

THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG CRITICAL THINKING, CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE, AND ETHNIC IDENTITY OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to investigate any relationship among critical thinking, cultural intelligence, and ethnic identity of Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. It also pursued if there is any significant difference among the three ethnic groups of Iranian EFL learners in their critical thinking and cultural intelligence. To this end, 180 ethnically diverse language learners from Turkish, Persian, and Kurdish ethnicities and from different language institutes were selected non-randomly. Using Nelson proficiency test 120 students were selected considering 1 SD above and below the mean score of the group. Three questionnaires of critical thinking, cultural intelligence and ethnic identity were administered to them. The data were analyzed through Pearson correlation, one-way ANOVA and multivariate ANOVA (MANOVA) all of which assume normality of the data. The findings revealed that the first null hypothesis, which poses there isn't any relationship between critical thinking and cultural intelligence of three Iranian ethnic groups of English learners, was supported. On the second and third null hypotheses which argue that there isn't any significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their critical thinking and there isn't any significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their cultural intelligence, the results showed that three different ethnic groups were different in critical thinking and cultural intelligence abilities so the second and the third null hypotheses were rejected. Findings of this research will be of benefit to educational systems, curriculum designers, material developers, language teachers, and language learners. Sociolinguists can also be benefitted from the findings of this study.

KEYWORDS: *Critical Thinking, Cultural Intelligence, Ethnic Identity, EFL Learners*

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking (CT) as an ability is of particular importance in modern education. It is also an important topic in language teaching and learning area. The ability to think critically is an important feature of all members of a society as a whole and of learners in all the fields. Almost everyone would agree that one of the main goals of education is to enable students to think

critically. All educators are interested in developing critical thinking skills in their students and thus better prepare them to successful learning.

In Schafersman (1991) view, critical thinking is correct thinking in the pursuit of relevant and reliable knowledge about the world. Another way to describe it is reasonable, reflective, responsible, and skillful thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do. A person who thinks critically can ask appropriate questions, gather relevant information, efficiently and creatively sort through this information, reason logically from this information, and come to reliable and trustworthy conclusions about the world that enable one to live and act successfully in it.

According to some researchers (Mahyuddin, Lope Pihie, Elias, and Konting, 2004), language learners with critical thinking ability are capable of thinking critically and creatively in order to achieve the goals of the curriculum; capable of making decisions and solving problems; capable of using their thinking skills, and of understanding language or its contents; capable of treating thinking skills as lifelong learning; and finally intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually well-balanced.

Earley and Ang (2003) assert that cultural intelligence (CQ) is a construct that encompasses and measures a person's capability for successful adaptation to new cultural settings, that is, for unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context. It has also been maintained that CQ reflects an individual's capacity to adjust to new conditions and produce novel behavior. It is the ability to discern, adjust and behave effectively.

In Kramsch (2013) opinion, the contribution of CQ in foreign or second language classroom is clear because culture cannot be separated from what is learned and classroom is full of interactions and communication tasks, oral skills, and interpersonal and social skills all of which fall within the domain of CQ.

Ethnic identity is dynamic and socially constructed, and reflects a sense of belonging to an ethnic group with shared heritage, including language use, traditions, religious practices, values, ancestry, and the like (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993). Simply stated, one's ethnic identity is a composite of both one's self perception of an ethnic group and the views held by others about one's identity (Nagel, 1999).

Our country is a multi-ethnic country with plentiful ethnic diversities and ethnic culture achievements, so more studies on culture and ethnic identity construction is particularly important.

