

**NURTURING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
IN EARLY YEARS ESL CLASSROOMS:
PERCEPTIONS, PRACTICES AND
CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS IN
PAKISTAN**

BY

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THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Faculty of Arts & Humanities for acceptance.

Thesis Title: Nurturing Critical Thinking Skills in Early Years ESL Classrooms: Perceptions, Practices and Challenges for Teachers in Pakistan

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Nurturing Critical Thinking Skills in Early Years ESL Classrooms: Perceptions, Practices and Challenges for Teachers in Pakistan** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Nurturing Critical Thinking Skills in Early Years ESL Classrooms: Perceptions, Practices and Challenges for Teachers in Pakistan

This study explores the perspectives, practices, and challenges faced by early years ESL teachers in Pakistan. The research aims to address the significant implementation gap in the early childhood ESL curriculum, particularly in incorporating critical thinking skills into the educational system. The Community of Inquiry model is used as the theoretical framework, with a purposive sample of teachers from eight kindergarten classrooms across three branches of Beaconhouse School System. Data collection methods include document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. Observations provide firsthand knowledge on instructional strategies and student interactions, while semi-structured interviews reveal teachers' perspectives, experiences, and methods for promoting critical thinking abilities. Lesson plans, curricular materials, and instructional aids are analyzed to create a contextual framework for evaluating observed and reported data. The study found that while teachers acknowledge the value of critical thinking abilities and desire to apply them in their lessons, they face difficulties such as conventional teaching techniques, lack of expertise, and limited resources. Some teachers use creative approaches to encourage critical thinking, such as problem-solving techniques, stimulating class debates, and incorporating real-world events into classes. The results highlight the need for thorough teacher preparation programs and curriculum changes that prioritize the early development of critical thinking abilities. The study aims to improve ESL instruction in Pakistan by attending to these needs, equipping students to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL:	English as a Second Language
CoI:	Community of Inquiry

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DEDICATION

In addition to my beloved children and sister, who have unintentionally given me strength and encouragement, my thesis is dedicated to my husband, who helped me become resilient for this academic adventure.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This study focuses on the perceptions, practices and challenges that teachers encounter while nurturing the critical thinking skills in early years ESL classes because these skills could have a significant influence on Pakistani policy formulation, our educational system, and other contexts with a similar make-up. Since the first man stepped foot on the earth, the idea of critical thinking has been around. Ancient philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all contributed to the development of critical thinking, which is why they are still with us now. Critical thinking became one of the mainstays of John Dewey's educational theory in more modern times, who said that the goal of education is to teach pupils how to think. Dewey (1916) asserted that kids did not enter school with no prior knowledge. A student is already tremendously active when he entered the classroom, and the matter of education is the question of taking hold of his actions and giving them direction. For many years, researchers studying language education have been examining the connection between critical thinking and learning a second language. For instance, in the early 1990s, scholars like Richard Paul and Linda Elder pushed for the inclusion of critical thinking in language training and stressed its significance in language learning (Paul & Elder, 1994). The concept of content-based instruction (CBI), which stresses the union of language acquisition with subject-matter education, gained popularity in the 2000s. CBI supporters said that it gave students the chance to practice critical thinking and problem-solving while learning the language (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1984). In today's media-dominated society, teachers frequently cite critical thinking as the most crucial skill for students to use to filter through the deluge of information they are exposed to, assess problems, and come up with solutions. Teaching 21st-century skills must include developing critical thinking abilities. According to studies, critical thinking may both expedite language learning and improve general language competency, which has led to an increase in its prominence in language education in the twenty-first century (De Haan & Van Dijk, 2017). Moreover, the growth of critical thinking enhances language learning by going beyond rote memorization and linguistic abilities (Sanavi & Tarighat, 2014). There is empirical data to support its successful incorporation into the teaching

foreign languages (Chapple & Curtis, 2000). As a result, academics have emphasized the importance of encouraging this way of thinking in language classrooms (Singh & Zhao, 2016) and thus it has been proposed that language teachers encourage students' capacity for critical thought throughout the process of language acquisition by assisting them in conducting critical analysis of instructional materials to internalize the language (Li, 2016).

Language education research has demonstrated a correlation between early ESL learning and critical thinking. It is during early childhood that a child's language and critical thinking are best developed. Children engage in developing their language abilities while trying to express thoughts and ideas in the process of learning about the world around them during this period of time. Obviously, engaging children with the opportunity in critical thinking and other problem-solving activities enhances early cognitive and social-emotional development. In the case of young English language learners, especially, researchers called for the inclusion of critical thinking skills in language instruction. For example, Scarcella said that teaching young ESL students to think critically could benefit both their language development and their general success at school. Moreover, found out that training early ESL students critical thinking skills can enhance their ability to think creatively, relate ideas and solve learning-related problems.

Young children's language development in an ESL class relies much on encouraging critical thinking in them. Research shows that encouraging young children to think critically enhances their capacity to solve issues creatively and independently. Critical thinking will help ESL learners and students to make sense of complex linguistic forms, dissect language patterns, and evaluate the effectiveness of their communication. Further, critical thinking aids learners in forming their own opinions, questioning, and engaging in meaningful discussions. According to Paul, Elder and Bartell (1997) critical thinking should be incorporated in ESL classes. This is because it is an international educational requirement and will ensure that the students are prepared to face the challenges of the twenty first century.

Critical thinking skills should be introduced at the beginners' level of second language learning, and this is where the teacher's role comes in as very paramount.

Through problem-solving, analysis, and assessment, young English language learners can practice critical thinking with the support of their teachers.

Elisanti, Sajidan and Prayitno (2018) assert that some things teachers could do to promote critical thinking for young ESL learners are by: providing feedback, modeling and scaffolding critical thinking skills, and creating an atmosphere that is safe in the classroom. Moreover, Zhang and Ma (2020) proposed that teachers can foster critical thinking in early ESL classes by utilizing specific questioning techniques.

Papadopoulos and Bisiri (2020) indicated that teachers in Greece could encourage the development of CT in the ESL early years classrooms by making provisions for it as an objective to be taught in lessons and contributing opportunities for learners to participate in activities that require them to think critically. In the same way, according to Wong and Nunan, the teachers in Hong Kong could adopt the methodology of task-based language teaching and create opportunities for collaboration amongst students to work on assigned tasks to help the young ESL learners develop CT skills.

According to Akatsuka, 2020, the teacher can involve young ESL learners in critical thinking. The provision of learning experiences will be authentic, open-ended in question form, and collaborative. Similarly, Kumar and Devi, 2022, insisted on fostering critical thinking skills in the early years of ESL classes, with teachers encouraged to use problem-based learning techniques to achieve such an end.

When we look at situation in our context it becomes evident that teaching critical thinking skills is now in a mixed state in our early childhood education institutions. Even though some schools encourage critical thinking, a large number is still trailing behind. According to a study by Khurshid and Iqbal (2021) Pakistan's present educational scenario does not promote the development of critical thinking through the use of traditional teaching techniques. According to the study, most teaching strategies were lecture-based and emphasized memorization and repetition over fostering critical thinking in the pupils.

Little progress has been made in integrating critical thinking into language instruction, despite the importance of cultivating this skill in language learning (Pica, 2000). This may be because language educators find it more challenging to do so than do instructors of other disciplines (Pica, 2000). Furthermore, there is a dearth of

teachers with the training and credentials necessary to impart critical thinking abilities to students in an efficient manner. According to a research by Zamir et al. (2021) Pakistani teachers lacked training in encouraging the development of critical thinking abilities. The teachers lacked knowledge and competencies to incorporate critical thinking into their classes and were certainly unaware of the main reasons behind the importance of such skills.

According to Lodhi et al. (2021), untrained teachers in Pakistan are responsible for a deficit in critical thinking skills among the students. As per this study, the students mostly relied on memory and rote learning and were misguided in practical applications of knowledge. This issue is of particular relevance to this country because of the potential effect it may have on increasing the standard of education in Pakistan. Owing to the potential influence this issue might have on raising the caliber of education in Pakistan, it is especially pertinent to that nation. Critical thinking abilities in ESL classes have not received much attention from studies, particularly when it comes to early childhood settings and the Pakistani environment. This study will be useful in addressing this gap in the literature and grasping the ground realities.

1.2 Thesis Statement

The development of critical thinking skills in young learners within Pakistani ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms is of paramount importance, as it equips students with the ability to think independently, solve problems effectively, and engage in meaningful dialogue. While a considerable body of research exists on fostering critical thinking at the tertiary and secondary education levels, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature concerning its integration into early years ESL education—particularly within the Pakistani context. This study seeks to address that gap by exploring the perceptions of early years ESL teachers, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies and resources they employ to cultivate critical thinking skills among young learners. By examining these dimensions, the research aims to assess how specific pedagogical approaches and classroom resources contribute to the cognitive and linguistic development of young ESL students. The study also considers the broader implications for teaching and learning practices in early years ESL classrooms in Pakistan. Ultimately, it aspires to offer practical insights that may inform

more effective, developmentally appropriate instructional strategies, thereby enhancing both academic outcomes and holistic growth for young ESL learners.

1.3 Research Objectives

The following are the objectives to be achieved through this study.

- To explore the perceptions of Pakistani ESL teachers regarding the nurturing of critical thinking skills in early years ESL classrooms.
- To examine and discuss effective strategies and resources employed by ESL teachers in Pakistan for nurturing critical thinking skills in early years ESL classrooms.
- To identify the specific challenges faced by ESL teachers in Pakistan when attempting to nurture critical thinking skills in early years ESL classrooms.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are Pakistani ESL teachers' perceptions regarding the significance of nurturing critical thinking skills in early years ESL classrooms?
- What strategies and resources can Pakistani ESL teachers use to develop critical thinking skills?
- How do ESL teachers in Pakistan experience and address the challenges of nurturing critical thinking skills in early years ESL classrooms?

1.5 Significance of Research

This study holds significance from instructional, practical, and theoretical perspectives. It is particularly beneficial for those involved in the field of education, as it highlights the importance of fostering critical thinking skills during the formative years of schooling. The ability to analyze information critically, draw well-reasoned conclusions, and solve problems effectively is an essential life skill.

The research primarily explores the challenges and opportunities teachers face in Early Years ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms. It provides practical suggestions for educators to support students who may struggle to develop critical thinking skills due to language barriers. These insights can be valuable for teachers

aiming to refine their instructional approaches and promote the cognitive development of their students.

Moreover, the study contributes to the understanding of how language policies influence the cultivation of critical thinking skills. It may guide educationists and policymakers in identifying links between language policy and the development of higher-order thinking. Additionally, the findings can support efforts to review or revise national language policies in order to strengthen their alignment with educational goals.

Finally, this study addresses existing gaps in the literature concerning critical thinking instruction in ESL classrooms in Pakistan. It underscores the need for further research in this area to better equip educators and inform effective policy development.

1.6 Rationale of the study

The rationale of the study is to examine the difficulties and chances that teachers have while nurturing critical thinking abilities in an Early years ESL classroom environment. The study is important because critical thinking is a key talent of 21st century skills that people need in order to examine information, develop rational conclusions, and successfully solve issues. Yet, due to linguistic and cultural limitations, teaching critical thinking skills in an Early year ESL classroom can be difficult. The goal of the study is to shed light on the particular difficulties teachers have while attempting to teach critical thinking skills in an Early year ESL classroom and to pinpoint solutions. Also, the study aims to investigate the possibilities for developing critical thinking abilities in an Early year ESL classroom and offer useful advice for teachers.

By examining these topics, the research hopes to add to the body of knowledge on critical thinking abilities in an Early year ESL classroom setting and to offer suggestions for teachers who want to enhance their instructional strategies and foster their students' growth.

1.7 Limitations & Delimitation of the Study

Certain limitations of the study must also be acknowledged. The small sample size, comprising eight teachers and sixteen classroom observations across the three branches, may limit the generalizability of the findings to the wider population of early

years ESL educators in Pakistan. Although some geographic variation was present, with one branch in Lahore and two in Islamabad, the sample still does not represent the full regional diversity across the country. Time constraints also impacted the depth of data collection, as the academic calendar and administrative permissions limited the duration and frequency of classroom observations and interviews. The qualitative nature of the research introduced the possibility of subjective bias during data interpretation. Moreover, the presence of the researcher during classroom observations may have influenced teacher behavior, commonly referred to as the Hawthorne effect. Additionally, since a significant portion of the data was collected through teacher interviews, there is a possibility of socially desirable responses or selective recall, which may have affected the authenticity and completeness of the information provided.

This study was delimited to three selected branches of the Beaconhouse School System in Pakistan—one located in Lahore and two in Islamabad. These branches were purposefully chosen to ensure consistency in institutional policies, curriculum, and pedagogical practices while also allowing for a limited degree of geographical diversity within the same school system. The study focused specifically on eight early years ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers currently teaching within these branches. Teachers from other grade levels or subject areas were not included, as the research aimed to investigate the practices, perceptions, and challenges related to the development of critical thinking skills in early years ESL classrooms. Additionally, the study was limited to the early years level—Kindergarten—excluding the other levels to maintain a focused exploration of early childhood education. The research was framed within the Community of Inquiry (CoI) theoretical model and contextualized using the Beaconhouse curriculum; as such, the findings may not be directly transferable to schools operating under different curricular or pedagogical frameworks.

1.8 Organization of the study

The present research covers the following chapters, each with its own set of details.

- **Introduction**

This chapter of the study provides a detailed background, statement of problems, objectives of the study, research questions, rationale of the study and the delimitations.

- **Literature Review**

This chapter evaluates the study's important concepts in a hierarchical sequence and establishes a connection between them. It goes on to evaluate previous research in the field of critical thinking in ESL classroom of early years.

- **Research Methodology**

This chapter provides a detailed insight of the theoretical and analytical framework of the study along with the data analysis tools and the data analysis procedure.

- **Data Analysis**

This chapter includes the evaluation and analysis of the selected sample under the light of the chosen theoretical framework.

- **Conclusion**

This chapter comprises the research findings, discussion and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature in relation to critical thinking and the educational practices and challenges that it brings for early years ESL teachers. The researcher looked at scholarly works in four sections before coming up with the study topic. The first part of the chapter examines the difference between nurturing and teaching in the context of early years 'education. Critical thinking, including its definition and requirements and the broad understanding of critical thinking abilities in education and its significance are highlighted in the second section: It highlights the importance of critical thinking abilities in Pakistan and the larger global educational setting. The third segment looks into the connection between acquiring a second language and critical thinking abilities: Opportunities and challenges that ESL teachers encounter generally, but especially in the early years. The last section explores the potential for fostering critical thinking skills in an early-year ESL classroom and the role of technology in developing critical thinking skills to provide helpful guidance for teachers.

2.1 Nurturing vs Teaching

The terms "nurturing" and "teaching" have a wide range of implications and connotations in the context of early childhood education. The word teaching according to the dictionary means a teacher's employment, career, or occupation. It describes the deliberate facilitation of learning events. It entails organizing and carrying out activities, imparting knowledge, and directing young children's cognitive, linguistic, physical, and creative growth (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2023). When it comes to education, teaching refers to both the purposeful sharing of knowledge and experience that is frequently structured within a discipline as well as, more broadly, the provision of an intellectual and psychological stimulus by another person or artefact (Impedovo & Iaquina, 2013). Early childhood teaching refers to the purposeful instruction and facilitation of learning experiences to support intellectual growth and academic abilities. Specific learning goals and objectives are targeted through planned and structured activities (Dunphy, 2012).

Giving young children care, support, and opportunities for emotional growth is referred to as nurturing (Johnson,2023). The primary goal of early childhood development is to balance opportunities for children that will support healthy brain development, keep an eye on the kid's learning capacity, and encourage each child to realize their full potential throughout life. According to research, the most important task for fostering social and intellectual development is maintaining an emotional connection (Bradbury,2022). It entails establishing a secure and supportive atmosphere that fosters their general wellbeing, social-emotional development, and self-assurance. Building wholesome connections, attending to children's emotional needs, and promoting a sense of security and belonging are all parts of nurturing. In order to help them determine who they are, what they may become, and why they matter to others, children need to be nurtured as members of a social society (Bornstein, 2002; Shankoff &Phillips, 2000).

The behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge associated with providing care (such as feeding, washing, and maintaining health); stimulation (such as talking, singing, and playing); responsiveness (such as early bonding, secure attachment, trust, and sensitive communication); and safety (such as routines and protection from harm) are a core set of interrelated components that comprise nurturing care.^{3, 4} The best environments for providing loving care are young children's immediate homes and daycare facilities, which are typically run by moms but can also be run by fathers, other family members, and child-care organizations (Britto et al., 2017). Though nurturing and teaching are interconnected terms, according to the studies done in this area it becomes quite evident that 'nurturing' in early years of education is more meaningful and long -lasting than merely 'teaching'. Colwell and O'Connor (2003) study comparing nurturing and teaching methods in early childhood education found that the nurturing group's teachers' verbal and nonverbal interactions with their charges were significantly more motivating and likely to boost pupils' self-esteem. On the other hand, it was shown that ordinary classroom instructors' interactions were less likely to foster an environment that encouraged high self-esteem. Studies have shown that emotional support enhances language learning outcomes (Curby et al.,2009). According to Wigfield et al. (2016), nurturing teachers provide their students with emotional support that helps them overcome fear and encourages them to take risks while speaking English. Young pupils are more likely to talk eloquently and confidently if they receive this emotional support.

In the early years of nurturing the provision of rich language models and substantive interactions is a must in ESL classes. According to research young language learners benefit from exposure to language and conversational interaction (Tabors, Snow, & Dickinson, 2001). Cultivating a feeling of community among kids and building relationships with them are crucial for language development (Hamayan et al., 2013). Early-life circumstances that nurture Language learners' varied requirements are acknowledged in ESL classes, and they are attended to. According to research, varied learning techniques and individualized instruction are essential (Gersten et al., 2007). To support each child's level of language competence, nurturing teachers modify their teaching strategies and resources, fostering the successful development of language skills.

2.2 What is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is described as "the ability to assess information objectively and make a reasoned decision based on facts" by the American Psychological Association. (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020). Moreover, the phrase "the objective investigation and evaluation of a topic in order to develop a conclusion" comes from the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.) and the Cambridge Dictionary defines critical thinking as the act of attentively considering a topic or concept without letting emotions or views impact you (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). John Dewey, an American philosopher (1910) coined the term "critical thinking" to describe an educational goal, but he preferred to use the term "reflective thinking." As he described it any belief or purported body of knowledge should be actively, persistently, and carefully analyzed in light of the arguments for and implications of its findings. To generate a well-supported view or judgement, it entails examining and assessing data, arguments, and supporting documentation from a variety of sources. Using knowledge gained from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide for belief and action, critical thinking is the intellectually rigorous process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information (Paul & Elder, 2014).

Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy emphasized critical thinking a few decades ago; analysis, synthesis, and evaluation levels were thought to require a higher level of cognitive ability that included critical thinking, whereas knowledge,

comprehension, and application levels were thought to only require remembering, relating, and applying information, respectively (Lauer, 2005). The definition of a purposeful, self-regulating judgement is one that combines conceptual, methodological, evidential, or criteriological justifications with interpretation, analysis, assessment, and inference (Facione, 1990).

Whereas, according to the Foundation for Critical Thinking (2021) it is the capacity to apply logic and reasoning to novel or unorthodox concepts, viewpoints, and circumstances. It entails dissecting information into digestible chunks, examining arguments and supporting data, and drawing logical conclusions about how various pieces of information relate to one another. According to Willingham(2007), critical thinking entails weighing all sides of an argument, keeping an open mind to new information that challenges your beliefs, applying impartial reasoning, demanding that claims be backed up by evidence, and coming to conclusions and solving problems based on the available data, to name a few.

In another definition critical thinking is defined as the capacity to reason logically and clearly about what to believe or do (Van den Brink-Budgen, 2010). Halpern (2014) believed that analysis and evaluation of information are key components of the active and deliberate process known as critical thinking, which helps people form opinions and make decisions. Asking the proper questions, obtaining relevant data, organizing it creatively and effectively, applying logic to it, and deriving conclusions about the world that are trustworthy and dependable enable a critical thinker to live and act successfully in it (Schafersman, 1991).

In general, critical thinking entails the capacity to assess facts, claims, and supporting data in order to develop logical conclusions or judgements. To reach a well-informed decision, it also entails identifying and challenging presumptions, prejudices, and other viewpoints. Moreover, many involved in the sphere of education have taken part in debates on critical thinking. Educational practitioners frequently cite Bloom's taxonomy for information processing skills as a source when teaching and assessing higher-order thinking skills (Bloom, 1956). With "comprehension" at the bottom and "evaluation" at the top, Bloom's taxonomy is hierarchical. Analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, the three highest stages, are commonly cited as examples of critical thinking (Kennedy et al., 1991). If one considers the types of thinking that educators consider to

be critical thinking and those that are not, one may conclude, according to Bailin et al. (1999), that educators commonly view critical thinking to possess at least three features.

- When someone thinks, they are trying to fulfil the standards of accuracy and sufficiency.
- When they think, they are meeting the requirements up to a certain point.
- Thinking is done to assist one decide what to think or do.

2.2.1 Significance of Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking has been acknowledged as a crucial talent that students must develop in order to become capable and useful members of society. According to Duron (2006) superior mind must be fostered since thinking is a natural process but can occasionally be biased, twisted, partial, misinformed, and possibly prejudiced when left to itself. According to Black's (2005) research, students can enhance their thinking skills by being taught how to think. According to Nickerson (1994), it is imperative that children be taught critical, logical, and creative thinking skills. Instructors may instruct students on critical thinking language and strategies, for example, as well as material evaluation standards.

Not only does critical thinking not grant you authority over others, but it also has no purpose of embarrassing or defaming others. Thinking critically gives you a certain kind of power. If you can be resolute and examine the foundations of a belief, you have a good opportunity of solving problems, gaining more control over your life, and discovering the truth. In conclusion, it is true that critical thinking facilitates the acquisition of information, and that power is frequently derived from knowledge (Barry, 1984). Halpern (2003) asserts that thinking is the process of changing or modifying an internal image. According to her, once we start thinking, we use what we know to achieve a purpose.

Because everyone wants to reach a goal, thinking is therefore a fundamental aspect of existence. We may use critical thinking to examine our own views and viewpoints in addition to those of others. Although it is true that you may use critical thinking like a scalpel to analyze the assertions you come across, its use is not exclusively restricted to other people's opinions (Barry, 1984). Time management and creativity are enhanced by critical thinking. Critical thinking is the ability to apply reasoning and probability to real-world problems that are dependent on content. It also

includes the ability to think logically and probabilistically. Developing critical thinking skills might help one become more aware of who they are. As they appreciate the views and opinions of others, critical thinkers will have the opportunity to be more impartial, less sentimental, and open-minded. They will be brave enough to offer fresh perspectives and startling facts to allay certain fears if they prepare ahead of time (Hader, 2005).

One of the most crucial cognitive abilities that one may acquire via deliberate practice is critical thinking, which helps an individual make significant changes in both their professional and personal lives (Shamboul, 2022). As stated by McGregor (2007), the purpose of education is to develop the individual and help them reach their maximum potential. The development of a child's thinking should be the primary goal of schools, not merely a byproduct, assuming it occurs at all. Critical thinkers are individuals who can analyze and evaluate knowledge. They stated that critical thinkers are individuals who can pose important issues and problems, clearly define them, obtain and evaluate pertinent information, apply abstract concepts, think in an open-minded manner, and successfully interact with others (Duron et al., 2006).

In order to function in a highly technological culture, students must be equipped with the lifelong learning and critical thinking skills necessary to assimilate and process knowledge in a continuously changing environment, according to Cotton (1991). Students should be taught the proper way to learn through expert instruction. When students evaluate their learning practices and what they have learned, they are exhibiting critical thinking skills (Emir, 2009). The emphasis now is on helping students develop their critical thinking skills rather than just imparting facts and substance. The world's educational systems are refocusing their efforts to help students develop their higher cognitive functions, such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Ashraah et al., 2012).

