Empowering Thai EFL Learners as Critical Thinkers and Skilled Writers: A Genre-Based Approach with Critical Pedagogy

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Article information	Abstract
	Critical pedagogy has gained recognition as a powerful tool that empowers learners by encouraging them to critically examine the unequal distribution of power and social structures that privilege certain groups in their society. However, despite its application in various pedagogical practices, critical pedagogy's implementation in EFL writing classrooms, particularly within EFL contexts, remains understudied. To address this gap, this study explores the integration of critical pedagogy (CP) and genre-based approach (GBA) in an EFL writing classroom to develop students' critical thinking and writing skills. We developed a Critical Pedagogy Writing Model (CPWM) and implemented it in an Academic Writing course with 32 Business English major students at a Bangkok university. The CPWM integrates Freire's problem-posing concept with GBA principles. Using a mixed-methods approach, we employed a critical thinking development assessment, paragraph writing pre-tests and post-tests, and argumentative essays to evaluate the impact of the CPWM. Findings revealed significant improvements in both critical thinking and writing abilities after the intervention. This research contributes to the field of EFL writing instruction, demonstrating the effectiveness of combining CP and GBA and offering new insights into the challenges and possibilities of critical writing pedagogy in the Thai context.

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking skills are the skills of a person for understanding, conceptualizing, applying, synthesizing, and evaluating new knowledge or information acquired (Perdana et al., 2020). According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report, it is stated that critical thinking and problem-solving are skills on the top list that are highly required, and fifty percent of all employees need reskilling by adopting technology by the year 2025 (Whiting, 2020). As one of the most important skills in the 21st century, promoting critical thinking has become a central issue of discussion and practice among instructors and researchers in the educational area. Critical thinking skill development, which is regarded as the main objective of education, is significant for students' learning and development (Yin et al., 2023). However, Rivas and Almeida (2023) pointed out that although the real world has changed rapidly, the main

approach of education in higher education is still teaching existing knowledge, rather than focusing on the learning process that helps students acquire knowledge and develop their competencies. Teaching and learning in the education system that relies on lecturing and students' content knowledge are claimed to be factors preventing learners' critical thinking development (Aouaf et al., 2023). As a result, students lack the ability to work and solve real problems in different complex contexts.

Due to the lack of critical thinking skills among the students, critical pedagogy, which is a philosophy of education by Freire (2005), has been applied not only to promote critical thinking but also to empower learners through the pedagogical practices. Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education aiming to motivate learners to examine the power of the privileged and their exercise of power embedded in their social structures to liberate themselves from oppression and social inequality. As claimed by McLaren (2002), critical pedagogy attempts to empower the powerless to challenge the ideology of the privilege immersed in school, political, and cultural contexts. To promote social justice and equality, schools therefore play a crucial role in helping learners understand social injustice and the use of power by the authorities in their sociopolitical context. In this respect, Giroux (2007) argues that schools should provide a circumstance that encourages students to be engaged with the unending process of democracy, thereby helping them to recognize education as a project for democracy and critical citizenship. To promote learners' citizenship under democratic circumstances, Freire (2005) proposes problem-posing education, which dissolves the hierarchal patterns of banking education in which the teacher knows everything and the students are taught. In contrast, based on problem-posing education, dialogue is the key element changing the teacher's role from the one who teaches to the one who participates in dialogue with the students for collaborative construction of knowledge.

In accordance with the principles of critical pedagogy to empower and promote critical thinking of learners, writing instruction has been broadly applied by multiple researchers across a wide range of disciplines and learning environments. Writing proficiency is an outcome of ingenuity and a person with strong writing ability is highly valued and given several advantages in terms of job opportunities and social services (Gautam, 2019). However, despite its significance, rather than their limitation in language accuracy, EFL learners frequently face the challenge of idea generation in their writing tasks; students frequently encounter some problems in writing, including psychological, linguistic, and cognitive issues (Byrne, 1995; Rahmatunisa, 2014, as cited in Nurlatifah & Yusuf, 2022).

In L1 contexts, where students use English as their native language, the impact of critical pedagogy on enhancing students' critical thinking and writing skills is evident. For example, in Dublin, Ireland, White et al. (2018) used creative writing and the concepts of dialogue, democratic relations, and voice to promote learners' self-esteem. At South Dakota State University, Highfill (2014) employed critical pedagogy to empower learners as citizens and encourage critical thinking. The researcher asserted that critical pedagogy offered students the opportunity and freedom to explore their own values and beliefs during class discussions and while composing essays. Additionally, at a public university in the Southwest United States, Cannizzo (2021) utilized feminist language pedagogy, an approach within critical pedagogy, in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing classroom for first-year students.

Similarly, the impact of critical pedagogy has also been observed in second language (ESL) settings. For instance, Talukder and Samuel (2018) applied critical pedagogy in an argumentative writing course at a private university in Bangladesh, while Raddawi and Degenaro (2017) investigated its role in English writing and research courses at three private universities in the United Arab Emirates. Jeyaraj (2023) explored learners' lived experiences in Malaysia when writing under remote teaching and learning conditions. However, little attention has been paid to integrating critical pedagogy in foreign language (EFL) contexts. In this context, studies examining the effectiveness of implementing critical pedagogy alongside genre-based instruction (GBA) to enhance learners' critical thinking and writing skills could be valuable for raising awareness. To fill this gap, this research explores how critical pedagogy and GBA can be utilized in an EFL writing classroom to understand how developing critical thinking skills contributes to improved writing abilities. This study investigated the development of critical thinking as a foundation for enhancing writing skills. Specifically, it answered the following questions.

1. How can the implementation of critical pedagogy and a genre-based approach enhance Thai EFL learners' critical thinking ability?
2. How can the implementation of critical pedagogy and a genre-based approach enhance Thai EFL learners' writing ability?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical thinking is an essential academic skill that allows students to evaluate and analyze information using their foundational knowledge. This ability helps individuals to build persuasive arguments supported by evidence (Ma & Li, 2022) and it is regarded as a significant factor contributing to the writing ability of EFL learners (Afshar et al., 2017). Critical thinking is crucial in L2 writing because it empowers learners to develop their own voice and justify their arguments. Therefore, critical thinking and L2 writing are dependent and are factors demonstrating one's academic abilities (Demiröz & Demirkol, 2023). This literature review explores how EFL learners' critical thinking, writing skills, critical pedagogy practices, and GBA are interrelated.

1. Theoretical background: Freire's problem-posing education

To liberate all forms of oppression, the oppressed must reject the banking concept and embrace "problem-posing education" which dissolves the hierarchical patterns of banking education (Freire, 2005). According to problem-posing aiming to construct knowledge by students and teachers, dialogue is the key element to empower and develop learners' critical thinking ability as stated by Freire (2005): "Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition that unveils reality" (p. 83). By the dialogic method, Shor (1987) proposes empowerment and development of critical thinking ability with the key elements in a dialogic method called "generative themes," which can be used to examine the experience and create a critical consciousness of learners by encouraging them to interrogate the social stereotypes and socio-political issues that have impacts on their lives. Therefore, to construct knowledge, teachers must provide students with experience as citizens of the world and place real-world problems in the curriculum.

Shor (1993) argues that student-centered dialogue, according to the Freirean pedagogy, is the attempt to develop critical consciousness that allows learners to problematize generative themes from social issues in everyday life. To promote dialogue, the teacher changes roles from the one who teaches to the one who participates in dialogue with the students; in other words, the teacher teaches while being taught concurrently (Freire, 2005). In addition to their role as facilitators, teachers need to create a democratic classroom environment. As stressed by Giroux (2007), critical pedagogy is related to democracy in that teachers should provide a circumstance that supports students to be associated with democracy so that students will recognize education as a project for democracy and critical citizenship where they can apply skills and knowledge to interrogate all of the myths in all aspects of social practice.

To summarize, the most important element of Freire's problem-posing education is a dialogue that promotes learner empowerment and develops their critical thinking ability. Additionally, the key element in the dialogic method is the 'generative themes' which can be applied to investigate learners' experiences and foster their critical awareness, prompting them to examine social stereotypes and socio-political issues influencing their lives, as displayed in the Figure 1.
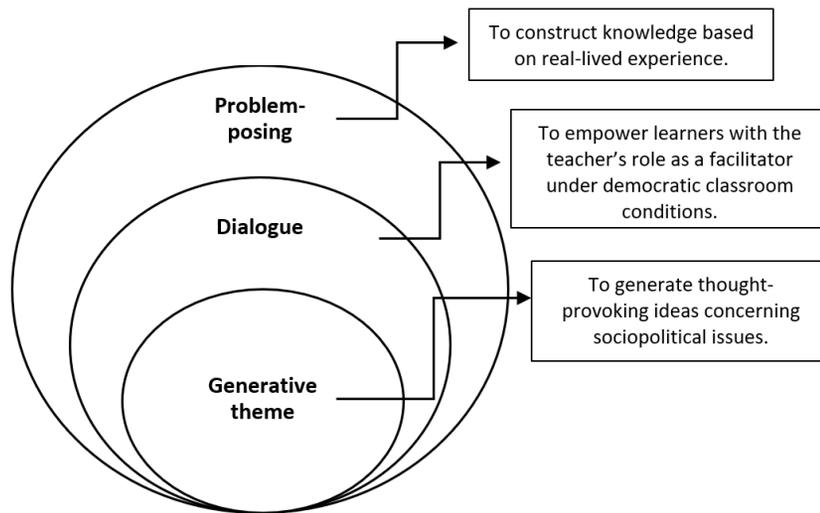
Figure 1 Freire's problem-posing concept

As illustrated, problem-posing can be described as a big umbrella representing Freire's principles of critical pedagogy aiming to construct knowledge based on the learners' real-life experience in their sociopolitical context. To achieve the problem-posing concept, dialogue is the key component. To create dialogue, the most important element is the generative theme, which is emotionally provocative content relevant to learners' real-world experience motivated by rhetorical questions provided by the teacher. In this regard, the teacher needs to adjust their position in the classroom as the facilitator and ensure the learners have a democratic classroom environment that respects the learners' voices.

