Developing Students' Critical Thinking Skills in Writing at a Saudi Arabian Writing Centre

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INTRODUCTION

Developing students' critical thinking skills in writing remains a challenging phenomenon across writing centres. Both within the writing centre pedagogy and the general academic writing theory, there are a few studies that investigate this aspect of language learning practice. Meanwhile, some of the studies attribute students' inability to demonstrate critical thoughts in language learning to the lack of a high-level critical thinking skill (Alagozlu & Sarac, 2010; Borglin, 2012; Klimova, 2013), knowledge also remains little about the way(s) teachers implement critical thinking strategies in teaching writing (Atac, 2015; Golding, 2006), and how students transfer the skills into their academic writing courses. Over the two years of its establishment as a support centre for students' academic writing, the writing centre at Royal Commission Yanbu Colleges and Institutes (RCYCI Writing Centre) has employed various measures to help students develop their academic writing skills. Using both naturalistic and participant observations as well as a follow-up interview, this study explores

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the manifestations of critical thinking strategies in tutors' and tutees' interaction as reflected in tutees' writing in RCYCI Writing Centre. The results show that, though most tutors are aware of critical thinking as a strategy for teaching academic writing, majority of students remain unaware about it, and only a few instances of the practices of such strategy appear in tutoring sessions. It is recommended that the RCYCI Writing Centre should develop a practical model for implementing critical thinking strategy through frequently organizing workshops for tutors and tutees to further raise awareness about the use of the strategy and providing tutors with the instructional model to implement. This process should be adequately monitored and evaluated.

To achieve the goal of this chapter, I first reviewed the evolution of writing centre, focusing on the development of pedagogical strategies employed over time. This is linked to the historical formation of RCYCI Writing Centre, examining its foundational and instructional objectives. I also reviewed some theoretical assumptions on critical thinking to place the study on context. This is further supported by critical examination of some research on critical thinking and writing instruction and narrowing it down to writing centre context.

A Brief Evolution of the Writing Centre

Though it can be argued that the writing centre pedagogy started gaining prominence in the early twentieth century, it is difficult to point to a formal set-up of a present sort considered as the early writing centre. It was the establishment of the Writing Lab Newsletter in 1977 and subsequently *Writing Centre Journal* that began to document the early struggles of institutions, particularly American colleges and universities, to establish remedial centres, which were later considered to be playing the role of the writing centres of today.

Often termed as 'writing lab' or 'writing clinic,' early writing centres were seen by their critics, such as Ray Wallace and Andrea Lunsford, as fix-it shops, storehouse of grammar drills where the focus was on error or poor students (Carino, 1995). Not all agreed with Wallace. For example, Christina Murphy, who also was a critic of the early centres, believed that though writing centres were established to cater for the learning needs of weaker students, they also were essentially meant to develop students' potentials and facilitate their intellectual growth (Murphy, 1991). Hobson (2001) further reiterates this argument that even in the period before the

paradigm shift of writing centre pedagogy from behaviourist to constructivist approach, instructions were mainly carried out with focus on, 'albeit often covertly,' helping the students to develop their writing skills beyond basic grammar rules.

What would be identified as a writing centre in its modern sense came in the 1930s with the establishment of a writing lab by the University of Minnesota and the State University of Iowa (now the University of Iowa). The institutions, according to Grandy (1939), in Carino (1995) established separate facilities: for example, at the University of Minnesota, the writing lab was equipped with reference books and writing tables where students work with teachers (tutors) on their writing.

It was also believed that the laboratory instructional method, introduced in 1904 by Philo Buck, a St. Louis high school teacher (Carino, 1995), influenced the concept of early writing centres, thus the names writing lab and writing clinic. Laboratory method dominated the early twentieth-century pedagogy and was seen as a departure from traditional classroom teaching. And so, writing centre pedagogy saw laboratory approach as a way of one-to-one or individualized instruction to better help weak students. It was conceived of not as a place at all but rather as a method of instruction (Boquet, 1999). However, due to its quest for space in academic institutions over time, today's writing centre is both a place and a method.

