

## **Developing a Descriptive Model of Critical Language Awareness in the EFL Context of Iran**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed at revealing the current state of Critical Language Awareness (CLA) in the context of Iran by analyzing Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' understanding of CLA, how familiar they are with the notion of CLA, and the way they approach it in their own instruction. It also focuses on the techniques they may use to raise their students' critical language awareness and also the challenges which they may confront in this regard. A group of 36 Iranian English instructors teaching English as a foreign language at different contexts, including universities, schools, and language institutes were chosen as the participants in the first phase of the study. Classroom observations and semistructured interviews were used to collect data. To complement the qualitative data, in the second phase of the study, a questionnaire was developed based on classroom observations and interviews, which was then distributed among 300 EFL instructors from the same contexts. Based on the findings with regard to the current state of CLA among EFL instructors in the context of Iran, a descriptive model of CLA was developed. This model was developed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) procedure by applying the Linear Structural Relations (LISREL) software. This model might be useful to several stakeholders in the field, including language teachers, as well as their learners, material developers, and curriculum designers. Further, the study revealed that the current state of CLA among EFL teachers in the context of Iran depended on these teachers' background involving their experience, educational context, and their students' age and level of education.

**Keywords:** Critical Language Awareness, English as a Foreign Language instructors, descriptive model of CLA

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### **1. Introduction**

Language as a tool of communication is used by people every day, although we may not think about it or be aware of it. As Kumaravadivelu (2003) has stated language is so intricately interwoven into the fabric of our lives that we rarely notice its presence around us, "we use it, misuse it, and abuse it; and yet, we seldom think about it" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 156). Therefore, as language teachers and educators, we are supposed to make our learners aware of the fact that how language might be used as a tool for manipulation and domination. It is our responsibility to help learners in detection of biased and manipulative language, and also in deconstructing texts with their intended ideologies.

"Language plays a crucial role in expressing, changing, and particularly reproducing ideologies" (Rahimi & Riasati, 2011, p. 111). Because it operates within social systems and institutions, language tends to construct and reflect ideology. It is produced in contexts which are constructed by the ideology of different social dimensions, and not in a context-free vacuum (Rahimi & Riasati, 2011).

Traditionally, the enterprise of language teaching had been based on learning the surface structure of language, rather than understanding different layers of meaning hidden in texts. The shift from traditional second language (L2) acquisition perspectives on language teaching to a critical and sociocultural perspective pinpoints the importance of power and identity in language teaching and learning (Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Miller, 2009). Thus, language teachers ought to develop in learners, not only the operational and descriptive knowledge of the linguistic practices of the world, but also a critical awareness of how social factors and relations of power shape these practices as well (Clark, Fairclough, Ivanič, & Martin-Jones, 2009).

There is a need in EFL contexts to explore the experiences of language teaching and learning through a pedagogy which focuses on knowledge about language, and more specifically, knowledge about the ideological and social dimensions of language: what we know as Critical Language Awareness (CLA). When the purpose of language education is the development of a critical awareness of the world, it can help in moving foreign language instruction towards a deeper and broader understanding of English. Thus, it is of utmost importance for language teachers to enlighten their students and train their minds to be able to think critically in the target language.

If language instruction, as a vehicle for liberation, aims at empowering learners, it must include implementing different abilities in them, involving the ability to say and write what they mean, hearing what is said and what is hidden, in addition to being able to defend their point of view, and having the ability to argue, persuade and negotiate (Janks, 2012).

### **1.1 Critical Language Awareness**

Critical Language Awareness (CLA) is a term which is coined in the late 1980s and early 1990s at Lancaster University by a Language-Ideology-Power research group, as a pedagogical approach that focuses on the relationship between language and power asking language users to attend to the various choices they might make and also to the consequences that their choices may have (Petersen, 2014). CLA focuses on an awareness of social, political, and contextual factors with regard to language use. It is based upon the relationship between language and social context. As Freire (1974) stated, we need to have a critical awareness of the word in order to develop a critical awareness of the world.

Through the CLA lens, language education can be seen as a critical source for sensitizing students to social inequalities which they may confront. Thus, CLA ought to be fully integrated with both the establishment of

language practices across the curriculum and the development of the students' intellectual capabilities which are required for their various struggles in different educational as well as social, political, and economic contexts of their lives (Fairclough, 1992).

It is the responsibility of language teachers and educators, to aid the development of learners' intellectual capabilities by implementing classroom activities toward raising their critical language awareness. They must help learners, through different teaching techniques and strategies, to understand how power is produced, maintained, and manipulated by dominant groups, and even how it is resisted by the dominated people.

As Zingraf (2003) mentioned, because of their unawareness of the ideological load of target language texts, and because of their unawareness of the manipulative function of these texts, EFL learners never question anything of the foreign language. Therefore, language instructors, especially in EFL contexts, are required to familiarize learners with CLA strategies and provide them with the necessary skills to feel more confident in expressing their own viewpoints and be critical of writers and speakers especially of dominant groups. Raising EFL learners' critical awareness promotes their consciousness of the injustice and several cases of inequalities which surround them every day. Implementing CLA techniques in the classroom may help transform learners from being passive and inactive to being more creative and critical students.