Statement of the Problem

Although some studies have been done on critical thinking in the field of EFL education, there is little information found on elements that affect the critical thinking ability of Iranian EFL learners, and previous studies didn't specify what makes this ability improve or which skills students need to cultivate it. Nevertheless, little practices have been done in enhancing critical

thinking ability in spite of its advantages in language learning. Additionally, there is almost a lack of research on the probable relevance of the critical thinking ability and cultural intelligence ability of Iranian EFL learners considering differences on their ethnicity. It seems that the role of culture and ethnicity differences on developing thinking skills in Iranian EFL learners has been ignored and little importance has been given to individual and cultural differences in language learning process.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Considering the importance of critical thinking, cultural intelligence, and the influence of ethnicity differences in language learning capability, the present study made an attempt to investigate the existence and strength of the relationship between critical thinking ability and cultural intelligence of three ethnic groups of Persian, Turkish, and Kurdish EFL learners. The purpose of the present study is to further investigate any difference among these three ethnic groups of Iranian EFL learners in their critical thinking and cultural intelligence abilities.

This study is a chance to discover some factors that may have an effect on the ability to think critically among Iranian EFL learners. In spite of diversity and increasing popularity of the research on critical thinking and different aspects of education, studying on the cultural constraints and ethnicity differences influencing critical thinking ability of language learners, have been a neglected area. So, the present study helps at obtaining some strategies to improve thinking abilities in language learners considering their cultural intelligence and ethnicity differences. Moreover, high level of cultural intelligence has a positive effect on learning the culture of the speakers of a foreign language in general and on learning a foreign language in particular. So, present study leads to suggesting affective strategies considering EFL learners' differences in critical thinking and cultural intelligence abilities to improve and facilitate language learning process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Thinking

Facione (1990) defines critical thinking as “purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or conceptual considerations upon which that judgment is based” (p. 3). Facione believes that CT is essential as a tool of inquiry. As such, CT is a liberating force in education and a powerful resource in one's personal and civic life. While not synonymous with good thinking, CT is a pervasive and self-rectifying human phenomenon.

Ever since the thinking movement in 1980s, educational scientists and the general public alike have come to agreement that critical and creative thinking abilities should not be just another educational option; rather it should be an indispensable part of education, because being able to think critically is a necessary condition for being educated (Norris, 1985).

The learners may become proficient in English language if they are motivated and taught how to display critical thinking in English language usage, which signifies that the learners must be

reflective in their production of ideas, and they may critically support them with logical details and examples (Rafi, 2011).

Nikoopour, Amini Farasani, and Nasiri (2011) investigated the relationship between critical thinking and the use of direct and indirect language learning strategies used by Iranian EFL learners. They selected 100 college students majoring in English Translation. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), and a Questionnaire of Critical Thinking, were administered to them. A statistically significant relationship was found between critical thinking and the use of specific direct and indirect language learning strategies, such as cognitive, meta-cognitive, and social, but not with memory, compensation, and affective strategies. In the light of the study, it can be implied that critical thinking has an effective role on the processes of foreign language learning and learners who are more critical are more successful in language learning.

Magno (2010) investigated the role of metacognitive skills in developing critical thinking. To this end, the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal and the Metacognitive Assessment Inventory were administered to 240 freshmen college students in Philippines. In order to determine the effect of metacognition on critical thinking, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used. The Pearson Product Moment correlation procedure revealed that the factors of metacognition are significantly related to the factors of critical thinking.

Cultural Intelligence

According to Livermore (2011) CQ or cultural intelligence is the capability to function effectively across a variety of cultural contexts, including national, ethnic, organizational, and generational. It's a whole new way of approaching the age-old topics of cultural sensitivity, racism, and cross-border effectiveness.

Those with high CQ have the ability to encounter new culture confusing situations, think deeply about what is happening (or not happening), and make appropriate adjustments to how they understand, relate, and lead in the context of this different culture (Van Dyne, Ang, & Livermore, 2010).

As discussed so far, nearly all researches on CQ are in relevance to leadership, management and business and a number of empirical studies on CQ and other cultural, sociocultural, ethnical aspects affecting foreign language learning are scarce. The present study tries to investigate the relationship between CQ and critical thinking ability of Iranian EFL learners considering three different ethnic groups as representative of all other ethnicities living in this country.

