



**Introducing Critical Pedagogy to English Language  
Teachers at Tertiary Education in Oman:  
Attitudes, Potentialities and Challenges**

A critical postmodernist study

Submitted By

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*to the University of Exeter  
as a thesis for the degree of*

*Doctor of Philosophy in Education (TESOL)*

**April 2016**

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# ABSTRACT

Based on critical theory and postmodernist paradigms, the aim of this study is to introduce Critical Pedagogy (CP) to English language teachers in four higher education institutions in Oman via an action research methodology. Eventually, the ultimate purpose of this study is to create a change by raising teachers' awareness of CP. Although CP cannot be reduced to a monolithic body of discourse, through a review of literature, unified principles have been put forward by various critical educators that shape this study: (1) the political nature of education, (2) the nature of knowledge, (3) education for empowerment, (4) education for transformation, (5) integrating the world into the classroom, and (6) the meaning of 'critical' within CP framework.

Five data collection tools are utilized during the four phases of the study. In the first phase, 178 teachers complete a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. In the second phase, an article is sent to teachers and a workshop on CP is conducted for 160 English language teachers in the four colleges. Then, documents (102 workshop evaluation forms and 25 lesson plans) and semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers are analysed to elicit teachers' attitudes towards CP and its potentialities and challenges in teaching English. Lastly, in the fourth phase, eight classroom

observations are conducted to obtain a deeper insight of the feasibilities and challenges of implementing CP.

The findings show teachers' initial lack of awareness of CP as a possible approach to teaching English. After the intervention, the findings reveal that teachers have various attitudes towards applying CP, ranging from caution to full support. Some teachers resist some of CP's premises while others are in-between. Although the findings of the study indicate the great potential of CP, the participants acknowledge the existence of many challenges to its implementation; these challenges are related to students, teachers and the college system. These findings are discussed in light of the existing literature and the Omani context. Implications for teachers, pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes and policy makers are drawn based on the study's findings.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Salah Troudi, my first supervisor, who has patiently and thoroughly guided me throughout the journey of conducting this thesis by encouraging me to continuously challenge my taken-for-granted thoughts, critically reflect on my thinking patterns, uneasily leave my comfort zones and academically articulate my ideas. My debt to him is enormous for undertaking this work. I would also like to thank Dr. Esmael Abdollahzadeh, my second supervisor, for his insightful feedback and sustained support which are really appreciated.

My deepest gratitude goes to *my mother and father*. Because of them, I am the one who I am now. Without their prayers and encouragement, this thesis would be impossible.

To *Mohammed*, my soulmate, whose love, support and kindness have been invaluable throughout this journey. He has always been there for me in moments of frustration or joy, disappointment or accomplishment, gloom or optimism.

To *Saif*, my youngest son, whom I was forced to leave in Oman in order to be able to concentrate on my study. No words could express the pain I had to undertake when you were far away from me. I am sure you encountered the same pain but could not express it, yet I could feel it in your eyes every time I looked at you when you joined me in the last two years of my study. I promise I will not leave you again.

To *Afnan* and *Alaa*, my princesses, whose innocent laughs and dynamic personalities made the gloomy nights and rainy days in the UK feel warm and sunny. Being with me during the most challenging stage in my life gave me the opportunity to know you better and enjoy your childhoods.

Last, but not least, many thanks go to the kind and passionate teachers who greatly helped me fulfil this study.

# DEDICATION

O Allah! All praise and gratitude be to You.

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AR</b>	Action Research
<b>BES</b>	Basic Education System
<b>CA</b>	Continuous Assessment
<b>CALx</b>	Critical Applied Linguistics
<b>CASs</b>	Colleges of Applied Sciences
<b>CELTA</b>	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
<b>CLT</b>	Critical Language Testing
<b>CP</b>	Critical Pedagogy
<b>CPD</b>	Continuous Professional Development
<b>CV</b>	Curriculum Vitae
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>ELCs</b>	English Language Centers
<b>ELT</b>	English Language Teaching
<b>EMI</b>	English as a Medium of Instruction
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>GFP</b>	General Foundation Program
<b>GPA</b>	Grade Point Average
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>HOSs</b>	Head of Sections
<b>HOCs</b>	Head of Centers
<b>IELTS</b>	International English Language Test System
<b>L1</b>	First Language
<b>LEE</b>	Level Exist Exam
<b>MTE</b>	Mid Term Exam
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoM</b>	Ministry of Manpower
<b>NCSI</b>	National Centre for Statistics and Information
<b>NESTs</b>	Native English Speakers Teachers

<b>NNESTs</b>	None Native English Speakers Teachers
<b>OAC</b>	Oman Accreditation Council
<b>PDPs</b>	Professional Development Programmes
<b>SACs</b>	Self-Access Centers
<b>SQU</b>	Sulan Qaboos University
<b>TEFL</b>	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
<b>TESOL</b>	Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>TOEFL</b>	Test of English as a Foreign Language
<b>TTCs</b>	Teachers Training Colleges
<b>WEFs</b>	Workshop Evaluation Forms

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## Chapter One : Introduction

*"If English is imposing the world on our students, we as TESOL professionals can enable them, through English, to impose their voices on the world."*

(Warschauer, 2000, p.530)

### 1.1 The nature of the problem

In recent decades, the Higher Education (HE) system in Oman has achieved substantial growth in the number of institutions, students, teachers and specializations. Every year hundreds of Omani students join HE institutions to continue their first degrees where English is used as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). These students aim to develop their English because it is considered the gatekeeper to technology, jobs and modernity (Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al-Jardani, 2011; Al-Issa, 2014). However, as in other Arab countries, there is a lively discussion about the quality of graduates of these HE institutions including their proficiency in English (Mahmoud & Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Tanveer, 2013; Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016). This could be attributed to the fact that education in general, and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular, are centred around passive learners, authoritative teachers, centralized systems, ready-made materials that do not correspond to students' needs or cultures, and tests that require mostly memorization. Al-Issa and Al-

Bulushi (2012) asserted that "students exiting ELT system in Oman suffer from various inadequacies in their English language proficiency, which has had negative implications for Oman's national development" (p.141).

Thus, there is a pressing need to revolutionize the ELT system in Oman in order to overcome the challenges facing the country including globalization and the advance of knowledge and technology (Al Nabhani, 2007) where English is used as the main global language. Moody (2012) argues that this status of English calls for changes in approach, methodology, curriculum and overall perceptions. In addition, Al-Issa (2007) asserts that "times have changed and so have the reasons and purposes for learning English and the way through which it is learnt" (p.213).

Adding to this, there has recently been a growing interest in viewing the learning of English as a complex sociopolitical process which cannot be achieved through the mainstream teaching methodologies in which the student's role is marginal and the teachers are consumers of Anglo-American materials (Norton & Toohey, 2004; Kumaravadivelu, 2011). Thus, Critical Pedagogy (CP) has been viewed as one of the alternative pedagogies capable of meeting the demands of the complexity of teaching English within its sociopolitical context (Canagarajah, 1999; Norton, 2000; Penneycook, 2001; Norton & Toheey, 2004; Akbari, 2008a). Although CP is not an easy philosophy to define, it is mainly

"a perspective on teaching, learning, and curriculum that does not take for granted the status quo, but subjects it to critique,

creates alternative forms of practice, and does so on the basis of radical theories of language, the individual, and society that take seriously our hopes for improvement in the direction of goals such as liberty, equity, and justice for all."

(Crookes, 2013, p.1)

In light of the above issues, there is a pressing need to seek new ways of conducting ELT in which the social and political issues affecting students are taken into consideration; where Anglo-American textbooks, materials and methods are problematized; and where teachers' and students' voices are heard and given legitimacy. The top-down approach to ELT cannot last forever. This thesis does not claim that implementing CP can solve all the problems of the ELT system in Oman, but it does provide a window on to what critical teaching is all about and on to the possibility of critical reflection, thoughtful questioning and creative action. Thus, one aim of this study is to introduce CP to ELT teachers at territory level in Oman. In addition, it aims to explore the potentials and challenges of CP from the teachers' perspectives because I firmly believe that "the teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement" (Hargreaves, 1994, p.ix).

## **1.2 Rationale of the study**

The idea behind this research came from my own experience as a student educated in a system focussed on tests that depended heavily on memorisation. My memory as a student was of teacher-centred

classrooms where I was discouraged from initiating ideas or asking questions. Despite the fact that I was one of the top students both in schools and university, I did not really do things beyond memorizing textbooks verbatim to pass tests and I was unable to apply what I knew to real life situations. However, deep down in myself, I was dissatisfied with my experience as a student and I always wondered whether education was all about memorizing facts, passing exams and getting good grades.

My experience as an ELT teacher at a tertiary institution was not any better than my experience as a learner. I found myself passive and powerless against demands for regulation, increased bureaucracy and accountability. The pre-designed syllabus that I taught contained issues which were distant from my students' lives; their voice and experience were totally marginalized. I took for granted that English was the linguistic capital needed for the job market. I had never deeply considered the hegemony of English in my context before my doctoral studies. Therefore, I consider this thesis to be not only for fulfilling the demands of a doctoral degree but also to represent a shift in my own thinking about what teaching is all about and about my role as an agent of change in my society.

This thesis originated from a small scale study that I conducted for one of my doctoral modules. I found that my colleagues shared with me the same dissatisfaction with the ELT system in Oman. However, dissatisfaction

itself is not enough to improve the ELT system; action is urgently required. By conducting this study, I aim to raise teachers' awareness of CP. CP is rooted in problematizing taken-for-granted practices and definitions by encouraging students to question whose language is legitimized, and whose is marginalized; which knowledge is included and which excluded. CP also aims to embolden students to address the social and political issues affecting their lives in order to achieve transformation.

Moreover, the idea behind this thesis is based on the supposition that our education system in general, and ELT in particular, are governed by the neoliberal capitalist ideology that views education's purpose as training students for the work force and producing lifelong consumers (Giroux & Giroux, 2006). This ideology views teachers as technicians who are supposed to train students and treat them as objects; the relations between humans are reduced to suppliers and consumers. This is clear with the increasing emphasis on standards, testing and classroom pedagogies that "teach to the test" (Gruenewald, 2003), as these prevent teachers acting as agents who can constantly engage in critical reflection leading to making changes in their institutions and in their students.

Many studies have criticized the traditional methods implemented by ELT teachers in Oman (McLean, 2011; Al-Mahrooqi, Hassan & Asante, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Tanveer, 2013). For instance, McLean (2011) stated that ELT in Oman is centred on "learning of grammar rules, memorisation of vocabulary lists and drills" (p.18). Conversely, the current literature is

talking about an "awakening" period in the TESOL field (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) which is characterized by moving beyond methods of teaching English to approaches where teachers are teaching for social transformation. The literature about the ELT system in Oman has focused on the necessity of implementing a communicative method of teaching English (Al-Husseini, 2006; McLean, 2011; Al-Mekhlafi & Ramani, 2011). For example, McLean (2011) found that ELT teachers in Oman were not even aware of the communicative approach and that they continued teaching by transferring knowledge to students who were supposed to memorize what their teachers or textbooks said and then pass the tests. The critical stance is almost absent from discussions of ELT in Oman (AL Issa, 2015). Therefore, there is a pressing need to introduce a teaching philosophy that goes beyond teaching methods and procedures. We urgently need to make CP the departure point for ELT classes in order to legitimize Omani students' experiences and voice.

It is worth mentioning that the first experience of Omani students at the tertiary level is of receiving instruction in English language at language centres run by HE institutions in order to enable them to join their specializations in which English is the medium of instruction, as I explained previously. This means that the language centres receive students who have just graduated from high school, so these centres should act as a critical transition stage to prepare students to join the new phase in their lives. The importance of this first university year was

emphasised by Bosman, Dedekorkut and Dredge (2012): “the first year experience of a university student is significant, it can make or break a student and sets the tone for the remainder of their academic journey and their career path” (p.8). Thus, it is important for these language centres to establish learning and teaching approaches that shift the role of students from passive receivers of information to active learners through problem posing and dialogue about topics related to their lives. In his study of the role of language centres in the bridging year between secondary school and university, Al-Hussaini (2006) found that Omani students criticized the merely technical role of ELT teachers who just taught them without dealing with them as people or helping them to truly engage in this transitional life stage. He concluded that the traditional methods currently utilized in language centres at tertiary level do not promote students’ active involvement in the most important stage in their life which, I contend, is to prepare them for being agents of change in their society. Thus, we need to implement CP in ELT to humanise the teaching and learning process and prepare students to take up their responsibilities as active members of society. As I will explain next, Omani society is changing dramatically because of the current social and political conditions we have been witnessing in the Arab World.

The Arab World, where Oman belongs, has been facing radical events (Abu-Hilal et al., 2016) since December 2010 which are widely known as the "Arab Spring". There has been a revolutionary wave of demonstrations

and protests that exemplify civil resistance against power, hegemony, marginalisation and injustice. It is worth mentioning that university and college students constituted the biggest group in these demonstrations in Oman (AL Hajri, 2013). These young adults who crowded into the streets calling for political, social and economic improvement were criticising corruption at all levels in their societies and resisting the oppressive political, social and economic conditions. Through their protests, they held a hope for justice and amelioration and believed in their ability to struggle in order to achieve transformation in their societies.

One of the main demands has been to improve the quality of education in HE institutions. However, the current education in Oman, as is the case in other Arab World countries, "is increasingly a function of training for test taking" (Giroux, 2001, p.xvii) where schools are characterized by "instrument rationality" (ibid) rather than being democratic public arenas. There is a pressing need to have an educational system that reflects the hoped-for social and political changes. Al-Harhi (2002) maintained that many problems in the Arab countries can be partially attributed to the absence of that criticality in education which would lead to people's empowerment and to the creation of citizens who would be active agents of social change. Therefore, I believe it is necessary to implement a pedagogy that aims to raise students' consciousness of dominant ideologies by confronting and interrogating these ideologies as a first step toward transformation. We are in need of such a pedagogy in our

education system in general, and in ELT in particular, since English is considered to be the language of technology, science and economy around the world. ELT in Oman is currently based on materials which do not suit the current 'awakening' era in the Arab World.

This study is also based on the fact that we live in an era characterized by a huge spread of English in almost all countries in the world including Oman. The technical ways of teaching English within the mainstream, in which teachers utilize certain techniques and follow pre-designed lesson plans and guidance, are not adequate for learning a global language like English (Tollefson, 2000). Akbari (2008a) stated that most ELT textbooks avoid discussing the very controversial issues that could lead to awareness raising. Most of these textbooks in Oman discuss shallow topics, such as travel, shopping, food and holidays, which deepen students' consumerist ideology and behaviour. In addition, within the current status of English, ELT teachers should realize its potential negative role in creating social, economic and capital inequalities. For example, in the Omani context many graduates fail to obtain jobs because they do not have a good command of written and spoken English despite their subject knowledge (Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016). In addition, students who come from more privileged economic backgrounds usually have better English proficiency when they reach tertiary education. This is often because their parents have sent them to private institutions

specifically to learn English (Al-Jardani, 2011). Al Badawi (2011) maintains that:

"Omanis who are financially capable prefer sending their children to be educated in English medium schools so that they acquire a native-like linguistic competence and are better prepared to pursue higher education studies, whether in Oman or abroad" (p.11)

Another example of inequality that is produced by the huge spread of English is the preference in ELT recruitment in Oman being for Native English Speaker Teachers (NESTs) who are paid more than their Non-Native English Speaker Teachers (NNESTs) counterparts in other schools (Al-Issa, 2002; Al-Jadidi, 2009). Therefore, there is a pressing need to look at "English teaching and schooling as political interventions, struggles over the formation of ideologies and beliefs, identities and capital" (Luke, 2004, p.86). We need teachers who are aware of the role of English as a global language that is capable of empowering and disempowering students by making educational and social progression more or less accessible (Mohd-Asraf, 2005). Continuing to teach English technically and without any critical stance will result in reinforcing cultural and linguistic capital for certain elites (Bourdieu, 1991).

### **1.3 Potential significance of the study and contribution to knowledge**

There are several important areas where this study makes an original contribution to knowledge. First, this study investigates CP which is

considered to be one of the contested approaches in education. Therefore, this study might inform the ongoing debate about its suitability in education in general and ELT in particular. McArthur (2010) confirmed that understanding of CP is improved through studying it and its potential in different parts of the world. Therefore, it is hoped that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of CP by giving insights from the Omani context via investigating teachers' attitudes and their perceptions about its potentialities and challenges in ELT classrooms.

Second, despite the fact that CP has been around in education since the sixties and seventies, much of the research on CP has been conducted in English as Second Language (ESL) contexts (Crookes, 2013; Chi, 2011). However, there is a growing but as yet small amount of research that addresses the usage of CP in English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Shabani & Khorsandi, 2014; Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Davari & Erfanim, 2012). It is hoped through this study to contribute to research into CP in EFL contexts. This study also has application to ELT in other Gulf and Arab countries where the role of CP has not been acknowledged (Raddawi, 2011).

Third, although there have been a number of research studies devoted to ELT teachers, learners, syllabi and teaching methodologies in Oman, most of these have looked at ELT as a natural and neutral act. Al Issa (2015) reviewed 82 theses produced for the Master of Education degree at Sultan

Qaboos University (SQU). He found that the research questions, the data analysis and the participants' choice entailed "an agenda that strongly supports mere descriptive work so as to avoid any change deriving from political criticism" (p.576). He concluded that the critical approaches that aim to problematise the status quo and address power, bias, oppression, ideology, hegemony, inequality, exclusion and inclusion are completely absent from ELT research in Oman. By conducting this critical action research, I hope to encourage other ELT practitioners to take a critical stance when they investigate ELT in Oman. It is hoped to raise awareness of the fact that:

“language learning and teaching is more than learning and teaching language. It is about creating the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lived experiences of teachers and learners.”

(Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.70)

Fourth, the findings of this study should make an important contribution by providing insights to pre-service and in-service teacher educators in order to establish more critical approaches in teacher education programmes that aim towards producing teachers as transformative intellectuals whose roles are to problematise taken-for-granted matters, suggest alternatives and initiate changes that empower themselves and their students. There is a pressing need to improve the quality of the teachers to boost students' achievement and success. The technicality of teachers' role is no longer

sufficient to prepare students for the twenty-first century where doing things with the knowledge is more important than the knowledge itself.

Finally, this study is deemed to be timely as ministries supervising HE institutions in Oman endeavour to achieve quality education; thus, it is hoped that the results of this study will benefit the educational policy-makers in terms of setting a framework to revise ELT goals and pedagogies. It is equally vital to raise the policy makers' awareness of the fact that

"To develop schools we must be prepared to develop teachers ... to invest in teachers. A first step in this process is to help teachers to remind themselves that they have a crucial role to play in making a difference in the lives of their students"

(Day, 2000, p.110)

### **1.3 Research aims**

The general aim of this study is to introduce the concept of CP to ELT teachers in tertiary education. This overall aim will be achieved through several separate objectives:

1. To examine to what extent current ELT teachers at tertiary level are aware of the main tenets of CP.
2. To introduce CP through an action research methodology to ELT teachers at tertiary level.

3. To explore teachers' attitudes towards implementation of CP in the ELT system in Oman.
4. To investigate the visibility and challenges of implementing CP in ELT system from teachers' perspectives.

## **1.4 Research questions**

The research is guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent ELT teachers in tertiary education in Oman aware of Critical Pedagogy?
2. What are ELT teachers' attitudes towards Critical Pedagogy?
3. What are the potentialities of applying Critical Pedagogy in EFL classes from teachers' perspectives?
4. What are the challenges of implementing Critical Pedagogy in EFL classes from teachers' perspectives?

## **1.5 Research approach**

To answer the questions of this study, critical and postmodernist stances have been utilized in order to introduce CP via an action research methodology to ELT teachers in four colleges in Oman. I used multiple data collection tools at various stages of the research. In the first stage, a total of 178 ELT teachers responded to a five-point Likert scale questionnaire in order to assess their awareness of CP before the

interventions (reading article on CP + attending a workshop). In the second stage, 102 open-ended questionnaires (the workshop evaluation forms), and 25 lesson plans were collected after conducting a workshop for teachers on CP. In the third stage, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to investigate teachers' attitudes towards CP and their perspectives on its potentialities and challenges in ELT in the four colleges. In the fourth stage, 8 semi-structured observations were carried out to obtain a deeper insight into how teachers could perform CP in their classrooms and what kinds of obstacles they encountered. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures were implemented at various stages of the research.

## 1.6 Thesis organization

Figure 1.1 presents the organization of this thesis that is composed of seven chapters.

After this introductory chapter, **Chapter two** contextualises the research by providing background information on the setting of the current research. The chapter is divided into two main sections. First, a macro context section includes a brief overview of the country profile with its political and socioeconomic features relevant to ELT. Second, the micro context section provides background information about colleges of technology in

Oman and the English language centres that are responsible for ELT in these colleges.

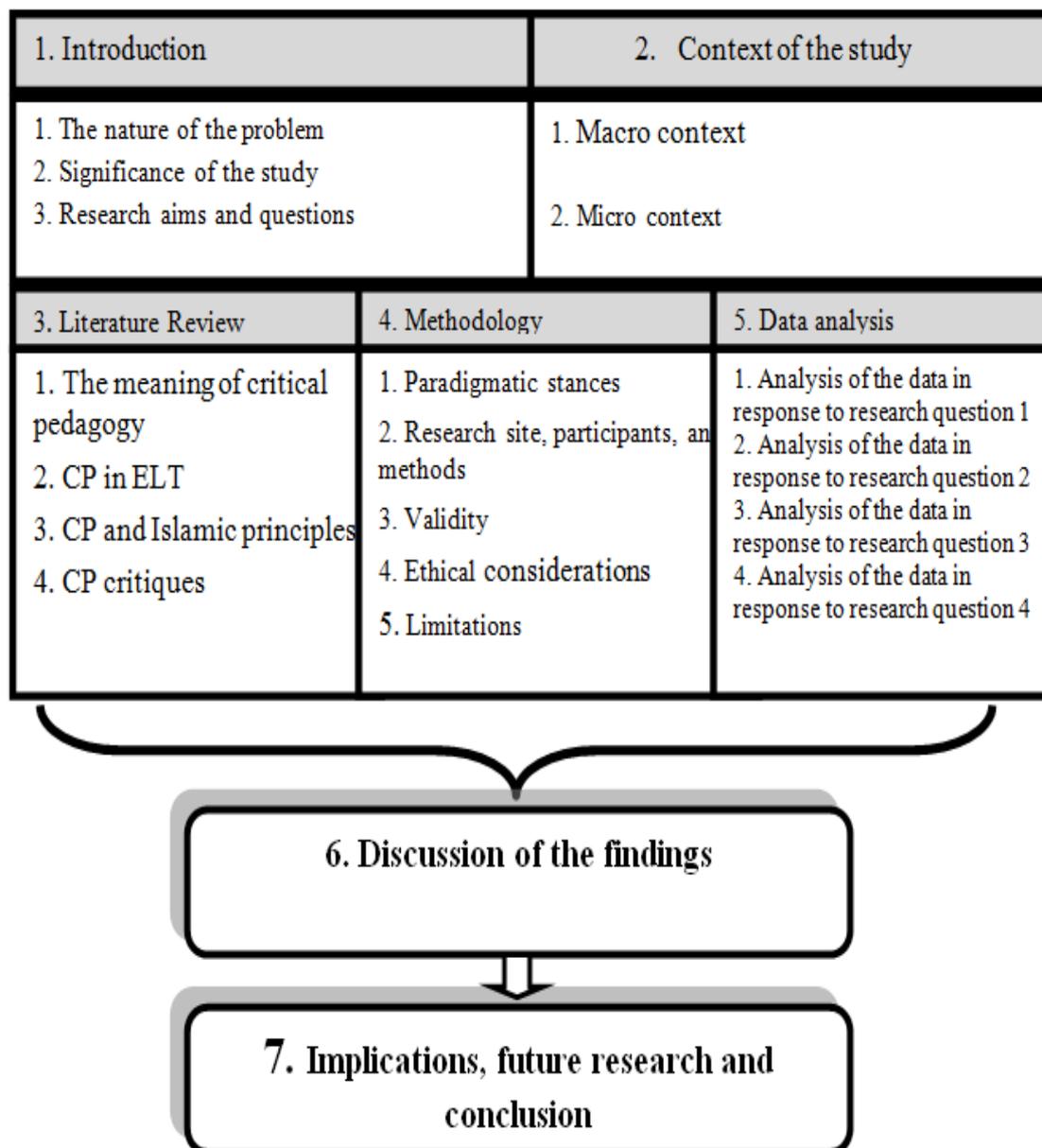


Figure 1.1 Graphic description of thesis chapters

**Chapter three** reviews the literature related to CP, its origin and main tenets, which guide the construction of this study. The second part of the

literature review talks about CP in ELT and how its premises appear in its aims, methods, materials and assessment from two sides: theoretical and empirical. This chapter also argues that Islamic principles and CP share some tenets, so reinventing CP in the educational system in a country like Oman where Islam is considered to be a worldview for most people would be strengthened and nurtured. Nonetheless, CP is not without its limitation, so this chapter also sheds light on its main critiques.

**Chapter four** gives details about the paradigmatic stances in this study and justifies using them by linking them to the study's questions and aims. It also gives details about the methodology, design and the methods of data collection used in the four phases of the study. In addition, it provides detailed background about the study's participants and different decisions made throughout the process of conducting it. The chapter also highlights the strategies applied to ensure the study's validity and ethical considerations that have been considered throughout the research process.

**Chapter five** consists of an analysis of the data collected from the questionnaires, interviews, documents (teachers' lesson plans +workshop evaluation forms), classroom observations and post classroom observation interviews. **Chapter six** presents in-depth discussion of the findings where I relate them to the research questions, existing literature and my context. Finally, **chapter seven** presents the implications of the study and provides recommendations for teachers, in-service and pre-

service teacher educators and policy-makers in order to successfully implement CP in Omani ELT. It also contains areas for further research and personal reflections on my research journey.

## Chapter Two: Defining the Context

*“The substantial dependency by a developing country like Oman on countries like Australia, Canada, UK and USA in planning language in education ... has subsequently forced the Sultanate to accept cultural and educational dependency as part of its existence and reality”*

(Al-Issa, 2006, p.214)

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives background information on the context in which this study was conducted. The context will be classified into two broad categories. First, the **macro context** where I provide an overview of Oman in terms of its demographic, linguistic and economic features and how all these affect education, which leads to the need for change including the necessity of widening the reach of ELT across the country. Following this, a brief description of the educational system in general, and higher educational system in particular, with a detailed focus on ELT will be provided. Since this study deals with teachers, one section in this chapter addresses teacher education in Oman. Second, the **micro context** provides information about ELT in the colleges of technology where this study was conducted, including the ELT programmes, teachers, students, syllabi, and opportunities for teacher professional development.

## **2.2 Macro context**

### **2.2.1 Sultanate of Oman**

Historically, 1970, when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos started to rule Oman, is considered to be an important turning point in Oman's history. Before 1970, Oman lacked basic services including health, education, transportation and housing. Nonetheless, under the leadership of his majesty, he transferred Oman from darkness to a modern country where education, health services and roads are provided to Omani citizens for free. Despite the development and modernization of all levels of Omani society, Al Issa (2002) emphasized that "discussing policy matters within the perspective of hegemony and power possession and distribution is a sensitive issue in Oman and people prefer to avoid practicing it in public" (p.412). However, on February 2011 and as a result of the 'Arab Spring' which reached Oman, young Omanis went out on the streets and protested, calling for reform, fighting against corruption in the Government and requesting solutions for unemployment and the limited opportunities in HE institutions. As a result, the Government worked hard to respond to these demands by employing about 50,000 Omanis in 2011 within one month, lowering the requirements of HE and firing key officials. The Government's reaction towards what had happened in 2011 seems to be a quick and smart response to maintain the country's stability while violent protest swept through the Arab world. Nonetheless, this reaction does not

really reflect a long term vision to overcome the social, economic and political issues encountered in Oman. Therefore, one can still read in the social networks and online forums about people's dissatisfaction with the Government's procedures for dealing with national issues. Omanis' comments in the social networks reflect their criticality of and resistance to the oppression and domination of the Government in Oman.

Islam is the religion of the country and this greatly influences Omani national identity and life style. Arabic is the official language; but several languages are spoken by inhabitants, such as English, Hindi, Urdu, Baluchi and Swahili, which reflects "Oman's historical past which included periods of empire and extensive trading with local and distant countries" (Ismail, 2011, p.11). In addition, some Omanis speak other languages such as Shihhi in the north and Jibbali in the south of Oman. There is no denying the immense power status of English around the world; Oman is no different, and English is an important tool in modern Oman (Al Hajri, 2013; Al-Issa, 2015). In fact, English is considered to be the "key element in the development of the country and its effective integration into the modern world" (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012, p. 263). People in Oman use English for travelling, pursuing higher education, finding a white-collar job, and in science and technology (Al-Issa, 2014; Al-Mahrooqi and Denman, 2016). In the urban areas, English is moving from the status of a foreign language to that of a second language (Al-Ghatrifi, 2006; Khan, 2011).

Economically, Oman is almost totally dependent on oil, which accounts for 80% of its income (Economic Research Forum, 2008). As a result, Oman, like other Gulf States, has attracted rich companies from the west, especially from the USA and UK, to start their oil and gas businesses. These companies depend on expatriate manpower, whose language of communication is English, to participate in the modernization project Oman is undergoing. All these factors influence the status of English. According to Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2016), the discovery of oil has involved “the importation of the foreign expertise, capital, technology and labor necessary to effectively exploit them, and contributed to the continued importance of English language in the Gulf States” (p.395).

It is worth mentioning that, despite the above, Oman produces less oil than other Gulf countries, and this makes the country look for other resources to maintain its economic progress. Therefore, Oman endeavours to develop other sectors, such as mining, fishing, agriculture and tourism, by providing them with support and incentives (Ministry of Information, 2003). In order for the Sultanate to meet its goal of diversity in the national income, education is perceived to play a role in preparing Omanis to work in these various sectors. The Omani Government is encouraging Omanisation, which is the replacement of expatriate workers by local people. This is especially the case in the private sector which is expected to play a significant role as the Government is moving towards privatisation of most services. Nonetheless, the last statistics obtained

from the Ministry of Manpower (MoM) show that the number of expatriate workers is increasing rapidly despite the efforts made to reduce it (MoM, 2012). One reason behind this seems to be that Omanis are found to be not sufficiently competent in relevant skills, including English (Al Issa, 2015; Al-Mahrooqi and Denman; 2016), which is considered a pre-requisite to obtain jobs in various public and private sector organisations (Al-Bakri, 2014; Al-Jardani, 2015). This means that the Omani Government perceives that ELT assists it to progress towards achieving Omanisation.

### **2.2.2 The educational system in Oman**

Al-Nabhani (2007) maintains that many educational reforms have been initiated to meet the challenges of the time and prepare Oman for a new stage where the focus is on improving its economy and preparing human resources to participate in it. One of the remarkable reforms in the educational system in Oman took place in 1998, called Basic Education reform, which replaced the previous education system of 'general education'. The Basic Education System (BES) consists of two cycles followed by a two-year post- BES. Cycle One covers Grades One to Four, Cycle Two covers Grades Five to Ten. Following these two cycles is Post BES which covers Grades Eleven and Twelve (refer to Figure 2.1).

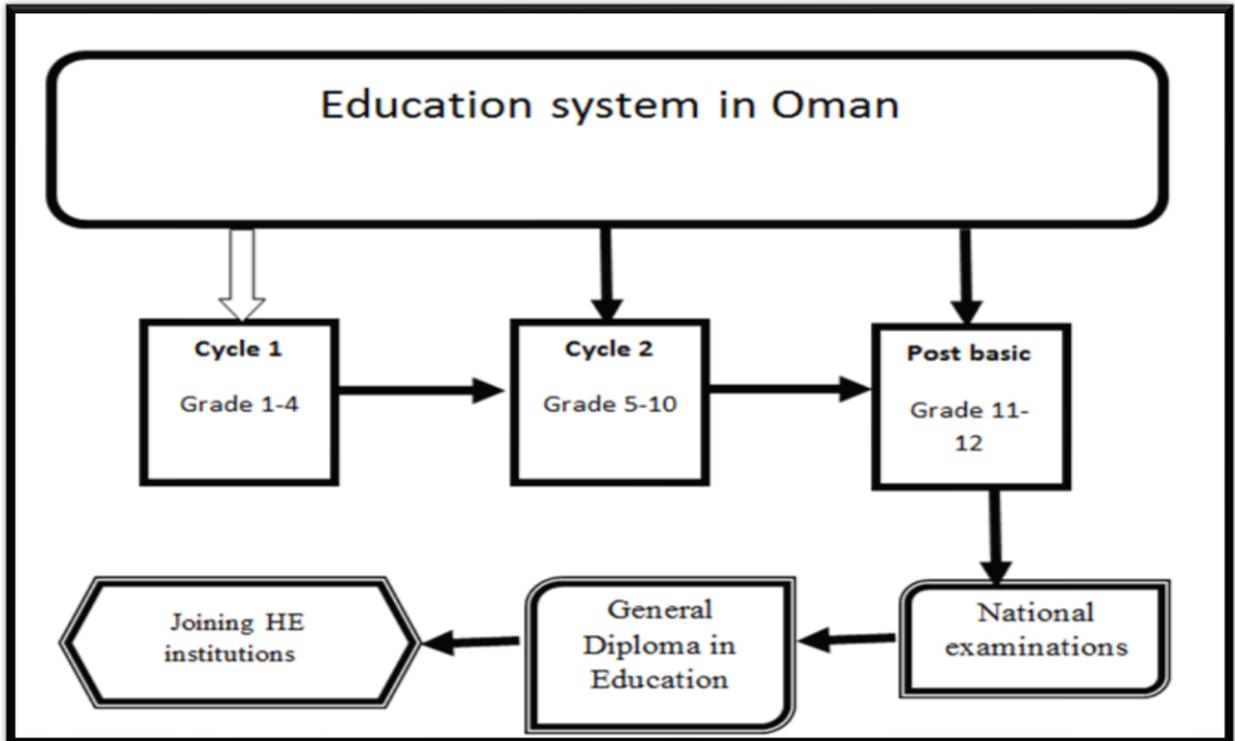


Figure 2.1 Stages of the education system in Oman

It is worth mentioning that the educational system in Oman is bureaucratic, highly structured, and authoritarian where decision-making and syllabi are decided by an elite at the ministry level (Al Nabhani, 2007; Al Issa, 2015). Teachers' roles are considered to be as policy implementers and their voice is largely marginalized. To maintain centralisation and hegemony of the education system, in the final year of schooling, students have to take national examinations which are the same for all students in the country. After passing these homogeneous exams, students are rewarded a General Diploma in Education (Ministry of Education, 2006) which is a prerequisite to entering HE institutions in Oman it is shown in Figure 2.1.

### **2.2.3 ELT in the education system in Oman**

In the reformed system, English is taught as a compulsory subject from grade one and for twelve years in public schools (Al-Badawi, 2011) as opposed to starting learning it from grade four in the old system. During grades eleven and twelve, students are offered both compulsory and elective English, where the former addresses all skills while the latter focuses on reading and writing. The great emphasis on ELT in the new reform also includes an increase of English instructional hours from 541 hours in the old system to 1200 hours in BES (Al Mahrooqi, Hassan & Asante, 2012). The great emphasis on ELT in the new reform is because English is seen as a pre-requisite for national development (Al-Badawi, 2011; Al-Lamki, 2009).

Therefore, children in Oman are encouraged to learn English, which is becoming the dominant language in education and jobs. Within the hegemony of English, rich parents send their children to private schools where English is used as the medium of instruction, so they will be ready to compete in HE institutions and the workplace in the future. Those who cannot afford this try to provide private tutoring to their children. Looking at the private schools and tutoring from a neutral perspective, it can be said that these parents are spending so much money on their children's education because an inability to operate in English would marginalise

their children and block opportunities for access to cultural capital (McKay, 2003).

The new reform also includes the change of the whole ELT syllabus (*English For Me*) which was designed with help from international consultants, mainly from Britain (Ministry of Education, 2010). It has been claimed that the new textbook is based on the communicative approach and student centredness (Al-Ghatrifi, 2006). However, teacher-centredness, rigidity of the syllabus, passivity of students, textbook-based teaching, and the examination focus are still features of Oman's ELT system despite the BES reform (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al Issa, 2009). Both local and expatriate teachers are found to utilise the Grammar-Translation approach and the Audio-Lingual method (Al-Issa 2010; McLean, 2011). They mainly train students for the examinations since the educational system in Oman relies heavily on the tests (Al-Issa 2006; Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi 2012; Al Hajri, 2013). These tests examine the mastery of the content (Al-Issa, 2007, 2010) rather than checking students' ability to use the language or ask them to think critically in inferring or applying what they have learned in new contexts.

#### **2.2.4 The higher education system in Oman**

The HE system in Oman has grown rapidly over the past three decades, especially since the establishment of the first HE institution in Oman, SQU

in 1986 (Al Shmeli, 2011). This expanding growth of HE institutions corresponds to the necessity of producing qualified Omani citizens who are capable of participating in the ongoing development of Oman (Al-Jardani, 2014; Al Barwani et al., 2009). There are various HE institutions which are supervised by various ministries as shown in Table 2.1.

<b>Name of the institution</b>	<b>Governing authority</b>	<b>Number of institutions</b>	<b>Specializations</b>
<b>Sultan Qaboos University</b>	University Council	1	Medicine, nursing, engineering, science, political science, economy, education, translation, tourism
<b>Colleges of Applied Sciences</b>	Ministry of Higher Education	5	Communication studies, information technology, design, international business administration
<b>Private Institutions</b>	Ministry of Higher Education	19 colleges & 7 universities	Medicine, engineering, information technology, banking, business, applied science.
<b>Colleges of Technology</b>	Ministry of Manpower	7	Information technology, engineering, human resources, business, applied science, photography, fashion design
<b>Health &amp; Nursing Institutions</b>	Ministry of Health	16	Physiotherapy, medical records, laboratory sciences, nutrition, general nursing
<b>College of Banking and Financial Studies</b>	Oman Central Bank	1	Accounting, banking, business, computing, and insurance.
<b>Military Technical College</b>	Ministry of Defense	1	civil engineering, marine engineering, aeronautical engineering and system engineering.
<b>Institutes of Islamic Studies</b>	Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs	1	Islamic studies

*Table 2.1 HE institutions currently operated in Oman*

The above listed institutions range from two year colleges offering diplomas in various specializations to four year colleges and universities offering Bachelor degrees (Al-Lamki, 2006). As a part of the accreditation of private universities and colleges, they are required to either affiliate or

sign a memorandum of cooperation with western universities in America or Europe (Al-Issa, 2002; Al-Lamki, 2006; Al-Jadidi, 2009). In all government HE institutions, the administrative and support staff are almost 100% Omani but the academic staff are largely expatriate (Al Shmeli, 2011; Al Bandary, 2005).

It is worth noting that, before the academic year 2010/2011, less than one quarter of the over 560,000 Omani high school graduates entered public HE institutions (Al Issa & Al Bulushi, 2012). However, as a result of the Arab Spring, the Government increased the intake to HE institutions by lowering the entry demands for public HE institutions and increasing the number of scholarships for Omanis to private HE institutions. This increase in intake has unfortunately not been paralleled by the human and physical resources needed by the institutions.

### **2.2.5 Oman Accreditation Council (OAC)**

This council aims to monitor and supervise accreditation and quality control of HE institutions in Oman (Al Issa & Al Bulushi, 2012). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to talk about OAC, but this section sheds light on the General Foundation Program (GFP) that has been proposed by OAC to ensure that foundation programmes in HE institutions are of high enough quality to enable students to join their regular HE courses. In 2008, the Minister for HE issued Ministerial Decision No.72/2008 stating

that the GFP should be adopted by all public and private HE institutions operating in Oman by the academic year 2009-2010 (Ministry of HE, 2010). The GFP contains English (core subject), mathematics, computing and general study skills. Programmes which meet the GFP standards will be recognized through formal accreditation by the OAC. With regard to English, the GFP standards require students to achieve English language competency at a level equivalent to IELTS 5.0 before they can start their specializations. After finishing GFP, the students are expected to participate actively in a discussion of any topic, paraphrase information from written or oral texts, deliver a talk for about five minutes, write essays showing control of layout, grammar and vocabulary, and read texts and predict, make inferences from and evaluate what they read. In addition, the students are expected to master basic research skills including paraphrasing, summarizing and referencing (Appendix 1: the GFP learning outcomes in English language).

### **2.2.6 ELT in HE institutions**

There is a huge shift in students' life when they join HE institutions, as here they start to learn in English as opposed to learning about English. In schools, Arabic was the medium of instruction. A large number of programmes are taught via EMI at HE institutions in Oman (Al-Jardani, 2015). Thus, 88% of the students who join tertiary education start by taking intensive English programmes that prepare them to study their

specializations in English (Al Shmeli, 2011). Students who fail to pass English courses are dismissed from HE institutions even before they reach the specialization stage. Thus, it can be said that English plays a major role in deciding Omani students' future in HE institutions (Al Hajri, 2013; Al-Jardani, 2015).

Most HE institutions depend on imported ELT materials, mainly from the UK and USA (Al-Jadidi, 2009; Ismail, 2011). Most of these teaching materials include full packages consisting of textbook, workbook, teacher's guide, charts, audio and videotapes and compact discs. However, these teaching materials often present topics that do not correspond to Omani students' concerns or interests (Al Mahrooqi & Al Busiadi, 2010; Al Mahrooqi et al., 2015). Tanveer (2013) asserts that the content of these textbooks adds barriers to learning English since students make a lot of effort to comprehend concepts that do not relate to their context. He strongly recommends that HE institutions think seriously about contextualizing the learning of English for it to be effective.

Regarding ELT syllabi, it has been found that covering too many skills within a short period of time (as is the case in GFP) can hinder students' mastery of English (Tanveer, 2013). Looking at the standards of GFP specified by OAC, the expectations are very ambitious; however, there is a huge gap between expectations and reality. Students need 3-4 years to meet these outcomes (ibid) while currently they spend between 6-18

months to pass the GFP. This results in the HE institutions endeavouring to meet the standards by having a full syllabus to meet the required standards, so the students end up having low mastery of the content. In addition, the GFP standards themselves are problematic since they were developed from the unrealistic objective that all students in Oman should achieve the pre-designed outcomes regardless of their historical background, socioeconomic status, geographical location or individual differences. Thus, it can be said that the GFP, as a "one-size-fits-all curriculum ends up fitting nobody" (Ohanian, 1999, p.43 as cited in Kincheloe, 2013, p.44) since it ignores "the profound differences between diverse schools, schools settings, students' needs and so on" (Kincheloe, 2013, p.44).

ELT teachers who teach in HE, as mentioned in the first chapter, come from a range of nationalities and cultures. The privilege is always given to NESTs who are usually paid more than their NNEST counterparts (Al-Issa, 2002; Al-Jadidi, 2009). However, these expatriate teachers, both NESTs and NNESTs, are found not to be motivated to create changes in their institutions (Syed, 2003; Khan, 2011; Hudson, 2013). In addition, most of these expatriate teachers lack cultural sensitivity and awareness (Al Issa, 2006; Chirciu, 2014). Furthermore, studies have found that students prefer bilingual teachers, especially at the beginning stages of learning English (Al-Jadidi, 2009; Ismail, 2011). These factors point to the need for the Omani Government upgrade the skills of Omani ELT teachers to teach in

these HE institutions. The next section sheds light on ELT teacher education in Oman.

## **2.2.7 ELT teacher education in Oman**

The main institutions for ELT teacher education in Oman are SQU and TTCs which were transferred to Colleges of Applied Sciences (CASs) in the academic year 2006/2007 (Al-Ghatrifi, 2006; Al Issa & Al Bulushi, 2011) to introduce more specializations that correspond to Omani labour market needs while continuing to provide teacher education programmes.

### **2.2.7.1 SQU**

The SQU programme aims to prepare teachers to teach English in Basic and Post-Basic education schools. It builds student teachers' competence in the four language skills, grammar and English literature. In order for student teachers to possess competencies which enable them to teach these areas, they study various educational courses (e.g. Curriculum and Methods of Teaching, Educational Psychology, Foundations of Education, and Instructional Technology) (quoted from SQU patrol online). The pre-service teachers also have microteaching sessions where they practise teaching in labs. Besides that, they have practicum in Basic and Post-Basic education schools (Appendix 2: English Education Degree Plan). The number of ELT graduate teachers from the SQU is 120 per year which

is deemed to be an insufficient number compared to the growth in demand of HE institutions in Oman (Ismail, 2011). In addition, it has been reported that the graduate teachers from the SQU "were better prepared in subject content than in pedagogy" (MoE & The World Bank, 2012, p.127) and there was a theoretical focus in the programmes (ibid). Al Mahrooqi (2011) found that there was a huge gap between theory and practice in the teacher education programme in SQU.

