

Integrating Critical Thinking into English Public Speaking Courses: A Framework for Enhancing EFL Students' Communicative Competence

Bingjie Zhang (Corresponding author)

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

Joanna Joseph Jeyaraj

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

Norzihani Saharuddin

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

Received: July 25, 2025 Accepted: August 9, 2025 Published: August 11, 2025

doi:10.5296/ijele.v13i2.23088 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijele.v13i2.23088>

Abstract

Critical thinking (CT) is widely recognised as a core competency in 21st century English language education, especially within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Despite the considerable potential of English Public Speaking (EPS) courses to promote both CT and communicative competence (CC), systematic integration of CT into EPS instruction remains limited, particularly in Asian EFL settings. This paper presents a research-informed framework for embedding CT within EPS courses, aimed at advancing both cognitive and communicative development among EFL learners. The framework comprises three core components: (1) foundational CT instruction, (2) structured activities and personalised feedback, and (3) ongoing support for student development. Drawing on empirical research and theoretical perspectives, the paper elucidates the interconnection between CT and CC, identifies persistent challenges in current teaching practice, and outlines practical implications for curriculum

design and pedagogy. The proposed framework offers a transferable blueprint for educators and researchers seeking to optimise EPS instruction and address the evolving demands of global communication.

Keywords: critical thinking, communicative competence, English public speaking, EFL, instructional framework, curriculum design

1. Introduction

As English language education evolves to meet the demands of increasingly diverse and dynamic communicative contexts, two competencies—communicative competence (CC) and critical thinking (CT)—have emerged as foundational for learners' academic and professional success (Canale & Swain, 1980; Paul & Elder, 2014; Uemi, 2024). Despite the proliferation of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programme and an increasing focus on performance-oriented language instruction, many learners continue to struggle with the cognitive and communicative demands of real-world contexts. The growing complexity of cross-cultural interactions and the rapid proliferation of information require students to move beyond rote memorisation and surface-level accuracy, cultivating instead the ability to analyse, evaluate, and construct arguments in diverse social and academic settings (Halpern, 2014). Yet, evidence suggests that, in many EFL classrooms—particularly in exam-oriented systems—language education often remains focused on mechanical skill acquisition, with insufficient emphasis on the development of CT and flexible communicative skills.

English Public Speaking (EPS) courses—now increasingly embedded in university EFL curricula across Asia—hold unique promise in bridging this gap. As courses that emphasise not just language form but also rhetorical strategy, audience adaptation, and argumentation, EPS can serve as a dynamic platform for developing both CC and CT (Kim & Zhang, 2021; Zou & Veloo, 2020). However, a growing body of research suggests that the potential of EPS to foster deep cognitive engagement is often underutilised. In exam-driven contexts like China, instructional practice tends to privilege fluency, pronunciation, and delivery, frequently at the expense of substantive content, critical engagement, and argument development (Li, 2023; Wang & Manly, 2024).

This persistent focus on linguistic surface features has significant implications. Without explicit integration of CT, students may become adept at delivering rehearsed speeches but remain ill-equipped to evaluate information, construct logical arguments, or engage persuasively in complex discussions. As highlighted in global and national education frameworks (e.g., Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013), such competencies are now seen as crucial not only for individual success but also for societal progress and democratic participation.

Against this backdrop, there is a pressing need to reconceptualise the aims and instructional models of EPS courses, positioning CT as a core outcome alongside CC. Yet, achieving this integration is not without challenges. Research indicates that many teachers lack clear guidance, training, or frameworks for embedding CT in public speaking instruction (Davies & Willing,

2023; Wagner, 2019). Students, in turn, may lack experience with argumentation, critical reflection, or peer evaluation, especially if prior schooling was characterised by teacher-centred, exam-focused approaches (Guo & Huang, 2024; Fitriani et al., 2019).

This paper seeks to address these challenges by proposing a research-informed, practical framework for the systematic integration of CT into EPS instruction in EFL contexts. Building on empirical studies, current pedagogical theory, and practical practices in language education, the framework emphasises three interrelated components: (1) foundational CT instruction, (2) structured activities and personalised feedback and (3) ongoing support for student development.

The proposed framework is designed to be transferable and adaptable—relevant for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers seeking to move beyond performance-based assessment towards more holistic, learner-centred models of language education. By foregrounding the interplay between CT and CC, this paper offers a blueprint for equipping EFL students with the skills needed to thrive in an increasingly interconnected, information-rich world.

The following sections review key theoretical and empirical perspectives on CC and CT in EFL education, identify gaps in current EPS practice, and introduce the proposed framework. The paper then illustrates practical applications of the framework using real classroom examples, before discussing implications for research, curriculum design, and teacher development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Communicative Competence in EFL Contexts*

Communicative competence (CC), a construct introduced by Hymes (1972) and expanded by Canale and Swain (1980), encompasses not only grammatical accuracy but also sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. In EFL contexts, researchers have highlighted the need to move beyond traditional, accuracy-focused instruction towards more authentic, task-based, and communicative approaches (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Jelodar & Farvardin, 2019; Gordón Fiallos et al., 2025). EPS courses have been advocated as effective means for developing CC due to their emphasis on real-world communication tasks, audience awareness, and persuasive speaking (Bylkova, Chubova, & Kudryashov, 2021; Pipit Rahayu, Rozimela, & Jufrizal, 2022). Unlike conventional language courses that often prioritise grammar drills and rote memorisation, EPS instruction is grounded in authentic communicative scenarios that mirror the complexities of real-world interaction. For instance, students are routinely tasked with preparing and delivering speeches on contemporary topics, engaging in debates, or participating in simulated public forums. These activities require learners not only to organise and express their ideas clearly but also to respond spontaneously to audience questions and adapt their language use to different social and cultural contexts.

Through such experiential learning processes, students develop key dimensions of CC:

- Grammatical and discourse competence are enhanced as they construct coherent

arguments and employ varied language structures in extended speech.

- Sociolinguistic competence is cultivated by considering cultural norms, context-appropriate registers, and the expectations of diverse audiences.
- Strategic competence is developed as students learn to monitor their own output, manage communication breakdowns, and employ compensatory strategies during live interactions.