Nasiri and Ghadiri (2016) investigated the relationship between cultural intelligence and pronunciation quality of Iranian EFL Students. Besides, they investigated how cultural intelligence is related to gender and age. To these ends, a total number of 100 Iranian speakers of English majoring in English teaching were first asked to fill out a 20 items cultural intelligence questionnaire developed by Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh (2008) and then took an IELTS-like speaking test which was subsequently scored by two raters. The result of data analysis indicated that there is a medium positive correlation between participants' cultural intelligence and their

pronunciation quality. The findings also lead the researcher to conclude that gender and age were not determining factors in the participants' cultural intelligence.

Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh (2006) explored the relationship of personality with CQ using the Big Five Trait Model. This model is used to measure personality and composed of variables such as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. The results showed that conscientiousness was positively related to Meta-cognitive CQ, while highly agreeableness was related to behavioral CQ. On the other hand, neuroticism was negatively correlated with cognitive, motivational and behavioral CQ, and openness to experience was the only piece which was positively related to all four facets of CQ.

Ethnic Identity

An ethnic identity refers to a sense of self which involves a shared sense of identity with others who belong to the same ethnic group. Ethnic identity is also an important contributor to an individual's well-being; individuals derive positive self-attitudes from belonging to groups that are meaningful to them (Phinney, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

There are many ways in which specific social factors affect L2 learning. The central factor, and the one that has attracted the most attention, is ethnic identity. Learners with positive attitudes towards their own ethnic identity and towards the target culture can be expected to develop a strong motivation and high levels of L2 proficiency, while also maintaining their own L1. In a socio-structural model, attitudes based on learners' sense of ethnic identity influence learning through the interactions in which learners participate (Ellis, 2008).

In order to investigate any influence that ethnic identity and motivation may have on Turk EFL learners' English proficiency in Iran, Saadat and Hosseini (2015) used an abridged version of the General Ethnicity Questionnaire, a motivation questionnaire, and a sample TOEFL test for data collection. The results indicated that both ethnic identity and motivation significantly influenced the Turks' English language proficiency. Similarly, a significant positive correlation was found between ethnic identity and motivation.

Podobnik (2009) investigated the role of ethnicity in second language (L2) learning motivation. The results of this study suggested that students who felt less strongly connected to their ethnic identity were likely to study longer than their more affirmed peers. It was concluded that although integrative and instrumental orientations play a strong role in L2 motivation, effects of ethnic identity are also important.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Regarding problems mentioned in the study, the following research questions were formulated:

Q1: Is there any relationship between critical thinking and cultural intelligence of three Iranian ethnic groups of English learners?

Q2: Is there any significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their critical thinking?

Q3: Is there any significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their cultural intelligence?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The total population of this study included 800 adult EFL students both males and females, with different language proficiency levels. They were from three different Persian, Kurdish and Turkish ethnicities and from different language institutes in Tabriz, Tehran, Silvana in West Azerbaijan, and Paveh in Kermanshah. Among them 180 students (60 students from each ethnic group), were selected non-randomly according to availability sampling. In order to investigate the background knowledge of the participants Nelson Proficiency Test (200A) was presented to them. Finally, 120 students (40 for each ethnic group), whose scores were 1SD above and below the mean were selected to participate in the study.

Instruments

In order to achieve the goals of the study, the following instruments were employed.

a) English Language Proficiency Test [Intermediate Nelson Test; (200A, 1976)]

Nelson English Language Proficiency Test adopted from Fowler and Norman Coe (1976), was used to assess the participants' language proficiency background and to achieve a homogeneous group of participants and at the beginning of the study. Nelson English Homogeneity Test is composed of 50 items which was expected to be answered in almost 40 minutes.

b) Test of Critical Thinking Disposition (CTDI)

In order to evaluate the critical thinking ability of participants, the Persian version of the standard test of critical thinking which is a version of Ricketts (2003) Critical Thinking Skills Test (CTDI) for adults, and is based on scale of critical thinking, produced by Facione in 1990, was presented to the participants. This standard and valid test includes 33 items and the participants were requested to answer to the questions of this test in about 20 minutes.

c) Test of Cultural Intelligence (CQS)