### **2.2.7.2 TTCs**

The TTCs were opened in 1976 as a two-year programme that mainly trained teachers to teach various subjects including English at elementary and preparatory levels. The teachers who graduated from these colleges were awarded a diploma in teaching English (Al-Ghatrifi, 2006). However, these institutions were converted to four-year programmes in teaching in the academic year 1994/1995 (Appendix 3: English Education Degree Plan in Rustaq TTC). The main rationale behind this conversion was to develop a teacher education programme and generate teachers who were qualified to teach their fellow citizens at all levels, including elementary, preparatory, secondary and university.

### **2.2.7.3 The Bachelor project for Omani teachers**

With collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the University of Leeds, all Omani English teachers who graduate from Diploma TTCs are

provided with in-service teacher education courses in order to improve both their English language and teaching skills. At the same time, all English teachers have been upgraded from Diploma holders to Bachelor (BA) holders. This programme started in 2000 with the beginning of BES in Oman in order to produce 1060 qualified English language teachers over a period of eight years (2000-2008) (Al-Jadidi, 2009). The BA (TESOL) programme is designed and taught by academic staff from the University of Leeds. This project has been the biggest one of its kind so far (ibid). The main aim is to upgrade the qualifications and skills of these teachers to support the implementation of the new English BES syllabus and to promote their own personal growth as teachers.

### **2.2.8 Teacher development programmes within HE institutions**

Teacher development programmes at HE institutions focus on upgrading Omani ELT teachers so that they can obtain their MAs in English-speaking countries. However, very few Omani ELT teachers are sent to obtain their PhDs since the Government believes that the MA qualification is enough for ELT teachers. In contrast, subject lecturers, such as engineering, business, information technology, medicine, applied science and others, are sent to do their PhDs. However, since the academic year 2011/2012, the number of ELT teachers who are sponsored to complete their PhD has increased due to the new programme of scholarships, called the '1000

Scholarship Program' that His Majesty announced after the 'Arab Spring' revolution in order to upgrade Omani citizens to be MA and PhD holders. Nonetheless, the number of scholarships for ELT teachers is still small when compared to other subjects. This can be attributed to the fact that ELT is considered to be a second class field that serves other specializations. This is to say that ELT is regarded as a 'service' field and within this perspective, it "will continue to risk marginalization and diminished status within university hierarchies" (Luke, 2008, p. 305).

With regards to in-service professional development programmes, there are no systematic training courses in HE institutions unlike in schools where the Ministry of Education (MOE) runs regular courses for ELT teachers in areas such as teaching methodology, language, research skills and leadership. Additionally, the MOE has established the Specialized Centre for Professional Training of teachers which mainly aims to raise teachers' knowledge, capabilities and skills (The Education Council, 2014). In contrast, within HE institutions, it seems such systematic programmes or clear visions of teachers' professional development are absent. However, there are professional development programmes within each institution where ELT teachers conduct seminars or workshops for their colleagues. In addition, some HE institutions conduct symposia from time to time and invite ELT teachers from other institutions to participate. Nonetheless, such symposia are not regular. So it can be inferred that ELT

teacher professional development within HE institutions in Oman depends on availability rather than on need.

Another professional development programme available to ELT teachers is **SQU ELT Conference**. This is a three-day annual conference held by the Language Center at SQU on current topics in ELT. **TESOL Arabia Conference**, which is an annual TESOL conference organized by neighbouring UAE, is another professional development opportunity for ELT teachers; this is the biggest ELT event in the Gulf.

Most public HE institutions and some private HE institutions give funding to ELT teachers to give presentations at conferences. In contrast, expatriates are just given tickets to attend. Some teachers also participate at SQU ELT Conference and TESOL Arabia Conference. HE institutions do not sponsor teachers merely to attend, they have to present. This is because ELT teachers at tertiary level are expected to conduct research. Nevertheless, it has been reported that conducting research as a means of professional development is rare in Oman (Al Issa & Al Bulushi , 2011; Al Hakmani, 2011; Al Lamki, 2009) and in other Gulf countries (Syed, 2003). For example, Al Issa and Al Bulushi (2011) found that Omani ELT teachers at SQU, which is considered the most prestigious HE institution in Oman and which hires only the best Omani ELT teachers, rarely publish research. This is because ELT teachers are overloaded with administrative and technical responsibilities and assigned heavy teaching loads.

Furthermore, the study found that the ELT teachers perceived conducting research as a very demanding task and they did not feel confident of their research skills, despite the fact that all ELT teachers who participated in this study were MA or PhD holders from English-speaking countries.

Having described the context of this study at the macro level, now I turn to describe the micro level. The uniqueness of the micro level affects the ELT system in general and teachers in particular.

## **2.3 Micro context**

### **2.3.1 Colleges of Technology**

The Colleges of Technology in Oman are part of the HE system, as mentioned above. They are part of the technical education system in Oman which started in 1972 (Al Hussein, 2004) and which includes the Higher College of Technology in Muscat and the other six Colleges of Technology located in Ibra, Nizwa, Shinas, Musna, Ibri and Salalah under the supervision of MoM (MoM, 2004; AlShahri, 2014). The technical programmes vary slightly from one college to another. However, students who are admitted to Colleges of Technology can move from one college to another based on their specializations. The programmes in these colleges include information technology (database, networking, software engineering, internet and security, information systems), business studies

(accounting, management), engineering (electrical, electronic, mechanical and industrial), applied sciences (biology, chemistry, physics), photography, fashion design and pharmacy. The last four programmes are offered only in Muscat. In addition, if the students want to continue their bachelor degree, they have to be transferred to the Higher College of Technology in Muscat. It is worth mentioning that Colleges of Technology prepare students to graduate at progressive levels from certificate, diploma, higher diploma to bachelor degree. Students can proceed to a higher qualification after they obtain high enough grades in their specialization and specific scores in IELTS, as shown in Figure 2.2. For instance, the students start with General Foundation Program (GFP) and, if they score 50% or above in the exit exam, they move to certificate level. If the students are interested in continuing their diploma after they finish Certificate, they have to get Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0. If they are interested in continuing to the higher diploma, they have to get GPA of 2.25 in their diploma and score band 4.0 in IELTS. If they want to continue their bachelor degree, they have to get GPA of 2.50 and score band 4.5 in IELTS. Figure 2.2 summarises how students progress from one level to another with the required criteria and time they spend in each qualification level.

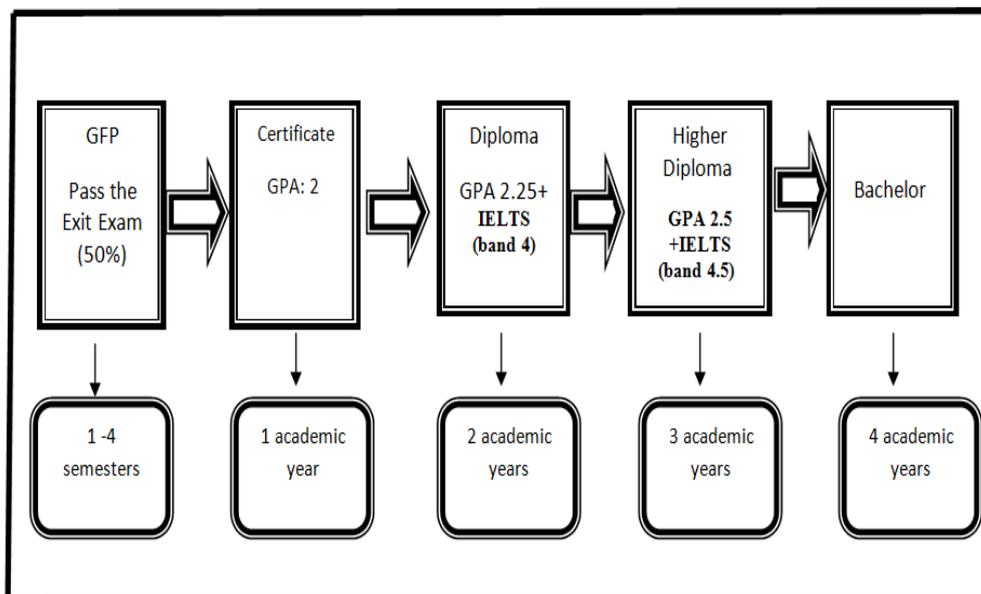


Figure 2.2 Progress and requirement to move from one qualification to another

### 2.3.2 English language centres

As English is used as the MOI in these colleges, most students start by joining the foundation year provided by the English Language Centers (ELCs), as explained above. All ELCs have Self Access Centers (SACs) which include some materials that students can use independently, such as books, stories, magazines, reading cards, readers, CDs and audio/video cassettes. There are also language labs where students can get more practice through MOODLE where some teachers put language tasks into practice. There are also programmes where students can work

independently, though they are not permitted to be in the language labs without a teacher or a technician.

The aims of these ELCs are

- ✓ To develop learners' skills in English, including speaking, reading, writing, listening, and study skills, so as to prepare them for higher studies in different areas of specialization.
- ✓ To reflect the learners' goals while considering their roles as community participants, workers and lifelong learners.
- ✓ To provide learners with skills to apply English accurately and appropriately in a variety of community, workplace and academic settings.
- ✓ To integrate second language learning with relevant life experiences by emphasising development of critical thinking, problem solving and other skills necessary for self-sufficiency.
- ✓ To provide a stimulating learning environment that respects adult learners and integrates their cultural backgrounds and experiences into the instructional process.

(Higher College of Technology, 2012, pp 3-4)

Each of the ELCs in these colleges has an overall head and two heads of sections: the curriculum and teaching methods section and the English language programme section. In addition, there are coordinators for all four levels who are teachers nominated by the Head of Centre (HOC) or

Head of Sections (HOSs) (see Figure 2.3: The administrative structure of ELCs). The coordinator's duties include monitoring the teaching and learning process through making sure that the outcomes for each syllabus are met, conducting level meetings with teachers and informing them about issues coming from the ELC administration, reviewing the supplementary materials used in each level, monitoring quizzes and written examinations, receiving students' complaints and appeals and reviewing teachers' portfolios.

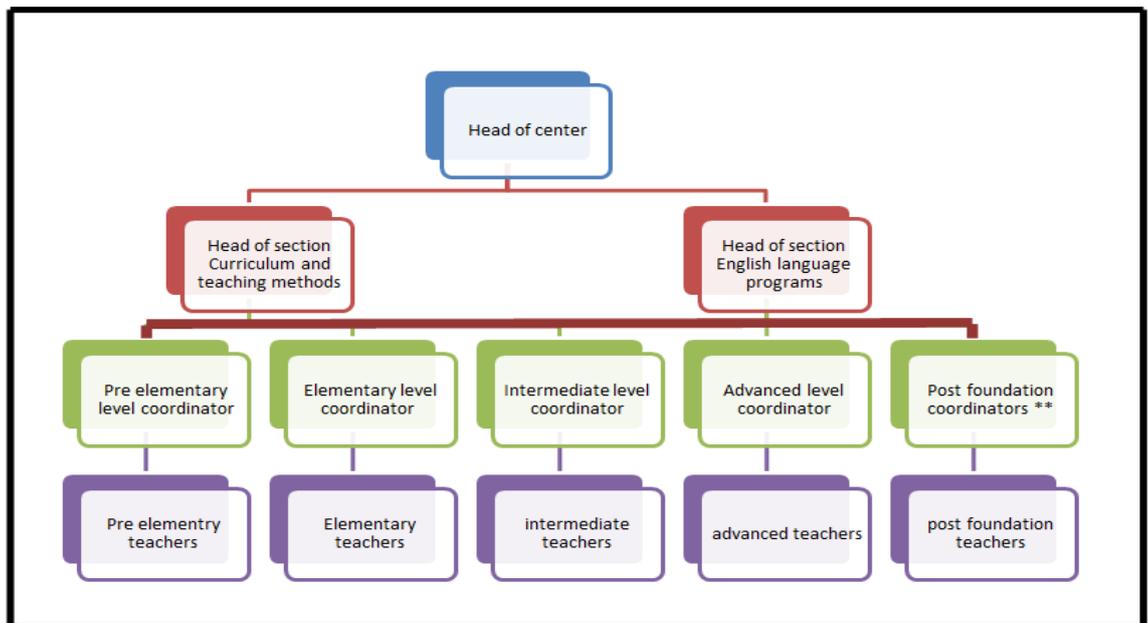


Figure 2.3 The structure of ELC

**\*\* each of the four courses in post foundation has its own coordinator**

It is worthy to highlight here that, because the GFP standards are set by the OAC, the ELCs have implemented various quality assurance procedures to ensure that the teaching and learning processes are up to the objectively predefined standards. Such quality assurance procedures require teachers to fill forms for every single act they perform, so they can show evidence to the audit communities that they are working to these standards. These quality assurance procedures require the ELCs to inspect teachers' attendance, teaching, and marking of examination papers. From the teachers' perspectives, this managerial system increases their workload and they feel unable to cope with the extra burden.

### **2.3.3 The General Foundation Program (GFP)**

At the beginning of each year, students are placed in four levels based on their scores on a placement test which is prepared in-house and lasts for two and a half hours. The foundation programme focuses on English skills including Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. Besides learning English, students also study Mathematics, Study Skills, and Information Technology to acquire the basic knowledge they need to join their specializations effectively (Appendix 4: Programme structure). The ELCs also offer further courses during the specializations stage, called post-foundation courses, to help students cope with their specialization study demands. These include four courses: Technical Writing I, Technical

Writing II, Technical Communication and Public Speaking. The academic year consists of three semesters (Fall, Spring, Summer) and the students can spend between one and four semesters in the GFP based on their placement test results.

### **2.3.4 ELT materials**

Similar to other HE institutions in Oman, colleges of technology mainly utilize materials that are Anglo-American or Anglo-Western. They come in full packages including the class book, workbook, CDs and teacher's guide; the latter tells the teacher how to start and end the lesson, and what to include or exclude. These materials are used to achieve a pre-designed syllabus that is prepared by elites at the ministry level "who do the thinking while teachers are reduced to doing the implementing" (Giroux, 1988,124). The textbooks for all levels of ELT programmes are decided by the Ministry (OAC Audit Report, 2010). This is to say that the students' and teachers' voices are not taken into consideration when the decisions are made. Consequently, the teachers and students report that the books are inadequate because their content does not meet the students' needs, is culturally inappropriate, and is too difficult (ibid). Nevertheless, the ELCs continue to use these inadequate textbooks. Occasionally, teachers can prepare their own materials but only after the approval of the level coordinator. There are textbooks for the different skills since they are taught separately. The rationale behind fragmentation of knowledge of the

language is to break it down in a way that is manageable and testable. Students are provided with a copy of each textbook; this is the cornerstone of ELT in the ELCs where the emphasis is on learning vocabulary lists and grammar forms without real meanings or contexts. Teachers depend heavily on the textbooks to teach since the assessment is based on their content.

### **2.3.5 ELT assessment**

Assessment of ELT at ELCs depends heavily on tests. It includes Continuous Assessment (CA) (20%) consisting of progress quizzes (Appendix 4: the breakdown of CA), Mid-Term Exam (MTE) (30%) and Level Exit Exam (LEE) (50%). The MTE should reflect the LEE in content, organization, and length so that the students get practice towards passing the LEE. The Ministry decided that 50% would be the cut-off point to move to the next level. Oddly enough, if the student fails the CA and MTE but succeeds in LEE, he or she can move to the next level, but if the student succeeds in CA and MTE but fails the LEE, he or she cannot move to the next level. A conclusion can be drawn that what matters in assessing students is the LEE regardless of the students' performance during the level. The LEE for all levels are written by each college separately; however, since the academic year 2012/2013, the LEE for advanced level has been written in the Ministry of Manpower.

### **2.3.6 ELT students**

All ELT students are Omanis who have graduated from high schools and come from across Oman. Usually, students are placed in the nearest college to their hometown to study the GFP and then they continue in the same college or transfer to another one based on their specialization. Male and female students study together with the females sitting at the right or back of the class while the male students sit at the left or front of the class, due to cultural constraints. Teachers are advised not to mix male and female students. It is worth mentioning that, out of all the HE institutions in Oman, the colleges of technology receive the largest intake of high school graduates (about 11,000 students per year). This means that the overall level of these students in general, and in English in particular, is not high. In addition, colleges of technology are not among students' first choices as they would prefer to join SQU or other HE institutions (Al Hussini, 2004; Al-Hinai, 2011). However, recently, the status of colleges of technology has been improved since their graduates have been succeeding in finding jobs in prestigious companies, especially oil companies.

### **2.3.7 ELT teachers**

The ELT teachers in the ELCs are of various nationalities, including Indian, Pakistani, Iranian, Arab (Jordanian, Tunisian and Sudanese), Canadian, American, British, Australian and South African. This makes ELCs very

diverse, with teachers bringing with them a range of backgrounds, cultures, teaching practices and philosophies. There are very few Omani ELT teachers, as in many HE institutions, yet the number increases year by year.

The majority of the teachers have 18 teaching hours per week besides at least two office hours to meet and provide support to their students. The teaching loads might be decreased if the teachers perform other responsibilities, such as committees at ELC level or college level. Each teacher is provided with a separate desk and computer, and a shared printer. ELT teachers have the freedom to choose which level at which they want to teach if there is a possibility of accommodating their choice in the ELC schedule. However, the newly arrived teachers usually teach in the first two levels. The rationale behind this is that the first two levels are not that demanding, so teachers have time to settle in.

Most teachers are master's degree holders in ELT or relevant subjects with two or more years' experience at tertiary level. However, some have a bachelor's degree in ELT or relevant subjects with an ELT qualification such as the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) or Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate. It is worth mentioning that in the contexts of these colleges, "one can find highly qualified academics holding PhDs and MAs with extensive teaching experience and impressive scholarly records alongside

native speakers whose degrees are not necessarily related to the language education field" (Chirciu, 2014, p.53). The recruitment of ELT teachers is done through agencies which are responsible for providing Curriculum Vitae (CVs) to the heads of ELC in the various colleges who forms a recruitment panel to interview teachers. However, some other teachers are recruited directly via the MoM, especially Omanis. Every new teacher is put in the probation stage for three months and observed by HOC Head of ELC or HOS.

### **2.3.8 Teacher induction programmes**

There are various induction programmes for teachers when they join the ELC. For instance, individual induction programmes are conducted by the Human Resources Department. A group induction programme is held at the beginning of each academic semester for all teachers at the ELC level. This induction programme mainly focuses on rules and policies that teachers need to be aware of and academic matters relating to teaching and assessment. In addition, new teachers are handed a booklet that consists of information related to the ELC's vision, goals and procedures. In some colleges, there is a friendly way of induction via a 'buddy system' where each new staff member is assigned to an existing staff member who can provide more information about the college rules, teaching matters and other matters.

### **2.3.9 Teacher appraisal system**

There are various means to carry out teacher appraisal. One of the principal means is classroom observations conducted by the HOC and HOS using a checklist which includes various criteria such as time management, lesson delivery, classroom management and student/teacher relationship. The visits to the class are scheduled by the ELC administrative staff who inform the teacher in advance; nonetheless, sometimes teachers are visited without prior notification. A post-lesson discussion is held with the teacher to discuss the lessons. New ELT teachers are observed at least twice during the three-month probation period. However, other ELT teachers can also be observed if there is a serious concern about them. It seems that conducting classroom observation has more of an evaluative goal than a developmental one.

Another principal means of evaluating teachers is through the students' questionnaire, which is carried out twice a year, specifically at the end of the first and second semesters for each English course. This questionnaire consists of statements in both languages Arabic and English. In some colleges, these questionnaires are conducted electronically while in others they are carried out manually. The results are then consolidated and transmitted to the HOC and discussed with the staff member during the appraisal process. These two means serve as input to hire or fire ELT teachers, with one month notification pre-termination. The feedback is also

sent to the recruitment agencies that employ teachers at the end of the year. It is worth mentioning that the termination process is not systematic in that those teachers whose performance is not satisfactory should be given warnings in advance or they should be subject to further classroom observation (OAC Audit Report, 2010). Additionally, promotion opportunities are available to teachers who are appointed directly by the Ministry and "there is no formal promotion process for staff contracted to the agents" (ibid, p. 2010)

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter gave a detailed description of the macro and micro contexts in which this study is conducted. It has also highlighted the major issues related to ELT teachers since they are the main concern of this study, including their education, appraisal and the chances for professional development. The next chapter reviews the literature relevant to CP and the main tenets which inform the current study.

## **Chapter Three: Literature Review**

*"To be liberate is not to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future"*

(Giroux ,1988, p.155)

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the body of literature related to Critical Pedagogy (CP) (Freire, 2000, 2003; Apple, 1999; Giroux, 2011; Shor, 1992; McLaren, 2003a; Kincheloe, 2005) that forms the basis of this study. It will start by tracing the history of CP and defining its meaning, then the implementation of CP in ELT will be explored. Next, literature will be presented which argues that some elements of CP are inherently related to Islamic principles, implying that Oman, as a Muslim country where Islam generally shapes most people's lives and world views, should implement CP in education in general and ELT in particular. This chapter will end by highlighting the critiques of CP.

## **3.2 Critical pedagogy: Origin**

In order to understand CP, light should be shed on its history. Tracing back the origin of CP, it is found that it is strongly rooted in critical theory (Kincheloe, 2005; Giroux, 2003; Keesing-Styles, 2003). It emerged from the members of the Frankfurt School, who included Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Habermas (Goomansingh, 2009; Troudi, 2015). The rapid growth of science, technology, immigration and capitalism in the West at the beginning of the twentieth century prompted Frankfurt thinkers to respond to these changes (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003). Their responses can be expressed, as Marcuse said before his death, "in compassion [and] in our sense of sufferings of others" (Habermas, 1980, as cited in Giroux, 2003, p.28). This means that critical theory addresses issues of power and justice and how economy, class, ethnicity, gender, education and ideologies shape society (Kincheloe, 2008b).

In addition, critical theory completely rejects neutrality, which concentrates on 'how to' instead of 'why should' (Giroux, 2003). This is to say that it critiques positivism, which sees the world as fixed and unchanged, and emphasises that human behaviour is the outcome of "particular illegitimate, dominatory and repressive factors: illegitimate in the sense that they do not operate in the general interest – one person's or group's

freedom and power is bought at the price of another's freedom and power" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 31). From critical theory's perspective, reality is "historically contingent [on] contexts mediated by relationships of domination and subordination" (Giroux, 2003, p.28). It is necessary to highlight here that Oman is not a democratic nation and people are not free to publically criticise the policies of the government. Hence, this thesis will concentrate on critiquing non-political matters, such as social issues relevant to students' lives. It also aims to question issues that are taken for granted and are related to teaching materials, methods, assessment, teachers' and students' roles.

Generally, critical theory does not aim to describe what is going on in society, but aims to emancipate it by empowering its people (Tamly, 2010). Nonetheless, one should be conscious of the word 'emancipation' in the twenty-first century, because "no-one is ever completely emancipated from the sociopolitical context that has produced him or her" (Kincheloe, 2005, p.51). As a result, critical theorists aim to make people aware of the dominant powers by uncovering the ideologies that surround them as a first step towards changing realities. This is very relevant to the present study because, by introducing CP to ELT teachers in Oman, I do not anticipate that the study's small interventions will result in their emancipation. Rather, the aim is to raise teachers' awareness of its main

tenets and embolden them to challenge issues surrounding ELT that are taken for granted in Oman. This is the first step in a critical series because "nothing will change unless people know things need to" (Pennycook, 1999, p.336).

Critical theory has influenced many fields including politics, economy, sociology and education. The introduction of critical theory into education has led to the establishment of CP (Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012). It can be said that CP is "an educational response to oppressive power relations and inequalities existing in educational institutions" (Keesing-Styles, 2003, p.2). CP has been associated with the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, although the term first appears in Henry Giroux's publication 'Theory and Resistance in Education' in 1983 (Darder et al., 2003). Freire (2000), based on critical theory, developed his influential book "*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*" where he called for emancipatory and liberatory education through "mak[ing] oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation" (Freire, 2000, p.48). He advocates a problem posing model that is based on dialogical methods and people's experience to encourage individuals to question their ideologies and raise their critical consciousness. However, throughout history (see Table 3.1), CP has been influenced by different philosophies and many thinkers who

have shifted its "focus on social class to include issues such as: race, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, globalisation and other elements" (Sadeghi, 2008, p.278). All these aspects contribute to an understanding of present-day CP.

Main Thinkers	Philosophies	Main Contributions
Dewey, Illich	Progressivism	A criticism of traditional education; thinking and reflection are central to education, and knowledge should be based on the learners' natural interest and curiosity; learning through activities.
Vygotsky	Socioculturalism	Individual's cognition is socially and culturally mediated; individual behavior cannot be removed from the context in which it occurs; language is central to the development of thinking.
Giroux, McLaren, Apple, Kincheloe	Revolutionary critical pedagogy	The school's role in transmitting certain messages about political, social, and economic life; schools as a means for the democratic sphere; questioning hidden curriculum, privileged people support the status quo; resists the technical model of schools and education.
Shor & Freire	A dialogical pedagogy	Teacher starts with the students' experience; students' respond to themes, texts, and/or problems; questioning of the status quo; one must struggle to find strategies that encourage rather than discourage students from thinking of themselves as critical agents shaping their own education.
Hooks, Shrewsbury	Feminism	Social class is not the only form of oppression; race, gender are forms of oppression in society, oppression is not static, rather it is constantly changing.
Said, Canagarajah,	Postcolonialism	Challenges the received histories and ideologies of formal colonial nations, allows insubordinate

Bhabha		knowledge to emerge, challenge and resist Western thought and colonial discourse, creative appropriation of language, culture and knowledge to the colonised nations, work contextually.
Foucault, Leather,  Britzman, Pennycook	Poststructuralism/ Postmodernism	Deconstruct givens of dominant modes of thought, open a space for diversity, nothing is absolute, knowledge is contextualised by its historical and cultural nature, power is discursive not structural, power is not fixed, Power is not represented in a form of domination only, but it can be in a form of resistance.

Table 3.1 CP thinkers and philosophies

Although not exhaustive, table 3.1 shows that CP cannot be reduced to a monolithic body of discourse (Philpot, 2015; Crookes, 2013, 2009; Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003; Burbules & Berk, 1999). For instance, Keesing-Styles (2003) asserts that the literature of CP is "incredibly broad and the content often dense and perplexing" (p.2). This is, firstly, because CP has been influenced by many trends and philosophies such as the Frankfurt School of critical theory, progressivism, social theories, feminism, postcolonialism, poststructuralism and postmodernism (Giroux, 2004; Weiner, 2007; Breunig, 2009; Chi, 2011). Secondly, CP is not a theory which can be framed (Akbari, 2008a) and it is not a set of ideas which can be packed and taught. Rather, it is "a way of doing learning and teaching. It is a practice motivated by a distinct attitude toward classrooms and society" (Canagarajah, 2005a, p. 932). Thirdly, CP respects the contextual

and political nature of schooling; consequently, its meanings and implementations vary accordingly (Chi, 2011; Breunig, 2011). Although the heterogeneous nature of CP can be confusing and misleading, it should be perceived as a "distinguishing factor that constitutes its critical nature and therefore its most emancipatory and democratic function" (Darder et al., 2003, p.10). This is to say that the varieties of CP reflect its criticality and should be considered beneficial, since it enables educators to reshape their understandings and interpretations as they progress.

Having shed light on the origin of CP, the next section elucidates its meaning.

### **3.3 Critical pedagogy: Definition**

It is difficult to find a concise meaning of CP, as explained above. In addition, critical pedagogues tend to refrain from constructing a harmonious 'blueprint' around critical work (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). Nonetheless, through a review of literature on CP, some major principles have been put forward by various critical educators and have helped to pin down the main elements of CP that shape the theoretical framework of this study: (1) education is a political enterprise, (2) education should address emancipatory knowledge, (3) education should aim to achieve

empowerment, (4) education should aim to achieve transformation, (5) the world should be integrated in the classroom, and (6) being 'critical' within the CP framework is about questioning dominant dogmas. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the six unified themes.

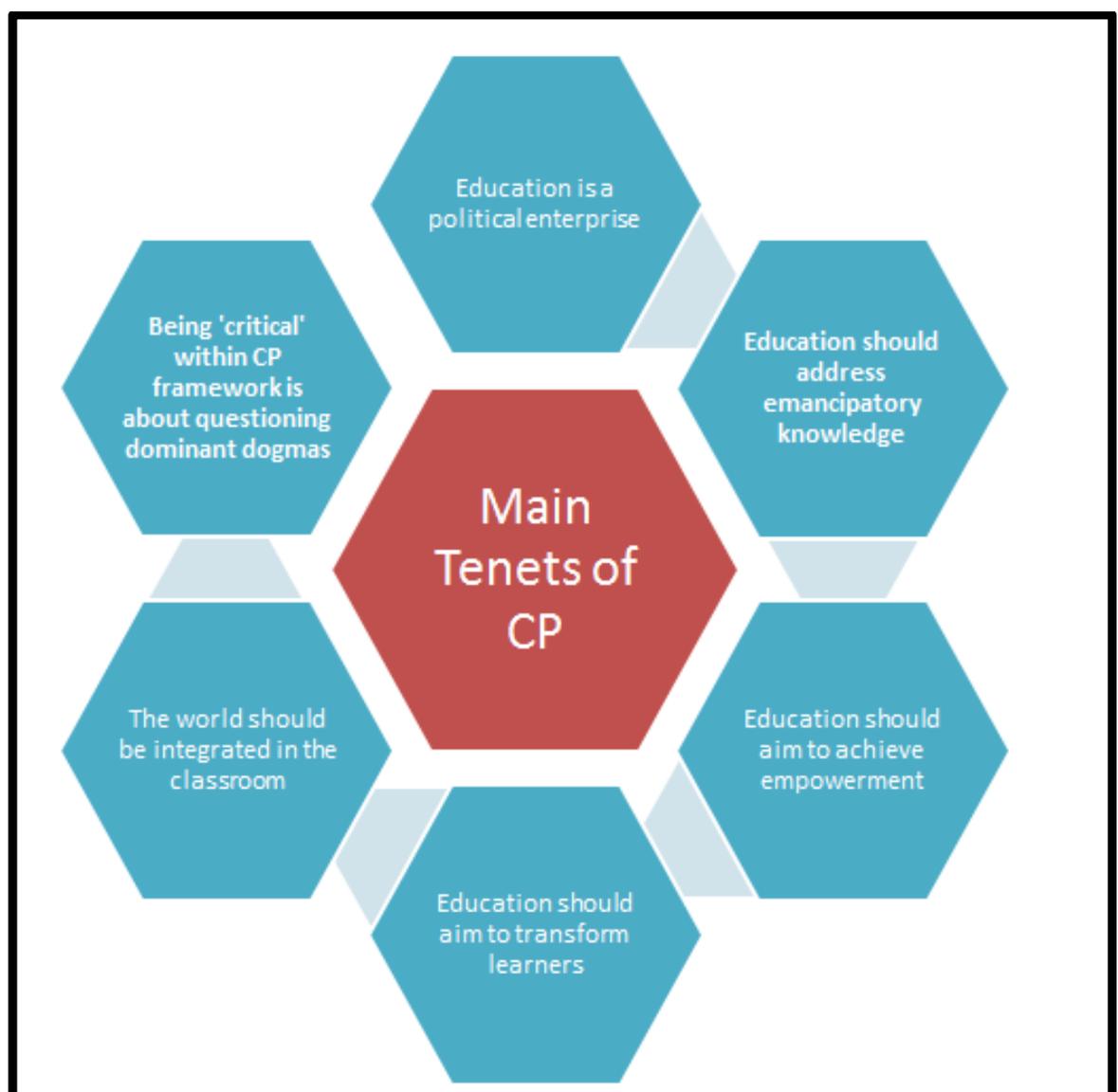


Figure 3.1 Main Tenets of CP

### **3.3.1 Education is a political enterprise**

For critical pedagogues, education is not neutral and it is highly influenced by the social and political relations in the context in which it occurs. This means that the school structure, curricula, modes of teaching, standards and assessment are value laden, which results in socialising people in terms of how to think, feel, speak and act in a certain context (Shor, 1993). Thus, education is "a highly contested, conflict-ridden enterprise where competing knowledge, values and practices of diverse communities struggle for dominance" (Canagarajah, 1999, p.16). Therefore, CP enjoins teachers to be aware that every form of educational practice is politically contested (Kincheloe, 2005). It views teachers as political agents (Simon, 1987) and requires them to take a political stance by continually questioning the traditional relations of power and ideas in their institutions. Nonetheless, many teachers within mainstream pedagogies view education as an apolitical and innocent act that contributes to the common good, where true facts are transferred to learners (Chandella & Troudi, 2013; Baladi, 2007; Crookes & Lehner, 1998). Taking a neutral stance towards education means that the status quo will be perpetuated. Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to raise teachers' awareness of the political nature of education, especially ELT, where teachers currently

approach their practice uncritically and behave as slaves to ideologies coming from the top (AL Issa, 2010).

Although the proposition that education is political seems to be powerful, it is contested. This is because CP has been accused of being political itself. Ellsworth (1989) interrogates "What diversity do we silence in the name of 'liberatory' pedagogy?" (p. 299). Similarly, Jeyaraj (2014) asserts that CP, with its keenness for achieving social justice and uncovering hidden agendas, has prescribed only one way of looking at reality whereby struggle against oppression is the core. This results in indoctrinating students into believing that CP with its political stance is the key to education. This is to say, ironically, CP has encountered the problem of knowledge imposition (Mejía, 2004) which contradicts its aim of moving from a banking model to a liberating education. Nonetheless, Chandella and Troudi (2013) maintain that every teacher has political stances and "consciously or unconsciously carry these into the classroom" (p.47). This means that holding a neutral stance is an illusion and all teaching approaches are political (Pennycook, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The difference is that the politics of CP is explicit, whereas the other methods are implicit and hidden behind a screen of neutrality (Haque, 2007).

From the above discussion, I argue that being aware of one's political stance is a first step to encourage engagement in constant questioning

and critical reflection about one's practice. In contrast, neutrality leads to an unreflexive agreement with the status quo. We, as teachers, always operate in a political field and, as such, we need to develop tactics to grapple with these politics, to challenge and resist them. To this end, it is necessary to make teachers aware of this tenet which is one of the key aims of this study.

### **3.3.2 Education should address emancipatory knowledge**

CP should aim to address emancipatory knowledge which necessitates critical practitioners ask how and why knowledge is structured the way it is and how and why certain knowledge is legitimised, while other wisdom is marginalized, whose representations are dominant and how this could be constructed otherwise (Morgan, 1997). Therefore, within this premise, the classroom should become "a venue in which teachers and students create and recreate knowledge," (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998, p. 2). This can be achieved through opening opportunities for provocative and conflicting ideas to appear in the classroom, which shift the ontology and epistemology for both learners and teachers. Students should be equipped with analytical tools that assist them to construct, reconstruct and resist knowledge presented to them in their classrooms. Utilising critical

discourse analysis, critical language awareness, and critical literacy can enhance students' ability to reach emancipatory knowledge (Skarin, 2005).

This will help students with their teachers examine:

“Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal circumstances of any action, event, object, process, organisation, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media or discourse”.

(Shor, 1992, p.129)

To address such emancipatory knowledge, which is the core of CP, teachers need to resist the idea that they are simply transferors of knowledge and that they are "technicians who simply implement pre-packed curriculums and standardised tests" (Giroux, 2003, p.124). From a CP perspective, teachers are transformative intellectuals who are sceptical questioners, constant analysers and advocating educators. Intellectual teachers free themselves from the technical constraints controlling their profession and begin to approach teaching with a 'teachable heart' (McLaren, 1999; Wink, 2005; Sedeghi & Ketab, 2009). This necessitates teachers to teach with the "fears, joys, questions, dreams, aspirations and interpersonal relationships of their students" (Kincheloe, 2013, p.45).

Nevertheless, looking at the current educational institutions in Oman, the teacher's role has been reduced to implementers of policies (Al Mamari,

2012; Al Issa, 2014). Education is mostly governed by technical knowledge that encourages rote learning and skill drills (Tanveer, 2013; Al- Issa, 2010; Al Jadidi, 2009). Teachers are teaching knowledge to students as fixed, static and complete (McLean, 2011). Students memorise such knowledge and are evaluated fairly and objectively through tests which determine their admission to any college and their subsequent specialisation (Baporikar & Shah, 2012). It also appears, through the fragmented nature of knowledge presented to students in schools, that these subjects are separate in reality and that there is no connection between them (Al Mamari, 2012). Focusing on ELT as an example, language is presented to students as a fragmented system where there is a textbook and a teacher for various skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Such practical knowledge makes students passive learners who memorise facts without a meaningful connection between their needs and concerns (Shor, 1992). According to Giroux:

"young people were at one time and are now once again shamelessly reduced to 'cheerful robots' through modes of pedagogy that embrace an instrumental rationality in which matters of justice, values and power are erased from any notion of teaching and learning" (2011, pp.3-4).

Practitioners are told that knowledge presented in schools represents various cultures, but indeed it represents the dominant culture in the case of most ELT programmes, where knowledge reaches students as part of a full package from big publishing names in the UK and USA. Thus, our

schools "become easy spaces for selling knowledge which corresponds to capitalist ideology" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.8). Consequently, this study aims to unmask the ideologies behind the knowledge presented in schools by encouraging ELT teachers to problematise it, co-construct it and base it on students' needs and concerns. In other words, it encourages teachers to address emancipatory knowledge, so teachers can empower themselves and their students, which is the true purpose of education from the CP perspective.

### **3.3.3 Education should aim to achieve empowerment**

Empowerment, this thesis advocates, is the ability of students to develop independent thinking, respect multiple perspectives, read critically, make informed decisions, understand others and accept differences without judging. This necessitates providing learners with spaces to reflect, gives them a voice that can be heard by their teachers and their peers in the classroom, and enables them to construct their own knowledge about the discussed issues. This can be attained via implementing problem-posing education, which is the antithesis of the banking model. The banking model sees education as an act of depositing, whereby students are depositories and the teacher is an attentive clerk (Freire, 2003). In

contrast, the problem-posing model of education involves "a constant unveiling of reality" (ibid, p.64) where teachers teach in "critical, open, explorative and collective modes" (Giroux, 1988, p.87). This model has five essential stages (Izadinia, 2009, p.13):

1. Describing the content: the teacher presents the students with a code which can be a word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph or a picture, a drawing or a video clip. The teacher asks the students to describe the code.
2. Defining the problem: the students uncover the problem or the issue.
3. Personalising the problem: the teacher asks the students about their feelings so they can relate the problem to their personal life.
4. Discussing the problem: the teacher leads the discussion and encourages students to think of the social and economic reasons for the problem.
5. Discussing alternatives to the problem: the students think about solutions to the problem.

Nonetheless, some literature has proposed that the ideas of participation, voice and autonomy are ideologies from the West and students in other contexts might not need them (Pennycook, 1997; Holliday, 1997). However, Baporikar and Shah (2012) maintain that these norms are of high value in a global world; therefore, Omani students need to be given chances to instill such qualities when they learn. According to them:

"It is no longer enough for students [in Oman] to sit and listen, test and forget. Learners of today need to become autonomous learners, thinkers and planners who are able to sustain learning and attain long-term success" (p.17).

Empowerment plays a major role in CP and, as such, has also been considerably criticised. For instance, Crookes and Lenhener (1998) in their study of a TESOL teacher education programme, assert that, although some of the participants enjoy the negotiation and dialogue, other participants resist CP because it is taught in contexts where the teachers are powerless and have no control over the syllabus they teach. Similarly, Ellsworth (1989) maintains that CP "has developed along a highly abstract and utopian line which does not necessarily sustain the daily workings of the education its supporters advocate" (p. 297). Nonetheless, Munroe (2011) maintains that empowerment is multifaceted; there is empowerment of thought, empowerment of voicing opinions and empowerment of action. When teachers are practising CP, it is more likely that their empowerment can be observed at the thought and voicing of opinions but not at the action level due to "restrictions imposed by school politics, and the social and cultural norms of the community" (p.118). However, I would argue that bringing empowerment at the thinking level is crucial as it provides teachers with the courage to voice their opinions which might gradually lead to their empowerment in action.

Empowerment is also criticised because moving towards problem-posing education is hard for many teachers and it may result in their discussing issues in a monological and judgmental manner which may result in "turning real problems into pseudo-problems with easy solutions"

(Ramanathan, 2002, p. 110). Similarly, in a study in Greece, Mitsikopoulou (2010) describes ELT teachers' perceptions of their work and their teaching practices when they move to teach through CP. The results show that some teachers cannot abandon their authoritative role and they continue teaching in the banking model. The study concludes that teachers "need time to unlearn operating within a framework that transmits knowledge" (p.331). This study indicates that teachers may not easily move to adopt a CP framework due to their inherent technical mode of teaching, as is the case with many ELT teachers in Oman who are found to transmit knowledge to students (Al-Issa, 2006; Mclean, 2011). Consequently, changing will require a lot of effort and time.

A note of caution, however; using the problem posing model in education in order to empower learners does not mean that teachers should not lecture or transmit knowledge to their students at certain times in the classroom. Rather, it means that lecturers should not intend merely to deposit information into students but they should approach their lectures interactively to generate the dialogue necessary for investigating issues deeply and critically (Shor & Freire, 1987).

### 3.3.4 Education should aim to transform learners

CP seeks learners' transformation through rigorous questioning of dominant knowledge, practices and values (Goomansingh, 2009). This requires teachers to confront students' experiences and ideologies through critical dialogue and reflection that leads to raising of awareness (McLaren, 2003a). By doing so, learners will attain '*conscientisation*' which can be defined as "the process by which students, as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacities to recreate them" (Darder et al., 2003, p.15). In other words, *conscientisation* is maintained when learners feel that they are capable of transforming their lives by challenging common sense and unmasking the ideologies and power underpinning them (Armitage, 2013). This *conscientisation* helps students to take action based on their own reflections on their realities, which Freire called 'praxis' which can be defined as "the site where theory and practice come together to create action that leads to social and political change" (Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p.31).

Praxis not only requires people to be critical and sceptical; they should also be creative and imaginative. This is to say, CP aims to transform practitioners and society through making people aware of their contexts and developing their creativity and imagination (Abednia, 2009). In the

present study, imagination is trusted as an idea and a fundamental way to achieve transformation. This is because the current schooling that operates in many parts of the Arab world, including Oman, tends to suppress imagination and care more about presenting technical knowledge to students. Abu Zide (2003) states that educational systems in most of the Arab world do not include activities that embolden students to imagine, explore, analyse or implement such imaginary ideas in their learning, which is one reason why the education system in the Arab world is lagging behind. With CP, teachers are encouraged to activate students' imagination since when "we can imagine then we can reconstitute the world" (Crookes, 2009, p.10).

However, like the above tenets, the transformative aims of CP have been criticised. For instance, "deconstructing past beliefs and reconstructing new ones may not be advantageous for someone who is accustomed to living and thinking in a certain way for so many years" (Pishghadam & Najj Meidani, 2012, p.476). Additionally, Sowden (2008) maintains that many learners of English around the world have instrumental goals and they will engage in any activity that helps them to enhance their proficiency. This means that they care more about developing their efficient English proficiency which can be achieved with learner centredness and authentic materials without engaging in uncovering ideological embedding. Also, CP is criticised for being ambiguous in terms of how teachers' and students'

increased *conscientisation* will lead to change in realities (Haque, 2007; Sowden, 2008). Unfortunately, looking at the CP literature, there is a dearth in longitudinal studies that trace the impact of CP in the long term in both students' and teachers' lives. Most studies are conducted during one academic semester or year which might not be sufficient to evidence such transformation.

### **3.3.5 The world should be integrated in the classroom**

Integrating the broader world into the classroom is an important tenet in constructing CP. This means the learners' social, cultural and political contexts should be critically integrated in the curriculum and openly discussed in the classroom. By doing so, CP endorses that what happens in the classroom should end up making a difference to the world. This can be achieved through presenting students with generative themes which can be defined as topics or words that "invoke passion and feeling" (Peterson, 2003, p.367) among learners. This means that this word or phrase should be closely relevant to students' everyday concerns and experience, a phenomenon or a problem in the community, news that can engender students' interest and motivation to take part in the classroom. This is a very important concept in the learning process, because

sometimes the irrelevance of topics may lead to frustration. This gap between learners' interests and the information presented by teachers makes students resist this reality, which means they may become demotivated and resistant to the whole learning process.

