Iran. The findings are also partially aligned with those of Esquivel (2020) who regarded the absence of critical literacy in educational systems and especially at class level as a major problem. The findings of our study in this respect might also be justifiable by the funneled relationship among the elements of the nation's educational system. In other words, the upper levels of the educational system (i.e., policy makers, curriculum developers, syllabus designers, etc.) pour the required ingredients into the funnel to reach the lower levels. The lowest level i.e., teachers and students, merely consume whatever they are fed without having sufficient power and authority to make much alteration.

Before, answering the second research question of the study, we first ran a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to inspect the normality of the distribution. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Teachers	Students
N		40	150
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	42.62	51.۳۸
	Std. Deviation	9.16	12.83
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.08	.09
	Positive	.08	.07
	Negative	-.08	-.09
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.56	1.14
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.90	.14

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.

The results shown in Table 6 supported the normality of the distribution for the scores of both students (0.14) and teachers (0.90); therefore, to address the second research question to investigate whether there was any significant difference between EAP teachers and students in their views on whether a critical approach was followed in EAP education in Iran, an independent samples *t*-test was run, whose results are summarized in Table 7. However, the descriptive statistics are first summarized in Table 7.

Table 7 Descriptive Statistics of Teachers and Students Regarding Their Perception on Whether a Critical Approach Was Followed in EAP Education in Iran

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perception on Critical Approach in EAP Education	Teachers	40	42.62	9.16	1.44
	Students	150	51.38	12.83	1.04

As is evident in Table 7, the mean and standard deviation of the teachers were 42.62, and 9.16, respectively, while the mean and standard deviation of the students were 51.38, and 12.83, respectively.

The results of the independent samples *t*-test for the two groups' perception on whether a critical approach was followed in EAP education in Iran are presented in Table 8.

Table 8 Independent Samples T-Test for Teachers and Students Regarding Their Perception on Whether a Critical Approach Was Followed in EAP Education in Iran

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Perception on Critical Approach in EAP Education	Equal variances assumed	7.864	.006	-4.045	188	.000	-8.755	2.164	-13.025	-4.484
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.895	84.387	.000	-8.755	1.788	-12.311	-5.198

As is evident in Table 8, the variances were not homogeneous (F=7.864, *p*=0.006<0.05), and the difference between the mean scores turned out to be significant (t (84.387) = -4.895, *p*=0.000<0.05). Thus, the two groups significantly differed with regard to their views on whether a critical approach was followed in EAP education in Iran; that is, students (M=51.38, SD =12.83) believed more in the fact that a critical approach was followed in EAP education in Iran than teachers (M=42.62, SD =9.16).

Moreover, in order to pinpoint whether there was any statistically significant difference between the students and teachers regarding the individual items of criticality questionnaire, a series of independent samples *t*-tests were run, the results of which are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9 Independent Samples T-Test for Individual Items of Criticality Questionnaire

.Item No.		t-test for Equality of Means		
		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Obstacles restricting freedom in the classroom	5.63	51.18	.00
2	Teacher being the only person who talks in the classroom	5.43	48.70	.00
3	Sharing ideas in the classroom	5.53	188	.00
4	Classroom ignoring the outside world	.10	46.43	.91
5	Asking question in the classroom	5.42	188	.00
6	Changing the present situation of the classrooms	-.39	47.70	.69
7	Being subject of learning not subject of lecture and textbooks	7.11	47.93	.00
8	Making decisions about classroom	5.98	188	.00
9	Being powerless in the classroom as an outsider	5.37	188	.00
10	Making decisions about sitting arrangement	-1.48	188	.13
11	Existence of bolted chairs	6.28	46.87	.00
12	Existence of higher platform for sitting	-.09	188	.92
13	Shaping the forms of assessments	4.56	55.54	.00
14	Provision of real life example to better help transfer the concepts	4.89	48.87	.00
15	Free to react to class	3.32	188	.00

16 Sharing opinions and suggestions about class management, teaching methods and forms of assessment at the end of the term	5.67	50.35	.00
17 Teacher telling what to do the whole session	4.26	188	.00
18 Teacher telling the forms of assessment at the end of the term.	1.49	188	.13
19 Teacher telling what to do the whole session	2.03	188	.04

As shown in Table 9, significant differences were found between the students and teachers' views towards criticality in EAP education. Significant differences were found in 14 items (i.e., items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 19) out of the 19 items of the questionnaire each focusing on a specific aspect of criticality in EAP classrooms. It is noteworthy that the students received higher mean scores in all the above-mentioned items than the teachers. It is also worth mentioning that the rest of the items (i.e., items 4, 6, 10, 12 and 18) were found not to be significantly different between the two groups.

This finding is consistent with the results of Author (2016), who also found a clear contrast between the views of Iranian EAP teachers and learners with regard to the needs and rights in EAP education in Iran.