Many research papers have provided evidence for the value of critical thinking in schooling. A meta-analysis of 70 research on critical thinking by Ülger (2016) revealed that problem-solving skills, academic achievement, and employment performance were all positively correlated with critical thinking ability. They also came to the conclusion that kids who are taught critical thinking acquire higher-order thinking abilities including analysis, assessment, and synthesis. A meta-analysis of 117 research

on the effects of critical thinking instruction in K–12 schools was done in a different study by Abrami, et al. (2015). They discovered that teaching critical thinking had a moderate impact on students' achievements, with students demonstrating growth in their critical thinking abilities, subject-matter knowledge, and proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Moreover, Bailin et al. (1999) looked at how well a programme is for developing critical thinking abilities in undergraduate students. It gave them, as opined, improved critical thinking abilities and positively impacted academic achievement and general intellectual development.

Critical thinking skills are regarded as the integral part of education, and the world of academics is well aware of this fact across the globe. But in some countries, like Pakistan, these skills are yet not credited to their worth. Certain research by Din (2020) suggests that critical thinking has remained a prime indicator of the academic success of any university student in Pakistan. This finding means that children who had more of this component of critical thinking did better in their academics compared to those who did not have this component. A study by Ali & Awan (2021) assessed the level of critical thinking skills among students in Pakistan. The results showed that the level of critical thinking skills was very high in students who were trained in critical thinking skills in comparison with those students who were not. Moreover, compared to those students who did not receive any education in critical thinking, the students who did had better problem-solving, creativity, and decision-making skills.

Moreover, considering the sociocultural and political pathologies of Pakistan, critical thinking has become an essential ingredient. The development of civic engagement among intermediate students of Pakistan pertains to critical thinking skills, argues a study by Shahzadi & Khan (2020). It contends that students who exhibited higher degrees of critical thinking were more likely to engage in various civic activities such as community service and advocacy.

In conclusion, research constantly demonstrates the value of critical thinking in education. Increasing one's capacity for critical thought can benefit one's academic achievement, problem-solving skills, and intellectual development as a whole.

2.3 Critical Thinking Skills in Early Years

Children are like information sponges, soaking up a ton of data every day. Early infancy is the only time when a person's social, physical, and mental development occurs at such a rapid rate (Koivula & Eerola, 2017). The notion is that our lives frequently mirror the caliber of our thinking, if this is the case, critical thinking should be encouraged starting in early life (Fisher, 2013). According to Riggs and Peterson (2000), it may be difficult to get young children to think since they frequently get very interested in what is most immediate and real to them rather than what is abstract. We are not born with the ability to think critically, thus we must practice and gain this ability over time. Critical thinking may be one of the most important abilities that the educational system can help students acquire (Peter, 2012). Children are capable of adapting some of the basic conceptual and cognitive abilities. The ability to think critically, which is crucial for both the community and the individual, takes centre stage among the abilities that are sought for and is at the core of education. The major objective of studying and teaching in education should be to sharpen and refine the thinking process (Wong & Yeo, 2014). In order to learn, one must be able to comprehend knowledge as well as recognize and reject false information. Children absorb a lot of information from people and their environment long before they start school, for instance; if they are not given the tools to examine this information, they run the risk of being deceived (Brosseau-Liard, 2017). It is even more crucial that individuals learn to filter this information through critical thinking because there is so much more information available now than there was thirty years ago (Halpern, 2013). A child's innate curiosity serves as the foundation for critical thinking. Creativity and curiosity are required for critical thinking since it enables us to take in information, evaluate it, and form views about it. As they acquire new knowledge, children accumulate something that could be called a mental library. It is imperative that people contemplate how the recently acquired knowledge aligns with their existing understanding and whether it modifies preexisting views (Galinsky, 2013).

One of the highest levels of cognitive capacity is critical thinking. The abundance of inquiries from kids regarding novel and surprising topics demonstrates their capacity for critical thought. Young children can develop critical thinking skills by observing, evaluating, and resolving problems (Dewi et al., 2019). Students are supposed to be developed as autonomous thinkers and effective thinkers, and critical

and creative thinking should be taught during the school years (Zahra, Yusooff, & Hasim, 2012). In order to meet children's cognitive demands for critical and creative thinking, educational activities should be able to meet children's cognitive demands for critical and creative thinking. (Smildtstein, 2011). Critical thinking is emphasized as a thinking and learning capacity that early childhood educators should foster. Both creative and critical thinking are viewed as being necessary for tasks like knowledge gathering, arranging, and developing new things.

It is believed that a child's mind and learning grow through a variety of worthwhile experiences. Children are led to create their own perspectives, assess dominant thought patterns, and act in an ethically sustainable manner through education and care (Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman, 2018). Critical thinking in early years' education is frequently emphasized by research. It has constantly been asserted that the development of critical thinking in early childhood would have a positive impact on the child's overall intellectual growth, problem-solving abilities, and eventually their school achievement. Edwards (2013), in a study, examined whether kindergarten children who were more disposed to exercise critical thinking displayed an early reading advantage. They found that children who were involved in critical thinking activities like analyzing information and making relationships had higher early reading skills. It therefore follows that the result is ... early instruction in critical thinking abilities can benefit young children's reading development. In another study, Berkowitz & Bier (2004) examined the effectiveness of a program aimed at enabling children's ability in critical thinking. Actually, they have concluded that this approach tends to provoke children's critical thinking, problem-solving, creativeness, and linguistic skills. This study proposes that children's learning to think critically may bring about other kinds of cognitive competencies.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory also identified the benefit of improving critical thinking skills among early childhood learners. His 1978 theory describes that children develop through the social interaction between them and adults and other children. Through such social interaction, children can learn higher-order thinking skills like analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. The finding indicates that provision for interpersonal communication and group learning activities might be one of the ways to enhance the critical thinking abilities of early childhood learners.

Research has singled out critical thinking as an important predictor for academic success, problem-solving skills, cultural sensitivity, and respect for diversity within a child in the early years of his/her schooling in Pakistan. For that, children must hold problem-solving skills which are supposed to develop through critical thinking. Fayyaz, et al. (2023) similarly found out that critical thinking abilities are a must for Pakistani early childhood development. The enhancement of early critical thinking skills in children significantly made them more competent problem solvers and decision-makers compared to their non-developed counterparts. Development of critical thinking abilities is further necessary to arm the kids against various sociocultural and political issues of Pakistan. In their study, Shah et al. (2021) have been able to show how critical thinking abilities are important for promoting cultural sensitivity and diversity among primary school children in Pakistan. The study found that pupils who displayed better levels of critical thinking were more likely than those who did not value diversity and cultural differences.

2.4 Critical Thinking Skills and Second Language Learning

Crystal (2003) states that a language can be proclaimed as the official language of a nation if it is used as a communication medium in institutions such as the government, court, media, and education. Usually, this kind of language is called a "second language," since it is considered a supplement to the native speech. Research in the educational setting has demonstrated that teachers must help children build their CT skills in order to prepare them for successful lives. However, it's crucial that teachers have methods for encouraging students to build and use CT to address their academic challenges (Zivkovil, 2016). Since critical thinking may both speed up language learning and improve all-around language ability, it has gained popularity in language education in the twenty-first century (Liaw, 2007). To succeed in this endeavor, one must make a conscious effort to learn the language. Cognitive processes are a part of language acquisition just like they are in other kinds of learning. Thinking and reasoning may be seen as the fundamental abilities in making sense of new knowledge and developing cognitive patterns like critical and strategic thinking that support effective learning in pupils. Saracalolu and Ylmaz (2011) stress that among the traits of a person who thinks critically are questioning and seeking reason. According to Beckman (2002), strategic learners are more involved in their learning and exhibit increased performance. They are also more self-aware, take on more responsibility, are

more self-confident, and enhance the correctness of their activities. According to Coşkun (2011), critical thinking is an intellectual process that helps us to understand as we attempt to respond to numerous inquiries beginning with "why," "what for," and "how." Since critical thinking may both speed up language learning and improve all-around language ability, it has gained popularity in language education in the twenty-first century (Liaw, 2007).

Additionally, the growth of critical thinking broadens the scope of language acquisition beyond rote memorization and linguistic abilities. As a result, academics have emphasized the importance of encouraging this kind of thinking in language classes, and empirical data has demonstrated how well it works when included in the teaching of foreign languages (Chapple & Curtis, 2000). It has therefore been proposed that language instructors enhance their students' capacity to think critically in the course of learning a language through their facilitating students in critically evaluating the tools and resources which they use during the course of learning the target language in question. Writing and reading are two pivotal areas of language that students have to master for it to make a positive impact in their academic endeavors, and critical thinking is said to play a crucial role in the acquisitive process for such skills.

This part of the literature review will analyze findings that establish a link between critical thinking and second language learning. Claims for an association between critical thinking and second language learning have been forwarded as positive by scientific research studies. Mohammadi et al. (2012) found out that critical thinking was significantly associated with academic performance among EFL learners. These researchers maintain that those students who exhibited high levels of critical thinking skills performed better in EFL as compared to those who did not. Critical thinking skills are also a requirement for students whose admission is intended to communicate in a second language effectively. Indeed, Gandimathi & Zarei (2018) in their study, found out that critical thinking skills were a prerequisite for ELL teachers to enable their students to acquire the skill of communicating effectively in the English language. According to the research, compared to those who did not develop critical thinking when taking classes in EFL, it was found that the group that developed more effective communication and comprehension skills as well. In addition, in order to be culturally sensitive and empathic, a second language learner needs to develop critical thinking. Returning to the Pakistani context for understanding the relationship between critical

thinking skills and second language learning, it becomes evident that this area has been less explored by local researchers; however, some of this research is important for underpinning one for a positive relationship between critical thinking skills and second language learning. One such study was conducted by Hashmi et al. (2021) explored the impact of critical thinking abilities on ESL learners' English language competency in Pakistan. The sample size was 120, divided into an experimental and control group. While the control group did not receive any critical thinking instruction, the experimental group did. The results were that experimental group improved significantly the usage of the English language in contrast with the control group. This study offers proof of the significance of critical thinking abilities in Pakistani ESL instruction.

These studies show that improving critical thinking abilities might help ESL students in Pakistan enhance their academic performance, reading comprehension, and speaking abilities. A rising corpus of research is emphasizing the value of fostering critical thinking abilities in young children's education, particularly in the setting of Pakistani ESL students.

2.5 What are Perceptions?

Perception is a quality that influences how people perceive the world and how they behave (Boadu, 2013). Sainn and Ugwuegbu (1980) defined perception as the method through which we derive significant information from physical stimuli. It pertains to how we perceive our feelings. They enumerated three key aspects of perception. First off, experience, intention, and social requirements are all factors that influence perception in addition to the stimuli. Second, the perceiver actively chooses information and develops hypotheses while something is being perceived rather than being passive and indifferent. This helps the perceiver determine what is truly happening. Thirdly, perception is a more complex mental process that enables a person to create a model of their environment, which enables them to foresee future events and prepare for them accordingly.

According to WoonChia and Goh (2016), the way in which teachers function within the system may be greatly influenced by their views and ideas about their work as well as the educational programmes they employ. It also need 21st-century skills to manage various parts of challenges in more complex scenarios, including big picture,

computational forms of reasoning, simulation, design, and inter-disciplinary thinking. The development of these skills depends heavily on teachers. To properly carry out their work, teachers need to be aware of their own perceptions and beliefs, feel supported in achieving their plans and goals, and be motivated to develop new pedagogies to progress their practice. The courses they teach must also incorporate these learning objectives (Smith et al., 2021).

Even while teachers have the potential to implement new practices, their willingness to do so may be affected by their perceptions, despite the importance of providing them with the necessary information and training (Century, 2023). It is important to understand that teachers might view themselves either as knowledge distributors or as facilitators of learning for a specific student. A mediator, according to Williams and Burden (1997) empowers a learner by imparting the necessary skills and learning processes. The student is an active participant in the learning process and there is contact between the student and teacher. The student may express his or her opinions to the teacher and is eager to complete the assignment. In contrast, there is minimal consideration for student involvement and criticism if teachers see themselves as knowledge distributors. It would be doubtful whether a student could develop critical thinking abilities from such a teacher. Only teachers who are well familiar with CT and know how to include it into courses can effectively teach it (Forawi, 2016). The absence of a clear knowledge of CT and how to encourage these abilities among primary school teachers has been demonstrated by various writers (Choy & Cheah, 2009). A lot of them compare cognitive training to intellectual stimulation, but they are unable to specify what forms this stimulation should take (Forawi, 2016). In order to successfully include CT into their classes, teachers must have a deeper understanding of the idea, claim Choy and Cheah (2009).

2.6 Role of Technology in Developing Critical Thinking Skills

In a globalized world where knowledge is increasingly accessed through technology, educators must support their students' learning through digital platforms by fostering online engagement and media literacy instruction. It is common for many school-age children nowadays to have grown up with technology since they were small. Children therefore often associate joy and excitement with computers, iPads, and other related technology. Consequently, integrating technology into the classroom not only

stimulates students' curiosity and enthusiasm but also invigorates more conventional teaching approaches. According to De Abreu (2010), media literacy may help students develop their critical thinking abilities, which are very important in the globalized and technologically complex 21st century. The most in-demand learning outcomes right now are critical thinking, digital literacy, and technical abilities. Researchers also stress the value of hands-on instruction that emphasizes critical thinking and navigating the world of digital media (Vetter, Sarraf & Woods, 2020). Twenty-first-century teaching and learning goes beyond STEM subjects and technology integration; it also emphasizes developing methods of thinking and supporting qualities of character that encourage success in an era of ever-evolving and expanding technology. To properly educate and care for students in the twenty-first century, educators must create environments and provide experiences that encourage inquiry and discovery in addition to creativity and curiosity (Ramay, 2016). Critical thinking skills are considered a 21st century aptitude that allow people to make informed decisions based on the information available to them. The reason studies on critical thinking in early childhood are so crucial is that they enable scholars to refine their comprehension of critical thinking in general and situate it within the context of real classroom practices of early years.

In order to do this, research done between 2015 and 2021 was analyzed for traits of critical thinking in young children as well as instructional practices created to enhance thinking in the early years' classroom by O'Reilly, Devitt, & Hayes (2022). The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) were used for this purpose. The research suggested that using thinking language, innovative technology, story-based methods, and classroom interactions, such as discussion and questioning, are effective mediators in eliciting critical thinking abilities.

Integrating technology in the classroom may be a successful strategy to improve critical thinking among students as well as teamwork and communication skills, according to Rafiq & Hashim (2018). One of the main goals of the informatization of education is to employ digital technologies to foster critical thinking through active learning techniques like brainstorming, project-based learning, training, business games, and case studies (Pegov & Pyanikh, 2010). By utilizing technology-based education in second language acquisition, instructors may encourage critical thinking. Ramalingam et al. (2022) indicated that technology-based training was

successful in fostering critical thinking abilities among EFL students. According to the study, pupils who participated in technology-based training had greater levels of critical thinking abilities than their non-participating counterparts. In another study conducted by Marczak (2019) it was quite evident that by encouraging interactive activities, numerous representations and models, self-regulated learning, scaffolded practice, and real-world applications, technology may dramatically improve critical thinking abilities. While several representations and models help to make complicated concepts and processes clear, interactive activities engage students and boost academic performance. Marczak (2019) also believed that while technology-rich environments encourage self-regulated learning through modelling, coaching, scaffolding, and problem-solving, digital learning environments promote critical thinking and improve accessibility. Through online and mixed learning environments, scaffolded practice helps students solidify their abilities, moreover, multimedia learning environments let them apply their knowledge in practical settings. Overall, technology is essential for teaching students to think critically and for providing them with access to individualized learning settings that promote academic and critical thinking.

Students may also utilize concept maps as tools for information evaluation and analysis. Robertson (2000) examined two brainstorming techniques. The initial method was asking students to list all of the things they already knew about a lesson, and the teacher writing the findings on a white board or poster board. This strategy performed admirably, but it restricted students' capacity to draw their own conclusions and compelled them to adopt the same conclusions as the class during the brainstorming exercise. Another strategy that was looked at was creating electronic idea maps using Inspiration software. With the use of their own knowledge and experiences, the students were able to define their own relationships while making their own connections. Students might further their understanding of the material by using the idea maps to browse the Internet. Since they may sort and arrange material to create their own connections, this kind of study allows students the chance to exercise critical thinking while creating concept maps (Robertson, 2000).

2.7 Strategies used by ESL Teachers in Developing Critical Thinking Skills

In language training, the development of critical thinking abilities is crucial because ideas are mostly expressed through language, and our native language's structure has a strong bearing on how we arrange our ideas. Thus, analysing language is the first step towards critical thinking. Critical thinking has to be incorporated in English language teaching (ELT) in a welcoming and engaging manner by ESL teachers in order to aid students in understanding how to properly arrange and communicate their thought processes in English (D'Argenio, 2022). The development of students' higher-order thinking skills may now be the most important educational goal, according to recent findings (Ganapathy et al., 2017). There is more support for this from Zohar (2013), who argues that teachers need to create creative learning activities that push students' thinking to the next level—comprehension—before they can go on to higher taxonomies of thinking, such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation tasks.

To scale up the "thinking curriculum" and help students become proficient, according to Resnick and Schantz (2015), is a significant educational issue (Abdullah et al., 2019). Research in the educational setting has demonstrated that teachers must help children build their CT skills in order to prepare them for successful lives. Whatever the case, it's critical for educators to have methods for assisting students in creating and using CT to address their academic challenges (Zivkovil, 2016). According to experts, teachers play a critical role in helping students build their CT abilities when it comes to language acquisition (Asgharheidari & Tahriri, 2015). The class's goal should, therefore, be defined: developing CT through the instruction of the target language. ESL teachers can be seen using various techniques to instruct and develop students that are creative, imaginative, critical, sharp, and a problem solver. ESL teachers are also aware that increasingly students are required to demonstrate and use information and skills learned in the classroom, but equally they are now expected to be able to create solutions and make better decisions (Singh et al. 2020). Many studies have described the use of strategies to enhance one's CT in a learning environment. Narmaditya et al. (2017) presented an analysis of the implementation of problem-based learning was presented by. The result indicated that this was one effective strategy for enhancing CT skills in students.

Corollary to this, Redhana (2013) analyzed the performance of science students with problem-based learning strategies and Socratic questions. This research found out

that these strategies succeeded in improving students' CT competence. Problem-based learning tasks can also be effectively added to encourage critical thinking in second language training. Hussain & Anwar (2017), in their study have found the problem-based learning exercises effective in developing critical thinking skills among EFL students. The level of critical thinking skills shown by the students who participated in the problem-based learning exercises was higher compared to their peers who did not participate. In this case, the teachers' ability to think critically plays an important role in making the students critical thinkers. According to As'ari et al. (2017), one of the main reasons teachers do not integrate critical thinking into the lesson plans is mainly due to the fact that they might not know how to be critical and how to raise critical thinking abilities. Therefore, for teachers to make their students critical thinkers, they have to enhance their own ability to think critically.

The role played by ESL teachers in the development of students' critical thinking has been highly researched, and it emerged that teachers can effectively develop the students' critical thinking skills if they adopt methods that enhance critical thinking in instructions. As noted by Ennis (2011) teachers who design lesson plans with emphasis on critical thinking may develop an analytical mind of their students as well as cognitive skills. According to one research by Shirkhani & Fahim (2011), ESL teachers may encourage critical thinking by designing lessons that challenge the students to think critically. They found out that students' ability in critical thinking increased tremendously when the teachers' designed tasks that required students to synthesis, analyze, and evaluate knowledge. Besides, Wang & Zheng (2016) found that ESL teachers could assist learners in developing their critical thinking skills by generating a class environment that facilitates inquiry, discussion, and critical analysis. The authors argue that learners improve their critical thinking skills if the teacher permits learners to express their opinions, raise questions, and critically evaluate the content.

Further, ESL teachers can trigger critical thinking among learners through the Socratic method of teaching, asserts Nasrollahi & Samadikhah (2020). The Socratic approach is based on asking the student to elaborate his doubts and questions and critically assessing the material in front of him. In this approach, some ESL teachers were said to have succeeded in enhancing the ability to think of their students by incorporating the Socratic approach in their teaching.

Besides, with the incorporation of technology-based education in the acquisition of the second language, teachers can be in a position to develop critical thinking. A finding by Ramalingam, S. et al (2022) showed that technology-based training was found efficient in developing EFL learners' critical thinking skills. These students who had undergone technology-based training portrayed higher levels of critical thinking than those that did not. ESL teachers thus play a very significant role in developing critical thinking among learners. According to research findings, the methods employed by teachers as a way of developing critical thinking will greatly benefit learning students in the enhancement of their analytical skills and the development of their cognitive mind. ESL teachers may organize conditions for critical thinking by designing learning activities that would provoke students to think critically, creating an inquiry-, debate-, and critical analysis-friendly classroom environment, using the Socratic method of teaching, and technology-based instruction. ESL teachers could help turn learners into independent learners and effective decision-makers since learners learn how to develop strategies of critical thinking with the encouragement obtained from classes.

This, therefore, means that the ESL teachers increase a lot in developing the pupils' critical thinking abilities. Using interrogative approaches, as researchers point out, gives students skills for analytical and cognitive reasoning. ESL teachers can encourage critical thinking in students by making them engage in learning activities that would challenge them to think critically, creating a classroom environment that permits inquiry, debate, and critical analysis, adopting the Socratic method of teaching, and using technology-based instruction. ESL teachers may turn learners into independent learners and effective decision-makers by asking them to develop critical thinking skills in classes.

2.8 Challenges ESL Teachers face in Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Developing students' critical thinking is, therefore, a very significant responsibility that language teachers, more so teachers of ESL, have to undertake with their pupils. There are numerous possibilities and problems ESL instructors experience that motivate critical thinking in the classroom. Drawing from the new findings available in this area, this literature review aims at exploring these challenges and

potential. One of the major challenges ESL teachers may face in an attempt to facilitate students with the development of critical thinking skills is the lack of training and help in this regard. According to Safdar & Mahmood (2016), most of the ESL teachers in Pakistan are unprepared to teach the skills of critical thinking and may totally lack pedagogical knowledge and skills in attempting to induce critical thinking in their learners.

Another challenge is the balance of adhering to the needs of standardized testing and the implementation of the goal of enhancing learners' critical thinking skills. According to Duan (2020), because of this kind of examination system, most ESL teachers in China reported that they felt pressure to teach to the test, which may narrow the opportunities to develop students' critical thinking skills.

Despite these challenges, ESL teachers have several opportunities to make their students richer critical thinkers. For example, it has been suggested by Rafiq & Hashim (2018) that using technology in the classroom may be an effective means of promoting critical thinking in students while simultaneously enhancing their teamwork and communication skills. Second, ESL teachers can create the occasion for critical thinking by capitalizing on diverse experiences and backgrounds of students in a classroom. According to Ganapathy et al. (2017), if students could be allowed to express their opinions and participate in the discussion, it would be very helpful in developing critical thinking as well as empathy.

Eventually, there are simply so many possibilities and challenges that ESL teachers face as they try to help their students develop such skills in critical thinking. Technology and tapping into various experiences of students are some opportunities for developing critical thinking skills, though it could also be difficult due to a lack of training and support, pressure of standardized testing, and a few other factors. ESL teachers in Pakistan are met with a variety of possibilities and issues regarding ways to promote critical thinking in students. Applying the results of current Pakistani studies, this part aims to delineate the possibilities and problems of critical thinking integration.

