

## The English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Infusing Critical Thinking Skills to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension

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**Abstract :** In the 21st century, developing students' critical thinking skills has become a prime concern in higher education institutions. Cognizant of this fact, the Ethiopian higher education policy document used critical thinking as one of the guiding principles. The study aims to explore how English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers perceive and practice critical thinking skills (CTS) in teaching reading to improve reading comprehension at Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia. A descriptive survey study used an exploratory mixed-methods approach. The study involved 20 EFL instructors and 40 2nd-year English majoring students. The numerical data were collected using teacher and student surveys and classroom observations; the qualitative data were obtained through content analysis and interviews. Teacher survey results indicated that teachers' perceptions are above average (mean = 3.41). And the result of classroom observations showed the practice CTS in class was below average (mean=2.61). The content analysis result revealed instructors utilized fewer higher-order thinking questions during class activities, quizzes, midterm, and final exams. The teachers perceived that teacher, student, and material-related challenges were hindering the practice of CT to improve students' reading comprehension. Finally, spearman's rho output showed  $r=0.97$  and  $p<0.05$ . Therefore, the results showed that the EFL teachers' practices of CTS to improve students' reading comprehension were less frequent; there was a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between the teachers' perceptions and practices of CTS in reading class.

**Keywords :** perceptions, critical thinking skills, practices, infusing thinking skills, reading comprehension

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