In essence, the writing centre pedagogy went through a series of evolutionary stages, as did many other learning theories, but its foundational principles remain the same up to today—an individualized learning centre designed to support students' academic writing and critical thinking skills through one-to-one tutoring. It depends on the institutional focus, and it supports both undergraduate and postgraduate students. In my study context, for example, it provides support for bachelors' and associate degree students who mostly are studying engineering courses as well as foundation students who are undergoing intensive English course to enable them join the associate degree and bachelors' programmes.

The Writing Centre at Royal Commission Yanbu Colleges and Institutes

In an Arabian Gulf city built on and driven by the petro-chemical industry, the dire need to create a programme for the development and refinement of writing skills has always been felt by learners, practitioners and administrators

alike. Indeed, various writing strategies and agendas had been developed and implemented, with mitigated success over the years. To further fill this writing gap, the management of Yanbu English Language Institute decided to establish a writing centre, which, after going through some administrative procedures, was achieved on 8 April 2014. I was charged with the responsibility to pilot the centre, a task that gave me an enormous opportunity to explore critical issues in the teaching and learning of academic writing. From the inception, we had centres in three campuses: Yanbu Industrial College, Yanbu University College and Yanbu Technical Institute. We had lots of books on writing centre tutoring, administration as well as writing instruction, which, though influenced by Western concept of writing centres, the new writing centre tutors and myself utilized them to equip ourselves with writing centre pedagogy. Gradually our centre went through conceptualization process to a fairly established practice within the Royal Commission Yanbu educational system.

Despite some of the achievements made, my preliminary study as a tutor myself shows that there is still lack of uniform and established pedagogical procedure used by tutors in the writing centre. The centre is still not far from what Ray Wallace and Andrea Lunsford, describing early writing centres, called as storehouse for grammatical drills where focus is on error. Also, it is not clear whether students transfer some of the skills they learned from the centre into their subsequent writing. The cause of all these, as far as RCYCI Writing Centre is concerned or any similar writing centre within the Arab region, can be easily linked to the common reason for their establishment discussed in Chap. 1 of this volume, which is to model writing centres from North America.

Theoretical Assumptions on Critical Thinking

Although the words 'critical thinking' suggest the idea of the concept, literature shows that it is difficult to underpin due to its complexity and somewhat abstract nature. For example, one of the issues related to its definition is the way some terms—critical thinking and higher-order thinking—are used interchangeably (Halpern, 2003), or with sharp difference (Facione, 1990). Other terms that interplay in the complexity of the concept and how it is viewed, include 'problem solving,' 'reflective thinking,' 'argumentation' and so on. The theoretical views of the concept by various disciplines also influence its definition. For instance, while

psychologists tend to focus on the process of cognition, the components and operations used to address academic practical problems, philosophers are more interested in the nature and quality of the products of critical thinking, such as argumentation (Reed, 1998).

Broadly speaking, critical thinking can be defined as the ability to evaluate information, establish argument and present clear and convincing position in a logical manner. Though we observe there is a variation of views with regards to the definition of critical thinking, there seems to be a consensus on its importance in life and particularly in education. It is believed to be the basis for modern education and an indispensable tool for growth in a dynamic economy. According to Ab Kadir (2015), developing the ability to think critically is indeed an imperative in a rapidly changing world which demands more of individuals in their personal, social and professional domains. Halpern (2003) further agrees that this ability is a necessity for the citizens of the twenty-first century. In a more educational perspective, Tapper (2004) opines that critical thinking is associated with abilities or skills such as selection, evaluation, analysis, reflection, questioning, inference and judgement.

There are two basic theoretical assumptions on critical thinking upon which this study is premised. There is the school of thought that believes critical thinking is a universal mechanism required for basic human survival (Moore, 2004; Casanave, 2004), and so, it is not only central to education, or writing in this context, but also an integral and essential part of reflecting, constructing and engaging with the world (Vyncke, 2012). This assumption is summarily conceptualized by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction (2003), which sees critical thinking as "a universal intellectual value that transcend subject-matter divisions; clarity accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth and fairness." Based on this perspective, therefore, critical thinking is perceived as an important life skill required for making judgement and interpreting the world irrespective of field of study or cultural background.