Nonetheless, in order to integrate the world in the classroom, teachers should be well informed about students' cultures. In his study with Chinese immigrants who studied English in Canada, Morgan (1998) was able to choose topics related to students' life such as immigration, the environment, social justice and the Gulf War. He maintains that integrating CP "based on my long-term work in the community and my recognition of the legitimacy this approach has with my students" (p.165). Additionally, reviewing studies about how CP can be integrated in the classroom, many such studies have been carried out by local teachers teaching English to local students (Huang, 2011; Ko, 2013; Sekigawa et al., 2007; Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005). However, this is not the case in many EFL contexts, including Oman, where many expatriate teachers have little or no knowledge about students' cultures (Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014). Sowdon (2008) maintains that such expatriate teachers may bring topics that are not appropriate to their context, which leads to the failure of CP. There are two arguments to be made here: first, teachers should have cultural knowledge about their students, called 'cultural knowledge' (Troudi, 2005), that enables expatriate teachers to

“understand his/ her students and develop appropriate pedagogy and materials that meet their needs” (p.24). Second, CP is rooted in dialogue, where students learn from their teacher and the latter learn from the former. This means that teachers with little knowledge about their students’ culture, through mutual dialogue and critical discussion, can implement CP. For example, in her action research (2007), Fredricks who is an American teacher teaching EFL in Tajekstan, a Muslim country like Oman, decided to base her pedagogy on students' culture by introducing readings that were relevant to students' lives. Fredricks' study stresses that even EFL instructors who have little knowledge about their students’ cultures can utilise CP through basing their teaching in dialogue whereby both the teacher and students gain cultural insights through mutual discussions of the topics.

### **3.3.6 Being 'critical' within CP framework is about questioning dominant dogmas**

Criticality within CP aims at making students aware of power, hegemony and inequality and assists them to achieve equality within their society (Freire, 2000; Canagrajah, 1999). In other words, criticality aims at "examining and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about injustice or inequitable issues and practices" (Bowes & Bruce, 2011, p.19). This

involves learners being open to questioning and being questioned, agreeing and disagreeing, and approaching and being approached (Freire, 2003).

When the word 'critical' is advocated, most mainstream teachers think of critical thinking. Nevertheless, there is a difference between critical thinking and CP. Looking at both terms, at the broad level they both share the same concerns in producing citizens who are able to think, analyse and evaluate issues based on logical reasoning (Quang, 2007; Burbules & Berk, 1999). However, the two terms are, indeed, different in their ontological and epistemological assumptions. Critical thinking views reality as something to be discovered or explained through giving reasons and evidence to reach a possible explanation. This is to say, "critical thinking encourages an analysis of situations and arguments to identify faulty or unreliable assertions or meanings" (Keesing-Styles, 2003, p.2). Nonetheless, from a CP perspective, reality is problematic when issues of power and ideologies need to be revealed so it can be changed. This means CP should lead to social change that encourages people to take action in order to ameliorate their reality. "A crucial component of critical work is always turning a sceptical eye towards assumptions, ideas that have become naturalised, notions that are no longer questioned" (Pennycook, 1999, p.343). In contrast, in critical thinking it is not

necessary to do that and the focus is more on analysing the situation, providing reasons for arguments (Burbules & Berk, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999). It only involves cognitive skills that enable learners to analyse, comprehend and explain. Emotions, imagination and intuition are not that important in critical thinking, as long as a person is providing good reasons for his or her argument (Canagarajah, 2005a, 1999). On the other hand, from a CP perspective, it is impossible to be detached; thus, it encourages learners to be subjective and passionate about the topics they discuss, since they tackle "how dominant ideologies in society drive the construction of understandings and meanings in ways that privilege certain groups of people, while marginalising others" (Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p.31).

Nevertheless, some studies have found that teachers have limited understanding of criticality within the CP framework (Sarroub & Quadros, 2015; Noroozisham & Soozandehfar, 2011; Holliston, 2006; Ruiz & Fernandez-Balboa, 2005). For instance, in her qualitative study, Breunig (2011) investigated how 17 self-identified critical pedagogues defined CP and its central purposes. She found that most of her participants related the meaning of CP to student-centredness and constructivism and less on power or social change. Although Breunig's study depended on self-reporting without utilising classroom observation to explore how teachers practice CP inside their classrooms, it does show that the meaning of

'critical' is by no means easy to develop, and especially that literature on CP offers very few strategies of how to put it into practice. Therefore, it seems necessary to introduce this tenet to EFL teachers in this study to raise teachers' awareness of the meaning of 'critical'. This may help teachers explore, revisit and interrogate the kinds of activities introduced in the ELT classrooms and move them to a new way of criticality which may affect their practice and their students' learning experience.

To this end, after explaining the main premises of CP, it is necessary to provide an operational definition of CP that guides the current research. For this study, I define *CP* as *a process that enables teachers and learners to work together to localise learning, interrogate issues that are taken for granted and legitimise their voice through critical dialogues of the phenomenon surrounding their schools, families and communities for the sake of empowerment, and hopefully change, through seeing aspects from new and multiple perspectives*. This understanding of CP will be introduced to ELT teachers in tertiary education in Oman. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of CP in the ELT realm, the next section explores this issue.

### **3.4 CP in ELT**

ELT seems to be governed by cognitive, instrumental and neutral assumptions which have results in the development of methods that were meant to be implemented universally, regardless of social and political consideration of the context in which learners are situated. Consequently, many teaching approaches have been developed and marketed across the world, mainly from the centre to the periphery, including the grammar-translation method, direct method, audio-lingual method, communicative language teaching, content-based language teaching, focus on form, negotiation for meaning, and task-based language teaching (Jeyaraj, 2014; Okazaki, 2005; Sadeghi, 2008; Sadeghi & Ketabi, 2009). The above ELT methods have been criticised for making ELT “a technical process prescribed by the experts and implemented by the teachers” (Pennycook, 1990, p. 304). It is beyond the scope of this section to detail the critiques carried out by different researchers of all these methods, so description will be limited to the critique of the communicative language teaching method, since it has gained popularity among ELT practitioners and has been imposed by language policy makers, teacher educators and materials designers as the best approach for ELT (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). In Oman, for instance, educational reform has been based on advocating communicative language teaching in the syllabus, teacher education and

in-service training (Al Issa, 2015; McLean, 2011; Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al-Ghatrifi, 2006).

Sadeghi (2008) opines that communicative language teaching fails to address students' needs and interests. It focuses more on communicative competence and "how" to teach rather than "why", "why not" and "in whose interest"? It only refers to linguistic and pragmatic contexts (who is talking to whom, where and about what). It fails to address the broader social, cultural, political and historical contexts of learners (Akabri, 2008a; Kumar, 2006; Sadeghi, 2008). Furthermore, communicative language teaching is considered an oral approach which neglects the development of students' reading and writing abilities (Mitchell, 2002 as cited in, Jeyaraj 2014). Additionally, McKay (2003, p.17) asserts that "the promotion of [communicative language teaching] has been fuelled by the tendency to extend so called centre assumptions of English language learning to other countries" (McKay, 2003, p.17) which result in students' assimilation and acculturation to Anglo-Saxon norms and ways of thinking (Cox & Assis-Peterson, 1999).

Consequently, various researchers have called for learning English to be viewed as a social system in which learners struggle to construct meanings from their experience, rather than a set of rules (Peirce, 1995; Pennycook, 1999, 2001, 2007; Canagarajah, 1999, 2000; Ramanathan, 2002; Norton & Toohey, 2004) for various reasons. Firstly, language and

power are inextricably intertwined since English can empower or marginalise learners who learn it as another language (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Secondly, the status of English as international language means it is seen as "a political site of struggle where particular meanings and practices are constructed and erased in power relations" (Kubota, 1998, p. 303). It seems that ELT, up to now, has been governed by discourses and ideologies that privilege what comes from the centre, including materials, methods and teachers, and suppresses and marginalises the periphery's cultures, experiences, languages and teachers (Pennycook, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005b; Troudi, 2015). Thirdly, due to the status of English as an international language, people around the world are thirsty to learn it since it opens many doors for its adepts (Matusda, 2003). For example, English in Oman is considered to be the gatekeeper for better learning opportunities and jobs, since it is the language of business, higher education, tourism, information and technology (Mahmoud & Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Al Jadidi, 2009). However, "English obsession has subsequently conceived of the tragic dilemma of the English divide among students in association with parents' socioeconomic status" (Byean, 2011, p.2). This is because students whose parents are economically capable tend to be competent in English.

This necessitates teachers to be aware that they as “English teachers stand at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time” (Gee, 1994, cited in Pennycook, 1999, p.346). To this end, ELT teachers are responsible for perpetuating inequalities if they approach ELT uncritically. As a result, ELT teachers should implement "a pedagogy of possibility, an approach that challenges inequality in society rather than perpetuating it" (Pierce, 1989, p. 403). Therefore, some researchers and practitioners have called for the necessity to move from technical approaches to more critical work, where English is taught as a weapon for social transformation (Kubota, 1998; Canagarajah, 2005a; Pennycook, 2001; Troudi, 2015). Such a critical turn in TESOL has resulted in the appearance of CP as one of the alternatives to mainstream methods.

Although CP has been around as an educational approach for almost six decades, it has been a feature of ELT in some contexts for only two decades (Canagarajah, 2005a, 2005b). This can be attributed to "the relatively strong hegemony of mainstream and apolitical approaches" (Troudi, 2015, p.89) to ELT and the heavy reliance of teacher education programmes, including both pre-service and in-service, on formal and methodological issues (Cox & Peterson, 1999; Haque, 2007; Byean, 2011). In addition, one of the reasons for the delay in CP's arrival in ELT

is the hegemony of the banking model in ELT in particular and education in general in most contexts. Mohamed and Malik (2014), via interviewing ten teachers, found that ELT teachers' lacked awareness of CP in five different countries (Sudan, Iran, Pakistan, India, America) because of the banking concept of education operated in the institutions where they worked. The teachers' role is limited to a "conduit" for "channelling the flow of information from one end...to the other" (Kumaravadivelu, 2011, p.8). Therefore, teachers are unable to critically think about the ideological and political aspects of ELT.

Historically, the appearance of Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism (LI) in 1992 has had an effect on the spread of the critical approach to ELT (Davari, Iranmehr & Erfani, 2012; Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2012). Within LI, ELT is a not a neutral endeavour and is related to a wider political agenda that mainly serves the centre, especially the UK and the USA. According to Phillipson (1992), LI can be defined as:

"The dominance of English asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (1992, p. 47).

Phillipson (1992) maintains that English sustains its hegemony in the periphery through prompting the usage of English via five fallacies:

- English is best taught monolingually ("the monolingual fallacy");
- the ideal teacher is a native speaker ("the native-speaker fallacy");

- the earlier English is taught, the better the results ("the early-start fallacy");
- the more English is taught, the better the results ("the maximum-exposure fallacy");
- if other languages are used much, standards of English will drop ("the subtractive fallacy") (ibid, p. 185).

Similarly, Canagarajah (1999, 2005a, 2005b) writes broadly of how ELT is a political enterprise and he considers it to be a Trojan horse that can perpetuate colonialism and Western hegemony if teachers continue to teach it without a critical stance. However, Canagarajah (1999) takes a hybrid status that does not reject English as does LI, but appropriates its learning according to one's needs and advantages. He points out that while "the uncritical use of English leads to accommodation or domination, and avoidance of English leads to marginalisation or ghettoisation, critical negotiation leads to their empowerment" (1999, p. 176). He maintains that ELT teachers should implement CP, which enables them to "critically interrogate the hidden curricula of their courses, relate learning to the larger socio-political realities, and encourage students to adopt pedagogical choices that offer sounder alternatives to their living conditions" (ibid, p.14). Canagarajah's hybrid or 'third space' status informs this study, since raising teachers' awareness of CP is not to invite teachers to reject everything coming from the centre as is the case with LI; rather, it is to encourage teachers to question and appropriate in order to include their voices and their students' voices and experience, so they empower

themselves by being bilingual instead of viewing their native identities or languages as inferior or marginalised.

Likewise, Pennycook's book 'Critical Applied Linguistics: A critical introduction' (2001) is considered to be a milestone in encouraging ELT towards more critical work and including CP in ELT through introducing Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx) which "involves a constant scepticism, a constant questioning of the normative assumptions of applied linguistics" (p. 110). Pennycook (2001) asserts that, in being critical and sceptical, teachers should problematise ideologies surrounding ELT and be doubtful about their role. Such an attitude can develop teachers' consciousness, which could empower them and their students as well. This is very relevant to the present study, since it aims to make teachers aware of their critical role in an era characterised by a huge spread of English that is seen as natural, neutral and beneficial (ibid).

CP is gaining momentum in ELT and has been applied broadly in different parts of the world where teachers transfer the principles and appropriate them according to their contexts. It has been emerging via various branches including 'critical literacy', 'critical multiculturalism', 'critical language awareness' and 'critical language test'. For this study, all these branches are subsumed under the term CP since they all utilize the main tents of CP that are described in this chapter and they all work against the

banking model of education critiqued by Freire (2000, 2003). They inherently start from the assumption that the

"dynamics of power and inequality show up in every aspect of classroom life, from physical setting to need assessment, participant structures, curriculum development, lesson content, material, instructional process, discourse patterns, language use and evaluation"

(Auerbuch, 1995, p.12).

This requires ELT teachers to introduce CP at the level of their overall aims, materials, methodologies and assessment.

### **3.4.1 ELT aims**

With regard to aims, teachers who believe in CP reject the belief that the goal of ELT programmes is to help students to master the language and pass exams in an era characterised by 'teach to the test' (Gruenewald, 2003). They believe that the purpose of ELT programmes is to enable students to master the language in conjunction with raising their consciousness of the world around them. For instance, Benites (2012) maintains that, within the CP framework, an ELT programme should have three aims. First, it should improve students' communicative abilities. Second, it should raise students' awareness of the world. Third, it should embolden students to act in order to ameliorate their situations. Basing her teaching on such aims, Derince (2011) conducted an action research at a

university in Turkey where she taught English. She concludes that CP "led to a more meaningful learning experience – both for the students and for herself – as well as a more efficient and lasting English language proficiency" (ibid, p.377), rather than an artificially-designed ELT programme which is test oriented.

Nonetheless, Lee et al. (2007) investigated a programme that claimed to incorporate CP as an approach. They found a huge gap between the programme aims and the teachers' practice. They, therefore, advocates the necessity of having teacher education programmes which would help in instilling criticality in teachers. Nonetheless, after introduced to CP, some teachers in other studies (Abednia, 2012; Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012) felt uncomfortable about implementing CP in their teaching. Bruce (2014) and Moore (2005) argue that such uneasiness with CP is essential in a transformation process. Therefore, teachers' discomfort with CP's aims does not mean that CP should not be introduced to ELT teachers. Rather, "resistance is itself empowerment" (Royal, 2010, p.36).

### **3.4.2 ELT materials**

At the level of materials, CP emboldens teachers to question the ELT materials that are produced in the centre and reach the periphery in full packages, as is the case in Oman (Tanveer, 2013; Al Jadidi, 2009). Such

materials "determine which language components got taught, which approach was best, what the language learners were required to do, which textbooks were appropriate and so forth" (Karmani, 2010,p.18), as if local people had no idea about how to fulfill their needs (Kasaian, 2011). Therefore, most of these materials, if not all, do not correspond to Omani students' needs and concerns (Al-Mahrooqi & Al-Busaidi, 2010; Al Mahrooqi et al., 2015; King, 2012). Many studies have shown that many current ELT materials have marginalised learners' interests, feelings, experiences and perceptions (Shin & Graham, 2005; Derince, 2011; Chi, 2011). What is more, most of the current materials used in the ELT these colleges seem to avoid discussing critical issues "such as crime, corruption, economic exploitation, racism, modern slavery" (Troudi, 2015, p.93). Unfortunately, these materials continue to address artificial topics including family, hobbies, food, sport and travel (Troudi, 2015; Moorhouse, 2014; Banegas, 2011). In addition, the suggested Anglo-American textbooks used in the colleges of technology have ideologies that conflict with Omani students' cultural and religious beliefs, such as topics on gambling and drinking (King, 2012).

In the same vein, Elyas (2008) reveals that many Saudi students believe that ELT textbooks include ideas which might hurt their Islamic identity. It is important to stress that such ideologies are offensive to students which negatively affects their learning experience and their motivation.

Nonetheless, Elyas (2011) opines that avoiding topics that go against students' Islamic and cultural beliefs is not a solution as the students may encounter them via other channels including the internet and media. Rather, teachers should contest them with their students via looking critically at them. Nevertheless, Holliday (2011) warned ELT teachers against the "harsh imperative of contestation" (p.15) that represents a dilemma for teachers, especially expatriates who are not aware of the students' cultures, to decide whether to contest such cultural ideologies which may put their jobs at risk or to avoid such critical issues which means providing an incomplete education (Hudson, 2012). This necessitates teachers to "strive to find a middle ground between administrative/governmental control and [their] own creativity and free will" (Rautins & Ibrahim, 2011, p.32) especially that CP does not mean that teachers have to be radical, rather it encourages them to question, challenge and work with the system (ibid) in order to establish criticality. Fairley's study (2009), for example, demonstrates the role of the teacher in modifying ELT materials to address students' needs and concerns, which increased the students' participation in the ELT classroom. She investigates the issue of male conversational dominance in EFL Egyptian classrooms because of the marginalisation of female students through intervening via the use of provocative topics that are related to students' lives (the role of Arab women, marriage and relationships, freedom of

expression). However, Al Issa (2010) asserts that ELT teachers in Oman fail to critically reflect on the given ELT textbooks. Therefore, teachers need to be cognizant of such materials and take a critical stance towards it, which is part of the critical agenda of this study. In other words, it is to encourage them to see that their role "is not only [to] serve a curriculum, but also to evaluate it, challenge it, play an active role and even redesign it" (Troudi, 2009, p.212).

In addition, in the case of many ELT programmes, most textbooks do not represent the status of English as an international language (Caukill, 2011) and highlight American and British varieties as standards that indigenous learners should meet; this is true of Oman. However, the international status of English means its ownership does not belong to the centre, but to everyone who speaks English (Norton, 2000). ELT teachers need to understand that by emphasising centre standards, they are perpetuating Western hegemony and marginalising other varieties of English. From a CP perspective, English learners "have to develop sensitivity to more than one variety of English" (Kachru & Smith, 2008, p. 182).

In their study about Japanese students' attitudes towards learning varieties of English, Imura and Kimizuka (2011) assert that students feel that being exposed to different types of English helps to facilitate English communication and international understanding. Similarly, in his study in

EFL German classes, Bieswanger (2008) discovers that his learners, especially intermediate and advanced learners, are frustrated since their schools exposed them to just one or two varieties of English {American and British} but, in reality, they discover that different strains of English are used by different individuals they encounter. He concludes that the one reason behind great emphasis on centre varieties of English is the teacher education programmes which do not prepare teachers to address such issues. In addition, Bieswanger (2008) states that addressing varieties of English is regarded by some teachers as unimportant, since this aspect does not play a great role in important exams. According to Picard (2006), the high-stakes international examinations like TOEFL and IELTS plays a great role in propagating the centre varieties of English, mainly American and British English. Quirk (1995, as cited in Imura & Kimizuka ,2011) suggests that ELT programmes should include a specific course in which students are made aware of varieties of English, which could perhaps be called English for international communication or international understanding. However, when scrutinizing teacher education in Oman, it can be immediately observed that there is no acknowledgement of English varieties through courses like that mentioned by Quirk. Furthermore, looking at the English GFP, most of the outcomes relate to technical goals and there is no reference to preparing students with regard to enabling them to understand varieties of English. This research aims to raise ELT

teachers' awareness of the necessity to question the ideologies behind centre standards, to reject such hegemony, and to encourage teachers to address and legitimise other varieties of English.

### **3.4.3 ELT methodologies**

At the methodology level, CP requires ELT teachers to engender a positive classroom atmosphere that enhances "student self-esteem and reduces anxiety levels" (Peterson, 2003, p.372). In Giroux's language (2011), this is about making the class a democratic public sphere. This means that the critical teacher should "create an atmosphere of respect for each other's opinions, beliefs, and ethnic or cultural diversity in the classroom" (Brown, 2004, p.23). This includes teachers' tolerance towards students' ambiguity regarding elements of the language (Aveni, 2005) and caring and encouraging students to participate and think critically, and be available to them (Mencke, 2010). Lamey (2009), through her narratives, shows how a teacher's pedagogical practice inside the classroom affects the student-teacher relationship and performance. Through self-reflection, Lamey discovered that giving students more power and linguistic space via rearranging seating in the classroom, giving students the choice of certain types of activities and partners to work with, depending more on

group work, and allowing students to postpone quizzes if they were not ready affected their learning positively.

In addition, within CP, it is crucial to create spaces in schools for students' "voices to be heard and taken into account in structuring educational experiences" (Swaminathan, 2007, p. 22). Various techniques can be implemented by ELT teachers in order to give their students a voice in the classroom. This can be introduced at the beginning of the year by negotiating classroom policies and the syllabus to meet students' needs and can include content, modes and ways of working (Ooiwa-Yoshizawa, 2012; Mack, 2012; Mencke, 2010; Sadeghi, 2008). Furthermore, teachers can occasionally ask students to reflect on what is helpful or unhelpful during the class, and adjust their teaching accordingly (Shor, 1996; Mazier, 2014). Overall, CP entails that teachers legitimise students' voices and respect their choice of topics or methodologies. Nonetheless, many studies have found that some students were not able to decide what topics they wanted to discuss in the classroom (Chi, 2011; Sadeghi & Ketabi, 2009; Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005). This can be attributed to the fact that these students were not used to making decisions and negotiating the curriculum, as their educational lives had previously been based on receiving deposits of knowledge from their teachers. In his study, Ibrahim (2013) explains the difficulties of involving his Egyptian students at

the tertiary level in CP. He attributes that to the fact that students have been oppressed by the banking model of education. In addition, the social context in Egypt, which is similar to Oman, negatively affects students' feelings of empowerment, since "parents usually are either authorised by students or willing to take some important and serious decisions in students' social and academic lives" (p. 264). However, Ibrahim maintains that through writing conferences and giving students' voice on choosing topics for the course, the process of conferencing and meaning negotiation and freedom to talk and critique; students feel empowered, which positively affects their linguistic ability. Nonetheless, Ibrahim asserts that such a "process was not easy to start and needed much effort to be enacted" (p. 266). This is to say, students need to be given enough time and practice and teachers need to be patient and tolerant (Rashidi & Safari, 2011).

Therefore, critical pedagogues emphasize the crucial role of dialogue, which is considered to be the most significant aspect of CP (Darder et al., 2003; Rashidi & Safari, 2011). Morgan (2009) demonstrates how dialogical methods between teachers and students can lead to a discussion of dominant ideologies in society such as gender roles, age, culture and family loyalties. Morgan's study showed how students learn from teachers and teachers learn from students, which eliminates a hierarchical teacher-

student relationship and helps students to engage in critical dialogues with their teacher and their peers.

A note of caution, however; giving students freedom does not mean that they do what they want and gain the impression that they are equal to the teachers. One of the challenges is "to create an environment which is both stimulating and flexible in which students can exercise increasing levels of power while regularly reflecting upon and evaluating the new learner-teacher relationship" (Peterson, 2003, p.374). Teachers need to maintain a balance between giving students a voice and keeping classroom discipline to avoid the two extremes of authoritarianism and democracy (Kanapol, 1999). Such a balance results in teachers acting as a guide, which "makes them [students] like independent co-owners of the course and, accordingly, they will participate in class activities more enthusiastically" (Abednia, 2009, p.276). Shin and Crooks (2005), in their action research, introduced CP to students in two Korean high schools for two months using the dialogic method and discussing generative themes such as the taboo topic of North Korea, educational issues, stereotypes and gender inequality. They conclude that students were actively involved in the critical dialogue. However, they highlight that the institutional constraints and the students' low proficiency in English are some of the challenges that teachers face when they implement CP.

From CP's perspective, students' first language can be utilised to enhance dialogue if they are not proficient (Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Akbari, 2008a). This is because utilising students' first language in the ELT classroom eliminates students' feelings of inferiority and marginalisation because they can use their first language, which is part of their own identity, to give them voice and power (Akbari, 2008a). Besides, students' first language can be employed to give instructions, which can save class time to be used to perform the task itself (Cook, 2006) and to explain grammatical or lexical concepts of English (Cook, 2001). Thus, ELT teachers should be aware of the usefulness of using students' first language in facilitating English learning, especially as there is no empirical confirmation that students' first language hinders the acquisition of English. On the contrary, students' usage of first language can facilitate students' English proficiency (ibid). For instance, Derince (2011) resists the monolingual fallacy that governs ELT in her institutions and allows her students to use Turkish to express their opinions, so silent students become more talkative and express their voice, which helps them to gain proficiency in English.

However, this is not to say that L1 should be used entirely in the ELT classroom; it should be employed in a way that facilitates the process of learning English. This study aims to raise ELT teachers' awareness that abandoning learners' first language represents one of the underpinning

assumptions perpetuated by the centre in order to maintain their hegemony and ideology in the periphery, and ELT teachers are required to be aware of this concept so they can approach CP successfully. Teachers should be aware that "teaching English without reference to the first language of the students may disempower them in the multi-cultural life in the postmodern world" (Canagarajah, 2005a, p.941).

Classroom arrangement is related to the implementation of CP in the classroom. In the traditional classroom, students sit in rows and the teacher's table is in the middle at the front of the classroom. Such seating exemplifies the banking model whereby the teacher is the authoritative figure in the classroom. However, from CP's perspective, the teacher can rearrange the classroom to minimise the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students. For instance, Jackson's study (2009) shows how the arrangement of furniture in the classroom can help students to feel a sense of belonging and identity, as well as power. She concludes that the traditional way of seating students in most Middle Eastern countries, where students sit in rows, negatively affects students' interaction, feelings and motivation. However, one should be cautious, since CP is about more than arranging the classroom (Pennycook, 1999). It entails teachers to have a clear purpose when they want to arrange the classroom in line with certain methods and establish how they conduct the classroom through

discussing generative themes, prompting dialogue that helps students to become aware of the world surrounding them.

### **3.4.4 ELT assessment**

Unfortunately, we live in an era characterised by heavy reliance on testing as the only valid and objective way of assessing students. However, the shift toward viewing learning a language as a social and political enterprise has resulted in the occurrence of critical language testing (Lynch, 2001), which is also an area of inquiry located within CP, of which teachers need to be aware if they want to approach their teaching critically. From critical language testing's perspective:

"Tests are often introduced not in order to assess knowledge, but rather to define it and to force test takers to master the knowledge that those who introduce the tests believe is important."

(Shohamy, 2004, p.74)

Thus, CP rejects a one-time pencil and paper test (Byean, 2011; Spolsky, 1995; Ismael , 2013). Ooiwa-Yoshizawa (2012) confirms that she asked her students in Japanese EFL classrooms to assess their performance in their presentation, which empowered them since it gave them a voice. Similarly, Keesing-Styles (2003) reports how using self-assessment and generating criteria to assess students' performance has empowered her

learners. However, she stresses the necessity of gradual approach in order for students to be able to assess themselves.

Nonetheless, the literature on CP offers very few guidelines about testing and alternatives for assessing students' learning (Crookes, 2013; Keesing-Styles, 2003), especially in a context where students and their teachers have no power in the knowledge that it is legitimate to include in the tests. Teachers in Oman, like other teachers in the Gulf, have no say in the design of the tests, and the criteria used to assess their students are imposed on them. Troudi, Coombe and Al-hamly (2009), in their study of teachers' views on English language assessment in higher education in the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, discover that teachers' voices were totally absent from decision making about matters of assessment approach and design. They also reveal that "some teachers did not participate in the process of designing assessment tools which dealt with areas of content, format, number of test items, and marking rubrics" (p.550). Similarly, in his study in one HE institution in Oman, Al Mammari (2011) asserted that teachers have been marginalized with regards to test design and content. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that most of the tests in HE institutions, especially the exit exams of the GFP, are prepared at the ministry level and are designed by elite experts. Such exams have a great consequence on students' lives, as they determine their continuity or

withdrawal from college if they fail to meet the cut-off point that is also specified by the elites. These exams are focused more on content mastery (Al-Issa, 2006), with traditional forms of questions such as multiple-choice, fill-in-the-gaps and matching, among others (Al Mammari, 2011).

Therefore, CP emphasises the necessity of utilizing alternative assessments including portfolio assessments, group projects and performances and essay examinations that tackle critical thinking (Shor, 1992, p.144). It also emphasizes the necessity of studying the consequences of these tests on students, teachers, institutions and society as a whole. However, the testing culture has controlled the ELT system in HE in Oman for decades as has been stated earlier. Therefore, it will not be easy to move to more critical approaches towards assessment. Al Mammari (2011) contested that, in order to implement critical language assessment in HE in Oman, awareness-raising is the first step to achieve it. Hence, the current study can be seen as a response to the call above by raising teachers' awareness of critical language assessment, so they can negotiate the current assessment system with policy makers at ministry and college levels.

### **3.5 ELT teachers' awareness and attitudes towards CP**

There have been many studies that scrutinize teachers' awareness of CP (Sadeghi & Ketab, 2009; Safari & Pourhashemi, 2012 in Iran; Byean, 2011 in Korea; Baladi, 2007 in Canada). However, the majority of these studies reveal that many ELT teachers are not aware of CP as an approach that can be used in ELT. Nevertheless, after being introduced to CP, teachers experienced frustration since they found themselves powerless against demands for regulation, increased bureaucracy and accountability (Abednia, 2012; Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012). For instance, Lin (2004) revealed, through introducing CP in an MA programme in Hong Kong, the difficulties of achieving critical consciousness in a context where room for "democratic condensation and alternative practice is limited" (p.277) as is the case in Hong Kong and Oman. Thus, introducing CP to teachers did not lead to critical awareness to motivate them to resist oppression and take action towards changing the status quo. Lin concludes that while introducing CP has "helped teachers to see the sources of their oppression under the current school administration system, they remain just that" (p.279). Lin also highlighted that her participants encountered a lot of difficulties trying to make sense of the abstract language of CP, which made them feel frustrated with the course reading. She concluded that critical pedagogues need to be cautious when they introduce CP to

school teachers, otherwise "their theories run the risk of talking over their heads" (p.276). Therefore, it is necessary to introduce CP in a way that empowers teachers, not to disempower them by presenting abstract terminologies.

Baladi (2007) investigated the possibility of implementing CP in a multicultural ESL classroom in a Canadian private language school. Via using critical action research, she focused on four teachers who were teaching at various levels. The results showed, in the first phase of the study, that teachers were not familiar with CP and they tended to base their teaching on mainstream topics. Furthermore, they viewed their role as teaching English skills without motivating their learners to question their social practice. Phase two comprised the intervention, where the four teachers were asked to teach two lessons based on CP principles that the researcher designed. She used post-lesson interviews and focus groups to tackle teachers' responses to teaching through CP. Baladi (2007) concluded that the participants became really enthusiastic about basing their teaching on CP. However, they described many challenges which teachers might face when they implement CP, including striking a balance between teaching students critically and addressing students' linguistic needs, and preparing them for tests that are crucial to their success in life.

Garcia-Gonzalez (2000) examined four elementary teachers' attitudes and practices regarding CP in two urban public schools in California (USA), and used multiple methods including teachers' interviews and classroom observation. The results showed that teachers' conceptualisation of CP varied, including raising students' awareness of identity, race and culture, teaching through the students' experiences and incorporating student-centred approaches. With regard to teachers' practice of CP, the results showed that they implement CP through establishing dialogue with students, utilising problem posing models to facilitate reflection, showing respect to students' native language and including students' life experiences in the syllabus. However, teachers encounter some challenges including "planning time, collegial support and teaching resources" (p.12).

Ko and Wang (2009) examined three EFL teachers' attitudes towards implementing critical literacy in ELT in Taiwan colleges. Semi-structured interview and lesson plan analysis were utilized to collect data for the study. The findings of the study revealed that the participants showed enthusiasm towards CP. Nonetheless, they expressed some concerns about CP including students' language proficiency and teaching resources.

Sadeghi and Ketab (2009) investigated six teachers' attitudes towards CP in Iran. After introducing CP to them through extensive reading on CP,

online-forums, opinion-exchange and reflection for a whole year, teachers were asked via interviews about their understanding of CP, its applicability in the classroom and the challenges they faced when they incorporated its tenets in their teaching. The results showed that the in-service course had a great impact on constructing a new perspective on teaching. Nonetheless, the participants also expressed that they encountered challenges, including Iranian learners being unprepared for such a critical approach and the teachers' inability to move from technicality in their teaching. Noroozi Siam and Soozandehfar (2011), Aliakbari and Allahmoradi (2012), Safari and Pourhashemi (2012) and Sahragard et al. (2014) surveyed the Iranian teachers' attitudes towards CP and its practicality in the educational system. The results showed that teachers were in full agreement with and approved of CP; however, a number of obstacles, namely lack of knowledge about CP, centralised top-down educational management, absence of a culture of critical thinking in Iranian education, resistance of school administration to any innovative approach and lack of critical materials work against implementing CP in Iranian ELT.

### **3.6 The research gap**

The research gap that this study addresses is three-fold. Firstly, various studies have tackled teachers' attitudes towards CP in different contexts.

However, most of these studies have been conducted in ELT teacher education programmes at universities (Crookes & Lenhner, 1998; Lin, 2004; Mambu, 2009; Pishghadam & Naji Meidani, 2012; Abdenia, 2012). This means that the ELT teachers' feelings or attitudes towards CP could be affected by the settings which students occupied when they were assessed. Baladi (2007) and Sedeghi and Ketabi (2009) are the only studies, based on the researcher's knowledge, that introduce CP as a way of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) while teachers are teaching in their institutions, as found in the current study, and they tackle teachers' attitudes towards CP. However, Baladi's (2007) study was conducted in an ESL context and Sadeghi and Ketabi's (2009) was conducted in an EFL context in Iran.

Second, all the above studies of in-service teachers' attitudes towards CP have been conducted without providing them with guides and examples of how to put its tenets into practice (Garcia-Gonzalez, 2000; Ko & Wang, 2009; Noroozi Siam & Soozandehfar, 2011; Aliakbari & Allahmoradi, 2012; Safari & Pourhashemi, 2012; Sahragard et al., 2014). Baladi (2007) and Sadeghi and Ketabi (2009) are the only exception. Nonetheless, the former provided her participants with ready-made lessons based on CP as a way to make them aware of CP. However, I believe that asking teachers to teach ready-made lessons based on CP is hierarchical and would not involve teachers as agents of change. Therefore, my study is different

from Baladi's study since it traces teachers' attitudes towards it after introducing its main premises via reading an article and attending a workshop on CP which provide teachers with the rationale behind implementing it, give them concrete examples of how it is practised and engage them in designing lesson plans based on its main premises, which is similar to what Sadeghi and Ketabi (2009) have done with their participants. However, Sadeghi and Ketabi (2009) had only six Iranian teachers who were teaching English to advanced and upper intermediate learners in one institution in Iran. In contrast, my study has more participants of different nationalities who were teaching four levels of English (pre-elementary, elementary, intermediate and advanced) in four institutions in Oman.

Third, the above studies examine teachers' attitudes via using one or two data collection tools, especially questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. My study has utilized five data collection instruments, including questionnaire in phase one, collected documents from teachers (workshop evaluation forms + lesson plans) in phase two, semi structured interviews in phase three and classroom observation in phase four. By implementing various data collection tools, it is hoped to broaden the picture of teachers' awareness, attitudes towards CP and the feasibility and challenges of implementing it.

### **3.7 Islamic principles and CP: A comparative view**

This study is conducted in Oman, which is a Muslim country and where Islam is more than a religion; it is a way of life and a means that shapes most people's worldview (Mohd-Asraf, 2005; Karmani, 2010). Thus, it is fundamental to understand the relationships between Islamic principles and CP. Indeed, I think that Islamic principles inherently encourage Muslims to be educated through CP tenets. Looking at the Muslim world in general and education in particular, discourses exemplify the essentialist dichotomy of the colonial relationship of self and other (Pennycook, 2001). To be more specific, these discourses demonstrate “the progressive self and the backward other” (Kubota, 2004, p.40). Such a dichotomy has been established through orientalist's writings during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Said, 1978) during which the British and Americans (after the Second World War) created boundaries between East and West, civilised and uncivilised, which perpetuate the notion that the East cannot develop itself without help from Western experts. Said (1978) asserts that Oriental people are perceived to be underdeveloped, irrational and generally inferior to Westerners. Such images of Orientals result in a continuous "relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (ibid, p. 5) that is imposed on the backward East by the modernised West. Edward Said wrote this almost

four decades ago; nonetheless, such discourses continue to be perpetuated up to the present day. To many, such discourses are accepted as facts which are naturalised in our daily lives, made clear by various aspects of the Muslim world including social life, education and media. According to Al Janhani (2002), Arabs have not been able to utilise the modern era through education to facilitate the dialogical methods that lead to real development. Instead, education has been utilised to spread artificial and technical knowledge that has come from the West. Thus, since the middle of the nineteenth century and up to the present day, Arabs have depended heavily on Western experts for their modernisation projects rather than developing their manpower and resources that already exist (Qurum, 2003; Karmani, 2010). They have come to believe that modernisation is not possible unless they follow the Westernised way (Al Issa, 2006; Jalal, 2007). At the level of ELT (since it is the focus of this study), Arabs have chosen the easiest way to develop by importing materials, methods, tests, teachers and experts from the West in order to teach English, which has become the tool to achieve modernisation (Karmani, 2010) without pondering whether such a procedure really relates to students' needs and concerns. Students continue to be dealt with as vessels which record information, memorise it and regurgitate it in tests which determine their success in a capitalist society. To this end, it can be said that consumerist ideologies and essentialist discourses have

conquered the Arab and Muslim worlds and made them passive receivers of concepts, tools and material coming from the West without critically evaluating their relative merits (Abu-watfa, 2002).

As a critical Muslim and Arab PhD student, I reject this essentialist view and we/other dichotomy, arguing that Islamic principles and CP share a number of philosophical assumptions. It is this topic that this section addresses. Hussein (2007) maintains that Islamic principles and CP are in harmony with each other in terms of how they both view human nature, knowledge and education.

### **3.7.1 Human nature**

Islamic principles are rooted in equality among human beings, regardless of their race and colour. This is clear in the Quran when Allah said, "O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another" (49, 13). This Quranic verse also shows that differences and diversity should encourage human beings to respect their co-existence by knowing and understanding each other better. Looking back, the historical stories of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) demonstrate how he refuses to insult and marginalise his followers based on their race, tribe or colour. Similarly, CP encourages people to avoid marginalising others based on such dichotomies.

In addition, Islamic principles conceive of freedom as an innate right for all human beings (Al Janhani, 2009). The third leader of the first Islamic state 'Omar Ibno Al Khatab' said, "When did you enslave people while they were born free"(ibid). Freedom in Islamic principles is rooted in the person's ability and right to choose and decide for his/her own life, including religion (Kurucan & Erol, 2012). However, Al Janhani (2009) asserts that throughout Islamic history and for the sake of political power, through the faking of stories, people were made to think that part of their faith was to consider everything as destiny, so Muslims would not think of liberating themselves from oppressive leaders. Nonetheless, Al Jenhani asserts that during the nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth century, due to many Arab thinkers such as Al Tahtawi, Muhammed Abduh, Taha Husain and others, the concept of freedom was redefined, although the word 'freedom' was not literally used by such thinkers to avoid upsetting those in political power; instead they used the words 'justice' and 'equity' as conditions to transform people's lives in the Muslim world. Consequently, Al Janhani (2009) states that there is an integrated relationship between questioning, doubting and the achievement of freedom and liberation, which is the ultimate goal for any community in the Islamic framework.

CP views human beings as being historically situated and that they are able to change themselves through reflection, since they are active beings in the world; similarly, Islamic principles view human beings as active

members who are responsible for constructing and reconstructing the world to become a better place.

### **3.7.2 Knowledge**

According to CP, knowledge is historically, socially, economically and culturally constructed and reconstructed. CP also stresses that the knowledge that should be addressed in schools should not be technical; rather it should be emancipatory (see Section 3.3.2). Likewise, Islamic principles view knowledge as historically and socially constructed. This is obvious when Muslims are required to perform *ijtihad* which can be defined as “reasoned struggle and rethinking” (Inayatullah & Boxwell, 2003, p.27, cited in Shani, 2007, p.25), since Muslims should question, analyse and situate the Quran and Prophet Mohammed’s sayings alongside their own experiences and understandings. This is to say, Islamic principles invite Muslims to look at knowledge critically, question it and not blindly follow it. As a result, many philosophers have come to prominence, such as Ibn Rushed, Ibn Khaldoon and others (Jalal, 2007) who question, relate and ponder about knowledge in the Islamic principles in order to better understand *Allah* through his words (Quran) and his creations in the world. They stress the necessity of using minds and current experiences in understanding the Quran and the world, and not

depending on other people's interpretations of them, which can be understood differently based on a person's history, culture and experience. Nonetheless, a lot of Muslims nowadays view themselves as unable to interpret Islamic principles and reach emancipatory knowledge and they depend on Muslim scholars, who are viewed as being more capable of interpreting Islam than ordinary people. Hussein (2007) asserts that Muslims are required to critically ask questions such as: how are these interpretations reached? Whose interests do they serve? Why are certain interpretations legitimised and promoted, while others are rejected? This will enable Muslims to differentiate "between what is considered as Divine or as human interpretation" (ibid, 92). Similarly, Ibn Kaldon, who is considered to be the father of sociology in the Muslim and Arab Worlds (Matoq, 2011), maintains that knowledge is not static; rather, it is dynamic and created and recreated historically, socially and economically. Ibn Khaldon further explains how the community suppresses or facilitates knowledge based on the opportunities that are given to the person to reconstruct the knowledge through questioning it and moving beyond passive receipt.

In addition, during the ninth century, which is considered to be the most prolific century in Islamic civilisation in terms of its development (Qasim, 2007), Muslims translated a plethora of Greek sources in order to develop their society and localised it to suit their needs, concerns and values. They

did not blindly follow Greek wisdom, but instead appropriated certain aspects to meet their needs and values. However, comparing the early history of Islamic civilisation and the current status of Muslims, it is apparent that Muslims, in their educational systems, particularly in ELT, import and legitimize Western materials, methods and assessment. Meanwhile, they totally marginalise their own knowledge, cultures and even language, treating them as illegitimate.

### **3.7.3 Education**

Within CP's framework, it is established that the aim of education is to empower and transform people through interrogating ideologies and issues that are taken for granted to establish a better life (see Sections 3.3.3 & 3.3.4). Similarly, the aim of education within Islamic principles is to lead a good life and what the learners learn should make a difference to their actions (Ashraf, 1985, as cited in AlKanderi, 2001). It is also established that this requires Muslims to question dogmatic and ideological understandings of Islamic principles and the world around them, so that they will fulfil their responsibility as Allah's vicegerents (Hussain, 2007). It is clear when *Allah* says "And among people and moving creatures and grazing livestock are various colours similarly. Only those fear *Allah*, from among His servants, who have knowledge" (35, 28).

This verse requires Muslims to seek education, so they will be capable of reaching *Allah* and fulfilling their responsibilities in the world.

Looking at Hussein's argument, she focuses on the similarities between Islam and CP at the macro level; however, on closer examination, I argue that Islam and CP share the same philosophies at the micro level, as well as the macro level.

### **3.7.4 Relationship between teachers and students**

Considering that the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was the first teacher in Islam, the Quran asked him to teach people with a teachable heart and this enabled him to convey his message. For instance, the Quran said, "If you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you" (3, p.159). This verse shows that in order to teach people, one should not be harsh or authoritative in speech. This is a basic tenet in CP, that teachers teach with a teachable heart (Wink, 2005), that helps teachers to establish a good classroom atmosphere in which students are encouraged to question, negotiate and critically confront their teachers, and peers also.

Moreover, Islamic principles require people to show solidarity, compassion and respect when they deal with one another. For example, the Prophet Mohammed said, "the person is not one of us who is not merciful to our

youth nor respectful of our elders” (as cited in Al-Aoufi, Al-Zyoud & Shahminan, 2012, p.207). In addition, Islamic principles invite people to respect and accept each other by saying "O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames" (49, 11). When implementing such Islamic principles in the classroom, teachers should be very sensitive and mindful that they do not offend their students and should not insult them or their backgrounds, because such actions may affect their identities and humanity in general. Teachers in this critical era need to encourage such morals within their learners and provide them with models, so teaching goes beyond ‘teacher says and students listen’; rather, it moves beyond that approach to give lessons in life, whereby such characteristics are found within the relationship between teachers and their students, which are the basic tenets of Islamic principles and CP.

### **3.7.5 Utilising discussion and dialogue**

Islamic principles advocate and maintain dialogue which encourages people to discuss, relate and better understand themselves, other people and the world around them (Kurucan & Erol, 2012). Accordingly, dialogues

should be utilised to “find out how the Islamic universal accepts and respects pluralism and the belief of the other” (Ramadan, 2004, as cited in Shani, 2007, p.426). Looking at the history of the first Islamic state and during the developed period and Islamic civilisations, it is observed that Muslims, through dialogue, acceptance, coexistence and cooperation, could understand themselves and others (Al Shadli, 2011; Al-Buleihi, 2010; Kurucan & Erol, 2012).