Because there is no particular course specifically designed for CLA, a requirement is felt for inducing CLA in educational contexts. Thus, this study is based on the current state of CLA in the context of Iran in the form of a cross-sectional study focusing on several EFL contexts in Iran, including universities, schools, and language institutes, aiming at developing a descriptive model of critical language awareness.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

This study aimed at revealing the current state of CLA in the context of Iran by analyzing Iranian EFL teachers' understanding of CLA, how familiar they are with the notion of CLA, and the way they approach it in their own instruction. It is based on realizing whether and how English teachers attempt in raising their learners' critical consciousness for being able to unravel the hidden agenda in ideologically-driven discourses which they encounter every day. It also focused on the challenges which they may confront to implement different strategies and techniques to raise their learners' CLA.

Based on the current state of CLA among EFL instructors in the context of Iran, a descriptive model of CLA was developed showing teachers' familiarity with the notion of CLA, the techniques which they use to raise EFL learners' critical language awareness, and the challenges these teachers encounter in this regard. This study aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What is the current state of critical language awareness among Iranian EFL teachers in the context of Iran?
2. What techniques, if any, do Iranian EFL teachers use in their classrooms to raise their learners' critical language awareness?
3. What challenges do these teachers encounter in their instruction with regard to implementing CLA techniques?
4. Based on these techniques and challenges, is it possible to develop a descriptive model of CLA related to its current state in the context of Iran?
5. If it is possible to develop a CLA model, what elements would it include and how would these elements be related to each other?

## **2 Method**

### **2.1 Participants**

The participants in the qualitative phase of the study included a group of 36 Iranian English instructors teaching English as a foreign language at different contexts, including 12 university professors holding PhD degrees, 12 school instructors with BA degrees teaching English at high schools, and 12 English teachers who were MA holders at language institutes including *Iran Language Institute* (ILI) and *Shokouh Language Institute*. It is worth mentioning that these institutes have branches in all the three cities of the study. The participants were chosen from three big cities in Iran, including Tehran, Kerman, and Shiraz as these cities are three of the main cities in Iran with regard to education and they include different geographical regions in the country including north, center, and south. They included both genders though gender was not a significant factor in this study.

The second phase of the study (the quantitative phase) involved 300 EFL instructors from the same contexts. Because the study aimed at developing a descriptive model of CLA, the information gathered from 36 participants did not suffice for the model development. Thus, it made use of a larger sample of participants from the same contexts.

The study followed purposive sampling because it aimed at collecting data from EFL teachers with more than five years of teaching experience who were also academically knowledgeable to provide the relevant and required information. It should be mentioned that initially the researcher intended to interview more participants, though as the collected data was sufficiently informative, the study reached data saturation with the current participants, as no new information was forthcoming from the new participants.

### **2.2 Instruments**

The instruments which were used to collect data included classroom observations, semistructured interviews, and a questionnaire which was developed based on the qualitative data collected through observations and interviews. Interview questions were developed based on observation, field notes and CLA literature in the field.

Based on the data collected through observations and interviews, a questionnaire was developed. In order to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire, experts' views analysis and peer debriefing were used. When the questionnaire items were developed, they were reviewed and analyzed by three English teachers. Based on their analyses, a few items were deleted for being reiterative and some items were rephrased because of being ambiguous. The questionnaire was also used in a pilot study with 300 EFL teachers from the same contexts as the main study. For the sake of construct validity estimation of the questionnaire, factor analysis was used. The results of factor analysis are shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1  
*KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.873
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	600.141
	df	325
	Sig.	.000

Table 1 shows Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The KMO statistic, which varies generally between 0 and 1, showed the value of 0.87 for the current data, which indicated a high value. According to Kaiser (1974) values greater than 0.5 are acceptable, while values between 0.5 and 0.7 are moderate, between 0.7 and 0.8 good, and between 0.8 and 0.9 great. Thus, it can be said confidently that factor analysis of the current data was appropriate. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was used to test the null hypothesis in order to show that the

original correlation matrix was an identity matrix. The factor analysis of the current data was appropriate since the Bartlett's Test was highly significant for these data ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 2  
*Total Variance Explained*

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.074	31.052	31.052	8.074	31.052	31.052	3.322	12.776	12.776
2	2.152	8.278	39.330	2.152	8.278	39.330	2.696	10.370	23.146
3	1.991	7.658	46.988	1.991	7.658	46.988	2.656	10.214	33.360
4	1.668	6.415	53.403	1.668	6.415	53.403	2.543	9.782	43.142
5	1.571	6.042	59.444	1.571	6.042	59.444	2.294	8.822	51.964
6	1.389	5.343	64.787	1.389	5.343	64.787	1.982	7.621	59.585
7	1.187	4.567	69.354	1.187	4.567	69.354	1.914	7.363	66.949
8	1.143	4.397	73.751	1.143	4.397	73.751	1.768	6.802	73.751
9	.930	3.575	77.326						
10	.848	3.260	80.586						
11	.783	3.011	83.597						
12	.729	2.805	86.402						
13	.609	2.344	88.745						
14	.466	1.791	90.536						
15	.443	1.705	92.241						
16	.399	1.536	93.777						
17	.352	1.355	95.132						
18	.339	1.304	96.436						
19	.261	1.003	97.439						
20	.190	.729	98.169						
21	.144	.552	98.721						
22	.123	.475	99.196						
23	.090	.347	99.542						
24	.060	.232	99.775						
25	.043	.166	99.941						
26	.015	.059	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 2 shows factor extraction listing eigenvalues being associated with each linear factor before extraction, after extraction and finally, after rotation. The analysis identified 26 linear factors in the dataset before extraction. Each eigenvalue was represented in terms of the percentage of variance. As shown in Table 2, factor 1 explained 31.052 of variance. Basically, the first few components represented relatively large amounts of variance in comparison to the subsequent ones which indicated small amounts of variance. Then all factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, leaving us with eight factors. The eigenvalues associated with these factors were displayed under Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings. In this column the values of the