The second assumption on critical thinking recognizes though, all human beings have the cognitive capacity to think and reason, it does not imply that different societies and cultures practice or see critical thinking in similar manner. This school of thought sees the concept as something unique to the Western culture rather than universal. It presents critical thinking as a culturally specific, uniquely Western concept, an ability which people develop unconsciously as they are socialized in their

Anglophone cultures (Vyncke, 2012). It is the belief of this school of thought that because of their non-exposure to critical thinking skill culture, second-language (L2) learners may not do well in terms of high-order thinking in their academic writing (Atkinson, 1997; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996), a notion that was reputed by other scholars, such as Canagarajah (2002). Canagarajah believes that everyone has agency to rise above their culture and social conditions to attain critical insights into their human condition. More so, one would assume that the current globalization and movement of people across borders, and of course access to information, would increase cross-cultural influence, an opinion Canagarajah (2002) agrees with.

Even though critical thinking can be clearly associated with Western culture, given the preceded argument, many studies conducted show that L2 learners have also considerably achieved high thinking order in their academic writing. For example, Vyncke (2012) studied Asian students, who are believed to come from non-critical thinking culture, studying in Anglophone country, and found that despite the challenges of their academic background, the students could adapt to the new learning context by critically analysing texts, evaluating multiple interpretations and projecting their voice. According to Vyncle, the students were able to display a solid understanding and implementation of Wingate's (2011) three components of argumentation: analysis and evaluation of content knowledge, which is the student's ability to select relevant information from the literature and substantiate the writer's argument; development of a position, which refers to the need to establish a position usually presented through the writer's voice; and, lastly, the presentation of the writer's position in a coherent manner, that is, the logical arrangement of proposition throughout the writing.

The achievement of all these components in Vyncle's study is a clear evidence that supports the earlier argument raised by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction (2003), which says, critical thinking is a universal intellectual value that transcends subject-matter divisions; clarity accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth and fairness. It also proves Canagarajah's (2002) argument that everyone has agency to rise above their culture and social conditions to attain critical insights into their human condition. It is upon this assumption that I investigate the sights and sounds of critical thinking skills in the tutoring process as well as academic writing of students who come to Yanbu Writing Centre to seek help from the tutors.

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING INSTRUCTION

"*If you can't write clearly, you probably don't think nearly as well as you think you do*."—Kurt Vonnegut

The above quotation by an American writer simply depicts the mutually inclusive relationship between writing and thought, or contextually put here, critical thinking. The fact that writing is a high and complex representation of our thoughts, it is difficult to imagine a writing process that does not tap from our analytical skills.

Therefore, besides being an indispensable life skill, critical thinking is particularly important and remains a reliable approach in academic writing. In fact, there is consensus among scholars (Atac, 2015; Dwee, Anthony, Salleh, Kamarulzaman, & Abd Kadir, 2016; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Tsui, 2002) on the significance of these skills in academic writing. Vyncke (2012) believes that when critical thinking is applied to writing, the above abilities and skills usually helps the students through the process of argumentation, which ultimately produces the final essay.

Therefore, it is true to say critical thinking is critical to writing instruction as well as writing centre tutoring. Among other approaches to the teaching of writing, such as pragmatic, rhetorical, cultural and expressive, critical thinking is gaining prominence. Some recent studies (e.g. Borglin, 2012; Klimova, 2013; Liu & Stapleton, 2014) show that students' inability to demonstrate critical thoughts in language learning is due to lack of high-level critical thinking skills. Students find it difficult to evaluate information and project their voice, or sometimes they perceive such projection of voice as simply the manifestation of an adversarial stance in writing, by overtly criticizing scholars' research or claims (Vyncke, 2012).

Studies (Vyncke, 2012; Wingate, 2011) show that students generally understand the need for critical thinking skills in the development of their academic writing, but always fail to implement it when it comes to the real practice. As to whether teachers and writing centre tutors emphasize on this need during their one-on-one meeting with students is unclear, and thus, this study poses as a question to explore in the Yanbu Writing Centre.

Sometimes the problem with implementation of critical thinking comes from the tutors' approach and teaching of the concept to the students. A study by Mitchell et al. (2008) highlights that university tutors used non-specific descriptions and vague terms such as 'critique,' 'critical analysis' and 'opinion' to explain the concept of critical thinking to students, leaving

them with more abstract terms to digest. In addition, Paul (1995) believes that if teaching of critical thinking must be done effectively, teachers must avoid the practices of teaching by telling, learning by memorizing, concepts he terms as 'didactism.' Indeed, most scholars of critical thinking pedagogy (Golding, 2006; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Martin & Michelli, 2001) believe that for students' critical thinking skills to be developed, teachers' attitudes and dispositions must align with aims of teaching the concept, which thus demonstrates the contemporary view of education as an experimental space, where the teacher is seen as a catalyst or a facilitator of learning rather than a giver.