Moreover, the persuasive focus of EPS encourages learners to move beyond simple information delivery toward argument construction, audience engagement, and rhetorical effectiveness. Activities such as peer evaluation, self-reflection, and real-time feedback further reinforce students' awareness of their communicative choices and the impact of their messages.

Empirical studies have shown that students who participate in EPS courses demonstrate greater fluency, improved organisational skills, and heightened sensitivity to audience needs compared to those in traditional EFL settings (Zhang, 2019; Kim & Zhang, 2021). Thus, by situating language learning within the context of purposeful, audience-centred communication, EPS serves as a powerful vehicle for the development of holistic CC in EFL learners.

2.2 The Role of Critical Thinking in English Language Education

CT is widely regarded as a higher-order cognitive skill crucial for lifelong learning and responsible citizenship (Franco, 2016; Saldıray & Doğanay, 2024; Selvaraj, 2024). In the context of English language education, CT enables learners to move beyond rote memorisation and passive language use, empowering them to engage critically with English texts, analyse spoken and written discourse, and participate thoughtfully in complex communicative tasks. Specifically, English learners are required not only to comprehend and recall information, but also to interpret meanings, question assumptions, and construct logical arguments in English (Ennis, 1985; Paul & Elder, 2014). Empirical research in EFL and ESL settings has consistently demonstrated that the explicit integration of CT instruction leads to measurable gains in students' language abilities. For example, Lu and Xie (2019) found that targeted CT activities—such as critical reading exercises, debate, and reflective writing—enhanced Chinese EFL learners' reading comprehension and their ability to analyse and synthesise English texts. Similarly, Lin (2024) reported improvements in students' argumentative writing and oral communication skills when CT was embedded in English curriculum design, with learners demonstrating greater clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness in their English expression. Despite these positive outcomes, the incorporation of CT into English language curricula remains inconsistent across contexts. Many teachers cite challenges such as limited training in CT pedagogy, heavy emphasis on test preparation, and insufficient instructional time as significant barriers to effective implementation (Davies & Willing, 2023; Guo & Huang, 2024). In exam-oriented EFL systems, classroom activities often prioritise grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition over critical engagement with English language materials. As a result, students may excel at reproducing set phrases or following formulaic writing templates, but struggle to evaluate sources, critique arguments, or articulate original ideas in English.

There is therefore a growing consensus among scholars and educators that fostering CT should be an explicit objective in English language education, particularly in public speaking,

academic writing, and other productive skills. Embedding CT into the teaching of English not only enhances linguistic competence, but also prepares students to navigate and contribute to the increasingly complex communicative landscapes of the globalised world.

2.3 Integrating CT and Communicative Competence: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasised the interdependence between CT and CC in English language education. Theoretically, CT and CC are not isolated skills but mutually reinforcing constructs; CT enhances learners' ability to formulate, justify, and adapt arguments, while CC provides the linguistic and pragmatic resources needed to express those arguments effectively in varied contexts (Soboleva & Lomakina, 2019; Revutska, 2024). Empirical research supports the view that integrated instruction—where CT is deliberately embedded in communicative tasks—can lead to significant gains in both domains. For example, Wang (2021) found that EFL students who participated in debate-based English public speaking (EPS) courses showed marked improvement not only in their ability to present clear, persuasive messages but also in their skills of evidence evaluation, argument construction, and audience adaptation. In a similar vein, Wagner (2019) proposed a CT model for public speaking instruction grounded in Paul and Elder's framework, emphasizing activities that train students to identify assumptions, assess information quality, and reflect critically on their message and delivery. His approach encourages instructors to shift the focus from mere performance to reasoning quality, thereby fostering deeper rhetorical awareness and cognitive engagement. The significance of integrating CT and CC lies in its transformative impact on student learning outcomes. Students exposed to this dual-focus pedagogy tend to move beyond superficial fluency or rote learning. Instead, they demonstrate greater confidence in participating in open-ended discussions, responding to challenging questions, and constructing coherent, context-appropriate arguments—skills that are increasingly valued in academic, professional, and intercultural settings (Budiyanto, 2024; Esen, 2021). Additionally, such integration nurtures “thinking speakers”—learners who can flexibly negotiate meaning, adapt to diverse audiences, and engage in critical reflection during real-time communication.

Notably, studies have also linked integrated CT-CC instruction to improvements in learners' overall academic performance and self-efficacy. For instance, Soboleva and Lomakina (2019) found that Russian university students in EPS courses with explicit CT components outperformed their peers in both argumentative writing and spoken interaction tasks. Revutska (2024) documented increased motivation and deeper learning engagement among students who participated in project-based EPS assignments requiring critical analysis, synthesis, and collaborative problem-solving.

Despite this compelling evidence, the systematic integration of CT into EPS courses remains limited, especially in exam-oriented EFL contexts like China. Many existing curricula focus heavily on delivery techniques and grammatical accuracy, neglecting the development of cognitive flexibility and critical engagement (Zhang, Yuan, & He, 2020; Zeng, Ravindran, & Amini, 2023; Zou & Lee, 2021). This gap highlights an urgent need for practical, research-informed frameworks that can guide educators in designing EPS courses where the development of both CC and CT is intentional, scaffolded, and assessed.

In sum, the integration of CT and CC is not only theoretically justified but also empirically validated as a means to empower EFL learners for the complex communicative demands of the 21st century. By foregrounding their synergy, educators can better prepare students to become articulate, adaptive, and critically engaged users of English—a goal at the heart of modern language education.

3. Theoretical Foundations and Research Gap

The conceptualisation of CC and CT in EFL instruction draws on several key theoretical frameworks. Hymes's (1972) theory of communicative competence, later refined by Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman and Palmer (1996), positions effective language use as an interplay between grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. This multi-dimensional view has underpinned the development of task-based and performance-oriented pedagogies in EFL classrooms, such as EPS (Ghavamnia, Tavakoli, & Esteki, 2013; Norris, Brown, Hudson, & Bonk, 2002; Wagner, 2019).