In addition, looking at Quranic verses, one can observe how *Allah* encourages Muslims to negotiate and consult each other on issues and not just transfer instructions. For example, Allah says, “whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves” (42, 38) and “consult them in the matter” (3, 159). If this is applied to a teaching context, the educator should negotiate and consult with the learners on content and classroom policies and methodologies. This is to say, if policies are imposed on people, they are less likely to learn and they will build negative attitudes towards the learning process. So, it can be concluded that the purpose of dialogue is to establish a good atmosphere rather than imposing on others, which may make them feel marginalised.

### **3.7.6 Teaching through questioning and reflecting on the world.**

Islamic principles embolden people to observe, ponder and question *Allah's* creations in order to reach a better understanding of the world, which enables them to deepen their faith. For instance, *Allah* asks Muslims in the Quran to reflect on His creation by saying:

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what *Allah* has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason" (2, 164).

*Allah* does not just ask Muslims to obey Him; rather, He asks them to reach Him through questioning and contemplating His creations. In addition, Ibn Khaldon (1967, as cited in Al-Kanderi, 2001) maintains that the means by which a person reaches knowledge is by asking questions; thus, students should be encouraged to ponder and engage critically with topics. Viewing Ibn Khaldon's philosophy through contemporary eyes, Mahzar (2003) and Al-Buleihi (2010) state that the backwardness that Muslims experience is partially due to the fact that they blindly follow without reflecting on the world. It is therefore crucial to highlight how the capacities to question and reflect are embedded within Islamic principles.

Through regaining these insights, links between Islamic principles, CP and modernisation can be strengthened.

To this end, it can be concluded that there are some similarities between Islamic principles and CP at the macro and micro levels. However, looking at the Muslim world, including Oman, it is noted that education systems focus heavily on rote learning, factual transmission of knowledge and blind memorisation for examinations, despite the fact that Islam calls for criticality in order for people to play their role as vicegerents of Allah (in Islamic language) or agents of change (in CP language). It is worthwhile mentioning here that Islamic values and traditions seem to have more obvious impacts on Muslims' daily worship than on their mentalities, as Islam is interpreted to only occur in religious contexts, but not in every aspect of life. Consequently, most Muslims, including Omanis, seem to be passive receivers of information and blind consumers of concepts and products thrown at them, especially from the West.

### **3.8 Developing a conceptual framework to introduce CP to ELT teachers in Oman**

Based on the literature review detailed in this chapter, this section describes the conceptual framework behind the introduction of CP to ELT teachers via the study's intervention. Figure 3.2 captures how ELT

teachers can be educated about CP, which can foster its implementation in Oman.

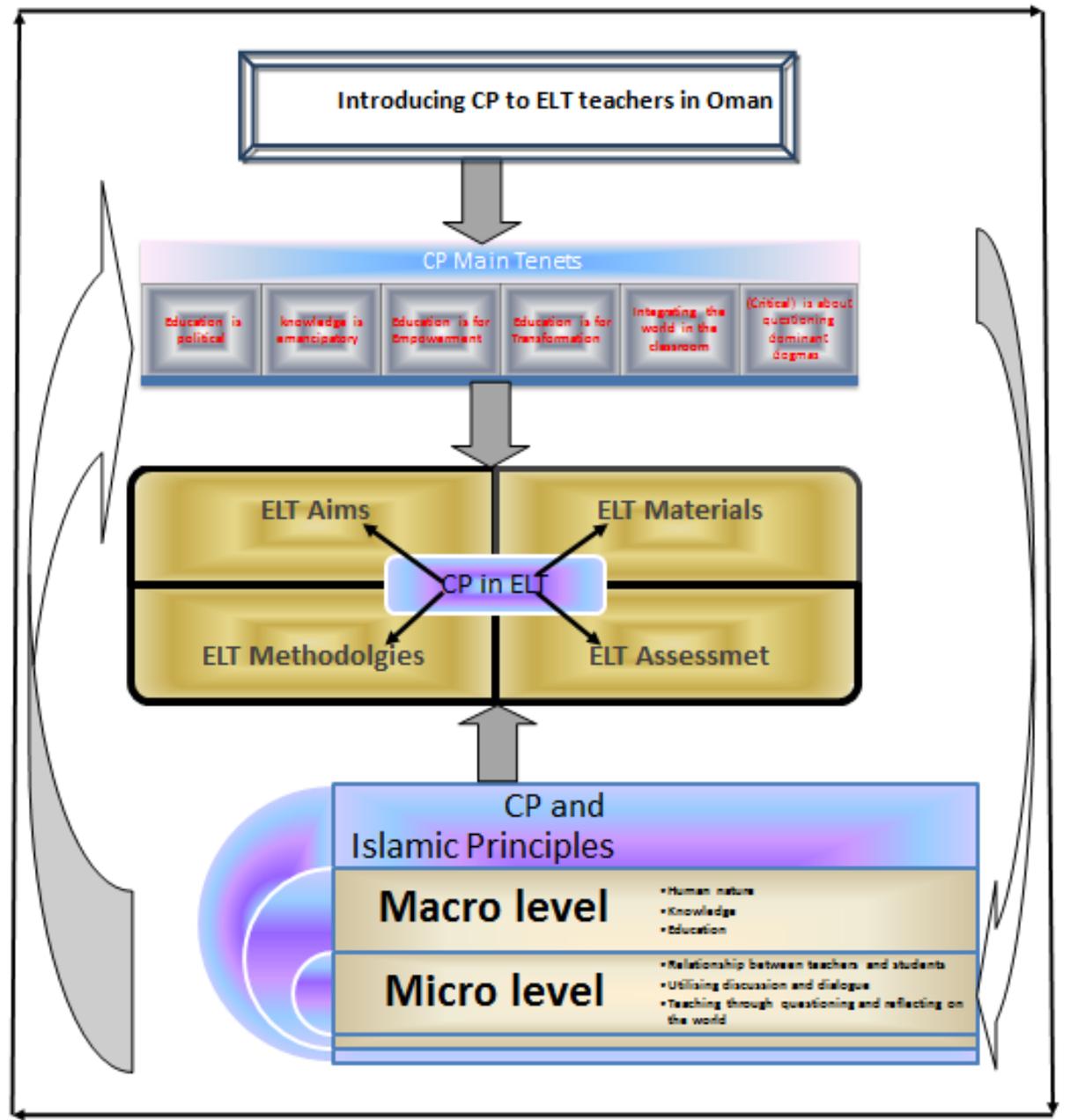


Figure 3.2 Conceptual framework to introduce CP to ELT teachers in Oman

This framework includes three components. The first component includes the main tenets of CP, namely the political nature of education, nature of knowledge, education for empowerment, education for transformation, integrating the world in the classroom, and the meaning of 'critical' within the CP framework (refer to Section 3.3 for an explanation of each premise). This framework also emphasises that, when introducing CP to ELT teachers, focus should be given to how its tenets appear in ELT aims, materials, methodologies and assessment (refer to Section 3.4). The last component of this model is how Islamic principles and CP share some principles (refer to Section 3.7), and this should be considered when implementing CP.

To this end, CP must not be only introduced as an approach that comes from the West; rather, teachers should become aware that CP is inherent in Islamic principles. Such knowledge would help teachers to situate the approach to suit their students' contexts and cultural concerns. In addition, it would help teachers to integrate global and local concepts when they implement CP. The intervention's procedures and tasks, which will be discussed in the coming chapter, reflect this conceptual framework.

Nonetheless, I believe that CP does not come without limitations; it has been criticized in the literature for several reasons, as elaborated in the next section.

### **3.9 CP critiques**

Although many of the critiques of CP have already been detailed above, this section sheds light on further critiques of it, which it is fundamental to discuss so that this study stays critical. Pennycook (2001) maintains that "critical work should always remain critical and skeptical" (p.139). CP has been criticized for being abstract and not touching upon classroom reality (Keesing-Syles, 2003). Ewald (1999) maintains that "despite the proliferation of discussion regarding critical pedagogy and S/FL classrooms, few authors have suggested what it might look like fleshed out in an actual classroom" (p.275). Teachers need to see CP at the level of "materials, lesson plans, classroom activities, assessment tools and course design" (ibid) and not solely focus on its aims and principles. However, looking at the literature, it is found that critical pedagogues are always warning teachers not to view CP as a method, but as "a social and educational process" (Crookes & Lehner, 1998, p.327). Nonetheless, in reality teachers need clear guidance as to how to implement CP. This study aims to bridge the gap between the abstraction of which CP is accused and practicality by providing teachers with guidance regarding the implementation of CP. This will be achieved by engaging teachers and providing them with examples that show how to implement CP in Oman. This should be done carefully, however, so the researcher will not fall back on traditional methods, whereby teachers come to the workshop as empty

vessels that are waiting to be filled by the researcher (this will be explored further in the methodology chapter).

Another critique of CP focuses on its inappropriateness for students in periphery ELT classrooms (Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012). Introducing CP to students who come from the banking model system can lead to uncertainty about the world in which they live, which can lead to an identity crisis and CP "[becoming] a medium of oppression, rather than emancipation" (Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012 p.477). Similarly, Ó'Móchain and Perkins (2010) maintain that, on some occasions, teachers impose discussions of critical issues on students who prefer not to talk about them. A survey consulted 200 students at two Japanese universities about the topics they prefer discuss; the results show that students prefer to talk about interpersonal and intrapersonal topics (hobbies, shopping, travelling, eating out, movies, and career) above critical sociocultural topics. Ó'Móchain and Perkins (2010) conclude that students who have been accustomed to specific school practices and ideologies, as is the case in Japan and Oman, may resist talking about critical issues. As a consequence, "an inevitable tension arises between our belief that critical pedagogy [CP] is good and just, and our right to impose it on others" (Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p.37).

Another critique of CP is its capability to empower learners, where "unequal power relations are a permanent feature of educational settings"

(Johnston, 1999, p.560). The forms of empowerment that teachers can advocate are restricted to negotiating the course contents and the allocation of more meaningful assignments, but the teacher always remains the authoritative figure in the classroom. In addition, Johnston criticises the fact that power is not something possessed by teachers that they are able to give to students. Rather, power has a dynamic nature which can be practised by both students and teachers, but is not a commodity that can be handed to students. This means that 'empowerment' is a fuzzy word, but not an achievable goal.

Similarly, CP has been critiqued for overlooking individual agency. It neglects to comprehend that individuals exist in social structures such as governments, peer groups, or educational systems that limit individuals' ability to make choices (May, 2001, as cited in Block, 2007). Applying this to learners in ELT classrooms, their ability to make choices regarding their language learning is restricted by the way classes are taught and the regulations of their institutions, including attendance, assignments and exams. In short, despite ELT teachers' desires in many cases to make a difference in their students' lives, they may face resistance from their institutions or their students for many reasons, including power relationships or students' unfamiliarity with CP's demands.

In addition, CP asks teachers to do a lot in order to achieve its transformative aims and neglects the fact that those teachers exist in a system that is operated at the ministry level and that it does not give teachers tips on how to negotiate with their systems (Akbari, 2008b). "The financial and occupational constraints they work within do not leave them with the time or the willingness to act as iconoclasts and social transformers" (ibid, p.646). He also maintains that the heavy workload teachers bear leaves very little room for them to critically reflect on their practice and design and prepare lessons based on CP. Thus, they choose the easiest path which is to rely on textbooks that provide them with a safe and effortless framework to follow. In a similar vein, Gore (2003) interrogates CP's ability to empower or transform since such claims "attribute extraordinary abilities to the teacher, and hold a view of agency which risks ignoring the context(s) of teachers' work" (p.334). For instance, Shohamy (2004) asserts that most ELT teachers work in institutions where tests are a major role in assessing teachers' performance, not only in assessing their students' language performance. Such reality means CP is not a practical choice to follow.

### **3.9.1 Response to critiques**

It may be true that the complexity of the educational system is beyond the capability of CP to transform. Nonetheless, rather than dismissing or avoiding CP, the practitioners should implement the concept of 'reflexivity' which involves a reflexive interrogation of the assumptions underlying CP's premises and aims (Sedeghi & Ketabi, 2009; Giroux, 2011; Penneycook, 2001). In this way, critical pedagogues constantly engage in the debate on CP, deconstruct it, think about how to situate it within their contexts and offer critical alternatives. In more precise words, they take a critical and postmodernist stance (refer to Section 4.2.2 in the next chapter) when they actualise CP in their teaching.

In addition, educational goals should look for possibility rather than be controlled by the current reality. This means that we should look at ourselves as intellectual teachers and practitioners rather than as "consumers and perpetuators of hegemonic structures and dominant discourses" (Troudi, 2015, p.96). Furthermore, it has been suggested that CP can provide a possible solution to the Arab world's educational systems (Raddawi & Troudi, 2013) to which Oman belongs. This is because CP can

"change the students' experience of learning, encouraging them to learn more and develop the intellectual and affective powers to think about transforming society. The power to think critically and to act constructively; the power to study in depth, to

understand school, society, work, politics and our lives; and the power to feel hopeful about an equitable future"

(Shor, 1996, p.111).

In addition, evidence has been accumulated that implementing CP in classrooms by giving students voices, raising their awareness and dealing with them as subjects can empower learners (Chandella , 2011; Ko, 2013; Izadinia, 2009; Okazaki, 2005). This implies that constant research and continuous attempts to bring CP into practice could facilitate its path in any educational context (McArthur, 2010). Therefore, this study is an attempt to raise teachers' awareness of CP, investigate their attitudes, and examine CP's potential and challenges, since pinning down both sides is a first step towards the hope that one day the educational system in Oman may reject the new liberal ideologies that govern it and move to critical approaches which could ameliorate it.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter began by tracing back the history of CP and highlighting how difficult it is to pin down its meaning, since it has been influenced by several philosophies that contribute to our current understanding. Next, the chapter detailed unified themes that are found in the literature which assisted in establishing the meaning of CP that guides this study. This chapter also detailed the history of CP in the ELT realm, where different perspectives were presented and examples from the literature were

highlighted to emphasise the potential of CP in ELT environments. Previous research related to teachers' attitudes towards CP was detailed to connect the work to the current study and identify the research gap in the literature. This chapter also included a comparative view of Islamic principles and the main tenets of CP which leads to developing a conceptual framework of how to introduce CP to ELT teachers in this study. It ended by detailing the critiques of CP. Overall, this chapter highlights many cases which show that engaging in critical work and implementing CP is by no means easy. However, this does not mean that CP should be avoided; rather, this study suggests expanding CP through using postmodern discourses such as rejection of absolutes and searching for possibilities via considering contexts (Butler, 2002).

Embracing postmodern discourses enables educators to be sceptical by problematising modernity and universality in the way CP is understood and conducted. This is to say that " a great deal of postmodernist theory depends on the maintenance of a sceptical attitude" (ibid, p.13). Therefore, educators are encouraged to look at CP as an unfinished project, a process of becoming rather than assertion. In Giroux's words, CP is "a project that is indeterminate, open to constant revision, and constantly in dialogue with its own assumptions" (2004, p.36). This is to say, rejecting absolutes in understanding CP emboldens educators to be open and willing to engage critically with its premises and to challenge

them via using 'reflexivity' which enables them to develop a means for pursuing ELT as a critical enterprise.

In addition, since postmodernism cares more about context than content, teachers need to appropriate CP's premises to suit their contexts and the circumstances in which they are intended to use them. This is to say, educators should focus on looking for deepening their understanding of CP tenets, considering that CP cannot be treated as fixed set of principles. This would encourage teachers to progress in their understanding of CP, appropriating it and looking for its possibilities in their contexts. Educators should remember that "in a postmodern world, power and domination will always exist, and pure emancipation is, perhaps, deceptive, but we do what we can" ( Foster, 1999, p.110).

## Chapter Four: Methodology

*“There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all”*

(Foucault ,1985, p.8)

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that I follow in order to introduce CP in the ELT system in four colleges in Oman. It starts with the philosophical assumptions that have informed the present study. This will be followed by the rationale for choosing the research site and a description of the participants. Next, the data collection methods, data generating process and data analysis will be described. Then, the validity of the study and the ethical considerations are discussed. The last section will highlight some limitations with respect to the design and the scope of the study.

### 4.2 The paradigmatic stance

A paradigm is considered to be the theoretical lens that guides the study. It can be defined as "a wider world view or research approach that informs the researcher's choices of methodology based on one's understanding of

the nature of knowledge, epistemology, and the nature of social reality, known as ontology" (Troudi, 2011a, p.212). Guba (1981) suggests that the researcher should choose the paradigm that best corresponds to the topic under investigation. Guba's suggestion implies that a researcher should be restricted to one paradigm when conducting a study. Nonetheless, Creswell (2013) maintains that the researcher can use multiple paradigms to inform his/her study. Following Creswell's idea, and with the belief that each paradigm has its own limitations, the current study is influenced by two paradigms that guide its design, methodology and methods: critical theory and postmodernism.

### **4.2.1 Critical theory**

The nature of the topic necessitates taking a critical stance to approach the journey of this research. This is because, as I explained in the previous chapter, CP is inherent in critical theory, wherein reality is seen as "stratified and marked by inequality, with differential structural access to material and symbolic resources, power, opportunity, mobility and education" (Tamly, 2010, p.128). This means that critical theory starts from the fact that reality is problematic and is socially constructed via various means, including education (curriculum, teachers, assessment and the whole educational system). Consequently, this study starts from the assumption that ELT and the way teachers teach it is problematic, since it

is constructed in a way that perpetuates the status quo. It does not help in generating learners "who are critical, self reflective and knowledgeable" (Giroux, 2011, p.3) and who are able to confront their assumptions, challenge common sense and ameliorate their lives. Having realized that the reality of ELT in Oman is problematic and with a critical stance, this study aims to achieve 'change' as opposed to 'explaining', as in the case of the positivist approach to research, or 'understanding' as in the case of interpretive research (Tamly, 2010). However, the change this study aims to achieve is not at action level, rather it is in terms of raising teachers' awareness of the socio-political issues surrounding their role as English teachers and the necessity of taking a critical stance towards teaching English (refer to Section 4.2.2). That being said, this study specifically aims to encourage teachers to **rethink** how ELT is conducted by emboldening them to problematise taken-for-granted issues and common assumptions related to teaching English.

Another fundamental tenet of critical theory is that the study consists of a critical agenda (Creswell, 2013; Troudi, 2015), which is the second principle of critical theory that guides this study. This might assist participants in the context of the study to ameliorate their thinking "from issues such as oppression, domination, suppression, alienation and hegemony" (Creswell, 2013, p.26). The critical agenda of this study can be summarized in the following points:

- Rejecting the idea of the banking model and teaching for the test and believing that "what happens in the classroom should end up making a difference outside the classroom" (Baynham, 2006, p. 28).
- Rejecting the idea that ELT teachers are skilful technicians whose role is to explain a grammatical rule or teach a reading passage, and who are told what to teach and how.
- Raising ELT teachers' awareness of their role as intellectual transformative agents who are able to empower their students by questioning the assumptions and materials governing ELT, including themes from the wider society, in their classes, incorporating topics from students' day-to-day lives to enable them to think about their situation and explore possibilities for change.

The final tenet of the critical theory that guides this study is that this theory criticises the technicality and rationality of the way schooling is operated and invites researchers to realise the "political and economic foundations of our construction of knowledge, curriculum, and teaching" (Gage, 1989, p. 5). Therefore, this study is rooted in the fact that no aspect in education is apolitical, which necessitates teachers "to recognize how schools have historically embraced theories and practices that function to write knowledge and power in ways that sustain asymmetrical relations of power under the guise of neutral and apolitical views of education" (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003, p. 11). The ELT realm in Oman, which is the

focus of this study, has been operated in a way that serves the interest of those who have power, mainly English-speaking countries, especially the USA and the UK, through importing their materials in full packages and privileging their teachers (Chirciu, 2014; Karmani, 2010). This means that what is currently happening in the ELT system in Oman helps in maintaining the status quo and producing inequalities. Thus, the methodology of this study aims towards externalizing the dominant ideologies and encouraging teachers to look critically at their profession. This is achieved through an intervention which aims to raise teachers' awareness of the political nature of ELT; and also through interviews and observations that aim to confront teachers with their taken-for-granted issues, encouraging them to challenge dominant discourses and think about other alternatives to empower themselves and their students, so the status quo could be altered. In other words, this research "offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that the research process enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations" (Lather, 1986b, p.263). This is to say that this study, with its critical stance, aims to move ELT from its apolitical and technical foci to a more critical and humanized enterprise.

Although critical theory has strongly influenced this study, as explained above, it is necessary also to be aware of its limitations. One limitation is its intent to empower people and achieve equality in society. Such intent seems to be hypothetical and it should be supported by empirical

examples and cases. However, this can be undeniably challenging for the critical theorist, as any change is a matter of time and cannot be observed immediately in society in general or in the educational setting in particular. Given the limitations of the critical theory paradigm, the postmodernism paradigm – to which I turn next – has also informed the current study.

### **4.2.2 Postmodernism**

Although there is no consensus about the definition of postmodernism (Kumaravadivelu, 2011), it "sets about dismantling most of our normal ways of thinking about how meaning interpretation and reality works" (Zeeman, et al., 2002, p.96). With regard to this study, three principles of postmodernism inform its design and methodology.

The first principle is that postmodernism rejects the fact that "linear progress and sequential development can lead to certainty and completion" (Slattery, 1997, p.5). This informs the design of the current study, since it does not claim that the small intervention will lead to improvement because the educational setting is not perceived as a linear setting where implementing one technique will lead to improvement. Rather, the educational setting is very complex and can be affected by many factors. Thus, in this study, the intervention basically aimed to encourage ELT teachers to rethink their situations and practices. This is to

say that postmodernism focuses on "changing ways of thinking rather than on calling for action based on these changes" (Creswell, 2013, p.27).

The second principle of postmodernism that guides this study is that reality is complex and diverse (Kumaravadivelu, 2011). Therefore, "instead of looking for one unifying truth, it recognizes a multiplicity of narratives" (ibid, p.5). Hence, this study aims to give the participating teachers a linguistic space where multiple perspectives are welcomed and they are encouraged to look for alternatives "rather than just fit in with the set rules" (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.80). In addition, this principle gives me as a researcher the capabilities to be "tolerant, flexible, and adaptive" (ibid, p. 155) and more "equipped to handle paradox, contradiction and conceptual complexity" (ibid), which encourages me to engage in reflexivity (refer to section 4.4)

The third postmodernist principle that guides this enquiry is that postmodernism "doubts that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the 'right' or privileged form of authoritative knowledge" (Slattery, 1997, p.1). This is to say that postmodernism calls for questioning and problematizing rather than establishing models or techniques. This principle is in fact corresponding to the nature of CP, which is seen as an "unfinished project intent on developing a meaningful life for all students" (Giroux, 2011, p.6). Although CP is encouraged as an alternative to the mainstream methods,

it is not seen as absolute. Rather, this study emboldens ELT teachers to appropriate the tenets of CP to their contexts and questions its potentialities and challenges in the ELT system. Consequently, this study does not aim to generate a 'correct approach' to ELT in the four colleges, but rather "a dialogue about the teaching act" (Kincheloe, 2012, p. 14).

### **4.3 Research methodology**

Methodology refers to "the overall strategy and design that will guide research in the whole process of the study" (Troudi, 2015, p.92). This study adapts Action Research (AR) as its methodology. AR has a long history in educational research that makes it hard to pin down its meaning. However, since its emergence, AR has been always associated with "promoting positive social change" (Lewin, 1946, cited in Noffke, 1997, p.311). It starts from the assumptions that reality is produced by human beings and they are themselves able to change it through their realization of problematic issues and taking action towards improving them. Reviewing the literature, there are three types of AR that serve different interests: technical, practical and critical or emancipatory (Punch, 2014; Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013; Manfra, 2009). Table 4.1 summarizes the differences between them.

This study adapts the vision that AR is critical for several reasons. First, it adopts some principles of the critical theory paradigm, which underscores that the research should have a political agenda (See section 4.2.1). Thus,

this study does not aim to describe or understand: it aims to change, and even, to be specific, to raise awareness, which is one of the characteristic of critical AR. In addition, this study is inherently rooted in postmodernism, which rejects linearity and rationality. Furthermore, taking the practical types of AR implied, using it for the sake of teachers' professional development raises a complex set of questions related to issues of power: Who and what is being "developed" and by whom, and, most important, in whose interests ? (Noffke, 1997)

Type of action research	Characteristics
Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The aim is to control and improve predefined outcomes</li> <li>• AR as a means to an end</li> <li>• The task is to improve the means</li> <li>• The relationship between the participant and the research is one way</li> <li>• Treating others as objects</li> </ul>
Practical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The aim is to improve the means and the ends</li> <li>• Teachers as researcher movements/reflection on action</li> <li>• The focus is on day-to-day issues of teacher performance</li> <li>• The researcher is open to the views and responses of others</li> <li>• Treating others as subjects</li> </ul>
Critical/emancipatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has an explicit political and educational agenda</li> <li>• Understand constraints that are</li> </ul>

	<p>generated from power, oppression, control and domination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raising consciousness of these constraints and their sources</li><li>• Inherently rooted in praxis, with empowerment and transformation as the goals</li><li>• It is dialogical</li></ul>
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*Table 4.1 Types of action research*

Therefore, this study espouses the critical vision of AR, which sees it as "a social practice – a special kind of social practice that aims at transforming other social practices" (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013, p.27). Thus, this study sees AR as part of a broader agenda where raising teachers' awareness of their role as intellectual transformatives and resisting the technicality in their profession can change the ELT realm at tertiary level, which could promote positive changes in schools, education and society in general.

Furthermore, adopting a critical vision of AR means that the process of conducting AR is a critical dialogue between the researcher and the participants which emboldens them to avoid looking for certainties and absoluteness, as in the case of technical AR, or to construct understanding of what is going on in the field. Rather, it encourages teachers to question and problematize their current practice. In other words, it takes a critical stance to the teaching and learning process through "encourage[ing] critical examination of the status quo or common

educational practices" (Sandretto, 2008, p.4). This is done through "opening up space for dialogue and conversation" (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013, p.28), which leads to the '*conscientisation*' that is necessary in order to improve the current situation of the ELT realm in the four colleges. In addition, adopting the critical vision of AR entails looking at the impact of the workshop in terms of teachers' acceptance, resistance and practice, not in terms of improvement. This is because the concept of improvement reflects rationality and technicality. It also has a double meaning. This is to say that "what count as cases of 'progress' or 'improvement' or 'development' for some groups, other groups may not regard equally or at all as cases of these things" (ibid, p.27).

Although such vision of AR has been criticized in the literature for being utopian, unrealizable and naive (Cohen et al., 2011), I inherently believe that teachers are the core of the empowerment in their students' lives if they play their role as transformative intellectuals and are sincerely willing to make change in their students' realities. I hope that by taking up a critical stance in my AR, I can encourage ELT teachers at tertiary level to question their teaching methods, materials and the whole system of ELT. Such actions might enable them to resist technicality, oppression and marginalization, and gain awareness, which is the first step towards ameliorating the situation. I might sound too ambitious and too utopian, yet I believe utopia is

"a fundamental necessity for human beings. It is part of their historically and socially constituted nature that men and women, under normal conditions, must not do without dreaming and utopia." (Freire, 2007, p. 25)

Because of my critical postmodernist stance, I believe that everything is open to be problematized, including my value-laden research and my explicit political agenda. Thus, the coming section reveals my background and experiences, which manifestly affect my research design, my analysis and my interpretations throughout the process of conducting this study.

## **4.4 Reflexivity**

The notion of reflexivity necessitates that the researcher becomes self-aware of the effect of her "values, attitudes, perceptions, opinions, actions, feelings" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.359) on the phenomenon studied. In addition, it entails the willingness of the researcher to disclose herself to the audience. Although critical researchers are encouraged throughout the literature to show reflexivity, it is necessary to admit that the researcher's decisions on what to reveal and what to conceal are undoubtedly political and subjective (Royal, 2010). Nonetheless, as Royal maintains, rather than escaping the attempt to be reflexive, I would be rather engaged in the process, admitting that it might be defective. Thus, this section underscores who I am.

I am an Omani lady born and brought up in a small city in the east of Oman. My experience as a student was shaped by a positivist and reductionist view of education in which my mind was not seen as "a constructor of reality but merely a filing cabinet into which unproblematized, objective data ... [was] stored" (Kincheloe, 2012, p.5). The more information I stored in this cabinet, the more I was able to insert it in the tests which were deemed to be the only valid way to assess my capability. When I graduated from high school with good grades that allowed me to get a scholarship and do my first degree in the USA or the UK, which were the best places for me to gain qualifications that would make me competent enough to compete in a capitalist society, my images of the USA and the UK were shaped by what I heard and watched in the media, which described them as the best places to acquire knowledge, which I took for granted. My father did not allow me to apply for scholarships, purely because I am a female and would not be able to take care of myself from his perspective, which I took for granted because of the way I was brought up in a conservative Muslim and Arab family where females have been marginalized by the ideologies that see them as incapable of taking care of themselves and always being in need of protection from males. My father's refusal meant that I ended up in the English department at SQU. My choice of English major was as a result of the status of English and the kind of social capital that it can bring to a

person. I had not thought of English as "a tool of oppression, colonialism, or rigid identity" (Pennycook, 2001, p.69).

In addition, part of my identity is that I am a bilingual lecturer who has worked among other multilingual and monolingual lecturers in a college. I have experienced the marginalization of bilingual and multilingual lecturers who have been side-lined in staff meetings where NESTs lecturers enjoyed legitimatization and privilege to voice their opinions. On the other hand, I have experienced privileges as an Omani ELT teacher that have led me to argue against some lecturers' stereotypical comments about Omani students' misbehaviour and attempted to convince them that they did not try to understand them and their needs and cultures. I rarely faced such misbehaviour from my students. I always ended up in my office talking with my colleagues about the inability of some teachers at college to understand students. In other words, they might not make an effort to understand students' needs and interests, or they might feel that they do not have to, since they have a detailed syllabus and set types of assessment.

My doctorate studies enabled me to look at the other side of education: its political and moral practice. Reading about CP made me realize all these reasons for our students' attitudes towards English and its teachers and readymade materials. Thinking back to these days after my exposure to CP made me reflect back on my identity, agency and "those maps of

meaning that enable [people] to define who they are and how they relate to others" (Giroux, 2011, p.6). This has not been a smooth approach. As I began to read about CP, its abstract terminologies, unsettled nature and utopian aims were not absorbed easily by my technical and practical background. Nonetheless, something inside me emboldened me to read more about it and explore it and more importantly to relate it to my own context. The more I read about it, the more I felt that CP had something to do with my and (maybe) with other ELT teachers' dissatisfaction with our teaching, which constitutes merely skills and techniques that are used to teach a pre-specified syllabus.

## **4.5 Research questions**

Having shed light on the theoretical and methodological framework that stresses that reality is problematic and the education system plays a role in maintaining the status quo, this study aims to introduce CP to ELT teachers at the tertiary level in Oman. Practically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent ELT teachers in tertiary education in Oman aware of Critical Pedagogy?
2. What are ELT teachers' attitudes towards Critical Pedagogy?
3. What are the possibilities of applying Critical Pedagogy in EFL classes from teachers' perspectives?

4. What are the challenges of implementing Critical Pedagogy in EFL classes from teachers' perspectives?

## **4.6 Choosing the Research Sites**

In locating research sites, according to Creswell (2013), the researcher needs to locate individuals who can be representative of the targeted group (ELT teachers at tertiary level in this study). Ideally, the research design would incorporate a wider number of ELT teachers from different HE institutions in Oman, which could establish the basis to understand the level of teachers' awareness of CP and their perceptions of its potentialities and challenges. However, from a practical perspective, this choice was difficult to implement for several reasons. First, trying to incorporate ELT teachers from various tertiary institutions entails high demands in terms of time, effort and resources, which were deemed to be impossible given the time framework set for this research, and the geographical characteristics of Oman. Second, as previously explained in Chapter 2 (refer to Table 2.1), different HE institutions in Oman are supervised by different ministries, which means that I would have needed to seek permission from different authorities in order to get access to ELT teachers. Third, most tertiary institutions in Oman consist of typical populations where the majority of teachers are expatriate teachers who come mostly from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Canada, the USA, the UK and Arab countries, with few ELT Omani teachers. Thus, it was not

necessary to aim for a wider number of HE institutions in order to find samples of the whole population.

Thus, in the light of the above issues, I decided to include four institutions which were supervised by one Ministry for the sake of easy institutional access. In addition, it happens that I was working in an institution that is supervised by the same ministry. Having decided on the research sites, the procedure of AR will be underscored in the coming section.

## **4.7 Action research procedures**

Looking at the literature, there are several ways in which the steps of AR can be conducted. This study adapted Cohen et al.'s model of conducting AR (2011, p.355) for several reasons. First and most important, the framework stresses the importance of reflection when conducting AR by locating it at the centre of the model. This reminds the researcher of the importance of reflection during the various research stages and its dynamic nature rather than its appearance after each stage. In addition, by locating reflection at the centre, it encourages feedback and interaction between steps, which allows new ideas and insights to emerge. In other words, by following this model, reflection becomes the engine of the AR, encouraging the researcher to always question and justify how each stage was approached.

The model includes eight stages. The *first stage* required identification and formulation of the problem that was perceived to be critical in the ELT realm in Oman. What is important at this stage is to formulate the problem in a way that justifies the necessity of introducing the intervention. In this study, the problem was that ELT teachers approach ELT technically, without taking the main tenets of CP into consideration. To identify the problem and pin it down, a questionnaire was designed to investigate ELT teachers' awareness of CP.

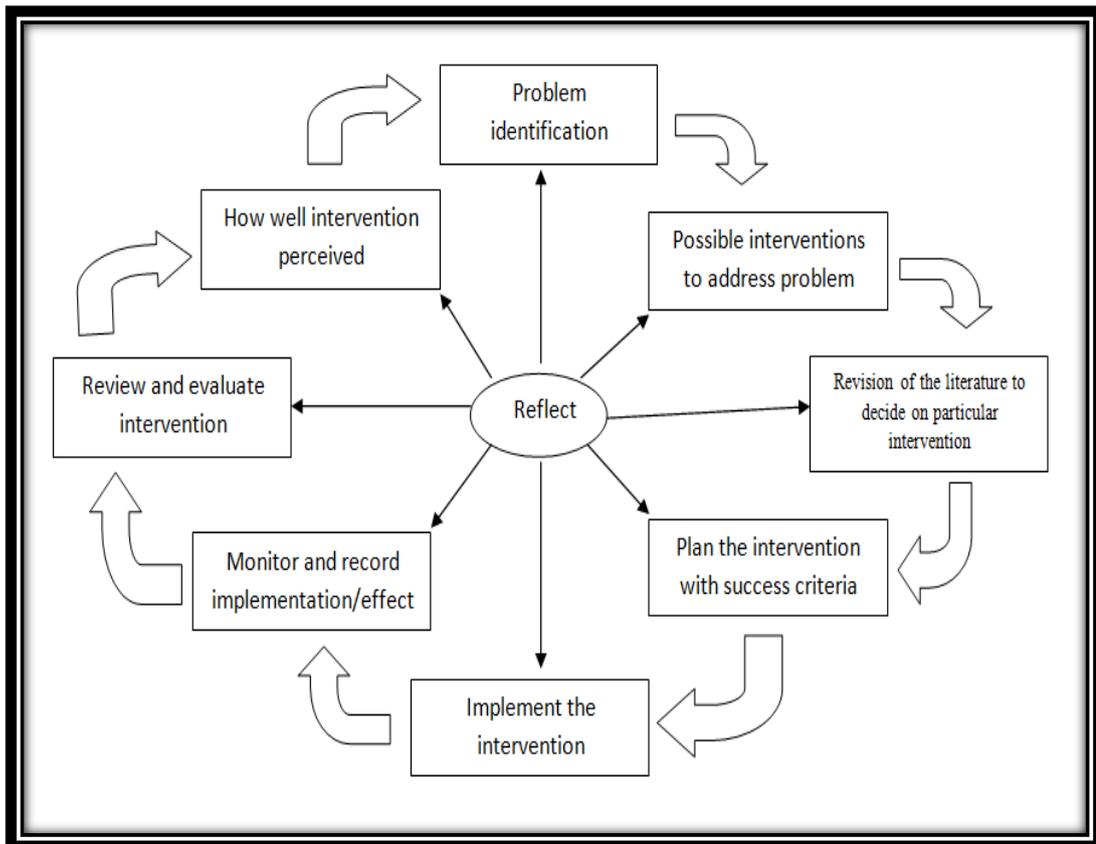


Figure 4.1 Framework of Action research Procedure

*(Adapted from Cohen et al., 2011, p.355)*

The *second stage* included possible interventions to address the problem. This involved discussing the research proposal with my supervisors at University of Exeter and colleagues from my college. The idea of this research originated from conducting a small-scale study for one of the modules I took in the first year of my doctorate studies. The study generated very interesting findings and some ELT teachers during the interview expressed the pressing need to utilize CP as one way to cope with a lot of problems we face back in HE institutions when English is taught. In addition, after conducting the study, some teachers contacted me asking for more resources and examples of how to implement CP. Thus, I thought that broadening the scope and the site of this study for my PhD dissertation would generate more critical discussions, which would lead to questioning, reflecting and problematising the dominant ideologies governing the ELT realm in HE institutions in Oman.

The *third stage* entailed reviewing the literature in order to decide which CP tenets to be included to help teacher to move from their traditional ways of teaching a critical approach. With regard to this study, relevant books and articles were reviewed in order to frame the conceptual framework for introducing CP to ELT teachers in the four colleges. Additionally, research that elucidates how CP could be implemented in ELT classrooms was studied in depth in order to help design the intervention.

The *fourth stage* involved planning the interventions. Many considerations were taken into consideration during this stage:

1. The interventions were designed in a way that would allow the participants to engage in the process rather than consider them as mere subjects. As such, participants of this study were requested to read about CP and how it appears in the ELT, contribute their personal perspectives on different aspects of the workshop, design their own tasks and evaluate different examples provided during the workshop (See Section 4.8 for further explanation about the study interventions).
2. The length of the intervention was considered and discussed with my supervisors, other colleagues and the ELCs administration; the workshop was conducted in one day over three hours for practical and pedagogical reasons. Practically, it was difficult to find a time slot for all teachers who were interested in attending the workshop for more than three hours. Pedagogically, I felt that having more than a one-day workshop would make me fall into a dictated approach to CP. My aim was to introduce it, open new angles for teachers to look at their practice, provide some examples and encourage teachers to find their own ways to appropriate CP according to their students' needs and concerns and encourage them to question its suitability in Omani context.

The *fifth stage* was concerned with the implementation of the intervention. This stage required negotiating the time and the venue of the workshop. Regarding the timing, I negotiated in June 2014 with the ELCs' administrations about the best time to conduct the CP workshop, and all of them agreed that the first two weeks of the academic year would be the most appropriate time. Regarding the venue, thinking about the geographical characteristics of Oman and the distance between one college and another and other responsibilities teachers might have, I decided to go and conduct the workshop in each college. This was overwhelming, since I needed to contact each college separately to negotiate the timing. However, this decision turned out to be fruitful, since it ensured a good number of attendees, whose interaction enriched the workshop. As I mentioned previously, self reflection has been a vital part of conducting this study. I videotaped myself conducting each workshop, which helped me to critically reflect on my performance during and after the process of conducting the workshops in the four colleges.

The *sixth stage* concerns monitoring and recording the impact of the intervention. Burns (2010) calls this stage observation, as the researcher observes the impacts of the intervention through documenting people's thoughts, opinions and action. This was done through interviewing teachers and observing them teaching lessons using some of the CP premises. This step thus required me to prepare interview questions, pilot

them and then conduct the interviews and to design semi-structured classroom observations.

The *seventh stage* was concerned with analyzing the findings and classification and analysis of the data. This is the stage where the researcher brings bits and pieces of data together, classifying them to see what they have revealed about the phenomenon under study. The *last stage* involved the interpretation of the data and making inferences and drawing conclusions to understand the issue clearly (Chapters 5 and 6). This stage also involved making guesses and speculations that go beyond the data, and implications for future actions and research (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013) (Chapter 7).

Although the stages in this model seem rigid and neat as they are set out (Figure 4.1), in reality this was not the case, since these phases and their outcomes actually overlapped. This is to say that these stages were "a cohesive whole rather than [...] fragmented, isolated parts" (Creswell, 2007, p. 42). However, these stages of AR were necessary parts of the process that the researcher needed to consider while conducting AR. Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2013) maintain that "things often proceed in a less well-structured way. But it is important to do all of those things" (p.113).

## 4.8 The study interventions

In order to introduce CP to ELT teachers in the four institutions, two main interventions were used. First, sending an article entitled ***Transforming lives: introducing critical pedagogy into ELT classrooms*** by Akbari (2008) via email to ELT teachers in the four institutions before conducting the workshop. I chose this article because it has sufficient background about CP and includes some practical examples of how to implement it in the classroom. It is also short (only eight pages) to encourage teachers to read it and think about its applicability in their contexts. In addition, the article was written by an Iranian scholar which sends a message to teachers that CP is not only about Anglo-Saxon countries, rather a neighbouring country like Iran has encouraged it in their ELT setting.

Second, conducting a three-hour workshop for 160 teachers. The workshop included ten tasks, as shown in Table 4.2 (refer to Appendix 5 for a full description of each task procedure and handouts).

	Task	Aim
1	Introduction	Talk about the factors that shape learning experience and show participants that the teacher plays a great role in shaping students' learning experience
2	Types of Pedagogy	Introduce models of pedagogy (Transmission, Generative, Transformative) and relate them to the participants' context
3	Introducing Critical Pedagogy	Understand the meaning of critical pedagogy

4	Introducing the banking model and the problem posing model	Differentiate between the Banking Model and the problem posing model
5	Examining ELT textbooks used in their context	To raise ELT teachers' awareness of the ideologies presented in ELT textbooks; realise the importance of implementing aspects of critical pedagogy in the ELT realm
6	Critical Pedagogy in practice	Give teachers examples of how to put critical pedagogy into practice
7	Classroom Scenarios	Determine the level of criticality in the given classroom scenarios
8	Critical pedagogy and Islamic principles	Raise teachers' awareness of the similarities between CP tenets and Islamic principles
9	Designing a lesson plan using aspects of Critical Pedagogy	Collaborate with others to put the critical pedagogy aspects into practice
10	Comments and feedback	Complete the workshop evaluation forms

Table 4.2 Workshop tasks and sequence

**Task one** asked teachers to talk about the factors that shape learning experience and show participants that the teacher plays a great role in shaping students' learning experience. This was done by asking teachers to recall an unforgettable episode from when they were students which has shaped their learning. **Task two** aimed to introduce models of pedagogy (Transmission, Generative, Transformative) and relate them to the participants' context. This was done by showing teachers three pictures exemplifying the three models of pedagogy. Then, teachers were asked to work in their groups and write three characteristics of each model. Also, teachers were asked to reflect, giving them prompts such as:

which of these models is more popular in their context? which model do they use more? why is a certain model more popular? why is a certain model absent?

**Task three** aimed to introduce CP to teachers. This was done by having a mini lecture where I talked about the six tenets that guide the definition of critical pedagogy in my study. Then, teachers were asked to reflect on the main tenets, seeking their opinions about the applicability of each of tenet in their college. **Task four** aimed to raise teachers' awareness of the difference between the banking model and the problem posing model by providing cut-out characteristics of both models. Teachers were asked to work in their groups and sort out which characteristics belong to each model. They were then asked to create a poster of the characteristics of both models. This task also included a group discussion to reflect on which model was more useful in their context and if they were satisfied with the model used in this context.

In order to design task five in the workshop, I benefited from relevant literature such as Janks (2010) and her work on critical literacy, Crooks (2013) and his work on developing critical materials and Kumaravadivelu (2003) and his idea of critical discourse analysis. **Task five** aimed to raise teachers' awareness that "words are not innocent, but instead work to position us" (Janks, 2013, p.227). This was done by asking teachers to examine materials that they currently used and encouraging them to think

about the authors' hidden messages and how they used signs, pictures and language to establish legitimacy to convey their agendas. **Task six** aimed to build awareness, momentum and understanding of the main premises of critical pedagogy. It also provided some practical examples of how to incorporate these premises in terms of aims, materials, methodologies and assessment via using an interactive mini lecture where teachers were encouraged to question the applicability of what was presented to them. Within this task, various handouts were provided to teachers in order to give them concrete examples of how CP can be implemented.

**Task seven** was designed to make teachers aware of the level of criticality that teachers could reach with their students. Therefore, teachers were given five different scenarios and asked to work in groups in order to determine the extent to which teachers were being critical in each scenario. Teachers were encouraged to provide reasons and justifications for their opinions about the criticality of each teacher in the given scenarios. **Task eight** aimed to make teachers aware of the similarities between Islamic principles and CP tenets, so teachers could realize the compatibility of both in terms of advocating questioning skills and seeking emancipatory knowledge. **Task nine** asked teachers to work in their groups to design lesson plans using CP tenets. The aim of this task was to give teachers the opportunity to collaborate with each other and try to put what they had understood from the workshop into practice. **Task Ten**

required teachers to reflect on the workshop by providing them with the form to evaluate it and critically reflect on the applicability of CP in the ELT system in their colleges.