2. Critical pedagogy and critical thinking

Since one of the principles of critical pedagogy is to promote learners' critical thinking based on the learners' lived experience, the terms of critical pedagogy and critical thinking have remained interwoven and inseparable (Bérubé & Gendron, 2022). However, even though the two terms seem to be closely associated, many scholars have attempted to address a clear distinction between the two terms.

On the one hand, in their review of critical pedagogy and critical thinking, Dahl et al. (2018) remarked that critical pedagogy and critical thinking are interrelated. Students who have critical thinking in the classroom can demonstrate the courage to gather information, broaden their viewpoints, challenge assumptions, and reflect on their actions. Accordingly, critical pedagogy strongly corresponds with the critical thinking development as it permits students to be associated with critical thinking development process based on its main aim to foster teachers to relinquish their classroom authority and provide learners with the opportunity to question authority and challenge conflicting assumptions. In addition, Twemlow (2023) also asserted that diversity of perspectives and critical thinking are the two important elements that are influenced by the critical pedagogical concept of the democratic classroom.

However, in a broader perspective, Killam et al. (2022) noted that critical thinking is a step to critical consciousness according to Freire's critical pedagogy, the principles of which are to promote social transformation by empowering the oppressed through education. Jeyaraj (2023) inserted that although critical pedagogy and critical thinking are seemingly similar, these two terms should not be confused. The author claims that while critical pedagogy intends to encourage individuals to think critically by seeking reason, truth, and evidence, critical pedagogy, in contrast, aims to empower individuals for justice and emancipation. For this reason, critical thinking alone in the classroom is not enough; rather, it needs to be equipped with political action in society. Pettersson (2023) also argued that, in a broad sense, both critical thinking and critical pedagogy foster learners' mindsets for critically examining supposed truth; however, critical pedagogy offers a broader view where knowledge and norms are seen as social and political phenomena. Therefore, in contrast to critical thinking, aiming to develop learners' higher reasoning and independent thinking, critical pedagogy intends to emancipate students through education (Herrera-Molina & Portilla-Quintero, 2021).

To elaborate, critical pedagogy intends to empower marginalized individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds with democratic classrooms that promote their voice, helping them to develop their critical awareness of social structures and change social inequalities (Finn, 2023). Therefore, critical pedagogy views education as a process of transformation where students are empowered to challenge social inequalities through their collective critical consciousness (Johnson, 2023). In this regard, Freire's problem-posing education, which focuses on exposing students to the world in which they live, is utilized as a means to help students become critical thinkers (Shih, 2018). As stated by Freire (2005) in his book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', while banking education treats students as objects, problem-posing education views dialogue as essential to the process of understanding, revealing reality, and developing students into critical thinkers.

3. Critical pedagogy and writing instruction

Since the principles of critical pedagogy aim to equip learners with critical thinking in order that they emancipate themselves from the oppressive and injustice social structure, critical pedagogy has been extensively employed through writing instruction. Arshavskaya (2018) argued that implementation of critical pedagogy in L2 writing classrooms not only helps promote students' critical consciousness and empathy but also helps them to be conscious of knowledge and power. Through writing instruction, teachers are allowed to perfectly position themselves to work with young people in exploring and addressing complex and controversial topics, particularly (Behizadeh, 2019).

In an attempt to empower learners and develop their critical thinking and sociopolitical consciousness, a number of educators in the area of critical pedagogy have proposed the practices of critical pedagogy in the writing classroom. For example, Giroux (1997) used his writing classroom design based on critical pedagogy to provide students the opportunity to contribute their affection and emotion on various issues concerning race, class, and politics. Shor (1987) exemplified the generative theme in a composition class to gain learners' voices, which is a method to empower and restore students' self-esteem and consciousness. Lee (2000) also proposed an approach to critical writing pedagogy, using "generative conflict" as an element to initiate an argument.

Due to the importance of critical pedagogy and the various approaches to writing instruction suggested by numerous educators, this educational framework has been extensively utilized in various writing classrooms with different writing genres. Among a variety of writing genres, creative writing has been largely employed to implement critical pedagogy in the writing classroom with a wide range of approaches since it has played an important role in developing critical thinking of students altogether with the improvement of their writing ability and critical consideration of sociopolitical issues (Clifton, 2022). As evidenced in White et al.'s (2018) research conducted in Ireland, creative writing was utilized to promote voice, sense of self, and critical thinking of the youth with lower socio-economic backgrounds, focusing on the concepts of dialogue and democratic relations. Moreover, in China, Yang (2020) also employed an ethnographic approach in an 18-week elective creative writing course, focusing on the key elements of critical pedagogy for the foreign-language writing classroom, including relationship, agency, identity, and power. Finally, creative writing grounded in critical pedagogy was also utilized by Arshavskaya (2015), who demonstrated a positive outcome of critical consciousness and a positive attitude towards critical pedagogy of less-motivated learners at the end of an advanced-level ESL writing course at a southwestern American university.

Furthermore, in addition to creative writing, argumentative writing plays a crucial role in fostering critical literacy when combined with critical pedagogy principles such as dialogic approach and problem-posing. Argumentative writing is claimed to be essential for developing critical literacy and students should be exposed to argumentation to become critical thinkers (Jimola & Olaniyan, 2021). In this regard, educators can empower students to think critically and construct coherent arguments using numerous approaches, especially those concerning dialogues. For instance, in line with the dialogic approach, at three secondary schools in the

Netherlands, debate pedagogy which involves debate-related activities such as reading articles, writing cases, and actual debates is claimed to enhance argumentative writing skills for L2 students (Majidi et al., 2023). Also, in Sweden, Dahlberg (2019) used mentor texts on political topics to help learners produce successful argumentative writing, the results showed that learners not only developed their argumentation skills but also the ability to provide more contributions to discussions in various social and democratic contexts.

Finally, sociopolitical issues are claimed to be a powerful tool to generate the students' ideas in argumentative writing, as found in research conducted in Bangladesh by Talukder and Samuel (2018). However, it is suggested that teachers need to be aware of challenges in creating spaces in classrooms with the role of teachers as co-interlocutors.

4. A Genre-based writing approach with critical pedagogy

The goal of a genre-based approach (GBA) to writing instruction is to teach writing skills by emphasizing the comprehension and usage of specific genres. According to Hyland (2006), a GBA facilitates learners—particularly those from non-English-speaking backgrounds—in gaining access to valued genres, and acquiring the cultural and textual resources necessary for academic and professional communication. However, conventional GBA have been criticized for their tendency to focus on structural features of texts that may insufficiently engage students in criticality (Cheng, 2008). To address this limitation, we modified Feez's (1998) five-step learning cycle by integrating some elements of critical pedagogy—a pedagogical approach that merges genre-based instruction with critical literacy. In our adapted model, we encouraged students to engage with the stages of GBA and critically examine and challenge dominant discourses through their writing (Janks, 2010). To promote this critical engagement, we designed an argumentative writing lesson that integrates aspects of critical pedagogy within specific stages of Feez's Teaching–Learning Cycle, which conceptualizes genre learning as a developmental process.

Feez's (1998) Teaching–Learning Cycle, situated within the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) Genre-Based Approach, lends us a pedagogical framework where we integrate language, meaning, and social purpose to support the development of students' writing abilities. Rooted in Halliday's (1994) Functional Grammar, this approach views language as a social semiotic system, emphasizing how linguistic choices are shaped by and reflect power relations, ideologies, and discourse structures (Hyland, 2004). In writing classrooms, the integration of Feez's (1998) cycle and critical pedagogy provides students with both a structural understanding of target genres and the contextual awareness needed to analyze language use critically. This approach also empowers EFL learners by helping them navigate key textual patterns common in English-speaking academic and professional communities (Hyland, 2004).

Despite its pedagogical potential, the combined application of GBA and critical pedagogy in EFL writing contexts remains limited. Among the few existing studies, Mitsikopoulou (2020) conducted a study in a university in Athens, Greece, by focusing on the integration of critical pedagogy and EFL teacher education through Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and a GBA. Students analyzed various media genres, particularly from newspapers and magazines, identified key features of academic and media texts, and explored how attitudes were expressed. They

concluded the unit by writing a brief report. The findings revealed that students became more aware of language features and developed broader perspectives on societal issues.