CT, on the other hand, is rooted in cognitive psychology and educational theory. Halpern (2014) defines CT as purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed thinking that involves problem-solving, inference, and evaluation. Paul and Elder's (2014) model of CT emphasises the systematic application of intellectual standards—such as clarity, accuracy, relevance, and logic—to thought processes, fostering deeper learning and informed judgment. In the context of EFL, CT has been found to facilitate higher-order comprehension, argumentation, and the ability to adapt communication to diverse audiences (Dzakiah, 2020; Maisarah & Dhari, 2025; Zainil & Lena, 2020).

Integration of CT and CC is further supported by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which highlights the role of interaction and scaffolded support in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Task-based and collaborative activities, such as debates and group discussions, create social contexts that promote both the use of language and the development of CT skills (Yang & Gamble, 2013; Sauhenda & Butarbutar, 2023). These theoretical perspectives converge in the design of instructional models that treat CT and CC not as isolated outcomes but as mutually reinforcing, dynamic processes.

Despite substantial advances in the theory and practice of both CT and CC, significant gaps remain in their integration within EFL public speaking courses, particularly in the Asian context. Many EPS courses are still primarily oriented towards performance and exam outcomes, resulting in formulaic speech delivery, rote memorisation, and limited cognitive engagement (Lee & Park, 2020; Kim & Zhang, 2021; Li & Chan, 2024). Teachers report a lack of practical guidelines and structured models for embedding CT activities in EPS instruction (Wagner, 2019).

Empirical studies indicate that while some teachers introduce elements of CT—such as open-ended questioning or peer critique—these are often sporadic, underdeveloped, or insufficiently aligned with course objectives (Fitriani, Asy'ari, Zubaidah, & Mahanal, 2019; Cáceres, Nussbaum, & Ortiz, 2020). As a result, students may be able to perform linguistically complex

speeches without demonstrating genuine analytical reasoning, audience adaptation, or rhetorical flexibility (Shi, 2021; Takegami, 2024). In addition, assessment systems rarely capture students' growth in CT, focusing instead on language accuracy and delivery skills (Zhao & Jia, 2023).

Given these challenges, there is an urgent need for a coherent, empirically informed framework that guides the systematic integration of CT into EPS courses. Such a framework should be adaptable, practical, and sensitive to the realities of EFL contexts, providing clear principles for curriculum design, instructional strategies, and formative assessment. The following section presents such a framework, drawing on empirical insights and current pedagogical theory.

4. Framework for Integrating Critical Thinking into English Public Speaking

This paper proposes a three-component framework for embedding CT within EPS courses for EFL learners. The framework, conceptualises CT development and CC as interrelated outcomes, supported by three key components: foundational CT instruction, structured activities and personalised feedback, and ongoing support for student development. Each component plays a distinct but interconnected role in nurturing learners' cognitive and communicative growth.

4.1 Foundational Critical Thinking Instruction

The first component of the framework is the explicit and systematic teaching of CT principles within the EPS curriculum. Foundational CT instruction involves orienting students to the core elements of CT, such as reasoning, argument structure, evidence evaluation, and the use of intellectual standards (Paul & Elder, 2014). Teachers introduce students to practical tools for analysing issues, formulating positions, and anticipating counterarguments.

For example, lessons may begin with guided analysis of speech topics, identifying underlying assumptions, strengths and weaknesses in arguments, and the credibility of supporting evidence. Teachers can draw on authentic materials—such as TED Talks, political debates, or news editorials—to model CT in action, encouraging students to question, reflect, and critique as part of their speech preparation. Research demonstrates that students who receive explicit CT instruction are more adept at constructing logical, persuasive speeches and at engaging critically with diverse perspectives (Halpern, 2014; Susilawati, Yundayani, & Chairunnisa, 2019; Mehta, 2024).

4.2 Structured Activities and Personalised Feedback

The second component emphasises the central role of engaging, structured activities that provide authentic contexts for practising CT. Activities such as debates, role-playing, speech content analysis, and collaborative group discussions challenge students to apply CT skills in realistic communicative settings (Sauhenda & Butarbutar, 2023; Yin, Guo, & Li, 2024; Hofmeyr, 2019). These activities move beyond rote learning by requiring students to construct arguments, defend viewpoints, respond to counterarguments, and adapt their messages to audience needs.

Equally important is the provision of continuous, personalised feedback. Effective feedback focuses not only on linguistic performance but also on students' analytical reasoning, clarity of thought, and the strength of their arguments. Teachers can employ formative assessment tools such as peer review, self-reflection checklists, and rubrics that integrate CT criteria (Dutta, He, & Tsang, 2023; Zhong & Yang, 2021). This process enables students to identify areas for improvement and to internalise CT standards as part of their communicative repertoire. Research indicates that the combination of structured activities and meaningful feedback significantly enhances both CT and CC, leading to more dynamic, audience-centred public speaking (Abellana & Abellana, 2025; Gao, 2024).

4.3 Ongoing Support for Overall Development

The third component of the framework recognises that CT and CC develop over time and require sustained, individualised support. Ongoing support can take various forms, including one-on-one consultations, personalised learning plans, targeted workshops, and the integration of CT development into broader academic advising (Bunnell, 2021; Emekako & van der Westhuizen, 2021). Teachers are encouraged to adopt a coaching mindset, guiding students as they encounter challenges and encouraging them to take intellectual risks.

This support is particularly important for EFL learners who may experience anxiety or uncertainty when engaging in critical discussion or public speaking. By creating a safe, supportive classroom climate, teachers can help students build confidence and resilience, enabling them to transfer CT skills beyond the EPS classroom into other academic and professional contexts (Jia, 2024; Kasim & Sukarno, 2024). The ultimate goal is to foster a growth mindset and a culture of inquiry, where CT becomes a habitual part of language learning and communication.