Arguing further on this claim, Golding (2006) suggests that part of the challenges of proper integration of critical thinking skills into the curriculum rely on both teachers' and students' efforts. Implementation must go beyond mere focus on results and contents to a more encompassing philosophy in which the school's practices, culture and surroundings all advocate and encourage good thinking.

It is therefore clear based on the above literature; a gap exists in the light of the role of the teachers towards implementing critical thinking education as further exemplified by Ab Kadir (2015). The study, which investigated the teaching of critical thinking and teacher knowledge, showed that there was apparent lack of readiness to implement critical thinking curriculum on the side of the teachers due largely to limited knowledge on the concept of critical thinking. The case was true for pre-service and in-service teacher, the population which the study investigated. In the context under investigation, we deal with in-service teachers, and our pre-survey already shows similarity with Ab Kadir's finding, which its analysis comes in the subsequent sections.

Pedagogical Approaches in the Writing Centres

Though each writing centre trains and utilizes its tutors differently, and it is almost difficult to ascertain the effectiveness of the tutorial measures within the overall practices of writing centres (Eleftheriou, 2011), certain common pedagogical strategies exist and oftentimes are under practioners' debate, for example the effectiveness of directive and non-directive approaches. Literature shows that most writing centres tend to shift strategies towards non-directive, collaborative approach (Bell, 2002; Bringhurst, 2006; Eleftheriou, 2011; LaClare & Franz, 2013; Powers, 2008). These scholars believe that tutors fixing tutees' errors and directly guiding them

on how to fix them, which is the fundamental principle of directive approach, is being prescriptive and does not allow the tutee to understand his or her writing problems or even implement them in subsequent writing. They emphasised the need for learners to take more active role in their learning process, with the tutor just asking probing questions and allowing the tutor to think critically and figure out what is wrong, a notion Gillespie and Lerner (2007) considers as 'keep hands off and let writers make corrections.'

This new approach, according to Eleftheriou (2011), has already become the tutoring norm in most North American writing centres and is influencing practices in the Middle East. However, she further argues that it may not be the effective way to address Middle Eastern students writing challenges due to the peculiarity of their language learning situation. Even though this is also true for Yanbu writing centre, I find it as an experimental ground to explore critical thinking strategies because, using the non-directive, collaborative approach, students could find an opportunity to think critically and reflectively towards developing their writing.

Baker (1988) specifically looks at the possibilities of critical thinking in writing centre. Her research, which reviews various research on critical thinking, particularly on the complexity of its definition, sheds more light on the application of the concept in the writing centre, but does not provide the basis by which theoretical principles discussed are examined through participants' voices. This is one of the gaps the current study seeks to address by collecting and analysing data from major writing centre stakeholders—tutors and tutees.

Methodology

This work is basically a qualitative study, adopting an ethnographic approach to explore the manifestations of critical thinking strategies in the tutoring and writing practices of RCYCI Writing Centre. Ethnographic method is an attempt to obtain a holistic picture of a particular setting or situation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Ethnography is believed to be associated first with cultural studies, but due to the intricate relationship between language and culture, it was later applied by language scholars to study to have a deeper insight into L2 learning context (Dornyei, 2007; Duff, 2002; Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, & Street, 2001).

Generally speaking, this study is based on three fundamental questions:

1. To what extent tutors and tutees at RCYCI Writing Centre are aware of critical thinking strategies as ways for improving academic writing skills?
2. To what extent critical thinking strategies are explored by tutors and tutees in RCYCI Writing Centre?
3. What are the possible challenges involved in the implementation of critical thinking strategies in RCYCI Writing Centre?

