Investigating the Development of Critical Thinking through Novels in English Language Learning: Teachers'-Learners' Perceptions

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Abstract

Thinking plays very significant role in one's success in life, how relative the concept of success might be. Critical thinking has drastic impact to ameliorate one's attitudes regarding personal, professional and even social life, and it has been a crucial part of language learning. Merely using the language and knowing the meaning is not enough. Learners need to use critical and creative thinking through the target language. They need to differentiate between rational and irrational argumentations, be creative in producing ideas and critically support them with logical explanations. Teachers are expected to give the opportunities them to ask questions, to doubt and to reject ideas. Their beliefs and attitudes about ideas, concepts and their functions in language classrooms have momentous implications upon learners' critical thoughts. However, in English language learning, literary texts are proved as adjuvant instruments. The current study indicates, to improve learners' critical thinking, literary pieces might prove facilitating to be used in language classrooms. It aims to investigate whether critical thinking skills develop through using English novels in language learning, among the tertiary level learners in Chittagong and what are the views of English language teachers towards this issue. This study is based on findings, both quantitative and qualitative, which demonstrate that, though benefits of using novels in facilitating learners' language learning and development of critical thinking is convincing, but for language classrooms novels are not convenient enough to be used as a tool. To uplift learners' critical thinking ability, novels can be read outside the classrooms as part of extensive reading along with pieces from other literary genres, and for language classrooms of tertiary education, teachers should select materials aptly to enhance learners' critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Critical thinking, Novel, Language Learning

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study:

Literary texts may play striking role in learning and teaching language. Through using literary texts, language acquisition can be more accelerated. According to Gillian Lazar [1], literature is the utilization of language to inspire an individual reaction in the reader or an audience. For tertiary level education of language learning, literature plays more lively and exigent role. "Literature is" Lazar [1] said, "feelings and thoughts in black and white…A good novel and

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short story may be particularly gripping in that it involves students in the suspense of unraveling the plot. This involvement may be more absorbing for students than the pseudo-narratives frequently found in course books…If the materials are carefully chosen, students will feel that what they do in the classroom is relevant and meaningful to their own lives." Students of lower levels should be provided with graded materials rather an authentic novel or short story, as they might not be able to bring out significant interpretation of the content whether the tertiary level students may get a lot of new languages nearly, while adapting to the novel or short story. In any case, in language learning, critical thinking (as a generic term) is, likely, viewed as the fifth skill, along with the basic four skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Chastin stated in his article, "many years ago it was believed that language learning can enhance intelligence of learners. The more it was exercised, the greater its abilities and the larger its assets" (Chastin,1988, as cited in Yavari and Gholami, [2]). One of the "intellectual abilities which have been recognized as a determiner of learning is critical thinking. To succeed in language learning, critical thinking is one of the major competence for L2 learners" (Connolly,2000; Davidson,1998; Davidson and Dunham,1997; as cited in Yavari and Gholami, [2]). Renner cleared out, "critical thinking skills improve high order learning skills cause to higher level of language proficiency" (Renner,1996, as cited in Yavari and Gholami, [2]). To be able to think critically requires the usage of one's rationality and intelligence. This is the ability to decide what to do or what to believe. Paul (1988) looked at critical thinking as "learning how to ask and answer questions of analysis, combination and appraisal" and "the ability to reach sound conclusions based on observations and information" (Paul,1988; as cited in Yavari and Gholami, [2]). Elder and Paul (2003) mentioned "an important part of critical thinking education is, to keep asking questions in the learning process", stressing that "to learn well is to question well" (Elder and Paul,2003, as cited in Maibodi, [3], p.98).

Usually, in language classrooms, novels are pretty much effective in accordance with learners' preference. Moreover, learners regard the novel as the most effective literary form in helping them to develop their linguistic skills and cultural awareness. Though Tsai [4] states, "the novels' lack of organized and systematical presentation of curricular items may require extra effort for course planning, but it is such quality that gives the language classroom a different atmosphere. When using a novel in the class. The teacher assumes the role as a narrator and facilitator rather than a lecturer, the students are no longer passive language learners but active readers of authentic texts that provide them a genuine perspective of the real world" [4, p.104]. As the subject matters of the novels are not written basing the needs of foreign language learners, these shows the authentic uses of that language which consequentially make the learners aware of the language and make them able in functioning meaningfully in that language. Tsai [4] again points out that, "…during novel reading, students become familiar with various linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings that are intended for native speakers. The content forms a basis for further writing and speaking (e.g. literature circle, role-play) practices. In cases where audio CDs or film adaptations of the novels are available, listening practices can also be the added value" [4, p.104]. Specifically, the scope of a novel extends beyond lessons thus, through better understanding of perspective, interpretations, symbolism, motifs and patterns, psychological intricacies and opens learners' minds to critical thinking skills, like, reading

between the lines, critiquing, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and so on. With the help of learners' background knowledge, they may deal more wisely with complex situations, life dilemmas etc. that are addressed by the novels, even in their own lives too. Seeing things from different views may give them a different appreciation for things they already know and make the learners realize what they do not know as they thought probably that they do. However, English language learners are less interactive yet towards critical thinking skills in tertiary level education in Bangladesh, even sometimes they are almost not interactive at all. Teachers almost always do focus on only giving lectures upon the selected topic and cannot concentrate on whether the learners are being able to ask, think, create, judge and appreciate the circumstances from the topic with their rationale. While the students across the world are doing researches on critical thinking activities, our learners are leaning to memorizing and rote learning only to pass in the examinations instead of using their own thinking ability and creativity. We assume that while using novels, the activities that are used in English language classrooms might be determined in such ways that learners may feel interest and enthusiasm to be engaged in thought provoking and make the learners response according to that even outside the classrooms too. This thought led me to investigate the development of critical thinking skills among learners through using novels in English language classrooms. In this study, we would like to see the teachers' and learners' perceptions about learners' critical thinking development through reading novels in language classrooms, learning experiences of the learners', learning environment and the contents studied in English Language and Literature department.

1.2 Purpose of the Study:

There have been many studies on development of critical thinking through literary texts in English language classrooms over the world, along with its strengths and weaknesses. Regarding the researches about critical thinking in Bangladesh, there is not much works in this issue. The benefits of integrating literary texts in language learning to achieve students' holistic language acquisition and critical thinking ability are evident. But, in Bangladesh, learners are less interactive towards critical thinking activities and the teachers are still being the sage on the cage whether the classroom environment should be learner-centered, specially to develop critical thinking.

1.3 Hypothesis:

This study presumes that, by integrating critical thinking activities in the classrooms, language learning gets more accelerated and in developing critical thinking skills, novels might prove as a beneficial tool.