In order to measure cultural intelligence ability of participants, the cultural intelligence test adopted from Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, and Ng (2004), which consists of 20 multiple-choice items on a 5-points Likert scale was presented to them. The responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The participants were asked to answer the questions in about 10 minutes.

d) Test of Ethnic Identity (MEIM)

The multi-group ethnic identity measurement questionnaire (MEIM) with Phinney (1992), which is a new scale for use with adolescents and young adults from diverse groups, was administered to the participants. The questionnaire consists of 15 items which items 13, 14, and 15 are used only for purposes of identification and categorization by ethnicity. Participants responded to these statements on a 5-points Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Procedure

In order to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses of the study, the following steps were adopted: Nelson Proficiency Test and three questionnaires of Critical Thinking, Cultural Intelligence, and Ethnic Identity were administered to the participants of the study. The data collection process was done in three sessions for each ethnic group. One session allocated to obtain data about Nelson Test, one session for Critical Thinking test, and one more session allocated to obtain required data from Cultural Intelligence and Ethnic identity questionnaires. At the beginning of the data collection process everything was explained to the participants and they were justified about the study. The Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test was administered to examine the reliability of three questionnaires applied in this study. The Cronbach' Alpha Reliability indices for the critical thinking, cultural intelligence and ethnic identity were .629, .742 and .662 respectively. The results were calculated, analyzed and compared in order to achieve the required objectives of the study.

The present research is a quantitative and correlational research that is carried out by the researchers in order to discover any relationship between three variables of critical thinking ability, cultural intelligence and ethnic identity of three different ethnic groups of Persian, Kurdish, and Turkish EFL learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before reporting the main results, it should be noted that the assumption of normality was retained. The absolute values of the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors were lower than 1.96 (Table 1); hence normality of the data.

Table 1: Testing Normality Assumption

Group		N	Skewness		Kurtosis			
			Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error		
Fars	Critical Thinking	40	-.550	.374	-1.47	-1.085	.733	-1.48
	Cultural Intelligence	40	.198	.374	0.53	-.801	.733	-1.09
Kurd	Critical Thinking	40	-.445	.374	-1.19	-.372	.733	-0.51
	Cultural Intelligence	40	.336	.374	0.90	-.924	.733	-1.26
Turk	Critical Thinking	40	-.411	.374	-1.10	-.530	.733	-0.72
	Cultural Intelligence	40	-.373	.374	-1.00	-.681	.733	-0.93

The results of Pearson correlations (Table 2) indicated that there were not any significant relationships between critical thinking and cultural intelligence among;

- The Fars ($r(38) = -.203$, representing a weak effect size, $p = .209$),
- The Kurds ($r(38) = -.019$, representing a weak effect size, $p = .906$), and
- The Turks ($r(38) = -.078$, representing a weak effect size, $p = .632$).

Thus it can be concluded that **the first null-hypothesis was supported**.

Table 2: Pearson Correlations; Critical Thinking with Cultural Intelligence

		Critical Thinking with Cultural Intelligence
Fars	Pearson Correlation	-.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.209
	N	40
Kurd	Pearson Correlation	-.019
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.906
	N	40
Turk	Pearson Correlation	-.078
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.632
	N	40

A one-way analysis of variances was run to compare the Persian, the Kurdish and the Turkish ethnic groups' means on the critical thinking in order to probe the second null-hypothesis. Before discussing the results, it should be mentioned that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met (Levene's $F(2, 117) = 7.24, P = .001$) (Table 3).

Table 3: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
7.249	2	117	.001

As displayed in Table 4 the Kurds ($M = 36.55, SD = 3.50$) had the highest mean on the critical thinking. This was followed by the Turks ($M = 35.42, SD = 2.26$) and the Fars ($M = 32.41, SD = 3.93$) groups. The results of the Brown-Forsythe's ANOVA and Tamhane' post-hoc tests will be reported because the groups did not enjoy homogeneity of variances.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics; Critical Thinking by Ethnic Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for			
					Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Fars	40	32.41	3.937	.622	31.15	33.67	25	37
Kurds	40	36.55	3.505	.554	35.43	37.67	29	42
Turks	40	35.42	2.267	.358	34.70	36.15	31	40
Total	120	34.79	3.724	.340	34.12	35.47	25	42

Since the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, the results of the Brown-Forsythe test were reported. Based on the results displayed in Table 5 ($F(2, 101.23) = 16.70, P = .000$) it can be concluded that there were significant differences between the means of the three groups on the critical thinking. Thus the second null-hypothesis as "there was not any significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their critical thinking" **was rejected**.