discarded components were ignored, so the table got blank after the eighth component. The eigenvalues of the factors after rotation was represented under the last part of the table entitled *Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings*. Rotation optimized the factor structure by equalizing the relative importance of the eight factors. Before rotation, the first component accounted for more variance than the other ones (31.052% compared to 8.278, 7.658, 6.415, 6.042, 5.343, 4.567, & 4.392%). However, after extraction it accounted for only 12.776% of variance (compared to 10.370, 10.214, 9.782, 8.822, 7.621, 7.363, & 6.802% respectively).

Table 3

*Communalities*

	Initial	Extraction
q1	1.000	.848
q2	1.000	.805
q3	1.000	.786
q4	1.000	.705
q5	1.000	.730
q6	1.000	.730
q7	1.000	.815
q8	1.000	.751
q9	1.000	.710
q10	1.000	.791
q11	1.000	.704
q12	1.000	.635
q13	1.000	.799
q14	1.000	.761
q15	1.000	.674
q16	1.000	.697
q17	1.000	.806
q18	1.000	.753
q19	1.000	.720
q20	1.000	.740
q21	1.000	.720
q22	1.000	.681
q23	1.000	.662
q24	1.000	.607
q25	1.000	.725
q26	1.000	.818

Extraction Method: Principal  
Component Analysis.

Table 3 shows communalities before and after extraction. Principal component analysis is based upon the premise that all variance is common; hence, the communalities were all 1 before the extraction. The communalities under extraction column represented common variance of data structure. Therefore, for instance, 84.8% of the variance related to the first item was common variance. According to Kaiser's (1974) criterion, if factor analysis conforms to the following criteria, then retain all factors with Eigen values above one: a) the sample size exceeds, 200 b) the number of variables is less than 30 items, c) the average communality greater than 0.6. Because factor analysis of the data in the study conformed to all these criteria, then factor analysis results of the data was appropriate and all the factors could be confidently retained. In order to estimate the reliability index of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha formula was utilized and it was  $\alpha = 0.90$  (Table 4 & Table 5).

Table 4

*Reliability Analysis; Chronbach's Alpha*

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
.903	26

Table 5

*Item Total Statistics*

	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
q1	92.7250	212.358	.549	.899
q2	92.6500	221.413	.317	.903
q3	92.8500	220.849	.315	.903
q4	93.0750	214.840	.453	.901
q5	92.8000	208.779	.647	.896
q6	92.5500	206.664	.772	.894
q7	92.8250	215.174	.452	.901
q8	92.9500	219.485	.361	.902
q9	92.9250	215.507	.488	.900
q10	92.8750	221.292	.308	.904
q11	93.1000	218.041	.386	.902

q12	92.6750	214.122	.583	.898
q13	92.9250	218.635	.476	.900
q14	92.8500	212.592	.538	.899
q15	92.8500	210.695	.668	.896
q16	92.6500	215.362	.517	.899
q17	92.6250	220.497	.397	.902
q18	92.7500	218.295	.438	.901
q19	92.9000	211.426	.637	.897
q20	92.8500	211.362	.615	.897
q21	92.8750	217.394	.442	.901
q22	92.9000	213.938	.540	.899
q23	93.1750	224.353	.237	.905
q24	92.7500	217.833	.515	.900
q25	92.6750	215.917	.438	.901
q26	92.9750	213.974	.671	.897

### 2.3 Data Collection Procedures

This study followed a mixed-method design, benefiting from both qualitative and quantitative data. A mixed method design helps increase triangulation, corroboration, and complementarity of the findings. The participants were ensured that their responses will be kept confidential and would only be used for research purposes. They were also told that the findings would be shared with them if they were interested.

Classroom observations and interviews encompassed the qualitative phase of the study. The researcher's stance in the observation was 'observer as participant' in which the observer did not really become involved in the behaviors and activities of the participants. Having a peripheral role, her status as researcher was known to those under study. The researcher created field notes during the observation sessions to be used later on.

The interviews had a semistructured format in which the questions, typically open-ended, were formulated beforehand but they were modified during the interview process. All the interviews were conducted in English,

which were recorded with the consent of the participants, and transcribed by the researcher.

To complement the qualitative data collected through the qualitative phase of the study, based on the observation schemes, field notes, and interview transcripts, a questionnaire was developed for the quantitative phase of the study, which was distributed among the participants. A google form of the questionnaire was created for the participants as an easier and faster way to be able to answer the questions online.