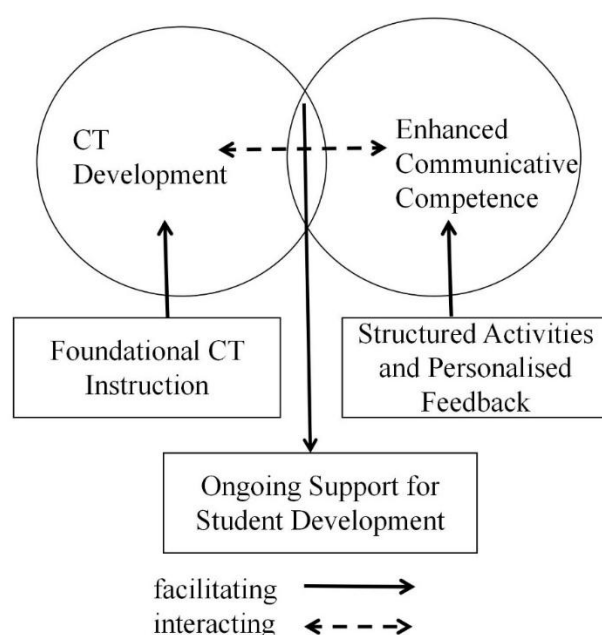


Figure 1. Framework for Integrating CT into EPS Courses

4.4 Interaction of the Three Components

The three components of the proposed framework—foundational CT instruction, structured activities and personalised feedback, and ongoing support for student development—are deliberately designed to function as an integrated, recursive system rather than as isolated instructional elements. This systemic view aligns with established theories of language and skills development, which emphasise the importance of iterative, scaffolded, and context-sensitive learning processes (Vygotsky, 1978; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

Foundational CT instruction serves as the cognitive and pedagogical anchor of the framework. By explicitly teaching core CT concepts—such as argument analysis, evidence evaluation, and reasoning standards—students acquire the metacognitive tools necessary for higher-order thinking (Paul & Elder, 2014; Halpern, 2014). This initial stage lays the groundwork for more complex communicative and cognitive tasks, ensuring that students possess a common language and shared expectations for what constitutes effective argumentation and critical engagement.

Structured activities and personalised feedback represent the experiential and dialogic dimension of the framework. Through authentic, task-based activities (e.g., debates, genre analysis, peer review), students are provided with opportunities to apply CT principles in realistic communicative settings (Barahona et al., 2022; Zhong, 2024). The iterative nature of these activities, combined with timely, individualised feedback, enables learners to test, refine, and internalise CT and CC skills. This approach is supported by research on formative assessment and active learning, which underscores the value of feedback-rich, learner-centred environments (Gillies, 2014; Botezatu, 2023).

Ongoing support for student development ensures that learning is sustainable, adaptive, and responsive to the diverse needs of EFL learners. Recognising that both CT and CC develop over extended periods and through varied experiences, this component integrates coaching, mentoring, and differentiated support into the instructional process (Palacio & Digo, 2024; Okoye et al., 2021). Research indicates that such sustained support—particularly in the form of academic advising, targeted workshops, and peer networks—can significantly enhance students' confidence, resilience, and transfer of skills across contexts (Sarathy et al., 2024; Frisby & Lawrence, 2024).

What distinguishes this framework is the dynamic interplay among its components. Rather than following a strictly linear progression, the components operate recursively, creating multiple points of entry and feedback loops for learners at different developmental stages. For example, foundational CT instruction equips students with CT concepts, which are then operationalised and reinforced through structured activities. Feedback from these activities, in turn, informs subsequent instruction and highlights areas for targeted support. Ongoing support acts as both a safety net and a catalyst, enabling learners to revisit and consolidate their understanding as they encounter new communicative challenges.

This recursive, interactive framework is consistent with socio-constructivist perspectives, which highlight the value of social interaction, reflection, and scaffolding in complex skill

development (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). By foregrounding both cognitive and communicative dimensions, the framework also addresses calls within applied linguistics and language education for more integrated, contextually responsive approaches to skills instruction (Bygate, 2018; Richards, 2015).

Figure 1 visually represents these interconnections, illustrating how each component both influences and is influenced by the others, thereby fostering a holistic, sustainable pathway for the development of critical and communicative competence in EFL learners. The framework's adaptability further allows for context-specific modifications, ensuring relevance across diverse institutional and cultural environments.

By adopting this framework, educators are equipped to move beyond fragmented, skills-based models and towards a more unified, developmental approach—one that prepares EFL students not only for public speaking tasks but for the broader demands of academic, professional, and civic life.

4.5 Validity and Reliability of the Proposed Framework

The validity of the proposed framework is anchored in three interrelated dimensions. First, it demonstrates theoretical validity by drawing explicitly on two well-established constructs—CT (Paul & Elder, 2014) and CC (Canale & Swain, 1980)—and integrating them into a coherent instructional model. The synergy between these constructs has been repeatedly emphasised in language education literature as a foundation for developing higher-order thinking alongside effective communication in EFL contexts.

Second, the framework exhibits pedagogical validity through its incorporation of instructional strategies—such as guided genre analysis, structured peer feedback, and rhetorical device training—that are widely reported in empirical studies to enhance learners' reasoning quality and communicative performance. Although this paper is conceptual in nature, these strategies have been shown in prior research to be transferable across cultural and institutional contexts, thereby strengthening the framework's practical applicability.

Third, the framework reflects design reliability through its systematic structure, explicit sequencing of components, and adaptability to varying classroom realities. The clarity and interdependence of its elements allow instructors to implement the framework consistently, while still permitting context-specific adaptations without undermining its core principles. This balance between structure and flexibility increases the likelihood that the framework can be sustained, scaled, and evaluated in future applications.

Together, these dimensions provide a reasoned basis for considering the framework both theoretically sound and pedagogically robust, offering a credible foundation for subsequent empirical testing and refinement.

5. Practical Examples and Pedagogical Applications

5.1 Illustrative Example: Integrating CT into an EPS Unit

To demonstrate the practical application of the proposed framework, this section describes a teaching unit implemented with second-year English majors at a private university in northwestern China. The unit is based on “Unit 10: Using Language” from *The Art of Public Speaking (13th Chinese Edition)*, which focuses on the accurate, clear, vivid, appropriate, and inclusive use of language in EPS.

Learning Objectives:

- Knowledge: Identify and explain the principles of accuracy, clarity, vividness, appropriateness, and inclusivity in public speaking; recognise and distinguish rhetorical devices such as alliteration and antithesis in authentic English speeches.
- Skills: Analyse speech excerpts for rhetorical effect; apply alliteration and antithesis when composing and delivering their own speeches; critically evaluate the arguments and language choices used by themselves and peers.
- Affective: Demonstrate increased confidence and creativity in crafting and delivering speeches on real-world topics; reflect on and articulate openness to diverse perspectives through peer discussion and feedback.