### **4.8.1 My role as a change agent**

I believe that I gained a deeper understanding of CP and how it could be implemented in the ELT setting, combined with my experience in the educational context. Therefore, I was in a good position to design a workshop on CP and present it to ELT teachers. However, by doing so I was aware that I might 'impose' my assumptions on teachers who attended the workshop. Thus, I tried to play the role of workshop facilitator, problem poser and critical analyzer rather than being authoritarian. I hope that I was viewed by the participating teachers as a colleague rather than an 'expert'. In addition, since CP believes that knowledge is contested, participants were given opportunities to think individually and work collaboratively with their colleagues in order to reflect and ponder on what was presented to them. Consequently, the workshop included more group activities than individual activities. Throughout the various workshop tasks, I remained aware of my hope that CP would give teachers new ways to conduct ELT. However, at the same time, I kept my mind open to the notion that CP may not be compatible with how teachers' view their

responsibilities and their students' needs. Therefore, I remained open to teachers' comments, concerns and resistance.

## **4.9 Methods of data collection**

Although most research literature believes that critical researchers should utilize qualitative data (Norton, 2000; Tamly, 2010), others believe that they could apply a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2013; Mackenzie & Knip, 2006) because it provides them with opportunities to develop “more complete and full portraits of our social world through the use of multiple perspectives and lenses” (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 275, as cited in Mackenzie & Knip, 2006). Therefore, the current study implements a mixed methods approach which involves "a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5) in order to get a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. Therefore, the four research questions were answered using more than one method. Figure 4.2 summarizes the stages of collecting data for this study and the methods used to answer the four research questions.

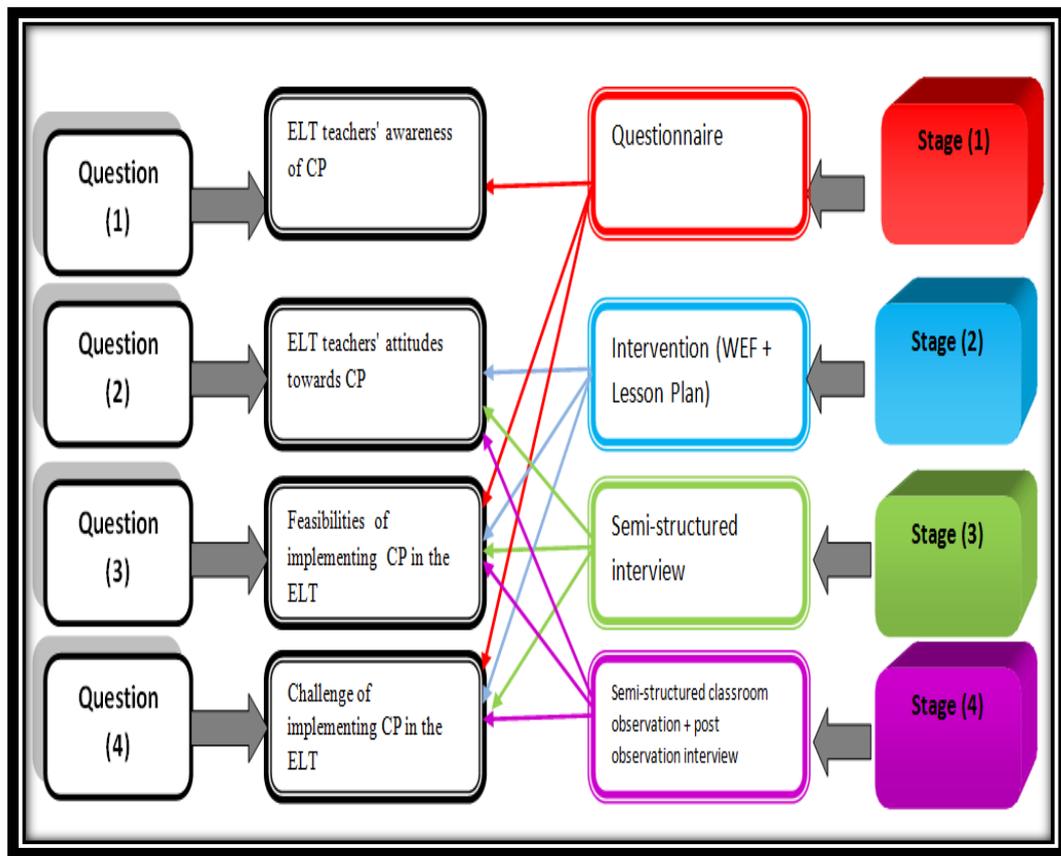


Figure 4.2 Research four stages

In what follows, I elucidate in detail how each data collection tool was applied, providing the rationale behind the decisions made throughout the process of designing and administrating them.

### 4.9.1 Stage one: questionnaire

A questionnaire can be defined as "any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers" (Brown, 2001, p. 6). A questionnaire approach is used in this

study because it is considered to be an adequate means to survey 'abstract notions' (in this study, teachers' awareness of CP) which cannot be observed directly (Wagner, 2010). It gives researchers the opportunity to operationalize these abstract notions and measure them in order to get information about the participants' knowledge, awareness, attitude, beliefs etc. (ibid).

According to Cohen et al. (2011), there are different types of questions that the researcher can include in their questionnaire, such as multiple choice questions, rating scales, constant sum questions and open-ended questions. In this study's questionnaire, I utilized rating scales where participants responded using a five-point Likert scale (from totally agree to totally disagree) to the statement that is closest to their opinions. Rating scale questions are used in this study because "they combine the opportunity for a flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.387). Furthermore, they are easier to collect and analyse (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2013). Nonetheless, they also have some disadvantages, including the tendency for participants to cluster their responses around one scale (Cohen et al., 2011). In addition, the participants sometimes get tired or bored and then tend to respond inaccurately, which is called in the literature the 'fatigue effect' (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p.9). This was avoided through piloting the questionnaire to ensure that it generated a range of responses (see section 4.8.1.1). In addition, the layout of the questionnaire was kept

simple by dividing it into sections rather than having a whole set of questions in sequence, using the same Likert scale in all sections. Respondents were asked to read the statement, read the responses, make a mark and move on to the next question (Dillman et al, 1999 as cited in Cohen et al., 2011).

The second disadvantage of using rating scale questions is that for the sake of clarity, the questions are made simple and straightforward, which may result in superficial data and prevent in-depth investigation of respondents' perspectives (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). This is overcome by including open-ended questions in the last section of the study's questionnaire, in which ELT teachers were asked about their awareness of CP and the challenges and the potentialities of implementing it in the ELT in Oman. Although responses to open-ended questions might be low and difficult to analyse, they provide useful information for exploration and explanation (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2013) and "more accurately reflect what the respondent wants to say" (Nunan, 1992, p.143).

Thus, the final version of the questionnaire (Appendix 6) included an introduction, in which the ELT teachers were given the overall purpose of the questionnaire, reminding them of their right to withdraw from the study and assuring them about the confidentiality of the study. Part one included questions on background, such as education level, gender, major (subjects) and years of experience in the ELT realm overall and in Oman.

This was followed by part two, which was divided into six sections (Table 4.3) corresponding to the literature discussed in Chapter 3. As mentioned previously, a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from "totally agree" to "totally disagree" has been adapted rather than a six- or seven-point scale, which would make it "more difficult for participants to respond in that they might have difficulty differentiating between the different degrees of agreement and disagreement" (Wagner, 2010, p.27). The third part contained open-ended questions where ELT teachers were asked about their awareness of CP, its potentialities and the challenges to its implementation in Oman. At the end of the questionnaire, a section was specified to ask respondents if they would like to attend a workshop on CP and to provide their contact details if they were willing. The rationale of having this section was to check whether teachers were willing or resistant to the idea of using CP in the ELT realm, and to make the process of attending the workshop voluntary rather than imposing attendance on them through the administration of the ELCs.

Sections	Titles	Number of items
First Section	ELT aim	11
Second Section	ELT materials	10
Third Section	ELT Teaching methods	11
Fourth Section	ELT Assessments	10
Fifth Section	Teachers' Role in ELT	10
Sixth Section	Students' Role in ELT	11

Table 4.3 Sections of part 2 of the questionnaire

#### **4.9.1.1 Preparing the questionnaire for implementation**

The first step within this stage was ensuring the validity of the questionnaire which refers to "the degree to which it measures what it is supposed to measure" (Pallant, 2007, p.7). Thus, to assure face or content validity, items in the questionnaire were generated from various sources, including reviewing previous literature. Thus, this study benefited from the literature discussed in Chapter 3, especially those studies that target ELT teachers' attitudes towards CP (Garcia-Gonzalez, 2000; Baladi, 2007; Noroozi & Soozandehfar, 2011; Aliakbari and Allahmoradi, 2012). In addition, to ensure its content validity, the initial version of the questionnaire was revised by two research experts and modified on the basis of their feedback. In addition, with the belief that I was too close to the questionnaire, so I "cannot see the problems that might be so obvious to someone who has not spent many hours researching and developing [it]" (Wagner, 2010, p.29), the questionnaire was also given to four PhD students who were studying at Exeter University, and four experienced ELT teachers who had been working in Oman for more than seven years. The feedback from all these people was considered in terms of wording, layout and content.

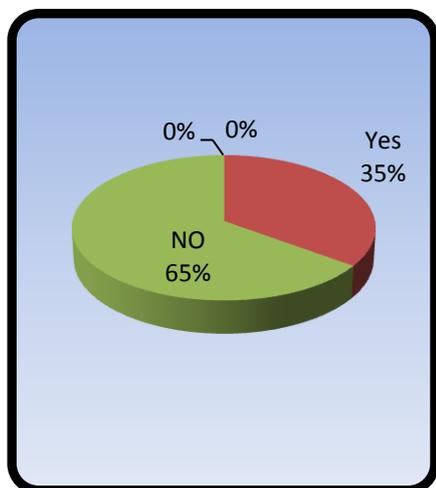
The second step within this stage was piloting the questionnaire. There are various reasons to pilot a questionnaire, including identifying the clarity of the items and omitting or revising certain items if necessary. In addition,

piloting provides information about the overall layout of the questionnaire and the clarity of the instructions (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, it is also necessary to pilot it on a sample of people who are representative or similar to the target sample for whom the instrument has been designed (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Thus, the questionnaire was piloted on twenty ELT teachers who did not participate in the actual questionnaire study. Based on Wallace (1998, p. 133), the respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire and to answer the following questions:

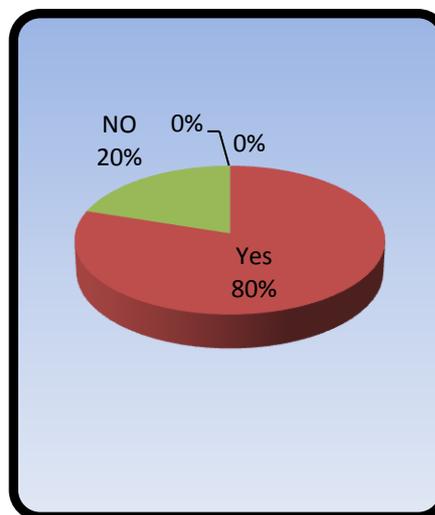
1. How long did the questionnaire take to complete?
2. Were the instructions clear?
3. Were any of the questions ambiguous, irrelevant, patronising or irritating? If so, will you say which and why?
4. Was the layout of the questionnaire clear/attractive?
5. Any comments?

The respondents indicated the clarity of the questionnaire items, and a small number of items were revised and others were omitted or paraphrased based on their feedback. In addition, this piloting study revealed how much time the participants needed to complete the questionnaire. Based on the responses to the pilot questionnaire, it was decided that the questionnaire needed 15-20 minutes to be completed. Furthermore, the results of the piloting study were informative in terms of giving an overall picture of teachers' knowledge of CP and their willingness to attend the workshop. Figures 4.3 and 4.4, below, indicate that the majority of the teachers were not aware of CP and they expressed their

willingness to attend the CP workshop, which confirmed for me the need to conduct the actual study.



*Figure 4.3 Teachers' responses of the question 'Have you heard of CP?'*



*Figure 4.4 Teachers' responses of the question 'Would you like attend a workshop on CP?'*

#### 4.9.1.2 Questionnaire sample

Most applied linguistics researchers use non-probability sampling or convenience sampling (Wagner, 2010; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, Brown, 2014), which "involves surveying individuals who are readily available and the researcher has access to" (Wagner, 2010, p.25). Consequently, this study followed a convenience sampling approach, which depends on geographical and time availability and easy accessibility to the researcher. Table 4.4 illustrates the exact number of participants from the four institutions:

Institutions	Total number of ELT teachers	Number of Questionnaire respondents	Percentage
Institution 1	86	41	48%
Institution 2	130	50	39%
Institution 3	110	60	55%
Institution 4	80	33	41%
Total	406	178	44%

Table 4.4 *Number of all teachers and participants in the four institutions*

### **Defining the questionnaire participants**

The ELT teachers in these four institutions who responded to the questionnaires were of various nationalities, including many Indians (31.5%), some Filipinos (10%), few Pakistanis, few Arabs (Omanis, Jordanians, Tunisians and Sudanese) and very few Canadians, Americans, British, Australians, South Africans and Europeans. It is worth mentioning that the small number of Omani ELT teachers reflects the situation in many HE institutions. The majority of the participants (73.6%) were Master's degree holders. However, some held Bachelors' degrees (only NESTs) and others had doctorates. Table 4.5 details participants' education level.

Education level	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor	17	10.1
Master	131	73.6
Doctorate	20	11.2
Missing data	10	5.6
Total	178	100

*Table 4.5 Participants' Education Level*

Both male and female teachers participated in the questionnaire, with percentages of 46% and 54% respectively. The majority of the teachers who participated in the questionnaire had twenty years' experience or less (32%) in the ELT realm in general, while 30% had more than twenty years' experience. With regard to their experience in the ELT system in Oman, the data showed that their experiences varied from less than one year to more than twenty years. Table 4.6 shows participants' years of experience in Oman.

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percent
Less than one year	45	25.3
More than five years	50	28.1
More than ten years	40	22.5
More than twenty years	38	21.3
Missing	5	2.8
Total	178	100

*Table 4.6 Participants' experience in Oman*

### **4.9.1.3 Administrating the questionnaire**

According to Muijs (2004), there are various ways to administer questionnaires, such as pencil and paper questionnaires, telephone interviews, face-to-face, postal, online and e-mail questionnaires. In this study, a pencil and paper questionnaire form was used for several reasons. First, ELT teachers in this context are overloaded with a lot of activities: thus filling in an online questionnaire or sending it by email might create more work for them, which might result in them not filling in the questionnaire or lead to a low response rate. Second, teachers in my context are accustomed to pencil and paper questionnaires, since they might have completed questionnaires for other studies. Third, pencil and paper questionnaires give teachers more time to think about their responses compared to telephone or face-to-face questionnaires.

I administered the questionnaire myself, which brought a lot of advantages, such as ensuring a good response rate, the ability to give immediate clarification to questions and enquiries asked by the respondents and making sure that all questions were answered (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010; Punch, 2014). Nonetheless, administering questionnaires personally has some disadvantages, which I needed to be aware of so that I could minimize them. For instance, the presence of the researcher may create "a sense of compulsion, where respondents feel uncomfortable about completing the questionnaire" (Cohen et al., 2011,

p.404). This was overcome by reminding the respondents that their participation was voluntary and they could quit if they wanted to. The other disadvantage of the presence of the researcher is the fact that self-administering of the questionnaire was time-consuming and resulted in expanding the frame time of the data collection phases (ibid). However, I was conscious of this and allowed four weeks to collect data, which was considered to be an adequate time frame.

#### **4.9.2 Stage two: tasks completed by teachers at the workshop (lesson plans and the workshop evaluation form)**

The CP workshop was conducted at four colleges of technology, as this was arguably one of the most effective ways to raise teachers' awareness of CP (Crookes, 2010; Baladi, 2007). Across all colleges, a total of 160 teachers attended. Table 3.8 shows the distribution of teachers who attended across the four institutions.

Institutions	Number of ELT teachers who attended the workshop
Institution 1	25
Institution 2	53

Institution 3	44
Institution 4	38
Total	160

Table 4.7 Number of ELT teachers who attended the workshop in the four institutions

The last task in the workshop asked teachers to work in groups and design a lesson plan using CP tenets introduced to them in the workshop (see Appendix 7 for an example of a lesson plan). The total number of these lesson plans was 25. In addition, teachers were also asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of the workshop. The rationale behind this was to provide a safe space for teachers who attended to respond openly and honestly regarding their attitudes towards attending a workshop on CP. This form contained two sections. The first section was closed-ended and asked teachers about their general views of the workshop. The second section contained four open-ended questions related to teachers' willingness to implement CP and which of the premises introduced were most or least applicable from their perspectives (see Appendix 8 for a copy of the evaluation form). The total number of these evaluation forms completed was 102. These lesson plans and evaluation forms were collected at the end of the workshop and were used during the analysis, as they provided valuable information regarding teachers' awareness and attitudes towards CP. They also presented teachers' perspectives about the potentialities and challenges of incorporating some of the CP tenets.

### **4.9.3 Stage three: Interview**

Interviews are considered to be one of the powerful data collection tools. This is because they "give voice to common people, allowing them to freely present their life situations in their own words, and open for a close personal interaction between the researchers and their subjects" (Kvale, 2006, p.481). In this study, interviews were used to trace teachers' perspectives of CP after the intervention and tackle the potentialities and constraints in applying CP at the ELT. In this study, interviewing is seen as "not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409). In other words, the interview has been seen as a social endeavour, not merely a data collection tool. Therefore, at the beginning, I considered using unstructured interviews, especially given that the interviewees were teachers in a context where they had been marginalized and their voice was lost. Using unstructured interviews was seen to be adequate in enabling self disclosure and minimizing the interviewer's power. However, unstructured interviews need to be handled by an experienced researcher and are not appropriate for novice researchers like me, and might have led me to ask inappropriate questions or end up having data which was irrelevant to the research study. Therefore, a decision was made to use a semi-structured interview approach (Appendix 9) because of its advantages in terms of giving the interviewees a degree of power and control over the course of the interview and giving the interviewer a great

deal of flexibility (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). In addition, this approach allows the researcher to explore issues in depth by using probes and prompts to encourage respondents to be engaged in what Kvale (2006) called 'actively confronting interview' where the aim of the interview was not to reach agreement between the researcher and the respondents, but rather to engage ELT teachers in reflectivity and embolden them to uncover their assumptions and common sense. In other words, the interview was seen as "a place for different competing perspectives to emerge: allowing for a multiplicity of competing stories, opening up for conflict and provoking the interviewees to come forth with contrasting perspectives on the topic of study" (ibid, p.488) that allows the ELT teachers to accept or resist the ideas proposed by the researchers and encourage them to be sceptical about the governed issues in the ELT realm in Oman. Thus, throughout the interview process, teachers were encouraged to be involved in active engagement through thinking, reacting, analyzing, interpreting, considering, reflecting and prioritising (Wajnryb, 1992).

#### **4.9.3.1 Piloting the interview**

It is very important to pilot the interview, since this provides the researcher with very useful information with regard to whether the questions generate the types of data required to answer the research questions and to eliminate any ambiguous or confusing questions (Nunan, 1992). In

addition, piloting provides valuable information to ensure that the time scheduled for each interview is sufficient (Wagner, 2010). In brief, piloting the interview is an essential part of its preparation stage and "the quality of the preparation will influence the quality of the data" (Punch, 2014, p.150). Having this in mind, a pilot interview was conducted with two Omani PhD students who were studying at Exeter University and who had also worked as ELT teachers at tertiary level in Oman. The rationale behind choosing these two PhD candidates was the fact that they were knowledgeable about the research methodology and they could provide valuable feedback on how to improve the interview techniques. In addition, they had knowledge about CP, which could have enabled them to indicate areas for improvement. In addition, having worked in the same context as the participants of the study, they were in a position to initiate some ideas that had not been taken into account. The benefits and lessons from the pilot interviews could be summarised as follows:

- I gained first-hand experience in arranging and conducting interviews
- They highlighted the necessity of conducting the interview in a friendly and relaxing manner through choosing a suitable place and starting the interviews with easy 'lead-in' questions, which could help in breaking the ice and building the interviewee's confidence in him/herself and in me as a researcher (Wallace, 1998).

- I discovered the importance of having two recording devices to ensure the clarity of the interview recordings and protection of the data.
- I realized the necessity of beginning the transcription process during the data collection stage and not leaving it until the end of the fieldwork (Burns, 2010). This is because leaving everything to the end of the interview schedule would have been overwhelming.

#### **4.9.3.2 Interview participants**

The last section in the WEF asked teachers if they would be willing to participate in the interview stage of the study. They were asked to provide their contact details if they were interested (see Appendix 8). A total of 36 respondents agreed to be interviewed. There were a number of issues that I considered in order to decide on which interview volunteers to select. The first issue related to the sample size of the interview participants. Although the decision about the sample size is not a straightforward one, considerations about time, cost and availability were relevant in such decision (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, after thinking about the kind of data I wanted to gather to answer research questions and time available to conduct the interviews, I decided that a total number of twenty interviewees would be appropriate. The second issue was that I tried to involve teachers from the four institutions. Table 4.8 shows the number of the participants from each institutions.

Institutions	Number of interviewed teachers
Institution 1	4
Institution 2	6
Institution 3	5
Institution 4	5
Total	20

Table 4.8 Teachers' interview by institution

Third, the Omani volunteers outnumbered the expatriates despite the fact that the latter formed the majority of teachers in the four institutions. The unwillingness of expatriate teachers to be involved in the interview stage might be that they felt that they were outsiders and CP should be initiated by Omanis as I will explain in Chapter Five. Therefore, I decided to take half of the participants to be Omanis and half were expatriates who came from different nationalities. Table 4.7 provides background information about the interview participants including their nationalities, educational qualifications and teaching experience in ELT in general and in Oman in particular.

pseudonyms	Gender	Nationality	Qualification	Years of Experience in the ELT	Years of Experience in the college	Comments
Joseph	M	Indian	PhD in Applied linguistics	25 years	17 years	
David	M	Canadian	MA in Applied linguistics	27 years	3 years	
Nasra	F	Omani	MA in TESOL	5 years	5 years	
Salima	F	Omani	MA in TESOL	5 years	2 years	She also participated in the observation phase
Fatma	F	Omani	MA in TESOL	2 years	2 years	
Don	M	Filipino	MA in Applied linguistics	6 years	1 year	
Basma	F	Omani	MA in TESOL	4 years	4 years	She also participated in the observation phase
Ahmed	M	Omani	MA in TESOL	15 years	3 years	
Linda	F	Indian	PhD in TESOL	16 years	1 year	
Saif	M	Omani	MA in TESOL	6 years	2 years	
Jack	M	Filipino	PhD in Educational management	10 years	1 year	
Sofia	F	Armenian	PhD in Applied linguistics	28 years	1 year	
Amal	F	Omani	MA in TESOL	6 years	2 years	
Emran	M	Pakistani	MA in English literature	20 years	3 years	
Suzan	F	Indian	MA in TESOL	21 years	1 year	She also participated in the

							observation phase
Nasser	M	Omani	MA TESOL	in	8 years	2 years	
Nancy	F	Filipino	PhD Applied linguistics	in	21 years	3 years	She also participated in the observation phase
Sara	F	Indian	MA TESOL	in	13 years	6 years	
Azza	F	Omani	MA TESOL	in	6 years	4 years	
Aysha	F	Omani	MA TESOL	in	11 years	9 years	

Table 4.9 Interview Participants

#### 4.9.4 Stage four: classroom observation

Observation is one of the most widely used instruments to collect data, especially in AR methodology, since the latter stresses the importance of "investigation of *actual* practices" (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013, p.20, emphasis in the original). In addition, observation gives the researcher an opportunity to collect 'live' data from natural settings, which makes it more authentic than making inferential meanings from conducting interviews or questionnaires (Flick, 2014; Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Cohen et al., 2011). This is to say that data obtained from observation is "more detailed and more direct than data from any other source" (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p.24). In addition, using observation as a data collection tool would complement the data collected from both the questionnaires and the interviews, which enriched the findings of the study. This is because it is

believed that "any tool for data-gathering provides only one picture of the social world, and matches and mismatches between data gathered by different techniques help to enrich understanding of what is going on" (ibid, p.25). Since one of the purposes of this study is to encourage teachers to look critically at their practice, observation would give such an opportunity by confronting them with questions such as "why have you done this?" This aims to "raise awareness of classroom realities and a reservoir of information and experience that will serve them in discussing and reflecting on the classroom" (Wajnryb, 1992, p.8).

There are three types of observation. First, in structured observation, observation categories are previously determined. Second, semi-structured observation is less predetermined than structured observation. Third, in unstructured observation, the observation is conducted without determining what to observe (Simpson & Tuson, 2003). Given the complexity of the classroom, it would be inadequate to use structured observation. In addition, unstructured observation might be extremely challenging in terms of data analysis. Thus, I utilised a semi-structured observation where categories and sub-categories were designed in advance but at the same time there was a column where the observer could add comments corresponding to each category. This type of observation is considered to be flexible and "allows the observer to consider the context of the behaviours, their sequences [and] their

meanings" (ibid, p.45). In addition, it allows recording of both what happened in the classroom and how.

#### **4.9.4.1 Preparing the observation for implementation**

Before implementing the observation, a lot of decisions needed to be made, such as who and what to observe, how many classes need to be observed per teacher and what observation and recording techniques would be suitable.

Thus, having looked at the research purpose and questions, considered the time, efforts and resources required and established the availability and accessibility factors, the following important decisions were made:

- With regard to who and how many teachers to observe, Burns (2010) maintains that the researcher needs a range of people who would help her to answer the research questions. In this study, during the interviews, teachers were asked if they would be willing to be observed by the researcher. Four teachers were willing and accordingly they were all observed in two lessons each (Table 4.8: Classroom observations schedule). The lessons observed were parts of the teachers' syllabus; nonetheless, teachers modified them to suit CP tenets according to the understanding they got from the two study interventions. This is to say that teachers taught the same topic in their syllabus but they incorporated some of CP

tenets. During this phase, teachers contacted me to ask for clarification about issues related to CP and how CP tenets could fit in with the materials they were currently using in the suggested textbook.

Name (pseudonym)	Observation	Observation date	Skills	Number of learners
<b>Salima</b>	Observation 1	5/10/2014	Writing	25
	Observation 2	8/10/2014	Writing	26
<b>Basma</b>	Observation 1	12/10/2014	Reading	29
	Observation 2	15/10/2014	Reading	28
<b>Suzan</b>	Observation 1	12/10/2014	Reading	30
	Observation 2	15/10/2014	Writing	29
<b>Nancy</b>	Observation 1	20/10/2014	Writing	28
	Observation 2	23/10/2014	Reading	26

*Table 4.10 Classroom Observation Schedule*

- With regard to when to observe, I decided to conduct the observation at the beginning of October 2014. By this time, teachers had spent about one month with their students, which I assumed would be sufficient time for both teachers and students to develop rapport with each other, which could have contributed to

more in-depth observation. Prior to conducting each observation, I reminded the teacher of the purpose of the observation and we discussed the aim of the lesson, so I would be equipped with more knowledge about where the teacher was heading to.

- As regards what to observe, I designed an observation task (Refer to Appendix 10: the semi structured observation form), which can be defined as "a focused activity to work on while observing a lesson in progress. It focuses on one or a small number of aspects of teaching and learning and require the observer to collect data or information from the actual lesson" (Wajnryb, 1992, p.7). Accordingly, designing an observation task helps the researcher in two ways. First, it limits the scope of what to observe, especially in a complex context such as an ELT classroom, where there is a lot going on. The observation task gives the observer an opportunity to focus on particular aspects. Second, the observation task is considered to be means to prevent the observer from making an "on-the-spot evaluation during the lesson" (ibid, p.8). Thus, a semi-structured observation form was designed using the literature review in Chapter Three, the intervention, and observation tasks adapted from Wajnryb (1992), including tasks on aim, learners as cultural beings (p.41), classroom power (p.120), and materials and resources (p.128). In order to assess the preliminary validation of the semi-structured observation form, I gathered feedback on the

items included from my supervisors, which resulted in the deletion of some repetitive items and stressing the necessity of having a space towards the end to add any further comments about the observed lesson.

- Video recording the observed classroom was another decision made in this study. The rationale behind this choice was its advantage in capturing verbal and non-verbal parts of the lesson exactly as they happened in the class, such as "gestures, facial expression, body movement and the general look and feel of the classroom" (Burns, 2010, p.70). In addition, taking notes during the lesson can cause the observer to miss some important events that could enrich the study (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Thus, video recording was used in this study to complement the observer's notes. However, video recording can cause distractions to the teachers and students because of the recording equipment, which results in them not acting and speaking normally. This was overcome by observing each teacher twice, which hopefully helped to familiarize the participants with the presence of recording equipment.
- Deciding on the procedure of the observation, all observations conducted in this study consisted of the three phases: before the observation, during the observation and after the observation

(Wajnryb, 1992). Figure 4.5 summarizes the types of activities included in each phase.

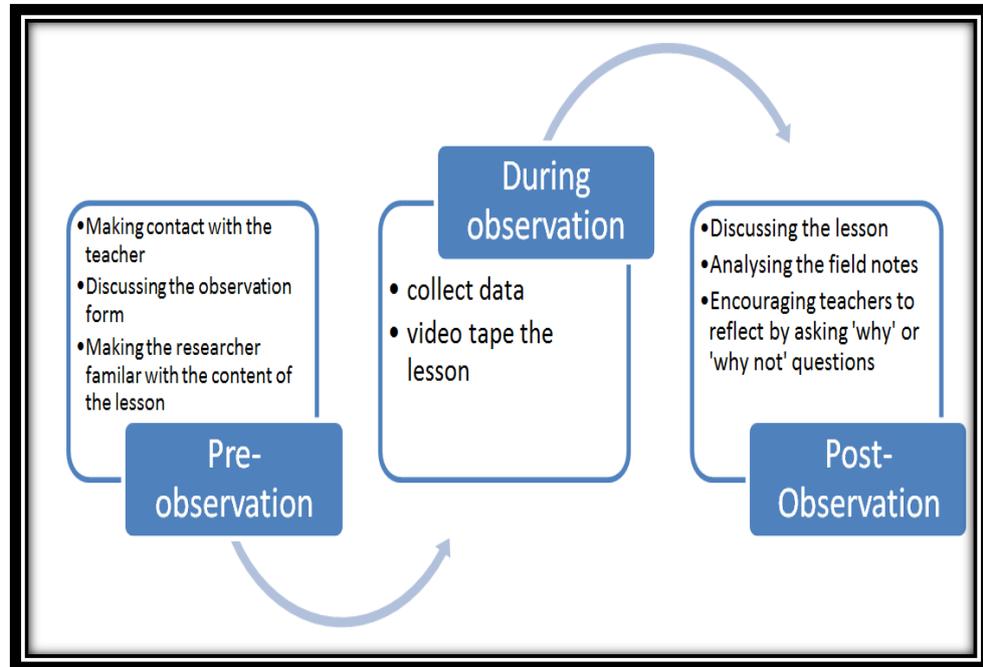


Figure 4.5 Procedure of conducting the observation

- The **post-observation interview** was conducted after each classroom observation. The questions were asked in a way that encouraged teachers to reflect and confront hidden assumptions. In other words, teachers were encouraged to be involved in active engagement through thinking, reacting, analyzing, interpreting, considering, and reflecting (ibid) (refer to Appendix 11: the post observation interview protocol). The post observation interviews lasted 10-15 minutes and were transcribed (refer to Appendix 12). The teachers were assured that the aim of the observations was to

observe the possibilities for implementing CP in ELT in Oman and I had no intention to evaluate or judge their teaching.

## **4.10 Constraints on data collection**

There were certain constraints throughout the data collection process that I need to highlight. First, the sample for both the interviews and observations was made up of volunteers. Using purposive sampling, in which the researcher selects individuals "based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's question" (Teddlie & Tu, 2007, p.77), was not utilised in this study since I did not aim to achieve representativeness or comparability (ibid). I felt that using a voluntary sample, which involves drawing a sample that is easy to access and willing to participate, was more appropriate. This is because this study aimed to encourage teachers to problematize the givens and take a critical stance towards teaching. Thus, teachers' willingness to participate became an important factor when investigating their perceptions of CP and the extent to which they saw it as feasible in ELT in the four colleges. Although such a voluntary sampling strategy might be problematic, it still allowed me to construct a rich description of teachers' views of CP, its feasibilities and challenges.

Second, since in this AR I had a dual role, as both researcher and implementer of the workshop, teachers' responses to WEFs and interviews could be affected by their desire to please me. In an attempt to

overcome such issues, I reminded teachers that their honest feedback would benefit me more in exploring the issues related to CP. I listened carefully to their answers and consistently asked them clarifying questions, so I could explore their perceptions in depth.

Third, using classroom observation as a tool in this study might raise some questions. This is because it was hard to tell whether that teachers' usage of some tenets of CP during their lessons was a result of the study's interventions or prior knowledge that they had about teaching. This was overcome by interviewing the observed teachers and discussing with them the effects of the interventions on their teaching.

Finally, despite my encouragement for teachers to express themselves and my assurance of the confidentiality and anonymity of the research, two teachers asked me to stop recording when they told me of certain incidents that related of how teachers were treated by the managerial system in their college. Although such data could have enriched my study, I respected their desire and did not record them when they narrated such incidents.

## **4.11 Data analysis**

### **4.11.1 Analyzing the questionnaire**

With regard to the closed-ended questions and open questions one and five, they were entered into the SPSS program after they had been

numbered and coded using a nominal scale for part one of the questionnaire and ordinal scale for the subsections in part two and open questions one and four. Burns (2010) states that "in AR, we are much more likely to be using descriptive statistics than complex inferential measures, statistical packages or correlation procedures" (p.121). Therefore, in this study, descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, were utilized. This is because descriptive statistics summarize quantitative data neatly and easily (Dornyei, 2007). Nonetheless, the rest of the open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively, as I will elucidate in the coming section.

#### **4.11.2 Analyzing qualitative data (the open ended questions, interviews, gathered documents, observation and post-observation interviews)**

The open-ended questions (2, 3 and 4), interviews, gathered documents, and observation and post-observation interviews were analyzed qualitatively. Looking at the literature, there are no quick fix rules to analyse qualitative data. This is to say that "there is no one single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data: how one does it should abide by the issue of fitness for purpose" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.573). Nonetheless, there is an agreement that the aim of qualitative analysis is to reach the richest possible data (Holliday, 2010). Having said

this, I benefited from the work of Burns (2010) in analysing the qualitative data obtained from the abovementioned research methods. The steps are summarized in Figure 4.6.



Figure 4.6 Framework analyses of the qualitative data

#### 4.11.2.1 Assembling the data

This step involved assembling the data, which comprised:

- 34 questionnaires (The total number of questionnaire where teachers answered the open-ended questions)
- 20 transcribed teacher interviews
- 25 lesson plans

- 102 WEFs
- 8 classroom observation forms with my handwritten notes and comments (Appendix 13)
- 8 transcribed post lesson interviews

At this stage, electronic handling of the data became necessary. For the interviews and post-lesson observation interviews, using Microsoft Word, a file was opened for each of them and the interviewees and observed teachers were given pseudonyms. Then all the interviews were transcribed (refer to Appendix 14 and Appendix 12). All the 34 questionnaires were numbered from 1 to 34 and then the responses to questions related to previous implementation of CP, potentialities and challenges were typed in one document. Regarding the WEFs, all 102 forms were numbered and the teachers' responses were organized in one document using the same questions that appeared in the WEF, namely: teachers' willingness, the most applicable tenet(s) of CP, the least applicable tenet(s) of CP and other comments. With regards to lesson plans, they were summarized using a table with four columns that summed up the topic of the lesson plans, skills, aims and procedures (refer to Appendix 15). According to Brown (2014), a matrix, which refers to "a table, grid or array using display data in two dimensions" (p.94), is very useful for managing qualitative data. Then, I printed all files created in Microsoft Word (six folders: open ended questions, interviews, classroom observations, post-observation interviews, lesson plans, WEFs). Within this step, I continued reviewing the research questions and going through the transcribed data, looking for broad patterns, ideas or trends that seemed to answer the research

questions. This is because I wanted to get a sense of the data holistically before breaking it into codes. Using different coloured highlighters, I wrote in the margins the initial thoughts that would help me in the preliminary process of exploring the data. Then all the documents were imported to Nvivo10 (Figure 4.7) to start the coding stage as I will explain in the next section.

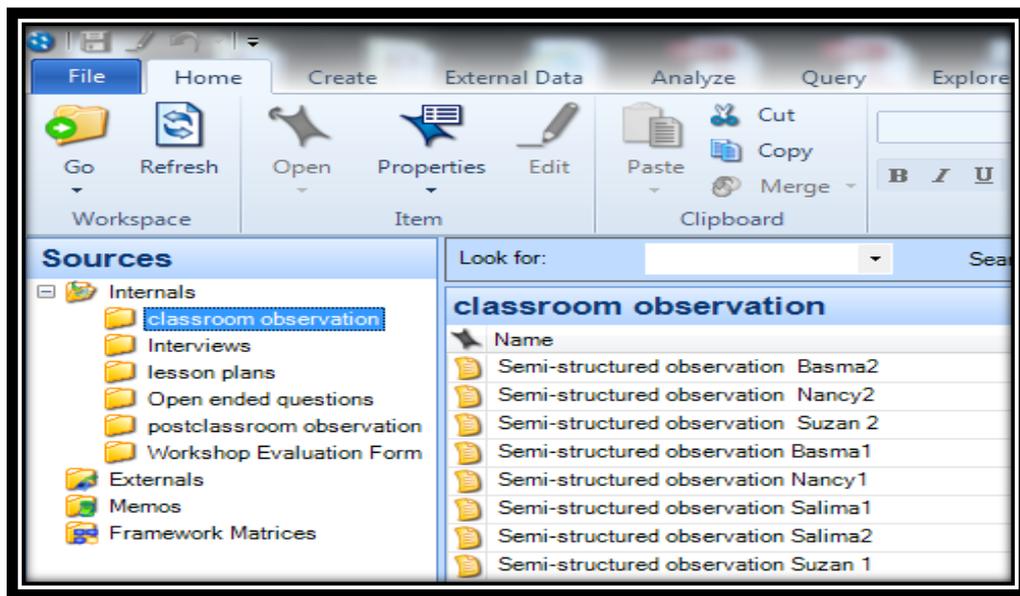


Figure 4.7 Importing documents to Nvivo10

#### 4.11.2.2 Coding the Data

According to Punch (2014), coding refers to the process of "putting tags, names or labels against pieces of the data" (p.180). It involves looking closely at all the transcripts obtained from the various research tools (interviews, open-ended questionnaires, gathered documents (WEFs and Lesson plans), classroom observation sheets and post-observation

interviews). I constructed the analysis of the qualitative data inductively through building categories and themes from the bottom up (Creswell, 2013). This is to say that I did not start with predefined categories or themes, but rather “allow[ed] them to emerge from the data” (Radnor, 2002, p. 70). Therefore, I started with **descriptive codes** which involved “little or no reference beyond the piece of data” (Punch, 2014, p.173) which were essential to get a feeling of the data. Then, I used these descriptive codes to look for **themes**, which refer to “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (Creswell, 2013, p.186). This entailed that I went back and forth between the data sources through careful examination of the emerging themes, reviewing them, reflecting and relating them to my research aims and questions. This sometimes involved a return to manual coding as I felt that NVivo separated me from my data and prevented total engagement with the developing themes (Ryan, 2006; Creswell, 2013). I continued the process by reviewing the themes, collapsing some and renaming others, until I reached a comprehensive set of themes across different study tools. The codes were chosen based on their recurrence and relevance to the research questions (Refer to Appendix 16).

#### **4.11.2.3 Comparing the data**

After completing the coding, I compared categories or patterns across different sets of data. A guiding principle that leads this stage was to not

use the data obtained from the various tools "to prove anything, but to generate ideas which are sufficient to make us think again about what is going on the world" (Holliday, 2010, pp.101-102). This means that I did not use data to state facts and truths, but rather to unsettle the realities, based on the critical and postmodernism framework. In other words, the aim of this approach was to use "disruptive devices in the text to unsettle conventional notions of the real" (Lather, 2014, p.50). For instance, one of the concurrent themes related to teachers' attitude towards CP is how to define CP. Table 4.9 shows one of the definitions, which is questioning dominant dogma. Comparing the data from various tools indicates that participants perceive CP as a way to challenge students' assumptions; yet the content of the lesson plans and the classroom observations reveal that teachers did not implement this definition in their practice. This means that there is a gap between what teachers said and how they performed inside the classroom. Such inconsistency in the data emboldened me to be more reflective and critically engaged with the data analysis such that contradictions and complexities were not "swept under the rug" (Clarke & Robertson 2001, p. 773).

Code	Data obtained from interview	Data obtained from the WEF	Data obtained from the analysis of lesson plan	Data obtained from the classroom observation
<b>Questioning Dominant Dogmas</b>	"give our students space to think and question things around them" Amal's interview	"Encourage learners to go beyond the surface meaning and to think out of the box" (WEF 86)	Arranged marriage lesson Teachers planned to ask questions about their opinions and the reason behind their opinions.	"Ask questions about their experience of watching a lot of advertisements in the media and the effects of these advertisements, the teacher did not ask "why" and "why not" questions. She did not encourage students to question their assumptions; nor did she relate the topic to wider socio-political issues" (Classroom observation form 5: Basma's lesson)

Table 4.11 Example of Comparing Code across Data Tools

#### 4.11.2.4 Building meanings and interpretations

According to Flick (2014), "interpretations is the core activity of qualitative data analysis for understanding or explaining what is the data-weather explicitly mentioned or implicitly there to be elaborated" (p.375). Hence, at this stage, I thought deeply about what the data were saying by going beyond coding and reflecting beyond the immediate surface details. This step entailed collecting all themes and subthemes, with all extracts of data related to them, in a separate file in Microsoft Word in order to build meaning, make connections and develop explanations. This started at a

descriptive level, where I described the themes and subthemes, and then I moved to the interpretive level, where I related them to the broader socio-political contexts of the study and previous literature (Patton, 2002). However, since this study is based on the critical theory and postmodernism paradigms, I needed to uncover the invisible artefacts of power and ideologies (Kincheloe, 2008b) and represented them in the interpretation of the study. This also entailed examining silences and what is not said (Creswell, 2013, p.186). However, I am aware that by doing this, there is a danger of further marginalization of ELT teachers by representing them as victims or in need of being promoted (Leki, 2003). These issues necessitated that I engaged in constant reflexivity and sensitivity (Royal, 2010).

#### **4.11.2.5 Reporting the outcomes**

This final stage involves thinking about how to present the findings of the study. It is "the telling of a story" (Ryan, 2006, p.103) in a coherent way that readers are able to follow. This involved selecting the most relevant and important parts of the story, as I could not present every single finding. The guiding principles for such a selection process were looking to my research questions and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that I utilized in this study. It also involved selecting the methods of organizing and presenting the analysis. Based on Cohen et al. (2011), there are various ways to do this, including by people, instruments, themes (issues)

or research questions. I decided to present data based on research questions, such that all themes obtained from various data instruments and mentioned by different people were integrated "to provide a collective answer to a research question" (ibid, p.552). This helps in exploring the teachers' awareness, attitudes towards CP, its potentialities and challenges easily and clearly.

Although the above-mentioned stages are presented in linear form, in reality they overlapped, which required me to move repeatedly between stages in order to reveal the constantly changing realities. Therefore, questions and tensions in the data analysis are presented and left for the readers to reach their own understanding, reflecting the critical and postmodernist paradigms upon which this study is based.

## **4.12 Strategies for ensuring validity**

It is essential to stress the fact that "without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility" (Morse et al, 2008, p.14). Consequently, it is salient to ensure the rigour of the data, minimize the influence of the researcher's personal bias and protect it from the researcher's enthusiasm (Lather, 1986a; Creswell, 2013). Thus, rigour was addressed in this study through various channels. First, **triangulation** was implemented to ensure the validity of this study,

including method triangulation, location triangulation, theory triangulation and perspective triangulation (Brown, 2104, p.20). With regard to **method triangulation**, data were gathered using questionnaires, interviews, collected documents, classroom observation and post-observation interviews, which assisted me to get a better comprehension and a deeper picture of the teachers' awareness of CP, their reactions towards it, their actual practice of it and their perspectives on its potentialities and challenges in the ELT system in Oman. According to Wallace (1998), one way to increase the validity of the research findings "is to have more than one source of data" (p.36). Regarding **location triangulation**, the study gathered data from four institutions located in four different geographical places in Oman. The study has also implemented **theory triangulation** using two theoretical frameworks that informed the design of it: critical theory and postmodernism. Finally, the study also applied **perspective triangulation** in that both positive and negative aspects of CP implementation are addressed in its findings. It is worth mentioning that such various types of triangulation were not utilized to confirm any truth. Rather, triangulation was used to reveal contradictions and the complexity of the phenomenon under study. This corresponds to the nature of the critical and postmodernist paradigm, wherein reaching a tidy and orderly conclusion is not a targeted aim (Royal, 2010).