#### **2.4 Data Analysis Procedure**

The qualitative data collected through observation and semistructured interviews were transcribed and analyzed using grounded theory approach. Generally, a constant comparative method was followed, using inductive coding of the individual data pieces and simultaneous comparison of units of meaning. The transcribed data were coded and categorized. Accordingly, the data pieces, which involved participants' responses to interview questions, were analyzed by looking for similarities and differences among them. Then, categories with similar units of meaning were formed to search for underlying themes and subsequently, relationships among the categories. Then, themes were developed based on these categories. This process of coding, categorizing, and developing themes was repeated for each transcript or set of data. Therefore, using induction and verification techniques, a general model was developed well-grounded in the data.

In order to ensure the reliability and dependability of the coding procedure, the intrarater and interrater strategies were followed. To follow intrarater strategy, the researcher coded the data, then left the analysis for a week, and got back to the data later to recode them and compare the two sets of coded materials with each other. In order to follow interrater strategy, the researcher randomly selected a transcript and asked a colleague to code the

transcript using the coding labels identified by the researcher. Then, the results were compared to the original coded transcript to determine whether both coders had labeled the components of the transcript the same. Generally, no subtle differences were found between the two coded transcripts.

The questionnaire items were based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Means, variances, and standard deviations were calculated for the quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire (Table 7).

Table 7  
*Scale Statistics: Mean, Variance and Standard Deviation*

Mean	Variance	Std. deviation	N of items
96.5500	232.510	15.24829	26

Based on the findings with regard to the current state of CLA among EFL instructors in the context of Iran, a descriptive model of CLA was developed. In order to develop the model, the researcher made use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) by applying the linear structural relations (LISREL) software. SEM uses a model to depict relationships among different variables. A theoretical model can be tested in SEM, which hypothesizes how sets of variables define constructs and how these constructs are related to each other. "The goal of SEM analysis is to determine the extent to which the theoretical model is supported by sample data" (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010, p.2). Basically, the raw data which included SPSS files involving participants' responses to questionnaire items were imported to LISREL software. In order to start LISREL analysis, these files were saved as a PSF file. Before generating the path diagram of the final LISREL model, as it was a necessary step for the analysis, a general hypothesized model was generated based on the themes and categories resulting from the grounded theory approach. In order to do so, the latent and observed variables were defined.

The observed variables of the current study involved the background of the participants encompassing their experience, educational context, age and educational level. In addition to these observed variables, the latent variables included the three main themes resulted from the grounded theory approach involving 1) the participants' knowledge of CLA, 2) the techniques they used to apply CLA, and 3) the challenges confronting them in this regard. After defining the variables under the Setup menu in LISREL software, in order to create the path diagram, they were dragged and dropped into the PTH window. The underlying variables, which involved the categories below each theme, were also added next to each related variable. Then, the arrows between the variables were added to the path diagram in the PTH window. Clicking on the Build SIMPLIS Syntax button on the Setup menu, an SPJ window was created in which the Run LISREL item was selected to generate the final path diagram. This diagram included the observed and latent variables along with their underlying variables and the relationship among them.

### 3. Findings

Applying grounded theory approach, the researcher developed categories based on the raw data including transcriptions of the participants' responses to interview questions.

**Language and Power Relationship:** Nearly all the participants of the study believed in a close relation of language and power.

**Neutrality of ELT:** Respondents from different educational contexts held different views regarding neutrality of English language teaching. Unlike university and institute teachers, language teachers at schools believed in neutrality of language teaching.

**Importance of Cultural and Political Considerations in ELT:**

Mostly, university instructors, especially those who taught at higher levels like MA and Ph. D. strongly believed in the importance of cultural and political considerations in teaching English as a foreign language. Nevertheless, school teachers did not believe so. Institute teachers, on the other hand, believed strongly in teaching cultural aspects of language but not political ones.

**Dissociation between ELT and Society:** Unlike university professors, institute and school teachers believed in dissociation between language teaching and the reality of society.

**Ability to Criticize Texts in L1 as Well as L2:** Among the participants of the study, university professors, especially those with more years of experience, were the only ones who believed that if students learn critical principles of language, they will be able to criticize texts not only in English, but also in their own language.

**The Importance of CLA in Students' Future Life:** Nearly all the participants of the study believed that learning critical language awareness influences their future lives.

**Familiarizing Learners' with the Views and Values of Writers and Text Producers:** University professors and institute teachers teaching older and higher level students stated that we need to let our students realize how texts are crafted according to the values, views and interests of writers. School teachers, nevertheless, did not believe so.

**Free Discussion:** Free discussion was a technique which most language instructors at universities and a few teachers at language institutes mentioned applying in their classes. None of school teachers stated using it.

**Reading between the Lines:** More experienced professors at universities and teachers at higher levels in language institutes claimed using the technique of reading between the lines in their instruction. School teachers, on the other hand, stated that they were just concerned about the propositional meaning of texts in their classes.