In a similar vein, Qoyyimah et al. (2022) investigated how a teacher implemented critical pedagogy within genre-based writing instruction in Indonesia. Using classroom observations, the study highlighted various teaching strategies employed during a genre-based cycle to teach argumentative essays. However, while the teacher aligned instruction with principles of critical pedagogy, several challenges emerged, including text difficulty and low student motivation.

Additionally, in the Brazilian context, Vian and Faria (2021) applied the GBA in combination with Freirean critical pedagogy in a writing workshop informed by the Sydney School's model. The workshop aimed to enhance students' linguistic awareness, particularly their use of modal operators and modality metaphors. The results showed improvements in students' argumentative writing, which demonstrated the value of integrating critical pedagogy with genre instruction.

However, although these studies contribute to the field, they offer limited practical guidance on how to teach argumentative writing in a way that simultaneously develops EFL students' writing skills and fosters their critical consciousness needed both for academic success and engagement with real-world issues.

To address this gap, we adapted Feez's (1998) Teaching–Learning Cycle as a GBA by integrating principles of critical pedagogy to support students in writing argumentative essays. Specifically, five key elements of critical pedagogy—democratic classroom practices, student empowerment, social justice-oriented writing tasks, active student participation, and critical dialogue (positioned in the outer circle of Feez's cycle, as shown in Figure 2)— were integrated into four of the five stages of the cycle: pre-writing, modeling and deconstructing the text, joint construction, and independent construction, with the exception of Move 2, *developing the context*.
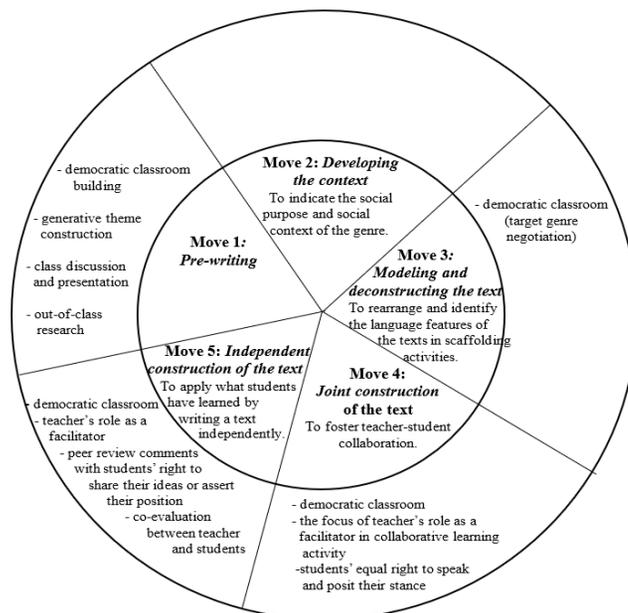
Figure 2 Critical pedagogy writing model adapted from Feez's (1998) Teaching–Learning Cycle

Move 1: *Pre-writing*

In accordance with Freire's problem posing concept, in order to originate dialogues, we built up the democratic classroom condition by explaining the pedagogical style of critical pedagogy being implemented, and inviting the students to participate in the course design and suggest some particular learning materials. The students were assured that the classroom was a safe place where they could share their opinions without being challenged or humiliated by their peers. Then, we created generative themes based on sociopolitical issues for class discussion. The students were also reinforced to do out-of-class research in order to build up knowledge based on their real-life experiences according to Freire's problem-posing concept.

Move 2: *Developing the context*

In this stage, text-building activity was emphasized. We empowered learners by encouraging them to question social practices by encouraging them to exchange their ideas on the institutional and social purposes of the argumentative genre.

Move 3: *Modeling and deconstructing the text*

We also empowered learners by encouraging their authorship. In this regard, we employed scaffolding activity 1 (text-level tasks) and scaffolding activity 2 (language tasks) to help the students understand and familiarize themselves with the target genre. In response to the principles of critical pedagogy in empowering learners, the students were allowed to negotiate and share their ideas about the Toulmin argument structure. As noted by Kamler (2001), the argumentative genre should be regarded as a clay work that is less static, factual, and touchable.

Move 4: *Joint construction of the text*

Based on Freire's problem-posing concept, this pivotal stage aimed to dissolve the hierarchal patterns of banking education where the teacher is the one who gives knowledge while students are knowledge recipients. In this respect, we fostered students' active participation by fostering collaborative work with the students. We focused less on input and modeling; rather, we acted as responders to student writing. Moreover, since joint construction was manipulated as a whole-class activity, the students worked collaboratively in groups with teachers, the facilitators in this study.

Move 5: *Independent construction of the text*

In this stage, we assigned students to write 2 topics related to social justice-oriented writing tasks used as writing prompts to encourage students to explore and express their positions on critical issues Benesch (2001). Students' interpretations of the context for idea generation reflected real-world issues they personally encountered, which makes their writing more meaningful and relevant. These authentic, meaningful concerns served as a foundation for developing idea, an essential component of argumentative writing. Equally important, we fostered a democratic classroom environment by encouraging students to provide constructive feedback on their peers' argumentative texts.

Across the five stages of the integrated genre-based and critical pedagogy model, we fostered student knowledge co-construction through dialogic interaction, grounded in Freire's (2005) concept of dialogue as a cornerstone for cultivating critical thinking. By blending the genre-based approach with the principles of critical pedagogy, we aimed to enhance students' writing abilities while simultaneously nurturing their critical thinking—skills they could carry forward into their personal, academic, and social lives beyond the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research context and the course

This research was conducted at a university in Bangkok, Thailand, which offers courses for both undergraduate and graduate students. The mission of the university is not to push learners' academic excellence, but to situate itself as a higher education institution for local development. The students at this university generally have low language proficiency, as indicated by the online English-level test based on CEFR standards, which all undergraduate students are required to take. Moreover, approximately half of them come from provincial schools in various regions of Thailand.

The Academic Writing course, which was a compulsory course aiming to provide learners with writing approaches to compose well-organized academic essays was selected for the research conducted throughout a 15-week period in the second semester of the academic year 2022. Before this course, in preparation for a more advanced writing course, the participants enrolled in the English Writing Techniques course, which focused on paragraph writing techniques. In this study, we designed the curriculum and materials throughout the semester, intending to instruct learners in argumentative writing by employing the principles of critical pedagogy and GBA as pedagogical practices.

2. Research approach and design

This research was conducted through experimentation in 2022, employing a one-group pretest-posttest design, which includes a pretest measure followed by a treatment and a posttest for a single group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This small sample size of 32 students was selected for the one-group pretest-posttest design because, qualitatively, they were able to specifically inform their understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study, helping the researchers to collect more specific information (Creswell, 2013). Accordingly, relying on a mixed-method approach, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using the convergent mixed methods design and then the quantitative and qualitative data were separately analyzed to examine the participants' critical thinking ability and writing ability. Dependent upon the mixed method approach, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected, the researchers could gain more comprehensive understanding of the research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009), using both quantitative and qualitative data to indicate the students' development of critical thinking and writing abilities.

3. Participants

The participants of this study were 32 second-year students majoring in Business English at a government university in Bangkok, Thailand. Having known this group of learners for two years, we realized that the target group of this study was an appropriate group of learners to implement the principles of critical pedagogy due to their low socio-economic backgrounds and marginalized status. That is, over half of them lived and studied at secondary schools outside Bangkok (59.38%). Moreover, approximately a half, or 50%, of them did part-time jobs and 31.25% of them had taken out student loans from the Student Loan Fund.
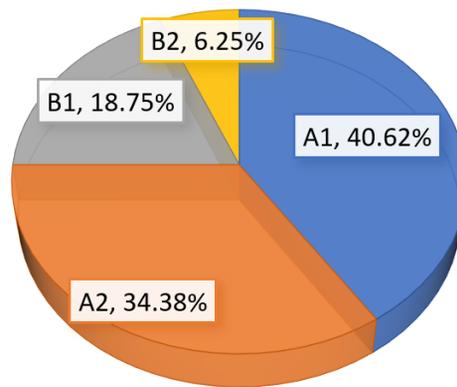
Figure 3 Participants' language ability based on CEFR

In terms of their language proficiency, according to the online English level test based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) standards provided by the university that covers the four main areas, including listening, reading, vocabulary, and grammar usage, most of the participants had the English language ability according to the CEFR at A1 level (40.62%), followed by A2 (34.38%), B1 (18.75%), and B2 (6.25%). This indicated that the participants were slow learners possessing weak writing skills when they enrolled in the Academic Writing course. Accordingly, in response to the principles of critical pedagogy aiming to emancipate the oppressed through education, the researchers purposively selected this group of learners for the experiment because this purposive sampling method could allow the researchers to use experience and knowledge of the target group for the experiment (Strunk & Mwavita, 2021).