DATA COLLECTION

Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) argue that the key tools in all ethnographic studies are in-depth interviewing and continual, ongoing participant observation of a situation. Therefore, the main tools used for data collection in this study were observation and interview. Observation is a method of data collection where the researcher merely observes the research situation and record whatever he/she observes without any interference. There are two types of observations: naturalistic and participant observation. It is considered naturalistic when the researcher's role is just to watch even unfolding and record. It becomes participant observation when the researcher participates in the activities being observed. In other words, he/she is part of what is being observed. More so, we use participant observation when we want to have a first-hand experience or a deeper insight into the situation, even though there is an argument over the possibility of the researcher influencing the responses. I use this technique being myself also a tutor in the centre. So, while tutoring I observed and evaluated students' writing, also reflected on my practices. I also used naturalistic by observing other tutors working with students.

The observation was carried out for one semester, a period of 14 weeks, in 2016. I observed nine tutors in a total of 89 sessions, involving 74 students. I used field notes and journals to record my observations. The 9 tutors were selected out of 16 using purposeful sampling technique in order to target a period in the writing centre schedule when students often visited. There were certain hours, for example 9 am–11 am and 1 pm–4 pm, when student did not have time to visit the centre because their regular classes were scheduled in those hours, an issue that I will also discuss in the analysis of results.

In addition to observation, I also used semi-structure interview, where I asked tutors and tutees questions about their knowledge and opinion on critical thinking strategies in developing students' academic writing skills. Interview is considered to be the most commonly used data collection tool in qualitative research (Briggs, 1986). It is indeed used to explore the feelings, thoughts and intentions of others, their 'inner-world,' that which cannot be directly observed or measured (Vyncke, 2012). Echoing this, Forsey (2012) further states that interview can provide detailed, rich insights, which surveys and observations cannot capture to the same in-depth level.

The respondents of the interview were the same tutors I observed during the 14 weeks' period. I asked them questions related to their experience as writing centre tutors. Each interview lasted about 7–10 minutes. For the tutees, since it was impossible to track and interview all the 74 I earlier observed, I therefore selected 30 using stratified and random sampling technique. I first used stratified sampling to group them into three strata: foundation, associate degree and bachelor's degree, which are the three groups of students within the colleges visiting the writing centre. At the second level, I randomly selected 10 students from each stratum, making 30, to represent their group. Thirty may appear to be a small number that may not allow for a generalization, but it provides an adequate representation of all the various categories of tutees that came to the centre during the research period and obviously, the visitation trend in general.

To ensure compliance with research ethics, a consent form was first signed by the respondents confirming their willingness to participate in the study. Also, a number (e.g. Tutor 1, Tutee 4) was used to represent them in order to close their identity.

DATA ANALYSIS

Since this is purely an ethnographic study, I used 'thick description' for my analysis. Thick description is a commonly used method for analysis in ethnographic studies, which, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), involves detailed description, often using extensive quotations, of the researcher's field work experience. In this section, I provide an analysis and interpretation of the field notes and journal records I collected during the observation as well as the interview scripts, which I transcribed. In the analysis, I also used my personal experience as a tutor and a participant observer to make inferences, employing all effort to avoid my personal

views influencing the result or what ethnographers called 'judgemental orientation.' I further used 'member checking,' a strategy applied in ethnography to allow research participants to review what the researcher has written to ensure accuracy and completeness.

RESULTS

Using thick description to analyse both the field notes from 14 weeks of observation and the responses of the interview administered on 9 teachers and 30 students, result were obtained and presented based on the research questions.

THE EXTENT OF TUTORS' AND TUTEES' AWARENESS ABOUT CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AS STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Majority of the tutors I interviewed responded that they were aware of critical thinking skills as strategies in writing instruction. For example, they made reference to when they taught argumentative writing. One of the respondents, in particular, says:

"*When I taught IELTS classes, I used to group my students into two, each group would write their points for or against a topic, then they would develop an essay based on those points.*" (Tutor 3)

Making reference to a bachelor's degree course in academic writing, one respondent also said:

"*We asked our students to use critical thinking when we teach them comparison and contrast paragraph.*" (Tutor 4)

Nearly all the tutees did not demonstrate any awareness about the concept of critical thinking. For example, when answering my question on whether he was aware of the concept of critical thinking in academic writing, Tutee 3 says:

"*Uh … no. we only know how to write topic sentence and details. Is it something … about thinking?*"

Another respondent says:

"*I don't know critical thinking*"

After I clarified to him, giving him a general idea what it meant in writing, he then said:

"*We write paragraphs about advantages and disadvantages, also about comparison. May be something like this?*" (Tutee 11)

The above response, however, shows some indirect links between the tutee's understanding of critical thinking and the concept, but not necessarily how it is applied in writing. All the very few that showed some understanding was in similar way.