Key Content:

- Techniques for clear and powerful language use in speeches
- Analysis and practical use of alliteration and antithesis
- Speech writing on current affairs (e.g., “*The Big Power in My Eyes*”)

Teaching Sequence and Activities:

A. Foundational CT Instruction

Begin the lesson by providing students with a speech excerpt from the United Nations Secretary-General. Instruct students to analyse how rhetorical devices are used to enhance clarity and emotional resonance in the following passage:

“This is a time for prudence, not panic. Science, not stigma. Facts, not fear. ... We can slow down transmissions, prevent infections and save lives. But that will take unprecedented personal, national and international action.”

Highlight the use of the “rule of three” in public speaking (for example, lists of three for rhetorical effect). Introduce and explain the concepts of alliteration (e.g., “prudence, not panic”; “facts, not fear”) and antithesis (e.g., “science, not stigma”). Guide students to identify these rhetorical devices within the text and discuss their impact on the effectiveness of the speech.

B. Structured Activities and Personalised Feedback

Design targeted exercises to reinforce students’ understanding of rhetorical devices and critical thinking strategies:

- Alliteration Practice:

Ask students to rewrite sentences using alliteration to strengthen their speeches.

Example task: Replace “reputation and wealth” in a speech on reading with two alliterative words.

Sample student answers: “fame and fortune”; “glory and gold”.

- **Antithesis Construction:**

Instruct students to craft opening or closing lines for speeches using antithesis to emphasise contrast.

Example output: “It is the darkest of times, it is the lightest of times.”

Another example: “It was a winter of stifling despair; it is a spring of coming hope.”

- **Speech Writing and Peer Review:**

Have students compose short speeches on themes such as “*The Big Power in My Eyes*,” incorporating rhetorical devices introduced in the unit. Conduct peer review sessions using structured checklists focusing on clarity, logical argumentation, vivid language, and the use of rhetorical strategies.

- **Mini-Debates and Group Discussion:**

Organise mini-debates or small-group discussions where students present and critique arguments, thereby deepening their critical thinking skills in realistic communicative contexts.

C. Ongoing Support for Student Development

Offer flexible participation options to accommodate students’ varying confidence levels. For those who feel anxious about in-class speaking, allow them to record their speeches using voice-to-text tools and share drafts in online groups for peer and teacher feedback. Ensure that practice is sustained and all students are included.

Implement a process-oriented assessment system that includes:

- **Class participation:** Encourage active engagement in discussions, debates, and exercises
- **Written assignments:** Require analysis of authentic speeches and independent speech composition.
- **Peer and self-evaluation:** Use structured checklists to assess rhetorical and critical thinking aspects.
- **Final assessment:** Assign a three-minute impromptu or prepared speech, to be evaluated holistically.

Reflections and Outcomes

- **Monitor student engagement** throughout the activities, especially in alliteration and antithesis exercises.
- **Encourage students to reflect** on their progress in confidence and creativity in speech delivery.

- Support iterative cycles of explicit instruction, practical exercises, feedback, and reflection to promote measurable growth in both CT and CC.
- Expect to observe more vivid language use, clearer argument structures, and greater rhetorical flexibility in students' speeches by the end of the unit.

5.2 Adapting the Framework to Diverse EFL Contexts

To implement this framework across varied EFL contexts, consider the following instructional guidelines:

- In resource-rich classrooms, integrate technology-enhanced tools to enrich CT activities. Use online debate platforms to facilitate structured argumentation, incorporate video analysis for students to critique real-world speeches, and utilise collaborative document editing tools for group drafting and peer review of speeches and argumentative texts (Talalakina, 2012; Jiang, 2023; Atkinson et al., 2024; Sawant, 2021).
- In more traditional or resource-limited settings, rely on printed materials, in-class discussions, and low-tech peer review. Distribute authentic speech texts for annotation and rhetorical analysis, organise classroom debates and group discussions to provide authentic practice, and encourage handwritten peer feedback and use printed checklists for formative assessment.
- Across all contexts, align CT instruction with local curriculum standards and students' linguistic proficiency levels. Maintain an emphasis on explicit teaching of CT principles, engagement in authentic communicative tasks, provision of meaningful feedback, and sustained support for student growth. Adjust lesson pacing, activity complexity, and assessment formats as appropriate for classroom reality.

By adapting lesson delivery and support mechanisms to local needs and resources, teachers can maximise the effectiveness of the framework and ensure all students benefit from integrated CT and communicative competence development.

6. Implications for Research and Practice

6.1 Implications for EPS Curriculum Design, Teachers, and Researchers

The proposed framework offers a structured pathway for curriculum designers and teachers seeking to transform EPS courses from performance-oriented modules into platforms for holistic language development. By embedding CT as a core outcome of EPS courses, educators can cultivate learners who are not only fluent speakers but also reflective, adaptive, and persuasive communicators (Paul & Elder, 2014; Wagner, 2019; Kusmaryani, Musthafa, & Purnawarman, 2018). The framework provides clear and practical guidance for lesson planning, formative assessment, and ongoing student support, making it adaptable for both tertiary and secondary EFL settings.

Specifically, EPS curriculum designers can use the framework to:

- Integrate explicit CT objectives and instructional strategies into course syllabi;
- Develop assessment tools that measure both CC and CT;
- Structure classroom activities to balance language practice with cognitive engagement;
- Foster a learning environment that values inquiry, reflection, and peer feedback.

By implementing this framework, EPS educators can move beyond surface-level fluency, enabling students to develop the analytical and rhetorical skills needed for success in academic, professional, and intercultural communication.

Beyond curriculum design, the framework carries two additional implications:

- For teachers, it serves as a practical guide for integrating CT pedagogy into daily instructional practice. By explicitly embedding reasoning tasks, rhetorical analysis, and peer evaluation within EPS lessons, teachers can move beyond delivery-focused training and foster deeper cognitive engagement. The framework also encourages reflective teaching, prompting instructors to assess how their own questioning strategies, feedback methods, and classroom interactions promote or hinder CT and CC development.
- For researchers, the framework provides a theoretically grounded model that can be empirically tested, adapted, and refined across contexts. It offers a foundation for designing intervention studies, developing assessment instruments for CT and CC, and exploring the mediating effects of cultural, institutional, and linguistic factors on framework implementation.