As an example, a significant difference between teachers' and students' views was found regarding equal opportunity for teachers and students to talk in the class. While most of the students expressed their discontent with not having enough chances to talk and share their ideas in the class, the teachers believed they had provided them with enough opportunity to do so. As another example, while the students considered themselves powerless in the classroom, the teachers disagreed and believed their students had a certain position of power which came to make the difference between the two groups significant. The results here are consistent with the findings of Tavakoli and Tavakol (2018), who pointed out that in the Iranian EAP context, students were passive recipients of their teachers' instructions without having the right to disagree with them.

Another difference between teachers' and students' views was in that while the former believed that the students had been the subjects of their own learning, the latter were divided in this respect. In addition, a significant difference was also found between the two groups in their views about the students' ability to make decisions about their classroom. With regard to the sitting arrangement, both groups agreed that the students were involved in making a decision in this respect. Moreover, the students reported that they were not even allowed to make a complaint about the class or the teacher or express an opinion or make suggestions about the teaching methods and that it was the teacher who always told them what to do.

Finally, there was a significant difference between the teachers' and the students' perspectives towards real-life examples to help better convey the concepts. While the teachers claimed that they used real-life instances, the students believed their teachers rarely used such examples.

The discrepancy between the teachers' and the students' viewpoints towards criticality in EAP education, as found in the study, might be caused by teachers' experience as learners. According to Rodriguez-Valls (2008), practitioners may redo what they have already experienced as students. In other words, the teachers who have been exposed to a traditional top-down managerialistic educational system are more likely to apply the same in their own

classes. The teachers might thus become concerned about their authority being shaken and their power being threatened in the classroom. As pointed out by Brown (2000), critical approaches suggest that students think freely without pressure from the authorities, which may result in teachers' threatened power from their points of view.

Another reason why the teacher participants did not adopt a critical approach in their classes might be associated with their non-reflective practice in their classrooms. According to Rodriguez-Valls (2008), if teachers are reflective, they will think critically. That is, there seems to be a direct positive association between reflectivity and criticality (Author, 2019).

The difference between the teachers' and students' perspectives on criticality might also have been related to both groups' low familiarity with the concept of criticality which means that they did not know what criticality was or how it could be put into practice. This might be attributed to the absence of critical concepts in teacher education programs, which have seemingly ignored the practical aspects of criticality overall. Additionally, time constraints associated with EAP education in Iran and insufficient time for students' participation do, seemingly, not allow the teachers to act critically in EAP classes, a reasoning also strongly supported by Author (2020).

To answer the last research question of the study as to what the obstacles and facilitating factors in following a critical approach in EAP education based on the teachers' perspectives were, the teachers' responses to the interview questions were audio-recorded and transcribed. Then, the transcriptions were subjected to a grounded theory approach inductive content analysis through which the common patterns and the recurring themes of the responses (i.e., the selected codes) were extracted, which were then 'quantitized' (Dornyei, 2007) and subjected to frequency analysis.

The first interview question addressed the extent to which the teachers were familiar with critical approaches to education. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10 EAP Teachers' Familiarity with Criticality

Response	Frequency	Percentage
High familiarity	2	10%
Medium familiarity	5	25%
Low familiarity	13	65%
Unfamiliarity	0	0%

Based on the responses in Table 10, most of the Iranian EAP teachers had low familiarity with criticality and critical approaches to education; however, no teacher was found with absolute unfamiliarity with the concept. Confirming this, one of the interview participants said,

> You know, I am familiar with criticality more or less. However, I do not know how to do it in my classes.

Additionally, another participant stated that,

> I am familiar with criticality somehow, but not [with] the exact tenets and
> principles.

This finding partly explains the discrepancy between teachers' and students' perspectives towards criticality. In other words, EAP teachers' low familiarity with critical EAP might have led them to ignore it in their classes. Furthermore, this finding could indicate that the government might have not provided such a context and opportunity in the educational system of the country. However, as pointed out by Fenton-Smith (2014), the absence of critical principles in the government plans does not mean that criticality should not be highlighted in the learning and teaching contexts.

The second interview question sought the teachers' views on the obstacles in the way of following a critical approach in Iranian EAP classes. The results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11 Obstacles in the Way of Following a Critical Approach in EAP Classes

Response	F	P
Low familiarity on the part of students	7	35
Insufficient time for students' participation	11	55
Low familiarity on the part of teachers	14	70
No reference to the concept in the curriculum	15	75
Lack of criticality concepts in teacher education programs	18	90

Note: F= Frequency; P= Percentage

As shown in Table 11, content analysis of the interviews showed that one of the obstacles to following critical approaches by the teachers included, 'low familiarity' on the part of both the students and teachers (35 and 70% respectively), which might be due to lack of concepts on criticality in teacher education programs (90%) 'no reference being made to the concept in the curriculum' (75%) and, 'not allocating sufficient time to students' participation', which was reported as an obstacle by 55% of the participants.