**Self-Expression:** Encouraging learners to express the ideas and viewpoints regarding an issue in class was a method which some participants mentioned using in their instruction. Among these participants, university professors were the ones who mentioned using it the most. Institute teachers teaching at higher levels also referred to applying this technique in their classes. Based on the school teachers' comments, self-expression was not a method being used at schools.

**Text-to-World Connection:** Among all the participants, university professors were the only ones who mentioned using text-to-world connection in their instruction, especially those with more years of teaching experience.

**Context Inference:** Context inference was a method mentioned being used by some university professors in specific courses and a few institute teachers teaching older and higher level learners. It was not being used by school instructors.

**Raising Learners' Talking Time (STT):** According to the participants' comments, English classes at schools were not a proper place for students to have an opportunity to speak English in comparison to language institutes in which language learners had more chance to talk, though limited. Universities, on the other hand, provided a much better circumstance for students to speak in class.



**Teaching CDA Techniques:** Teaching students about the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) strategies applied by writers was a method mentioned being used by university professors teaching higher level students. These methods included persuasion, argumentation, euphemism, and passivization.

**Choice of Instructional Materials:** Based on the comments of the participants in the study, university professors had the opportunity to choose their materials for each course they taught, in comparison to school and institute teachers to whom materials including books were handed down.

**Type of Instructional Course:** According to the university professors' comments, it was not possible to implement CLA in every course they taught, because some courses provided more favorable circumstances to do so.

**Preplanned Syllabus:** School and institute teachers in the study referred to the fact that besides teaching materials, they do not have the opportunity to choose their instructional syllabus either. In universities, though, every professor can devise their own lesson plan for each course.

**Lack of Knowledge of CLA:** Almost all the university professors interviewed in the study, especially those with more years of experience, were more or less familiar with the concept of CLA. Furthermore, although institute teachers were not familiar with technical terms related to CLA, generally their replies to the interview questions revealed a few instances of CLA application in their classes. School teachers, nevertheless, did not show any knowledge of CLA or any instances of applying it in their instruction.

**Lack of Motivation and Interest:** Unlike university instructors, language teachers at institutes were not motivated or interested enough to implement CLA in their classes.

**Lack of Time:** Lack of time and, as a result, the necessity to follow the lesson plan or to fulfill the syllabus was a barrier of implementing CLA for nearly all the participants of the study.

**Past Teachers' Practice:** Among all the participants of the study, there were only two instances of reference to their own teachers' use of CLA strategies in foreign language instruction and these instances were concerned with specific courses at university.

All these categories were later combined into three main themes: 1) knowledge of CLA, 2) techniques to implement CLA, and 3) challenges confronting CLA application. These themes along with their underlying categories as well as the background of the participants were evolved into a descriptive model using SEM approach by the application of LISREL software. This model is represented in Figure 1.

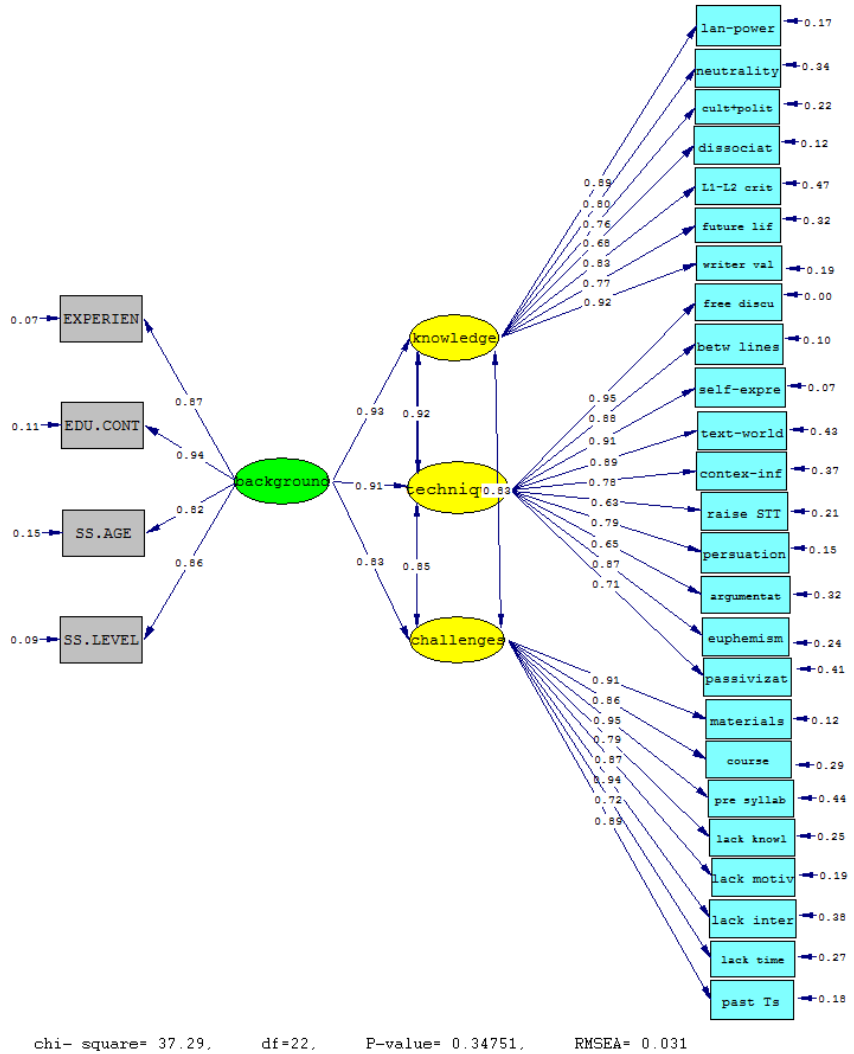


Figure 1. A Descriptive model of CLA in the context of Iran

#### 4. Model Specification

As shown in Figure 1, the main variables of the CLA model involve the three themes of the study including: 1) knowledge of CLA, 2) techniques to implement CLA, and 3) challenges confronting CLA application.