4. Data collection methods

Throughout the 15-week period, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected for the study. First, we conducted paragraph writing pretests, asking the students to reflect on their opinions on corporate social responsibility (CSR) writing topics and write a complaint letter. Then, they were asked to give their response to the statements in a critical thinking development assessment form. Then, during the instructional period from weeks 2 to 14, together with class discussions on sociopolitical issues, the students composed two argumentative essays: one was related to the youth political movement in Thailand and the other one concerned educational

inequality. Finally, in week 15, the students did paragraph writing posttests, using the same writing topics as those in the pretests and then completed the critical thinking development assessment form.

5. Research instruments

In accordance with the mixed-method approach, the research instruments employed in this study contained both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments as follows:

Quantitative data

To answer research question 1, a critical thinking development assessment form adopted from Thomas et al.'s (2014) Critical Consciousness Inventory (CCI) was used to evaluate the students' critical thinking ability. CCI is a nine-item scale to assess critical consciousness development, comprising various aspects of critical consciousness such as equity and justice in society, equal treatment of different social groups, and educational opportunities for various groups of people. Each of the sub-items within the nine items was given numerical scores ranging from a = 1 (pre-critical), b = 2 (beginning critical), c = 3 (critical), and d = 4 (post-critical).

Qualitative data

The research instruments employed to collect the qualitative data comprise paragraph writing and argumentative essays. First, in addition to the critical thinking development assessment form, the qualitative data obtained from two paragraph writing tasks were also utilized to explore the students 'critical thinking ability in research question 1: the first writing task was relevant to corporate social responsibility (CSR), while the other task was a complaint letter. Although CSR is perceived as a business-oriented topic, in this study, the first topic relevant to a corporation producing haze and smog in a northern province of Thailand is a thought-provoking theme that could well generate the students' critical minds. For the complaint letter, since the participants were majoring in Business English, the researchers could cultivate this opportunity to promote learners' critical thinking with the familiar writing topic. With their familiarity with the topic, the students were assumed to utilize not only critical thinking but also their writing skills (Indah, 2017). Although complaint letters seem not require much critical thinking due to a fixed format, they still correspond with the principles of critical pedagogy, particularly the problem-posing concept utilized in this study. Problem-posing, which is advocated by Freire, not only encourages learners' critical thinking but also promotes their problem-solving skills, by engaging learners through dialogue and real-life experience, resulting in their confidence in decision-making and higher self-esteem (Shor, 1992). Therefore, writing a complaint was a challenging writing task for the students of this study as they had to express their problem-solving skills.

To answer research question 2, two argumentative essays based on the Toulmin Model proposed by Bowen (2023) were utilized to examine the students' writing abilities. The argumentative essay was selected for the qualitative data collection instrument since it is a powerful tool to enhance learners' critical thinking, particularly when engaging with group discussion and reflective practices (Lu & Nguyen, 2022).

6. Research procedure

The research procedure of this study is divided into two main stages: the development stage and the implementation stage.

Development stage

The development stage focuses on the development and validity of the research instruments. In this respect, the principles of critical pedagogy were explored and synthesized in order to develop the lesson plan in application of critical pedagogy and GBA. After the lesson plan was developed, all of the research instruments were validated by three experts using item-objective congruence (IOC) and subsequently piloted in a pilot study.

Implementation stage

The implementation stage was conducted in the Academic Writing course over 15 weeks divided into three steps: c*onducting a pretest, instructing argumentative writing*, and *conducting a posttest*. In the first step of *conducting a pretest*, in week 1, the participants were requested to do paragraph writing pretests and complete the critical thinking development assessment form. Then, in the next step of *instructing argumentative writing*, over the 15-week period of instruction, we followed the Critical Pedagogy Writing Model as the instructional plan designed by the integration of the principles of critical pedagogy and GBA. Lastly, in the final step of *conducting the posttest*, in week 15, the students were asked to do paragraph writing posttests, using the same writing topics as those in the pretests, and then the critical thinking development assessment form was completed.

7. Teaching procedure

As described in the literature review, this study employed the Critical Pedagogy Writing Model applied from the principles of critical pedagogy and GBA as the instructional plan for the EFL writing classroom. The teaching procedure following the writing model is briefly described as follows:

Move 1: *Pre-writing*

This stage taking place from weeks 1-3, aimed to empower learners and construct knowledge based on their real-world experience. First, the researchers cultivated Freire's problem-posing concept to assure the students a democratic classroom environment where every voice and different opinions were respected. Then, some social problems were introduced to listen to the students' problems occurring in their communities. Those problems were introduced as the generative themes for class discussion which is the method to originate dialogue between the teacher and the students. Finally, in week 3, the students did group presentation based on the social issues in which they were interested.

Move 2: *Developing the context*

In week 4, the students were engaged in text-building activities by exchanging ideas on the social purposes of the argumentative genre based on the Toulmin Model. This stage took around 30-45 minutes with the provided questions in order to raise the students' awareness concerning the social context of the argumentative genre.

Move 3: *Modeling and deconstructing the text*

This stage occurred in weeks 4 and week 5. Based on the genre-based writing, two scaffolding activities in text-level tasks and language tasks were implemented to help the students understand the argumentative essay structure based on the Toulmin Model. Also, for learner empowerment, the students were encouraged to negotiate and share their ideas about the Toulmin argument structure to help them become aware of their authorship.

Move 4: *Joint construction of the text*

This stage focused on collaborative writing; after the out-of-class research presentation in week 6, the facilitator role was highlighted in week 7. In this respect, we had a collaborative writing activity with the students by providing them with the opportunity to practice composing an argumentative essay in a group. After that, the students presented their written works in a democratic classroom environment that respected different opinions on the written texts.

Move 5: *Independent construction of the text*

In week 8, the students did an independent construction activity composing an argumentative essay topic: "Is it necessary for the youth to go for political movement?" Like Move 5, the teacher with the facilitator role was still emphasized by giving the students some advice to compose the essay. Also, to empower learners, the students were allowed to critique their friends' essays under the established democratic classroom condition. To empower, the students could co-evaluate their writing with us, helping to foster their sense of authorship.

After Move 1-5 were accomplished, the teaching returned to Move 1 again to generate the students' ideas for argumentative essay 2 with a new topic of "Is Thai education equal and fair for learners with any types of socio-economic backgrounds?" taking place in weeks 9-15.

The evaluation criteria of the two essays focus on how effectively the students can develop their argumentation. Therefore, the scoring rubric developed by Bowen (2023) employed in this study provides a development/support section that includes all essential elements, comprising topic sentences, grounds, and warrants in the body paragraphs of the Toulmin-based essay structure. This design helps raters easily follow the scoring criteria and determine whether any writers miss the required elements when developing their arguments. Accordingly, based on the Toulmin model and the adopted scoring criteria, the students were instructed to write argumentative essays following this structure, with a length of approximately 300-500 words.

8. Data analysis

To answer research question 1, which examined the students' critical thinking abilities, the data obtained from the critical thinking development assessment form was analyzed by dependent samples t test and descriptive statistics of mean and S.D. Additionally, the language features in the two paragraph writing tasks that matched each level of critical thinking according to the critical thinking model generated by the University of Plymouth were analyzed by the researchers and the other rater who had expertise in discourse analysis. According to the Linear Model to Generate Critical Thinking of the University of Plymouth, there are three levels of critical thinking. First, critical thinking level 1 'description' shows the writer's ability to describe background information derived from the language elements originating from the questions *what, who, where,* and *when*. Next, critical thinking level 2 'analysis' displays the writer's higher ability to give reasons, compare, contrast, and explain the relationship of different elements retrieved from the questions *how, why,* and *what if*. Finally, critical thinking level 3 'evaluation', which is initiated from the questions 'so what' and 'what next,' shows the writer's highest critical thinking ability to justify the value and significance of something and make recommendations and predictions for future action. The number of language features found at each level of critical thinking in paragraph writing pre- and post-tests was compared, using descriptive statistics of mean and S.D.

In response to research question 2, which aimed to examine the students' improvement of writing ability, the scores of the two argumentative essay first and final drafts were rated by two raters, excluding the researchers, using the argumentative essay rubric created by Bowen (2023). This scoring rubric was specifically designed for the claim of fact used for the Toulmin argument model, comprising micro-level mistakes, introduction, thesis, development/support, organization/structure, grammar/style, and conclusion, making a total of 100 points. To prevent any potential bias, the researchers were excluded from the scoring process. Then, two independent raters quantitatively analyzed the scores of both the first and final drafts of the argumentative essays. In this regard, dependent samples *t* test and descriptive statistics of mean and S.D. were utilized to compare the students' argumentative writing ability before and after the implementation of critical pedagogy. Moreover, the researchers employed content analysis to explore how the students had developed their writing ability by focusing on the differences between the first and final drafts of argumentative essays according to the particular aspects of the evaluation criteria.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1: *How can the implementation of critical pedagogy and a genre-based approach enhance Thai EFL learners' critical thinking ability?*

To answer this research question, we analyzed the data in two stages. First, we examined the overall difference in students' thinking ability scores. Second, we conducted a three-component analytical framework to assess students' thinking skills, focusing on description, analysis, and evaluation.