The core challenge that most ESL teachers face in developing learners' critical thinking skill subjects is the lack of training and assistance. As posited by Khan & Alam (2021), a lot of ESL teachers in Pakistan consider themselves unprepared to teach those skills, specifically pedagogical knowledge and abilities in teaching effectively to

stimulate learners' critical thinking. Another challenge lies in the Pakistani educational system itself, where it is revealed that much emphasis has been focused on mere memorization and rote learning, which makes it rather difficult to improve further on critical thinking skills. According to Bangwar (2022), most of the pupils that have come from Pakistan were merely taught to memorize and regurgitate whatever was given to them by the teacher but have not been trained enough to critically analyze or appraise any given information. In contrast, there are various other opportunities ESL teachers possess in making their learners become better critical thinkers. For instance, Iqbal and Khurram (2022) note that including relevant content with real-life contexts in ESL training could help learners develop critical thinking skills, because it invites them to relate the knowledge to be evaluated or examined from the context associated with real life.

Additionally, the opportunities for critical thinking can be enhanced in ESL classes by capitalizing on students' diverse backgrounds and experiences. Permitting the expression of opinion by students and involving them in discussion was suggested by Fareed et al. (2016) for lessons that would enhance the development of critical thinking and empathy. Promotion of critical thinking abilities amongst ESL students in Pakistan is not without its possibilities and problems. While the use of authentic materials and building on students' diverse backgrounds can offer very exciting opportunities to promote critical thinking, they can also be significant sources of difficulty in the absence of adequate training and support or reliance on rote learning.

2.9 Previous Studies

Below are the past research studies conducted in early years ESL classrooms for the development of CT skills. By applying a range of techniques case study approach was adopted to explore two thinking skills programs for a maximum variation sample of five to six - year - olds in four schools across two local authorities LAs in England and Wales by Aubrey, Ghent & Kanira(2012).According to school employees who were questioned, thinking skills programs increased language usage, attentive listening, social collaboration, confidence, and independence while also enhancing critical thinking abilities. Welsh employees reported that the programs had an overall positive effect on the school, mirroring national policy, providing intense training, coaching, and monitoring, and transferring to other subjects like mathematics. The

English thinking-skills practice was susceptible to interruption and lack of consistency since there was no national curriculum mandate. A teacher's delivery of open questioning and challenging, group work, and student conversation varied, according to the observation. Students' logical reasoning and verbal attainments showed modest evidence of change and development. Factors that supported transformation and sustainability include a national policy with thinking skills at its Centre, excellent professional development, a whole-school strategy, systematic observation and feedback, and coaching. This encouraged modifications to frameworks of interaction between the policy and LA, head teacher, teachers, and students, leadership, trust, and cooperation.

Singh & Marappan (2020) did a study on literature review concerning teaching HOTS implementation in the EFL/ESL classes. The previous research demonstrated that HOTS foster critical and creative thinking among learners. The objective of implementing HOTS in English as Second Language, Early years, primary, and tertiary classes was to make students belonging to these classes independent, able to solve problems, and make decisions in later life. The results of the evaluation show that teachers lack knowledge and enthusiasm in subject matters, while students show interest in learning HOTS activities. In order to teach with global competences, teachers need understand and use HOTS. The researchers make a number of suggestions for improving HOTS, including (1) sending instructors to more courses and professional development training, (2) providing sufficient resources and technological infrastructure connected to HOTS, and (3) appropriate instructions from the Ministry.

Belda (2022) conducted a study on promoting inclusiveness, creativity and critical thinking through digital storytelling among EFL teacher candidates. The study examined how storytelling, which is an essential component of language learning and acquisition; has changed over time from an early oral tradition to a modern digital literacy. Because inclusive and diverse tales are still underrepresented in digital storytelling (DST), it has grown to be a crucial tool in language development. The uniqueness of this study lies in the fact that it presents the results of a two-year investigation into the development and application of DST by 244 teacher candidates and their perspectives on inclusivity, critical thinking and diversity in education. Pre-test and post-test results, class presentations, and semi-structured dialogues were used

to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Results showed statistically significant variations in inclusivity, creativity, reasoning and diversity among participants following the intervention. The findings supported the use of inclusive DSTs in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and called for greater pedagogical and technological training for teachers before they become digital native students.

In the context of pre-primary education, Reynolds et al. (2021) conducted a study on the viewpoints held by future EFL instructors. This qualitative case study advances this line of inquiry by analyzing the development of student teachers' attitudes on teaching English to pre-primary pupils in Macau as part of a teacher education course. In the third year of a four-year bachelor's degree programme in pre-primary education, the participants comprised 60 pre-service teachers who were attending an English Language Activities course. Written reflections that were gathered at three different times over the 16-week course—at its start, midway through it, and at its conclusion—made up the data. Five broad topics emerged from the study, further broken down into fifteen subthemes: (1) learning and students; (2) teaching; (3) subject; (4) self; and (5) learning to teach. For the first time, a number of subthemes were identified in the context of pre-primary EFL teacher education. Most importantly, the findings demonstrated that taking the course resulted in the formation of new subthemes and the modification of existing subthemes. The outcomes were assessed in relation to the course material, the chances for experiential learning, the pre-service teachers' prior experience teaching and learning languages, and the local context in which language instruction occurs. The proposals for the future were considered along with the consequences for programmes that prepare future teachers.

2.10 Fostering Critical Thinking in Early Years Through the Community of Inquiry Framework in Existing Research

The CoI framework has transformed early childhood education by emphasizing social, cognitive, and teaching presence in fostering collaborative and reflective learning. According to Imdad Ullah, Asghar & Tahir (2022), this approach enables educators to construct knowledge collectively while creating authentic social relationships with others, the very foundation of holistic development among young

learners. The focus on social presence, characterized by engagement, relationships, and meaningful interactions, aligns very well with the developmental needs of young children, as emphasized by Ghafoor and Khan (2023). This approach not only reshapes traditional pedagogical methods but also helps teachers to deal with the stressful complexity of early years education through the establishment of environments where children feel secure in expressing their thoughts and acting actively.

Moreover, the CoI model combines both cognitive and affective aspects within learning, according to Theodosiadou et al. (2017) who, in turn point out how emotional and social involvement are paramount in a successful learning experience. CoI, therefore, goes beyond the academic achievement of the children but instead helps them develop emotional and social competencies as well. Rourke and Kanuka (2009) stress that for higher-order learning to be effective, it needs to be community-focused. They also note that collaboration and shared inquiry create an environment where learners are motivated to think critically and deeply about their experiences.

Another reason CoI should be utilized in early childhood classrooms is the additional practical application. According to Mthethwa and Mkhize (2023), The children share a sense of belonging or unity; they feel connected with one another; hence, the activity becomes enjoyable, and pupils have an opportunity to understand and appreciate whatever concept they are dealing with. This community of practice-where ideas flow openly and where guided discussions occur-is dynamic and inclusive. The outcomes reported by educators and researchers further indicate that such interactions not only promote cognitive development but also enable children to feel like active participants in their learning journey. CoI, which fosters collaboration, reflection, and shared inquiry, thus sets a strong basis for both immediate and lifelong learning, making it an invaluable tool in early years education.

By offering insights on how critical thinking abilities may be fostered in the setting of an early years ESL classroom in a particular cultural and educational context, this study may potentially fill a vacuum in the literature. For the first time, this study would use the COI lens to examine the challenges and opportunities faced by teachers attempting to assist young ESL students in developing their critical thinking skills in a private school setting in Pakistan.

The study may also look at how instructors at private schools might deal with issues including inadequate funding, inadequate teacher preparation, and cultural hurdles. The study may also help teachers at Pakistani private schools develop successful instructional techniques for developing young ESL learners' capacity for critical thought.

Overall, by offering insights into a particular cultural and educational setting that has not been substantially researched in the literature, the study may add to the body of knowledge already available on developing critical thinking abilities in an early year's ESL classroom.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section comprises of an explanation of each stage in the approach that was chosen to support the research study. The explanation of the research paradigm and research technique is followed by a methodical flow to the data collection criteria in this chapter. But first, the chapter describes the theoretical framework used for the study before going into the specifics of the research component.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

In 2000, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer developed the Community of Inquiry (CoI) approach to promote critical thinking and group learning. Social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence are the three interrelated parts of the CoI approach. For this inquiry, a better iteration of the CoI model offered by Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) will be used. This study will also include one more element of the CoI model, namely emotional presence, as they are all vital to producing the kind of meaningful, collaborative learning experiences that enhance students' critical thinking skills. The torch for the researcher's in-depth comprehension of the study concerns will be carried by the four CoI components. The research methodology is particularly CoI relevant when the data collection tools in this research include interviews, document analyses, and observation of classes while studying how the ability for critical thinking is fostered by early years ESL classes in Pakistan. It is likely that the CoI model will inform a structure that will lead questions and discourses. Interviews allow one to delve into teachers' attitudes and practices related to the development of skills in critical thinking. In terms of promoting skills growth in critical thinking, it can help shed light on how teachers perceive cognitive presence, social presence, emotional presence, and teaching presence. Moreover, the CoI model can also be administered to reveal existing practices and resources supportive of the growth of critical thinking based on document analysis—for instance, examination of curricular materials and teaching aids. Finally, using the CoI model as a guide, researchers will examine how well activities and strategies that support or develop critical thinking are being enacted in classrooms while simultaneously observing displays of teacher cognitive presence, social presence, emotional presence and teaching presence. The CoI

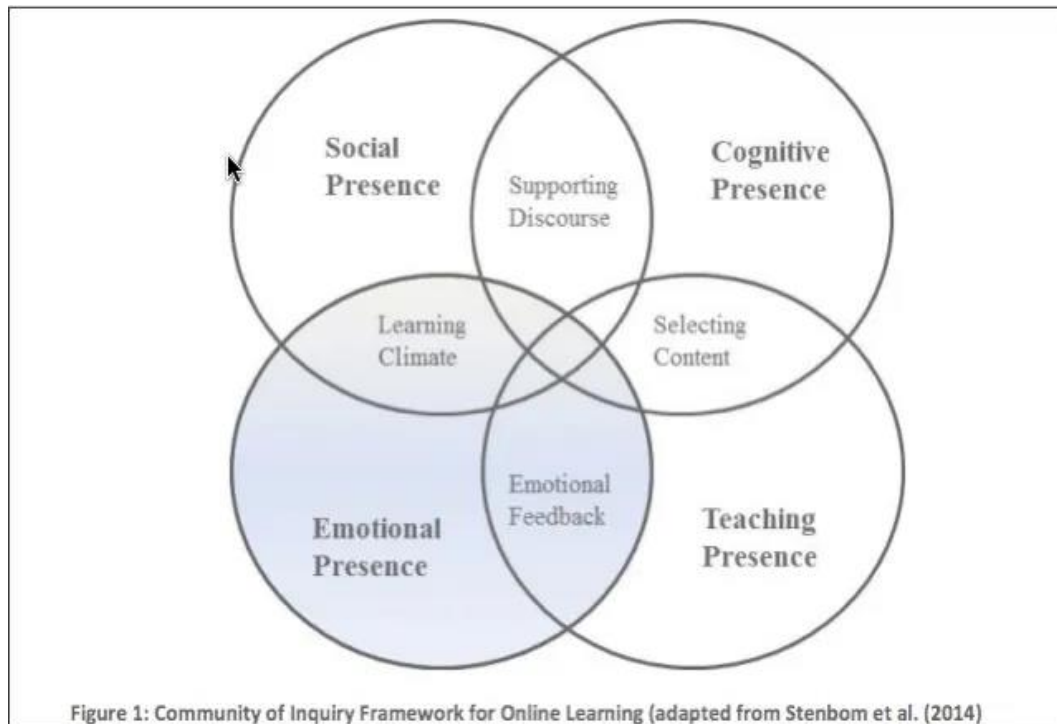
model has been used as the overall theory with three research tools—interviews, document analysis, and classroom observation—to develop an understanding of how perceptions, practices, and challenges put forward by the teachers about fostering critical thinking in early years ESL classrooms in Pakistan. Details associated with these CoI components and the respective investigations help in elaborating on the model's operation across different contexts.

Social Presence: It is the ability of students to interact with one another in a way that develops a sense of being together and learning together. This may take place through various means such as icebreakers, discussion forums, and peer reviews. Social presence can result in an appreciative and inclusive learning environment where learners feel motivated to share their thoughts and opinions. For instance, Liaw, Huang, and Chen (2007) concluded that, in an online ESL course, social presence will have a major impact on students' happiness and perceptions of learning. These researchers further found that this might be improved through techniques such as icebreakers, discussion forums, and multimedia material. In another study, Shih and colleagues (2010), showed that social presence in face-to-face ESL sessions strongly positively correlated with student involvement and perceived learning. The researchers operationalized this by assuming that methods such as group work, peer feedback, and instructor assistance will help to enhance the social presence.

Cognitive Presence: It refers to the element of inquiry and critical thinking that occurs in a community of learners. This dimension involves methods to present problems in a manner that tests students to act thoughtfully in chains of thoughtfulness and executing actual problem-solving tasks. Alternatively, instructors can support a variety of methods that will enable cognitive presence; these comprise, among other strategies, scaffolding, idea mapping, and case-based learning activities. Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) addressed one aspect of the Community of Inquiry model called the cognitive present component. It was with the view of researching its impacts on outcomes of online learning . The outcome of this research had established that among the fundamental determinants of learning success in an online setting was cognitive presence that relates to exploration, integration as well as solution to concepts.

Teaching Presence: This refers to the role taken up by instructors in facilitating the learning process. Designing and delivering efficient learning experiences, providing feedback, and building a happy learning environment are all phases that become part of it. Some strategies teachers can use to promote teaching presence are modeling, questioning, and feedback. In a study, Liu and colleagues (2019), found that in face-to-face ESL sessions, teaching presence was positively correlated with student engagement and perceived learning. According to the authors, other things that may strengthen teaching presence include clear directions, prompt feedback, and active encouragement of class discussions. A study on the Community of Inquiry model focused on the teaching presence element and its impact on the development of learning communities in online courses. As these authors point out, a course's teacher presence—in activities like designing, facilitating, and directing online learning activities—was vital in creating a supportive and motivating learning environment in online courses (Shea et al.,2005).

Emotional Presence: Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) have proposed emotional presence as a new component in the framework of a community of inquiry. Emotional presence is the externalization of emotion, affect, and feeling in a relationship of inquiry. Emotions, as explored by (Dirkx, 2008; Schutz & Lanehart, 2002; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), play an important role in learning processes. Emotional presence facilitates aspects related to expressions of emotion, affect, and feelings that will interplay with the social, cognitive, and instructional presence (Cleveland-Innes and Campbell,2012).



3.2 Research Design

Exploratory in nature, the research design for this study is qualitative.. Qualitative research assumes additional importance in the context of ESL education as it yields insight into the experiences and views of ESL learners and their teachers. The aim of qualitative research is to explore the complexity of human experience but not to find the truth (Ian Shaw, 2016). Qualitative research methods can help to identify factors that go to make for successful language learning and teaching, and the challenges learners and teachers meet. Amongst other approaches, qualitative research is the journey of discovery, an adventure into the uncharted (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In ESL, qualitative research is mostly directed toward the investigation of various experiences of students, teachers, and other key stakeholders involved in the teaching-learning process.

One special ability of qualitative research with respect to ESL is an examination into complex social phenomena, such as intercultural communication, learner identity, handicaps and opportunities of various contexts of ESL teaching, and motivation toward language acquisition. Qualitative research abides in the exploratory nature of the possibility of finding certain possibilities for further study in the area of ESL. It is,

in particular, the case with the exploratory ESL-related research, which may help much in the conceptualization of new research questions and illumination of relatively understudied areas related to language teaching and learning (Duff, 2018). According to Silverman (2021), the qualitative paradigm goes very well with the need to explore subjective learners', teachers', and other stakeholder experiences within the ESL environment, and offers valuable insights into how the lived reality of being a language learner at any level is constituted.

3.3 Research Sample

The present study employed a purposive sampling technique to identify and select participants who could provide rich, relevant data aligned with the study's objectives. Data was collected from three branches of the Beaconhouse School System in Pakistan, a prominent private educational network known for its structured and standardized early years curriculum. The Beaconhouse School System was selected as the research site due to its prominence as one of the largest and most well-established private educational networks in Pakistan. With a widespread presence both nationally and internationally, Beaconhouse offers a structured and standardized curriculum, professional development opportunities for teachers, and a stated commitment to promoting 21st-century skills—including critical thinking, creativity, and communication—particularly in the early years.

Beaconhouse has implemented various curriculum frameworks aligned with international standards, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Inquiry-Based Learning, and blended pedagogies. These frameworks provide fertile ground for investigating how critical thinking skills are nurtured in ESL classrooms during early childhood education. Furthermore, the system's centralized academic planning, policy-driven teaching standards, and investment in teacher training programs make it an ideal context for studying both the theoretical and practical aspects of critical thinking pedagogy.

Another key rationale for selecting Beaconhouse lies in its multilingual and multicultural environment, where English is used as the primary medium of instruction. This linguistic context aligns well with the focus of the current study on English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching practices. Additionally, Beaconhouse schools often serve diverse student populations, offering insights into how critical thinking is fostered

among young learners from varied socio-cultural backgrounds. By focusing on one structured school system, the study ensures a degree of curricular and pedagogical consistency across research sites, which strengthens the reliability of cross-branch comparisons. The reputation of Beaconhouse as a pioneer in educational innovation in Pakistan further supports its relevance as a site for research aimed at understanding best practices and challenges in nurturing critical thinking in early years ESL settings

From each school, kindergarten sections were selected based on their comparability in terms of academic structure and instructional practices. Two branches have three kindergarten sections each, while the third has two sections for the current academic year, resulting in a total of eight classrooms. Each classroom comprises approximately 20–25 pupils aged 5 and above.

To gain an in-depth understanding of classroom practices and the development of critical thinking skills in ESL settings, the researcher conducted structured classroom observations using a pre-designed observation form. Additionally, semi-structured interviews lasting 25–35 minutes were conducted with eight ESL teachers—one from each classroom. These interviews explored the teachers' perceptions of fostering critical thinking in young learners, along with the challenges and opportunities they encounter in the process.

To ensure data triangulation and enhance the credibility of findings, lesson plans and curriculum documents were also analyzed alongside the observations and interview data. This multi-source approach strengthens the validity of the study and provides a comprehensive view of how critical thinking skills are addressed within early years ESL classrooms.

3.4 Data Collection Tools

Classroom observation is the prime research tool for the researcher. According to Creswell (2013), classroom observation is an important method of qualitative research since it facilitates the gathering of in-depth details on participant interactions or behaviors while in their natural environment. By making direct observations, the researchers learn the finer details of classroom dynamics, which sometimes might be very hard to capture with any other technique of data collection. Moreover, classroom observation can confirm other types of data collected, such as interviews or questionnaires. The researcher also used semi-structured interviews as one of the study

methods, which allowed her to chat freely with the teachers and provide them with an opportunity to make their points. Interviews permit an examination of the depth and width of experiences gained by participants and the elicitation of their opinions, attitudes, and beliefs (Flick,2014). Interviews also enable researchers to better understand participants' social and cultural contexts as well as the interpretations they ascribe to their experiences (Seidman,2013). For triangulation of data documents are checked, i-e lesson plans, curriculum documents etc.... because checking documents is an essential step in doing qualitative research as it enables researchers to collect extra information that may be used to confirm findings and spot trends or themes (Maxwell,2013). Document checking includes reading and evaluating a variety of research-related papers, including letters, reports, memoranda, emails, surveys, and other written materials. Document verification serves to enhance evidence gathered through other research techniques, such as interviews or observations.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The qualitative exploratory study used a multi-method approach in collecting information from document analysis, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews. The researcher first analyzed the curriculum documents so that the explicitly stated educational goals and standards of the curriculum are compared against which the findings of the study could be discussed. Besides, fifteen lesson plans were collected for review to examine how these educational goals were translated into instructional strategies.

Classroom observations were held in eight classrooms over a four-week period. Total sixteen classroom observations were conducted and each observation lasted 40-45 minutes. All the teachers' instruction methods, classroom dynamics, and ways of integrating critical thinking strategies were captured using a standardized observation form. The observations provided significant insights into what was planned versus what was enacted as instructional practice.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with eight homeroom teachers, taking 25–35 minutes per interview. This provided in-depth perspectives on the experiences, perceptions, and challenges of teachers while nurturing critical thinking in early years ESL classrooms. The interviews were recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim,

and were used in textual data for thematic analysis.

The triangulation of all data by combining aspects of curriculum goals, observed classroom practices, and teachers' perception inculcated robustness to data. This approach enriched the study's findings by ensuring a detailed and nuanced understanding of teaching practices and all challenges under investigation.

The researcher began the analysis by reading through all collected data—documents, observation notes, lesson plans, interview transcripts—to get the broad sense of content. After that, she started taking original notes on recurring themes, ideas, and concepts that appeared striking.

Next, open coding was conducted, involving the identification of key points, concepts, and recursive themes in the data. After conducting open coding, axial coding followed, in which these codes related to each other, leading to the recognition of patterns and relationships between data. This step helped in refining the grouping of codes into broader categories or themes.

After axial coding, the researcher used selective coding to integrate these categories further into key themes that led toward the answer for my research questions. The researcher was constantly comparing data from various sources, such as curriculum documents, observation, lesson plans, and interviews to check consistency and validity in findings.

Throughout the time of analysis, The researcher kept memos of thoughts, reflections, and insights as they came out from the material. These were useful in providing a record of how ideas and themes are changing and developing and stood as the foundation on which final data interpretation could rest.

Finally, The researcher synthesized these findings to make them correspond to a clear narrative that brought out those major themes and insights derived from my data analysis. This ensured that her analysis of findings was based on data and further anchored by the direct quotes and examples from the curriculum documents, classroom observations, lesson plans, and interviews. This is an approach that ensures thorough, credible qualitative data analysis for research.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data sourced from curriculum documents, lesson plans, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. The community of inquiry theoretical insights was used to base the analysis. The analysis began with an analysis of curriculum documents to get insight into articulated educational goals and standards. In addition, I conducted classroom observations, collected lesson plans, and conducted individual semi-structured interviews with homeroom teachers. All these were transcribed verbatim for further in-depth analysis.

First, I conducted open coding for key points, concepts, and themes recurrent in the data using qualitative data analysis software. Afterwards, axial coding worked to bring out the patterns and relationships between the data. Next, selective coding fleshed further these categories into key themes taking the shape of answers to my research questions.

The synthesis of the findings occurred in a voice that majorly integrated the themes and meanings as derived from the data. This holistic approach would ensure that one would cover all processes comprehensively to be credible, grounded in data, and supplemented by direct quotes and examples from the curriculum documents, classroom observations, lesson plans, and interviews.

4.1 Curriculum Document Analysis

This section analyses the Beaconhouse Curriculum document with a view of establishing to what extent it conforms to the Community of Inquiry structure. The review investigates how curriculum provisions create an emotional, social, teaching, and cognitive presence that enables rich learning opportunities and a caring environment in which critical thinking abilities are to grow in an educational context. According to Garrison, Anderson & Archer (2000) Beginning with the fundamentals, the CoI framework adopts a constructivist orientation, emphasising knowledge construction rather than learning outcomes from an objectivist standpoint.

4.1.1 Analysis of vision, purpose, and learner profile

There is strong support for a supportive learning environment in the Beaconhouse Curriculum. This endeavor finds voice through its vision and mission statements, with the most prominent one being to foster an entrepreneurship identity in students that provokes independence, imagination, and critical thinking. The document says

“Our schools uphold the freedom of each student to think, create and discover on the basis of their cultural and spiritual tradition, whilst respecting the cultures and spiritual insights of others. We believe the human mind grows best in a spirit of freedom and co-operation”. (Beaconhouse, n.d.)

These are matched against the cognitive presence in the CoI framework, which includes elements of reflectiveness, critical thinking skills, and knowledge building. The degree to which students may create and validate meaning by extended contemplation and discussion within a critical Community of Inquiry (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 1999). The learner profile seeks to engender attributes such as creativeness, inventiveness, critical thinking, skepticism and world-mindedness which shall enhance the students cognitive presence and thereby contribute to their intellectual growth.