When I further tried to find out about the stages and elements of critical thinking they employed in their instruction, the answers were also unclear. They tend to use non-specific description and vague terms in their explanation, a similar situation Mitchell et al. (2008) highlight about university tutors' explanation of critical thinking. They further argue that this approach only leaves students with abstract and unclear terms.

The observation result also shows similar trend. There was no direct reference to the concept in tutor–tutee interaction, and most discussion did not appear to provoke students' critical thinking faculty. Attitudes and dispositions demonstrated in the sessions do not align with contemporary views of education, which Golding (2006) and Lillis and Turner (2001) describe as a system where teacher is just a facilitator that helps the learner to discover himself.

With regards to the tutees' level of awareness about critical thinking skills, my study appears different from Wingate (2011) and Vyncke (2012), which claim that students generally understand the need for critical thinking skills in the development of their academic writing, but always fail to implement it in their writing. Even though I did not expect it to be exactly the same due to the peculiarity of my study context, which Eleftheriou (2011) in her study of Middle Eastern writing centre described as challenging language learning situation, I presumed bachelor's students might show some level of awareness because they went through various academic writing courses. It is difficult to answer why they did not, perhaps a question that may be best answered by another in-depth research of the whole

academic writing teaching practices of the institute. But, at this level, it is clear that their lack of awareness might be due to non-specific description of critical thinking strategies by tutors.

The Use of Critical Thinking Strategies by Tutors and Tutees

Quoting Eleftheriou (2011), I earlier stated that non-directive tutoring approach, which emphasizes the need for learners to take more active role in their learning process, has taken over most writing centres in North America and was also influencing practices in the Middle East. Being one of the fairly known centres in the Arabian Gulf, I expected to see this influence gradually establishing tutoring practices in RCYCI Writing Centre.

However, the results obtained show, apart from the superficial level of awareness, no significant manifestations of critical thinking skills in the tutoring sessions as well as from their oral responses. The dialogue was dominated by directive approach with tutors being more prescriptive—fixing tutees' errors and directly guiding them on how to fix them—a method LaClare and Franz (2013) and Bringhurst (2006) claim do not allow the tutee to understand his writing problems or even transfer skills learned in future writing. There is little evidence of analysis of content of knowledge, development of position and logical presentation of the position, Wingate's three components of critical thinking strategies that I explore in this study.

The fact that they are aware of the fundamental principles of critical thinking strategies, tutors believe absence of these three components or using only directive approach would not help students enough, but they also express concern about the reality of implementing of all these in the RCYCI Writing Centre. For example, one of the tutors said:

> "*It's difficult for the students to explain some of the questions we ask them. Most of them only copied from the Internet or didn't have time enough to write down their ideas that they would be able to respond when asked.*" (Tutor 5)

When I asked one of the tutees about the use of their ideas or projecting their voices, which is an element of critical thinking, he responded:

> "*Sometimes, yes, we use, but we usually explain what we read.*" (Tutee 8)

Here he meant to say they usually write what the writer says, of course without having to analyse and show their position on the writer's idea.

To some extent, the above response clearly explains the reality of RCYCI Writing Centre. However, my observation also shows that tutors' effort towards using probes and questioning is minimal. In this regard, therefore, the non-implementation of critical thinking strategies reflects the opinion of Golding (2006), which states that the challenges of proper integration of critical thinking skills rely on both teachers' and students' efforts. He therefore suggests that practice should go beyond emphasis on results and contents to a more comprehensive philosophy of reflective thinking.

CHALLENGES FACING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGIES IN RCYCI WRITING CENTRE

There appear to be many factors affecting the use of critical thinking strategies in RCYCI Writing Centre. I already pointed out some of them in the course of discussing the previous two research questions. I will be discussing them again in details including those observations raised by tutors and tutees during interview regarding the general operation of the writing centre.