1.4 Research Questions:
How effective novels and their themes are in the process of English language learning and in development of critical thinking?
How is the learners' critical thinking experience in English language classrooms?
What are the teachers'-learners' perceptions about critical thinking environment in English Language & Literature department?

1.5 Significance of the Study:

The findings of this little attempt may benefit the learners and teachers of English language to have some generalized view of present critical thinking environment and classroom situation towards critical thinking activities in tertiary level education in Bangladesh. Using novel as a tool in language teaching and learning, teachers may include the activities that are mentioned in this study to motivate the learners and help them to be interactive in and outside the classrooms towards critical thinking skills. To be engaged in thought provoking activities, teachers may inspire the learners to practice the skills more, specially through their writings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Thinking: The Definition

Critical thinking, as Wikipedia defines, is the objective analysis of facts to form a judgment. The subject is complex, and several different definitions exist, which generally include the rational, skeptical, unbiased analysis, or evaluation of factual evidence. Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. According to Wikipedia, Lewis Vaughn stated that one needs critical thinking in aspect in life, in education and profession because one is required to use logic to evaluate and understand arguments in order to understand one's view of the world. Critical thinking will allow one to think outside of the box to extend one's learning abilities, problem learning abilities, problem solving skills, and will empower one's knowledge and understanding to evaluate a statement or to articulate one. J.J. Jelinek defined critical thinking as "interpreting facts, applying generalizations, and recognizing errors in logic"(Jelinek, 1956, p.633 as cited in D'angelo [5]). According to Maibodi [3], "critical thinking skills require self-correction, monitoring to judge the reasonableness of thinking, and reflexivity"[3, p.99]. D'Angelo [5] found that, "critical thinking should not be equated with creative thinking, problem solving, imaginative thinking, and other kinds of critical thinking. Critical thinking is not a singular skill; it is a generic term used to denote many kinds of skills. Distinguishing a fact from an opinion, recognizing and evaluating assumptions, and discovering fallacious arguments are just a few of those skills"[5, p.634-635].

2.2 Using Novels in Language Learning and Critical Thinking

While using literary items in language classroom, Bobkina and Stefanova state in summing recent studies that have indicated the possibility of connecting with students into the way toward offering meaning to the narrative strategies received by the author, animating them to the cross interdisciplinary limits by including components from zones, for example, postcolonial or gender studies. Subsequently, to urge students to produce and convey their own understanding of a literary work, the reader-response approach that relegates the peruser a functioning job in meaning making turns into the most reasonable strategy to arrange reading for joy and critical thinking [Egan,2005; Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, & Willingham,2005; Hall,2015; Yaqoob, 2011; p.679 as cited in Bobkina and Stefanova, 6]. Maibodi argues, "the idea of how the

language will be used might influence one's perception and way of thinking has always been intriguing to scholars in philosophy, sociology, linguistics, and language learning"[3, p.100].

Reading novels can allow one to develop empathy to different people in different situations, differing cultures, backgrounds, ways of life and it does open one's mind to the fact that things in life are not always black and white. Learners need to be able to think critically as Edward M. Glaser [7] summed up, "a persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports or refutes it and the further conclusions to which it tends. He proposed that the ability to think critically involves three elements:(1) An attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experiences. (2) Knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning. (3) Some skill in applying those methods.

3. Methodology

As mentioned in chapter one, the aim of this study is to investigate the development of critical thinking through using novels in language learning. Though this study used seemingly quantitative method, but it is actually in mixed-method approach by collecting data from both quantitative and qualitative methods. We have conducted this approach as it's believed that a mixed-method approach would increase the scope of the investigation and provide a more reliable way of investigation. We have collected quantitative data through a questionnaire that has been designed for the learners of English language at tertiary level and from the teachers we have collected both quantitative and qualitative data, again through a questionnaire. The collection and analysis of quantitative data is done in order to know the responses of a huge number of participants in a short period of time and the analysis of quantitative data is done numerically which is systematic. However, numerical data are not always enough to draw conclusions under the study. So, the collection and analysis of qualitative data is done in order to know the opinions of the teachers and what they think or how they feel about the topic. For qualitative data, we have not designed any interview question rather collected through questionnaire. The quantitative data have been analyzed using Microsoft Excel (MS.) 2010. To present the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire both from the learners and the teachers, we have basically used different charts and tables. The qualitative data that collected from the teachers through open-ended questions have been analyzed by coding them as T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter includes three sections. The first section presents the demographic description of students who have participated in this study. The second section shows the analysis of questionnaire that has been prepared for learners. And the final section includes the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data that were collected from the teachers through the teachers' questionnaire.

4.1 Learners' Demography:

It would be useful to know the demographic description of the learners in order to have a clear idea about the characteristics of participants of this study. The following table illustrates their demographic description-

Female	52%
Male	48%
Age (average)	24

Table 1: Learners' Demography

This table shows that the number of female participants is more than male participants, and their average age is twenty-four. All of the participants are the learners from upper level of undergraduate and from postgraduate level.

4.2 Results and Analysis of Learners' Questionnaire:

Each question in learners' questionnaire is analyzed based on three major research questions of this study.

4.2.1 RQ1. How effective novels and their themes are in the process of English language learning and in development of critical thinking?

Among 13 close-ended questions in learners' questionnaire, the first five questions were prepared to look into how effective novels and their contents are in the process of English language learning and in development of critical thinking. These five questions were formed to know how the subject matters of the novels are that the learners study, is there any practicality in the subject matters of the novels or not, how promotive they are in developing learners' critical thinking, what kind of effect may the contents, themes leave in their life after they read them, and what the learners think about their development of critical thinking and language learning through reading novels.

At first, the learners were asked about their opinion about how the subject matters of the novels that they study are to them, in order to see whether they find them highly interesting, deep thoughts provoking, just reading for exam, or the learners have no feeling towards the novels. They varied remarkably in their opinion as the following figure shows it more clearly:
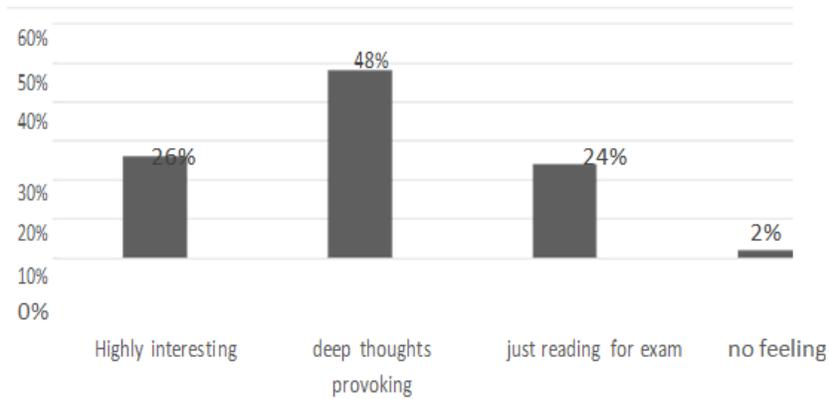
Figure 1: The subject matters of the novels that the learners study

The above figure illustrates that, majority of the students think that the subject matters of the novels they study are deep thoughts provoking (48%), and some of them find those highly interesting (26%), importantly some of the learners opined that they read those only for examination (24%) and rest of the population said that they have no feeling (2%) towards these. Through this illustration, we see that most of the learners enjoy the novels they read as they find their subject matters are deep thoughts provoking and highly interesting. But an important number of them said that they read the novels only to pass in the examination which means they are forced to read those only because of the novels are in their syllabus.