4.1.2 Promoting Inclusion and Emotional Well-being

The focus of the curriculum on enabling and nurturing environment that enhances the self-esteem of all participants shows a concern for the emotional presence. It provides equal opportunities to all children without any discrimination towards their background for its inclusion and equity.

“ At Beaconhouse, we expect and demand high standards from all our students and staff, and we celebrate the achievement of all”

A discussion between an expert and a group of students also highlighted the transactional aspect of the CoI paradigm (de Leng et al., 2009). Learner profile commitments to empathy, altruism, and moral behavior convey a commitment to emotional well-being and a caring atmosphere that meets the needs of all its stakeholders. It aligns very nicely with the CoI framework since it places a great emphasis on how to teach learners to be present emotionally, in a way that will motivate them to share their feeling in the environment.

4.1.3 Teaching Strategies and Teaching Presence

The learning/curriculum document provides teachers with a topic guide and plan of work-an excellent trajectory to support teaching and learning in the CLL curriculum. This is evident through its involvement in classroom education, whereby it offers the teachers the materials and tools to employ innovative and interesting strategies in teaching. “The teaching and learning of the English language is through active means such as play, and multi-sensorial means. English language teaching and learning involves conceptual and symbolic thinking” (Beaconhouse, n.d.).

Among these instructional approaches are a variety that foster active student engagement and interaction, such as teacher read-aloud sessions, group reading, and guided writing. CoI also supports student-centered frameworks that aim to support inclusive education and learning that lead to successful results(Khoza & Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2021).Such strategies are meant to enhance meaningful learning experiences hence knowledge creation in support of cognitive presence.

4.1.4 Consistency and Continuity

The plan of study in the curriculum document guarantees consistency and continuity in teaching and learning. It explicitly gives details on concepts, skills, and learning objectives to be tackled throughout the year in the course of study. That is, students will get an organized and coherent learning experience since it creates cognitive presence, offering a defined structure through which knowledge acquisition and development would take place. The CoI framework's dynamic character is also evident in the way that it is described as the "interaction" between the three presences (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000).

The Beaconhouse Curriculum aligns with the cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of the CoI framework. The vision, purpose, and learner profile of the curriculum put forward much the value of providing a supportive and caring environment that stimulates cognitive state of mind, emotional well-being, and inclusivity. Teaching strategies and the suggested teaching presence through this curriculum document encourages cognitive presence as well by making possible significant learning experiences. The uniformity and continuity on which the curriculum insists imply a well-organized and seamless learning experience for the learner. This will therefore be assessed in totality to bring out the effectiveness of a

curriculum in promoting a Community of Inquiry and ensuring a holistic educational experience.

4.2 Analysis of Classroom Observations

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework is a comprehensive model used to assess the quality of educational experiences, emphasizing social presence, cognitive presence, emotional presence and teaching presence. The CoI framework prioritizes the educational experience of the student, highlighting the function of the communication medium in building community and enhancing the learning process (Garrison et al., 2001). Based on the above, the analysis which follows combines all observations from multiple Kindergarten ESL classrooms of three branches of Beaconhouse School System, Pakistan to indicate how they are imbedded within the system to develop critical thought.

4.2.1 Social Presence in Classroom Observations

The teachers in all my observations used different means to prepare the ground for a sense of belongingness. These methods were by the use of the right body language, by making the learners take part in different student group structures and by the use of appropriate procedures. Social presence is about setting up relationships of trust, communication, cooperation, and community connection. Social presence is then what gets operationalized into the notion of open communication, group cohesion, and personal / affective expression (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Some of the things that this involved in the classrooms I observed is the bean bag game, group work in the reading area, and whole-class oral drills in order to foster a sense of class unity so that each student knew they were part of something as well as belonging to something. For instance, when they made compound words from flash cards and group work, the interactive activities among the students elicited evidence of mutual support and connectedness with one another. Such activities as "See and Say," "Air Writing," and "Arm Tapping" implied that the students were involved in shared processes of learning, which reinforced mutual support and team work.

Teachers always encouraged communicating and cooperating with each other by engaging them in activities. They were once asked to work together making the list of high-frequency words, and the other time they were engaged in class discussions identifying the rhyming words. Tasks, such as sequencing a story, making compound

words from the list of words given, or making sentences with pronouns, also served as tools that not only developed the speaking skills of the students but also helped in reinforcing the content learned through interactions with their peers.

Students showed mutual support in ways as simple as nodding to assent with fellow students in discussion or as actions like offering assistance during an activity. It signaled a high level of connectedness. It is in a school context that provides for development of empathy, respect, and positive social relationships; it enables the development of a sense of community, individual diversity, and collaboration in the school environment with others (Schaps, 2003).

The classroom environment across the Beacon house School System was designed in a way to allow peer interaction. Students often clapped for each other's performances and very readily helped one another doing their tasks.

4.2.2 Cognitive Presence in Classroom Observations

Teachers fostered higher order thinking in students by asking open ended questions, encouraging independent sentence construction, and engaging them with challenging activities like sequencing of events or pairing rhyming words. They were provided activities that prompted them to analyze, compare, evaluate or apply the knowledge so gained, such as, to relate lessons learned from the stories to their own lives or to extend simple sentences by giving more information. Questions such as "What gave them a fright? " and "What happens to Biff and Chip? Why? " were questions that forced both the students to begin thinking about a story and derive a meaning from it, therefore enhancing the acquisition of correct comprehension and inference skills. A different approach of another teacher to the activity where the students had to prove their answers and giving clues, helped them develop thinking skills and correct comprehension.

"Effective classroom teaching that promotes critical thinking involves posing thought-provoking questions, encouraging students to explore multiple perspectives, and providing opportunities for active engagement with the material" (Facione, 2011, p. 8).

Students' critical thinking was evident because they were able to make sentences, look for rhyming words, and sequence story events correctly on their own. They connected classroom learning to personal experiences thereby giving meaning to

their answers and making the responses relevant. Their ability to generalize learned concepts to new situations, which was witnessed in activities as creating new words out of given patterns, Writing story in their own words and changing the end of story which showed their cognitive development and acquisition of critical thinking skills.

According to Tiruneh et al.(2014) integrating critical thinking instruction into content-area classes can help students develop the respective skills to evaluate arguments, analyze information, and derive solutions to problems under subject-specific circumstances. Learning was often brought to the personal level of the learners. For instance, the teacher talked about how the story character would like to be "big" to impress kid brothers/sisters or would mention personal routines along with students to make them understand the concept of sequencing stories by relating it with real life. This proved to be motivating and made the learning a lot easier to grasp.

4.2.3 Teaching Presence in Classroom Observations

"Teachers who model critical thinking in their own instruction and provide explicit instruction on critical thinking strategies can foster the development of these skills in their students" (Dwyer et al., 2014, p. 38).

Teachers of the three branches of Beaconhouse School System planned diverse activities aimed at promoting critical thinking. These include open-ended questions, group work, picture walks, oral drills, and writing exercises. There must be specific and carefully planned activity that responds well to varying learning styles and progressively develops from what students already know in order to ensure a thorough approach to the critical thinking of the students. Students are more likely to display prosocial behaviors and form healthy peer connections in the classroom when teachers set clear goals, offer continuous positive reinforcement, and apply fair penalties (Simonsen et al., 2008).

Feedback was immediate, positive, and constructive. "Feedback that focuses on the task, process, and self-regulation levels is most effective in promoting critical thinking, as it helps students understand the learning goals, monitor their progress, and adjust their strategies" (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 205).Almost all the teachers praised students' efforts, offered encouraging remarks, and provided specific suggestions for improvement. This approach not only boosted students' confidence but also guided them in refining their critical thinking abilities and understanding of the

concepts. The friendly and conducive environment for learning across the branches was commendable. Giving students timely and helpful feedback is essential for developing critical thinking abilities because it enables them to examine how they think, see where they can improve, and make necessary corrections (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

4.2.4 Emotional Presence in Classroom Observations

The main base for emotional intelligence is derived from critical thinking. According to Elder (1996), she held that the only logical way for us to apply intellect to our emotional lives is through critical thinking. Gaining the ability to think critically can improve one's emotional intelligence, success in life, and mental well-being. on the other hand, are related with worse emotional control and lesser general we-being.

There was a large amount of non-verbal emotional connection by the teachers with the students to make sure a sympathetic-positive classroom atmosphere was encouraged. Gestures such as hugging, clapping, and having private conversations with students formed part of the teachers' non-verbal means of emotional connection with students. A sensory atmosphere coupled with a positive tone within the classroom kept students alive and interested.

It was a great observation that as soon as the emotional cue was delivered by any student, teachers gave an instantaneous response to that requirement by offering reassurance and encouragement. If the situation so demanded, they managed behavioral problems effectively and conducted individual counseling also. The overall theory was to establish a learning atmosphere where students should feel safe, supported, and comforting expressing self. The capability to focus and concentrate and put consideration thought to issues and manage these helps students to cope with different types of achievement and keep a higher level of mental health (Thoyatt, 1995).

In sum, the observations in the classroom showed effective practice of the CoI framework elements. There was an environment created to serve, a place where interaction and collaboration are promoted, a high-level thinking developed, result-oriented feedback provided, attention to the students' emotional condition, and rumination. Finally, all these strategies collaborated to provide an appropriate and adequate climate for the cultivation of critical thinking skills amongst Kindergarten ESL students.

4.3 Lesson Plans Analysis

The CoI framework represents an integrated approach to developing an engaging and effective learning environment through cognitive, teaching, social, and emotional presence. According to the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence are the three interrelated elements that together allow for a collaborative teaching and learning process (Garrison, Anderson & Archer 2000). Upon analyzing Kindergarten lesson plans via a CoI lens, it is evident that the majority of the activities/tasks have cognitive, teaching, social, and emotional components to varying degrees.

Cognitive presence thus finds expression in the lesson plans through activities that agentify active engagement and critical thinking. The use of flashcards for teaching long vowel sounds "oi" and "oy" allows students to work in phonetics and determine language patterns. Shared readings, where the story elements are discussed by the student who then makes predictions as to what will happen, builds comprehension and analytical skills. Relating students real life experiences with classroom learning through questions in the lesson plan about 'I do not eat the colour green' enabled the students to think outside the box. Cognitive presence refers to the extent to which students in a class engage in higher-order activities that entail thinking and understanding. The "Sequencing Little Rex" lesson has the students identify, read, and sequence the story events, therefore establishing coherence in thought processes and entrenching their knowledge of narrative structure. Toward that end, the "Dinosaurs (Reader-Little Rex)" lesson has comprehension questions like "What was the story about?" and "Why did Rex want to be called 'BIG'?" These guide students into deep analyses about characters or events and foster critical thinking with personal links to the story itself. This would ensure, through clear differentiation, that every student is stretched according to his/her potential. The activities included in the lesson plans, to a greater extent, have students engage deeply with the content. For example, in the lesson "Floating (Once there was a raindrop!)," after listening to the story and discussing it, the students write the main events thereof in their own words. Obviously, the strategy makes students understand or internalize the story and contributes to higher-order thinking. According to us, a course can only be structured successfully if the lecturer actively and skillfully directs the students towards higher order learning through discourse facilitation and direct instruction, which in turn leads to practical inquiry (Pool, Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). A variety of questions is used throughout the plans to check comprehension and

provoke critical thinking. Questions like "Can you retell the story in your own words?" and "What do you understand by evaporation?" in the Floating lesson, and "How did Biff and Chip get the key?" in "The Magic Key" lesson promote analysis and synthesis of information.

One strength here is the diversity of tasks that seems to be operating in a differential way, engaging different aspects of cognitive engagement: phonics, reading comprehension, and vocabulary building. While activities of many types are embedded in the plans, it would engage cognitive domains better if more varied approaches to tasks include group discussions, debates, and hands-on experiments. Simulation of water cycle can be added. More scaffolding for really complex tasks will help; for example, give graphic organizers for story re-telling or concept maps to understand the water cycle. It can help students organize thoughts to grasp underlying abstract ideas.

One area for development could be the incorporation of more higher-order thinking opportunist activities—for example, problem-solving or creative writing tasks where learners can apply their learning in novel ways. According to Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000), cognitive presence is the degree to which a teacher and their students can create and validate meaning through extended discourse (discussion) in a community of inquiry.

The plans also show a strong social presence, community, and collaboration among the students. The ability of members of a community of inquiry to present themselves through the chosen communication medium as socially and emotionally authentic individuals—that is, as their entire selves—is known as social presence (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes 2005). The circle activity with the bean bag for the lesson on "Time" (Sentences with pronoun I) encourages students to come up with the pronoun "I" in a sentence and helps them to interact and communicate. This activity helps students feel connected to their peers and develop social skills. Group discussions during the "Dinosaurs (Reader-Little Rex)" lesson that include student predictions and thoughts on different content also create a collaborative learning environment. Students can express ideas and carefully listen to others to build mutual respect and lay a cultural foundation. There is a strong teaching presence that shows from the clearly defined learning objectives and the structured activities. Goals, such as identifying and using long vowel sounds, provide the teacher and the students with a clear map of what they

should be doing. It helps in driving teaching instructions. Structured activities, including PowerPoint presentations and songs, facilitate students to interact with and enjoy learning while meeting educational goals. Verbal sentence construction and Q&A sessions are examples of formative assessment strategies that allow the teacher to check for understanding and make adjustments on the spot to get students on the right track to meet the learning objectives. These plans contain elements of collaboration where the group has readings and discussions. This is evident in the lesson on "Floating" where, during the picture walk, students discuss the story in detail, and in the lesson on "Compound Words" where students come up with compound words together. Questions directed to the whole class, such as "What do you see on the cover page?" or "Where does the ocean water go?", motivate learners to share their ideas and listen to others in building a community. All of this continuous assessment is characteristic of the effective facilitation and direction that strong teaching presence exhibitions bring to a learning environment.

One area of development could be the use of more strategies related to differentiated instruction to meet diverse learning styles and abilities so that all students are engaged and challenged throughout. A variety of close ended and open ended questions in the lesson plans could have served this purpose to a greater extent. More structured opportunities for peer feedback can enhance social presence. For example, after writing down the main events of the story, students could pair up to share and discuss their summaries, offering constructive feedback. The increasingly collaborative projects—for instance, creating a mural for the class on the water cycle or developing a group storybook—can further enhance social bonds and cooperative learning.

During collaborative activity, students can nucleate a social presence through which they can communicate and be able to interact with others in the class. Group activities include reading words aloud, coloring them, using words in sentences, and promoting community along with shared learning. Interactive question-and-answer sessions would create conditions in which meaningful communication would take place among these students, where they are able to express their thoughts and participate in meaningful discussions.. Pair activities—story elements discussed with a partner—strengthen social links and collaborate on learning. These strategies provide for an assisted learning environment where students feel un-detached and involved, thus strengthening social presence in class. These plans contain elements of collaboration

where the group has readings and discussions. This is evident in the lesson on "Floating" where, during the picture walk, students discuss the story in detail, and in the lesson on "Compound Words" where students come up with compound words together. Questions directed to the whole class, such as "What do you see on the cover page?" or "Where does the ocean water go?", motivate learners to share their ideas and listen to others in building a community.

Some of the strengths are the focus on collaboration or communication, thus developing rudiments for a good classroom community. This can be further expanded with more peer feedback sessions and group projects to increase social bonding and cooperation skills. Teaching presence fosters meaningful conversation, cohesive discourse, and interpersonal connections, all of which are crucial for developing a feeling of social presence. It creates the conditions for deliberate conversation and introspective learning procedures (Bangert, 2008). Learning outcomes for the lesson plans are stated clearly and hence very specific; for instance, the students will listen with interest and understand the story. This sets clear expectations for teaching and learning activities. Plans include guided activities, such as the teacher reading the story correctly with pronunciation and intonation, thereby modeling behaviors and practices the students should follow. . In the "Sequencing Little Rex" lesson, the teacher provides an introduction to sequencing, gives examples, and guides the students with their tasks in such a structured way that students clearly know what they are expected to do and get relevant help if needed. In the "Time (Sentences with pronoun I)" lesson, the use of a video explaining the rules of sentences and the pronoun "I," followed by an interactive game, would allow students to apply what was learned. Further to promote teaching presence, more emphasis on individualized feedback during written tasks would make student support and strategies highly tailored for those who need more help.

Activities that help in developing emotional presence include those that encourage students to express their feelings through activities provided with positive feelings. Introducing words such as "brave" and sharing characters from stories provide opportunities for students to develop an understanding of feelings and their expression. Encouraging students to speak clearly and share their views promotes self-esteem and confidence. These lesson plans provide for a learning environment in which students feel free to express ideas and feelings, thereby promoting emotional development and class cohesion. In a community of inquiry, emotional presence refers to the outward

manifestation of feeling, affect, and emotion by individuals as they relate to and engage with the learning technology, course material, students, and teacher (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes 2005).

The strength of emotional presence lies in the provision of an enabling and encouraging environment working toward students' emotional well-being. This could be an area of growth in terms of more activities to explicitly teach emotional regulation and empathy—for example, through role-playing for scenarios and discussing feelings—to further build in the emotional intelligence of the students. According to Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fung (2010), emotional presence in various learning settings might affect students' general well-being and sense of belonging. Positive reinforcement, such as "smiling faces" for formative assessment, builds an inviting tone for this "Sequencing Little Rex" lesson. The use of provocative questions in the "Dinosaurs (Reader-Little Rex)" lesson demonstrates respect for engaging students' feelings in learning. Strategies that will deal with individual needs, such as a step-by-step approach and sensory integration, shall thus make the lessons inclusive and foster the importance of student values and supports. Regular checking-in with students to express their feelings about learning could help ensure that valuable insights are obtained. The issues raised by students could be 'spotted' and addressed right away by the teacher to maintain emotional presence. Responses like "smiling faces" and praises for participation build a positive classroom atmosphere where students could feel worthy and motivated. Their feelings towards the activities and learning could be regularly checked. One can, therefore, properly understand and overcome their emotional needs in that regard. Emotional presence can be further enhanced by ensuring all students feel included and supported through the use of varied instructional strategies answering diverse learning needs and backgrounds.

The lesson plans of Beaconhouse School System have an absolute integration of the CoI framework to drive a complete and engaging experience of learning. Critical and reflective activities make one feel cognitive presence. Teaching presence is reflected in the structured design—it is clear with learning objectives to ensure articulations of learning educational outcomes. It gives community by iterative means of collaborative activities and purposeful communication. Activities allowing self-expression and feelings of well-being are tending to emotional presence. These

elements, in turn, form a rich environment for the carrying out of the educational process and nourish cognitive, social, and emotional developments in students.

Said differently, although the lesson plans received a good mark for encouraging engagement and a positive atmosphere for learning, further development in the areas of differentiation, HOTS, and explicit emotional learning would go a long way toward structuring a much more robust educational experience.

4.4 Analysis of the interviews

Interviews give us the opportunity to gather data that would not be possible to obtain in any other way and to obtain insights that are essential for this kind of research (Islam & Deegan, 2008). A quality interview possesses the ability to generate intricate, striking quotes (Lareau, 2021); these should be precise, colourful, and full of emotion and passion to pique the reader's interest (Kraus, 2022). Teachers' interviews yielded detailed accounts of how critical thinking abilities are developed in an ESL classroom throughout the early years, which were then compared to the Community of Inquiry framework. The components of this lens—cognitive presence, social presence, emotional presence and teaching presence—would provide important insight into the workings of their methods, techniques, and difficulties. A quality interview possesses the ability to generate intricate, striking quotes (Lareau, 2021); these should be precise, colorful, and full of emotion and passion to pique the reader's interest (Kraus, 2022).

4.4.1 Cognitive Presence in Interviews

Critical thinking involves a variety of cognitive abilities and tactics, such as interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Effective problem-solving and decision-making require these abilities and attitudes (Facione, 2015). All interviewed teachers identified that critical thinking develops the following essential skills: observation, question, reasoning, and problem-solving. They agreed on the same point: ESL students are supposed to build curiosity and confidence. Teacher1 discussed how to engage her learners with open-ended questions and situations from real-life aspects. Teacher 2 did this through freedom and exploration-setting environment. While Teacher 1 was more focused on structured activities, it is interactive play and learning by doing for Teacher 2. Teacher 3 used the mind map, brainstorming, and interactive tasks to acquire skills toward out-of-the-box thinking by breaking the barrier of language. Teacher 4 elaborated that critical thinking is "about

'thinking' about 'thinking'" and thus comprises analysis and judgment while fanning open-ended questions together with hands-on experience. For example, teacher 5 provided open-ended questions, involved students in discussion groups, and created problems to be solved in writing—deeper engagement in material. Critical thinking requires higher-order thinking abilities like analysis, assessment, and creation since they demand more from students than just reciting facts; rather, they ask for more intricate cognitive processes (Brookfield, 2012).

Teacher 6 explained the means by which she would provoke curiosity: through telling stories and providing videos in which students would predict and analyze the scenarios. "Sometimes I introduce a lesson with just a little story or video and then ask them what they think will happen next, or what would you do if you were in the place of a particular character." She feels that through this approach, students are being forced to start thinking critically about various scenarios, hence increasing cognitive presence in engaging them at a more analytical plane. For Teacher 7, she opines those who can think critically always perform better.

4.4.2 Social Presence in Interviews

Students that collaborate to solve problems can develop their critical thinking abilities since they are required to have conversations, weigh different points of view, and assess the facts in order to draw conclusions (Gokhale, 1995). BSS teachers discussed creating a collaborative atmosphere with great zeal. Teacher 1 provided open-ended projects and group conversations as a means of encouraging children to listen and share their ideas. Teacher 2 believes that differentiating assignments to cater to different learning styles is important and highly values a varied classroom. She considers the environment to be the best resource and believes that "best resource is environment...it should be made interactive." Teacher 3 divided students into several learning areas and tasks to meet demands in order to foster collaboration, and Teacher 4 included activities aimed at logic as well as computer-assisted narrative tools. To create a sense of community, she pays attention to role-playing and discussions, especially when it comes to the use of creative language. In the beginning, Teacher 6, a novice teacher, permitted the students to inquire and participate in their mother tongues. Teacher 7 organizes a classroom debate to foster communication and collaboration where students discuss a topic in English present arguments and counterarguments. She said, "I focus on incorporating activities that challenge students to analyze, evaluate

and create using English language like designing activities that gradually increase in complexity starting with basic comprehension task and progressing to more challenging task that requires critical thinking.” According to Brookfield and Preskill (2005), critical thinking skills can be greatly enhanced by classroom conversations that push students to examine presumptions, pose pointed questions, and build on one another's ideas. Teacher 8 enjoys using classroom learning areas for this purpose along with picture flash cards and some more classroom techniques.

4.5 Major Findings of the Study

- The Beaconhouse Curriculum incorporates the CoI framework of cognitive, social, teaching, and emotional presence, thus ensuring that students have a comprehensive learning experience. The curriculum focuses on the development of critical thinking, independence, creativity, and respect for diversity in culture; it fosters intellectual growth. Inclusiveness and emotional well-being are incorporated, and students are treated with equal opportunities based on their background, with emphasis on enhancing self-esteem and moral behavior.
- Teaching approaches utilize multisensory, interactive, and active approaches that are helpful in enhancing learner engagement and mental development. The teacher asks open-ended questions and applies real-life scenarios and problem-solving activities to develop higher-order thinking. Resource utilization and availability differ from classroom to classroom, indicating that standard and holistic materials are needed to ensure uniformity. Complex tasks such as concept mapping, graphic organizers, or extended projects are not regularly used to help students learn abstract or difficult concepts.
- A well-planned lesson program facilitates coherence, consistency, and progressive learning over the course of a year. Group activities, peer interactions, and shared tasks conducted in a class foster teamwork, communication, and mutual support among learners. Storytelling, brainstorming, and debates are some activities that spark curiosity, encourage critical thinking, and improve language ability. Teachers engage students in exploring how the lessons learned in class relate to real life, furthering their comprehension and relevance. Peer interaction is promoted through pair and group activities, which promote collaborative problem-solving and the sharing of diverse perspectives.