Each of these themes has its own components underlying it (Fig. 1). The first theme which is the knowledge of CLA, encompasses seven categories. These categories are shown as language and power relationship, neutrality of ELT, importance of cultural and political considerations in ELT, dissociation between ELT and society, ability to criticize texts in L1 as well as L2, the importance of CLA in learners' future life, and familiarizing learners' with the views and values of writers and text producers.

The second theme, concerning the techniques to implement CLA, includes free discussion, reading between the lines, self-expression, text-to-world connection, context inference, raising students' talking time (STT), and teaching writers' strategies (Fig. 1).

The third theme, with regard to challenges confronting CLA application, involves the choice of instructional materials, the type of instructional course, pre-planned syllabus, lack of knowledge of CLA, lack of motivation and interest, lack of time and past teachers' practice (Fig. 1).

As illustrated in Figure 1, knowledge, techniques and challenges of CLA have two-way dialectical relationships with each other. The more knowledgeable language teachers are with regard to CLA, the more they apply its various techniques in their instruction and the less they would be affected by CLA challenges (Fig. 1). The more EFL teachers implement CLA techniques in their classes, the less educational and social challenges would affect their instruction. (Double-headed arrows show two-way dialectical relationships between elements).

## 5. Model Evaluation

The results of the study were also quantitatively analyzed using SEM procedure. The output file of the SEM analysis showed the chi-square goodness-of-fit test, as well as the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). RMSEA adjusts for the complexity of the model and the size of

the sample. Generally, RMSEA of 0.05 or less indicates a good fit, with the current study showing a RMSEA value of 0.031. Usually, the chi-square statistic's p-value must be greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ), which showed a value of 0.34751 in the current study, indicating a good fit between the data and the proposed model. The results of the SEM analysis (as shown in Table 8) also indicated that the size of the chi-square/DF = 1.695 (values below 3 are acceptable), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.987 (values approaching 1 show good model-data fit), and a measure of Balanced Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) = 0.953 (values above 0.9 are appropriate). Therefore, the analyses and measurements indicated that the data in this study had a reasonable adjustment for the proposed model and as a result, the model was fitted well with the obtained data.

Table 8  
*Indices of the Goodness-of-Fit of the Model of CLA*

<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>Index of chi-square/DF</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Index of Goodness-of-Fit</b>	<b>Balanced Index of Goodness-of-Fit</b>
<b>7.29</b>	22	0.031	1.695	0.34751	0.987	0.953

The categories underlying each theme were found to be statistically significant, with the levels of significance being in a range between 0.6 and 0.95 (significantly close to 1.00), which indicated to be highly significant. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 1, the relationship between the background of the participants and each of the three themes of the study was also found to be of high significance (background-knowledge = 0.93, background-techniques = 0.91, background-challenges = 0.82). In addition, as shown in Table 5, the relationships among the three thematic variables of the study including knowledge, techniques, and challenges were also found to be significant. The highest estimate was found between knowledge and

techniques (0.92), with techniques-challenges and knowledge-challenges relations showing estimates of 0.85 and 0.83, respectively (Table 9).

Table 9

*Overall Standardized Parameter Estimates for the Structural Model*

<b>Path Relationships</b>	<b>Significance Level</b>	<b>Parameter Estimates</b>	<b>P-Values</b>	<b>Significance (Yes/No)</b>
<b>Knowledge-Techniques</b>	0.03	0.92	0.34	Yes
<b>Techniques-Challenges</b>	0.03	0.85	0.34	Yes
<b>Knowledge-Challenges</b>	0.03	0.83	0.34	Yes

## 6. Discussion

The need to develop EFL learners' critical language awareness has become an important issue, since nowadays we are exposed to several discourses via the media around us and it is generally difficult to decide on the extent of dependability of these information. Ideologically manipulated texts have become parts of our daily lives, and we do not even suspect the fact that we are being manipulated altogether. In such circumstances, it is the responsibility of the teachers to develop their learners' critical awareness to make them mindful and sensible people being able to respond properly to the manipulative attacks of society.

Based on the findings of the study and as an answer the first research question posed at the outset of the study, it must be stated that the current state of CLA among EFL teachers in the context of Iran depended on these teachers' background involving their experience, educational context, and

their students' age and level of education (Figure 1). With regard to educational contexts it is worth mentioning that the current state of CLA among EFL teachers at Iranian schools was far from satisfactory.