Table 1

A comparison of the students' critical thinking ability before and after the instruction

Tests	n	Mean	S.D.	df	t	p-value
Before instruction	32	2.85	0.26	31	1.075	.098
After instruction	32	2.93	0.27			

p < .05

As illustrated in Table 1, the scores from the critical thinking development assessment form before and after the instruction were analyzed by descriptive statistics to examine students' development of critical thinking skills. The data analysis showed that the mean score of the students' critical thinking was 2.85 before the instruction and then increased to 2.93 after the instruction. However, the t-test value of 1.075 with a p-value of 0.098, which was higher than the 0.05 level of significance, indicated that the students' critical thinking ability was not significantly developed after critical pedagogy and GBA were implemented.

Although the initial quantitative analysis did not reveal a significant difference in students' thinking ability after the intervention, we delved deeper into the data. We re-analyzed it using a framework that considers three levels of thinking: description, analysis, and evaluation. The comparison of the three critical thinking levels is displayed in Table 2 below.

Table 2

A comparison of the students' mean scores of three critical thinking levels in paragraph writing pre- and posttests

Tests		Level 1 Description		Level 2 Analysis		Level 3 Evaluation	
		$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
Task 1	Pretest	1.68	1.61	3.53	2.10	2.50	2.14
Task 1	Posttest	1.56	1.52	4.12	2.47	2.81	2.00
Task 2	Pretest	2.90	1.78	2.50	1.70	2.84	1.93
Task 2	Posttest	2.53	2.22	2.62	1.40	3.65	2.14

Table 2 shows the decrease of the mean scores of critical thinking level 1 'description' and the increase of the mean scores of critical thinking level 2 'analysis' and critical thinking level 3 'evaluation' in both paragraph writing topics after the instruction. As can be seen in critical thinking level 2, the students' mean scores increased from 3.53 to 4.12 in paragraph writing task 1 and 2.50 to 2.62 in paragraph writing task 2. Similarly, for critical thinking level 3, the students' mean scores increased from 2.50 to 2.81 in paragraph writing task 1 and 2.84 to 3.65 in paragraph writing task 2. On the contrary, the students' mean scores of critical thinking level 1 decreased in both writing tasks, reducing from 1.68 to 1.56 in task 1 and 2.90 to 2.53 in task 2. The increase in critical thinking levels 2 and 3 indicated that the students had developed their critical thinking ability after critical pedagogy was implemented in their writing classroom.

For more clarity, the three levels of critical thinking in each paragraph writing task were compared to illustrate the students' development of critical thinking. The first paragraph writing task was related to the CSR writing topic in which the students were required to give

their response to a social issue that the local people in Northern Thailand were suffering from haze and smog emitted by a corporation that ran its animal feed business.
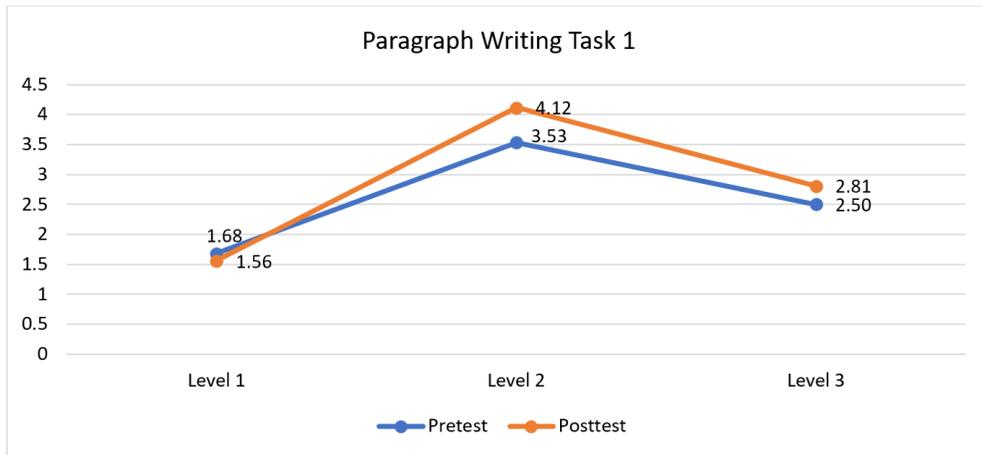
Figure 4 A comparison of the three levels of critical thinking in paragraph writing task 1

Figure 4 shows that, in general, the differences in the students' critical thinking abilities were obvious in levels 2 and 3, while critical thinking level 1 was slightly different. As shown in the figure, the mean scores of paragraph writing pre- and post-tests for critical thinking level 1 were quite similar, decreasing slightly from 1.68 to 1.56 in this task. On the contrary, the students' critical thinking abilities in both levels 2 and 3 increased in the posttests. This means that critical thinking level 2 was the most developed in paragraph writing task 1.

To further explain and support the quantitative results, the qualitative data from the students' paragraph writing could be utilized as supportive evidence. From the content analysis, two main themes saliently emerging from the students' paragraph writing task 1 were critical thinking levels 2 and 3. Below is a student's writing excerpt from critical thinking level 2: *Analysis*, which shows the student's ability to give reason, predict possible situations, and compare, contrast, and identify the relationship between different elements.

Critical Thinking Level 2: *Analysis*

> "***If*** they still continued their product, they will cause a lot of haze and smog. Not only some provinces of Thailand, maybe the haze and smog ***will*** cover all of Thailand and make many people get sick." (Student 20_Post)

From the sentence above reflecting the originated question, *what if*, the author anticipated what would happen if animals feed with corn grain as its main ingredient continued to be produced. As a result, many people would therefore become sick because of the haze and smog that covered a vast area of norhthern Thailand.

In addition to critical thinking level 2, despite the less improvement, critical thinking level 3: *Evaluation* was another distinctive theme from the content analysis showing the students'

highest critical thinking level in giving judgments, making recommendations, and identifying the values of something, as demonstrated in a student's excerpt below.

Critical Thinking Level 3: *Evaluation*

> "*Furthermore, if they want to save environment, they **have to** reduce the haze and smog by using less machine on their factory. Or they **need to** move their factory to farway place that didn't near city, forest, or river.*" (Student 3_Post)

Obviously, with the auxiliaries "have to" and "need to," the student expressed his strong desire in accordance with the question *what next*, suggesting the way to reduce the amount of haze and smog; otherwise, the corporation needed to move its factory to a place from far from the city, forest, or river.

In addition to paragraph writing task 1 concerning CSR writing, paragraph writing task 2 related to complaint letters was also used to explore the students' critical thinking development. In this writing task, the students were required to write a complaint letter concerning the wrong delivery of a product they ordered from a company in Europe. As well as paragraph writing task 1, paragraph writing task 2 regarding complaint letters also showed the students' improvement of critical thinking levels 2 and 3, as demonstrated in Figure 5 below.
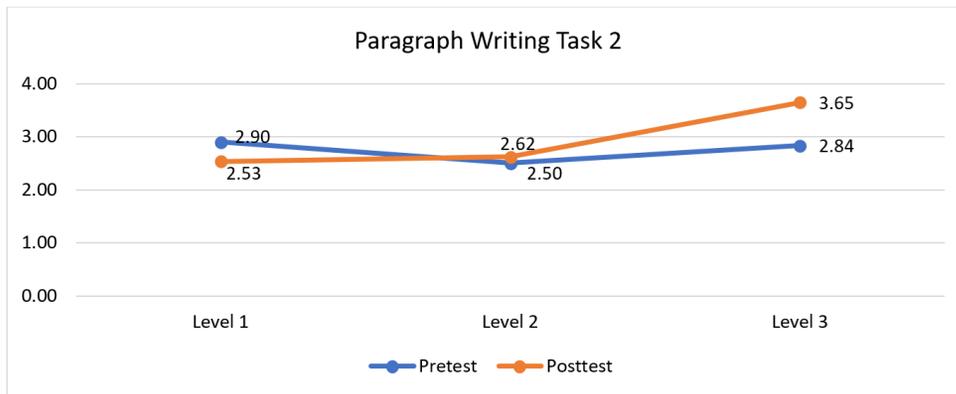
Figure 5 A comparison of the three levels of critical thinking in paragraph writing task 2

Figure 5 shows an increase in the students' critical thinking levels 2 and 3, while critical thinking level 1 decreased. Clearly, it can be seen that in the posttest, the students' critical thinking in level 2 increased by 0.12 from 2.50 in the pretest to 2.62 in the posttest. However, the difference in the critical thinking level was highly explicit in level 3 which increased by 0.81 with a mean score of 2.84 in the pretest and 3.65 in the post-test.

To further explain, the decrease in the posttest mean score in critical thinking level 1 could be argued as a positive finding. That is, the decrease in critical thinking in level 1, which represented the students' abilities to give background information with the generated questions such as *who, what, where*, and *when*, was replaced by their higher critical thinking

abilities in level 2 and particularly in level 3. Obviously, in this paragraph writing task, the students showed the highest critical thinking improvement in level 3, demonstrating their ability to give judgment, make recommendations, and evaluate the values of something.

To clarify the qualitative data, in response to the above quantitative findings, the content analysis showed that the theme that explicitly appeared in this paragraph writing task was critical thinking level 3: evaluation, as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

Critical Thinking Level 3: *Evaluation*

> "*You **should** improve as soon as possible and in the future your company will have many customers.*" (Student 13_Post)

> "*The shipping company **should** inform about the problem that occurs. So that I could know beforehand and **should** provide rigorous training to employees, update various systems into record.*" (Student 9_Post)

As can be seen, based on the generated questions about what next, the students chose to use the helping verb *should* to make some recommendations, expecting the shipping company to make some changes for the improvement of its delivery service.