- Emotional presence in the classroom setting manifests as supportive environments for students' emotional needs, facilitated by gestures, empathy, and positive reinforcement. However, there is a need for more explicit focus on these aspects. Incorporate emotional learning activities such as role-playing or even discussing feelings that could be explicitly introduced to increase emotional regulation and empathetic development. Teachers often seek general positive reinforcement; more specific and regular check-ins on students' emotional states could identify and address an individual's needs more effectively. Supporting student learning, confidence, and refinement of critical thinking skills can be supported with immediate and constructive feedback from the teachers.
- Differentiated instruction is present but needs more emphasis to meet the needs of diverse students through tailored strategies, scaffolding, and individualized learning experiences. Incorporation of higher-order thinking tasks such as creative writing, solving real-world problems, and more complicated analytical activities must be expanded to challenge the students.
- There is a variation seen in teachers' responses balancing structured and exploratory, and perhaps their practices require standardized professional development across all. There are more underutilized innovative teaching approaches, such as technology integration, simulations, and experiential learning, which can provide additional stimulus for students.
- There is a scarcity of long-term assessments for the development of critical thinking, and tools to measure impact could be implemented to make the strategy more effective.

The lessons mostly focus on isolated subjects rather than interdisciplinary approaches that could help students connect ideas across domains and think more holistically.

4.6 Key Themes and Discussion

4.6.1 Holistic Development of Students

The Beaconhouse Curriculum primarily works toward the all-round growth of the students with independence, imagination, and critical thinking. Further complementing its vision and mission statements is a learning environment allowing freedom in thought, co-operation elements very much in the cognitive presence of the

CoI framework. Again, it finds reflection in the holistic approach to learning that is found in the learner profile, which constitutes an education fostering creativity, skepticism, and world-mindedness leading towards intellectual and emotional development. According to Schiller (2016) early learning should be approached holistically because children's learning and development are complex processes. It entails providing comprehensive support for children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive requirements in order to enhance their general success and well-being.

The analyzed lesson plans of Beaconhouse School System also support holistic development because they have different kinds of activities which improve the intellectual, social, and emotional development of a student. For example, the long vowel sounds using flashcards and shared readings enhance the cognitive skills of a student. Moreover, group discussions improve the social skills of the student coupled with social-emotional understanding.

"Effective early childhood programs recognize the interconnectedness of all domains of child development - physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. They intentionally integrate learning experiences that nurture the whole child." - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2022, p. 4).

The activities also ensure that the children get an all-round education because the different activities incorporated into the daily routine encompass intellectual, social, and emotional development. This makes provisions for activities like forming compound words and sequencing of stories, which ensure that the students will learn language skills at the same time fostering team spirit and social bonding. Other interactive activities between the learners themselves, like "See and Say," "Air Writing," and "Arm Tapping," show their involvement in shared learning processes, building mutual support and creating teamwork.

Teachers focus on the development of students' intellectual, social, and emotional capabilities. For instance, open-ended questions and life situations instill curiosity and boost the self-confidence of the student; freedom and support explores and sets a role model for interactive play and learning through doing; mind maps and brainstorming foster out-of-the-box thinking. This shows how different strategies cater to the holistic growth of the students.

4.6.2 Metacognition and Reflection

Comprehensive learning is facilitated by the complex interplay between metacognition and reflection (Granville & Dison, 2005). It biases views that students themselves think about their thinking processes and reflect on learning processes involved. Therefore, this falls under cognitive presence in CoI framework since it urged a reflective and critical thinking in the students. For instance, emphasis by curriculum on discussions and further reflections enhances development of metacognitive skills. Students' engagement in reflection is increased when they are encouraged to cultivate metacognitive abilities (Lin, 2001; Rimor & Kozminsky, 2003).

The plans build on students' self-reflection about their learning thought processes. For instance, retelling stories in one's words and the prediction of story outcomes are strategies meant to help the student in reflecting on and understanding thought processes in order to improve metacognitive skills. It makes the student think about their own thinking and reflection in the process of learning. Open-ended questions from the teachers like "What gave them a fright?" further prompt the children to do analysis and derive meaning from stories at greater levels, developing reflective skills. They are able to relate it to learning experiences back in class through saying what is relevant and meaningful

Critical thinking involves self-regulation and reflection. Another aspect of encouraging students to think about their thinking is the use of questioning capped with the need for analysis and judgment on the part of the student. For example, Teacher 4 explains, "It is all about 'thinking' about 'thinking'; hence, it incorporates analysis and open-ended questions with hands-on experiences in ICT and critical thinking.". One of the emerging strategies Teacher 6 used was storytelling, whereby students were permitted to view videos, raise questions, and ask for predictions of scenarios to analyze in building reflective skills.

4.6.3 Active and Engaged Learning

The Beaconhouse Curriculum focuses on active learning. Practices within the strategies of teaching, like read-aloud by the teacher, group reading, and guided writing, foster active engagement. In such manners, meaningful interactions and knowledge-building lead to cognitive presence. Emphasis on active means of learning through the curriculum, like play and multi-sensorial approaches, keeps students engaged and

involved. To accomplish challenging learning objectives, a proficient learner can develop and apply a variety of thinking and reasoning techniques (American Psychological Association, 1997)

Shared readings, story sequencing, and group discussion activities ensure active involvement of the students in the learning process. At this level, interactive tasks involve students deeply with the learned material, enhancing its meaningfulness and enjoyment. Effective learners are able to learn how to learn and employ analytical and strategic methods of instruction. They aspire to be autonomous, self-reliant learners who actively shape their own educational experiences (American Psychological Association, 1997). Through the activities, such as the bean bag game, which the children are going to play to practice pronouns, students become agents in their learning, and group work in the reading area helps the children to remain involved in the learning process. This kind of activity keeps students involved by making learning enjoyable and meaningful. Other speaking activities include sequencing the story or making sentences with pronouns; this not only enhances their speaking skills but also reinforces the content gained through the interaction of children with their peers.

The students are engaged through interactive lessons and discussions. Teacher 7 firms up class debates therefore challenging the learners to analyze, evaluate and create in English. Teacher 5 engages the learners through discussion groups and problem solving to ensure that the learners deeper engage with the resources resultingly. All these approaches keep students fully involved and make learning meaningful and fun.

4.6.4 Differentiation and Integration

The idea behind differentiated education is that differentiating instruction should be focused on the needs of each unique and diverse student in the classroom (Tomlinson, 2001). By providing entry points, learning objectives, and outcomes that are specific to each student's learning needs and skills, differentiated instruction enables all students to access the same classroom material (Caliskan & Sunbul, 2011). The curriculum under discussion is designed to be inclusive and gives equal opportunities to all in the student body, notwithstanding their diverse backgrounds. It creates an atmosphere that enhances the self-esteem and emotional well-being of a student. This echoes emotional presence as described by the Community of Inquiry framework. The

following learning objectives within the curriculum see that students learn empathy, altruism, and moral behavior for an atmosphere of caring.

These lesson plans entail equal opportunities for all learners to participate and become successful: activities such as discussing real-life experiences or tasks that require groupings ensure that diverse learners are engaged and challenged according to their abilities. Given the inclusive nature of the classes, every student is able to engage and thrive there. This includes activities inside classrooms that ensure that diverse learners are engaged and supported in these actions in accordance with their abilities. The application of various activities, such as open-ended questions and group work by the teachers, is quite responsive to different learning styles and therefore ensures comprehensive attempts at critical thinking by the students.

Different activities and assignments are provided according to the various learning styles, ensuring that no student is left behind. Teacher 2 embraces a diverse class environment or atmosphere with differentiated assignments to support different learners in her class. Teacher 3 categorizes students into learning areas to meet their demands in a collaborative way. All these coordinate and support teaching approaches towards meeting the needs of diverse learners and developing critical thinking.

4.6.5 Clear and Structured Learning Pathways

The overall curriculum provides an overall plan of study, identifying concepts, skills, and learning objectives for the year. This provides both consistency as well as continuity in teaching and learning to provide students with a coherent learning experience. In giving a defined structure for the knowledge acquisition and growth, it follows the cognitive presence in the CoI framework.

The lesson plans have an organized structure. The learning objectives are clear, and activities have been well and clearly detailed. For example, the "Sequencing Little Rex" lesson gives a clear sequence of activities that lets children know what to expect of the process and how to achieve the former.

The teachers provide clear instructions and structured activities. For example, in sequencing events, the steps are well outlined, hence the students know what to expect of themselves in terms of learning objectives and how they can achieve them. The welcoming nature and the ambient setting in all the branches ensure the immediate

reception of positive and constructive feedback, which can be applied and built upon in refining critical thinking skills and concept understanding.

Structured activities, clear instructions, and stated expected student outcomes support students in comprehending learning outcomes through attaining these outcomes. According to Marin and Halpern (2011), proficient teachers exemplify critical thinking and problem-solving techniques, offer clear guidance in these areas, and facilitate chances for learners to engage with and implement these abilities in real-world situations.

The set practice of Teacher 1 incorporates critical thinking, as she seeks to relate the content to the learners' lives and checks for understanding by inquiry. The use of Bloom's taxonomy is most explicit in Teacher 4, with digital tools and games that enhance thought processes. Clear pathways are assured so that students know what to do and how to attain learning goals.

4.6.6 Component-Based Activities

The curriculum covers all dimensions of learning with different activities. For example, some of the strategies used in teaching and learning are playing, multi-sensory learning, and conceptual thinking, among others, which enable students to interact with the subject matter in different ways. This aspect of scaffolding fulfills cognitive presence in the nature of active engagement and interaction.

These lesson plans also contain multiple activities that address different dimensions of learning, such as phonics, reading comprehension, and vocabulary building. Variation keeps students engaged by moving from one cognitive domain to another. Teachers must not only impart critical thinking abilities to their students, but also foster in them the attitudes and mentalities that are necessary for critical thinking, such as intellectual curiosity, open-mindedness, and a readiness to examine different viewpoints (Facione, 1990).

It accommodates several activities that target various aspects of learning, such as phonics, reading comprehension, and vocabulary building. Such variety helps to engage different cognitive domains and keeps students interested. For example, "See and Say", "Air Writing", and "Arm Tapping" are some of the varied tasks that make students deeply engage in the content. Activities aimed at various components of learning help to keep children interested. Teacher 5 prepares lessons on analysis and

reasoning, while teacher 4 works with activities on logic and those conducted with the support of computers. The activities directed at components capture various types of cognitive domains. Consequently, students develop a complete cycle of competence.

4.6.7 Support and encouragement for emotion and Psychological safety

An atmosphere where students feel accepted, respected, and free to take interpersonal risks without worrying about unfavourable outcomes is what defines psychological safety, which is a crucial aspect of student wellbeing (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Emotional well-being is, therefore, very strongly underpinned within the Beaconhouse Curriculum. It lets them express what they feel, and their caring environment supports them. Positive reinforcement and an outlook towards empathy and moral behavior assure students feel safe and cared for. This aligns to emotional presence in the CoI framework that places an emphasis on support and inclusiveness of the environment.

Lesson plans accommodate an environment where students feel safe to air their thoughts and feelings. Activities on discussing one's feelings and positive reinforcement, with praise or "smiling faces" for good work, help in boosting students' self-esteem and emotional well-being.

The teachers provide the students with a comfortable and homely environment whereby one feels free to share his or her views and emotions. Hugging, clapping, or even holding private discussions with them enable teachers to boost the self-esteem and emotional integrity of the students. For instance, through non-verbal actions in an emotional relationship, such as hugs and claps from the teacher, students will feel good in class and develop a good emotional attachment with the teacher. Studies have indicated that fostering an atmosphere of psychological safety and offering emotional support to kids can result in enhanced academic achievement, higher levels of motivation, and better social-emotional outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Setting up an enabling environment, central to critical thinking development, had emphasis on the need for emotional bonding and safety within classrooms. To Teacher 2, true learning begins with the rapport that exists between students and the teacher. For Teacher 8, it is emotional connectivity, while she maintains that students open up to her and thus scaling up guidance. Secure emotional setting would encourage students to take intellectual risks and encourage critical thinking.

4.6.8 Teachers' Professional Development

The curriculum enhances teachers' professional development since it has clear guidance on teaching methods and resources. This will help the teachers to use new and exciting approaches to teaching that will lead to cognitive presence due to meaningful learning activities. By continuously developing professionally, the teacher will be able to modify the approach usefully to meet the needs of the students. To improve their methods and better assist the growth and learning of their students, effective teachers participate in ongoing professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Lesson plans with clear objectives and activities further structure the lesson to be effectively taught. Resources and strategies supplied to teachers assist in professional growth to adjust teaching for students better. There are various activities that the teachers organize, aimed to develop and encourage critical thinking. Immediately after the class, they provide immediate, positive, and constructive feedback. Therefore, the teachers increase not only confidence among the students but also make them feel in the right direction of building their critical thinking skills and learn the concepts. Teachers' modeling of classrooms, of critical thinking while teaching others, fosters the development of these skills in students.

Teachers work on their continuous professional development to make themselves better at supporting their students. One-size-fits-all professional development programmes are less successful than customized programmes that are made to meet the specific needs and circumstances of each teacher (Patton et al., 2015). Teacher 3 trained and thus finds it helpful for her practice. Teacher 4 has additional qualifications in MPhil and many courses, of which the Reflective Practitioner course is one, which will help her in her practice. Teachers' dedication to keeping up with the latest advancements in their field certainly helps them stay abreast of the always emerging technologies and new tactics. These would help them to make the students more and more critical thinkers.

4.6.9 Barriers and Challenges

While the Beaconhouse Curriculum very nicely aligns with the CoI framework in what it is trying to accomplish, there may be difficulties in terms of how all the strategies will be realized in every classroom. Not all teachers are gifted enough to use all the resources that are available and have the flexibility to try and accommodate the

needs of diverse learners, and require continuous follow-up and training. Addressing these challenges is essential for maintaining the effectiveness of the curriculum.

While the lesson plans in and of themselves are strong, they can be further improved by increasing the higher level thinking activities of problem-solving and creative writing to challenge students. In addition, more differentiation strategies will ensure that all learning styles and all abilities are effectively addressed.

While classrooms are generally very strong in building critical thinking, further enhancement can be added through the implementation of more higher-order thinking activities that push students further, such as problem-solving tasks. More differentiation strategies ensure all styles and abilities in learning are effectively catered to. For example, there could be more opportunities for peer feedback and collaborative projects adding variety into the course and enhancing social presence and cooperative learning.

Some of the problems faced by some of the teachers include language difficulties, cultural load and parental pressure. Unrealistic expectations and parental demands might impede children's holistic development by prioritising academic performance and achievement over other crucial developmental domains. When parents' objectives conflict with their children's unique needs and interests, this is particularly troublesome (Gross-Loh, 2014).

On language, as discussed earlier, Teacher 1 reports that the level of vocabulary is lower order and that higher thinking is weak. Teacher 6 states that though parents want an English fluency programme, they do not want it to include other skills. It might be difficult to provide young children with comprehensive, developmentally appropriate care if cultural attitudes and practices are prevalent. For instance, scholastic success may be valued more highly in some cultures than play and social and emotional growth (Gestwicki, 2017). On the other hand, cultural diversity is viewed by the teachers as a strength. Cultural diversity adds, according to Teacher 7, culturally colored perspectives which may provoke broader thinking. The recognition and acknowledgement of the students' cultural background adds to the learning environment and the development of critical thinking.

In summary, the Beaconhouse Curriculum, lesson plans, classroom observations, and teachers' interviews all point to a comprehensive approach toward promoting holistic development, metacognition, active learning, inclusivity, and

emotional safety. The Community of Inquiry framework elements are very well aligned to promote such a rich educational experience. The implementation of these strategies may be further improved with address to the challenges identified and, through continuous support, by fostering professional growth.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This research analyzed the perceptions, challenges, and teacher strategies used to promote critical thinking abilities in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model of early years ESL classrooms in Pakistan. Drawing on curriculum documents, lesson plans, classroom observations, and teacher interviews, the research gave an insightful idea of how critical thinking is embedded in ESL teaching and the obstacles that inhibit its effective adoption. The results suggest that teachers universally identify the need for developing critical thinking skills early on, since they play a part in intellectual, social, and emotional development in students. Critical thinking is regarded by teachers as an integral aspect of ESL teaching, as it allows learners not only to master a second language but also to become independent, analytical, and creative thinkers.

Teachers use a range of strategies to foster critical thinking, from open-ended questions, problem-solving activities, and reflective conversation, the research found. These strategies invite students to explore material in-depth, verbalize their thinking, and build higher-order thinking abilities. Other features for developing critical thinking include collaborative learning structures, role-play based on real-life scenarios, and incorporating digital tools like interactive storytelling software and education-based games. One of the major findings was the significance of a positive and open classroom climate in building the confidence, curiosity, and ability of students to voice their thoughts without fear of being criticized. Teachers stressed the value of positive feedback and reflective learning environments in assisting students to develop metacognitive abilities and take an active role in their learning process.

In spite of the obvious advantages of integrating critical thinking into ESL teaching, several challenges to its effective application were identified through the study. The most serious challenge is the absence of systematic and ongoing professional development in critical thinking for teachers. Most teachers report that they are inadequately trained to teach critical thinking systematically and need specialist training programs that offer classroom-based strategies. Also contributing is the prevailing Pakistan education culture of placing a priority on English language literacy and memorization rather than analytic thought, creating a considerable hindrance. It is

such an ingrained tendency that typically reduces how teachers who are not taught critical thinking as students may be encouraged to advance inculcation via inquiry.

There is yet another fundamental issue - resources enabling teaching critical thinking. While others use technology to develop dynamic learning experiences, access to the technology varies among schools. Scarce resources and little knowledge of technology create challenges for teachers to apply personalized and inquiry-based learning methods efficiently. Meeting these issues is a many-pronged problem that addresses the need for developers of curricula, policy-makers, and educators to pool together in forming an enhanced nurturing environment for promoting critical thinking skills among early years ESL classrooms.

The importance of these outcomes affects policy as well as practice. First of all, it is urgent for solidly-designed professional development programmes on how teachers may be made expert in bringing into their instructional tools evidence-informed methods promoting critical thinking skills. These programs must not only impart theoretical knowledge but also involve hands-on training, in-class modeling, and ongoing mentoring. Curriculum reforms must also set critical thinking as a key learning goal and not as an adjunct skill, such that teaching materials and evaluation methods must be geared towards higher-order cognitive development. Schools also need to strive to change the dominant cultural attitude by discussing with parents and communities the long-term advantages of developing independent and innovative thinkers instead of only linguistic competence.

Aside from changes at the institutional and pedagogical levels, there is a call for more extensive research on how various approaches to teaching impact critical thinking skills among ESL learners. Although this research gave us useful insights into the views of teachers, more research could be done on the experiences of students themselves to have a better understanding of the learning process. Comparative studies between various education systems, both within Pakistan and abroad, could also provide valuable lessons on best practices for incorporating critical thinking into language teaching. This would serve to determine the most suitable methods of instruction and lay the groundwork for their application in the home environment.

A further area of vital potential study is parental involvement in developing critical thinking. As children in Pakistan tend to be raised in households that focus on

memorization and obedience, parents have considerable influence over students' attitudes towards learning. Educational institutions and teachers can design awareness programs or workshops to enlighten parents about the significance of critical thinking and how they can facilitate its improvement at home. Open discussion, storytelling, and problem-solving games could be included in activities to promote critical thinking outside the school environment.

Additionally, technology's contribution to facilitation of critical thinking must be investigated in more depth. Though a few teachers have managed to integrate digital tools into their classrooms, the potential of technology is far from fully unleashed. Such digital literacy training for teachers and investment in educational technology infrastructure could greatly boost the efficacy of critical thinking learning. New technologies like artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and adaptive learning platforms can offer personalized and interactive learning experiences that push students to think critically and solve complicated problems.

On the policy side, education officials should consider including critical thinking goals in national education standards and making sure that they are applied consistently across various schooling systems. This would involve reorienting teacher training at the pre-service level to have new teachers prepared with the required skills and knowledge to promote inquiry-based learning. Also, the assessment procedures should align with critical thinking objectives away from memorization by rote and standardized testing towards performance assessments that test students' capacity for analyzing, reasoning, and applying knowledge in practical contexts.

Ultimately, this research affirms the irreplaceable function of early years ESL teachers in establishing a critical thinking culture for students. As much as challenges confront them, teachers remain strongly committed to creating interesting, question-provoking, and mentally stimulating classrooms. Their initiatives create the platform for lifelong learning that prepares students for necessary problem-solving, reasoning, and analysis capabilities that will outlast their college years. Yet to maintain and expand these initiatives, constant institutional backing is needed. Spending on teacher training, curriculum improvement, and research-based pedagogy is essential towards ensuring critical thinking is made a part of early years ESL education in Pakistan. By working through the challenges, it has identified and capitalizing on the strengths inherent in

current practice, schools are able to meaningfully advance towards building a generation of autonomous, thoughtful, and critically conscious learners well-equipped to tackle an ever-more complicated world.

Overall, encouraging critical thinking within early years ESL classrooms must take a well-rounded approach which encompasses teacher development, curriculum re-design, shifts in culture, parent engagement, and technology infusion. Although there has been progress, much work remains to be done to ensure that students acquire the thinking skills required to succeed in the 21st century. This research identifies the perseverance and commitment of teachers to overcome challenges and emphasizes the importance of ongoing support at all levels to make critical thinking a fundamental part of learning. In the future, it is critically important that educators, policymakers, and researchers all work together to build an environment where questioning, thinking, and analysis are not only fostered but ingrained in the very essence of early childhood education.

5.1 Suggestions for future research

Some of the further research field suggestions from the findings of this research are longitudinal studies that trace the development of students' critical thinking skills across time. This can provide more information on the long-term effectiveness of the strategies in the Beaconhouse Curriculum, thus pointing out the stages at which the critical thinking skills develop to a greater extent and which interventions are most effective.

- Having that key view of comparative studies from different education systems could be of help both within and outside Pakistan in arriving at a wider picture of what best practices could be for promoting critical thinking skills. This can identify universal strategies as well as those that might be specific to some cultural or educational contexts.
- A study into the effectiveness of the training programs in teacher education regarding the induction of critical thinking skills in students could help in the refinement of professional development initiatives. Studies might focus on the kinds of training that work best and how they are put into practice.
- Exploring parental roles for developing critical thinking could offer a view into the home influences on learning. The research might look at strategies that result in more

effective means of gaining not only the inclusion of parents into the learning process but also the elimination of parental expectations and pressures.

- What could be interestingly studied is how digital tools and technologies can be utilized in their full vibrancy for critical thinking skill development among early years ESL learners. This could be structured in investigations of the application's potential efficacy—that is, applications such as apps and online platforms for collaboration, among other digital materials.
- Research would also need to be carried out on how cultural attitudes and practices affect the development of critical thinking skills, which could lead to the development of educational strategies modified to a cultural context. This can be achieved by investigating the perceptions that different cultures have toward education and learning, and the implication of the perceptions on teaching practices and student outcomes.
- More research on effective differentiation strategies for diverse learners—from learning-disabled learners to learners from various linguistically diverse backgrounds—would be necessary to afford a level playing ground for all students in developing such critical thinking skills. Research might focus on specific techniques or their effectiveness within inclusive classrooms.
- It would also be very useful for developing and validating assessment methods sensitive to measurement, reflecting the critical thinking skills of very young pupils. Actualizing this could include the development of rubrics, standardized tests, or alternative assessment tools that are sensitive to changes in the movement of critical thinking development.
- Of particular interest would be which factors exactly provide a sense of psychological safety and emotional well-being in the classroom that allows and supports the development of critical thinking. This could be explored in the context of such variables as classroom dynamics, teacher-student relationships, and the level of emotional support present.
- It is probably advantageous to adopt a more enlightened approach by researching how cross-curricular critical thinking skills may be integrated with subjects other than ESL, including subjects for mathematics, science, and social studies, through the respective effectiveness of interdisciplinary teaching methodologies.