By addressing the needs of curriculum designers, teachers, and researchers within a single coherent model, the framework supports a systemic shift towards integrating cognitive and communicative skill development in EPS courses.

6.2 Research Directions

Future research is needed to empirically validate the effectiveness of the framework in diverse EFL environments. Longitudinal studies can track students' CT and CC development over time, while classroom-based action research can explore the challenges and successes of implementing the framework. Comparative studies may also investigate how cultural and institutional factors mediate the integration of CT in EPS instruction (Boromisza-Habashi, Hughes, & Malkowski, 2016).

Furthermore, research should examine teacher professional development needs, as effective CT integration depends on instructors' own understanding and modelling of CT (Zhang et al., 2020; Akram & Mahmood, 2021). The development of assessment instruments that capture both CT and communicative growth is another key area for future inquiry.

6.3 Limitations and Considerations

While the framework is grounded in current theory and supported by relevant empirical findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the framework has not yet been tested in real classroom contexts; its effectiveness remains theoretically reasoned rather than

evidence-verified. Second, its design is informed primarily by higher education EFL contexts in China, which may limit transferability without adaptation to other cultural and institutional environments. Third, successful implementation presupposes that teachers possess adequate preparation in both CT pedagogy and EPS instruction; in contexts where such expertise is lacking, additional training and support may be necessary.

In addition, external factors such as large class sizes, test-oriented institutional cultures, and limited instructional time can further constrain the application of the framework (Allehyani, 2025; Mrabti, Nfissi, & Madani Alaoui, 2023). Teachers' beliefs about the nature of CT and its role in language learning may also influence uptake and sustainability.

By articulating both its research potential and practical constraints, this section underscores the need for future empirical work to test, adapt, and refine the framework across diverse educational settings. Such efforts will help ensure that the model can be implemented effectively, achieving its goal of fostering both reasoning and rhetorical competence in EFL public speaking contexts.

7. Conclusion

This paper has presented a research-informed, adaptable framework for integrating CT into EPS courses for EFL learners. By synthesising key theoretical perspectives and addressing documented gaps in current classroom practice, the framework positions CT and CC as interconnected, mutually reinforcing outcomes of effective EPS instruction. Through explicit teaching, structured activities, meaningful feedback, and sustained support, EFL educators can create dynamic learning environments that nurture both cognitive and communicative growth.

The framework outlined in this paper offers clear and actionable guidance for educators and curriculum designers seeking to move beyond traditional, performance-oriented approaches to public speaking. By embedding CT at the heart of EPS instruction, the model aligns with global trends in language education that prioritise higher-order thinking, creativity, and real-world communicative effectiveness.

It is hoped that this framework will inspire further innovation in curriculum design, classroom research, and teacher professional development, ultimately empowering EFL learners to thrive in a complex and rapidly changing world. Future research should explore the implementation and outcomes of the framework across diverse educational settings, and examine how institutional factors, teacher preparation, and assessment policies influence the integration of CT and CC in EPS courses.

By adopting a holistic approach that values both CT and CC, educators can better equip students not only for academic and professional achievement, but also for lifelong learning, informed citizenship, and meaningful participation in global society.

References

- Abellana, M. J. T., & Abellana, L. B. (2025). Enhancing the speech delivery skills of Grade 12 learners through target public speaking workshop. *Journal of Research in Education and Pedagogy*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.70232/jrep.v2i2.50>
- Akram, M., & Mahmood, A. (2021). A correlation study of Pakistani EFL teachers' professional discerning and their critical thinking. *Arab World English Journal*, Special Issue on Covid 19 Challenges, 194–209. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/MEC2.27>
- Allehyani, S. M. (2025). Cultivating critical thinking in EFL learning: Strategies, outcomes, and contextual considerations. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i4.8968>
- Atkinson, A., Bell, P., De La Rosa, I., Degeorge, T., Jonassen, L., Kokil, V., Lee, S., Malloy, M., Pinzon, K., Robertson, C., Savage, J., Shahbaz, R., Villanueva, O., & Wludyga, J. (2024). Student-created videos in online STEM education: A large, interdisciplinary, randomized control study. *Discover Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-024-00283-8>
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford University Press.
- Barahona, C., Nussbaum, M., Martin, V., Meneses, A., Arriagada, S., Serio, A., & Hilliger, I. (2022). Technology-scaffolded peer assessment for developing critical thinking in pre-service teacher training: the importance of giving feedback. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 71, 667–688. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-022-10173-1>
- Boromisza-Habashi, D., Hughes, J. M. F., & Malkowski, J. A. (2016). Public speaking as cultural ideal: Internationalizing the public speaking curriculum. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 9(1), 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2016.1120847>
- Botezatu, V. (2023). Feedback in formative assessment: strategies to optimize student learning. *Journal of Pedagogy - Revista de Pedagogie*. <https://doi.org/10.26755/revped/2023.2/175>
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.). (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school* (Expanded ed.). National Academy Press.
- Bunnell, S. (2021). A whole person model of student success advising in the liberal arts. *In Student Support Services*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3364-4_14-1
- Bygate, M. (2018). *Learning language through task repetition*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Bylkova, S., Chubova, E., & Kudryashov, I. (2021). Public speaking as a tool for developing students' communication and speech skills. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 273, 11030. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202127311030>
- Cáceres, M., Nussbaum, M., & Ortiz, J. (2020). Integrating critical thinking into the classroom: A teacher's perspective. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 37, 100674. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100674>

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1-47. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/I.1.1>

Davies, M. J., & Willing, L. (2023). An examination of teachers' beliefs about critical thinking in New Zealand high schools. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 52, 101280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2023.101280>

Dutta, S., He, M., & Tsang, D. C. W. (2023). Reflection and peer assessment to promote self-directed learning in higher education. *Journal of Educational Research and Reviews*. https://doi.org/10.33495/jerr_v11i3.23.111

Dzakiah, D. (2020). The use of higher order thinking questions in reading comprehension to improve the students' critical thinking. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 9, 36-42. <https://doi.org/10.33506/JQ.V9I1.941>

Emekako, R., & van der Westhuizen, S. (2021). Progressive and developmental pathways for student retention and academic success: Lessons from one-on-one student academic advising. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 35(6). <https://doi.org/10.20853/35-6-4208>

Ennis, R. H. (1985). A logical basis for measuring critical thinking skills. *Educational Leadership*, 43(2), 44-48.