As mentioned above, based on the interview results, most of the teachers had low familiarity with criticality. According to the teachers, this partly resulted from lack of concern about criticality in the Iranian EAP education context. That is, they believed such academic issues were not important in EAP classes, where the teachers are only given 16 sessions in four months or so to teach a specialized course. Corroborating this, one of the teachers stated,

> I believe implementing this important issue in educational context is a must
> though impossible due to the time constraints imposed by the policy makers.
> I mean it is not easy for me to cling to the imposed content to be taught let
> alone an ideal [i.e., critical] approach.

Time constraint is also mentioned by Author (2016) and Tavakoli and Tavakol (2018) as one of the major deficiencies of EAP education in Iran.

Another justification for the teachers' low familiarity with criticality might be attributed to the outdated teacher training courses in which there is no place for the latest theories of education. Most of the teachers highlighted the fact that they had not passed any courses dealing with such an issue, which might be addressed by holding workshops, seminars, webinars, etc.

by the stakeholders involved. Echoing this, one of the interview participants stated,

> I do not remember any courses of my education to be related to critical issues. So, I think this lack of knowledge of criticality and teachers' low familiarity with critical concepts can be ascribed to uncritical educational system.

The last interview question addressed the factors facilitating criticality in EAP classes, the results of which are presented in Table 12.

Table 12 Factors Facilitating Criticality Implementation in EAP Classes

Response	F	P
Allocating time for 'Ask & Answer' sessions	7	35
Asking for and applying students' favorite assessment forms	8	40
Holding teacher training courses	14	70
Having students present some lessons	15	75
Defining team-work projects	17	85

Note: F= Frequency; P= Percentage

Based on Table 12, the most frequent responses provided by the teachers were concerned with 'defining team-work projects' (85%) 'having students present some lessons' (75%) and holding teacher training courses for teachers' (70%).

Similarly, Morgan (2009) pointed out that creating opportunities for students to construct their own critical insights across lessons facilitates criticality. Clarke (2003) also considers students as active participants and not as passive recipients of teachers' knowledge, an assertion also corroborated by the findings of Author (2020) where the participants deemed active participation, interaction, and collaboration necessary for implementing criticality in foreign language education. Two other factors, believed to facilitate the development of criticality in EAP courses, included 'allocating time to ask and answer sessions' and 'asking for and applying students' favorite assessment forms', which are believed to make the class student-centered. One of the interview participants asserted that the educational system should be designed in such a way to meet students' needs and interests. On the other hand, Khany and Tarlani-Aliabadi (2016) in their study, found out that the participants are passive recipients in the class and are not involved in their EAP class decision-making.

Conclusion and Implications of the Study

Overall, the results of the present study showed that most Iranian EAP classes did not follow a critical approach, and that there were significant differences between teachers' and students' perspectives on the status of criticality in EAP education. That is, while the teachers believed they had provided students with the tenets of criticality, the students believed not so and reported they were void of such concepts and standards. The most plausible reason for such differences might be the lack of a comprehensive understanding of critical approaches and practices resulting from lack of knowledge in this regard.

Moreover, based on the findings, EAP education in Iran seems to have ignored equal power relations and distribution and social justice. That is, it is only the teachers who are the speakers,

power sources and main actors in EAP classes, which can lead to demotivation on the part of the students.

The study might yield some implications. Firstly, EAP instructors, especially subject-matter/content teachers, should be exposed to the latest theories of education especially critical approaches and transformative frameworks in teacher training programs and trained on how to put them into effect in practice. Secondly, holding '*Ask & Answer*' sessions, defining team-work projects, asking for and applying students' ideas about assessment forms, holding (pre-service and in-service) teacher training courses for EAP teachers and having students present some lessons, as found in the present study, might act as solutions to boost criticality in EAP education in Iran and other similar EAP contexts especially where English is learned and taught as a foreign language.

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Declaration of interest statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.
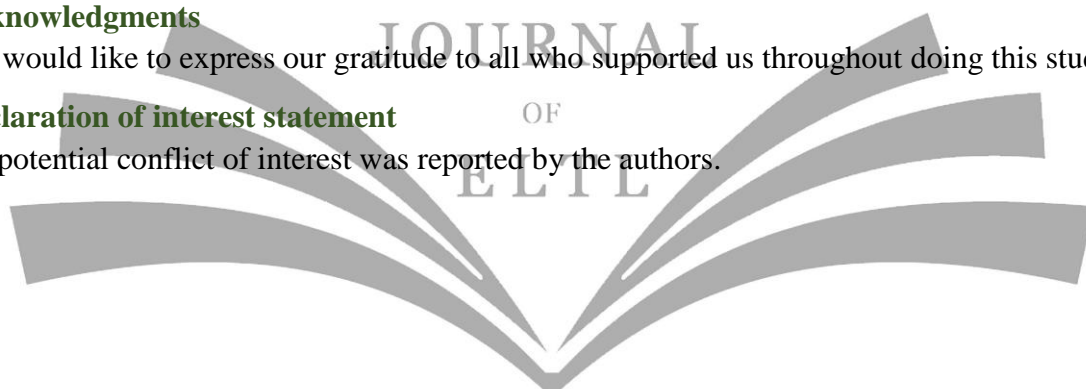
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Appendices