The results indicated that the majority of university language professors of the study were familiar with CLA and supported the helpfulness of applying CLA in foreign language instruction. This finding is line with the results of the study done by Sahragard et al. (2014) who found that the majority of Iranian university EFL instructors were aware of critical pedagogy and its principles. The study revealed that EFL teachers' knowledge of CLA depended on their teaching experience, instructional context, and their students' age and level of education. More experienced language instructors, especially those who were teaching in universities were more knowledgeable with regard to CLA and therefore they were more prone to use various techniques to apply CLA in their instruction. Furthermore, the type of instructional course was of utmost importance with regard to CLA instruction. Because some courses provided more space for discussing CLA and giving students awareness of various elements in this regard. For instance, some instructional courses such as reading comprehension, reading English newspapers, and literary criticism were among such courses. Other important factors with regard to CLA instruction involved students' age and their educational level, with older and higher-level students having more potential for learning CLA in their educational life.

In order to answer the second research question, it must be mentioned that there were few techniques that EFL teachers of the study mentioned using in their instruction to apply CLA. These techniques included having free discussion with the students, making text to world connection, providing context inference, reading between the lines, providing opportunities for students' self-expression, raising students' talking time, and teaching CDA

techniques such as argumentation, euphemism, passivization, and persuasion strategies (Figure 1). Reading between the lines which involved studying texts critically and differently to find meanings implied in texts was a technique which had also been used in Granville's study (2010) and also in the work of Koupaee Dar, Rahimi, and Shams, (2010). Further investigations in the study revealed that university EFL instructors encouraged their students to read between the lines and look for the hidden meanings implied in texts, in spite of the fact that their own teachers had not made them read texts critically, when they were students themselves. According to Granville (2010), reading texts critically and differently helps students make new meanings in a radically changing educational, political, and social context.

Having free discussion with students and providing opportunities for them to express themselves were among the prominent CLA techniques that were used frequently in the study. These teachers claimed that they allow their students feel free in expressing their opinions and viewpoints in the classroom, while withholding their own ideas until their students express theirs. Therefore, students would have an opportunity for discussing their ideas with their teachers and other students in class. This finding is in line with the results of Icmey's (2009) study. The positive effects of allowing students express their opinions in class were found in his study in which he allowed students to express their viewpoints after reading and analyzing texts critically, which also led to an increase in the EFL learners' motivation. On the other hand, it is contrary to the finding of Waseema and Asadullahb (2013), who found that in the TEFL context of Pakistan there was no opportunity for learners to express themselves and discuss their opinions with their teacher and classmates.

Another significant technique which was found in the study was text to world connection which had also been used in the study of Icmey (2009)



involving asking students to connect what they read in class to their own experiences in life. As Brown (2004) had claimed, providing opportunities for the students to learn essential social matters with regard to the world in which they live is the responsibility of the teachers. It is worth mentioning that inferring the context of text production leads students to connect a text to the larger context in which they live. Teachers' emphasis on making text-to-world connection supports the idea mentioned by Akbari (2008) claiming that the classroom context must be aptly related to the broader historical and social context. He believes that whatever happens in a language classroom should move toward bringing about a change in the wider social community. When students are able to make such a connection between the text they are reading and the real world in which they live, they are more prone to read between the lines and look for the intended meanings in a text in order to find such a connection.

In line with study of Vadai (2014) and Koupae Dar et al. (2010) who made use of explicit instruction of CDA techniques to raise EFL learners' critical awareness of language, the study found some of these techniques being used by university language teachers. These CDA techniques involved euphemism, argumentation, persuasion, and passivization. These authors also asked language learners to analyze texts in order to find out the texts' writers views and values which was found to be significant in the current study too.

As an answer to the third research question, it must be stated that there were several challenges confronting language teachers with regard to implementing CLA in their instruction. Among these challenges, lack of knowledge of CLA was a prominent factor among the majority of school teachers. These teachers claimed that their past teachers had not familiarized them with critical pedagogy and critical language awareness. Mohamed and Malik (2014) also found very little awareness of CLA among ELT teachers

as a result of institutional structure which favored mainstream pedagogy. Generally speaking, English teachers at language institutes did not have much interest or motivation to implement CLA in their instruction, although a few of them were familiar with the concept of CLA. The main reason for their disinterest and lack of motivation, lied in the fact that they were totally concerned with teaching the content materials they were supposed to teach in order to fulfill the syllabus in their instruction. Therefore, lack of time and the necessity to fulfill the top-down preplanned syllabi were great barriers for these teachers. Another challenge confronting CLA was lack of opportunity to choose instructional materials, which was a prominent barrier for school and institute teachers. Therefore, their instruction was confined to teaching word lists and grammar points provided in the pre-planned materials. University professors, nevertheless, had a greater opportunity in choosing their instructional materials. Having more favorable circumstances, university professors were able to make use of CLA techniques in their own instruction. At the university level, however, mostly teachers who taught courses like reading comprehension and literary criticism had a better opportunity for discussing notions like euphemism, voice, argumentation and implementing consciousness-raising activities.

To answer the forth research question, it is worth mentioning that based on the current state of CLA and the techniques and challenges in this regard, it is possible to develop a descriptive model of CLA in the context of Iran. Based on the results and findings of the current study, a descriptive model of CLA regarding its current state in the context of Iran tends to be as shown in Fig. 1.