Esen, M. (2021). Critical thinking and intercultural competence: Review, use, and classification of the 21st century skills in intercultural EFL education. *Journal on English Language Teaching*, 8(1), 23-31. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijelt.v8n1p23>

Fitriani, H., Asy'ari, M., Zubaidah, S., & Mahanal, S. (2019). Exploring the prospective teachers' critical thinking and critical analysis skills. *Jurnal Pendidikan IPA Indonesia*. <https://doi.org/10.15294/jpii.v8i3.19434>

Franco, A. R. (2016). What do Ode to Joy, the Nobel Peace Prize, umbrellas and cartoons have in common? Why critical thinking matters and how higher education moulds. *Higher Education for the Future*, 3(2), 108-124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347631115610231>

Frisby, B. N., & Lawrence, H. E. (2024). Students' peer network quality: effects on academic resilience and intention to persist. *Review of Communication*, 24(2), 133-145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2024.2374913>

Gao, X. (2024). Critical peer feedback for oral presentation at TEFL tertiary education: Comparison, perception and reflection. *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science*, 18(4), 887-900. <https://doi.org/10.56557/jogress/2024/v18i48887>

Ghavamnia, M., Tavakoli, M., & Esteki, M. (2013). The effect of pre-task and online planning conditions on complexity, accuracy, and fluency on EFL learners' written production. *Didáctica. Lengua y Literatura*, 25, 31-43. <https://doi.org/10.30827/digibug.29559>

Gillies, R. (2014). The Role of Assessment in Informing Interventions for Students with Special Education Needs. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 61(1), 1-5.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2014.878528>

Gordón Fiallos, B. A., Aguaguña Pilla, M. P., Casa Molina, P. E., & Nuñez Melo, N. N. (2025). An in-depth analysis of current approaches to teaching argumentative writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms: Examining effective strategies and methodologies. *Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar*, 9(1). https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v9i1.16299

Guo, L., & Huang, Y. (2024). Investigating critical language awareness and critical cultural awareness in EFL materials use. *Language Awareness*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2024.2434012>

Halpern, D. F. (2014). *Thought and knowledge: An introduction to critical thinking* (5th ed.). Psychology Press.

Hofmeyr, M. (2019). Cross-examining the news: Building linguistic competence and critical thinking skills in a Japanese EFL context through class debate on controversial issues. *Osaka University Repository*, 2, 201–211. <https://doi.org/10.18910/71892>

Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–293). Penguin.

Insan Budiyanto, S. (2024). Promoting critical thinking and public speaking skills through debates at Tridinanti University. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v12i2.4299>

Jelodar, Z. Y., & Farvardin, M. T. (2019). Effects of collaborative tasks on EFL learners' written production. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(1), 83–98. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2019.12126a>

Jia, W. (2024). Anxiety in English academic writing of EFL students. *SHS Web of Conferences*. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202419901001>

Jiang, F. (2023). Fostering critical thinking skills in the EFL college-level classroom through online collaborative document tools. *Sino-US English Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8072/2023.09.004>

Kasim, N. R., & Sukarno, S. (2024). The correlation between students' anxiety and their speaking ability in EFL classroom. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*. <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v11i10.6258>

Kim, S., & Zhang, Y. (2021). The effects of an English public speaking course on critical thinking dispositions of Chinese EFL university students. *Studies in English Education*. <https://doi.org/10.22275/see.26.4.03>

Kusmaryani, W., Musthafa, B., & Purnawarman, P. (2018, January). *Optimizing students' speaking and critical thinking through students' reflective practice in Socratic circle speaking*. In *Proceedings of the 1st Bandung English Language Teaching International Conference (BELTIC 2018)* (pp. 201–209). SciTePress. <https://doi.org/10.5220/0008215802010209>

Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. Oxford University Press.

Lee, O.-S., & Park, J. (2020). Understanding L2 speech production: Implications for teaching speaking in EFL classroom. *The Journal of AsiaTEFL*, 17(3), 808–823. <https://doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2020.17.3.4.808>

Li, Q., & Chan, K. K. (2024). The effect of teaching critical thinking on EFL speaking competence: A meta-analysis. *English Teaching & Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42321-024-00191-y>

Li, S. (2023). *The Application of "English Public Speaking" in College English Teaching*. *Frontiers in Educational Research*, 6(4), 17–21. <https://doi.org/10.25236/FER.2023.060404>

Lin, Y.-H., et al. (2024). Exploring the effects of argumentation-based inquiry in dual-language courses on EFL students' oral presentation skills and willingness-to-communicate. *Cogent Education*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2429873>

Lu, D., & Xie, Y. (2019). The effects of a critical thinking oriented instructional pattern in a tertiary EFL argumentative writing course. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38, 969–984. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1607830>

Maisarah, I., & Dhari, A. S. (2025). Integrating critical thinking into Indonesia's EFL curriculum: Insights from Bengkulu teachers. *Journal of English for Specific Purposes in Indonesia*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.33369/espindonesia.v4i1.34754>

Mehta, S. R. (2024). Ensuring inclusivity through critical thinking in EFL contexts. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*. <https://doi.org/10.22190/jtesap231220003r>

Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2013). *Malaysia education blueprint 2013–2025: Preschool to post-secondary education*. <https://www.moe.gov.my/en/muat-turun/penerbitan-dan-jurnal/Dasar-dan-Perancangan/malaysia-education-blueprint-2013-2025>

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2022). *China education modernization 2035* [Policy document]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A03/s7050/201902/t20190223_370876.html

Mrabti, A., Nfissi, A., & Madani Alaoui, K. (2023). University EFL teachers' perceptions of critical thinking barriers in higher education. *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research*, 5(5). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i05.7508>

Norris, J., Brown, J. D., Hudson, T., & Bonk, W. (2002). Examinee abilities and task difficulty in task-based second language performance assessment. *Language Testing*, 19(4), 395–418. <https://doi.org/10.1191/0265532202lt237oa>

Okoye, K., Hosseini, S., Arrona-Palacios, A., & Escamilla, J. (2021). Impact of Educational Coaching Programs and Mentoring Services on Users' Perception and Preferences: A Qualitative and Quantitative Approach. *IEEE Access*, 9, 48105–48120.