Appendix A

Teacher Criticality in EAP Classroom Questionnaire

No	Items	SD D N A SA
1	I think there are some obstacles which restrict my students' freedom in the classroom.	
2	I am the only person who talks in the classroom.	
3	I allow my students to share their ideas in the classroom	
4	I ignore anything which is related to the outside world.	
5	I allow my students to question whatever they want in the classroom.	
6	I encourage my classroom to change the present situation	
7	I try not to focus just on the lectures and the textbook.	
8	My students can make decisions in the class.	
9	My students are powerless and passive in the class.	
10	Sometimes, I tell my students how to sit in the classroom.	
11	Students' chairs are bolted into the ground	
12	In some classes, I sit on a higher platform.	
13	I ask my student about the forms of assessment.	
14	I give examples from real world to make student understand the concepts better.	
15	My students can complain about the class easily	
16	I ask my students' opinions about class management	
17	I ask my students' opinions about teaching methods	
18	I ask my students' opinions about forms of assessment at the end of the term.	
19	I am the only person who tells the students what to do in the class the whole session	

Appendix B

Student Criticality in EAP Classroom Questionnaire

No	Items	SD D N A SA
1	I think there are some obstacles which restrict my freedom in the classroom.	
2	Our teacher is the only person who talks in the classroom	
3	We can share our ideas in the classroom.	
4	Our classroom ignores the outside world.	
5	We can question whatever we want in the classroom.	
6	We try to change the present situation of our classrooms.	
7	We focus on how much we learn not just on lectures and textbooks	
8	We can make decisions about our classroom.	
9	We are powerless in the classroom as an outsider.	
10	The sitting arrangement of our classroom is decided by our teacher.	
11	Our chairs are bolted into the ground.	
12	In some classes, our teacher's seat is placed on a higher platform	
13	Our teacher asks our opinions in shaping the forms of assessments.	
14	Our teacher uses examples from real world to better help transfer the concepts.	
15	If we have complaints about our class or our teacher, we are free to react.	
16	Our teacher asks our opinions and suggestions about her/his class management	
17	Our teacher asks students' opinions and suggestions about class teaching methods	
18	Our teacher asks students' opinions and suggestions about the forms of assessment at the end of the term.	
19	Our teacher tells us what to do the whole session	

Appendix C:

Table 2. *Matrix Factor Allocation, Communality, Eigenvalues and Variant of Teachers' Questionnaire*

Item	Factors		Communalities
	1	2	
Item 1	0.864		.608
Item 2	0.607		.521
Item 3	0.435		.540
Item 4	0.61		.590
Item 5	0.457		.571
Item 6	0.422		.430
Item 7	0.444		.527
Item 8		0.592	.746
Item 9		0.624	.690
Item 10		0.657	.635
Item 11		0.563	.625
Item 12		0.621	.815
Item 13		0.676	.702
Item 14		0.659	.611
Item 15		0.602	.686
Item 16		0.716	.844
Item 17		0.728	.677
Item 18		0.519	.716
Item 19		0.486	.693
Eigenvalues	5.633	2.507	
Variance Explained (%)	29.645	13.193	

Appendix D

Table 5. *Matrix Factor Allocation, Communality, Eigenvalues and Variant of Students' Questionnaire*

Item	Factors		Communalities
	1	2	
Item 1	0.477		.608
Item 2	0.689		.521
Item 3	0.551		.540
Item 4	0.415		.590
Item 5	0.704		.571
Item 6	0.847		.430
Item 7	0.594		.527
Item 8		0.838	.746
Item 9		0.748	.690
Item 10		0.781	.635
Item 11		0.563	.625
Item 12		0.459	.819
Item 13		0.415	.702
Item 14		0.55	.611
Item 15		0.646	.686
Item 16		0.745	.844
Item 17		0.717	.677
Item 18		0.721	.716
Item 19		0.585	.693
Eigenvalues	5.055	3.079	
Variance Explained (%)	26.605	16.207	

Appendix E: Interview Questions

1. To what extent are you familiar with critical approach?

2. What are the obstacles in the way of following critical approach in Iranian EAP classes?

3. What are the facilitating factors which pave the way to follow criticality in EAP classes?