Additionally, verbs showing the writer's desire, expecting the shipping company to take some particular actions were also found in a student's writing as shown in the following writing sample.

> "*It is the fault of the company or the transporter. I **hope** the company will fix the problem or call to apologize for the mistake.*" (Student 30_Post)

As can be seen in the sentence samples, the students used the verbs *wish, want*, and *hope* to express their desire for the company to pay more attention to its logistics, learn from the situation, and fix the system, all of which reflected the writers' desire for a movement, and their justification of the success or failure of something based on the critical thinking ability level 3.

The students' development of critical thinking levels 2 and 3 may benefit from Freire's problem-posing highlighted in Move 1 or the pre-writing stage of the Critical Pedagogy Writing Model (CPWM). That is, the researchers cultivated this writing stage to empower learners by the generated questions corresponding with critical thinking levels 2 and 3, such as *why, how, what if, so what*, and *what next*. Moreover, the sociopolitical issues introduced for class discussion in the initial stage of writing instruction could be assumed as the factor contributing to the students' development of critical thinking - with the real-world problems they were confronting and class discussion touching upon these issues, the students may become motivated to think more critically towards what had happened in their society.

Research Question 2: *How can the implementation of critical pedagogy and a genre-based approach enhance Thai EFL learners' writing ability?*

To answer this research question, the data analysis was conducted in two phases. First, quantitative data analysis was employed to evaluate the overall differences in students' writing abilities between the first and final drafts of argumentative essays. Subsequently, content analysis was used to assess the quality of students' writing according to each criterion in the scoring rubric, mainly comprising an introduction, thesis, development/support, organization/ structure, grammar/style, and conclusion.

First, to assess the quantitative data of the students' writing abilities, we used an analytic rubric, which was claimed to have greater reliability than holistic rubrics and be able to serve as an instructional tool and grading (Davies et al., 2022). Therefore, the analysis relied on descriptive statistics to examine students' development of writing ability. In this respect, two raters, excluding the researchers, separately rated the students' argumentative essays. Then, the degree of consistency in the students' argumentative essay scores was evaluated using the intraclass correlation (ICC) statistics with the two-way mixed-effects model for the analysis. The result shows that the scores obtained from the two raters were reliable, as evidenced by the intra-class correlation of .868, which was statistically different at a 95% level of confidence (*p*-value = .001). The comparison of the students' writing abilities between the first and final drafts is displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3
A comparison of the students' abilities in writing argumentative essays 1 and 2

Argumentative Essay	Drafts	n	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.	df	t	p-value
1	First Draft	32	23.50	72.35	52.22	12.19	31	6.327	.000*
	Final Draft	32	43.25	73.25	61.55	7.23			
2	First Draft	32	40.15	63.50	56.79	5.47	31	7.405	.000*
	Final Draft	32	41.85	80.70	67.11	5.82			

*p < .05

As illustrated in Table 3, overall, the quantitative data analysis from the two argumentative essays revealed that the students' writing abilities improved after the instruction. In argumentative essay 1 concerning the youth political movement, the dependent samples *t* test showed that the students' writing abilities in the argumentative essays first and final drafts had a statistically significant difference, with the mean scores increasing from 52.22 in the first draft to 61.55 in the final draft. Similarly, in argumentative essay 2, which required the students to write about the inequality of Thai education, the dependent samples *t* test also confirmed the students' improvement of writing abilities, as the mean score in the final draft was significantly higher than that in the first draft, increasing from 56.79 in the first draft to 67.11 in the final draft.

To closely examine how the students' writing ability was developed in each criterion, the scores obtained from the first and final draft of argumentative essay 1 were compared as displayed in Table 4 below.

Table 4
A comparison of the mean scores in the first and final drafts of argumentative essay 1
in all evaluation criteria

Evaluation Criteria	First Draft (n = 32)		Final Draft (n = 32)		t	p	Mean Difference
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.			
1. Introduction	6.27	1.08	6.82	0.90	3.765	.001*	0.55
2. Thesis	5.03	1.57	5.73	1.07	3.125	.004*	0.70
3. Development/Support	19.53	5.46	23.42	1.63	5.153	.000*	3.89
4. Organization/Structure	7.51	0.47	8.81	1.12	5.530	.000*	1.30
5. Grammar/Style	9.34	2.05	10.99	1.32	5.413	.000*	1.65
6. Conclusion	4.54	1.56	5.78	1.19	4.598	.000*	1.24
Total	**52.22**	**12.19**	**61.55**	**7.23**	**6.327**	**.000***	**9.33**

*$p < .05$

Table 4 shows the students' improvement of writing ability in argumentative essay 1 in all evaluation criteria. As can be seen, the students' mean scores for the final draft of argumentative essay 1 were higher than those of the first draft in all aspects, and the result of the dependent-samples *t* test confirmed that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores in all aspects of evaluation at a significant level of 0.05. In particular, the students had performed their greatest improvement on writing abilities in the aspects of *Development/ Support* (mean difference = 3.89), followed by *Grammar/Style* (mean difference = 1.65), while the least improvement was *Introduction* (mean difference = 0.55).

The quantitative results showed that students made the most significant progress in *Development/Support*, which was consistent with the content analysis revealing that, qualitatively, students' writing ability was highly developed in this criterion as demonstrated by the writing excerpt of body paragraph 1 written by Student 27.

First draft

> *First, the younger political movement want to check the corruption in Thailand.* As you all know, Thailand has been plagued with political corruption for a long time. And has not been corrected or corrected but is not at the end of the cause. **For instance, the government has set a budget for the year 2022, there is a "blank check" because there are only "topics" and "limit" but does not specify the details of the project and they has increased the budget for military welfare. This is therefore the young people where the budget causes no opportunity to know. Young people want the government to show transparency in spending.**

Final draft

> *First, the youth should go for political movement to make clear of the corruption.* **For the first thing, the government allocated the budget inappropriately.** For instance, according to BCC news, the government has set a budget for the year 2022, there is a "blank check" because there are only "topics" and "limit" but does not specify the

details of the project amount 1,623 million baht. **In addition, Bribery is another point of corruption.** *Thailand is notorious for bribery in the bureaucracy. According to workpointtoday.com, Transparency International It is assessed annually using more than 10 global bribery and corruption databases to quantify and rank it. This year, Thailand scored 35. When ranking countries, it was found that Thailand's ranking this year (ranked 110 out of 180 countries) was also considered the lowest in 10 years compared to other years.*

As illustrated in the first draft of body paragraph 1, in the topic sentence, "*First, the younger political movement want to check the corruption in Thailand,*" the writer stated the first claim of why the youth go for political movement, but the problem arising from the topic sentence is that it is not linked to the thesis statement, "*I strongly believe that the youth should to go for political movement.*" which clearly claimed the necessity of why the youth should go for political movement. Moreover, when investigating the rest of the body paragraph 1, it can be seen that the writer had problems in providing an appropriate reasoning or warrant that links the data to the claim. What the writer placed in the rest of body paragraph 1 was only some examples of how the government was corrupted.

In contrast to the first draft, the writer had appropriately developed body paragraph 1. As illustrated, the topic sentence of body paragraph 1: "*First, the youth <u>should</u> go for political movement to make clear of the corruption.*" was clearly revised as the writer stated a clear position on the issue using the word "should" that signaled the writer's strong opinion. In addition, the lack of warrants in the first draft was filled with two effective reasonings with two clear points of corruption that should be eliminated including inappropriate budget allocation and bribery.

In addition to argumentative essay 1, the comparison of the scores the students had obtained from the first and final drafts of argumentative essay 2 in each criterion was detailed in Table 5 below.

Table 5
A comparison of the mean scores in the first and final drafts of argumentative essay 2
in all evaluation criteria

Evaluation Criteria	First Draft (n = 32)		Final Draft (n = 32)		t	p	Mean Difference
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.			
1. Introduction	6.59	0.49	7.57	0.68	7.664	.000*	0.98
2. Thesis	5.35	0.78	6.87	0.97	8.230	.000*	1.52
3. Development/Support	20.71	2.15	26.11	1.93	11.921	.000*	5.40
4. Organization/Structure	8.34	0.67	9.20	0.71	9.313	.000*	0.86
5. Grammar/Style	10.62	0.72	10.96	0.79	1.469	.152	0.34
6. Conclusion	5.18	0.66	6.40	0.74	7.415	.000*	1.22
Total	**56.79**	**5.47**	**67.11**	**5.82**	**7.405**	**.000***	**10.32**

*$p < .05$

As displayed in Table 5, the results of the dependent-samples *t* test showed that, at a significant level of 0.05, there was a statistically significant increase in the mean scores of the final drafts in every aspect of argumentative essay 2 except *Grammar/Style*. In more detail, it can be seen that as well as argumentative essay 1, *Development/Support* presented the students' greatest improving aspect of their writing ability with the mean difference of 5.40, which was 1.51 higher than that of argumentative essay 1, followed by *Thesis* (mean difference = 1.52) and *Conclusion* (mean difference = 1.22), while Grammar/Style, performed the least improvement in argumentative essay 2 (mean difference = 0.34). To demonstrate how the students had improved their writing ability, the students' first and final drafts of the argumentative essay 2 written by Student 5 are compared in the samples of writing excerpts.