<https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2021.3069130>

Palacio, H. G., & Digo, G. S. (2024). Development of handbook on instructional coaching and mentoring for master teachers. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijssers/v04i4y2024-08>

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2014). *Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your learning and your life* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education.

Pipit Rahayu, Rozimela, Y., & Jufrizal, J. (2022). Students' public speaking assessment for persuasive speech. *Proceedings of the 67th TEFLIN International Virtual Conference & the 9th ICOELT 2021 (TEFLIN ICOELT 2021)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220201.046>

Revutska, S. (2024). Writing skills improvement and development of critical thinking. *Teaching languages at higher institutions*. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2073-4379-2024-45-05>

Richards, J. C. (2015). *Key issues in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Saldıray, A., & Doğanay, A. (2024). An action research on developing critical thinking skills in the context of citizenship education in higher education. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 52, 101584. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2024.101584>

Sarathy, J., Morales, T. P., & Narayanan, M. (2024). Engaging Alumni as Peer Mentors: Fostering Belonging and Forging Paths to Success. *Physiology*. <https://doi.org/10.1152/physiol.2024.39.s1.1646>

Sauhenda, A. F., & Butarbutar, R. (2023). Roles-based engagement in collaborative online discussions to promote EFL speaking. *Culture, Education, and Future*. <https://doi.org/10.70116/2980274110>

Sawant, S. (2021). Online collaborative learning tools and types. In *Handbook of Research on Online Collaboration and Synchronization: Strategies for Competitive Advantage* (pp. 12–41). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-5849-2.ch002>

Selvaraj, B. (2024). Critical thinking assessments: An analysis. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 9(5), Article 955029. <https://doi.org/10.35631/ijepc.955029>

Shi, L. (2021). Study on the correlation between linguistic complexity and audience recognition in college English speech contests. *BCP Social Sciences & Humanities*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.54691/bcpssh.v14i.262>

Soboleva, A., & Lomakina, A. (2019). Critical thinking as a premise for the intercultural competence development. *Language and Culture*, (11), Article 11. <https://doi.org/10.17223/24109266/11/11>

Susilawati, S., Yundayani, A., & Chairunnisa, C. (2019). Promoting students' critical thinking in writing persuasive text through explicit direct instruction (EDI). *Journal of English Language Studies*, 4(2), 193–205. <https://doi.org/10.30870/jels.v4i2.5879>

- Takegami, F. (2024). Enhancing EFL students' speech presentation skills through Aristotle's rhetoric. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 11(6). <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.116.17145>
- Talalakina, E. (2012). Video-conference debates – A platform for critical thinking within foreign language acquisition. *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Computer Supported Education (CSEDU 2012)*, 1, 88–93. <https://doi.org/10.5220/0003899700880093>
- Uemi, M. (2024). The impact of critical thinking-focused learning logs: Enhancing Japanese students' CT performance in written communication. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 21(4), 797–817. <https://doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2024.21.4.3.797>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds. & Trans.). Harvard University Press.
- Wang, C., & Manly, N. E. (2024). Cognitive schema to interests for English learning of Net-Generation college students: A basis for English teaching design in Sichuan Province, China. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*. <https://doi.org/10.54097/e2hsv242>
- Wang, L. (2021). Critical thinking sub-skills in English debate. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 11(12), 1596–1602. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1112.15>
- Wagner, P. E. (2019). Reviving thinking in a speaking course: A critical-thinking model for public speaking. *Communication Teacher*, 33(3), 158–163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2018.1536795>
- Yang, Y., & Gamble, J. (2013). Effective and practical critical thinking-enhanced EFL instruction. *ELT Journal*, 67(4), 398–412. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ELT/CCT038>
- Yin, S., Guo, K., & Li, D. (2024). To assign a topic or not: Examining critical thinking in English as a foreign language speaking. *RELC Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882231222651>
- Zainil, Y., & Lena, M. (2020). Levels of reading comprehension questions in EFL classroom: higher order thinking skills (HOTS). *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Education and Multimedia Technology*, Article 10.4108/eai.11-12-2019.2290895. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.11-12-2019.2290895>
- Zeng, X., Ravindran, L., & Amini, M. (2023). Teaching critical thinking to Chinese students in English as a foreign language writing class: A review. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 12(3), 1205–1213. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v12i3.24699>
- Zhang, H., Yuan, R., & He, X. (2020). Investigating university EFL teachers' perceptions of critical thinking and its teaching: Voices from China. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 29(6), 483–493. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-020-00500-6>
- Zhang, X. (2019). Model comparison for English public speaking self-efficacy: Bifactor versus second-order models. *Proceedings of the 2019 AERA Annual Meeting*.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/1425533>

Zhao, Y., & Jia, X. (2023). On critical thinking skill cultivation in EFL teaching. *Journal of Psychology Research*. <https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5542/2023.11.002>

Zhong, M. (2024). Critical Thinking in English Reading Courses. *Applied & Educational Psychology*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.23977/appep.2024.050414>

Zhong, Y., & Yang, M. (2021). Formative assessment in higher education classrooms: Second language writing learning. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2021.12.05>

Zou, M., & Lee, I. (2021). Learning to teach critical thinking: Testimonies of three EFL teachers in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 43(4), 867–881. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.1982674>

Zou, Y., & Veloo, P. K. (2020). Development of linguistic competence and critical thinking skills via English public speaking contest. *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Arts, Design and Contemporary Education (ICADCE 2018)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201127.096>

Acknowledgments

Not Applicable.

Funding

Not Applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Macrothink Institute.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding

author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

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/>).

Copyrights

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