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APPENDIX A

This appendix consists of curriculum document of Beaconhouse School System and it includes their vision & mission statements along with the learner profile , introduction, philosophy, Cross-curricular links and subject guide and assessment policy for Communication ,Language and Literacy – English of Kindergarten Class.

1-Curriculum Document

Vision: Beaconhouse values the right of every individual to realise his or her potential through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values in a caring and supportive environment. Our schools uphold the freedom of each student to think, create and discover on the basis of their cultural and spiritual tradition, whilst respecting the cultures and spiritual insights of others. We believe the human mind grows best in a spirit of freedom and co-operation.

We believe in developing responsible citizenship by precept and example. We provide an environment for learning, which promotes independent, creative, and critical thought.

We provide a friendly and supportive environment, which not only enhances the self-esteem of each individual but also challenges each to develop understanding skills, abilities and talents to the full.

At Beaconhouse, we expect and demand high standards from all our students and staff, and we celebrate the achievement of all.

Beaconhouse values its past and builds its strengths approaching new ideas with discernment as it continuously looks to the future.

We promote equal opportunities for all our students irrespective of gender and of religious, social, ethnic or linguistic background.

Mission: Beaconhouse aims to provide quality education of an international standard. We aim for excellence through quality management, quality training and quality teaching, bringing benefit to our students, the community and the wider world.

Introduction: The Beaconhouse learner profile has been developed to incorporate the Beaconhouse mission statement and the OECD Global Competency Framework for an Inclusive World.

The attributes of the learner profile express a set of values and beliefs intrinsic for school heads, teachers and students.

It is designed so schools support their students throughout their education and in their transitioning from school to the world of work and civil responsibility.

These attributes will be consistent through the Early Years, Primary, Middle and Secondary schools.

The Beaconhouse learner profile supports a professional learning community where students are empowered, nurtured and inspired to learn and reach their potential. These attributes encourage students to be more actively engaged beyond schooling as they come to know and understand a complex geo-political world where an informed understanding of themselves and others will hopefully contribute to a humane world.

Aim of the Beaconhouse learner profile:

Our students come from a variety of social, cultural and economic backgrounds, not only nationally but also internationally. Our learner profile and our students are our brand ambassadors. The learner profile shares common attributes which forge ties with all students in Beaconhouse schools both within Pakistan and internationally.

Beaconhouse promotes holistic learning of the student, emphasizing the educational, emotional and physical needs through the domains of learning-the cognitive, affective and psychomotor. By focusing on the dynamic combination of knowledge, skills, creative and innovative thought and global awareness, the Beaconhouse learner profile prepares our students as lifelong learners and responsible citizens.

As a key component of a Beaconhouse education, the learner profile is a central tenet of our curriculum, and the values embedded within it.

Implementation of the learner profile

The curriculum itself alone cannot implement the learner profile. School heads and teachers will model the values of the learner profile and share in the development of a professional learning community that promotes accountability, responsibility and empowerment of all its members. The Beaconhouse Learner profile

is an organic document and will thrive only to the extent that it is lived out as a model of exemplary humane, personal and professional conduct.

Creative & Innovative	Our students aspire to generate original and meaningful ideas which add value to their personal lives and to the communities they inhabit, in the 21st century. Through our local and international curricula, and with the direct support of school heads and teachers, Beaconhouse students draw on inspirational examples from human history to be creative, imaginative and innovative in their pursuit of knowledge and understanding.
Analytical	Through local and international curricula, our teachers facilitate and support students to create logical, coherent and creative connections between ideas. Through multidisciplinary collaborations, open-ended investigations and by reflecting on their own critical thinking processes, teachers and students strive to identify, evaluate and solve problems systematically.
Inquisitive	Our students are curious about their surroundings. Through our local and international curricula, facilitated by teachers, our students develop an ingrained inquisitiveness towards an enhanced understanding of the world in which they live.
Resolute	Our school heads and teachers support all Beaconhouse students to become dedicated, dependable, resilient and unwavering in their quest to acquire knowledge and understanding.
Empathetic	All Beaconhouse schools promote and support good works and community service so our students can empathise with others, ensuring the development of a more just, caring and compassionate world.
Ethical	Our school heads promote student accountability and an informed responsibility for an individual's actions. Through the curriculum, our students and teachers develop a spirit of honesty, integrity, equality and fairness.
Globally Competent	Through our local and international curricula, school heads and teachers support and facilitate our students to critically analyse and question global issues based on three principles:

	<u>Equity:</u> To learn that the increased imbalance of income, the unavailability of quality education for the poor and the digital economy are fundamentally altering the nature of employment and the right to earn a livelihood. <u>Global & Social Cohesion:</u> Mass migration from countries stuck in war and poverty create problems on a global scale. Through our local and international curricula teachers and students discuss the integration of diverse groups of people and ways to avoid the growth of extremist ideologies. <u>Sustainability:</u> Our local and international curricula prioritise the investigation of sustainable goals through becoming cognizant of the consequences of overconsumption of non-renewable energy sources. Schools promote self-awareness and ownership of responsibility in their students to prepare themselves for a greener future and realize the impact that they have on the lives of future generations in the face of increasing chances of environmental degradation, imminent global warming, and rapid climate change.
Holistic and self sufficient	Our schools promote and support healthy and sustainable life styles, to ensure physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing of all Beaconhouse students. Our schools ensure that all Beaconhouse students are able to make conscious decisions for smart health choices today, and for the future. They are actively involved in physical and creative activities both inside and outside the school, leading to heightened development of their mind, spirit and body. All BSS schools prepare students at various levels for first aid, medical emergencies and unfortunate natural disasters through a four tiered model; <i>Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.</i>

Digitally Intelligent	Heads of schools and teachers promote the ethical use of social media and digital technology to enhance teaching and learning. Beaconhouse teachers and students are expected to create a safe digital environment where they may share, communicate and disseminate digital knowledge and information ethically, conscientiously and responsibly. Our schools proactively keep themselves updated on newer technologies and continue enhancing digital citizenship and awareness by collaborating and engaging with local and international technological organisations.
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Introduction

Welcome to the Beaconhouse Early Years - **Communication, Language and Literacy curriculum.**

The curriculum is founded on the Beaconhouse Mission Statement and is aligned with our BSS Learner Profile. It incorporates specifications from globally recognised curricula frameworks. Beaconhouse offers a well-balanced and broad based curriculum where education is not only academic but includes cultural, personal, social, spiritual and physical development and growth. The principal aim of the curriculum is to set direction for student learning in our schools and ensure that all students develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need to be successful, confident, responsible and independent learners in the 21st century.

The Beaconhouse curriculum fosters the holistic development of the student and enables each student to progressively realise their individual potential. All students have access to a full range of activities and experiences and students are provided with practical, hands-on learning opportunities; these enable students to experience learning in a meaningful way that reflects their interest and needs. Individual differences are recognised and catered for, and learning is differentiated so that every student is helped and encouraged to do their best without being forced beyond their capabilities. The curriculum promotes equal opportunities for all and helps student to understand the world in which they live and the interdependence of individuals, groups and communities, including awareness of economic and environmental issues.

The Beaconhouse curriculum establishes and promotes within schools:

- a clear philosophy and a set of overarching aims that guide the learning and teaching in schools;
- a basic framework of what to do, how to do it, when to do it in the classroom, and how to know if it has been achieved;
- flexibility and encourages experimentation and innovation in teaching and learning within our curriculum framework;
- inquiry and project work within a methodological paradigm which acknowledges both traditional and innovative forms of lesson delivery in a classroom or through an online, virtual classroom;
- interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of curricula when and where appropriate.

The curriculum documents provide a structure of learning and teaching through a comprehensive set of attainment targets for each subject. The attainment targets detail what the student needs to know, do and be able to understand in a particular subject area. A diverse range of pedagogies are deployed to meet diverse student needs, enhance their learning experiences and engage them in learning.

Philosophy

We believe that the acquisition of a language is driven by our primal need to communicate and the BSS Early Years Communication, Language and Literacy curriculum builds on this need. Communication, Language and Literacy form the basis for learning across the curriculum, whether students are learning about numbers or movement, language is central to engaging with and accessing the curriculum. It is language that facilitates the development and strengthening of relationships as conversations about learning, interests, opinions, needs and feelings prove vital to the learning process, hence all our teachers are language teachers.

At BSS we value each student's home language and believe that communicative fluency acquired prior to school underpins the acquisition of English as an additional language. We aim to preserve and wherever possible support the home language, whilst continuing to ensure that all students develop English language proficiency through a

process of English language immersion. In a total-immersion programme, students hear all conversations and instructions in English, eventually acquiring the language through subject-area activities. This, we believe, is the optimum situation for language learning.

The concept of a total immersion school is based on the premise that language learning should begin and involve students in normal everyday situations and in subject-content learning. Students learn the English language as they learn their first language and gain the ability to communicate, understand, speak, read and write fluently.

Early Years education at BSS takes a constructivist and social constructivist approach over one of simple transmission^[1], where active and co-operative learning is encouraged. Multiple types of interactions, such as small group, large group and one to one are used to maximize the amount of talk and interaction between students. These experiences encourage and facilitate student exploration, experimentation and creativity in the pursuit of language development.

Course Description

Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL) – English is a discipline that encourages and fosters English language acquisition. It is through this area of experience that students learn the symbols and operations of the discipline. The course builds upon the language competencies acquired prior to school and aims to preserve the home language, develop competency in the national language i.e. Urdu and support the acquisition of English as an additional language.

The course is based on the principle that all students are curious, active and competent and that each individual has a right to receive optimum support and learn in environments, which enable them to achieve to their fullest potential. Enjoyable experiences with language and literature form the bedrock for developing key literacy skills in the Early Years. These experiences develop in students the disposition to read and write as well as contribute to the development of spoken language. In addition, we trust that the ability to listen, speak, read and write efficiently gives students the confidence and self-esteem needed to succeed in school life.

The teaching and learning of the English language is through active means such as play, and multi-sensorial means. English language teaching and learning involves

conceptual and symbolic thinking. Given below are the strands for CLL these have been designed to ensure that teaching and learning is both balanced and consistent thus facilitating transition for students within and between classes.

The Early Years CLL curriculum has 4 main strands i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing. The strands and their components are in progression.

The Strands: Speaking and Listening

Key findings from research indicate that ‘talk’ is central to the development of knowledge and understanding^[2]. The curriculum therefore gives appropriate weightage to opportunities for ‘talk’. It is, however, to be noted that the development of speaking, listening, reading and writing are interdependent. Opportunities for students to use ‘talk’ to organise their thoughts, to practice sharing ideas and to express feelings, all enhance learning. Knowing that speaking and listening support the development of language as a whole, the curriculum includes adequate opportunities for the development of these skills, wherever required, skills are explicitly taught and opportunities for practicing, applying and extending these is ensured.

The Strands: Reading and Writing

The rich environments that our students inhabit today influence their understanding of how graphic symbols, letters, words, and numbers are used to represent concepts, ideas and experiences. One example that young parents proudly quote is the relationship their young child establishes between the letter ‘m’ and a certain fast food restaurant! This is indeed a grand achievement, which lays the foundation for developing the skills of reading and writing as well as validating the need to broaden the definition of literacy. Substantial research has been conducted and terms such as ‘new literacies’ and ‘multiliteracies’ have reconceptualised the notion of literacy, broadening it to include the vast array of literacies that have emerged particularly with the advent of digital technologies. These new literacies involve becoming aware of and developing the ability to understand and use means of communication other than reading and writing e.g. logos, electronic signs, icons, text messaging, and film, television, video, photography, and satellite navigation systems^[3].

Aims

The aims for the Kindergarten - English Curriculum are to encourage and enable students to:

- develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a variety of contexts.
- comprehend and use English in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes.
- apply language skills and knowledge in a variety of real-life contexts.
- develop an interest in reading widely.
- engage with Information and Communication Technology for a range of purposes, in particular for improving English language competency.

Cross Curricular Links

CLL has strong cross-curricular links with all subjects in the early years.

1. Mathematical Development

Language is fundamental to the development of conceptual understanding in Mathematics. Students acquire Mathematical language naturally when its usage is modelled by the teacher and when they hear it used by others both in their home and school environments. Students clarify and communicate their Mathematical reasoning using language, some examples being: while playing with blocks students talk about size and shape and how best to build a tower, while playing in the home corner students use language to communicate why they have set a table for three, while playing in the playground students use language to communicate position i.e. behind, in front of, near, far etc.

2. Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Language is at the core of learning about the world, students use language to understand and learn about the world they live in, they use language when they talk about their experiences, their homes and their communities. Strong cross curricula links with language are evident when students: hear and comprehend information about the experiences their friends and peers have had, listen to stories from different parts of the world/region, use language to describe and explain their own experiences.

3. Personal, Social, Health and Emotional

CLL also contributes to PSHE and vice versa. When playing co-operatively students use language to show empathy, care and concern for others. They learn the language needed to express their feelings, needs and interest, allowing them to communicate orally and assisting with the management of their behavior.

4. Physical Development

Various activities incorporate and aim to develop fine and gross motor skills, which constitute to the development of skills needed for reading and writing, whether students are throwing a ball or carrying out a fine motor activity in which they have to string beads. The physical exercise develops hand-eye coordination, as well as gross and fine motor skills.

5. Creative Development

Language learning contributes to creative development and vice versa, students explore and experiment with English language as they create their own rhymes, jingles and dialogues; they use their knowledge and understanding of English to inspire and influence their art and learn the language needed to describe and explain their Art and Music to others.

Recommended Course Delivery

At BSS the role of the teacher is to:

- be a guide;
- be a facilitator;
- be a role model;
- form relationships with students;
- be a mentor;
- be knowledgeable;
- be informed.

In order to promote young student's optimal learning and development, teachers should base course decisions on knowledge of:

1. updated theoretical understanding of human development and learning;
2. what is appropriate for each individual;
3. what is culturally appropriate for each individual and for the group as a whole;
4. the vital role of educational technologies in supporting and enhancing learning.

In the early years students are natural learners. Teachers deliver the course by focusing on students natural abilities in two ways:

1. through the choice of task;
2. through repeatedly providing opportunities to develop specific skills.

The purposefully designed environment in which students play includes various natural materials, as well as educational resources. Students construct their own knowledge whilst using and sharing the materials in the environment available to them. Also, it is the ability of teachers to recognize the language potential in the environment and draw it out via skilful questioning that leads to further language development. Students can be seen singing, reading, writing, as well as working in a systematic or orderly manner.

It is suggested that teachers start each lesson with a recap of prior learning or through oral and mental starters. These activities take only the first five to ten minutes of each lesson and have numerous benefits such as:

- enabling students to become adept at reasoning;
- revising and revisiting previous learning;
- preparing students for the main activity and further work;
- allow for quick assessment of students.

The main part of the lesson is where the teacher aims to meet the learning outcomes. It involves activities such as reading a book, watching video clips, using strategies such as prompting, questioning, informing or some other activity. The main part of a lesson often has students providing deliverables such as a piece of writing, drawing, explanation of an idea, or a presentation.

The last part of each lesson is the wrap up. In the wrap up, the teacher summarises the learning outcomes of the lesson. They reiterate the learning that took place. The teacher can act as a facilitator and encourage students to describe what they have learnt and/or showcase a group or a student's work.[\[8\]](#)

Beaconhouse Assessment Philosophy

Nurturing a culture of assessment at Beaconhouse means caring deeply about students and young people and making a difference in their lives. At Beaconhouse assessment is intrinsically linked to a culture of enquiry from which we develop ways of helping and supporting our students to know and learn about the world, themselves and each other. These precepts form the foundation of our 21st century education. At Beaconhouse assessment is about enhancing student learning and development which encompasses the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of learning. Assessment is not about complying with external or internal rules and requirements on how and what to assess. It's helping students to understand and identify the difference between skills required for examinations to get good grades and developing a passion to recognize, learn, create and understand knowledge. Our process of assessment begins with questions: What do we want our students to know about themselves, the world and how they learn? What kind of feedback do we give to our students? How do our teachers support our students so they succeed in their learning?[10][11]

Assessment Strategy

Assessment plays the key role in informing teachers and parents about students' progress. Furthermore assessment is used to plan and modify activities, identify students' needs and strengths and also provide support. It is an integral part of effective teaching. In the Early Years much of assessment is of a formative nature and is integrated within the day during interactions with students[12]. Thus assessment in the Early Years is not a synonym for testing but it means the continuous process of getting to know students. This entails that teachers do not assess students so much as they assess 'student's behaviours, skills, competencies, preferences and interactions'.[13]

Assessment is not only for the teacher to plan for upcoming learning experiences but should be shared with parents so that they can support the learning experiences at home. Assessment that is criterion referenced measures students against Early Years attainment targets and identifies whether they are exceeding expected levels, reaching them or not yet meeting them.[14]

In the Early Years assessment must also be flexible. Often time's students may not perform at their true level due to factors such as illness, fatigue, hunger and other situational factors. A large part of authentic assessment of young students is better done whilst observing students engaged in spontaneous activity.

Methods of Assessment

Formative assessment of students' scientific learning is used to support teaching and learning. It is important that teachers become familiar with each student's scientific understanding. Various tools are used to facilitate, gather, assess and record information. These include:

- observations;
- anecdotal records;
- conversations with teachers;
- conversations amongst students;
- tasks;
- portfolios;
- learning journeys/stories;
- student self-assessment;
- teacher reflections;
- student reflections;
- Parental reflections.

Feedback strategies include:

- verbal comments to students;
- modelled behaviours or activities;
- written comments/symbols on work;
- celebration of any student displaying/recognising in others the attributes of the learner profile.

APPENDIX B

This appendix consists of the transcriptions of the semi structured interviews of the teachers.

Teacher 1 Interview

AK: What is your understanding of critical thinking skills?

T1: Critical thinking in my opinion involves fostering skills for example observation, questioning, reasoning and problem solving.

AK: What do you think ...are critical thinking skills crucial for ESL students in their early years, why/why not?

T1: Yes because it helps them learn with curiosity and confidence.

AK: Ok and how do you think critical thinking skills contribute to overall development of ESL students?

I think, critical thinking skill helps the students improve their vocabulary and grammar which is very important for their English language.

AK:Hmmm ...what strategies do you presently employ in your early years ESL classroom to encourage the development of critical thinking skills?

T1: I can ask open-ended questions like what do you think will happen?. And can have group discussions in which they can share their thoughts and listen to the thoughts of their class fellows.

AK: Would you mind .. If I ask you to give some instances of the assignments or activities you employ to get your students thinking critically?

T1: Yes, by reading a book and asking questions (the king lost his ring, where could be the ring?) encouraged them to think and give answer.

Given students open-ended art projects where they used certain materials to create something and then I asked them to explain it.

AK: Got it got it...what strategies do you use to build critical thinking into your lesson planning besides the one you just shared?

T1: Relate lesson content to real-world scenarios that require critical thinking to solve. This makes learning more relevant and encouraged students to apply their knowledge practically.

AK:How do you establish a classroom climate that is emotionally helpful for your ESL students?

T1: I strongly believe in close emotional bond between teacher and student.I treat them with respect and have built a trust by keeping their small secrets .

AK:Do you think curriculum of your school contribute in the development of critical thinking skills? I would appreciate if you could give reasons for your answer.

T1: Yes, it is well designed and encourage inquiry based learning which helps students to think critically and creatively to find the solutions.

AK: The curriculum supports you but there must be some difficulties ...what challenges must you overcome to nurture critical thinking in ESL classes for young children?

T1: The challenges of teaching critical thinking skills in ESL classes includes students' intelligence not reaching higher-order thinking levels, teachers' creativity, and students' lack of vocabulary.

AK:How do you establish a classroom climate that is emotionally helpful for your ESL students?

AK: Hmmm...do you face any particular language-related difficulties while teaching critical thinking skills?

T1: Yes, students' language proficiency.

AK: How do you work on it then?

T1: I just keep working hard and provide them with opportunities to overcome their issues and it helps.

AK: Which elements, in your opinion, prevent Pakistani students from developing their critical thinking abilities in ESL classes?

T1: The rote learning culture may discourage the Pakistani students from questioning, analyzing, and exploring different perspectives.

AK: I would appreciate if you could tell me the strategies you use to assess the critical thinking skills of your ESL students in the early years?

T1: By observing the students during group activities and by noticing their ability to ask questions.

AK : and how do you provide feedback to young students for fostering their critical thinking skills?

T1: By asking them questions in which they will explain their reasoning and analysis.

AK: Does it really help...By the way have you undergone any professional development or training pertaining to nurture critical thinking skills in ESL classrooms?

T1: No.

AK:Do you remain up-dated on the most recent studies and recommended techniques for developing critical thinking?

T1: Yes I do

AK: Would you mind sharing any studies that has helped you?

Anum: I do not remember the details...

AK: What type of assistance or tools do you believe might help you improve your capacity to nurture critical thinking skills in your ESL classroom?

Anum: Training sessions focusing on techniques for integrating critical thinking into ESL students can be a big help.

AK: What have you discovered to be the most successful in nurturing critical thinking skills in young ESL learners, in your experience teaching?

T1: I have discovered that encouraging collaborative discussions and group activities where students can share different viewpoints and learn from each other is the most successful one.

AK: Is there anything you would like to modify or enhance about the way you now encourage critical thinking?

T1: No...I think I m doing the prefect... by implementing project based activities which have critical thinking, reasoning and problem solving questions.

Teacher2 Interview

AK: What is your understanding of critical thinking skills?

T2: Critical thinking skills are basically the ability to generate the ideas to develop the new ideas so in my opinion they are not just the one thing they are comprised of multiple things for example in particular for the problem solving, we do many things, we to evaluate the things, we ask the questions.... these all the things they actually merge in together to make anyone a critical thinker.

AK: Alright! and do you think these are crucial for English language learners ?

T2: Definitely! Definitely! they are very important you know I am going to refer to the age group which I am dealing with so hey at the early stages the child is actually acquiring the language so since they are acquiring the language the main thing is that we need to develop the critical thinking skills in the students in such a way that they are able to question they should able to ask ...they should be able to you can say to think out of the box. Right! how to generate and develop the new ideas... do not stuff them and first and most important thing is that what kind of a caregiver or you can say if they are at home then I will refer to the caregiver or a parent body or any other adults that is attached with the child that is really important in the development of critical thinking skills and when the student is in the school environment then how the teacher is dealing with a child that is really important that how the skills is going to develop if the critical thinking skills are not properly catered at the early stages then we can can simply say that it comes to the pruning... pruning is like breaking down the ideas of my connections which is developing at the ideal stage that is why they are very important next week.

AK: Alright ...can't agree more....! what strategies do you presently use in your lesson plans or in your classes to encourage critical thinking skills?

T2: See... the most important thing is environment that we are providing to the student... freedom is really important and in the kindergarten class ... they are free to explore.... they are free to enjoy the activities in the areas especially when we are dealing with the stages of three, 3.5 to 4 years that is a their nursery stage at that stage they are provided with different equipment... best resource is environment...it should be made interactive and you can say that whenever they look at the things

they ask the questions... it is not necessary they will ask you the questions in their 2nd language when they are actually inquiring... they do need languages...it is very important as well to not suppress them and ... to just say that ask the same thing in the English.... Speaking ability in English comes you can say with the passage of time... let the child get immersed in the environment and gradually learns the second language ... so you have to provide the environment plus a facilitator.... how the facilitator is scaffolding the learning...? how they are learning.....whether they are learning through structured play whether they are learning through unstructured play so these are the things that are really important.