First draft

> On the one hand, some people contend that Thai education is equal and fair for learners with any types of socio-economic backgrounds because we have free education at public schools for all children in Thailand. **The government provides education at public schools is free until grade 9.** Neither is mandatory. It's possible to say that we have free education at public schools for all children in Thailand. However, a lot of people claim that many students still fall short of receiving equal access to basic resources like books, learning materials, uniforms and student development including adequate funding for their living. **Currently, education in Thailand is fiercely intense competition for places at Thailand's top schools and the disturbing reality that thousands of children are missing out on primary education.**

Final draft

> On the one hand, some argue that Thai education is equal and fair because Thai education have free education. **The government provides free education at public schools until grade 9, and Thailand has free education program that seeks to promote education quality and access for all objectives through school funding.** It may be true that Thailand has free education. However, I strongly believe that free education can not reduce educational inequality. **In addition to the tuition fee, parents must struggle to pay for school uniforms, transportation, food, and school equipment themselves. The Bangkok University survey shows 11.9 percent of parents have to borrow from their friends and relatives, 8.2 percent have to pledge their valuable items and some have to depend on loans to provide the best education for their children (source: www.thaipbsworld.com).**

As displayed in the section of 'counterargument and refutation' in body paragraph 3, the writer began the paragraph with a counterargument to her argument, addressing that Thai education was fair and equal because it was free for all children, particularly at public schools. However, when closely observing, it was found that this counterargument was problematic since it provided a tiny detail of how the government provided free education.

Moreover, the writer put some irrelevant details to support the refutation regarding inaccessibility to basic resources and funding. Instead of providing why Thai students found it difficult to access the basic resources and funding, the writer in turn said that many children were facing a fierce competition to enter top schools in Thailand.

On the contrary, in the final draft, the counterargument was developed since the writer provided more details to support the counterargument, saying that Thai education is equal and fair because free education was provided until grade 9 with free education programs and school funding. Moreover, the writer eliminated the irrelevant details in the first draft and replaced them with more appropriate reasoning and supporting evidence to explain why her claim to the fact that Thai education is not equal and fair was stronger, such as the extra expense and the survey results by Bangkok University.

The two writing excerpts derived from argumentative essays 1 and 2 present the holistic picture of Thai EFL learners' struggle, the participants of this study in particular, to generate ideas and construct an argument in their writing. As previously explained, the primary focus of this research is to empower learners through the implementation of CP and GBA. Consequently, the entire instructional process, based on Freire's problem-posing concept central to the dialogic method, was assumed to be a crucial factor in enhancing the students' critical thinking, which subsequently supported their ability to construct arguments, as reflected in their argumentative essays, regardless of language refinements made prior to submission.

DISCUSSION

It has been proven that the principles of critical pedagogy and GBA implemented in the EFL writing classroom of this current study have played an important role in developing the students' critical thinking and writing abilities. The first key point to be discussed is the students' critical thinking development. As reported, although the quantitative data from the critical thinking development assessment form did not show a significant improvement in students' thinking ability after the intervention, the qualitative data evaluated through three levels of critical thinking performed in paragraph writing demonstrated an enhancement in their critical thinking skills.

Two main themes saliently emerging from the students' paragraph writing task 1 were critical thinking levels 2 and 3 which show the students' higher levels of critical thinking. The problem-posing concept, central to Freire's critical pedagogy, is key in developing students' critical thinking in this study. Integrated into the Critical Pedagogy Writing Model (CPWM), it promotes active dialogue and reflection on real-world issues during the pre-writing stage. By engaging students with questions such as "why" and "what if," this approach empowers them to construct knowledge and enhances their critical thinking, particularly at advanced levels. As argued by Giroux (2001), students must be taught to think critically. They need to move beyond literal interpretation and understand how modes of reasoning are developed and influence the world. Consequently, students must be able to view the world comprehensively to discern the connections between facts, concepts, issues, and ideas.

The students' improvement of critical thinking ability was aligned with a number of studies, such as a study by Mazdaee and Maftoon (2012) employing the dialogic method in the EFL university writing classroom. The study showed that, among the four thinking modes, including *descriptive, personal, critical*, and *creative*, the students could develop their critical thinking in 'critical mode' and 'creative mode', which are comparable to critical thinking level 2 'analysis' and critical thinking level 3 'evaluation' of this study. Also, Cannizzo's (2021) study showed that the students could develop their critical consciousness with a strong feeling of gender and social issues, as evidenced in the three themes of critical consciousness, including *critical reflection, political efficacy*, and *critical action*, all of which are comparable to the three levels of critical thinking in this study.

The students' critical thinking development highlights the significance of problem-posing concepts in empowering learners. As this study specifically focused on the pre-writing stage, or Move 1 of the designed writing model, Freire's problem-posing concept was emphasized to empower learners. This approach aimed to construct knowledge based on their real-life experiences through a dialogic method. Due to their comprehensive understanding of the social issues and the knowledge mutually constructed by the teacher and the students under the problem-posing concept, the students' critical thinking abilities were enhanced. The relationship between problem-posing and critical thinking was evidenced in multiple studies such as Hwang et al. (2021), who claimed that the integration of problem-posing and structured concept mapping could enhance students' critical thinking and deeper understanding of texts. Moreover, Hu and Hwang (2024) argued that a self-adapted mobile concept mapping-based problem-posing (CMPP)could significantly improve learners'critical thinking, meta-cognition, problem-solving, and computational tendencies.

The second point of discussion is the students' improvement of writing abilities. The results of the study showed that writing abilities improved in both argumentative essays after the instruction, indicating the effectiveness of critical pedagogy and GBA implemented in the EFL writing classroom. Critical pedagogy and a GBA are powerful tools for enhancing students' writing skills, particularly through problem-posing concepts and critical thinking. In the pre-writing stage, problem-posing encourages learners to engage deeply with critical thinking towards sociopolitical issues and their real-world problems. This approach fosters student-teacher dialogue, enhancing critical thinking and argumentative construction. The writing model central to problem-posing concepts and a dialogic method therefore strengthens students' critical thinking abilities, which, in turn, supports their ability to build strong, coherent arguments in writing.

The results of the study were in accordance with multiple studies exploring the effects of critical pedagogy on writing ability. For instance, Ghouzani et al. (2014) employed critical pedagogy to enhance upper-intermediate female EFL learners' writing and self-regulation skills. Moreover, critical pedagogy was also found to be able to enhance both the writing and critical thinking abilities of learners, as stated in Ma and Li's (2022) study that showed the relationship between the critical thinking ability and argumentative essay writing ability of first-year Education major students.

The impact of critical pedagogy on the students' writing ability can be described in terms of theoretical perspective. That is, the problem-posing concept, which encourages class discussions and dialogues based on generative themes, could enhance students' writing abilities, especially in terms of their argumentation skills. As found in a study by Nejmaoui (2019), it was argued that the ability to create a valid argument and develop ideas with credible sources and related evidence was a necessary skill for critical thinking and argumentative writing. Fakhri et al. (2019) also asserted that students instructed using the problem-posing learning model outperformed those taught with the problem-based learning model in writing text reviews.

In addition to problem-posing, another theoretical perspective that should be noted is the benefits of the GBA for students writing ability. As the writing model used as the intervention of this study was designed by the integration of critical pedagogy and GBA, it could be argued that the GBA may considerably contribute to the students' development of writing abilities. As claimed by Hyland (2004), "Perhaps the most important advantage is that genre-based writing instruction seeks to offer writers an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written in the ways they are" (p. 11). In light of this, the students may benefit the most from Move 3 of the writing model which provides the learners with opportunities to scaffold the target argumentative genre. As found in Bejarano and Chapetón (2013), which focused on dialogic interaction with peers and teachers and scaffolding based on genre-based writing, the researchers claimed that the genre-based activities not only supported the students' construction of argumentative essays but also promoted their positive attitudes and confidence towards writing. More specifically, the GBA employed could provide a great advantage for EFL learners, particularly the low-proficient student participants of this study. As discussed in Haerazi and Irawan's (2019) study, genre-based teaching could improve low-achieving students' writing skills in an English educational program, and the students reflected that it was easier to write with structured guidance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study has demonstrated that applying principles of critical pedagogy highlighting Freire's problem-posing concept and GBA in the EFL writing classroom significantly enhances students' critical thinking and writing skills.