Table 5: Robust Tests of Equality of Means; Critical Thinking by Ethnic groups

	Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Brown-Forsythe	16.703	2	101.237	.000

The results of the Tamhane's post-hoc comparisons (Table 6) indicated that;

- The Kurds significantly had a higher mean (M = 36.55) than the Fars (M = 32.41) (MD = 4.14, p = .000).
- The Turks significantly had a higher mean (M = 35.42) than the Fars (M = 32.41) (MD = 3.01, p = .000).
- There was not any significant difference between the Kurdish (M = 36.55) and the Turkish (M = 35.42) ethnic groups' critical thinking.

Table 6: Multiple Comparisons; Critical Thinking by Ethnic Groups

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Kurd	Fars	4.141*	.833	.000	2.11	6.18
	Turk	1.130	.660	.250	-.49	2.75
Turk	Fars	3.012*	.718	.000	1.25	4.77

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

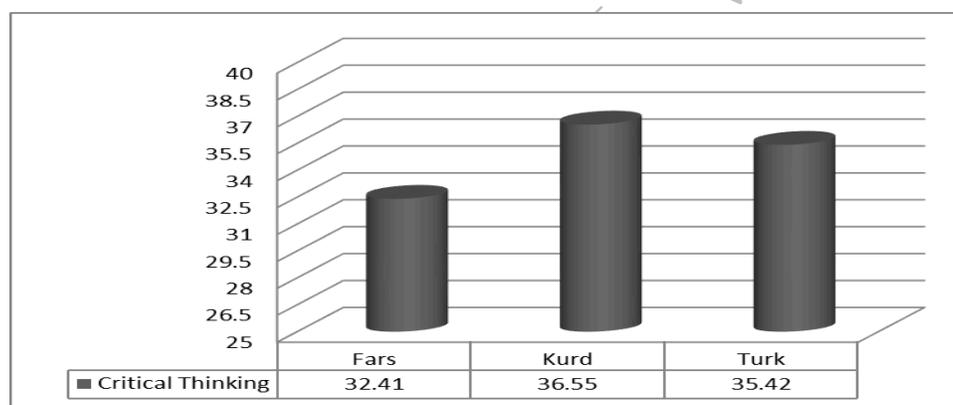


Figure 1: Critical thinking by ethnic groups

A one-way analysis of variances was run to compare the Fars, the Kurds and the Turks' means on the cultural intelligence in order to probe the third null-hypothesis. Before discussing the results, it should be mentioned that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met (Levene's F (2, 117) = 7.52, P = .001) (Table 7).

Table 7: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
7.521	2	117	.001

As displayed in Table 8 the Kurds (M = 46.51, SD = 8.74) had the highest mean on the cultural intelligence. This was followed by the Turks (M = 41.63, SD = 6.82) and the Fars (M = 37.69, SD = 5.19) groups. The results of the Brown-Forsythe's ANOVA and Tamhane' post-hoc tests will be reported because the groups did not enjoy homogeneity of variances.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics; Cultural Intelligence by Ethnic Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for			
					Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Fars	40	37.69	5.199	.822	36.03	39.36	28	47
Kurds	40	46.51	8.741	1.382	43.71	49.30	33	64
Turks	40	41.63	6.823	1.079	39.45	43.81	28	54
Total	120	41.94	7.891	.720	40.52	43.37	28	64

Since the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, the results of the Brown-Forsythe test were reported. Based on the results displayed in Table 9 ($F(2, 10.43) = 15.59, P = .000$) it can be concluded that there were significant differences between the means of the three groups on the cultural intelligence. Thus the third null-hypothesis as “there was not any significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their cultural intelligence” **was rejected**.