Overall, such triangulation of data provides **a thick description** (Holliday, 2004) of the topic under study, which ensures its validity. Relating to thick

description is **transparency** of the researcher, showing the readers how she has reached her conclusions and the interconnectedness of the steps taken in the process of conducting research (ibid). This entails "description of how the research was carried out, from decisions regarding data collection and analysis, to how the beliefs and influence of the researcher were excavated and addressed" (Holliday, 2010, p.100). Therefore, this chapter details various steps of conducting the study and the process of designing the tools and how they were determined, conducted and analysed.

With the belief that my assumptions create the lenses through which I would perceive, analyse and interpret what is going on throughout the research process (Burns, 2010, p.25), the second criterion that ensured the study's validity is **reflexivity**. Thus, section 4.4 was specified to reveal explicitly my assumptions as a researcher, which helped me to be aware of them and equip myself with open-mindedness as to what the data might have indicated (Creswell, 2013). Relating to this, the present study attempted to reach **substantive validation**, which refers to "understanding one's own topic, understandings derived from other sources and the documentation of this process in the written study" (Creswell, 2013, p.248). Therefore, this study started with reviewing previous studies on CP and built on them via critically examining them and identifying the research gap.

In addition, two research experts have reviewed the study through its various stages, including its design, analysis, interpretations and findings. These experts play an important role in "keep[ing] the researcher honest, ask[ing] hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provid[ing] the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feeling" (Creswell, 2013, p.251). Additionally, **peer comments** were very useful to establish validity in this research. I have participated in national and international conferences where parts of this study have been presented and comments I received were used to improve the quality of the current research (Appendix 17).

Another criterion that ensures the rigor of this research is **catalytic validity**, which refers to "the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1973) terms 'conscientization,' knowing reality in order to better transform it" (Iather, 1986a, p.67). Thus, throughout the research stages, participants were confronted to challenge their assumptions. For example, the intervention (workshop) included various activities that encouraged ELT teachers to rethink their context and explore alternatives to make the ELT realm at tertiary level more engaging and critical. In a similar vein, Creswell (2013) contends that critical study should provide the participants with voice and raise awareness in order to make the reality better. Hence, the interview was designed in a way that aimed not only to obtain better data, but also

to encourage participants to reflect on their understanding, ideologies and taken-for-granted issues. That is to say that the interviews were conducted in an interactive and dialogical manner (Lather, 1986b) that helped the participants to better understand their oppressed situation, which enabled them to transform it (Cohen et al., 2011). In addition, the data analysis was conducted in a way that corresponds to the whole purpose of the research, which was to make a change in terms of encouraging the participants to problematize the givens and raising their awareness of the current situation. Throughout the process of conducting this research, 'one and only way' of producing truth was rejected, and "such a democratic process opens up a new world of understanding and cognitive and ethical growth emerging from such new experiences" (Kincheloe, 2012, p.191-192). Recognition of the political and ideological nature of the educational system in general and the ELT realm in particular will hopefully make teachers rethink their role as social agents who refuse to adapt themselves to the status quo and who think about alternatives to make changes which give them a sense of empowerment.

**Paralogical legitimation** (Lather, 1986b) is another criterion to ensure the validity of the study. This entails presenting paradoxes in the data. Hence, contradictions across the data obtained via various research methods were highlighted and interpretations for them were provided using previous literature and my own experience as a teacher in a HE institution.

To sum up, most researchers agree that the issue of validity in critical postmodernist studies is "very complex and even disarming" (ibid, p.181). I hope that by taking the above strategies and techniques, I have made my study valid and trustworthy.

## **4.13 Ethical Considerations**

"Research ethics are to do with conducting research in a moral and responsible way" (Burns, 2010, p.34). Therefore, to ensure that this research was conducted ethically, various issues were identified: 1) access and acceptance, 2) informed consent, 3) respecting individuals, and 4) confidentiality and anonymity.

### **4.13.1 Access and acceptance**

According to Punch, (2014), the initial stage in conducting research is to gain permission from the organization or the institution where the study will be conducted. Thus, before choosing colleges to participate in the research, I obtained permission from the Ministry of Manpower, which is considered to be responsible for all colleges of technology in the Sultanate. This was done through going to the Ministry of Manpower in person in April 2014 and explaining the purpose, procedures, requirements and the benefits of this research. Then, I was asked to write an official letter addressed to the Deputy Head of Technical Education in

the Ministry (Appendix 18). After gaining the Ministry's permission (Appendix 19), Deans of Colleges and Heads of Language Centres were contacted in person and the aims, methods, requirement procedures and benefits of the study were elucidated in full detail. In addition, at this stage, a research ethics form was completed and approved by the Graduate School of Education at Exeter University (Appendix 20).

### **4.13.2 Informed consent**

The second ethical principle is the informed consent of the participants, which gives them the right to withdraw or take part on a voluntary basis (Punch, 2014; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). I obtained written consent from the participants via a form on which I included a description of the nature and purpose of the research (Appendix 21). The informed consent was written in "clear and plain language" (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013, p.161), so the participants had no difficulty in understanding it. The rationale behind obtaining written consent and not verbal agreement is that the former ensures that the participants have a clear picture of the purpose and the procedure of the research to which they can refer. Furthermore, it ensures their willingness to be involved in the research (Burns, 2010).

Nonetheless, with regard to the questionnaire, the ELT teachers were informed that its purpose was to gather opinions about the current practice

of ELT in higher education in Oman, not to examine their awareness of CP. The rationale behind this is that teachers might have not heard of CP and introducing it at this stage through the questionnaire's title and purpose might have caused confusion and potentially led to low or inappropriate responses. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), the researcher can provide participants with a *general* purpose rather than a specific purpose. Nonetheless, regarding the interview and the observation, the purpose of the research was made manifest, since ELT teachers were introduced to CP through the interventions (the article and the workshop), so the assumption was made that they would have some knowledge about CP at this stage. They were also provided with clear information about the recordings to be made and how they would be stored and used.

Despite the fact that the participants signed the written consent in advance, before conducting the interview and the observation, I reminded them about the purpose of the study in case they had signed the consent form without paying due attention, and reassured them that they had unlimited right to withdraw at any time. They were also given opportunities to ask questions about any aspect of the research (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

### **4.13.3 Respecting individuals**

The third ethical consideration is respecting individuals by making sure that there will be no harm resulting from participating in the study. Harm may take different forms, such as physical, psychological or social (Bryman, 2012). Thus, I assured participants that their reactions toward the research and the data collected from them would by no means affect their jobs, especially in some cases where the participants' opinions seemed to be contradictory to the authorities' views in the context. This was done by presenting results through focusing on "a composite picture rather than an individual picture" (Creswell, 2013, p.174). During the various phases of the study, the participants were reassured that the nature of their participation was voluntary and that they could refuse to participate at any phase. In addition, it was made clear to all participants that the data gathered would be used for research purposes only.

### **4.13.4 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality requires that "private data identifying the subjects will not be reported" (Kvale, 1996, p.27). Therefore, all the data gathered was dealt with anonymously with no reference to any particular participants. This was done by assigning numbers to individuals who filled in the questionnaire and assigning aliases to individuals (Punch, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007) who had been interviewed and observed. By doing this, the

identities of the participants would remain confidential and nobody could identify them. This was made explicit to the participants before collecting data through all instruments: questionnaire, interview and observation. In addition, all data – questionnaires, field notes, printed transcripts and video recordings – were securely stored in a locked cabinet. Digital data were kept on a computer with a username and password only known by the researcher.

#### **4.14 Study limitations**

Although taking a critical perspective towards AR has its strengths, the design of the AR in this study has some limitations. First, the AR was designed and implemented by the researcher herself, which means that the changes were imposed on the participants: this can "generate frustration, dissatisfaction or a sense of alienation" (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013, p.18) for the study participants. However, this limitation has been overcome by making the intervention (the workshop) more interactive, as participants were asked to reflect upon and challenge the concepts presented to them. In addition, semi-structured interviews and observation were used to encourage participants to engage in critical dialogue where assumptions and ideologies were interrogated and possibilities and challenges were articulated.

Another potential problem is that the intervention in this study was small (one article and one three-hour workshop). The teachers would have

benefited more from a series of workshops on CP. However, I could not do that because of local limitations including logistics such as coordinating the times for workshops across the four geographically separated colleges. In addition, teachers had different teaching schedules which made it hard to allocate times at which all teachers would be free to conduct a series of workshops. Bureaucratic administration, which included obtaining permission from different people in the four colleges each time I went to them, limited the opportunity for conducting more than one workshop.

Other limitations include the fact that the study used a convenience sample, so its findings are limited by the unique characteristics and context of the study participants. Therefore, this is by no means representative of ELT teachers in various HE institutions across Oman, since "educational action research is context specific and is not concerned with generalizations and the establishment of scientific predictions" (Troudi, 2006, p.283). In addition, the present study looks at the potentialities and challenges of implementing CP through teachers' perspectives, which are presented as 'claims' that refer to "statements that connect the world bounded by our data to our interpreted understanding of that data" (Freeman et al., 2007, p.27). Following critical theory and postmodernist paradigms, this study acknowledges that such 'claims' are subjective and depend on teachers' own interpretations as well as on my interpretations, which make bias inevitable.

## **4.15 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined and discussed the philosophical assumptions that influence the design of the study. To summarize, the present study follows some tenets of the critical theory and postmodernist paradigms, which aim to problematize the givens and encourage changes at thinking and attitudinal level, which supposedly lead to change in action. Through the use of quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative research methods (semi-structured interviews, observation, gathered documents and post-observation interviews), this study aimed towards bigger and richer data from ELT teachers at tertiary level in Oman. The data analysis followed the steps explained by Burns (2010), upon which I have depended quite heavily to guide me through the lengthy process. In addition, this chapter also highlighted how validity has been ensured in this study. Due to the fact that ethics are deemed as a fundamental component in any research enterprise, this chapter also addressed the ethical issues that were taken into consideration while conducting this study. This chapter ended by acknowledging the study's limitations. The coming chapter will present the findings of this study.

## Chapter Five: Research Findings

*“Teaching is about passion, love of education and learning, inspiration, compassion, consideration of the other, dedication to trusting students, belief in the power of knowledge, and an incessant attempt to make a difference to the lives of others”*

(Troudi, 2011b)

### 5.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, the main aim of this study is to examine ELT teachers' awareness of and attitudes towards Critical Pedagogy (CP), and to explore the feasibility and challenges of implementing it in ELT at tertiary level in Oman. This chapter is intended to consolidate the data from the various instruments used in this study and relate them to the research questions. Findings extracted from the questionnaires, interviews, Workshop Evaluation Forms (WEFs), lesson plan analysis and classroom observations will be presented, compared and contrasted (where applicable) in order to show discrepancies, differences and conflicts within teachers' perceptions of ELT in general and CP in particular. To this end, this chapter has four sections related to the research questions, namely: Section 5.2 reports on ELT teachers' awareness of CP; Section 5.3 reports on ELT teachers' attitudes towards implementing CP in the ELT realm in Oman; Section 5.4 reports on ELT

teachers' perspectives regarding the potential for applying some of CP's tenets; and Section 5.5 reports on perceptions of the challenges that teachers might encounter if they want to implement CP in the ELT classroom.

## 5.2 ELT teachers' awareness of CP

This section presents findings pertaining to the first research question, which is about the ELT teachers' awareness of CP before the intervention. As a benchmark, it is worth starting with the most explicit question: in this case, one that asked teachers directly if they had heard of CP. The analysis of this question revealed that most of the teachers were not aware of CP as an approach for teaching and learning. Figure 5.1 demonstrates the ELT teachers' awareness of CP.

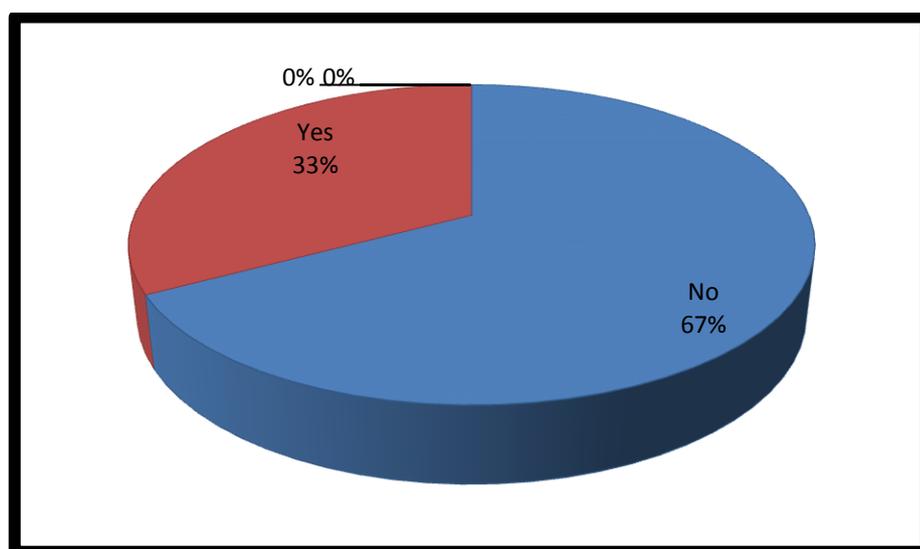


Figure 5.1 ELT teachers' awareness of CP

The above chart shows that almost 67% of the ELT teachers who participated in this study were not aware of CP, while only 33% of them had heard of it through various resources, including their graduate studies, conferences, articles and the internet. This is in line with other studies by Cox and Assis-Peterson (1999) and Baladi (2007) which found that EFL teachers were unaware of CP. Teachers' unawareness of CP, which has been discussed broadly in the literature including books, academic articles and journals, could be attributed, based on my experience, to the fact that after joining the profession, most teachers are less likely to read about current philosophies and approaches in teaching because of their workload or lack of interest. In addition, the professional development programmes that aim to raise teachers' awareness of current teaching approaches in these colleges are very rare and depend more on availability than on the actual needs of the ELT teachers (Ismail, 2011; Al Jadidi, 2009). Adding to this, teachers at the colleges of technology have very limited opportunities to participate in conferences, making it hard for them to keep abreast of the latest trends in ELT.

However, findings from the qualitative part of the questionnaire revealed that there were some teachers who knew about the term but did not think of implementing it; on the other hand, there were a few teachers who were aware of CP but applied it in a limited fashion in the ELT system in the four colleges, as I will explain in the coming sub-sections.

### 5.2.1 Being aware of CP without implementing it

In the qualitative part of the questionnaire, some of the teachers reported that they had been introduced to CP in the past through their readings or graduate studies but had never had a chance to implement it in Oman. The reason behind their reluctance to apply CP was the nature of this approach and its underpinning assumptions. From the teachers' perspectives, CP aims to liberate students, and this might not be a desirable aim for everyone. This is in line with the work of O'Mochain and Perkins (2010), who found that teachers had sometimes imposed CP on students who preferred to be taught through mainstream methods and to discuss less critical topics. In addition, although CP challenges the banking model of teaching, it has its own limitations, especially regarding its philosophical and idealistic assumption of the possibility of emancipation and radical change, which might not be achievable (Neumann, 2013). Hence, teachers avoid using it in their classes and perceive teaching through it to be problematic. The following excerpt from one teacher's answer in the questionnaire illustrates this point:

*"I did not use it because not everyone wants to be 'set free'. It is a western assumption based on the 'enlightening', and critical pedagogy [CP] has its own set of problems surrounding issues of emancipation and freedom." (Questionnaire 29)*

Furthermore, other teachers in this study did not incorporate CP in their teaching despite their awareness of it due to the nature of the Omani

context. To illustrate, from participants' perspectives, it seems that the ELT system in Oman is not welcoming to such an approach due to its rigid syllabi and regulations. This is in line with Al Issa (2014), who maintains that the current rigid ELT system in Oman "slams the door in the face of change, creativity and innovation" (p.415). One teacher wrote in the questionnaire:

*"I have implemented it back in my country but not here in Oman because it seems a pretty rigid place for revolutionary ideas."*  
(Teacher from the Philippines: Questionnaire 5)

From the above, it appears that some teachers did not implement CP despite their awareness of it because of the nature of the approach itself or because of the nature of the Omani context in which they worked.

### **5.2.2 Being aware of CP and implementing it in a limited way**

There was a minority of teachers who reported that they were aware of CP as an approach that could be used in ELT, but who only applied it in their teaching in a limited way. For example, in the questionnaire, one teacher wrote:

*"I only implemented it in a limited way here in Oman. Sometimes, I ask my students to give their own critical thoughts and conclusions about particular topics which helps them in promoting their communication skills."* (Questionnaire 18)

From the above excerpt, it seems that a teacher was implementing CP through addressing students' concerns and discussing controversial issues. However, this extract gives the impression that the teacher's aim was governed by mainstream methods, which aim at "*promoting their [students'] communication skills*". Creating changes in students' lives and advocating questioning skills, which are the core of CP, were not overtly mentioned in the teacher's response. This could be attributed to the monopolization of the banking model and mainstream methodologies in the ELT system in the four colleges, as the analysis indicated. It is to these topics that the coming sections turn.

### **5.2.3 Banking model**

A closer look at teachers' responses to some of the questionnaire's items revealed that the ELT system in the four colleges was governed by the banking model approach. For instance, Table 5.1 summarizes the teachers' opinions regarding the role of the ELT teacher. Over half of those surveyed (N=104: 58.8%) agreed and (N=38: 21.5%) strongly agreed that the role of the ELT teacher is to transfer the language to the students, while only 8.4% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement and 11.3% were uncertain. This is in line with Al Issa (2010) who reported that ELT teachers in Oman adhere to

'safe' teaching routines through unproblematically transferring descriptive knowledge about English to their students.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	1.1
Disagree	13	7.3
Uncertain	20	11.3
Agree	104	58.8
Strongly Agree	38	21.5
Total	178	100

Table 5.1 Teachers' responses to the statement: "the role of the ELT teacher is to transfer the language to the students"

Therefore, it seems that the role of the students is restricted to being the objects in the class who receive knowledge from their teachers. In addition, the passive role of the students, which is one of the main features of the banking model (Freire, 1998), was represented in teachers' perspectives about who set the classroom policies and rules. The following table (table 5.2) demonstrates that the total agreement among participants with regard to the statement "Policies and rules should be set by the teachers and students should follow them" was 66.9% (19.2% strongly agreed and 48% agreed), while only 19.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This result ties in with Al-Mekhlafi and Ramani's study (2011) on ninety-three teachers of English in Oman about their role and contribution of learners in the learning process, in which they

found that ELT teachers liked to preserve their prominent role in the class when they teach English.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	7	4
Disagree	28	15.8
Uncertain	23	13
Agree	85	48
Strongly Agree	34	19.2
Total	178	100

*Table 5.2 Teachers' responses to the statement: "Policies and rules should be set by the teachers and students should follow them"*

Additionally, table 5.3 provides strong evidence of the hegemony of banking model in the ELT in the four colleges. For instance, almost two-thirds of the respondents (63.6%) strongly agreed or agreed that the role of the students is to be receptive to what the teacher tells them to do. Thus, a good student, according to the teachers' responses in the questionnaire, is one who obeys the rules, with a total agreement of 56.7% (10.1% strongly agreed and 46.6% agreed). Furthermore, approximately, half of those surveyed in this study (49.7 %) think that students are incapable of deciding for themselves what to learn in an ELT classroom. In addition, from the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, it seems that technical knowledge, which concerns facts and truths, monopolizes the

ELT realm at tertiary level in Oman. This is obvious from the fact that 57.7% of respondents (13.6% strongly agreed and 44.1% agreed) believed that good ELT textbooks should be free from controversial issues, which reflects the emphasis on technical knowledge in ELT in the four colleges and its ignoring of emancipatory knowledge which is one of the fundamental premises of CP (Giroux, 2011).

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Students are receptive to what the teacher is telling them to do	5.1%	58.5%	19.9%	15.9%	1.6%
A good student is the one who obeys rules	10.1%	46.6%	22.5%	19.7%	1.1%
Students can decide for themselves what to learn in an ELT course	3.4%	18.6%	28.2%	44.6%	5.1%
Good ELT textbooks are the ones which are free of controversial	13.6%	44.1%	14.7%	22%	5.6%

*Table 5.3 Teachers' responses to some statements in the questionnaire demonstrating banking model in the four colleges*

## 5.2.4 Unproblematic view of ELT

The analysis indicated the absence of a critical view in ELT and in the role of English internationally. This view of ELT is clear when its aim is seen as being to enable students to communicate and pass tests that will grant them access to better education or employment opportunities. For instance, in the questionnaire, almost two-thirds of the participants (62.8%)

responded that the main purpose of ELT is equipping students with skills to find a job and achieve a better future (refer to Appendix 22). The absence of a critical view in ELT could be attributed to several reasons. First, the teachers' education programmes more frequently focus on preparing teachers in linguistic and methodological competence without addressing the critical approach to ELT. Second, the language policies applied in Oman stress the importance of English as a crucial means to achieve modernization and development. Third, these policies rely exclusively on ready-made packages of methods, techniques and materials that are imported from inner circle countries (Tanveer, 2013) and consumed by the Omani ELT system, as this is seen as the best way to succeed in the capitalist world. Therefore, teachers seem to be unable to locate ELT within the broader social, economic and political context (Penneycook, 2001).

This results in the power given to English in Oman, which is perpetuated and naturalized, so that people no longer question its domination. This is clear when ELT teachers believe that the spread of ELT should be regarded as unproblematic: 61.4% agreed with this statement, while only 11.4% disagreed and 27.3% were uncertain (refer to Appendix 22). Table 5.3 shows that the majority of the ELT teachers participating in this study 83% (N: 148) felt that English is privileged compared to other languages. This can be ascribed to the fact that, currently in Oman, English is a prerequisite for joining HE institutions and getting white-collar jobs (Al Issa,

2014). It is also interlinked with the discourse of modernization and prestige (Abdel-Jawad & Abu Radhwan, 2011).

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	.6
Disagree	13	7.3
Uncertain	16	9.0
Agree	81	45.5
Strongly Agree	67	37.6
Total	178	100

*Table 5.4 Teachers' responses to the statement: "English is privileged compared to other languages"*

### **5.2.5 Mainstream hegemony**

The findings of this study show the hegemony of mainstream ideologies in the ELT system in the four colleges in terms of (1) teaching methods, (2) monolingual fallacy and (3) traditional ways of assessment. First, the questionnaire showed that the overwhelming majority of respondents (80.2%) agreed that ELT teaching in their colleges is based on the communicative approach (refer to Appendix 22). Al-Mekhlafi and Ramani (2011) indicated that the communicative approach to teaching English in

Oman has gained momentum in recent years so that 'communication' has become the ultimate aim of ELT.

This great emphasis on the communicative approach may be a partial cause of the dependence on monolingual teaching in the ELT realm in the four colleges, as 72.5% of teachers responded that English should only be taught through English, while only 16.3% disagreed and 11.2% were uncertain of this statement. In addition, slightly over half of the respondents (53.1%) believed that usage of L1 inside the ELT classroom hinders students' English learning, while 25.4% disagreed with this statement and 21.3% were uncertain about the role of L1 in students' learning of English (refer to Appendix 22). Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that the mainstream ELT methods which abandon L1 while teaching English has been popularized in the four colleges, which makes teachers intolerant to the usage of L1 in English classes. This is line with the study of Davari, Iranmehr and Erfani (2012), who found that the common practice of ELT teachers in Iran was to reject the first language while teaching English.

The monopolization of mainstream ELT methods was confirmed when 62.1% of the teachers responded that testing is the best way to assess students in ELT, while 25.4% disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, 64.9% of the participants agreed that quizzes and tests accurately measure students' ability in English while 22.6% disagreed and 12.4%

were uncertain (refer to Appendix 22). This can be attributed to the fact that quizzes and tests have been given more weight than other forms of assessment in the four colleges, as explained in Chapter Two (Section 2.3.5).

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	2.8
Disagree	15	8.4
Uncertain	25	14
Agree	106	59.6
Strongly Agree	27	15.2
Total	178	100

*Table 5.5 Teachers' responses to the statement: "TOEFL/IELTS is a good indication of students' English proficiency"*

Table 5.5 indicates teachers' responses when they were asked about their opinions regarding IELTS and TOEFL, which are products of the UK and the USA respectively. 59.6% agreed and 15.2% strongly agreed that TOEFL/IELTS is a good indication of students' English proficiency. This is in harmony with the work of Khan (2009), who found that teachers in Saudi Arabia consider TOEFL as a good indicator of students' English proficiency. This finding could be due to three reasons. First, the teachers could have experienced throughout their years of teaching that

TOEFL/IELTS are valid measurements to tell them about their students' English proficiency. Second, the policies in the four colleges give high importance to TOEFL/IELTS by relying on them to make high-stakes decisions. Third, it seems that most of the participants in this study have very strong links to TOEFL/IELTS since they have been educated in one of inner circle's countries. This was the case for all Omani ELT teachers in this study, who had obtained their Master's degree in the UK or Australia or had been asked to do so to proceed to postgraduate studies, as had the non-native expatriate teachers. This means that the teachers themselves had undergone TOEFL/IELTS as a way to gauge their proficiency in English, which might make them accept their validity.

To sum up, this section reveals that the ELT system in the four colleges is heavily governed by mainstream methods and ideologies. Nonetheless, the story is not that simple and the data gathered from the questionnaire showed a level of criticality within the ELT system in the four colleges.

### **5.2.6 A level of criticality**

Although the ELT teachers' responses to the items in Sections 5.2.3, 5.2.4 and 5.2.5 clearly exemplified the domination of the banking model and mainstream methods, their reaction to other items demonstrated a degree of criticality. For instance, 89.8% of ELT teachers supposed that students could contribute effectively to the decisions made in the classroom.

Furthermore, 77.4% of the participants in this study agreed that ELT should aim to create a change in students' lives, while 6.2% disagreed and 16.4% were not sure about this statement (refer to Appendix 22). This is in line with Benites (2012) who maintains that ELT should aim towards creating a change in students' lives in conjunction with improving their language.

In addition, the data showed the critical view of the ELT teachers in the four colleges to the aims of Centre's materials and textbooks used in the Omani ELT context. For instance, half of the participants (52.3%) were in agreement that aspects of the western lifestyle illustrated in the instructional materials could gradually interest Omani students (refer to Appendix 22). This corresponds to the findings of King (2012) and Karmani (2010), who assert that the content of ELT textbooks used in HE institutions is highly political and leads to transfer of western values and ideologies. Indeed, with a quick glance at the current textbooks used in these colleges, which discuss artificial topics such as food, holiday, entertainment and celebrations, one can infer the role of such materials in socializing students into consumerist and materialist ideologies for the sake of teaching the language.

Additionally, 51.4% of the ELT teachers in this study deemed that the topics in ELT materials should be based on the students' specific history and contexts. This finding is consistent Davari, Iranmehr and Erfani

(2012), who found that Iranian teachers believed that ELT materials should be based on the students' contexts.

The findings of the questionnaire showed that 64.3% of the participants responded that ELT textbooks designed by Omani experts would not be as good as those designed by native English experts. This could be for several reasons. First, the four colleges depend on textbooks that are produced in one of the Anglo-Saxon countries. This may result in teachers' perceptions that textbooks cannot be produced locally. Second, both pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes seem to give little or no attention to preparing teachers to design textbooks, which leads teachers to believe that local teachers were incapable of fulfilling such a task.

Despite the hegemony of mainstream ELT teaching methods that was explained in Section 5.2.5, teachers' criticality can be observed, as 57.3% of teachers asserted that the ELT teachers' role is to raise students' awareness of other varieties of English. Similarly, 66.3% of the respondents believed that the ELT materials should make students aware of other varieties of English, while only 17.4% disagreed with this statement (refer to Appendix 22). This might be partly attributed to the position of English in Omani society as a lingua Franca (Al Issa, 2014; Al Jardani, 2015) where the workers in various places (including the four

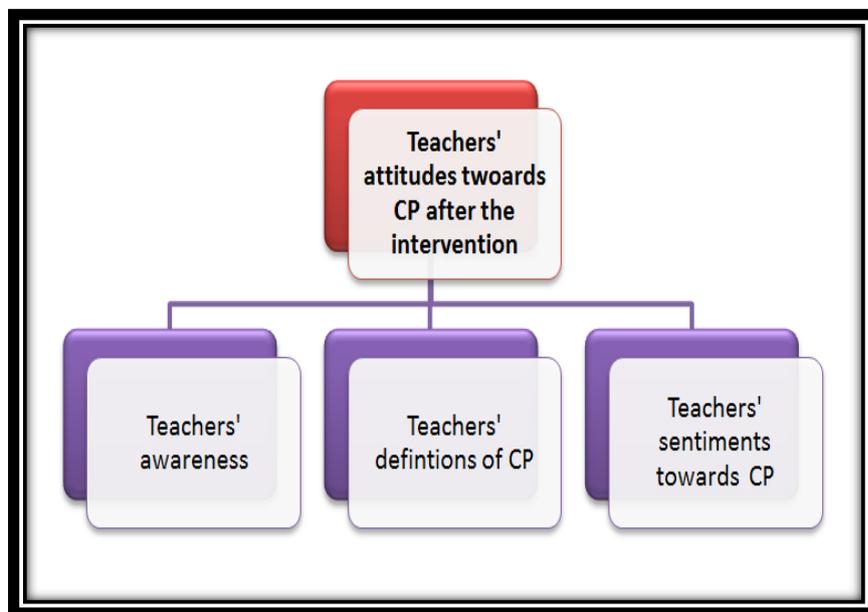
colleges) come from different parts of the world and use English to communicate with each other.

Overall, the findings in this section reveal that there was a level of criticality when teachers responded to the above questionnaire items. There are several possible explanations for this result. First and most importantly, teaching as a profession relies on the teachers' personal and educational backgrounds. In these four colleges, specifically, the ELT teachers come from various milieus that affect their opinions regarding different aspects of teaching and learning. In addition, these teachers are also different in age and teaching experience, so one can consider them to be from various generations, which might affect the way they look at the ELT realm. Third, being a teacher in one of the colleges of technology, there has been a strong critique within the ELT discourse regarding the teacher-centred approach and the need to move towards a more student-centred approach in order to raise the quality of education. Thus, this criticality in teachers' responses might reflect such an endeavour in moving towards a more student-centred approach.

### **5.3 ELT teachers' attitudes towards CP after the intervention**

This part of the chapter attempts to answer the study's second research question, namely: What are ELT teachers' attitudes towards CP after the intervention? However, I think it is reasonable to establish the ELT

teachers' awareness and understanding of CP before tracing their attitudes towards it. To answer this question, data gathered from the WEFs, the interviews, the classroom observations and the post classroom observation interviews are integrated here in order to build a deeper picture of their attitudes. Three main themes were found, namely: teachers' awareness of CP after the intervention, their definitions of it and their sentiments towards it as shown in Figure 5.2.



*Figure 5.2 Main themes related to teachers' attitudes towards CP after the intervention*

### **5.3.1 Teachers' awareness of CP after the intervention**

The analysis of the data revealed that the interventions of this study (the article and the workshop) assisted teachers to know about CP. For

example, teachers were asked in the WEFs to reflect on the effects of the workshop in raising their awareness of CP. Table 5.6 shows the percentages of teachers' responses to the closed-ended questions in the WEF.

	Yes	Don't know yet	No
○ Understand the rationale behind the necessity of implementing critical pedagogy in ELT	95%	4%	1%
○ Understand the main tenets of critical pedagogy	92%	7%	1%
○ Implement some aspects of critical pedagogy in your teaching	76.5%	21.5%	2%
○ Include activities in your teaching using some tenets of critical pedagogy	78.4%	19.6%	2%

*Table 5.6 Teachers' views about the effects of the workshop on raising their awareness of CP*

The above table demonstrates that a substantial number of the respondents (95%) understood the rationale behind the necessity of implementing CP in ELT classrooms and 92.2% said that they understood the main tenants of CP. In addition, 76.5% of teachers thought they would be able to implement some aspects of CP in their teaching and 78.4% stated that they could include activities in their teaching using some CP tenets. Nonetheless, a closer look at teachers' responses revealed that the percentages of the first and second statements that are related to

teachers' knowledge about the rationale and main tenets of CP were higher than the percentages of the third and fourth questions that are related to their ability to implement CP in their classrooms. This is in line with Sadeghi and Ketabi 's (2009) study and Sahragard, Razmjoo and Baharloo's study (2014), who found that participants in their studies struggled to put CP tenets into practice although they had demonstrated a good level of understanding and support of CP and its premises. This could be attributed to several reasons. First, it is not an easy task to transfer abstract knowledge into practical reality which means that, although teachers might be aware of CP tenets, they appeared to be unsure of how to put them into practice. Second, as explained in Sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.5, ELT in Oman has been directed by the banking model and mainstream methodologies. Consequently, it is challenging for teachers to move from traditional ways of teaching to critical approaches (this will be explored further in Chapter Six). Third, the intervention was short and therefore was not sufficient to give teachers the confidence that they could put CP into practice. However, analysing the qualitative data obtained from various methods revealed that the intervention succeeded in raising teachers' awareness that an approach called CP existed and that it encouraged them to think about its suitability for Omani students. It also emboldened some teachers to utilise different teaching strategies, such as imagination, that had been neglected in the ELT classroom in the four colleges, as will be explained in the coming three sub-sections.

### 5.3.1.1 The term is new but the idea is not totally new

The results showed that some teachers had not heard about CP but the approach was not totally new to them. This means that they had been applying some CP tenets without knowing the term. For instance, one teacher wrote in the WEF: *"I feel I was already implementing it [CP] in my classes unknowingly, unaware of the technical term 'critical pedagogy'"* (WEF9). Similarly, the following excerpt from Sara's interview demonstrates that some teachers did not know the term but they had been doing CP:

*"I didn't know before meeting you about critical pedagogy [CP] but I do give some sort of activities where I aim to intellectually shake my students. Reflecting back on my experience, I do not know if I have been doing critical pedagogy, but sure it is not zero. Some of the tasks I have been giving my students can be grouped under critical pedagogy but I never noticed that I did it."*

It seems that attending the CP workshop assisted ELT teachers to know the term explicitly and plan to use CP consciously in the future. From their perspective, the workshop encouraged them to continue performing CP in their classroom. For instance, one teacher wrote in the WEF:

*"I feel that I have already been doing it in my classes. By attending this workshop, I learnt the name for what I have been doing and the benefits of it. Therefore, I will continue doing it."* (WEF 62)

### 5.3.1.2 Arousing call

From the data, it seems possible that the CP workshop provided opportunities for some teachers to rethink how CP could be implemented in the classroom. For instance, Aysha maintained that attending the workshop enriched her knowledge of CP. This would encourage her to implement CP through addressing students' concerns, opening discussions about current phenomena, and taking the discussions further in terms of depth and breadth. She said,

*"I have not heard about CP .... But I got from the workshop that we need to ask them [students] more questions and open discussions with them in order to raise their awareness. For example, if one student told me that he spent his free time watching TV, I could open up the discussion about violence on TV, ideologies of different movies - just to make them question things, not just being passive about it."*

Moreover, some teachers reported that attending the workshop led them to **rethink** their position towards the appropriateness of implementing CP in ELT in Oman and made them recognize that they could think differently in the future. For instance, in the WEF, one teacher wrote:

*"When I read the circulated article, CP is absolutely impractical, anywhere in the world in the current situation, my understanding changed completely after attending this workshop." (WEF 81)*

In the same vein, Nasra expressed that, although she was aware of CP as a teaching approach, she had never thought of implementing some of its

premises in her classes. Nonetheless, attending the CP workshop made her **rethink** her approach, at least in terms of topics and questions addressed in the classroom. The following extract from Nasra's interview succinctly summarizes this:

*"I had heard about critical pedagogy [CP] before, but I did not expect that it played such a role in the classroom, and what I got from the workshop actually [was that] I was not paying attention to the kind of the questions I am addressing to my students ...I think we need to be careful and sensitive in the type of the questions we should ask our students and with the way we should behave with them. This makes me rethink the way we should teach our students."*

In reference to what Nasra said, it seems that despite teachers' awareness of CP prior to conducting this study, attending the workshop made them reflect on their knowledge about CP. It gave them an opportunity to **rethink**, espouse some of its tenets and open new angles for them to think about the role it may play inside the classroom in terms of the kinds of questions teachers ask and the need for sensitivity in their actions with their students. This might be because teaching involves countless actions that are essentially habits which teachers take on without thinking about them. Through such actions, teachers might unwittingly present dominant social discourses as 'normal' without thinking that such discourses might make some students feel marginalized or inferior. Hence, raising teachers' awareness of CP might make some of them recognize that disparities exist and should be respected and critically addressed. This is in line with

Pessoa and Freitas (2012) who stated that critical language teaching can provide teachers with opportunities to think again about what they can do in their classes.

### **5.3.1.3 The power of imagination**

In addition, the study intervention had an impact on raising teachers' awareness of CP, especially the power of imagination. The intervention motivated teachers to implement it in their classes. Within CP, teachers are encouraged to activate students' imagination since "transformation involves anticipating a society different from the one we have now" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.185). In the post-lesson discussion, Basma talked about her lesson on advertisements and how she used imagination to raise students' awareness about the consumerism that governs their lives:

*"I have not involved my students in imaginative activities before. But, as you saw in my lesson, the students engaged more in the discussion when I asked them to imagine themselves without money and how would they feel about this and how they would deal with the situation. They came up with various interesting points."*

Although Basma asked her students to imagine themselves in a situation they might have never been in or thought about, that is of being students who receive financial support from the government and their parents, from observing her class it was clear that Basma limited her questions to students' feelings and reactions. She did not ask them about 'why' or 'why

not' in order to provoke more understanding and examine the underpinning assumptions of their reactions. From the CP framework, it is necessary to assist learners to examine their assumptions without "being naively idealistic" (ibid, p.187). This might show that Basma seems to have limited understanding of CP and how to use imaginative activities to question hidden assumptions, a point which will be explored further in Chapter Six.

### **5.3.2 CP definition: in teachers' own words**

Various methods were used to collect data about teachers' own definitions of CP. For instance, in the interviews, teachers were explicitly asked about how they would define CP. In addition, analysis of the WEFs, lesson plans and the classroom observations was also utilized to identify how teachers delineated CP. Teachers came up with different definitions as shown in Figure 5.3.

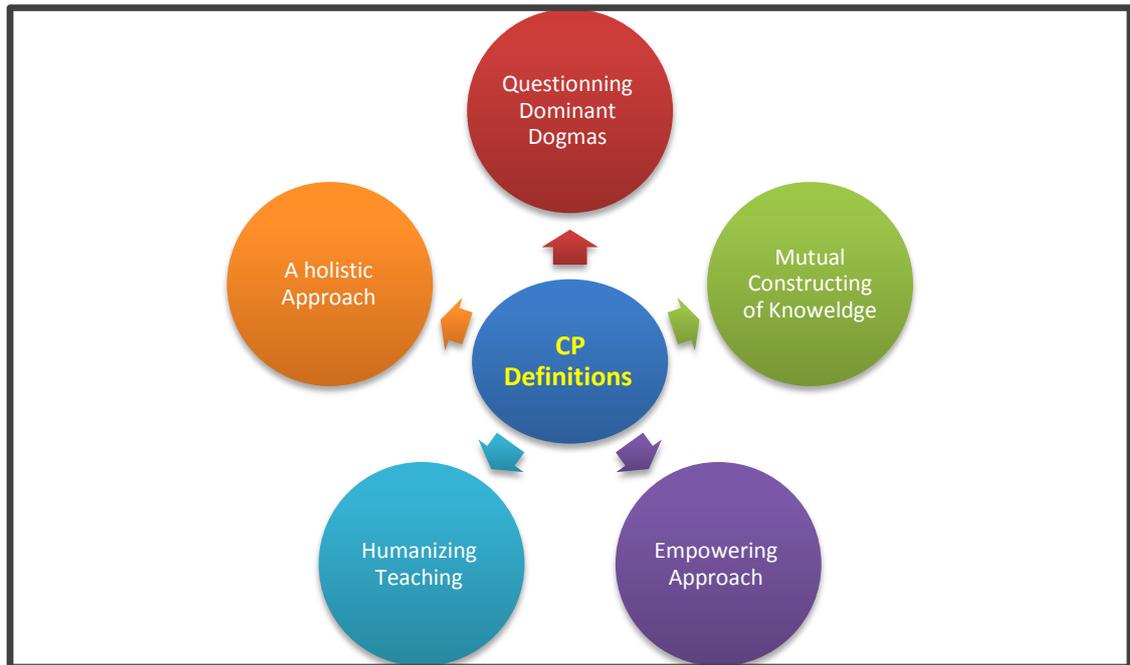


Figure 5.3 CP definitions in teachers' own words

### 5.3.2.1 Questioning dominant dogmas

Teachers associated the meaning of CP with the ability to question and reflect. They defined CP as an approach that enables both students and teachers to question the common ideologies around them. First, teachers thought that CP assisted students to question what was going around them, so that they could think differently about things. For instance, one teacher wrote in the WEFs that CP was about "*encouraging learners to go beyond the surface meaning and to think out of the box*" (WEF 18). Similarly, Don, during his interview, said that CP served "*to encourage learners to become critical individuals and take active parts in the debated issues in and outside Oman*". This corresponds to Grioux (2011), who

maintained that part of CP is concerned with addressing problematic issues in society inside the classroom and scaffolding students to form their own understandings. What is more, the teachers underscored that this ability to question and reflect necessitated giving students the opportunity or 'space' to rethink about themselves and their societies, which was currently unavailable to them due to the hegemony of the banking model. This resulted in full power being in the teachers' hands, while students were totally passive. Amal explained:

*"Critical pedagogy [CP] for me is to give our students space to think and question things around them and even to be by themselves in the classroom. Unfortunately, what we are doing here is the teacher-centred approach; we are trying to control everything. We do not give students a chance."*

The analysis of the lesson plans and the classroom observations showed that part of CP is to promote questioning skills. For instance, in most of the warm-up or introductory activities in the lesson, teachers planned to ask students to reflect on their experience, to justify their answers and to personalize the issues discussed. For example, in the lesson plan about arranged marriage, teachers planned to ask students about their opinions of arranged marriage and why they thought in a certain way. In addition, the same kinds of question were asked in other lesson plans, such as the one that discussed school uniform, where students were asked at the beginning to interrogate their experience of having school uniform, their feelings and opinions about it.

During the classroom observation, Basma asked students to reflect on their experience of watching a lot of advertisements in the media and the impact of this on becoming materialistic people. However, although the topics discussed in the lesson plans and classroom observations were critical in nature, the teachers' ways of addressing them were more towards critical thinking than towards critical pedagogy. In other words, the two observed teachers (Basma and Salima: both Omani teachers) failed to make connections between the topics addressed and the issues of power, inequality, discrimination, resistance, and struggle (Pennycook, 1999, p.332) that would make students think about the topics from a new angle. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

Interestingly, in the classroom observations, two teachers (Nancy and Suzan: both expatriate teachers) encouraged their students to question the ideologies around them and related them to power, such as 'poverty' and 'divorce' respectively. These two teachers emboldened students to question assumptions and connect them with issues of class and gender, such as why the society provided help to poor people through donating money only (Nancy's class) and why divorce affects women more than men in Oman (Suzan's class). However, students were passive and could not be engaged in critical discussion, especially in Suzan's class (refer to Section 5.5.1.2).