In response to research question 1, the implementation of critical pedagogy and a genre-based approach could enhance the students' critical thinking abilities. Although the quantitative analysis from the critical thinking development assessment form did not reveal a significant difference after the intervention, the deeper analysis of the qualitative data derived from paragraph writing pre- and post-tests had expressed the students' critical thinking development. The important points that should be marked in this study are the students' higher critical thinking abilities in critical thinking levels 2 and 3, which originated from the questions *how, why, what if, so what*, and *what next*. To explain, at critical thinking level 2, the students showed their deeper analytical skills by demonstrating their ability to find reasons and explain how something operates. In critical thinking level 3, the students showed their highest critical thinking level by evaluating the significance of something and proposing recommendations

for particular actions or strategies. The students' development in critical thinking may stem from Freire's problem-posing concept during the pre-writing stage of the Critical Pedagogy Writing Model. This approach helped them think critically about real-world problems through a dialogic method, where the teacher encouraged them to express their opinions on thought-provoking issues.

Next, to address the second research question, the findings showed the enhancement in students' writing abilities in both argumentative essays. In particular, among the six criteria, the students had performed their greatest improvement of the writing abilities in the aspect of Development/Support in both argumentative writing topics. The students' writing abilities development could be attributed to two primary factors. First, as well as the improvement of critical thinking ability, the students' development may also result from the influence of the problem-posing concept emphasized during the pre-writing stage. Second, as the Critical Pedagogy Writing Model utilized as the intervention of this study was designed to apply critical pedagogy and a genre-based approach, the students' development in writing abilities may have also benefited from the genre-based approach, which organizes the writing process into five major stages. The students in this current study, who were mostly low-proficient learners, were therefore able to gradually familiarize themselves with the writing context, scaffold the language feature of the argumentative essay using the rhetorical structure of the Toulmin model before joint construction, and finally individually compose the argumentative essays.

However, despite the positive outcome of the study, as earlier mentioned, some limitations and recommendations of this study are worth considering. First, in terms of critical thinking, even though the qualitative data from paragraph writing tasks showed the students' improvement in critical thinking, this might not reflect that the students genuinely enhanced their critical thinking abilities. To explain, the students may not reflect their real critical thinking when evaluated by the language features in each level of critical thinking; rather, the positive outcome might result from their knowledge or their familiarity with the language features they used in paragraph writing. Therefore, to eliminate the impact of background knowledge on the results of the study, it is advisable that the participants be taught the linguistic devices that could be used to reflect the levels of their critical thinking.

Also worth mentioning is the impact of the Thai educational context. As Thai students still regard teachers as superiors, due to the role of the researchers as the teachers in this study, it is inevitable that the power relationship between teachers and learners would have a considerable influence on the results of the research. To eliminate power relations between teacher and learners, instead of taking the role of teacher-researcher, future researchers are suggested to take the role of researcher only or may train other teachers to use this Critical Pedagogy Writing Model and then interview their perceptions towards the utilization of critical pedagogy and GBA.

Finally, in terms of research design, although a one-group pre-test post-test research design employed for this research may indicate that any change in critical thinking and writing abilities occurs after the intervention, the limitation of this research design is that the researchers may

not know exactly if any differences between the pretest and the posttest are due to the treatment (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Therefore, future researchers may add a comparison group that does not receive the treatment. That is, a pretest-posttest control-group design can be used to randomly select an experimental group using critical pedagogy and GBA as an intervention and a control group with traditional instructional methods in order to further investigate the effectiveness of critical pedagogy and GBA.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is evident that the Critical Pedagogy Writing Model based on the principles of critical pedagogy and GBA could be utilized to enhance the students' critical thinking and writing abilities. Therefore, the designed writing model has made a significant contribution to individuals involved in English language teaching and learning in terms of research and writing instruction.

First, this study may strengthen and broaden the research area of critical pedagogy and writing instruction. Since critical pedagogy has been utilized as a tool to enhance critical thinking in various educational contexts by integrating students' diverse socio-cultural backgrounds into the classroom (Floyd, 2022), this study has introduced a broader perspective on critical pedagogy, demonstrating its effective application in EFL settings. This broader perspective encourages researchers to pay more attention to implementing critical pedagogy in EFL contexts and also introduces an alternative approach to developing critical thinking and writing abilities, particularly of EFL learners.

Also, this study has expanded the instructional practices, focusing on the utilization of critical pedagogy and GBA. Generally, EFL teachers might find it challenging to generate EFL learners' ideas for writing, as many of them might be familiar with the process-based approach that views writing as an ongoing process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Hyland, 2009). Accordingly, the writing model of this study that focuses on the problem-posing concept has provided EFL teachers with a new approach to idea generation that is significant for writing. It is argued that the strategies used for generating ideas are crucial as they enable learners to create well-developed texts and enhance learners' writing skills (Alemu, 2020). Additionally, teachers adopting this writing model might find that the GBA not only benefits learners in terms of writing achievement but also empowers them when applied to critical pedagogy.

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Appendix A
Critical Thinking Development Assessment Form
(Adopted from Thomas et al. (2014) applied from the Guttman model of scaling)

Direction: Please place a check mark ✓ in front of the statement in each item that corresponds the most to your opinion.

No.		Statements
1	☐	I believe that the world is basically fair.
	☐	I believe that the world is basically fair but others believe that it is unfair.
	☐	I believe that the world is unfair for some people.
	☐	I believe that the world is unfair, and I make sure to treat others fairly.
2	☐	I believe that all people are treated equally.
	☐	I believe that some people don't take advantage of opportunities given to them and blame others instead.
	☐	I believe that some groups are discriminated against.
	☐	I work to make sure that people are treated equally and are given equal chances.
3	☐	I think that education gives everyone an equal chance to do well.
	☐	I think that education gives everyone who works hard an equal chance.
	☐	I think that the educational system is unequal.
	☐	I think that the educational system needs to be changed in order for everyone to have an equal chance.
4	☐	I believe people get what they deserve.
	☐	I believe that some people are treated badly but there are ways that they can work to be treated fairly.
	☐	I believe that some people are treated badly because of oppression.
	☐	I feel angry that some people are treated badly because of oppression and I often do something to change it.
5	☐	I think all social groups are respected.
	☐	I think the social groups that are not respected have done things that lead people to think badly of them.
	☐	I think people do not respect members of some social groups based on stereotypes.
	☐	I am respectful of people in all social groups, and I speak up when others are not.
6	☐	I don't notice when people make prejudiced comments.
	☐	I notice when people make prejudiced comments and it hurts me.
	☐	It hurts me when people make prejudiced comments but I am able to move on.
	☐	When someone makes a prejudiced comment, I tell them that what they said is hurtful.
7	☐	When people tell a joke that makes fun of a social group, I laugh and don't really think about it.
	☐	When people tell a joke that makes fun of a social group, I laugh but also feel uncomfortable.
	☐	When people tell a joke that makes fun of a social group, I realize that the joke is based on a stereotype.
	☐	I tell people when I feel that their joke was offensive.
8	☐	I don't see much oppression in this country.
	☐	I feel hopeless and overwhelmed when I think about oppression in this country.
	☐	I feel like oppression in this country is less than in the past and will continue to change.
	☐	I actively work to support organizations which help people who are oppressed.
9	☐	I don't feel bad when people say they have been oppressed.
	☐	I feel sad or angry when experiencing or seeing oppression.
	☐	I often become sad or angry when experiencing or seeing oppression, but I find ways to cope with my feelings.
	☐	I work to protect myself from negative feelings when acts of oppression happen.

Appendix B
Argumentative Writing Rubric
(Adopted from Bowen (2023)- Claims of Fact)
Scoring Rubric - Claims of Fact (Toulmin)

MICRO-LEVEL MISTAKES
→ One point deducted for every 5 micro-level mistakes: _____ divided by 5 = ☐

INTRODUCTION _____ out of 10 (2.5 points per item)
→ Title is imaginative and reflects the essay's content ☐
→ Hook creatively grabs reader's attention ☐
→ Linking sentences clearly introduce the topic ☐
→ Introduction indicates what type of argument the essay will be ☐

THESIS _____ out of 10 (2 points per item)
→ Offers a thought-provoking idea ☐
→ States why the topic is important to write about ☐
→ **Claim** of fact is clear, concise, and well-placed ☐
→ Claim is **qualified** appropriately ☐
→ Claim is not too general or too broad ☐

DEVELOPMENT/SUPPORT _____ out of 35 (7 points per item)
→ Appropriate topic sentences start each body paragraph ☐
→ Thoroughly covers the main points of the argument ☐
→ Body paragraphs provide sufficient **grounds** and **warrants** for claims ☐
→ Content is interesting and supported with references where needed (**backing**) ☐
→ Supporting details are relevant and tied to thesis ☐

ORGANIZATION/STRUCTURE _____ out of 15 (5 points per item)
→ Transition words and phrases effectively link sentences and paragraphs ☐
→ Essay exhibits sophistication in structure and is not merely a list of points ☐
→ Information is well placed in terms of importance ☐

GRAMMAR / STYLE _____ out of 20 (5 points per item)
→ Variety of sentence lengths and sentence beginnings ☐
→ Complete sentences throughout (no run-ons or fragments) ☐
→ Observes the conventions of plain language usage ☐
→ Exhibits correctly used advanced punctuation—colon, dashes, etc. ☐

CONCLUSION _____ out of 10 (5 points per item)
→ Thesis not merely restated ☐
→ Summarizes content and ends with a memorable point ☐

Total _____ out of 100