The second question was asked to know learners' opinion regarding the practicality in the contents of the novels stating that, 'there is no practicality in the contents/subject matters of the novels they read in the classrooms'. In this regard, good number of the learners agreed (24%) and strongly agreed (6%), but more than half of the total population disagreed (62%), and strongly disagreed (8%). This shows that, though majority of the learners can connect themselves with the universality of the novels, a mentionable number of the learners (6%, 24%) cannot connect themselves with the themes of the novels as those were not written for foreign readers.

This may happen because of cultural differences, as it is found in some researches that teaching English to non-native speakers through authentic texts may be loaded with cultural problems. The following figure shows the percentage of the learners regarding this question:
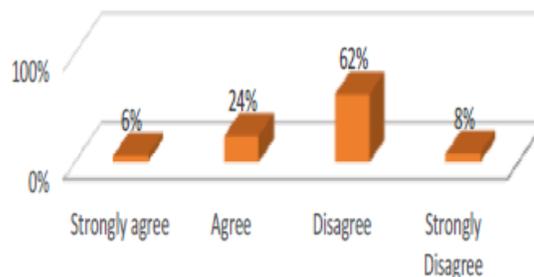

Figure 2: There is no practicality in the contents/subject matters of the novels

The third question was framed to see whether the subject matters of the novels are promotive to develop learners' critical thinking. Large number of the population said "yes" (57%), very little part said, "always" those are promotive to develop their critical thinking (3%), one-third of the learners said, "sometimes" they find those promotive to develop their critical thinking (36%), and the rest of the participants said "no" (4%) as they do not find those promotive in developing critical thinking. This illustrates that the learners are aware of their development in critical thinking skills and enjoy the contextual connection, plot construction, etc. of the novels by connecting with their reasoning skills, they may keep searching for evidence that both supports and refutes a given conclusion. Following figure shows these percentages:
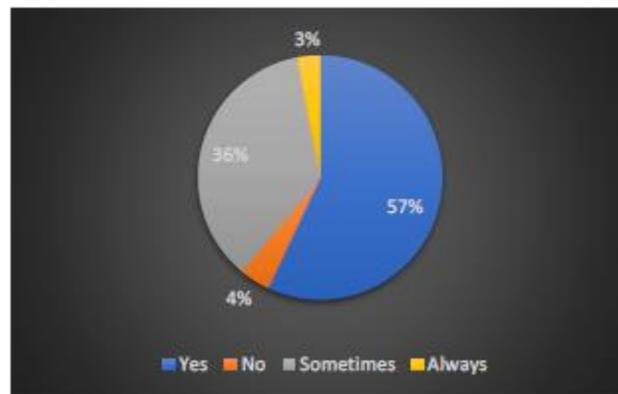

Figure 3: The subject matters of the novels are promotive to develop critical thinking

Here is the figure 4 which illustrates the percentage of question number four under first research question:
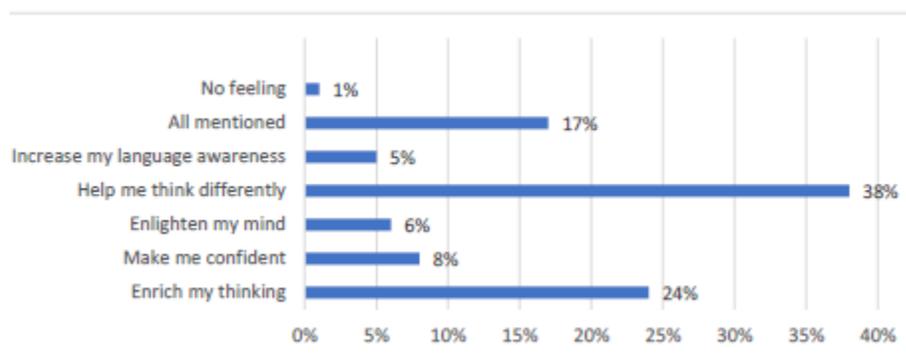

Figure 4: What kind of effect may the novels leave in learners' life after they read them

The fourth question was asked to observe what kind of effect the novels may leave in learners' life after they read them. As above shown figure indicates, learners consider that the novels they read 'help them to think differently' (38%), 'enrich their thinking' (24%), 'make them confident' (8%), 'enlighten their mind' (6%), 'increase their language awareness' (5%), and except those a few participants who have 'no feeling' (1%), the rest of the population opine 'all mentioned'

(17%), that is, they think that the novels increase their language awareness, make them confident, enlighten their mind, enrich their thinking and help them to think differently- which shows a positive attitude regarding the higher order thinking skills. Learners' ability thus become enhanced in solving problems and making decisions which eventually takes them to break down problems into the simplest outcomes.

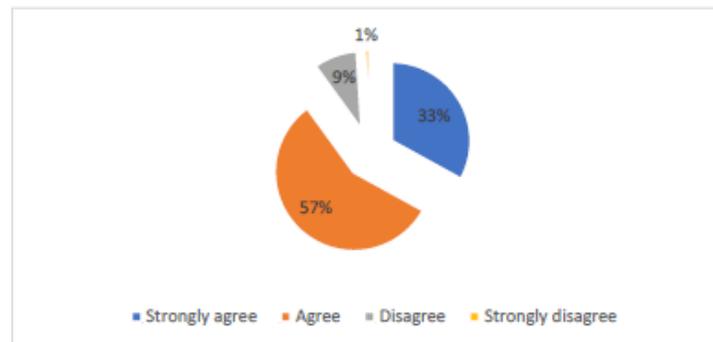The percentage of the fifth question is shown in the following figure-

Figure 5: Through reading novels, learners' development of critical thinking and language acquisition is facilitated consequentially

The fifth question was intended to know learners' views regarding the facilitating feature of the novels, in acquiring language with critical thinking skills, by stating "through reading novels, learners' development of critical thinking and language acquisition is facilitated consequentially". Figure 5 illustrates learners' views showing more than half of the population who 'agreed' (57%) on the statement, and another large part of the learners 'strongly agreed' (33%) that through reading novels, learners' development of critical thinking and language acquisition is facilitated consequentially. Among rest of the participants who do not think so as question five states, they 'disagreed' (9%) and 'strongly disagreed' (1%). Illustrating this, it is clear that, through reading novels learners' language acquisition is facilitated and the novels may play a beneficial role in development of learners' higher order thinking skills.