Other teachers associated the meaning of CP with the teachers questioning their teaching. In other words, CP is about moving from a level where the teachers' teaching may be guided largely by routine to a level where their teaching is guided by interrogation and reflection. This is to say that the role of the teacher should be that of a transformative intellectual (Giroux, 2007; Kincheloe, 2008a) who can analyze and problematize their teaching rather than technicians or materials implementers who approach their teaching blindly and technically. For instance, in the WEFs, one teacher wrote that CP is "*a reflective approach which helps teachers to learn better ways of teaching*" (WEF 24). Similarly, in the interviews, teachers emphasized that CP is about pushing teachers to critically examine their performance, think about ideas to enhance their students' learning and create change in their lives. Saif summarized his understanding of CP by stating:

*"It is about questioning our teaching. It is not a matter of teaching level after level but instead it is about questioning ourselves about how much our students can learn from the opportunity they are given here in the college. By learning I mean affecting them in one way or another by making a change in their life."*

### **5.3.2.2 Mutual construction of knowledge**

Like the teachers in Ruiz and Fernández-Balboa's study (2005), teachers in the current study viewed CP as a way in which students and teachers equally construct the knowledge addressed in the ELT classroom. In other

words, CP rejects the teacher/student dichotomy where teachers know everything and students know nothing, as in the traditional methods that render students passive (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). Rather, CP views both students and teachers as lifelong learners who construct knowledge together. Sara underscored that CP is about:

*"giv[ing] students and teachers an opportunity to construct knowledge in the classroom. Teachers are no longer the sole authority inside the classroom. Students are not blank tablets who need to be fed with information, as it is readily available everywhere."*

Nonetheless, during classroom observations, especially in the cases of Basma and Salima (both Omani teachers), this mutual constructing of knowledge was rarely implemented inside the classroom. Teachers were often at the front of the classroom, which gave the impression that they held power and controlled everything. The two teachers did most of the talking during the lessons and the students' talking time was limited to answering the teachers' questions. Thus, the teacher-student dichotomy was clearly demonstrated. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Norooziasiam and Soozandehfar (2011), who found that while ELT Iranian teachers supported the implementation of CP, observing them in the classrooms revealed that they were in authority and the mutual constructing of knowledge between teachers and students was missing. Nonetheless, Nancy and Suzan in this study successfully exchanged knowledge interactively with their students by giving students voice on the materials and utilizing dialogical methods. Nonetheless, the

dialogue could not be deepened due to students' low English proficiency (see Section 5.5.1.3). For instance, Suzan raised the issue of divorce through using newspaper articles. She tried to engage students in a dialogue about why divorced women suffer more than divorced men in a society like Oman. Nonetheless, students could not even understand the meaning of the word 'divorce', although they were at advanced level, so the teacher could not engage them in a deep discussion about the topic. In other words, students' low proficiency blocked the teacher's opportunity to engage her students in dialogical methods, which is the core of mutual construction of knowledge.

### **5.3.2.3 Empowering approach**

The third definition of CP provided by teachers in this study is that it empowers learners to think critically in order to improve their lives. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2007) underscore that CP is meant to empower individuals to play their role as agents of social change. Similarly, one teacher in this study wrote in the WEFs: "*I believe that CP empowers my students, so they can participate in building a better tomorrow*" (WEF 95). This can be done via raising their awareness of what is going on around them locally and globally, as teachers maintained in various data tools. For instance, the majority of the teachers interviewed mentioned that, in order to empower learners, the content of the textbooks should reflect the students' communities and concerns. This is in tune with

Akbari (2008a) and Chandella (2011), who stated that localizing the ELT materials enables learners to ponder about the society where they live and think about ways to change it. This is because addressing local concerns makes learners feel connected to what they learn. In addition, students would be able to use their schematic knowledge to learn the language. It would thus be easier for the students to comprehend and understand the issues discussed and teachers would be enabled to discuss them in depth. The following extract from Linda's interview demonstrates this:

*"In order to empower our learners, it is necessary to base our teaching on students' background, so it becomes easier for the students to personalize, comprehend, and digest."*

This is in line with the findings from the WEFs, lesson plan analysis and classroom observation. For instance, in the WEF, one teacher wrote that CP is *"a teaching pedagogy where students are enabled to think about themselves, the community and change things for better"* (WEF 17). In the lesson plans, teachers tended to address the problematic issues in students' contexts through using problem-posing education focusing on issues such as 'car accidents' (Lesson plan 1), 'unemployment'(Lesson plan 4), 'arranged marriage' (Lesson plan 5), 'women at work' (Lesson plan 12), and 'expensive life' (Lesson plan 19),. With regard to classroom observation, the analysis also showed that teachers tried to empower their learners by relating the content of the lesson to students' context and using generative themes. For instance, Salima addressed problems that

students faced in their real life such as getting bad marks, car accidents and smoking inside the college.

In addition, the teachers in this study attributed the meaning of CP to empowering students through raising their awareness of the global issues around them. For instance, in the WEFs, some teachers wrote that CP *"helps Omani students to know the world around them and shouldn't be limited only to what they have and what is happening in their country"* (WEF 5) and *"raising students' awareness of global topics"*(WEF 43). In the same vein, in the interviews, teachers underscored the necessity of raising students' awareness of what was going on around them in order to empower them. For example, Joseph defined CP as a way of:

*"Empowering students by using English classes as a springboard in introducing the social issues faced by a particular group of people, so learners can become aware of the world and their social responsibility."*

Correspondingly, the teachers' lesson plans also reflected this definition of CP. For instance, in one lesson plan, the teachers explicitly wrote that the aim of the lesson would be *'to empower learners through discussing global issues'*(Lesson plan 16). In addition, in one lesson plan, the teachers claimed that the aim of the lesson would be to:

*"Enhance critical analysis and social awareness of the students through discussion, reading, writing and doing a project on the increasing use of plastics and its impact directly or indirectly on the human beings, animals and the ecosystem."* (Lesson plan 2)

Similarly, in the classroom observation, some teachers clearly showed their understanding of CP as a way to empower students by raising their awareness of what was going on around them and encouraging them to take action. For instance, Nancy clearly stated that the aim of her lessons was to raise students' awareness of the false information in the advertisements and to make them aware of their role in helping poor people in their society. She successfully encouraged her students to move to action by asking them to work in groups to write a mock letter to the government on the malpractices of certain food advertisements in the country. She engaged her students in collective action for the sake of empowerment (McLaren, 2003b). In Freire's language (2003), she successfully involved her students in 'praxis'. The students were critically engaged in this activity and came up with different ideas that were read aloud for the whole group.

#### **5.3.2.4 Humanizing teaching**

The fourth definition of CP provided by participants was of CP as a humanizing approach which encourages teachers to look at students as people who have their own opinions, values and interests. This is in line with how teachers in Sadeghi and Ketabi's study (2009) viewed CP as a way to respect learners' opinions and thoughts. For instance, in the WEFs one teacher wrote that CP meant that "*my teaching should not be just*

*transferring knowledge; rather it should become a human act" (WEF 31).*

Similarly, Linda, in the interview, stated that CP:

*"is a matter of opening up the person and looking at students as subjects, as people, not objects, loaded with a lot of information. They are not washing machines, they are people with their interests, values and priorities."*

The data obtained from the classroom observations provided a range of evidence of this humanistic approach towards teaching, including creating a comfortable atmosphere, calling students by their names, utilizing dialogic methods, putting them in groups, giving them voice, choosing the pictures they liked to describe (Nancy's lesson & Suzan's lesson), being responsible for teaching each other to build their confidence (Basma's lesson), being patient with them, showing respect to students and using humour in the classroom, among others.

### **5.3.2.5 A holistic approach**

Some teachers mentioned that CP for them was a holistic approach. Within these responses, teachers emphasized that, unlike other approaches, CP does not consist of steps to do things inside the classroom. Rather, it is a way of looking at teaching as consisting of intimately interconnected aspects related to how to teach and deal with students which lead to development in students' lives. This definition is exemplified by Crookes and Lehner's ways of looking at CP not as a pedagogical method but as a social and educational approach that is

rooted in how ELT can enhance students' personal and social growth (1998, p. 327). For example, one teacher wrote in the WEFs that "*CP is holistic. It is not only about communication. If the teacher is following it, then they can be critical even in a very simple aspect*" (WEF 101).

Likewise, in the interviews, teachers expressed the same holistic understanding of CP. For instance, Aysha summarized this by stating:

*"When I read the article you sent to us... It is as a writer of the article said: it is a way of doing teaching, so it is not a technique or a method. I came to know in the workshop that there are not certain steps of doing it like 1, 2, 3 but it is a way of how you behave in the class, how you deal with students and even how to introduce the content of the lesson."*

Other teachers emphasized that CP as a holistic approach enables teachers to achieve large goals such as going beyond the classroom, exploring new ideas and developing students' personalities. For instance, Jack maintained that:

*"CP means that we should not be limited to the classroom but we should go beyond the classroom and discuss issues that are current and relevant to students' life and culture. Students should be allowed to explore new ideas, not within the limits of the classroom but should be outside the classroom and that should be incorporated into their own personality."*

From the above, it is not surprising that teachers provided various definitions of CP, including questioning dominant ideologies, the mutual construction of knowledge, empowering learners and being a holistic approach. This is because, as discussed in Chapter Three of this study,

CP cannot be reduced to a homogeneous body of discourse. In addition, I could observe in the interviews how teachers struggled to give a definition of this approach, especially those who were hearing of it for the first time. Some of them could not even articulate its definition in words. This is in line with Ruiz and Fernandez-Balboa (2005), who found that most teachers were unable to define CP when required to do so.

### **5.3.3 Teachers' sentiments towards CP**

After attending the workshop, the findings suggested that the teachers had various attitudes towards CP. Looking closely at the data obtained from the interviews, the WEFs, the classroom observations and post-classroom observation discussions, it was found that teachers had various feelings towards CP, ranging from full support for applying it to caution about its implementation. There were also teachers who resisted some of CP's premises while others were in between (Figure 5.3). The following four sub-sections detail these various attitudes toward CP.

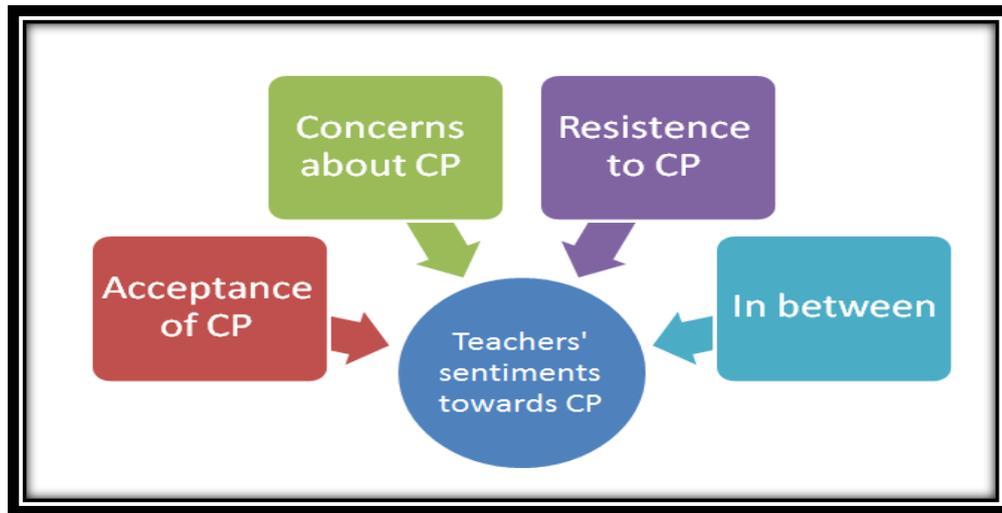


Figure 5.4 Teachers' sentiments towards CP after the intervention

### 5.3.3.1 Acceptance of CP

Although participants offered various definitions of CP, as shown in Section 5.3.2, the majority of them showed willingness and enthusiasm to incorporate CP in their teaching after attending the workshop. This is in line with other studies which found that teachers are willing to teach through CP after they are introduced to it (Ko & Wang, 2009; Baladi, 2007). Analyzing the WEFs, teachers showed their acceptance of CP by saying various things, including:

*"Definitely I am willing to implement it: it is our prime duty to be role models and affect change in our students' lives." (WEF 1)*

*"I am willing to implement it to create an awareness of the society they live in and to liberate them to think for themselves." (WEF 85)*

*"Yes, I am willing to apply some aspects of it. It is necessary for students to be taken out of their comfort zone and learn about other issues and confront the world at large." (WEF 35)*

Similarly, in the interviews, teachers showed enthusiasm towards CP, since it helps in bringing the world to the classroom and discussing issues that are not discussed in the current ELT textbooks. For instance, Emran said:

*"I totally agree with critical pedagogy and I totally believe in bringing the world to the classroom and discussing relevant issues in the society, especially about marginalized people like old people and disabled people."*

Therefore, Sofia was enthusiastic to implement CP in her teaching since she believed that the teacher's role should be more than one of transferring the language to the students but should also involve adapting the materials to suit the students' backgrounds. Put differently, she believed that the ideas and thoughts carried in the language classrooms were as important as the linguistic elements of the language *per se*. She asserted:

*"I believe in CP because you cannot just teach any content for the sake of language. You have to choose the content very carefully to serve your educational objectives, so this content must be adjusted according to the existing traditions, historical scientific traditions and see how the nation is shaping."*

Other teachers expressed their positive attitudes towards CP because of the students' age, which necessitated taking their voices and opinions into consideration. Amal expressed this view by saying:

*"Implementing CP is necessary, especially when we are dealing with this critical age group, so their voice can be heard, because this is what they need at this age. If you try to listen to them and get them to discuss some of the issues that are related to their age, then you are helping them to learn."*

Other teachers had positive attitudes towards CP and considered it a necessity since they were living in an era characterized by a "global spread of English and the growth in regional varieties of English" (Troudi, 2005, p.127). Therefore, in the interviews, some teachers expressed the inevitability of addressing other varieties of English and not concentrating on teaching centre varieties. For instance, Nasser clearly stated that:

*"When students are exposed to different varieties of English, at least at pronunciation level, students come to realize that English is an international language that belongs to different people, not just British or Americans."*

In the post-lesson discussion, Nancy said that teaching via CP tenets made her "*feel different*" since she had taught her students something "*significant*" and "*deep*". Basma also asserted after her lesson, "*I feel self-satisfied: at the end you are trying your best as a teacher to bring a change in your students' life*". This corresponds to the findings of Royal's study (2010) and Baladi's study (2007) where teachers felt a sense of achievement and pride because of the meaningfulness of their lessons. From the above, it seems that teachers had positive attitudes towards implementing CP for several reasons (as will be discussed further in

Section 5.4.1). On the other hand, some teachers noticeably articulated their concerns about this approach.

### **5.3.3.2 Concerns about CP**

When asked about their willingness to implement CP, some teachers expressed their concerns about it for several reasons. First, some teachers were concerned about implementing CP because they believed students did not have sufficient foundations in language or critical thinking, which are two conditions for implementing CP. They claimed that implementing CP without these conditions would shock students and negatively affect them. This is in line with Pishghadam and Meidani's study in Iran (2012), which found that introducing CP to students who were not used to critical thinking created negative feelings such as anxiety, confusion and depression. The following excerpt from Don's interview, in reply to the question about his willingness to implement CP in his teaching, exemplifies this point. Don believed that:

*"CP is something that would have to have a foundation, because without a foundation, students will lack exposure to sensitive issues and concerns, and then it would affect the real purpose - maybe because it would shock them. It would not transform them in a positive way but rather it would make them negate more of the ideas."*

Other teachers were cautious about implementing CP because the ELT system in the four colleges was heterogeneous in terms of teachers'

nationalities and backgrounds. Therefore, the introduction of CP by such a varied group of teachers might not be safe, since they did not know the students' cultures and concerns. Sofia asserted that:

*"It [introducing CP] is very dangerous, especially in a multicultural setting like ELT here in the college, because imagine that all teachers with their different backgrounds start to question and think about alternatives to the topics discussed in the classroom!"*

Thus, Sofia and other teachers voiced their concern about the implementation of CP by teachers from various backgrounds because of their lack of understanding of the cultural and religious backgrounds of students. However, even Omani ELT teachers, who were supposed to be familiar with their students' background, clearly articulated the danger of implementing CP in the college. Azza stated that:

*"We need to be careful and make sure that we are not giving the students the wrong thing. Like what I understood from critical pedagogy that there is no absolute truth. I do encourage deep thinking, deep reasoning, but I need my students to reach a conclusion, a right conclusion."*

From the above, it appears that being ill-informed about the students' cultures and beliefs was not the only reason that made the teachers concerned about CP. The teachers' technical backgrounds, which reflected a right-wrong dichotomy, gave them reservations about implementing CP in which such absoluteness is rejected and continuous questioning is encouraged. It seems that teachers had internal hesitations

about CP's aims, especially about taking a sceptical stance towards the issues under discussion. This is because CP requires students to challenge assumptions or try out new alternatives, which could be dangerous from the teachers' perspective, since change is not easy. As one teacher wrote in the WEF: "*Change is precarious and a person needs to be somewhat cautious as an agent of change*" (WEF 72)

It is worth mentioning that analyzing the data showed that the teachers' responses to the question about their attitude towards implementing CP were full of contradictions. For instance, in the previous section teachers believed that CP should be put into practice because of the students' critical age, which required that they be given a voice. Nonetheless, some teachers expressed their unease about CP for the same reason. They justified their concerns by stressing the point that the students were not yet mature enough to decide for themselves, so introducing CP might lead them in the wrong direction. Fatma expressed this by saying:

*"We should ask questions but while we are mature enough to do that, our students are too young to do that - I mean, we do not want our students to misunderstand what we are doing, especially at this age, since the students can believe in anything very easily."*

Another teacher (Sara) asserted that she was worried about implementing CP because it meant questioning, which could lead to dissatisfaction and unhappiness. Thus, it seems that teachers would avoid implementing CP

in order to be on the safe side emotionally (to avoid unpleasant feelings).

Sara described this by saying:

*"You know, being a critical person means being a suffering person. If you want to be happy, just accept everything and do not question. For me it is a double-edged sword. We must be careful at all times."*

On the other hand, some teachers, especially expatriates, were concerned about implementing CP because they felt that they were outsiders who did not have the right to question issues related to Omani students' lives. For instance, one teacher wrote in the WEF that he was not willing to implement CP because *"I do not feel I have the right to implicitly question my students' beliefs in this context"* (WEF 39). In addition, such questioning could mean that their job in the college would be threatened. Therefore, questioning the givens, including rules and materials, was seen as impossible by the teachers because they were afraid of losing their jobs. This is to say that some teachers were hesitant to implement CP for practical reasons (to keep their jobs), especially in a managerial system where teachers were powerless and voiceless. This relates to Akbari (2008b), who asserted that if the expatriate teachers started to question and be critical of things around them in the Arab world, where Oman belongs, this could cost them their career. Jack expressed this by saying:

*"Questioning the materials given or decided by the administration is very hard for us because, based on my experience here in the college, we are not into the questioning of the materials directly because at the end you are a teacher"*

*and you need your job and you do not want to put yourself in a critical situation that could affect your existence in the college."*

### **5.3.3.3 Resistance to CP**

From the data analysis, there were very few teachers who clearly showed resistance to CP because they regarded their role as solely to teach the language and not to create changes in students' lives. This is in line with Sadeghi and Ketabi (2009) and Baladi (2007), who found that some teachers who participated in their study felt that their main responsibility was to teach linguistic skills to their students rather than to question students' beliefs about various social issues. Two teachers in the current study clearly stated that they favoured the communicative approach over using CP. For example, Azza stated in the interview:

*"I think, as teachers, it is not our job to question students' beliefs and assumptions. Our job is to teach language without interfering with students' beliefs ... if I had a choice to do critical pedagogy or communicative approach, I would choose communicative approach because it is more beneficial for my students than critical pedagogy."*

Although I did not ask participants to define what they meant by 'communicative approach', I had the sense that this approach was sometimes used by teachers, as it is self-evident. Additionally, in Oman, the communicative approach has been popularized among ELT teachers as the best way to assist students to gain competency in English language, especially after the educational reform that took place in 1998,

which was heavily based on this approach (Al-Issa, 2015; McLean, 2011; Al Ghatrifi, 2006). Actually, the communicative approach has become a buzzword that one can repeatedly hear at the levels of policy making, institutions and research, which emphasizes the necessity of teaching communicatively as the best method for ELT. Therefore, teachers might assert that they use this approach more than any other teaching method because they want to be associated with a more contemporary methodological style (Mohamed, 2006; Al-Mekhlafi & Ramani, 2011).

This great emphasis on the communicative approach might partially result in some teachers abandoning L1, which is regarded from the CP perspective as a source that should be utilized in ELT classrooms. To illustrate, some ELT teachers in the four colleges perceived Arabic as an obstacle that inhibited students from learning English. For instance, Emran, who is Pakistani and thus does not speak Arabic clearly, maintained in the interview that:

*"English is a foreign language and when we learn English we should not use our mother tongue because when we translate from our first language, the whole structure in the target language will change, so we should learn English as it is through English and getting exposure to it."*

Surprisingly, some Omani ELT teachers who shared the same linguistic background with their Omani students were also intolerant of the usage of Arabic inside the classroom. Amal explained that Arabic was totally

inacceptable in her class and students were not allowed to use it at all. For instance, she explained:

*"I do not use any Arabic word in the class. If I open the door for the students to use Arabic and explain things for them in Arabic, it will be an Arabic class. This is why I start my classes with an agreement between me and my students that we should not use any Arabic in the classroom because if I allow them to use Arabic, it will be like a habit, so I totally avoid using Arabic in the classroom."*

Teachers presumably pointed out that allowing students to talk in Arabic meant less opportunity to learn English. However, many studies conducted nationally have reported that most students prefer to use some Arabic when they learn English as it helps them to understand the complexity of the content (Al Bakri, 2014; Ismail, 2011; Al Jadidi, 2009). It seems the majority of the interviewed teachers viewed the usage of L1 as a way to help in explaining vocabulary or grammar rules and giving instructions to save time, especially at lower levels. They did not see using Arabic as a way of respecting students' identities and backgrounds, taking into account that Arabic is part of students' identity, which may result in students feeling inferior from the CP perspective, as the workshop and article emphasized. For instance, Nasra said:

*"I am towards using Arabic with low level students in level 1 and 2 ...So I can say we need to use Arabic with low level students and then you try to minimize it when they reach higher levels like level 3 and 4."*

Furthermore, one of the CP tenets challenges the appropriateness and relevance of ELT materials that are designed by the Centre's authors (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). Thus, it encourages developing ELT textbooks locally. However, during the interviews, some teachers, especially Omanis, resisted this tenet and asserted that they could not design ELT materials. For instance, Saif said:

*"They [British or American ELT expert designers] have been designing ELT materials for a long time, so they can be ideal designers; they have a lot of experience. Frankly speaking, we Omanis do not have enough experience in designing curriculum and we are not expert in it."*

Two issues arise from the excerpt above. First, it seems that Saif believed that Omanis have less knowledge than materials designers from the inner circle countries, who have a lot of experience which guarantees the design of good ELT materials despite their limited knowledge about the Omani context. Second, this excerpt exemplifies the dichotomy of others as superior or experienced (British and American designers) and the self as inferior or inexperienced (Omani designers) which perpetuates the centre-periphery dichotomy that legitimizes knowledge from the centre and neglects what is produced in the periphery. This can be attributed to the experience we have undergone in Oman of importing readymade materials from big publisher names to teach English and bringing consultants from the inner circle countries to establish programmes at HE institutions (Al Issa, 2006; Karmani, 2010). In addition, based on my

experience, professional development programmes that aim to promote teachers' knowledge and skills about designing materials seem to be scarce. Therefore, teachers seem to be accustomed to believe that they are incapable of designing English textbooks. However, looking at reality and what was happening in the classrooms, many teachers said that students reacted to teachers' handouts better than to the activities designed by these experienced and 'superior' ELT designers. For instance, Ahmed, an Omani ELT teacher, said "*I can assure you that whenever we prepare a handout, students like it more than the activities in the textbook*". Nonetheless, like Saif, Ahmed asserted that he was capable of designing separate handouts but incompetent to design a whole textbook.

#### **5.3.3.4 In-between: Inner Pull vs. Outer Pull**

A number of teachers seemed to experience a disjuncture between what they wanted to do as teachers who believed in CP and what they were required to do by the current system with its goals, syllabi and assessments. On one hand, they were impressed by CP and believed that it could make the students' learning experience better (**inner pull**). However, if they did that, then they would find themselves straying away from what they were expected to do (**outer pull**). In the next excerpt, Joseph encapsulated this dilemma by maintaining that:

*"For example, if I expose them to critical issues and that is what I really want to do and believe in, what if other groups are not given this kind of materials, they would make a comparison; they would have to question 'why do you have these materials? Why are you teaching this?' You become in a way disconnected with the rest of the system. So for me I can do so much, like making them explore their creativity and their imagination, but in the overall trend, I have to look at the curriculum that runs in the college."*

Fatma, an Omani teacher, had previously mentioned the danger of implementing CP in the college because of the students' immaturity, which would prevent them from grasping the aim of CP (refer to Section 5.3.3.2). In the following extract, she expressed her willingness to try it out because CP could achieve, in her words, the *'true meaning of education'*. Nonetheless, she believed that the administration would not support her because of the critical age of the students, who were perceived by the administration to be powerful, since they were the ones to resist the regime in the country and protest to demand changes in 2011 (Arab Spring in Oman). Fatma explained that by saying:

*"I would like to try CP in my classes because it represents the true meaning of education, but thinking about the administration here, especially in our country, are in their comfort zone and getting such an approach would make them ask 'why is she doing it?' especially after the Arab Spring. They are afraid of any new approach which may affect the way students think because they strongly believe that students at university level have power and they might threaten the whole country if change leads their thinking to a way that they think is unsafe."*

The discrepancy in Fatma's response is clear: at one level, she expressed her unease of implementing CP because of the critical age of the students and because introducing CP to them might lead them to a space where they should not go. On the other hand, she said that she would like to try CP but the administration would not support such an approach for the same reason (the critical age of the students). This echoes the findings of Kress, Degennaro and Paugh (2013) who found that their pre-service teachers in Boston University believed that CP might not be aligned with the administration in an era characterized by neo-liberalism and accountability discourses.

Therefore, ELT teachers emphasized the need for the college itself to adopt this approach in order to enable teachers who support CP to implement it. Based on my experience as a teacher in these colleges, teachers within a level conduct meetings every two weeks, held by the level coordinator, to make sure that everyone is following the syllabus and they are covering all topics at the same time, because the tests are central and students need to get an idea about all of the topics in the syllabi. Thus, a single teacher implementing CP might contradict the goal of the institution, which could put the teacher under a lot of pressure. The following extract from Jack's interview exemplifies how the current ELT system pushed him to stay inside the institutional box despite his positive attitude towards implementing CP:

*"I am into CP but first it must be part of the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the institution because as a teacher, as a lecturer, you cannot do so much and if you are doing like something that is not in line with the college's vision, you are not into this kind of general direction, then it becomes a struggle on your part."*

## **5.4 Feasibility of implementing CP in the ELT system in Oman**

This part of the chapter addresses the third question, which looks at the opportunities for CP implementation in the ELT system in Oman. In spite of the great differences and considerable diversity in the participants' ages, teaching experience and educational backgrounds, there is a strong consensus with regard to the potential of implementing CP in ELT in the four colleges. The analysis of the data revealed that CP is feasible for various reasons and with certain conditions as shown in Figure 5.5. This section will detail the **reasons** behind the necessity of applying CP tenets and the **conditions** for implementing it.

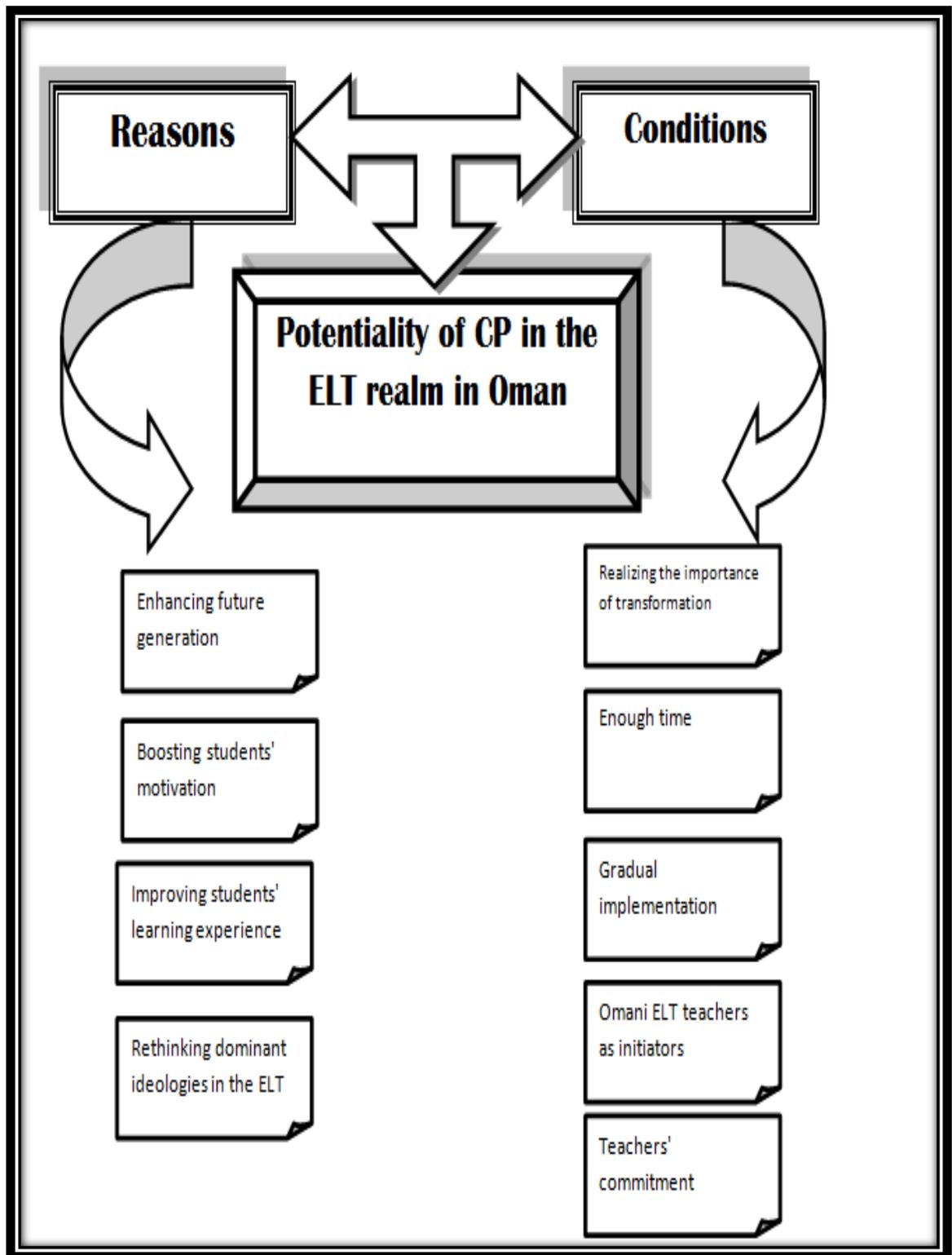


Figure 5.5 Feasibility of implementing CP in the ELT system

### **5.4.1 Reasons for the feasibilities of CP implementation in ELT**

The data analysis revealed that several reasons that came to the fore regarding the feasibility of CP in Oman, although with varying degrees of emphasis. These include enhancing the future generation, boosting students' motivation, improving students' experience, and rethinking dominant ideologies in ELT.

#### **5.4.1.1 Enhancing the future generation**

Similar to Ko and Wang's study (2009), the ELT teachers in this study justified the potential of implementing CP because there was a pressing need to enhance the future generation in the country, who were deemed to be "the *soldiers of tomorrow*" in Sara's expression. One teacher wrote in the WEF that CP had great potential, since "*it will make the students better human beings and citizens of the country*" (WEF 3). In the questionnaire, one teacher wrote that "*CP should be implemented because it considers how education can provide individuals with the tools to better themselves and strengthen the society*" (Questionnaire 33). According to some teachers, CP should be put into practice because it would address betterment in students' education in particular and life in general, since it would help them identify society's strengths and weaknesses and think about ways to foster and improve them. However, the current system, where students have books and tests, would not allow

Omani students to use what they learn in an effective manner. Sofia nicely summarized this by saying:

*"There are a lot of potentialities for CP here in Oman because it will enhance the future generation of young Omanis and that would be ideal for certain changes that need to happen towards better education, not only in terms of awareness but in terms of making education more meaningful, more practical, rather than giving students books and testing them on their content. Omani students need to be aware of what is going on around them, so they can identify their weaknesses and work towards improving them, and that is something that cannot happen with the current ways of teaching and learning."*

Additionally, some teachers emphasized that CP needs to be implemented in the ELT system in Oman since it enables learners to appreciate different perspectives, value them and construct their own understanding of the proposed problem. The following extract from David's interview hints at such views:

*"A very important part of problem solving is the reconciliation of diverse points of view; if you don't start with diverse points of view, you won't solve the problem and then there is a negotiation process that you go through. When you discuss any problem that is related to students, they learn how to think their own ways through the problem. This is why we need to implement CP"*

Overall, teachers believed that in order to generate better generations, espousing teaching methodologies and materials that assist students to critically describe, negotiate, and reflect (which are main premises of CP) rather than accumulating bits of information.

### 5.4.1.2 Boosting students' motivation

It is noteworthy that colleges of technology receive the lowest level of students who graduated from high school in Oman, so their motivation is not particularly high. Adding to this, as described in Chapter Two (Section 2.2.4), colleges of technology are not colleges of choice, since most students prefer to go to SQU or study abroad. Hence, some teachers believe that using some of the tenets of CP, such as linking what is discussed in the classroom to students' own lives, might motivate them.

Basma, in the post-lesson discussion, said:

*"You know, colleges of technology are not colleges of choice for our students, so they are here because of their low score in high school. So they always think that they are in the bottom of the hierarchy compared to students who join SQU or go to study abroad. Those are the elites, and are self-motivated. But our students are different. They are not dumb people, they are just not motivated and unless you work on their motivation, they won't learn. And I think CP is one way to do this through relating what they learn to their own life and discuss current issues with them."*

Similarly, Ahmed believed that the reason behind students' low motivation was the materials used in the college, which were alien to the students. Thus, he believed that linking students to their cultures, which is one of the main premises of CP, could be one way to increase their motivation. He stated that:

*"If you want to learn English, you should be motivated to do so, so we need to raise up their motivation level and make their learning more meaningful. I think linking their learning in English*

*to their social life, to their daily life, can help in motivating them. But if you give a textbook that talks about cultures in North America, they will not be motivated. But if you give them a textbook about their cultures, Omani or Arabs in general, they will be more motivated because you discuss things that are relevant to them, meaningful to them."*

### **5.4.1.3 Better learning experience**

Another recurrent theme related to the reasons behind the great potential of CP is its capacity to improve students' learning experience. This is to say, a number of respondents felt that if CP were incorporated into ELT teaching, students would be given more freedom to express their opinions about issues important to them, which would positively affect their learning of English. Suzan summarized this by saying:

*"Critical pedagogy, I feel, is not teaching in the framework and, at the same time, there are no hard and fast rules. The students are at liberty, more liberty, so I think this ensures better participation of the students and also gives them an opportunity to voice out whatever they have in their learning, so the ultimate goal is their learning ..., so automatically I believe the language learning process will be better through this particular approach."*

Similarly, others believed that CP would make the students more involved in the learning process, since it would require them to play an active role. This would mean greater participation from the students' side, which would positively affect their language achievement. This would encourage teachers to do more with their students. Salima summarized this by saying:

*"It is about making students part of the teaching and learning process because when they feel that they are part of the process, they will do their best, they will participate and their language achievement will be improved. Even the teachers, when they see that the students' language achievement is improved, then they will be satisfied and the learning process will be fruitful."*

In addition, analyzing the CP WEFs, teachers said that implementation of CP could result in a better learning experience for several reasons, including developing students' reasoning skills and showing that teachers care about their learning. The following sentences from the WEFs demonstrate this view:

*"It can encourage students and push them to use reasoning, which means a better learning experience for them." (WEF 9)*

*"It enables students more in the learning process and enhances their learning experience as well, since it shows that we care about them." (WEF 54)*

#### **5.4.1.4 Rethinking dominant ideologies in the ELT**

Due to the hegemony of mainstream teaching methodologies and the unproblematic view of ELT (Sections 5.2.4 and 5.2.5), teachers believed that being aware of CP would help rethinking about English and its domination in Oman, such as the appointment criteria used by the administration in the four colleges which are still heavily based on being native speakers. For instance, Sofia described the situation by saying:

*"CP helps to reveal the commercial approach in the ELT, especially when it comes to appointing teachers. For many years here we know, and you know better than me, that the country was choosing language teachers and qualifying them according to native speakers, someone from somewhere brought a sheet of paper and came as a native speaker and he earns more than a professor coming with 25 years of education in language teaching, I feel inferior that I was not born in the USA, UK, Canada or Australia, so they pay me less."*

The above extract shows that the absence of criticality in the four colleges resulted in huge differences in salary and privilege for NESTs (Al-Issa, 2002; Al Jadidi, 2009) and in feelings of inferiority for NNESTs. In other words, it seems that NNESTs in ELT in the four colleges suffer from hiring discrimination (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Alshahrani, 2014) by which nativeness is seen to be more important than the teachers' educational background or experience. However, raising awareness about CP could challenge such discriminatory recruitment policies and employment inequality. This might encourage recruiters in the four colleges to review the current appointment criteria to be more inclusive.

Additionally, from the teachers' perspectives, CP would help in rethinking about English and its domination in Oman. In other words, so far ELT teachers have naturalized the spread of English in Oman and focused on the cultural and linguistic capital that English can bring to a person. Nonetheless, having been introduced to CP, they have rethought English domination by starting to problematize the givens to a certain extent. Ahmed summarized that by stating that:

*"Before being exposed to CP through your workshop, I thought the spread of English and studying everything through English is good and I am even proud of talking and teaching English. I always talk with my cousins in English. I was not thinking for a second about my identity as an Arab. I think we need to rethink our education policy and about the spread of English - and without CP we cannot do that."*

So, from the above, it seems that without implementing CP, it would be really difficult for ELT teachers to be sceptical about ELT and their own role in it. In other words, putting CP into practice might challenge the unproblematic spread of English and match the ELT to the students' needs and interests. This is line with Aghagolzadeh and Davari (2012), who maintained that implementing CP in ELT in Iran would appropriate it to society' needs and concerns, which could not be achieved by following the mainstream methodologies. For example, in one of the classes observed in this study the issue related to the spread of learning English in Oman was discussed. In her writing class, Salima aimed to problematize the phenomenon of learning English. She asserted that she had discussed this issue previously but had focused on its positive effects. However, having attended the CP workshop, she discussed the issue in her class in terms of its negative effects, such as its effects on Arabic and on students' academic lives and the kinds of difficulties they encountered when they learned English. Salima said in the post-lesson discussion:

*"The effects of learning English have been one of the favourite topics that I discuss with my students when I teach the effect essay. However, this is the first time I have discussed the issue from its negative effects. I used to focus on the positive effects of learning English and I thought that was one way to*

*encourage them to learn English. But being exposed to CP through your workshop made me think that we need to problematize it and think about its negative effects. I do not know if my students got the idea or not but I will continue to discuss this issue in the future in order to problematize what we have been doing for a long time. I do not know how to say this but I think you understand me that English has been taught here without thinking about its effects on students' psychology and academic achievement."*

To sum up, the analysis of the data has revealed that there was a consensus about the necessity of implementing CP in the ELT at tertiary level in Oman, for several reasons: enhancing the future generation, improving students' experience and rethinking the dominant ideologies in ELT. The teachers also underscored that CP could not be implemented in the ELT realm without the conditions described in the following section.

#### **5.4.2 Conditions for implementing CP**

In the eyes of the ELT teachers who participated in this study, certain conditions were necessary for CP to be implemented in Oman. These included realizing the importance of transformation, allowing enough time, gradual implementation, Omani ELT teachers as initiators and teachers' commitment. Each of these conditions will be explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

### **5.4.2.1 Realizing the importance of transformation**

Some teachers believed that CP could not be implemented in Oman unless teachers, in the first place, realized the importance of changing. Therefore, the first step to make CP feasible was to raise teachers' awareness of the necessity of transformation, and this would not be an easy step to perform. This is because some teachers might not perceive traditional ways of education as political or problematic. This result is aligned with the findings of Crookes and Lehner (1998), who could not engage some of their pre-service teachers in CP, since they "weren't quite convinced that traditional education is biased, discriminatory and perpetuates the status quo" (p. 325). Therefore, in order to implement CP, the participants maintained that teachers needed to be convinced that there was a need to change and move from traditional methods to CP. David summarized that by saying:

*"CP, as I understood it, is about transformation, but I think before transformation can take place, people have to become aware of the need for it. When people are over-accustomed to their environment, they accept their conditions as normal and often do not see injustice around them."*

### **5.4.2.2 Enough time**

Shakouri and Abkenar (2012) emphasized that teachers need time in order to be able to implement CP in their teaching. Similarly, many teachers in this study believed that this approach would be feasible in the ELT system in the four colleges but it would require time. Working from

critical and postmodernist stances, time is subjective and relative. Borrowing from Hargreaves' conceptualization of time (1994), 'time' as a condition for implementing CP from the data collected in this study can be understood in different ways. For instance, some teachers reported in the WEFs that *"it will take some time to develop CP"* (WEF 44) and *"it requires a long time"* (WEF 100). In addition, Don expressed in the interview that CP *"is not an overnight step"*. Teachers' responses in the previous extracts reflect the physical dimension of time which is needed in order for CP to find its path in the ELT system in the four colleges. As explained previously, the ELT system has been governed by the banking model and mainstream methods. Therefore, an approach like CP requires time to be implemented and people need enough time to grasp its main tenets in the first place.

Jack maintained that sufficient time would be needed in order for CP to find its way in the ELT, since it would be a new concept for teachers and students. The following extract summarizes Jack's perspective:

*"It [CP] has a great potentiality but it will take time because embracing a new concept in teaching is not a snap of the fingers. We need time to think of topics that could be explored, like the one you presented for us, and then plan it out where we could put it in our syllabus and in our lesson plans and how to assess students. Of course we would need a lot of adjustments."*

Jack's response might reflect the phenomenological dimension of time (ibid, p.100), which refers to how much time is needed to understand and apply CP, which is bound up with other aspects in the colleges including the teachers' ability to incorporate them in their lesson plans, the syllabus and how to assess students, which might enhance or hinder CP implementation. Therefore, a lot of modifications would be needed before CP could find its path in ELT in the four colleges.

Third, teachers might also mean the socio-political dimension of time, which refers to how much freedom teachers would be given by the administration to put CP into their teaching. Linda asserted that:

*"We need time to use critical pedagogy in our classes. I mean we should have freedom to choose what to teach and not be given a ready-made syllabus. We need time too to prepare materials as we are now overloaded with a lot of stuff. If we want to practice critical pedagogy, administrators should provide us with time to be able to do it."*

Linda's emphasis on the socio-political dimension of time can be explained in the light of the increased accountability required of teachers, where the focus is on meeting pre-specified outcomes for every student regardless of their geographical, social or educational background. Therefore, the above excerpt reveals that, in order for teachers to be able to enact CP in the ELT classroom, they need to be given enough time and freedom by the college administrations. This result confirms Jeyaraj's findings (2014)

where some teachers asked for more freedom in order to be able to implement CP.

### **5.4.2.3 Gradual implementation**

Some teachers believed that CP would have great potential in Oman; however, it should start gradually. For example, in the WEF, teachers wrote, "*it may not be accepted in the beginning but gradually it may find its way through*" (WEF 96). Similarly, in the interview, Suzan expressed the necessity of gradual utilization of CP in order to find its path in the colleges. She said:

*"I think we should introduce it gradually. It can be a trial and error basis initially. Maybe you can teach some problematic issues in the society; you can build awareness through YouTube videos; show some problematic issues and make students aware of them and see how they would react to the problem and to this kind of teaching."*

A string of issues arises from the excerpt above. First, Suzan stressed the idea of using available resources such as YouTube clips in order to help students visualize the issues discussed. In other words, she emphasized the necessity of using 'code', in Freire's language (2003), in order to raise students' awareness of the problematic issues in their society. Furthermore, Suzan highlighted the necessity of giving students a voice and a chance to react to the CP approach and reflect upon it, and not only on the topics discussed. According to Aliakbari and Faraji (2011), critical

teachers should concern themselves with eliciting students' opinions about what and how to learn. In this way, students are given the voice to reflect on suitable ways of learning and are not simply treated as empty vessels.

Furthermore, some teachers proposed the gradual implementation of CP through specifying one day a week to discuss controversial issues and encourage students to critically think about them. For instance, Nasser said:

*"For myself, what I am planning to do is to specify one day where I bring current controversial issues that meet students' interests and discuss them in the class."*

In a similar vein, other teachers believed that the gradual implementation of CP could be achieved through specifying a few minutes in each lesson to ask students thought-provoking questions and use their imagination in order to enable learners to see different realities, which might help with the steady introduction of CP. Don summarized this:

*"You ask propping questions at the beginning of the lesson to provoke social imagination and ask them if they can see yourself or your friends, your families. That way, in a step-by-step process, we could open up critical pedagogy for the students."*

It is worth pausing here to note an important issue that arises from the two excerpts above. It seems that teachers limited their understanding of CP to

the addressing of controversial issues. They also thought that CP could be achieved by specifying a certain time each week or each day to provoke students' questioning skills. They did not realize that CP could not be in any sense confined to an activity to be done once a week to address debated issues. Rather, it is a way of living (Canagarajah, 2005a) and an attitude towards ELT (Pennycook, 2001). This results from the fact that the small intervention in this study was too short to make teachers fully aware of CP. Indeed, a lot of effort at the level of pre- and in-service teacher education is needed in order for ELT teachers to begin perceiving themselves as educators not just as instructors. This will be discussed further in the coming chapter.