Table 9: Robust Tests of Equality of Means; Cultural Intelligence by Ethnic groups

	Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Brown-Forsythe	15.595	2	100.433	.000

The results of the Tamhane’s post-hoc comparisons (Table 10) indicated that;

- The Kurds significantly had a higher mean ($M = 46.51$) than the Fars ($M = 37.69$) ($MD = 8.81, p = .000$).
- The Turks significantly had a higher mean ($M = 41.36$) than the Fars ($M = 37.69$) ($MD = 3.93, p = .015$).
- The Kurds significantly had a higher mean ($M = 46.51$) than the Turks ($M = 41.63$) ($MD = 4.87, p = .000$).

Table 10: Multiple Comparisons; Cultural Intelligences by Ethnic Groups

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Kurds	Fars	8.814*	1.608	.000	4.87	12.76
	Turks	4.875*	1.753	.021	.59	9.16
Turks	Fars	3.938*	1.356	.015	.62	7.25

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

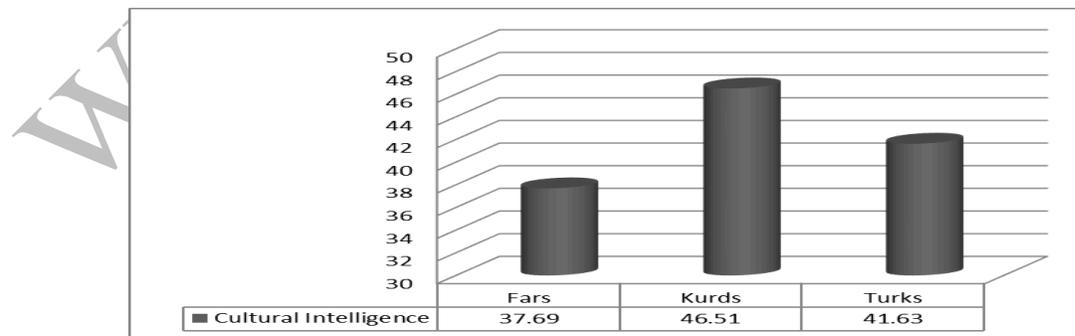


Figure 2: Cultural intelligence by ethnic groups

Table 11 displays the Cronbach's alpha reliability indices for the three questionnaires employed in this study. The indices for the critical thinking, cultural intelligence and ethnic identity were .629, .742 and .662 respectively.

Table 11: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's AlphaN of Items	
Critical Thinking	.629	33
Cultural Intelligences	.742	20
Ethnic Identity	.662	12

According to the statistical analysis, on the first research question (Is there any relationship between critical thinking and cultural intelligence of three Iranian ethnic groups of English learners?), the results indicated that there was not any significant correlation between critical thinking and cultural intelligence among three different ethnic groups of Iranian EFL learners, so **the first null hypothesis was supported.**

Possible findings of this study can be in contrast with the findings of Magno (2010), who investigated the role of metacognitive skills in developing critical thinking among 240 freshmen college students who were taking their first year in college in Philippines. The Pearson Product Moment correlation procedure revealed that the factors of metacognition are significantly related to the factors of critical thinking. Since metacognitive skills are one of the components of cultural intelligence abilities, it can be considered that cultural intelligence is a predictive factor in developing critical thinking ability among students.

Nevertheless, as Ten Dam and Volman (2004) observed, empirical research which addresses the role of culture in relation to critical thinking is currently limited. To the best of our knowledge, there is no published study involving direct comparison of critical thinking and cultural intelligence with regard to ethnicity differences in Iranian EFL contexts.