4.2.2 RQ2. How is the learners' critical thinking experience in English language classrooms? Among thirteen questions of learners' questionnaire, question number 6 to 9 have been framed in order to find out through what kind of critical thinking experience do the learners go in English language classrooms of tertiary education. These four questions were prepared to know whether learners find a cohesive relation between what is taught in language classrooms and what is needed in the real world; are the teachers of learners' department friendly, helpful, and cooperative in developing the critical thinking skills or not; if the learners see a fundamental change in their thinking and outlook after they experienced English language through literature with novels; and what do they think about learning language with critical thinking activities or do they feel it as difficult as before.

At first, learners were asked whether they find any cohesive relation, by stating 'you find a cohesive relation between what is taught in language classrooms and what is needed in the real world'. The participants varied in mentionable ways while giving their opinions. Some of them opined 'always' (29%), a great number of the learners said 'often' (32%) as they often find the copulative connection between what the teachers teach usually in language classrooms and what they need in the real world. One-third of them responded in 'sometimes' (32%), among the rest, one part found the cohesiveness 'rarely' (6%), and another part chose 'not at all' (1%) as they could not find any cohesive relation between what they learn in the classrooms and what they 33 need in the real world. This shows the picture of learners' diversity to be interactive towards the lessons and it indicates the difficulty in making interactive all the learners in a heterogeneous classroom. In such situation, development of critical thinking skills among learners differs remarkably which is a general image of the learners in tertiary level education of Bangladesh. The percentage of responses towards this question is shown in the following table:

6. The learners find a cohesive relation between what is taught in language classrooms and what is needed in the real world.	Percentage
(a) Always	29%
(b) Often	32%
(c) Sometimes	32%
(d) Rarely	6%
(e) Not at all	1%

Table 2: Learners' response towards cohesive relation between lessons and needs

In seventh question, it was asked to the learners about their teachers' role in developing critical thinking skills by stating 'teachers of your department are friendly, helpful and cooperative in developing the critical thinking skills'. Surprising note is, the illustration of this question presents that the larger part of the participants 'strongly agreed' (64%) and 'agreed' (34%) on this statement. Among the rest part of the total population, 'disagreed' (1%) and 'strongly disagreed' (1%). Albert Einstein said, "it is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge". In appreciating critical thoughts of learners, teachers play a very crucial role, even those thoughts and reasoned explanations may be accepted or may not be accepted by the teachers, but the teachers need to be stimulant. The following figure sketches beautifully these percentages:
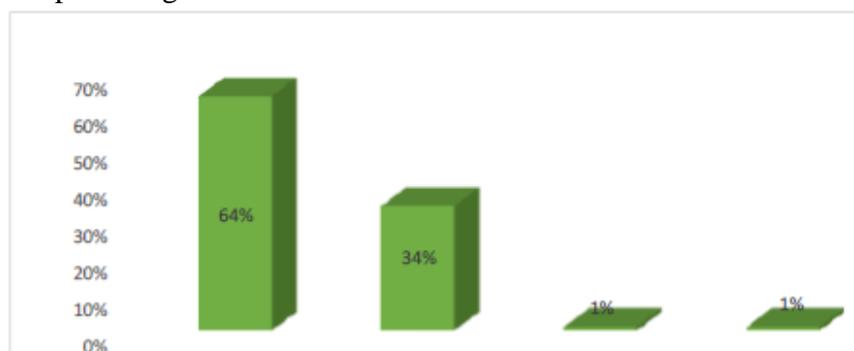

Figure 6: Teachers of learners' department are friendly, helpful and cooperative

Then, the learners were given the eighth question to find whether the learners sense a fundamental change in their thinking and outlook after they experienced English language through literature with novels. In this question, the learners responded in 'always' (35%), 'often' (19%), 'sometimes' (39%), 'rarely' (5%), and in 'not at all' (2%). This illustrates that, one-third and one-fifth of total participants always and often sense a change in their thinking and outlook going through novels. More than one-third of total population find that, they sometimes see change in their thoughts. And the rest of the participants do not observe any change in their thoughts after they experienced English language through literature with novels. This shows a fifty-fifty picture towards novels, to be used as both a beneficial and inconvenient tool for language classrooms. This may happen, because novels are too length to cope with and it becomes monotonous to the learners where they may not go with the flow of thoughts. The following table shows the figure of learners' response in percentage regarding the eighth question:

8. The learners sense a fundamental change in their thinking and outlook after they experienced English language through literature with novels.	Percentage
a. Always	35%
b. Often	19%
c. Sometimes	39%
d. Rarely	5%
e. Not at all	2%

Table 3: Learners' response towards the change in their outlook after reading novels

In question number nine, it was asked to the learners to find out their opinions and experiences about critical thinking activities and difficulty or easiness of English with these activities. They were asked whether learning language with critical thinking activities helps to learn English or they feel it as difficult as before. 39% participants opined that, 'it helps to learn English though sometimes they feel it difficult', 29% said that, 'it is helpful in learning English and rarely they feel it difficult', 27% said 'it helps to learn English and there is no difficulty at all' and the rest 5% opined that, 'always they feel it difficult and it is not helpful at all'. This shows, most of the learners acknowledge the easiness of language with critical thinking activities while learning English, though some of them feel it difficult. Those a few of participants personally informed that, they are not that fluent in English, specially they cannot convert their thoughts and feelings in English. It is said, the critical thinking activities are not practiced enough inside or outside their classrooms though almost all of the participants agreed that their teachers are cooperative in developing reasoning skills among them. They focused on enough source and administrative support upon this issue. However, the following figure shows the percentage regarding this question:

Figure 7:Learning language with critical thinking activities helps to learn English or the learners feel it as difficult as before.

4.2.3 RQ3. What are the learners' perceptions about critical thinking environment in English Language and Literature department?

In this section, it is seen basically, what are the learners' perception about critical thinking environment in English language and literature department. In order to know their opinions about critical thinking environment in their department, last four question were designed in learners' questionnaire. The learners' opinions upon the source to develop critical thinking skills, the learning environment, administrative support to promote and develop critical thinking environment, and whether effective novel selection can be an aid to learning English and devising critical sense in learners, were asked through these questions under research question three.