Based on the results, there is a consensus among both tutors and tutees regarding the schedule of the writing centre, which often conflicts with students' regular classes. As I stated earlier in the background of this paper, the centre is serving students who are mainly undergoing either bachelor's degree or an associate degree in engineering. So, they have regular classes usually from 7 am to 6 pm, with ten-minute break in between every hour, for example lecture at 7:15 am ends at 8:05 am, and the next one begins at 8:15 am. This is exactly the schedule of the Writing Centre, but instead of 7 am–6 pm, it starts at 9:15 am and closes at 3:05 pm.

Therefore, because the students' regular classes are usually packed with lectures, the only time they have to visit the writing centre is during the ten minutes' break, often rushing to catch the next class. In fact, the ten-minute break is the time the tutors change, that is, one comes and another one leaves, making the situation even worst, especially for the tutee. This schedule conflict neither allows them to concentrate and listen to tutor's guidance nor allows the tutors to employ any rigorous strategy to help them in reflective thinking. This concern was echoed again and again in

student's responses when asked 'why they do not come to the writing centre often or even early enough when they had any assignment.'

"*I have class from 7 till 5 most days.*" (Tutee 16)

Another one also said,

"*I have only one hour break the whole day.*" (Tutee 21)

Beside schedule conflict, tutors express so much concern about tutees' perception about the writing centre. Many students visit the writing centre expecting the tutors to just fix their writing.

"*They'd just pop in and hand you their work and expect you to just correct. They're not interested in the questions you ask them … or they don't understand. They just want to go.*" (Tutor 7)

The above response is clearly echoing the findings discussed in Chap. 1 of this volume regarding the teachers' opinion of students about the writing centre support.

In summary, these responses further demonstrate not only the low level of awareness, which I already discussed, regarding critical thinking, but also regarding the function of the writing centre. We can, therefore, sum up the major challenges of implementing critical thinking skills in the RCYCI Writing Centre as (1) lack of deep awareness about the concept, which leads to lack of adequate knowledge to apply the concept and (2) lack of time, especially on the site of the students to visit the centre. Even though, one of the tutors believes that "*if students show more interest, lack of time should not be an issue*" (Tutor 9). He further argues that "*there are times when the students are free and have the opportunity to visit the centre when tutors are available, but they just do not do that.*"

Conclusion

Even though we can consider the level of awareness and knowledge for the implementation of critical thinking strategies in RCYCI Writing Centre is low, it is difficult to say that the culture of critical thinking does not exist among tutors and tutees of the institution. Suffice it to say, this study still assumes the theoretical assumption of National Council for

Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction (2003), echoed by Vyncke (2012), Moore (2004) and Casanave (2004), that critical thinking is a universal mechanism required for basic human survival, and that it transcends subject-matter divisions or any social background. What people need is exposure to new concepts and ideas, and be given the opportunity to experiment. No doubt, required level of exposure to critical thinking concept is lacking in the context of my study. To me, the causes of non-implementation of critical thinking strategies in RCYCI Writing Centre is similar to the causes Ab Kadir (2015) found when he investigated the application of the strategy among pre-service and in-service teachers. His conclusion was that the non-implementation was due largely to lack of readiness and limited knowledge of critical thinking on the side of the teachers. I would like to say, in addition, students' lack of awareness about critical thinking skills as well as about the role of the writing centre plus lack of time appear to be the major challenges in RCYCI Writing Centre.

Therefore, I would like to recommend the following measures that would help to implement the use of critical thinking strategies in RCYCI Writing Centre to help students improve their academic writing skills:

- The writing centre administration, in collaboration with Yanbu English Language Institute, should develop a comprehensive model of implementing critical thinking strategies in the centre. This model should include the following:
  - A provision for workshop series to be conducted frequently for tutors and students mainly to raise awareness about critical thinking skills and to develop tutors' knowledge and implementation skills.
  - A timeline of activities that would include pre-implementation activities, implementation activities and post-implementation activities that propose evaluation and further plan.

Finally, this research did not explore every aspect of critical thinking skills implementation in RCYCI Writing Centre. For example, it has not explored the relationship between academic writing courses taught within the colleges and the development of students' critical thinking skills in the writing centre. I believe it has left a gap for further experimental investigation into the effect of critical thinking strategies in RCYCI Writing Centre.

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