AK: Very thoughtful of you Anjum...What kind of task or activities do you do in the class to promote critical thinking skills?

T2: Most of all the first thing which in my opinion is really important is a question and we actually keep in mind the questions, which we ask them... the questions should be very much open ended and the question should be catered for all levels... to encourage the curiosity in them... so they will ask...they will think.... if you have to present for example if you introduce a lesson you are not going to say simply that is the concept.... You will come up with some exciting activity...that will push them to think about it and they learn through the videos you have to introduce in such a way that will be curious about what they are going to learn new today.

AK:How do you establish a classroom climate that is emotionally helpful for your ESL students?

The genuine learning process in the classroom will commence when there is a "rapport" between the students and the teacher, so I believe this is the most important job a teacher has to do.I am kind and 'available' and this makes the whole difference.

AK: So what is your say on this..... is the curriculum you are teaching at the moment in this school helpful in developing critical thinking?

T2:Of course it is very important and right now we are having the best vehicle and what is the focus of the curriculumenvironment I will refer back to the learners profile which means that what we are actually bound in the basis to what kind of a student we want to develop or acknowledged them as individuals... we are not only the police to promote lawour job is the development of the students so

definitely critical thinking is an important part and there are good things in the curriculum to support the learner profile which encourages critical thinking skills.

AK: What are the challenges you face while developing the critical thinking skills?

T2: First of all the most important challenge which I am going to refer is that we are teaching in a bilingual school so the students are like more inclined towards Urdu... the parents demand that they should learn the English language speaking ...it shows they are not really focused ... the importance is not like that they want the child to learn the concept they want them to speak in English... so that is I think in my opinion secondary.... 1st of all they should learn the concept and critical thinking is going to be promoted at this stage and at this stage if I am going to just simply snub them and add them to repeat the same thing in English so the main challenges in this period are I can say the parents.

AK: What about the cultural variances and the diversity in the classes is that a problem is that a hindrance or that a strength?

T2: No it's not really ...I can say it's not a hindrance ... the diversity is something that we are... you can say specialized in dealing with these things so how to cater the diversity how to cater the diverse students that's why we are we are focused on station learning that's why there are different tasks assigned so they are challenging tasks as well there are differentiated task as well so these are the challenges which we face in the classroom but we are equipped with how to deal with these troubles coming in general.

AK: That's so encouraging to know....By the way how do you assess the critical thinking of your students in the class?

T2: Hmmmm... how do we assess them definitely the casual way you can say informal way of assessing them is that the way their communication skills that how they are communicating... how much they have learned in during the time they are asking the questions they come up with such a new things or ideas to you for example I quote you an example there was a child who was struggling with the language. He had issues in the first term...was passive most of the time but in the 2nd term he was quite confident in language... he was like struggling so after the entire term has been passed he came to me and he started saying the words which the general students

were not using in the classroom and once he said to me after I came in the classroom and I got my eyesight checked with new glasses on and he looked at me and said ma'am you are just looking like a YouTube creature and that was a new thing maybe he was relating me to the animation creature on YouTube or maybe he was seeing some leisure movies related to animation so I think that is an achievement which I can see that and I can feel in the environment in there everyday learning so informal way of assessing is that you can see in your body language.... in their communication skills.... and how to provide them feedback for that.... feedback is that obviously the positive reinforcement is really important and I provide the feedback.... there are the formal ways are like the ptm performance you can say that through the communication telephonic communication with the parents these are the formal needs AFL is also but the informal is like the AFL the positive AFL strategy which we use in the classroom and the award system that is really working.

AK: Do you have any professional training in the system for this? And what do you are the type of assistance or tools to improve the capacity of students thinking?

T2: For students thinking skills what kind of assistance and things we do I can say in life with the passage of time keep on equipping the classroom with a new tools when you resources are sufficient it encourages students.... the technologies play a very important part do that thing which is not just like you play a video and then let them watch it obviously the video should be appropriately dealt with... the video should be like at you can say at a modification level or at a redefinition level of a SAMR so that the students can create something obviously you are not going to start up from the creation process you have to start up from the base from the substitution then you will go to modification then you will jump to the redefinition level so it is a step by step process and it will take time so critical thinking but earlier is the ideal we say definitely

AK: Do you think the way you are teaching in early years ESL classroom is the perfect way or would you like to change something about it?

T2: Time constraints sometime and sometimes we are bombed to do the things in a certain way and we can not deviate from them so these are the things that you can say are our limitations but we can make that exceptions as well we have that and

obviously it's not like that every day we can make the exceptions but the passage of time and you will look at the child you actually devise the plan that how you are going to take that child to develop a critical thinking skills for example like if I just mentioned that a child that he was not he was not communicating especially he was not answering the questions which I used to ask and he was simply looking at the thing he and he just like would understand the everyday simple vocabulary and when he tried to produce something on the paper when he was unable to write but when I translate that thing in the Urdu that was much easier for him to understand so it means he was not lacking in intelligence there was no problem with that but only language barrier so I need to develop a very friendly environment between myself and student and I started from the basic techniques and then the actions helped to do everythingthis is how you feel so when he learn from the drawing..... he learn from the picturesfrom flash cards every child has a different learning style and you have to identify as a teacher and then provide a different way .

AK: Do you keep yourself updated by reading researches or articles related to your professional development and specifically critical thinking skills?

T2: Not much not much but the ones which I have read earlier I keep on referring back to that like for example my favorite one is like you can say is the cognitive cognitive theory by piaget that is really you can say thought provoking and then there is another one by that is Noam Chomsky but please don't ask me questions about them now...

AK: Laughingly Alright..No problem I won't ask any further question! thank you so much for your time and great ideas...It was really nice talking to you...

Teacher 3 Interview

AK: What is your understanding of critical thinking skills?

T3: Basically I guess it is about analyzing and thinking about how to go for the thing called the knowledge.... how to implement new things to think critically is to think and analyze and to then implement and to rethink.

Ak: How do you think they are important for English Language learners?

T3: Because of the teacher's experience and the fact that children come from a variety of backgrounds, these abilities are essential for English language learners. For instance, during this term, we had several kids from Afghanistan who spoke their language. Only a few of them are at ease speaking in public, so the language barrier is a big thing for them. Secondly, I believe it is crucial for them to consider how the language barrier affects their overall development because it enables them to channel their energy, think broadly, and think outside the box, which will lead to better results.

AK:In your opinion how does it contribute to their overall development?

T3:It contributes in a way that they can implement it in a proper way they can channelize their energies and they can think widelythey can think out of the box and then it would give a better result.

AK: Alright ...what kind of strategies do you presently use in your lesson plans and in your earlier classes?

T3: To encourage thinking skills for that we use the mind mapping , brainstorming and some other fun activities.

AK:So are they the only strategies you will use or do you use some other strategies too?

T3: We have some different strategies also that we implement any kind of task you give to the students any kind of task to do to the students ...we distribute them keys... we have different learning areas so when we divide them up for a task task for example we are talking about nouns.... any form of diagrams so we have different learning areas in all that areas we have different things going on and that is all depicting the same rule of noun but somewhere they are building nouns or somewhere they are making sentences so we see that there is progression going

on..... the students are different.... differentiation is over there so we created number of different tasks to cater all the students.

AK:How do you establish a classroom climate that is emotionally helpful for your ESL students?

T3: Ohh..it is of utmost importance and can not be negelected at all...I am famous in the whole school for establishing a strong bond with my students.

AK: Alright! and what do you think this curriculum of the school does it help you to develop critical thinking skills ?

T3: Yes , we have ability that we can develop it... means it gives us lots of freedom..... the focus of the curriculum we are teaching in is the learner profiles of our students so we contribute in critical analysis... digitally literate students ... for example we have a B-bots ... this is software E beams I use them basically for my English CLL lessons and we play a game for example of drag and draw or we can fill in the planks and we can use that so that is just like a pen style we use it so you know that when I was using it one of my student came and he just clicked on the pen and the cursor started to move so I was amazed I am using it for the past four years and I didn't know that I can just use it the way so this is their way they thought they can use it in such a way he tried and he figured it out and he told me see you don't have to put it on the board... you can do it like this so this is their thinking ...technology helps outit helps a lot in building concepts... we use different strategies ... we use different game boards we use different technologies in which they can enhance their learnings... by putting their videos... sounds emotions everything so that is they are learning and implementing it

AK: Great! what challenges do you face in developing thinking skills?

T3: The challenges are like some children it is difficult for them they have a shorter memory for some they have a speech difficultythey dont understand the things for that we need to say them again and again....diversity is an issue or citizenship issue and now days I think the diversity is the biggest issue and cultural differencescultural differences yeah they can bebut when it comes to the language they are not able to understand what we are saying and how we are going to use it

AK: Hmmm and and what do you do to promote... how do you cater the diversity then ?

T3: We have to figure out how what is the main point of them for example I had a child who was speaking first he didn't know how to converse in English I started with a simple word sentences made him understood so in this term I had a child who came from Italy but he did not know English he was just talking in Urdu or some words of Italian that Ireland understand what he was saying so I made him understand by actions by words by practicing by giving them more tasks so this is the thing that the environment also helps.... yeah the interactive environment of our school if you look around the school you can see there are so many interactive walls and that is the I guess the teacher the source the things and it is the 3rd interactive thing for a child to learn from for example and two years old so peers also they can come and they can play with these we have the freedom walls we have this wall of all that sort of textures we have the prediction walls we have matched walls ... walls they can go create words so this is this wall that enhances creativity and thinking...

AK: What are the issues which are hindrance in development of critical thinking skills in students?

T3: I think so the level of Education is different everywhere.... beginning teachers play a role in our life....teachers play crucial role like if you say that we have enhanced the learning for the children in a way that they can think so for that the teachers also need to be trained .One can not have advanced knowledge of the teaching and learning without proper advanced training.

AK: So have you got any professional trainings?

T3: Yes, I've done so many courses and I have just done the DRP course and the RP stands for a reflective practitioner so it was it helpful and it groomed me a lot

AK: So it would have helped you in developing thinking skills also ?

T3: Yes, it had all those blooms Taxonomies... everything all the learner profilethe toolkits so many things that we as a teacher should know.... that how we are going to come stand up and we believe that a thinking teacher will make a thinking child . I think the way the teacher is in the class is depicted through students...

AK: How do you assess the thinking skills of the students?

T3: It is not like everyone is a critical thinker it is not like that for example if I say if I have a child who is brilliant in writing he can express he can write but I don't think so he is that much good when he is in speakingwhen he is standing and thinking he cannot do it in the way that he does in the writing so it depends on the child level but we are here to nurture them and we do it so that when I think so when they come end of the term so most of them I guess most of them are at the position that they are now thinking critically

AK: So how do you assess... what tells you that this child is thinking critically?

T3: I think so when they are giving you more than what you have asked for when they are writing something when they are presenting unusual things like we would focus on more place we focus on different interactive things so when for example when we do digraphs that is the same we show the video with 'ch' words but sometimes for example a child uses a word which wasn't used by the teacher in introduction of that digraph...that is another word that they thought that sure is coming in it so that is critical thinking ability.

AK: Alrighttt!so what kind of feedback do you believe in and how do you give them feedback?

T3: Basically, we use AFL strategies for that we come to know that which child is responding at that time and how the activity was held or what is the level that he is answering so then it depends on the child that they are need to be encouraged or they are said OK well done! Bravo! you did it! and you know it WOW...that's

AK: Do you think that encouragement helps them?

T3: Yes, I think so the motivation is the best thing to keep children active and involved.

AK: How do you keep yourself updated with latest advancements in teaching profession?

T3: No, I don't do anything personally but BSS is a strong believer of professional development and we are kept engaged in various professional development courses. I just completed my DRP course it was basically effective practitioner course so in that we we were given a lot of reading material .

AK: OkOk...so did it develop your interest in reading about the importance of critical thinking skills...

T3: Yes, we should know that what is going on in our field ... what are the 21st century skillshow we are going to implement critical thinking in collaboration and how strongly it impacts our students.

AK: What type of assistance or tools like you have just told about the beams and the tablets and the online games and things like that do you think what other tools can help you to develop thinking skills?

T3: We have a BSS toolkit that was introduced in this course to us it gives us a list of all those websites all those softwares according to the level for example it's in early years so it's written that it's a kg for so we have a list of those tools I advise in its its wiser me there are Padletwalls, they are jam boards there are so many different things apps as well as the online sites from which we use and we create our own assignmentswe create our own virtual assessments and then we use our digital tools so they are very effective.

AK: Hmmm so, what I am getting from you is that you believe as a teacher that technology plays a crucial role these days in our learning?

T3: The technology is integral part of lifeone cannot live without this Internet ...mobile... gadgets because now its impossible to live without google.

AK: What do you think that the way you are introducing critical thinking skills or nurturing critical thinking that's a perfect way what do you think that you should be doing it differently ?

T3: There is a room of improvement every time there are new things that are introduced you should be updated we should be given the facilities so that we could learnwe could understand and we would see it's not that these are things.OK you have to go and make a worksheet on koobit and you have to give it for studentsno first we should know how to use itmake it how to publish it and then so like when we give these things to our students we don't we just ask them to okay this is the way you have to like they designed an article they design an advertisement but when they are on using that thing then it's a hand on experience that is the basic thing they click to understand and then they use critical thinking for these things.

AK: Alright thank you so much ...

Teacher 4 Interview

AK: -What is your understanding of Critical Thinking skills?

T4: Critical thinking is ‘thinking about thinking’. It involves analyzing the facts, evidence, observations, and arguments and make judgements.

AK: Do you think these skills are crucial for students in learning English?

T4: Yes definitely! They are important for overall learning of the students, students having critical thinking abilities excel in all fields of life.

AK: How do you think this contributes to their overall development?

T4: Well, if you have a critical mind, you will examine the idea in depth. This fosters a habit of in-depth study and the capacity to consider issues from a variety of perspectives before drawing any conclusions. This makes you a holistic learner.

AK: What strategies do you use in your English classes these days to encourage the development of critical thinking skills?

T4: We use different strategies according to the need of the concept to be taught. We use questioning technique which is very crucial and the questions we usually ask are open ended to make child think...mostly we follow bloom’s taxonomy for this purpose to ensure participation of the whole class. We also use mind mapping which is a wonderful strategy to build connections, solve problems and learn concepts. Besides that we at BSS believe in ‘hands on’ experiences ..in English we use digital tools, flashcards, storytelling, and audio-visual aids to enhance the thinking skills of the students.

AK: OK!that is so heartening to know... so you think that these strategies help them to improve them the critical thinking skills? can you give me some example of the task the kind of task to give them in English lessons?

T4: Let me share one activity with you ...The Story Sequence Puzzle is an activity designed to enhance critical thinking skills in early years ESL students by improving their ability to sequence events and think logically. The activity involves using picture cards representing key events from a familiar story, displaying them randomly on a chart paper or whiteboard, and asking students questions related to the story. Students are divided into small groups and instructed to work together to arrange the cards in the correct order. They are then monitored and encouraged to share their story sequence.

The final step is to collaboratively create a story sequence on the chart paper or whiteboard using time and sequence vocabulary, discussing any differences in sequencing and reaching a consensus on the correct order. The activity encourages critical thinking, analysis, and application of the story to sequence events, ultimately improving students' English language proficiency.

AK: Oh wow What kind of strategies do you mostly use in your lesson plans besides the one you just told to improve the thinking of the students?

T4: In addition to the approaches and ideas I just stated, there are some more. For example, we employ online games and various activities when using the internet. As additional teaching tools, we employ tabs, MMP, and CPU.

AK: How do you establish a classroom climate that is emotionally helpful for your ESL students?

A solid rapport between a teacher and her students is crucial as it lays the foundation of everything else coming up in academic areas. Without emotional connectivity, nothing 'big' can be achieved.

AK: What role do you think digital tools play in development of critical thinking skills in early years?

T4: Early on, interactive learning, visual and multimodal learning, immediate feedback, personalization, opportunities for problem-solving, collaboration and communication, access to vast amounts of information, real-world simulations, reflective learning, motivation and engagement are all ways that digital tools significantly aid in the development of critical thinking skills. In addition to giving students access to a wealth of knowledge and a variety of viewpoints, these technologies promote active thinking, problem-solving, cooperation, and communication among them. The proper integration and regulation of digital tools is necessary to ensure that they support other forms of learning, such as hands-on activities, social interactions, and other types of learning, and that they promote the development of critical thinking.

AK: Do you think the curriculum in this school helps you to develop the critical thinking? How

T4: Yes! BSS has one of the best and updated curriculum in the country. By including techniques and exercises that promote analytical thinking, problem-solving, and

assessment, the English language curriculum of BSS plays a significant role in helping students develop critical thinking abilities. These include a variety of reading materials, open-ended inquiries and discussions, problem-solving exercises, writing for various audiences, inferring and drawing conclusions, project-based learning, reflective learning, scaffolding and differentiation. These components are used by us to encourage students to become active, discriminating learners who are ready to think critically and make wise judgements in both academic and real-world contexts.

AK: These are good things but I would also like to know the challenges you face in teaching critical thinking skills in English classes right now what are the challenges what are the problems?

T4: Individual needs, diversity and cultural differences are the challenges mostly faced by us in the classroom.

AK: So, how do you meet up these challenges?

T4: The BSS pedagogy revolves around individuals... we meet the individual needs of the students...we have learning areas in our classrooms like construction area, exploration area, reading and writing area etc During one lesson we make child work in all areas and this helps him to learn the concept...in every lesson we use digital tools , songs etc to cater their needs according to their learning style.

AK: Alright! This helps the child to learn as per his/her learning style... but how do you usually assess the critical thinking skills of the students?

T4: We have formative assessment system...during daily routines we observe the students while working in groups and throughout the day. His or her behavior , reponses, body language and class participation helps us to assess the students.

AK: OK! OK...

AK: How do you provide them feedback when a child shows you his or her critical thinking skills?

T4: Giving youngsters feedback when they exhibit critical thinking abilities is essential for their development. Positive reinforcement, specific feedback, encouraging reflection, validating effort, constructive feedback, modelling critical thinking, cultivating a supportive environment, encouraging collaboration, utilising formative

assessment, and offering opportunities for growth are all examples of effective ways to give feedback.

AK: Have you gone under gone any profession development and training about development of thinking skills in the classes ?

T4: Oh Yes! I am a certified educationist ...have done my M.phil in Art Education from Beaconhouse National University and besides that I have done a number of courses offered by the system e.g The reflective practitioner course and they have been quite helpful.

AK: Thank you so much! It was lovely talking to you.

T4 :Thank you!

Teacher 5 Interview

AK: What is your understanding of critical thinking skills?

T5 : Critical thinking skills involve analyzing information, evaluating evidence, and making reasoned decisions. It's about thinking clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas, and solving problems systematically.

AK: That's right, Sidra. It's like teaching students to not just accept information at face value but to question and explore it.

AK: Do you think critical thinking skills are crucial for ESL students in their early years, why/why not?

T5: Yes, critical thinking skills are crucial for ESL students even in their early years. These skills help them understand and use language more effectively, enabling them to make connections, ask questions, and engage deeply with content.

AK: Exactly. Do you think these skills also help with their overall language acquisition?

T5: Definitely, Azra. When students think critically, they're more engaged and better able to understand the nuances of the language.

AK: How do you think critical thinking skills contribute to the overall development of ESL students?

T5: Critical thinking skills contribute to the overall development of ESL students by enhancing their ability to understand and interpret language, think independently, and solve problems. These skills also build their confidence in using English in various contexts.

AK: And it's amazing to see how their confidence grows as they get better at expressing their thoughts, isn't it?

T5: Absolutely. Confidence is such a key part of learning a new language.

AK: What strategies do you presently employ in your early years ESL classroom to encourage the development of critical thinking skills?

T5: In my classroom, I use open-ended questions, group discussions, and problem-solving activities to encourage critical thinking. I also incorporate storytelling and ask students to predict outcomes or explain characters' actions.

AK: I do something similar. Have you found any particular activity that your students really enjoy?

T5: Yes, they love role-playing scenarios. It really gets them thinking and using the language creatively.

AK: Could you give some instances of the assignments or activities you employ to get your students thinking critically?

T5: Examples include asking students to compare two stories, solve puzzles, or discuss their opinions on a simple topic. I also use role-playing activities where students must think about how to respond in different scenarios.

AK: Role-playing is great! I've also tried using debate formats on simple topics. It's a fantastic way to get them to articulate their thoughts.

T5: That's a great idea, Azra. I should try incorporating more debates into my lessons.

AK: What strategies do you use to build critical thinking into your lesson planning?

T5: I integrate critical thinking by planning lessons that require students to analyze, compare, and reflect. For instance, I might plan a lesson where students have to find similarities and differences between two characters in a story.

AK: Planning is crucial. Do you have any tips on how to ensure these elements fit seamlessly into the lesson?

AK: How do you establish a classroom climate that is emotionally helpful for your ESL students?

T5: It is important for the overall development of the students to connect emotionally with their teacher. I believe in it and always strive to win my students' trust and love.

T5: I try to make critical thinking activities a regular part of the lesson, not just an add-on. This way, students get used to thinking critically all the time.

AK: Do you think the curriculum of your school contributes to the development of critical thinking skills? Why and how?

T5: The curriculum in my school does contribute to developing critical thinking skills by including activities that require analysis and reasoning. However, it could include more resources and structured opportunities for critical thinking practice.

AK : I feel the same. Do you think more teacher training could help?

T5: Absolutely. More training on how to effectively integrate critical thinking into everyday lessons would be very beneficial.

AK: What challenges must you overcome to nurture critical thinking in ESL classes for young children?

T5: One challenge is ensuring that activities are age-appropriate and engaging. Another is the language barrier, which can make it difficult for students to express their thoughts clearly.

AK: I struggle with that too. How do you make sure the activities are suitable for their age?

T5: I try to use a lot of visuals and hands-on activities. It helps keep them engaged and makes the concepts easier to grasp.

AK: Do you face any particular language-related difficulties while teaching critical thinking skills?

T5: Yes, there are difficulties, such as students struggling to find the right words to express their thoughts or understand complex instructions. Simplifying language and using visual aids can help overcome these challenges.

AK: Visual aids are a lifesaver! Do you use any specific types of visual aids?

T5: Mostly pictures and simple diagrams. They really help in making abstract concepts more concrete.

AK: How do you promote critical thinking skills while taking into account cultural variances and different points of view?

T5: I promote critical thinking by encouraging students to share their cultural perspectives and listen to others. This helps them understand different viewpoints and think more broadly.

AK : That's a wonderful approach. How do you handle situations where cultural perspectives clash?

T5: I use it as a learning opportunity. We discuss why people might have different views and what we can learn from each other.

AK: Which elements, in your opinion, prevent Pakistani students from developing their critical thinking abilities in ESL classes?

T5: Factors such as rote learning practices and limited exposure to interactive and inquiry-based learning can hinder the development of critical thinking skills among Pakistani ESL students.

AK : I agree. How do you encourage more interactive learning in your classroom?

T5: I try to include more group work and hands-on activities to get students actively involved in their learning.

AK :What effects do social or cultural norms have on the development of critical thinking skills?

T5: Social and cultural norms that emphasize conformity and respect for authority can sometimes discourage questioning and independent thinking, which are crucial for critical thinking.

AK: Yes, challenging those norms can be tough. How do you encourage students to ask questions?

T5: I create a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and asking questions without fear of judgment.

AK: Are there any particular difficulties or factors that are exclusive to ESL classes in Pakistan that have an impact on the growth of critical thinking skills?

T5: Limited access to resources, large class sizes, and traditional teaching methods are some challenges that affect the growth of critical thinking skills in ESL classes in Pakistan.

Azra: Do you have large class sizes in Beaconhouse too?

T5: No, No...the classroom in this system is manageable.

AK:How do you assess the critical thinking skills of your ESL students in the early years?