In question number 10, the learners were asked about source to develop critical thinking, by stating, 'there is good source to develop critical thinking skills in ELL dept.'. The following figure shows the percentage of their opinions:
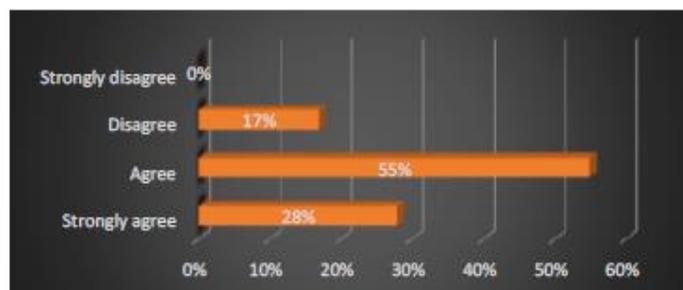

Figure 8: There is good source to develop critical thinking skills in ELL dept.

This figure illustrates, regarding this question, 28% learners 'strongly agreed', and 55% participants chose 'agree' while 'disagreed' 17% learners. That is, more than half of the participants think that there is good source to develop critical thinking skills and 17% of the learners think that, not enough sources are available there to develop learners' critical thinking skills in their department. It is clear that, there needs enhancement and enrichment along with existing sources to promote critical reading, writing, and other activities among the learners.

Question number 11, 12 were formed to know about learning environment and administrative support. The percentages of these two questions are shown in the following table:

11. The learning environment that the learners get facilitates creativity of them.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	0%	51%	45%	4%
12. There is enough administrative support to promote and develop critical thinking environment.	Admirable	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
	0%	30%	32%	38%

Table 4: Learners' opinions regarding the learning environment and administrative support in promoting critical thinking skills

The above table depicts that the learning environment in learners' department is merely facilitating for some of the learners, but not enough pleasing for all the learners. As question 11 states, 'the learning environment that the learners get, facilitates creativity of them', 51% learners agreed on it. But, in a reverse way, rest 45% disagreed on this and the least 4% strongly disagreed that the learning environment is not that facilitating in provoking creativity and critical appraisals by the learners. In question 12, it is stated that, 'there is enough administrative support to promote and develop critical thinking environment'. 30% learners said it is 'good', 32% of them said it is 'satisfactory' and the rest 38% learners which is the majority part gave their opinion by saying, it is 'poor'. From these two questions' responses, it is clear that the learning environment should be improved more which may become a critical learning environment, and there is more administrative support is needed to develop the higher order thinking skills among learners.

The last question in learners' questionnaire was about selection of effective novel in learning English and devising critical sense, again asked through a statement- 'effective novel selection 39 can be an aid to learning English and devising critical sense in learners'. Following figure shows the percentage regarding the question number thirteen:
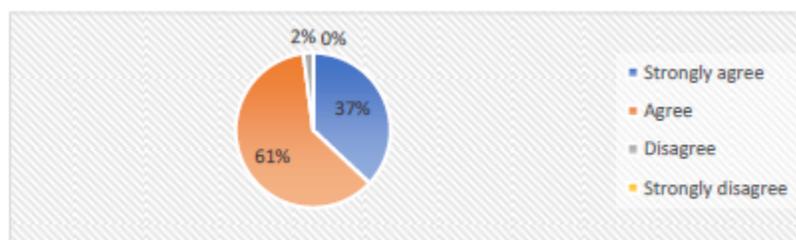

Figure 9:Effective novel selection can be an aid to learn English and devising critical sense in learners.

Above figure describes the learners' views regarding the effective novel selection which may prove facilitating consequentially in learning English and forming critical sense in learners. One-third of the learners 'strongly agreed' (37%) on this, 61% which is majority of the total population 'agreed' that, effective novel selection can be an aid to learn English and forming critical sense in the learners. The rest 2% 'disagreed' on this statement. This figure of percentage illustrates that in acquiring English language and devising critical sense in the learners, selecting effective novels might become an aid for them.

4.3: Results and Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire

Each question in teachers' questionnaire is analyzed under three major research questions of this study.

4.3.1 RQ1. How effective novels and their themes are in the process of English language learning and in development of critical thinking?

Among 14 questions of teachers' questionnaire, first 12 questions were close-ended questions which were under three research questions. Question number 13 & 14 were two open-ended questions in teachers' questionnaire. Five teachers participated in this questionnaire who teach at English Language and Literature department in tertiary level of Bangladesh. First five questions were designed to know teachers' opinions upon the subject matters of the novels that they teach in the classrooms, whether there is any practicality in the subject matters of those novels, whether the themes of those novels are promotive to develop learners' critical thinking, what kind of effects may the contents (of those novels) leave in learners' life after they read them, whether through reading novels, learners' development of critical thinking and language acquisition is facilitated consequentially.

Regarding the first question, the percentages of the teachers' views are shown in the following table:

1. The subject matters of the novels that the teachers use in the classrooms, are-	Percentage
a. Highly interesting	0%
b. Deep thoughts provoking	80%
c. a and b	20%
d. No feeling	0%

Table 5: The subject matters of novels that the teachers use

This table shows, among five teachers, four said that the subject matters of the novels they teach in the classrooms are 'deep thoughts provoking' (80%), and one teacher said those 'highly interesting' as well as 'deep thoughts provoking' (20%). While in learners' case, though majority of them find those deep thoughts provoking and highly interesting, but 24% learners opined that they read those only to pass in the examination. However, keeping their views in mind, teachers

may present the themes of the novels more interestingly and they can include more activities where the learners need to go through their own thoughts in performing those activities.

Concerning the second question, the percentage of teachers' opinions is drawn in the following table:

2. There is no practicality in the subject matters of those novels that the teachers use in the classrooms	Percentage
a. Strongly agree	0%
b. Agree	0%
c. Disagree	60%
d. Strongly disagree	40%

Table 6: There is no practicality in those novels' subject matters

Above drawn table shows, no teacher agreed on that, 'there is no practicality in the subject matters of the novels that they use in the classrooms' rather three of them 'disagreed' (60%) and two teachers 'strongly disagreed' (40%) upon the practicality issue of the novels. Regarding this question, almost one-third of the learners 'strongly agreed' (6%) and 'agreed' (24%), though majority opined reversely. The probable reason behind this is, the learners may not connect themselves with the universality or they may not see any similarity of the themes of those novels with their known surroundings, more specifically saying, with their own society and culture. But, the cultural differences cannot be minimized. In spite of this, the teachers may help the learners by comparing and by relating those themes with the learners' society and culture, can inspire them to cope with the flow of universality. The third question's figure of percentage is given in the following table:

3. The subject matters of the novels are promotive to develop learners' critical thinking.	Percentage
a. Yes	60%
b. No	0%
c. Sometimes	0%
d. Always	40%

Table 7: The themes of the novels are promotive to develop critical thinking.