Regarding the second research question (Is there any significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their critical thinking?), the results obtained from analyzing the data indicated that, there were significant differences between the Fars, the Turks and the Kurds' means on critical thinking. Thus **the second null-hypothesis was rejected.**

Findings of the present study is in agreement with findings of Alagozlu (2007), who claims that Turkish EFL students are not strong enough to express their thoughts, especially in a foreign language, and they should be supported regarding critical thinking skills. This problem is rooted in the system of traditional education, which provides ready-made information requiring no questions. One possible reason for such differences may be partially attributable to the cultural differences leading to different abilities of the participants. Concerning the third research question (Is there any significant difference among the three ethnic groups in their cultural intelligence?), the results obtained from data, indicated that there were significant differences between the Fars, the Turks and the Kurds' means on cultural intelligence. Thus **the third null-hypothesis was rejected.**

A study designed by Azizi, Hosseini Fatemi, Pishghadam, and Ghabanchi, (2015) to determine whether there is any association between Iranian EFL learners' Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and their Home Culture Attachment (HCA). The results of correlational study indicated a significant relationship between CQ and some of sub-scales of HCAS. Then, it was estimated that there is a statistically significant difference between male and female subjects with regard to their CQ but there is no statistically significant difference among the age groups with regard to their CQ.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge no study ever has investigated the cultural intelligence ability differences among ethnically diverse EFL learners. It remains, however, to be explored whether the CQ of three ethnic groups of Iranian EFL learners are different.

CONCLUSION

In studying the relationship between critical thinking and cultural intelligence among these three ethnic groups the results showed no significant relationship between the two variables. In other words, being a culturally intelligent person can't be a predictor factor to being a critical thinker among the three different ethnic groups under discussion in this study. So this issue is not addressed more in this part and accordingly further study is needed.

This study deals with investigating any difference in critical thinking ability among three ethnic groups of Persian, Kurdish, and Turkish EFL learners. Based on the results of the current study, Kurdish EFL learners performed better in critical thinking than Turkish EFL learners, followed by Persian EFL students. In other words, Kurdish EFL learners are better critical thinkers, while Turkish students performed moderately in critical thinking and the Persian EFL learners lied in the last level of critical thinking ability. It should be mentioned that there was not any significant difference between Kurds ($M = 36.55$) and Turks ($M = 35.42$) ethnic groups' critical thinking. Discovering levels and extremes of the ability to think critically among students of these three ethnic groups, will help the researchers in providing appropriate ways to enhance it among those who suffered more from the low levels of critical thinking ability. This study revealed that students of different ethnic groups have different abilities to think critically, so more attention should be paid to reduce the differences. This study also deals with investigating any difference in cultural intelligence ability among three ethnic groups mentioned above. As revealed by the present study, Kurdish intermediate EFL learners who benefitted from higher levels of critical thinking ability experienced higher levels of cultural intelligence ability. It followed by Turkish EFL learners. Persian EFL learners were the last who enjoyed from the cultural intelligent ability. This study also revealed that students of different ethnic groups have different levels of cultural intelligence abilities.

In conclusion, because of the significant role of critical thinking and cultural intelligence in developing effective language learning, they need to be promoted among language learners. Since critical thinking is one of the requirements of successful education in general and language learning in particular, findings of present research will give insights for language practitioners, material developers and curriculum designers to be aware of some factors that affect development of critical thinking ability and accordingly to improve language ability of Iranian EFL learners.

Sociolinguists can also benefit from the findings of this study, so that they can discover any probable correlation between Iranian EFL learners' critical thinking and their ethnicity differences. In present research both critical thinking and cultural intelligence of EFL learners were affected with ethnicity differences. These findings can help ELT practitioners in providing appropriate ways of enhancing CT and CQ abilities among EFL students of different ethnicities. Regarding this, educational systems, curriculum designers, material developers, language teachers, language learners and also sociolinguists will be benefitted from findings of this study.

Limitations of the study

Depend on the novelty of the present study, there wasn't enough literature around it or any related concepts. This study had a comparatively small sample size for such a correlational study, this obstacle made the generalizability of findings limited. Since this research conducted among some ethnically diverse EFL students, there were religious diversities or social class differences among them. Anxiety or other individual problems, time restrictions, dishonesty in answering questions, personality and sociocultural differences, impact of native language and so, could have influenced the results as intervening factors and may affect the validity of research.

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