T5: I assess critical thinking through observations, discussions, and assignments that require reasoning and analysis. I look for evidence of students making connections and expressing their thoughts clearly.

AK: What kind of assignments do you find most effective for this?

T5: Projects where students have to solve a problem or present their opinions on a topic work well. They require students to think deeply and articulate their thoughts.

AK: How do you provide feedback to young students for fostering their critical thinking skills?

T5: I provide feedback by highlighting students' good thinking processes, asking probing questions to extend their thinking, and offering suggestions for improvement.

AK: Feedback is so important. How do you ensure it's constructive?

T5: I focus on specific examples of what they did well and what they can improve, rather than just giving general comments.

AK: Have you undergone any professional development or training pertaining to nurturing critical thinking skills in ESL classrooms?

T5: Not so far...may be in near future I get a chance.

AK: Ok...on your own do you remain updated on the most recent studies and recommended techniques for developing critical thinking?

T5: I try to read articles sometimes but not very regularly.

AK: What type of assistance or tools do you believe might help you improve your capacity to nurture critical thinking skills in your ESL classroom?

T5: Access to more professional development opportunities, teaching resources, and collaboration with experienced colleagues would help improve my ability to nurture critical thinking skills.

AK: Collaboration is key. How do you collaborate with your colleagues?

T5: We have regular meetings where we share ideas and strategies. It's very helpful to hear what others are doing in their classrooms.

AK: What have you discovered to be the most successful in nurturing critical thinking skills in young ESL learners, in your experience teaching?

T5: In my experience, activities that involve problem-solving, group discussions, and open-ended questions have been most successful in nurturing critical thinking skills.

AK: Problem-solving activities are great. Do you have any favorite problem-solving tasks you use?

T5: I like using real-world scenarios where students have to come up with solutions. It makes the learning more relevant and engaging.

AK: That sounds effective. Real-world scenarios can make a big difference in how students connect with the material. Is there anything you would like to modify or enhance about the way you now encourage critical thinking?

T5: I would like to incorporate more technology, such as educational apps and online resources, to make critical thinking activities more engaging and interactive.

AK: Technology can be a game-changer. Have you tried any specific apps that worked well?

T5: I've used apps like Kahoot for quizzes and Padlet for collaborative brainstorming. They're interactive and the students love them.

AK: How do you want to improve the critical thinking skills of young learners in ESL classrooms in the future?

T5: In the future, I aim to design more interdisciplinary projects that require critical thinking and to create a classroom environment that consistently encourages questioning and exploration.

AK: Interdisciplinary projects sound exciting. How do you plan to integrate different subjects into these projects?

T5: I plan to collaborate with teachers from other subjects to create projects that combine skills from multiple areas, like science and language arts, to provide a more holistic learning experience.

AK: That sounds like a fantastic approach. Collaboration between subjects can really enrich the learning experience for students. Thank you for sharing your insights, Sidra. It's been very enlightening.

T5: Thank you, Azra. It was great discussing these ideas with you.

APPENDIX C

This appendix consists of the randomly selected classroom observations data conducted by the researcher.

Classroom Observation Forms

Grade Level: Kindergarten ESL Classroom

Observation Focus: Nurturing Critical Thinking Skills

Classroom Observation #1 & 2 (Abracadabra)

Social Presence:

- What strategies/tasks/activities etc does the teacher use to create a sense of community among the students?
Brain storming followed by a classroom discussion on the favorite characters from story.
- How does the teacher promote communication and collaboration among the students?
She asked few questions(though all students were not given a chance to speak) , for collaboration she gave them a task to circle high frequency words in small groups.
- In what ways do the students prove a sense of connectedness and mutual support?

They helped one another in finding high frequency words from the reader.

Cognitive Presence:

- In what ways does the teacher encourage, promote and nurture higher-order thinking skills?
Teacher missed many ‘teaching moments’ to nurture high order thinking skills...all her questions were about who, when and where...why and how questions were not posed by the teacher through out the lesson.For example..where were the kids playing?Who was hiding behind the balloon etc
- What critical thinking skills abilities do the students demonstrate and how?
Students were not provided with opportunities to demonstrate critical thinking skills.
- How visible are the connections between students learning and their personal experiences? Give examples

This was unfortunately missing as teacher was stuck to the written questions in the lesson plan and did not generate discussion to link students learning with real life.

Teaching Presence:

- What are the activities the teacher design and facilitate to promote critical thinking skills?

Brainstorming and a small discussion in the introduction of the lesson .

- In what ways does the teacher provide feedback to the students to facilitate their critical thinking skills?

She provided feedback positively ...students were asked to clap for one another...were given golden stars made by glitter sheets on their right answers but high order thinking was not ensured by the teacher. Most of the questions she asked from the students were focusing on lower order thinking skills.

Emotional Presence

- In what ways does the teacher tend to students' emotional well-being and create a conducive environment for learning?

She talked to them politely and was friendly with students .Though she asked questions only from selective students (she used to name student before posing a question...making others believe that they do not need to think)..but she didn't do it in a rude manner. Students were comfortable with her presence in the class and I could observe two students going to her and sharing their personal stories with her.

- How does the teacher respond to the students emotions ?

She was kind and polite with students. A new student in class was hesitant in taking permission for washroom....she understood without saying and asked the Assistant Teacher to take her to washroom.

Classroom Observation 3 & 4 (I do not like the color green)

Social Presence:

- What strategies/tasks/activities etc does the teacher use to create a sense of community among the students?

A shared reading activity to encourage group participation, moreover, students were also asked to recall a previous story which jogged the collective memory of a class as it led to a very interesting discussion.

- How does the teacher promote communication and collaboration among the students?

Opportunities to participate in the class discussion, Pair activities, group activities.

- In what ways do the students prove a sense of connectedness and mutual support?

Class discussions especially I would like to mention the effective classroom management as students very calmly listened to one another and took turns to speak up.

Cognitive Presence:

- In what ways does the teacher encourage, promote and nurture higher-order thinking skills?

Open-ended questions e.g., "What changes would you make in planning your meal for lunch box?"

- Predict the story from the cover, encouraging inferential thinking.

Change the end of story

- What critical thinking skills abilities do the students demonstrate and how?

Students' participation in discussions and the activity of changing end of story.

- How visible are the connections between students learning and their personal experiences? Give examples

Discussion about meal planning and food preferences discussion made visible connections between students learning with their personal lives.

Teaching Presence:

- What are the activities the teacher design and facilitate to promote critical thinking skills?

Activities like story prediction, character description, and story retelling to engage students in higher-order thinking.

Use of Flashcards and sound blending activity were also used to reinforce reading skills and comprehension.

- In what ways does the teacher provide feedback to the students to facilitate their critical thinking skills?

Probing questions

Cues for meal planning and food preferences discussion like why do you think its important to eat vegetables with green colour? Or is it always bad to eat sweet things...give me reason etc

Emotional Presence

- In what ways does the teacher tend to students' emotional well-being and create a conducive environment for learning?

Positive reinforcement

Encouraging words and phrases

Clapping ,pat on shoulders

- How does the teacher respond to the students emotions ?
Very politely...she had such a good emotional bonding with students that I felt her talking with kids through eyes and gestures only.

Classroom Observation #5 & 6 (Jacob O'Realy Wants a pet!)

Social Presence:

- What strategies/tasks/activities etc does the teacher use to create a sense of community among the students?

Through Stay on Green (Behaviour management system) students are encouraged to work together to get green points and achieve a reward at the end of term.

Help each other out when struggling to answer a question, working together in areas, whole class/circle time with PSHE ,think-pair and share activities.

- How does the teacher promote communication and collaboration among the students?

Help each other out when struggling to answer a question – phone a friend.
Foster class friendships, working together in tables, whole class/circle time with PSHE

Partner talk – discuss ideas, work out answers, read together. A story was given in the form of puzzle and the students had to sit together in small groups to discuss and give it a ending.

- In what ways do the students prove a sense of connectedness and mutual support?

Listening to each other's answers, respecting the class rules – kindness, taking turns, helping each other when needed, working as a team.

Cognitive Presence:

- In what ways does the teacher encourage, promote and nurture higher-order thinking skills?

Elaborative sentences using who, when and where in writing whereas in discussion time the teacher asked probing questions like why do you think Jacob wanted to keep animals in his home, is it a good idea...why/whynot

- What critical thinking skills abilities do the students demonstrate and how?

The questions students posed and points they made during discussion were showing their ability to think deeply.

- How visible are the connections between students learning and their personal experiences? Give examples

The teacher's questioning skills encourages students to make connections .For example A child asked how can keep all these animals in home...it will be so expensive and you know kids don't have so much money.Another child on asking a question if you were jack what would you have done said that ' I will keep only cat in my home as pet because we do not need big space and it is very friendly'.

Teaching Presence:

- What are the activities the teacher design and facilitate to promote critical thinking skills?

Most of the activities designed by teacher promoted critical thinking skills especially open ended questions and changing the ending of story really helped students to collaborate and think.

- In what ways does the teacher provide feedback to the students to facilitate their critical thinking skills?

The teacher encourages student's ideas and incorporated them into the modelled text sometimes expanding on them. This is then encouraged into their own work. Purple colour marking – students mark their own work under guidance of the teacher(for a simple comprehension worksheet about the story with multiple choice questions).

Emotional Presence

- In what ways does the teacher tend to students' emotional well-being and create a conducive environment for learning?

The teacher seems to have a personal connection with all the students as each child was dealt differently ...it was evident through the way she posed questions. A smile on her face, hugs , high five , clapping were all helping students to be relaxed and emotionally comfortable.

- How does the teacher respond to the students emotions ?

It is very encouraging and appropriate to build a rapport. For example One child had a couple of outbursts, peers were talking and stopping him from working, they couldn't see the board to get on with work. Eventually they burst into tears. When spoken to it, it became evident that this was all a reaction to events at home and they didn't know how to cope with it. Once they spoke to the teacher they were able to get back on an even keel and knew that they could speak to the adult about it.

APPENDIX D

This appendix consists of the lesson plans collected from all three branches for analysis.

Lesson Plan-1

Topic	Floating (Once there was a raindrop!)	Subject	Communication, Language and Literacy-English
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Class	Kindergarten	Duration	90 mins
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Attainment Target	Raise and answer questions about the characters, settings, events, etc. in the story/non-fiction information text. Tell a story and answer related questions, providing some detail.
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Learning Outcomes (Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes)	By the end of the lesson students would have • listened to the story with interest . • comprehended the story and written the main events of the story in their words.
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Content and teacher activity	Student activity	Time	Learning materials and resources	Formative assessment (Day to day assessment)
Recap: Remind the students of ‘proper nouns ‘ and ask them to give you few examples of proper nouns from their surroundings.	Exhibit memory of previously learned concepts.	5 min		Oral responses

WALT: listen to comprehend the story WILF:. telling the main events of story ‘Once there was a raindrop!’ in simple words. TIB:. Reading and listening skills are pivotal to excel in academics.				
<u>Introduction: :</u> - Teacher will tell the students that today they are going to listen and read a new reader ,after that show them the cover page of the book and ask the following questions - Can you read the title of the story? - What can you see on cover page? - Tell them about authors of the story and point to their names. - Ask them do they like rain and why? - Have they ever wonder how all this rain water comes from? - Encourage them to predict the story. - Discuss the characters on the cover page.	Students will get introduced to the reader	15 min	Reader: Once there was a raindrop!	Hand raising
<u>Main Activity(Whle Class)</u> Read the story with correct pronunciation and intonation .(Help can be taken from the given link for reading aloud of the story) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9JGV7dz7ec A picture walk of the story will be done to discuss the events of story in detail.	Students will listen to the story. Students will participate in class discussion during picture walk.	60 min	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9JGV7dz7ec	Smiling faces

Comprehension check What was the story about? what was the young girl explaining to his brother? Can you share anything you remember about the story? Can you retell the story in your own words? What does rain made up of? Where does the ocean water go? What do you understand by word evaporation? How does our clothes gets dry? Is too much rain fall good for us? Can you explain the process of rain fall? What do they understand by water cycle? -Play the following song about water cycle for students https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWb4KlM2vts After that explain students the process of water cycle in simple words Teacher/AT will monitor and help the students in different areas to do the assigned activities.	Students will answer the questions <u>Writing Area:</u> The students will write the story in their own words with the help of words bank on white board. <u>Reading Area:</u> The students will be given readers to read and discuss together as a group. <u>Exploration Area:</u> The students will identify the high frequency words from reader and write them on white boards. <u>Construction Area:</u> Students will draw picture of water cycle on given sheets. <u>Differentiated Task:</u> Students will learn to describe the picture with Assistant Teacher help.		Readers ‘Little Rex’ Whiteboards,A4 sheets	Oral responses
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Wrap up: Tell any three new words we learnt from the story ‘Once there was a raindrop!’	Students will tell the words.	10 min		Oral responses
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How did you meet the individual needs of students?

I made the lesson inclusive with the help of different teaching strategies:

- Established prior knowledge.
- Used a step-by-step approach with much practice and repetition.
- Incorporated sensory elements: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic one.

Lesson Evaluation:

Strengths	Areas for improvement
Identify a way forward to improve this lesson	

Lesson Plan 2

Topic	(high frequency words)	Subject	Communication, Language& Literacy-English
Class	Kindergarten	Duration	45 mins

Attainment Target	Recognize automatically the following high frequency words from previous learning
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Learning Outcomes (Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes)	By the end of the lesson students would have Recognised, read and written the following high frequency words : said ,your ,went ,off ,get, their
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Content and teacher activity	Student activity	Time	Learning materials and resources	Formative assessment (Day to day assessment)
<u>Recap:</u> Remind the students of verbs? Ask them some words and engage them in discussion. WALT: High Frequency Words WILF: identified, read and written said ,your ,went ,off ,get, their) TIB: to be better readers and writers.	Exhibit memory of previously learned concepts.	5 min		Oral responses Independent writing Modelled writing Shared writing Guided writing

students in different areas to do the assigned activities.	<u>Construction Area:</u> Read and write the given high frequency words with the help of flash cards. <u>Differentiation Task:</u>Students will sort flashcards from the given flashcards of high frequency words(said ,your ,went ,off ,get, their) <u>Extension Task:</u> Students will use said, your in their sentences.			
<u>Wrap up:</u> Teacher will ask the students to write one high frequency word..	Students will write the word.	5 min		Exit ticket

How did you meet the individual needs of students?

I made the lesson inclusive with the help of different teaching strategies:

- Established prior knowledge.
- Used a step-by-step approach with much practice and repetition.
- Incorporated sensory elements: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic one.

Lesson Evaluation:

Strengths	Areas for improvement
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Identify a way forward to improve this lesson	

Lesson Plan 3

Topic	(The magic Key-ORT reader)	Subject	Communication, Language & Literacy-English
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Class	Kindergarten	Duration	45 mins
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Attainment Target	-Use their knowledge of letters and sound-symbol relationships in order to read words. -Identify the main events and characters in stories and find specific information in simple texts.
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Learning Outcomes (Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes)	By the end of the lesson students would have read aloud with clarity, correct pronunciation, intonation, expression, increasing fluency and confidence. identified the main events and characters in stories and found specific information in simple texts.
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Content and teacher activity	Student activity	Time	Learning materials and resources	Formative assessment (Day to day assessment)
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<u>Recap:</u> Remind the students of ‘journal writing of Little Rex’ and ask them to retell the story in few sentences. WALT: read independently. . WILF: skill and confidence to read ‘The magic key’. TIB:. Reading and listening skills are pivotal to excel in academics.	Exhibit memory of previously learned concepts.	5 min		Oral responses
<u>Introduction: :</u> Show the cover page/big book to the students and ask them some stimulating questions to trigger their thinking. -What Biff is holding? -Can you find the word ‘key’ in the title? -Look briefly through the book and talk about what is happening in the pictures. - Where did the key come from? What do you think might happen in this story? Introduce the students to the writer, illustrator ,blurb on the back cover of the reader.	Students will get introduced to the reader	10min	Reader: The magic key	Hand raising
<u>Modelled Reading(Whole Class)</u> Read the story with correct pronunciation, intonation and stress to keep students involved in the story. Ask the following questions: What is the story about? How many characters are in the story, tell their names? Where is the story taking place(setting)? How did the story end?	Students will listen to the story. Students will participate in class discussion during picture walk.	25 min		Smiling faces

Shared Reading:

- -Read aloud with clarity, correct pronunciation, intonation, expression, increasing fluency and confidence and let the students read after you.
- During reading remind the students to sound out and blend unfamiliar words from left to right.
- Use spelling patterns to read similar words, e.g. 'house' and 'mouse'
- Use comprehension skills to work out what is happening in the story, e.g. what happens to Biff and Chip? Etc
- Discuss setting of the story along with occasional picture descriptions.

Independent Reading:

During independent reading teacher will ask the following questions to make students understand the events of story in detail, it will also help to develop their thinking skills.

- How did Biff and Chip get the key?
- What gave them a fright? (page 8)
- How do you think Biff and Chip are feeling? What are they trying to do?
- What it is that makes Biff and Chip get bigger or smaller (picking up the glowing key).
- What happens to Biff and Chip? Why? Do you think this would happen to

Students will read after teacher ,answer the questions during discussion.

Independent Reading:

Read the story aloud. Praise and encourage them while they read, and prompt as necessary.

Readers 'The magic key'
Whiteboards,A4 sheets

Oral responses

Oral responses

them in real life? What makes this story different from other stories you have read? AT will monitor and help the students in different areas to do the assigned activities.	<u>Differentiated Task:</u> Students will identify, read and make list of the high frequency words they can read from reader.			
<u>Wrap up:</u> What was your favorite part in the story and why? Tell any new word you learnt to read today.	Students will share their favourite part of story and tell the words.	5 min		Oral responses

How did you meet the individual needs of students?

I made the lesson inclusive with the help of different teaching strategies:

- Established prior knowledge.
- Used a step-by-step approach with much practice and repetition.

Lesson Evaluation:

Strengths	Areas for improvement

Identify a way forward to improve this lesson	

Lesson Plan-4

Topic	Dinosaur(rhyming string-orn)	Subject	Communication, Language & Literacy-English
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Class	Kindergarten	Duration	60 mins
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Attainment Target	Generate and write a rhyming string beginning with the word 'make' ,corn,etc
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Learning Outcomes (Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes)	By the end of the lesson students would have identified, read and written ake,ug,orn,ar words.
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Content and teacher activity	Student activity	Time	Learning materials and resources	Formative assessment (Day to day assessment)
<u>Recap:</u> Remind the students of sentence formation and ask them to tell you four rules of writing sentences. WALT: Rhyming strings WILF: identified, read and written – ake,ug,ar orn words TIB: to be better readers and writers.	Exhibit memory of previously learned concepts.	5 min		Oral responses
<u>Introduction:</u> : Introduce the topic and remind the students of ‘rhyming words’. Give some examples like tail and mail are rhyming but tail and tall are not. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVophT8naUM Oral drill for rhyming words like orn,ake,ug, and ar will be done as a whole class activity.	Students will be introduced to the concept. Students will learn the concept with the help of videos and explanation.	15 min	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVophT8naUM	Sit down/stand up
<u>Main Activity :(Whle class):</u> Paste orn,ake,ug and ar words on A4 paper in different corners of the class, give students a chance to pick one slip from already prepared slips .(Prepare slips with the above word families one day before) and go to their respective family.	Students will show their understanding of the concept by participating in activity..	35 min	Whiteboard	Oral response

In the end every student will read the word written on their slip for the whole class. 2. Teacher/AT will monitor and help the students in different areas to do the assigned activities.	<u>Written Task: (Individual work)</u> Write 2 rhyming words for each .corn, cake, bug, car <u>Reading Area:</u> Find rhyming words from available readers. <u>Construction Area:</u> https://www.turtlediary.com/game/words-that-rhyme.html <u>Exploration Area:</u> Students will make a list of rhyming words on white boards. <u>Differentiation Task:</u> Identify and make pairs of rhyming words from the given flash cards.		Notebook https://www.turtlediary.com/game/words-that-rhyme.html tablets flashcards whiteboard, marker etc	Written task
<u>Wrap up:</u> Teacher will ask the students to write one rhyming pair of their own choice.	Students will write the rhyming pair.	5 min		Exit ticket

How did you meet the individual needs of students?

I made the lesson inclusive with the help of different teaching strategies:

- Established prior knowledge.
- Used a step-by-step approach with much practice and repetition.
- Incorporated sensory elements: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic one.

Lesson Evaluation:

Strengths	Areas for improvement
Identify a way forward to improve this lesson	

Lesson Plan-5

Topic	Sequencing little Rex	Date	10 th December'2021 (Day 5)
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Class	Kindergarten	Duration	60 mins
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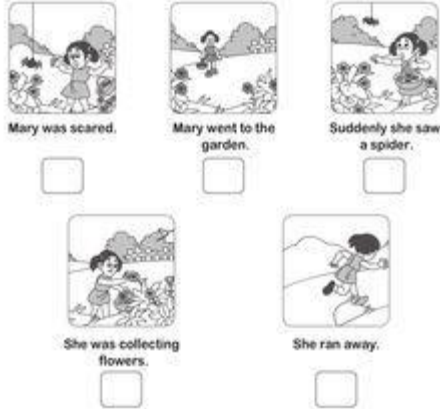
Attainment Target	Use language and vocabulary associated with: communicating needs naming and describing objects, characters, people asking and answering questions
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	describing possession sequencing events
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Learning Outcomes (Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes)	By the end of the lesson students would have By the end of the lesson students would have Identified, read and sequenced the story little Rex
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Content and teacher activity	Student activity	Time	Learning materials and resources	Formative assessment (Day to day assessment)
Recap: Remind the students of digraph er words. Ask them some of the words started from it. WALT : Sequence the story WILF: identify, read and sequence the story TIB:	. Exhibit memory of previously learned concepts.	5 min		Oral responses Writing responses

Enable them to identify how to sequence the story				
Introduction: Tell the students that today they will learn about sequence the story. Ask them to tell what does sequence the story means. Tell them that sequencing refers to the identification of the components of a story — the beginning, middle, and end — and also to the ability to retell the events within a given text in the order in which they occurred. Encourage them to use the sequence vocabulary i.e first, next, then and last. The students will sequence different events by inserting the numbers 1-4. They will solve the online worksheet https://www.liveworksheets.com/worksheets/en/Reading/Sequence_of_events/Review Teacher will now tell students about little Rex story in this link and ask students to sequence the story. https://youtu.be/uIZ6Gk96dVQ	Students will get introduced to the sentence formation.	15min	https://youtu.be/uIZ6Gk96dVQ	Hand raising
Main Activity :(Whole Class): Teacher will describe the whole class that sequencing events are very important.		35 min		Smiling faces

Write the number to sequence the story.  Mary was scared. Mary went to the garden. Suddenly she saw a spider. She was collecting flowers. She ran away. She will show this sheet and ask students to sequence it. Teacher/AT will monitor and help the students in different areas to do the assigned activities.	Students will participate in class discussion ,sequencing events identification and phonic drill. Written Task: Write the story of Little Rex using sequencing vocabulary in notebook. Reading Area: . The students will be given little Rex to read it Exploration Area: The students will be given a worksheet to sequence the events. Construction Area: Students will practice writing of sequencing events on tablets/whiteboards. Differentiated Task: Students will be given reader Little Rex (available in class/Library) to read and write its events on plain paper .		Note book Flashcards ,whiteboard, marker etc	Oral responses Written task
Wrap up: Ask the following questions? -what are sequencing events?	Students will write the story of little Rex with sequencing the events.	5 min		Exit tickets

How did you meet the individual **needs of students?**

I made the lesson inclusive with the help of different teaching strategies:

- Established prior knowledge.
- Used a step-by-step approach with much practice and repetition.
- Incorporated sensory elements: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic one.

Lesson Evaluation:

Strengths

Areas for improvement

Identify a way forward to improve this lesson