This table illustrates, 60% teachers agreed that, 'the subject matters of the novels are promotive to develop learners' critical thinking' and the rest 40% said those are 'always' promotive in developing critical thinking. Regarding this question, bigger part of the learners responded in the same way as the teachers did. Among the rest, 36% learners 'sometimes' find those themes promotive, and 4% of them do not think the subject matters of those novels are promotive to

develop critical thinking. This little difference towards this question, between the teachers' and the learners' perceptions might occur in terms of variables while reading novels.

Question number four and its percentage is shown below:

4. What kind of effect may the novels leave in learners' life after they read them?	Percentage
a. Enrich learners' thinking	40%
b. Make them confident	20%
c. Enlighten their mind	0%
d. Help them to think differently	20%
e. Increase their language awareness	0%
f. All mentioned	20%
g. No feeling	0%

Table 8: The effects that the novels may leave in learners' life after reading

This table describes teachers' perceptions regarding what kind of effect the novels may leave in learners' life after they read them. According to them, the novels can 'enrich learners thinking' (40%), 'make the learners confident' (20%), 'help the learners to think differently' (20%), and the rest 20% mentioned all these effects along with 'enlighten the learners' mind', and 'increase their language awareness'. The learners also responded regarding this question almost in the same way.

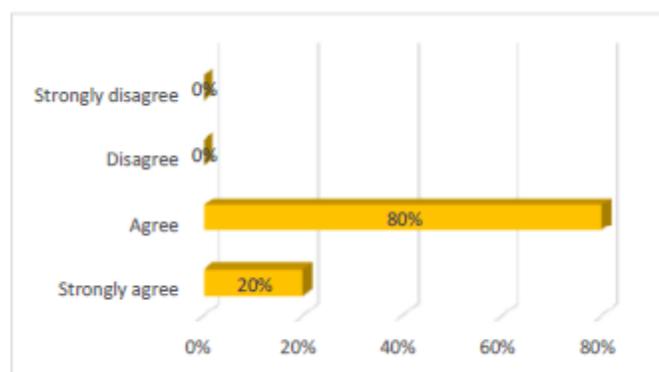In regards of the fifth question, the percentage of teachers' opinions is in the following figure:

Figure 10: Through reading novels, learners' development of critical thinking and language acquisition is facilitated consequentially

Question number five was intended to know teachers' views about facilitating critical thinking development and language acquisition through reading novels. The question states, 'through reading novels, learners' development of critical thinking and language acquisition is facilitated consequentially'. As above figure shows, the teachers opined these respectively- 'strongly agree'

(20%) and 'agree' (80%). The learners also opined as the teachers did. Only 9% of them 'disagreed' and 1% 'strongly disagreed'. Among the rest of them 'strongly agreed' (57%), and 'agreed' (33%) that reading novels, learners' development of critical thinking and language acquisition is facilitated.

4.3.2 RQ2. How is the learners' critical thinking experience in English language classrooms?

In teachers' questionnaire, question number 6 to 8 were under second research question which is about the learners' critical thinking experiences in English language classrooms. Through these three questions, the teachers were asked whether they find a cohesive relation between what they teach in the classrooms and what is needed for learners in the real world, how the learners' 45 responses towards critical thinking activities are, whether the teachers observe any fundamental change in learners' thinking and outlook after they experience English language through literature with novels.

The percentage of sixth question in teachers' questionnaire is given below:

6. The teacher finds a cohesive relation between what she/he teaches in language classrooms and what is needed for learners in the real world.	Percentage
a. Always	40%
b. Often	40%
c. Sometimes	20%
d. Rarely	0%
e. Not at all	0%

Table 9: Seeing cohesive relation between what is taught and what is needed for learners.

Table 8 illustrates the percentage of teachers' response regarding sixth question, which states, 'the teacher finds a cohesive relation between what she/he teaches in language classrooms and what is needed for learners in the real world'. 40% among the teachers responded as 'always', 40% said, 'often', and the rest 20% said, 'sometimes' they find so as the question states. The learners also responded in the same way except some learners who find rarely any cohesive relation between the lessons and their needs (6%), and 1% who do not find any cohesiveness between what is taught and what is needed for them.

Then, figure 11 shows the percentage of seventh question in teachers' questionnaire:
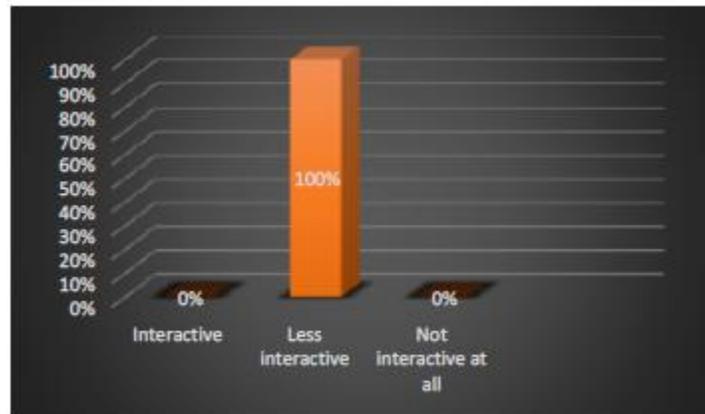
Figure 11: Learners' responses towards critical thinking activities

Question number 7 of teachers' questionnaire was asked to the teachers only, about learners' responses towards critical thinking activities, in which, all the teachers (100%) gave the same opinion that, the learners are 'less interactive' regarding such activities. There might have various reasons behind this situation. The learners who participated in this study tremendously opined in similar way regarding the cooperation, helpfulness of the teachers of their department in developing critical thinking skills among them. Critical thinking (as a generic term) or higher order thinking is such skill whose growth and development varies from person to person. But, some common traits regarding this skill can be observed by the teachers. For tertiary level learners, more specially saying, who are at the edge of ending their academic studies, being less interactive towards higher order thinking skills is a matter of great concern. So, where the teachers' cooperation is approximately beyond question, some of the probable reasons behind the learners' less interactions regarding critical thinking activities are- lack of eagerness in learners, lack of favorable environment inside and outside the classrooms, lack of sources, lack of supportive administration, lack of supportive and effective devices, lack of enough appreciation, lack of using technological devices, etc.