As a reply to the last research question, it must be stated that the elements of the CLA model include EFL teachers' knowledge of CLA encompassing their familiarity with and understanding of this notion, the techniques used by

EFL teachers to raise their learners' critical language awareness and the challenges confronting them in this regard. It also involves teachers' background as an important element affecting these teachers' knowledge, the techniques they use and challenges confronting them. As illustrated by the model, these teachers' background includes their educational experience, their instructional context, and their students' age and level of education.

The elements of teachers' knowledge involved language-power relationship, neutrality of ELT, cultural, and political considerations, writers' values, students' future lives, the relation of CLT with reality of the society, and their ability to criticize L1 as well as L2 texts. The techniques which these teachers used involved strategies of having free discussion with the students, reading between the lines, creating text-to-world connection, providing context inference, raising students' talking time by withholding their own opinions before the students, giving students an opportunity for self-expression, and familiarizing them with notions like argumentation, euphemism, passivization and persuasion strategies. lack of CLA knowledge, top-down teaching materials, shortage of time and necessity to fulfill the preplanned syllabus, type of course, their past teachers' practice, lack of interest and low motivation among EFL teachers were the challenges confronting EFL teachers which led to no or less opportunity for implementing critical language awareness in foreign language instruction.

It is worth mentioning that the current state of CLA among university professors is much more satisfactory with comparison to school teachers and language institute instructors. For instance, they have more freedom of material choice in comparison to school and institute teachers to whom books are handed down and are supposed to follow the step by step syllabi. In addition to language teachers' experience and instructional context, their students' age and educational level are two other background factors which

affect CLA in the language teaching profession, with better opportunities for CLA application for older and higher-level students.

## **7. Conclusions**

The findings of this study showed that language teachers' engagement with CLA differed based on their experience, their educational background, the context in which they teach, the age and level of their students, and the challenges confronting them. As the findings showed, the current state of CLA in the context of Iran was not satisfactory in schools and language institutes while in universities the situation was much more appropriate.

The main reason for the lack of CLA among the majority of language teachers at schools and language institutes is that they are all caught up in institutionalized instructional practices that valorize mainstream pedagogy with the elimination of alternative practices. This condition leads EFL teachers toward being passive and deskilled so that they solely receive their teaching instructions from the institutions and apply them to their classroom verbatim without any modification or refinement. Another primary factor for this situation is the banking concept of education which is still the norm for preservice and inservice teachers both. Therefore, they are drastically drawn to the mainstream pedagogy and as a result, tend to take it for granted. In such a scenario foreign language teachers primarily perceive their role as EFL teachers to be confined to curriculum implementation. Furthermore, a great number of language teachers in the country are being drawn into the mainstream pedagogy simply because most language institutes support a policy of uniformity of language teaching methods for the aim of securing higher profits.

According to Mohamed and Malik (2014), since critical pedagogy offers much more emancipating and meaningful learning, in comparison to mainstream pedagogy, it must be highlighted and promoted in our

instructional contexts. Consequently, teachers should be equipped with sufficient knowledge and critical awareness of language. If educational institutions implemented a specific course on critical thinking in the curriculum, they would go a long way towards raising language teachers' and learners' critical language awareness. Therefore, EFL teachers and learners would be provided with sufficient opportunities to study and practice critical reflection and inquiry. Creating critical teacher study groups would be a good suggestion to raise their critical awareness since they can "enable teachers to become subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectuals" (Friere, 1970, p. 74). As a result, they lead to raising teachers' critical language awareness and by that means the field of TEFL may be enormously enhanced and upgraded.

Language instructors are supposed to make their learners aware of how language might be used as a tool for manipulation, oppression or domination. They can help learners in working with texts critically by deconstructing them with their intended ideologies and detecting biased and manipulative language. Based on CLA premises, every text is a constructed product and "anything that has been constructed can also be deconstructed. This unmaking or unpicking of the text increases our awareness of the choices that the writer or speaker has made" (Janks, 1993, p. iii). According to Brown (2004), it is the responsibility of teachers to provide opportunities for their students to learn essential social matters and to analyze several sides of an issue. A language class can be a very ideal setting for offering information with regard to different topics. Therefore, the purpose of a course should not be limited to structural and linguistic factors. It should include developing the art of critical thinking as well.

By implementing CLA techniques in language instruction, students would become more consciously aware of the nature of language and its role in

human life and therefore they get more sensitive to the relationship between language and the society in which they live. As a mental and internal capacity, critical language awareness creates a spirit of enquiry since L2 learners develop a tendency to see language texts as the true reflections of social realities and therefore, resist the temptation to see only what meets the eyes. By learning critical approaches to language study, students get sensitized to the invisible manipulative nature of texts and hence they make an effort to take a much closer than indifferent look at the things that are usually taken for granted. By reading between the lines, they deal with challenging tasks and attempt to question the authenticity of the information. Consequently, they can resist mental sluggishness, rather than being passive, to develop several competencies including thoughtfulness, discernment, argumentation, perceptiveness and critical thinking.

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