The eighth question for teachers was asked by stating, 'the teacher observes a fundamental change in learners' thinking and outlook after they experience English language through literature with novels'. The following table shows the percentage regarding its opinions:

8. The teacher observes a fundamental change in learners' thinking and outlook after they experience English language through literature with novels.	Percentage
a. Always	20%
b. Often	20%
c. Sometimes	60%
d. Rarely	0%
e. Not at all	0%

Table 10: Observations regarding the change in learners' thoughts & outlooks

Teachers' responses in this question shows, 20% of them think that, they can 'always' observe a change in learners' thoughts and outlooks after teaching them with novels; another 20% find so 'often' in learners; and the rest 60% of participated teachers 'sometimes' observe a fundamental change in their students' thinking and outlook after they teach them English language through literature with novels. The learners also responded almost in the same way as the teachers did. This depicts, according to most of the teachers and learners, for developing learners' thinking order and outlooks in language classrooms, novels may prove sometimes beneficial, but neither always nor often the learners should be provided with novels. Reading English novels outside the classrooms should be promoted and inspired by the teachers as a part of extensive reading to be brought change and enrichment in learners' thinking and outlook regarding various issues.

4.3.3 RQ3. What are the teachers' perceptions about critical thinking environment in English Language & Literature department?

The participated teachers' perceptions about critical thinking environment in English Language and Literature (ELL) department of the university where they teach, were intended to know through research question three. The last four close-ended questions were formed under this research question. In this part, teachers were asked whether there is good source to develop critical thinking skills in ELL department; is the learning environment that the learners get here, facilitates creativity of them or not; whether there is enough administrative support to promote and develop critical thinking environment; and what do the teachers think about selection of effective novels in devising critical sense in the learners.

Through the ninth question, teachers were asked about whether there is good source to develop critical thinking skills in ELL department. The percentage of their opinions, is showing in the following table:

9. There is good source to develop critical thinking skills in ELL department.	Percentage
a. Strongly agree	0%
b. Agree	100%
c. Disagree	0%
d. Strongly disagree	0%

Table 11: There is good source to develop critical thinking skills in ELL dept.

This table illustrates, all the participated teachers (100%) think that, there is good source to develop critical thinking skills among learners in ELL department where they teach as all of them 'agreed' on this issue. Among the learners, except 17%, think as their teachers think about available sources for developing critical thinking skills. As for the rest 17% who disagreed, it can be said that there needs more enhancement and enrichment along with existing sources.

Then, the percentage of teachers' responses regarding question number 10 & 11 are shown in the following tables:

10. The learning environment that the learners get, facilitates creativity of them.	Percentage
a. Strongly agree	0%
b. Agree	60%
c. Disagree	20%
d. Strongly disagree	20%

Table 12: The learning environment is facilitating for creativity of the learners.

11. There is enough administrative support to promote and develop critical thinking environment	Percentage
a. Admirable	0%
b. Good	20%
c. Satisfactory	20%
d. Poor	60%

Table 13: Administrative support in promoting and developing critical thinking

The tenth question states, 'the learning environment that the learners get, facilitates creativity of them'. As table 11 shows, 60% teachers 'agreed' in this regard, while the rest of them 'disagreed' (20%) and 'strongly disagreed' (20%). And in the eleventh question it was asked whether 'there is enough administrative support to promote and develop critical thinking environment'. Table number 12 illustrates, 60% of participated teachers said, it is 'poor', and 20% said, it is 'satisfactory', though the rest 20% teachers think it is 'good'. When these two questions were asked to the learners, they also responded almost in similar way as their honorable teachers did. That is, the learning environment in ELL department is merely facilitating for some of the learners, but not enough pleasing for all the learners, and there is more administrative support is needed to promote critical thinking environment and appreciate critical appraisals by the learners.

The last close-ended question in teachers' questionnaire was intended to know the teachers' opinions towards selection of effective novel in learning English and forming critical sense in learners. The question states, 'effective novel selection can be an aid to learning English and devising critical sense in learners'. 20% teachers 'strongly agreed' and the rest 80% of participated teachers 'agreed' that, in acquiring English and devising critical sense in learners, selection of effective novels might prove an aid for learners. As the teachers opined, the learners also gave their opinions regarding this in a similar way. The following table shows the percentage of teachers' opinions in the last close-ended question of teachers' questionnaire:

12. Effective novel selection can be an aid to learn English and in devising critical sense in learners.	Percentage
a. Strongly agree	20%
b. Agree	80%
c. Disagree	0%
d. Strongly disagree	0%

Table 14: Teachers' opinions regarding effective novel selection in learning English and forming critical sense

4.3.4 Analysis of Open-Ended Questions*:*

Five teachers have participated in this study and their opinions regarding two open-ended questions will be analyzed by coding them as T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5. Question number 13 and 14 of teachers' questionnaire, were formed to know teachers' opinions about using novels as a device to develop learners' critical thinking and for their suggestion about what kind of activities should be introduced while using novels in the classrooms as the learners are less interactive towards critical thinking activities.

In question number 13, teachers were asked for their 'opinions about using novels as a device to develop learners' critical thinking'. T1 thinks that novels can be used as a device in developing learners' critical thinking abilities. He stated, to develop learners' critical thinking, novels are "too useful and fruitful" as a device. Regarding this, T2 gave his opinion by saying, "I think they (novels) can be good device in this connection (in developing learners' critical thinking) if used properly and judiciously". He emphasized on proper and judicious use of novels in language classrooms, if they are to be effective in developing learners' critical thinking abilities. T3 said, focusing on 'learners' interactions', "if the learners are interactive, I think, novels as a device to develop language and critical thinking, can be very helpful". Her focal point was based on learners' response inside the classrooms regarding novels whether they like those as a tool or not. If the learners can connect their thoughts with the sequence of events of the novels, as T3 opined, they can be used in language classrooms, and thus might prove beneficial in developing learners' critical thinking. Showing positive attitude towards using novels in language learning, T4 stated, "I think, a novel has great impact upon learners' critical thinking". According to him, effective novels are influential in provoking critical sense in learners, but in average, learners lose interest while going with the novels because of their usual length. T5 concentrated on apt selection of novels to be used in classrooms. He stated, "novels may help learners' critical thinking if they are aptly selected". All of the teachers basically focused on the fact that, since the learners' upliftment of critical thinking is in concern, the novels might prove influential for language learning if they are selected suitably and implemented wisely by the teachers, so that the learners may not lose interest and become interactive towards the text.

Question number 14, that is, the second open-ended and last question of teachers' questionnaire was asked for teachers' suggestion 'if the learners are less interactive or not interactive at all

towards critical thinking activities', about 'what kind of activities should be introduced while using novels in the classrooms'. T1 suggested, "motivation" as he thinks continuing to motivate the learners is very necessary which works as an influential stimulator upon the learners. Then, he suggested to apply "innovative techniques" through "modern devices" along with traditional techniques to make the learners interested to texts as well as interactive towards critical activities. Regarding this, T2 stated, it is "better to choose topics related to teachers' likes contextually". According to him, using novels in language classroom is inconvenient, rather he suggested to select topics and materials that the teachers think suitable contextually for the learners to develop their critical thinking skills along with basic skills of language learning. Then the third teacher, that is T3, here again focused on learners' opinions regarding the materials which are to be used in the classroom before starting the classes. She suggested in replying question number 14, "if the learners are given chance to say something of their own, about the pieces and the classes before, they would be interactive". She neither encouraged nor discouraged the idea of using novels in language classrooms, rather opined to ask for learners' choice before starting the classes regarding the materials that are to be used, so that the learners become interactive in thought provoking activities by their own. After that, T4 provided suggested to use short novels, keeping in mind the problem of length where the learners usually lose interest with long novels' gradual progress of events. He stated, "short novels are better to be used and the learners need to go through exercises from the text where they need to use their own thoughts". Emphasizing on implementing such activities relating the text where learners need to go through their own thoughts and ideas along with knowledge from the text, he preferred to use short novels in language classrooms. Lastly, T5 suggested to ask for learners' opinions about the incidents of the novel to make them interactive. He stated, "learners' opinions should always be asked about the incidents happening in the novel". To engage the learners' critical thoughts with the progress of the plot, complex situations, T5 suggested to keep them asking frequently about the incidents happening in the novel, if the novels are to be used in language teaching, though he mentioned the problem of length as T4 also did.

5. Findings

5.1 Summary of the Findings:

Analyzing the close-ended questions regarding how effective novels and their themes are in the process of English language learning and in development of critical thinking, it is seen that learners gave convincing opinions. Ninety percent learners find that, through reading novels, their language acquisition and development of critical thinking is facilitated consequentially. Though majority of the learners enjoy reading novels as they find those interesting and deep thoughts provoking which harmonize with the teachers' opinions as well, a great number of the learners read those only for examination. One-third of total participants cannot connect themselves with the universality of those novels as they think there is no practicality, while their teachers think there is practicality in the themes of those novels. Regarding whether the novels that the learners read are promotive to develop their critical thinking or not, again one- third of them said those are not enough promotive always; while the teachers said those are promotive

enough. Although learners' views differ towards above points, but they think these novels have great impact upon their life after they read them which coheres to the teachers' views too.

In depicting how is the learners' critical thinking experience in English language classrooms, the teachers and learners presented their views with authenticity. It is seen that, in spite of difficulties in making interactive all the learners in a heterogeneous classroom, the teachers of learners' department are very friendly, helpful and cooperative, specially in developing their critical thinking skills as they opined. All the teachers said about learners' responses towards critical thinking activities that, they are less interactive. Regarding the issue of change in learners' thinking and outlook through using novels in language classrooms, both teachers and the learners provided mixed reaction that, those may prove beneficial as well as inconvenient too. Still now, some of the learners who are at the edge of their academic studies, feel sometimes learning English difficult with critical thinking activities, which indicates the disappointing note that the teachers mentioned regarding learners' responses towards critical thinking activities.

Exploring the teachers'-learners' perceptions about critical thinking environment in English Language and Literature department, it is seen that the participants' views are not that favorable enough about this. About the availability of sources to develop critical thinking skills, learners think there needs more enhancement and enrichment along with existing sources while the teachers think enough sources are available in the department. For enhancing creativity and critical skills of the learners, the learning environment is merely facilitating to some of them, but not enough pleasing to all of them which coheres with teachers' opinions as well. According to majority of the teachers and learners, more administrative support is needed to promote and develop higher order thinking skills among learners. Lastly, in learning English and forming critical sense in learners, all the teachers and ninety-eight percent learners opined that, effective novel selection might become an aid for the learners.

Analyzing the qualitative data, it can be assumed that for language classrooms, novels are not convenient enough to be used as a tool; but for developing higher order thinking skills in learners, novels are very effective as other literary pieces are. Learners can read novels outside the classrooms which may accelerate their thinking, as part of extensive reading. Influential and effective short novels can be used whose may match the adaptability of the learners and can motivate them to think, to ask, to judge, to accept or to reject ideas with their own rationales. It is better to choose materials and topics that the teachers think suitable contextually, which can instigate the learners' thinking process and inspire them to be active in critical thinking skills inside and outside the classrooms.

5.2 **Recommendations**:

Based on the findings, following steps are recommended to develop learners' critical thinking skills and to increase their interactions regarding critical thinking activities inside and outside the classrooms, to enhance their language awareness as an eventual part of language learning:

i. Choosing materials and topics that the teachers think suitable contextually to promote learners' critical thinking abilities and authentic materials can be preferred to do so motivating the learners to be active in critical thinking activities inside and outside the classrooms. To ensure a real learner-centered environment, implementing innovative teaching techniques using modern technological devices and engaging the learners to such activities where they need to apply their own rationales along with textual knowledge and understanding.

ii. To ascertain favorable critical learning environment, more administrative support is needed with enhancement of sources and proper equipment. Classrooms should be improved technologically. Teachers should appreciate and entertain learners' thoughts and critical appraisals, even without agreeing or accepting those.

iii. Learners should change their attitudes towards critical thinking by taking it as another skill along with four basic skills of language learning. They should increase their extensive reading outside the classrooms to be efficient in English and to cope with the present issues across the world, thus to connect their thoughts with universal themes eventually. They can read novels and other literary pieces from other genres to extend their extensive reading comprehension and to increase their language awareness.

iv. Influential and effective short novels can be used whose themes are thought provoking if the teacher thinks those suitable for the learners to shake and uplift their thoughts. But those need to be selected aptly and implemented skillfully upon the learners. Learners should be asked repeatedly about the incidents happening in the novel while teaching, and about their judgements upon the rational and irrational argumentations relating the themes of the novels.

5.3 **Conclusion**:

Language learning is accelerated by integrating critical thinking activities inside and outside the language classrooms. Since the tertiary learners of Bangladesh are still less interactive towards critical thinking activities while learning English language, to develop their critical thinking ability and to increase their interactions towards such activities, teachers should select and use materials keeping learners' choice in mind and that mostly suit them. Learners should change their attitudes regarding higher order thinking skills and should practice those more with eagerness specially through their writings. They should increase extensive reading specially through literary pieces which are more influential, relevant and contemporary to their personal, social and cultural perspectives.

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