#### **5.4.2.4 ELT Omani teachers as initiators**

From the participants' perspective, the potential of CP depended on Omani English language teachers. In other words, it should be initiated by Omani ELT teachers, not by expatriate teachers, who form the majority of the current ELT teaching force in Oman. The argument behind this is the view that expatriate teachers might feel that they are outsiders who would stay in Oman for a limited number of years, so their opinions or suggestions might not be seen as legitimate in the settings in which they work. On the other hand, Omanis have legitimate rights to bring changes because they are the owners of the country and are also going to take over from the expatriates in the long term. Sofia said:

*"Only Omani teachers can initiate this because they are the owners of this country because one day something will happen and the expatriates will disappear - who has to rule? Only Omanis. Who has to decide what to do next? Only Omanis. The Omanis can do things according to their needs and values. I am an expatriate: I can help but I cannot initiate changes."*

The other focus of the argument is that, unlike Omanis, the expatriate teachers can be easily terminated from their jobs (Al Barwani et al., 2009), so the best way to keep them is to do what they are asked to do. For these expatriates, following the given syllabus, teaching from the textbook and meeting the institutions' expectations would guarantee their continued existence in the college. Sara illustrates this by stating:

*"I think Omanis should take the initiative; they are the ones who should push this kind of approach. As expatriates, we cannot say anything, we need our jobs here and we should do as we are asked to do, but you Omanis should take such initiatives and bring a lot of changes to the system because you have the right. Our ideas are taken but not that seriously. Things are different when it comes from Omanis. In the end, it is their country."*

#### **5.4.2.5 Teachers' commitment**

Most of the teachers believed in the possibility of implementing CP in ELT in Oman, especially if the teachers were committed to applying it. For example, Joseph emphasized that *"the main factor behind the success of implementing CP in Oman is teachers' personal commitment"*. Similarly, Sofia agreed that the teachers' commitment to CP was key to its success, saying *"there are some challenges that might impede the implementation*

*but if you want to do it as a teacher, I think you can*". However, CP is a very demanding approach in terms of preparing materials that link the ELT to the larger social issues students face in their society, offering a chance for critical dialogue and providing students with opportunities to make a difference in their lives and their communities. So, if the teachers are not committed, it would be easier for them to quit CP and return to mainstream teaching methods that do not require them to be sceptical and to act as agents of change. The following extract from Nasser's interview nicely addresses this point:

*"Teaching through CP means a lot of preparation time, so teachers need to be willing to take their work home in order to prepare good materials which cannot be done inside the college because of the teaching load teachers have. Preparing and getting the right materials needs time. Continuing doing it is another issue: maybe there are teachers who are willing to do it but it may not work for them from the first go, so they need to have the willingness to give it another try."*

Analyzing the data from the classroom observations showed how teachers played an important role in encouraging students to be critical. For instance, Salima tried to engage her students in critical classes by giving them the opportunity to decide on any problem they would like to discuss. The students remained silent and did not suggest any topics. This reaction pushed the teacher to depend on the banking model, where students were totally powerless and the teacher took control of the classroom by providing them with problems to discuss. On the other hand, Nancy was

successful in engaging her students in critical discussion despite their passivity at the beginning of the lesson. She achieved this by asking prompting questions and building on their answers. For instance, in one lesson, she discussed responsibility towards poor people. One student answered that they could help such people by donating money and buying food and clothes for them. Nancy asked if they thought that such actions would help in the long term. She used the idiom, "*Do not give me a fish but teach me how to fish*". The students were able to come up with interesting answers such as training these poor people for jobs so that they would be able to earn their living. She raised the issue of how poor people could be helped in the long term. In addition, in another lesson, Nancy was successful in engaging her students in critical discussion by making them work in groups to discuss critical questions related to how the government should protect consumers from false advertisements. The students were given a chance to think, help each other and report their ideas to the whole group. The students came up with very interesting ideas, such as using social media (Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to report such advertisements to the government or organize demonstrations in the front of government offices, among others.

To summarize, the findings from the data clearly indicate that CP has great potential in ELT in Oman if certain conditions are provided, including awareness of the need for change, sufficient time to grasp the premises of CP and gradual implementation of this approach. Furthermore, these

conditions include Omani ELT teachers playing their role in initiating CP, since they are the owners of the country and they have the legitimate right to provoke change, unlike their expatriate counterparts. Teachers' commitment and devotion to do and continue doing CP is another condition of CP's feasibility in the ELT system in Oman. Nonetheless, ELT teachers expressed that CP was not an easy approach to apply and that teachers may face numerous challenges if they wanted to put it into practice. Consequently, the next section will attempt to identify these challenges.

## **5.5 Challenges for implementing CP in the ELT system in Oman**

This part of this chapter attempts to answer the last research question, namely: "What are the challenges of implementing CP in the ELT system in Oman?" It is worth mentioning that much devotion has been given to this question, since I believe that the first step to seeing the possibility of implementing a new teaching approach is to identify the challenges of implementing it. Thus, an awareness of these difficulties can be useful in finding ways to utilize it. Analysis of the open-ended questions from the questionnaire, WEFs, interviews and classroom observations showed that the challenges of implementing CP clustered around three main categories: challenges related to students, challenges related to teachers, and challenges related to the college system, as shown in Figure 5.6.

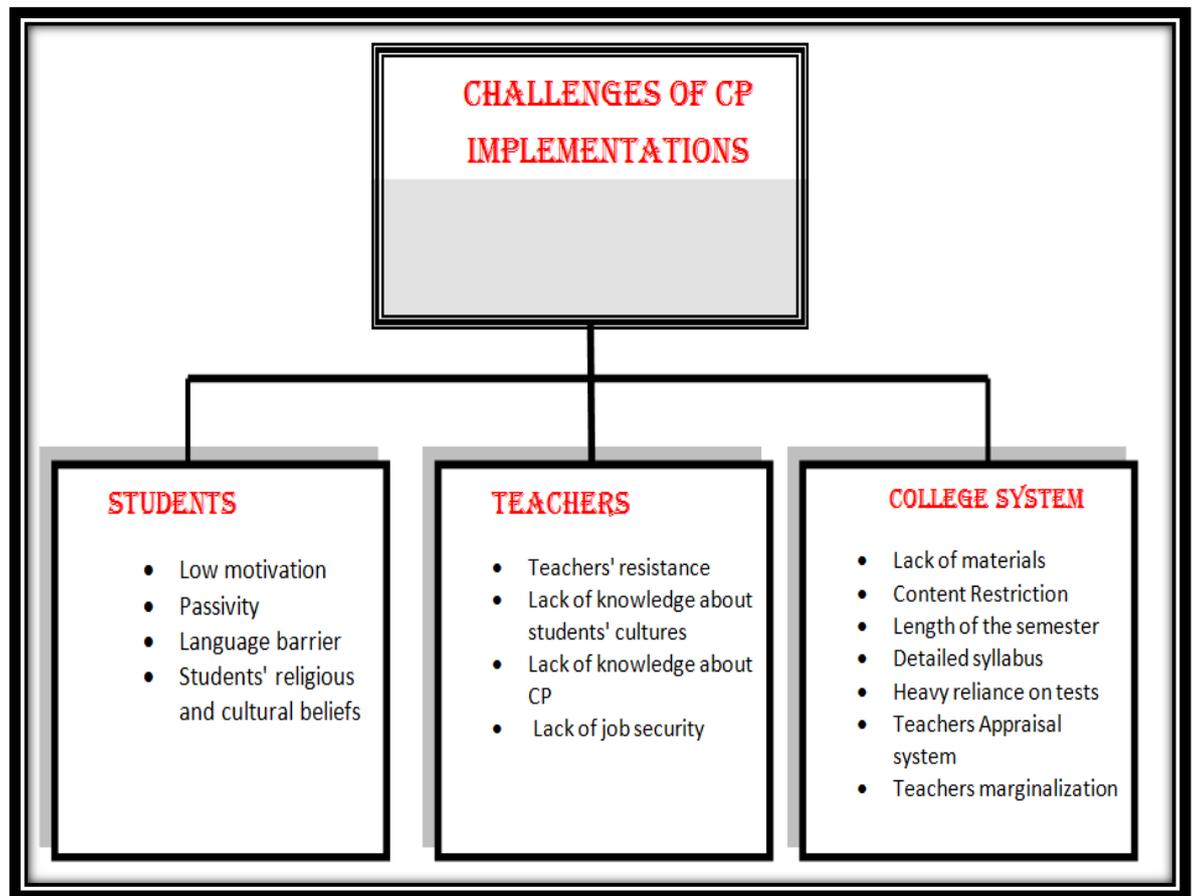


Figure 5.6 Challenges of implementing CP in the ELT in Oman

### 5.5.1 Challenges pertaining to students

This theme addresses the challenges of implementing CP related to students in the four colleges of technology. This theme includes the following sub-themes: students' low motivation, their passivity, their language barrier and their religious and cultural beliefs.

### 5.5.1.1 Low motivation

One of the challenges of implementing CP in ELT concerning learners, as teachers highlighted during the interview, is the low motivation of the students. This challenge was mentioned by the majority of the teachers during the interviews. Fatma said:

*"Our students are not motivated to learn English. They just have the chance to be here without having something clear in their minds. That's why we find many students careless, not responsible, they do not attend the class regularly, they do not do homework, and they do not show up in the classroom. We have a lot of problems because of the students' motivation."*

This is in line with other studies (Al-Issa, 2014, 2010; Khan, 2011) that underscore that one of the challenges faced by EFL teachers on a daily basis is students' lack of motivation to learn English. Teachers provided many reasons for the students' low motivation. For instance, some of them elaborated that students were demotivated because they did not appreciate the amount of money that the government was spending in order to qualify them and enable them to join the job market. It is worth mentioning that the students at the colleges of technology are studying completely free of charge and they are paid 90 Riyals (about 160 pounds) to help them with their living costs. Joseph nicely captured this by saying:

*"Motivation is a huge issue here in Oman because young people are getting spoiled by the government, which is being super-generous by even paying the money to go, getting expatriates of various education and backgrounds and putting*

*all these at their disposal and the students are not studying, which is really disappointing.”*

### **5.5.1.2 Students' passivity**

The passivity of the students was considered to be one of the challenges to implementing CP, as teachers expressed in the questionnaires and in the interviews. For example, one teacher stated in the questionnaire that *"the mindset of Omani students needs to be changed, as they are currently too closed-minded"* (Questionnaire 23). Similarly, Nasser said:

*"Our students are in general passive; they expect the teachers to do everything and they want the class to be over; they want the teachers to tell them what to do; they will do it and this is the end of the story ... They are not stupid, they are not lazy but they have grown up with the idea that the teacher knows better than them as students and the teacher has the whole power in the classroom."*

In the above extract, Nasser described the passivity of the students and their reluctance to learn or participate in the class. His extract also explained the reason behind their passivity, which was not stupidity or laziness, but was due to the banking model through which they had been educated in their schools, where the teacher is authoritarian, knowledgeable and powerful and their role as students was restricted to that of listeners or followers. Therefore, students depend too much on their teachers and they cannot learn independently. This corresponds to Chi's study (2011) and Grenier (2015) that emphasized the difficulties of

engaging students in discussing critical issues if they have been educated via the banking model.

Other teachers attributed students' passivity to their social backgrounds, where they were disempowered by society and by their parents. In a context like Oman, due to cultural and social norms, parents are sometimes responsible for taking serious decisions about their children's personal lives, such as marriage or academic life, like what to study at university. For instance, one teacher wrote in WEF that students are passive because they "*grow up with social norms that silence them*" (WEF 60). This corresponds to Ibrahim (2013), who found it difficult to implement CP with Egyptian EFL learners, since they felt powerless because of the way they were brought up in families that did not take their voice or opinions into consideration.

Others asserted that students' passivity could be attributed to their lack of information about the discussed topic, since they did not read and were not aware of the current issues taking place in their society. Thus, it would be difficult to implement CP. The following extract from Azza's interview summarizes this point:

*"I do not see any opportunity to enhance criticality within our students because such criticality needs students who read in order to be aware of many things. For example, I was teaching one of the courses for female students only and I asked them about the government efforts to support working women in Oman. Many students could not even express their ideas because they were not aware of such issues ... so, with this*

*kind of students, how would you expect them to engage deeply in discussing controversial issues and say their opinions?"*

This was seen to be true during most of the classroom observations. Students seemed passive and silent despite the fact that some teachers brought generative themes and asked critical and provoking questions. Indeed, despite all of the teachers' efforts, students were not engaged in the discussion and appeared uninterested most of the time, playing with their mobile phones or talking to each other. However, there was an exception to this during two lessons conducted by Nancy. Despite the students' passivity at the beginning of the lessons, she succeeded in engaging them in critical discussions about advertisements and poverty. I think she succeeded in achieving this for several reasons. First and most importantly, she used codification, bringing pictures that assisted students in visualizing and describing the issue. Second, she kept asking questions, paraphrasing them and building on students' responses, unlike other teachers, who did not paraphrase their questions or prompts during the discussion, so students remained silent. Third, she gave her students time to think about the issues individually and collectively in groups, yet other teachers appeared not to give students time and expected them to respond quickly. In line with the above, Sara believed that it all depended on the teacher and asserted that if the students were given a chance and time, they would be able to abandon their passivity and become critically engaged in the discussions. She maintained:

*"You give them the chance and they will come up with very good ideas. I remember two years back, there was news about the first bike riding club for women in Oman. It was a controversial issue. We as teachers could not bring this issue to our class, but the students themselves through the English Society in the college brought it in their weekly debate programme. I attended and I was amazed how students held the discussion. It was really interesting. We underestimate our students' ability. So they themselves implemented critical pedagogy."*

From the above, the discrepancy in the teachers' views towards students' passivity is evident in their responses. Previously, teachers stated that their students were passive and incapable of discussing things in depth. However, Nancy clearly demonstrated the role of the teacher in assisting students to engage in critical discussions. Sara also deemed students to have the capability to discuss things deeply, but stressed that they needed to be given the opportunity to show their criticality, and she mentioned an episode that showed students' awareness of issues surrounding them and their ability to look at them deeply and creatively.

### **5.5.1.3 Language barriers**

Not surprisingly, when teachers were asked about the challenges that they might encounter if they implemented CP, the majority considered students' low proficiency in English to be one of the main challenges. In the questionnaire, teachers mentioned that *"the low level of language proficiency can be one of the obstacles in effectively implementing this approach into the curriculum"* (Questionnaire 9). According to the

teachers who participated in this study, the majority of students in the colleges of technology cannot understand the most basic speech in English. Basma sarcastically asked, "*If our students do not decode the language, if they do not understand what 'apple' means, then what is the point of implementing CP?*" Therefore, from the teachers' perspectives, the students' weakness in English would hinder their ability to express their thoughts and opinions about the critical topics. This finding is aligned with the work of Ko and Wang (2009), who found that students' low proficiency in English in Taiwan prevented teachers from incorporating CP into their teaching. In this study, teachers perceived that having a good level of English would enhance the implementation of CP, since students might have opinions about the topics discussed but might be prevented from expressing them because of their poor language proficiency. For example, the following excerpt from Fatma's interview elucidates this point:

*"I do not think critical pedagogy is applicable in our college because of the low levels of the students, their English proficiency. They are not able to discuss such complicated questions."*

However, looking at the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, the discrepancy in their opinion is clearly observed: 61% of the teachers agreed that students can be engaged in dialogue regardless of their level of proficiency and 23% strongly agreed with this (refer to Appendix 22). In contrast, in the interviews, teachers maintained that students' low

proficiency in English is deemed to be a vital factor influencing the implementation of CP. It is noteworthy that Omani students are obliged to study English regardless of their interest or specializations because of the EMI policy implemented in tertiary education in Oman.

#### **5.5.1.4 Students' religious beliefs and cultures**

Another challenge stated by the teachers is the students' religious beliefs as Muslims, which prevent teachers from discussing sensitive issues. This is in tune with Khuwaileh's study in Jordan (2000) where students resisted discussing topics such as AIDS and contraception in ELT classrooms because of their religious beliefs as Muslims. In the current study, this challenge arose repeatedly in the qualitative parts of the teachers' questionnaire responses: they mentioned "*students' religious tradition*" (questionnaire 7), "*it explores some sensitive issues to students' religion: gender, sexuality*" (Questionnaire 16), "*students' religious background*" (Questionnaire 25), "*religious background*" (Questionnaire 28), "*the rigid religious norms*" (Questionnaire 33). The reason might be attributed to the fact that CP addresses unchallenged beliefs and assumptions, which is taboo in Arab cultures as teachers have been told by their administrators, colleagues or students (Hudson, 2013). According to Akbari (2008b), expatriate teachers' dealing with sensitive topics in some Arab and Muslim countries can be dangerous and risky, due to certain religious interpretations of such topics.

It seems that teachers had acquired a partial understanding of CP, which is about liberation in all aspects. However, CP as an approach has the capacity to be localised and modified in order to suit the learners' context (McLaren, 2005; Smith, 2013), and teachers can utilize CP without addressing sensitive issues. Therefore, teachers need to introduce suitable discussion topics at the beginning, as this will enhance deeper implementation of more sensitive issues later on. Nancy expressed this by saying:

*"Learners may resist the discussion of certain issues at first, but the introduction of suitable ones will facilitate their acceptance of much deeper concerns"*

On the other hand, other teachers said that CP cannot be implemented with Arab learners, since they are not trained to be reflective. For instance, in the questionnaire, one teacher wrote, *"this approach is more for western cultures where students know how to reflect. It is hard in Arab world; we do not have the culture of reflection"* (Questionnaire 2). The same comment was mentioned in the interview by Azza, an Omani teacher, who thought that this approach was applicable for western students but not for Arab learners. I took the interview further in order to confront Azza with her assumptions about Arab learners:

*I: You said this approach is not adequate for our Arab students, since we are not trained to be reflective. How did you know that?*

*Azza: Whenever I participate in international workshops where we are asked to reflect on ourselves via writing, drawing or sometimes orally, I figured out that I as an Arab learner take longer and really do not find my way through the activities because I am not used to such tasks. Arabs in general, this culture is newly introduced to them and for them to do such reflection they need a lot of time.*

*I: But we have one Islamic principle saying clearly that we need to be reflective in our life.*

*Azza: Yes, I totally agree, but it is not practised. I do not know why. Do not ask why because I do not have an answer.*

The above exchange between Azza and me clearly demonstrated the general stereotypical assumptions teachers might make about Muslim and Arab learners. When the teacher was confronted about reflection being one of the basic tenets of Islamic principles, this teacher was unable to elaborate and preferred to stop the conversation about the issue, saying "*Do not ask why because I do not have an answer*". There could be many reasons for such responses. First, teachers might have experienced in their daily teaching that it is hard to involve Omani students in reflective activities where they are required to question and construct their own understandings. Second, over the years it seems that some issues, like different gender roles, have such deep roots in Arab culture that they are often accepted as Islamic rules (Chandella, 2011). That is to say that many issues in Oman and other Arab countries have been constructed from cultural practices rather than from Islamic commands (ibid) and they have been carried on in society to the present day as being parts of Islam.

This might prevent teachers from realizing that there is no contradiction between Islamic principles and criticality, including questioning and problematizing (refer to Chapter 3).

On the other hand, a minority of teachers could look at CP in a broader way and emphasized that CP and Islamic principles were interrelated in one way or another. For instance, Saif maintained that Muslim religious beliefs did not conflict with CP, since both aim to improve people's lives through seeking knowledge and critically looking at this knowledge. They both reject the passive absorption of technical knowledge. He stated:

*"I believe, as you said in your workshop, that we have a role in this life. I cannot remember the exact verse but basically we are required as Muslims to build the earth and we cannot do that without seeking knowledge that helps in doing that ...we have our mind to think and rethink about the things around us. We are required to explore the world, to understand the world."*

### **5.5.2 Challenges pertaining to teachers**

This part of the chapter discusses the challenges to implementing CP in the ELT realm in Oman that are related to teachers. Various sub-themes emerged from the data and were theorized by the teachers who participated in this study. Hence, this theme consists of the following sub-themes: teachers' resistance, lack of knowledge about students' cultures, lack of knowledge about CP and teachers' lack of job security.

### **5.5.2.1 Teachers' resistance**

One of the main challenges to implementing CP is teachers' resistance. This is to say that teachers might be reluctant to apply CP because they have been teaching English for years using mainstream methods (refer to Section 5.2.5). They feel comfortable and safe with the methods they are used to using. According to Zimmerman (2006), some teachers resist change because it requires them to improve or develop new skills where they might not feel secure, so they prefer to continue teaching in the same ways where they feel safe and comfortable. Similarly, in this study, teachers maintained that it is often just easier to rely on their familiar teaching methods than to introduce CP in their classes. For instance, David stated that:

*"Initially teachers might be stressed out and resistance will be there. Every teacher has a mindset and they might ask 'why should I introduce CP? I am happy with what I am doing, I am getting my students to pass and there is no failure, so I am a good teacher for years without implementing CP. Why should I learn a new thing and start implementing it?' So I think teachers' resistance will be one of the main challenges."*

### **5.5.2.2 Lack of knowledge about students' cultures**

Some teachers considered that one of the challenges that they would face if they wanted to implement CP would be their limited knowledge of the socio-cultural issues that Omani students are interested in, or whether there was a need to challenge students' assumptions about them in order to achieve a better life or change the society. This is because one of the

main tenets of CP is to empower learners through basing teaching on students' cultures. For example, Don said:

*"As an expatriate, the main challenge is to go into the culture because culture is not stated in a handbook or manual. It is something that you learn as you go along. Say there are some cultural norms I am not familiar with and I am still looking into that aspect - so cultural awareness will play a very important role if all teachers are able to embrace - because the success of CP would depend on our awareness of the cultures."*

In the above extract, Don underlined an important aspect about cultures, which is the difficulty of learning them. It is not a matter of being aware of the topics and norms but of embracing them, which requires a long time. To overcome this issue, some teachers put forward suggestions such as conducting orientation programmes to make foreign teachers aware of the Omani culture, especially given that the current situation in most ELCs reveals orientation programmes that are short and need a lot of improvement (see Chapter 2 Section 2.2.6). Nasra described this by saying:

*"We need to do a lot of things. We need to conduct a lot of orientation programmes in order to make teachers aware of the Omani culture and make it clear to them what is acceptable and what is not acceptable."*

Nonetheless, from the extract above, it seems that what Nasra proposed emphasizes the technicality of such orientation programmes, whose focus is on 'what is acceptable and what is not acceptable'. This might not be

particularly helpful, taking into consideration the point made by Don that culture cannot be packed into a manual that describes the taboos in the Omani culture: it must be embraced within the society. Therefore, ELT Omani teachers were worried about implementing CP by expatriate teachers who are not fully knowledgeable of Omani culture. For instance, Saif, an Omani teacher, said:

*"But thinking about the current ELT here in my college, I think it is difficult for expatriate teachers to do. I can do it as Omani because I understand the culture very well. So if we want to bring changes to our students' lives, we need to make sure that these foreigners understand our culture."*

Looking at the above extract, one can clearly observe a demarcation line between 'We' ('Omani' teachers) and 'Other' - '*these foreigners*' who need to familiarize themselves with Omani culture. Reflecting back on my experience as a teacher in one of these colleges, Omani ELT teachers and administrators rarely made efforts to help expatriate teachers understand our culture. The most frequent endeavour related to teaching our culture was telling foreign teachers about our taboos. Therefore, instead of making efforts to better introduce expatriate teachers to Omani culture, Ahmed, another Omani ELT teacher, suggested hiring more Omanis in ELCs, as there are currently very few of them compared to the number of teachers from other nationalities. He said: *"I think we need more Omani teachers in our ELC and currently the number of Omani*

*teachers is very low*". Employing more Omanis could be a way to implement CP in the ELT system in the four colleges. However, currently Oman does not have this choice, as there is still a lack of qualified Omani ELT teachers and it seems that the dependence on expatriate teachers who lack knowledge of Omani culture will continue. Therefore, some participants in this study emphasized the point that teachers themselves should be committed to learn about students' cultures. Joseph stated that:

*"A teacher should be responsible for learning about students' cultures. A teacher should educate himself about the culture where he teaches and do some fieldwork or read about the culture on the Internet."*

### **5.5.2.3 Teachers' lack of knowledge about CP**

Another teacher-related challenge to implementing CP is teachers' limited knowledge of CP. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Norooziasiam and Soozandehfar (2011), who found that although ELT Iranian teachers had positive attitudes towards CP, one of the obstacles they faced was their inadequate knowledge of CP. Teachers in the current study reported that they were still not confident in using CP, since this approach was new for them. They stated that a three-hour workshop was not sufficient to make them fully capable of implementing CP. For example, Emran maintained:

*"We need first to understand this approach in a better way. One workshop for three hours is not enough. We need a series of workshops with more practical activities on how to do it in the classroom."*

Likewise, after I had observed her class, Nancy clearly expressed that her lack of knowledge about CP made her feel uncomfortable and expressed a need for more workshops in order for the teachers to be able to implement it successfully. She stated:

*"The application of CP in both lessons was a bit uncomfortable because of the newness of the approach. In my previous lessons, the contents in the Course Delivery Plan were the main focus of the delivery and the approach was secondary. Thus, in both lessons, it felt like I tried hard and felt self-conscious in incorporating the approach. I think we teachers need to be trained extensively to effectively implement this."*

The teachers' insistence on the need for more workshops on CP in order to be able to implement it reflects the centralized system that prevails in Oman, whereby teachers have become accustomed to having professional development provided in the form of formal training courses (AL Lamki, 2009). Amal, in the following extract, agreed that teachers needed to widen their knowledge about CP. Nonetheless, from her perspective, the teachers should not wait for workshops; rather, they themselves should independently enrich their knowledge of CP through reading about the approach and sharing best practices with their colleagues. This is to say, Amal asserted the need for the teachers

themselves and their colleagues to take responsibility for broadening their knowledge about CP. She stated that:

*"We need to read deeply about this approach, since it is new for most of us. You gave us a very good start, now it's our role to read more about it, so we can enhance our knowledge about it. Besides, as teachers, we can sit together and discuss it in order to increase our awareness about it."*

Amal's point was that the teachers should be regarded as accountable and intellectual individuals who could find ways to widen their knowledge about teaching methods and approaches. Basma had a similar perspective with regard to sharing practice as the best way to widen teachers' knowledge of CP. She said:

*"If we really believe in critical pedagogy, we need as teachers to sit together and share our ideas. We need to share best practice before we go and discuss critical issues with our students."*

Sofia had a similar perspective with regard to looking at teachers as individuals who are responsible for their own development, but in a different way. Sofia highlighted the need to get rid of the technicalities when teachers are trained regarding teaching methods. She emphasized that the focus of current workshops was to equip teachers with skills that they could use in their classes. However, from her perspective, the teachers' training workshops should concentrate on encouraging teachers to think. In other words, these training programmes should look at the role

of the teachers as transformative intellectuals who are able to think rather than information implementers who apply what they have been given. She summarized her view by saying:

*"The traditional way of conducting workshops that focus on one skill is not sufficient at all because teachers should be trained to think as ones who have the capabilities of thinking big but stepping small."*

#### **5.5.2.4 Teachers' lack of job security**

Another reported challenge related to teachers is their insecure status in the colleges. This is because the current employment system in the colleges of technology, especially for expatriates, depends on annual contract renewal. This means that teachers might not feel secure in the colleges, since their contracts may or may not be renewed towards the end of the year. Therefore, teachers might not feel committed to their work in the colleges and were always looking for other opportunities with greater job security. Ahmed clearly expressed this:

*"There is no stability in the college, so we cannot sustain a good level of teaching and learning. Teachers come and go. As a teacher you need to feel secure and that this is a good place for you to stay. Especially, we have an annual contract system, so these teachers are continually searching for a better place and for good chances for themselves, so whenever they find a good opportunity, they will grab it."*

CP requires preparation, familiarizing oneself with the students' culture and understanding their needs and concerns, but it seems that due to the

teachers' lack of security in the colleges, they could not achieve these requirements. This is because familiarization with Omani culture takes a long time, and by the time teachers have become familiar with it, they have to move to another place. The following extract from David's interview exemplifies this point:

*"Most expatriate teachers need a long time to customize with the culture, especially the Islamic norms and gender segregation, but the moment they settle down, they leave."*

The above analysis clearly shows that the teachers' lack of job security due to the colleges' employment policy could hinder the implementation of CP, which needs significant commitment from the teachers' side to try it and continue doing it (refer to Section 5.3.4). However, if the teachers do not feel secure or settled, how can they be expected to be committed to improving learning and teaching experiences for their students and for themselves?

### **5.5.3 Challenges pertaining to the college system**

It is worth mentioning that challenges related to administration were mentioned very frequently in teachers' responses when they were asked about the challenges of implementing CP. This could be due to the fact that in the top-down system which is implemented in the four colleges, teachers seem to be powerless and marginalized. This theme includes the

following sub-themes: lack of materials, content restriction, length of the semester, detailed syllabus, heavy reliance on tests, teachers' appraisal system and teachers' marginalization.

### **5.5.3.1 Lack of materials**

As in the work of Garcia-Gonzalez (2000) and Noroozi Siam and Soozandehfar (2011), materials featured highly on teachers' list of challenges to the implementation of CP. A plausible explanation may be that the current materials used in the ELCs were ready-made materials imported from the centre, mainly the UK and the USA, which did not correspond to the students' needs or concerns. Joseph sarcastically criticized the continued use of these ready-made materials over several years, which did not add any advantage to the students:

*"We have been using various textbooks, such as Interchange, Headway, Atlas, and so many other textbooks. However, to be honest, we could not see any headway. We need to customize the materials to be able to implement critical pedagogy."*

Another teacher, Nasser, reported a similar view about the ready-made materials being a main challenge to the implementation of CP. However, he added that these materials continued to discuss artificial topics that did not match the goals of CP. This is in harmony with Gray (2002, 2010) and Akbari (2008a), who found that imported ELT textbooks used artificial topics and avoided controversial issues, and these issues and topics form

a central part of CP. The next excerpt from Nasser's interview clearly highlights this challenge.

*"The problem is that we are using ready materials and I do not want to say that we are outdated but we have fixed topics, we have been teaching them for ages, they are not up to date."*

Likewise, Suzan in the post-observation discussion, asserted that materials were a big challenge for her when she implemented CP because she had to search for materials, which required too much preparation time.

She asserted that:

*"I found it challenging to look for materials that would help me use CP. It also took a lot of time for me to search for suitable topics that would relate with students' own experiences."*

This means that teachers need a lot of time, effort and knowledge in order to be able to adapt the current materials to match the CP premises. On the other hand, Aysha asserted that although the materials could be a challenge for teachers they would still be able to implement CP without preparing materials from scratch. She said it would be a matter of linking what was in the textbook to students' cultures and contexts: then, the teacher could take the discussion further by questioning and raising students' awareness of the things around them.

*"So sometimes you do not need to prepare the materials from scratch, you need to relate what is in the textbook to students' cultures and lives. For example, 'this is in the USA, what about Oman? Have you experienced this? How did you feel about it? What do you think of this and that? Do you agree with it? Why? Why not?' So, still with the current materials we have, teachers*

*can bring CP into their classroom without printing new materials."*

Another teacher, Saif, echoed what Aysha stated about the materials not being an issue if teachers knew how to adapt them to meet the CP tenets. He emphasized that teachers were given freedom to perform in the classroom and to use the materials in ways that matched their philosophy and the students' needs.

*"We have the freedom to do what we want to do inside the classroom. We are not 100% following the curriculum; we can still adapt some activities in the textbooks to do CP."*

To conclude, materials were deemed to be one of the challenges that teachers might encounter if they implemented CP due to the ready-made materials used in the colleges of technology. This is because these materials discuss topics that are artificial or irrelevant to students' needs and cultures. In addition, teachers highlighted the difficulties in finding proper materials that corresponded to CP, since this required considerable time and massive effort from their side to prepare such critical materials. In contrast, other teachers did not consider materials as a big issue, as teachers could still utilize the same materials in the textbook, but in a way that met the principles of CP, by linking them to their students' context and building on them to discuss issues in depth, especially when there were no restrictions on what teachers could do in the classroom. Nonetheless,

other teachers believed that there was restriction in terms of what the teachers could discuss in their classes, which was considered a challenge to the implementation of CP, as I portray in the next sub-section.

### **5.5.3.2 Content restriction**

According to participants in this study, content restriction was one of the challenges to implementing CP in ELT in Oman. They elaborated that the contents, such as politics or the students' culture, presented restrictions.

Sofia expressed this by saying:

*"I think the content language teaching in Oman is restricted to a great extent: no politics, no religion and sex etc. This restriction of content works against the local culture, development and education of the students."*

Although Sofia clearly stated that content restriction was a challenge, she fully understood that this restriction was due to the fact that ELT was performed by teachers of various nationalities who had different backgrounds and purposes. She said, *"I understand the reasons behind this restriction; the teaching is done by different people who have different backgrounds and intentions"*. Correspondingly, Emran also believed that content restriction was one of the challenges to putting CP into practice. He agreed with Sofia that the reason behind such restrictions was the fact that ELCs had teachers of various nationalities who were instructed by the

administration to stay away from discussing cultural issues. He summarized this by saying:

*"In all colleges, especially at ELCs, we have different nationalities, so the management, to be on the safe side, try to avoid pedagogy that is related to the culture in order - how can I say this? - for these managements unfortunately everything related to culture is taboo. Do not talk about it! Because they are afraid of changing the ideologies or beliefs of the students."*

On the other hand, other teachers believed that content restriction in ELT was not sensible, since students had access to different ideologies and information via various channels, including TV, the internet, electronic games etc. For instance, Basma maintained that:

*"I don't understand such content restriction here in the college. Let's talk about PlayStation for boys. Many ideas are being introduced there - the dress, the ideologies of dating, boyfriend and girlfriend; let's talk about movies and cinema. Let's talk about the internet and the kind of things that are open for all students to watch in different websites. In order to make our students aware of all these topics and their ideologies, I think we need to address such taboo topics via CP and it is better to come from us as teachers because we can model things to our students."*

### **5.5.3.3 Length of the semester**

This challenge was mentioned repeatedly by the participants in the study, who thought the length of the semesters, which is ten weeks, was not sufficient for teaching English in general and implementing CP in particular. The participants' comments seem to fully corroborate the findings of earlier studies in this regard too (Al-Issa, 2006; Tanveer, 2013).

One can immediately question what kind of learning and teaching would take place in ten weeks, including one week for the final exams. In addition, within these nine weeks, students need a week or two to settle into their classrooms and a week or more will be taken up by midterm exams and quizzes. This leaves six weeks or less for actual teaching, which is really questionable in terms of students' ability to learn enough to move up to another level within the four-level system implemented in these colleges. The participants in this study argued that CP, which is supposed to aim at raising students' awareness of their society and the world, requires sufficient time to do activities that achieve this aim. Saif illustrated this by saying:

*"One of the challenges is time. We have here in the colleges three semesters and each semester is ten weeks, including the exam week, so teachers cannot spend time on discussing social issues or current issues in one class. At least, teachers need three classes in order to confidently raise students' awareness and with the current semester length this is impossible. We have the issue of time because if we implement CP, then we will do it in rush and this won't accomplish the aim of the CP."*

Like Saif, Nasra considered that the length of the semester was one of the challenges of implementing CP. She had concerns that students could not learn anything in less than ten weeks. She explained this view in the following interview extract:

*"With the current system, when students are about to learn something, we end the semester. So ten and even less than ten*

*weeks - taking into account that one week for is allocated for the exam - is not sufficient. Students even do not have time to practice."*

From the above, it is clear that the semester length is a real challenge to teachers' ability to implement CP. This is because CP as an approach requires teachers to negotiate the topics with the students, giving them time to think and rethink about their opinions, basing their teaching on dialogical methods and raising students' awareness of the world. One will question how teachers would manage to teach the current intensive syllabus required by the college at each level within the time available, which is only eight weeks.

#### **5.5.3.4 Detailed syllabus**

Teachers expressed that one of the challenges to implementing CP was the detailed syllabus they were required to complete. Teachers were given descriptive details by the system, including what to teach week by week. Teachers within a level (pre-elementary, elementary, intermediate and advanced) conducted meetings every two weeks to ensure that everyone was following the syllabus and that they were covering all the topics at the same time. This meant teachers become more concerned with maintaining the flow of their teaching and keeping pace with other teachers regarding the content to be taught than with the actual learning of the students. In addition, such a detailed syllabus restricted teachers' freedom to choose

what to teach their students. For instance, one teacher wrote in the questionnaire:

*"We are constrained by the syllabus in that we have to finish all the topics that are mentioned in the delivery plan, so teachers will say, 'instead of implementing CP, it is better to finish what I am required to do in this plan'" (Questionnaire 26)*

However, some teachers believed that the detailed syllabus was not a challenge, since teachers were only required to meet the outcomes, which means that they could design their own materials to meet these outcomes. The following excerpt from Aysha's interview indicated that, although they were given a detailed syllabus, teachers could still exercise power over it and design their own materials if they wanted. She said:

*"We are not required to teach the textbook from A to Z. We do as teachers have the freedom to adapt things if we want to. We always prepare our own handouts as supplementary materials. We do need to teach the vocabulary from the textbooks, but we have something wider called the outcomes and here the role of the teacher comes in: if he wants to use critical pedagogy, he or she can use the same vocabulary, grammatical structures but bring a passage that meets the critical pedagogy."*

### **5.5.3.5 Heavy reliance on tests**

The hegemony of the banking model, as explained previously in this chapter (Section 5.2.3), means that assessment is heavily reliant on tests. Therefore, some teachers thought that implementing CP would be impossible within the ELC's assessment system, which mainly involves tests and quizzes. From the teachers' perspective, there was a huge focus

on testing, which led one teacher, Linda, to sarcastically state that: "*We have midterm exams and final exams in less than ten weeks and we also have quizzes in between, so we are not teaching, we are testing*". This concentration on testing as a way to assess students meant that they became grade-oriented and cared more about getting good marks than about their actual learning. Thus, Don questioned the usage of CP, which aims for lifelong learning, under a system with such a great emphasis on tests, which form over 80% of the students' assessment:

*"So these students that we have right now, they are aiming for high marks ..., for them it is marks that matter, so what is the point of doing CP that aims for lifelong learning?"*

Similar to Ali and Al Ajmi's study (2013) on ELT teachers' perceptions of the current assessment in HE institutions in Oman, the participants in the current study expressed their dissatisfaction with the current way of assessment and saw a need for revising and updating it. Consequently, some teachers in this study endorsed the need to implement some aspects of critical language testing in the ELT system in Oman in order to get away from the banking model. For example, Joseph opined, when reviewing the current approach to assessment:

*"Currently we test the content and students' ability to memorize. We need to change this. We need to introduce some of the critical language testing tenets, so students need to be given at least ten or fifteen topics to choose from them. We do not limit them with one or two topics."*

Despite the great focus on tests, some teachers still believed that CP could be implemented if the college community believed in its premises and aims. They believed that teachers played a significant role in shaping students' understanding about learning in the college by highlighting to students the importance of college life. The next extract from Basma's interview demonstrates this point:

*"There are some teachers who start their teaching by telling their students 'if you do this you will pass and if you do that you will fail.' So if you start your teaching in this way, then the students will be mark-oriented, but if you start your teaching by knowing their dreams, their concerns and their plans in life, you can help them in doing this. You make them aware that language is a means to do this and is not everything"*

However, observing the teachers in the classrooms revealed that they themselves reminded students about tests and the importance of studying for them to the extent that some of them allotted time in the lessons to prepare students for the midterm exam. For example, Salima allotted almost twenty minutes to revise for the test through asking students to give her the synonyms or antonyms for the words she was calling out. In addition, Basma dedicated about ten minutes in her class to conducting a quiz that asked students for the meanings of words without providing any context. It seems that the tests are inherently rooted in the ELT system in the four colleges to the extent that teachers set aside parts of the lesson for revision and provided students with handouts that trained them to

answer similar questions to those that may come up in the tests, as classroom observations indicated. A possible explanation for this might be that these classroom observations were conducted the week before the midterm exams, so teachers wanted to train students for the types of question that they might get. In addition, the teachers' appraisal system in these colleges partially depends on the opinions of the students, who were eager for good results that would allow them to move to the next stage.

### **5.5.3.6 Teachers' appraisal system**

It is worth mentioning that the teachers' appraisal system was crucial for ELT teachers because it determined whether they would continue to be employed in the college or whether their contracts would be terminated. The teachers' appraisal system was done by ticking off certain criteria (refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.2.6). Therefore, some teachers believed that if they implemented CP, it would be hard for them to achieve a good evaluation, which could cause their termination from the college. Sofia expressed this by saying:

*"If I am an excellent critical teacher but my class observation gives very low marks, then I am going to lose my job, if my head of department is not a very broad-minded person who understands what is going on in my class and what I am trying to do with my students, I would be marked and assessed with very low marks because I did not meet with some standards and expectations because my observer who has no idea about CP comes with a list of boxes to tick and he would say 'I did not see this or I did not see that'."*

From the above, it seems that the appraisal system limited the scope within which the teachers could implement CP. This is because it did not give credit to the teachers' criticality, as Sofia expressed. What is more, the teachers were observed once or twice for evaluative purposes, not for developmental goals, which means that attending a single class with a teacher might cause their continuation or their termination from the college. Therefore, the teachers were worried that implementing CP might result in their getting low marks if they were assessed using the current structured evaluation form where the focus was on classroom management and the teaching of the materials in technical ways. According to Fobes and Kaufman (2008), such standardized teaching evaluations that are rooted in measurable criteria prevent teachers from using creativity and innovation, which are key elements of CP.

In addition, part of the appraisal system was the students' evaluation, which could also determine teachers' future in the college. According to Jack, some students did not like teaching through dialogue and preferred to be spoon-fed with information and trained for the tests. Thus, implementing some of CP's premises, which required them to work, research and continuously ask questions, might lead to low scores in teachers' appraisal forms. Therefore, teachers continued to focus on what the students wanted, which was to pass the exit exam. He maintained:

*"You know our students: they do not want to work hard. They like an easy job, they come to class, take some handouts to*

*study for the tests and pass to the next level. Bringing discussion about controversial issues that requires a lot of thinking and hard work might not match their ability. So, at the end, they are going to rate you as a teacher very low, which may affect your existence in the college."*

Therefore, some teachers believed that, for CP to be implemented, it must be incorporated by the whole system and be supported by the ministry that is responsible for setting the aims and objectives of ELT, a system in which teachers are completely marginalized.

### **5.5.3.7 Teachers' marginalization**

Throughout the process of analyzing the data, there has been ample evidence of teachers' marginalization in ELT in tertiary education in the four colleges. It is interesting to see that although the teachers participating in this study differed in age, years of experience, nationality and educational background, the majority felt that they were powerless in decisions related to how and what to teach. This means that, if CP is to be implemented, it should be supported by the whole system, not only by the teachers, who are voiceless. Teachers experience oppression due to a rigid hierarchical system. For example, in the questionnaire, one teacher responded to the question about the potential of CP in ELT by saying: "*It depends on the management to decide*" (Questionnaire 34). Similarly, Ahmed mentioned in the interview that, in Oman: "*We have a central education system. If you want to implement a new thing, you need a long*

*process and at the end you cannot guarantee their agreement".*

Therefore, this top-down system seems to leave teachers marginalized and disempowered. They themselves cannot propose the usage of CP: it should start at the Ministry level. Don succinctly illustrated this by saying:

*"It has to do with continuously looking at the bigger framework first because the teachers cannot do a lot of things because they follow the guidelines of the framework."*

Don's usage of words such as 'cannot' and 'follow' indicates the powerlessness felt by teachers in the ELT system in the four colleges. In other words, teachers perceived their role as passive technicians who implemented what they were told. Likewise, Ahmed shared the same opinion as Don about the limitations of what teachers could do and about the need to gain approval and support from the Ministry in order to implement CP. What is more, Ahmed believed that the teachers' perspectives were not taken into consideration by the decision makers (elite). In addition, he maintained that the Ministry repeatedly neglected teachers' voice in the choice of materials, which made them feel that they had little or no influence. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Mullick (2014), who found that ELT teachers' voices in Saudi Arabia were totally ignored because of the top-down approach. Ahmed expressed this by saying:

*"I think if we want to implement CP, it should come from the Ministry because teachers cannot do a lot; they do not consider*

*our opinions whenever we ask for something... they completely rejected what we suggest because they prefer to follow ready-made materials they import from the USA or the UK."*

From the above, the teachers' frustration can be felt via words such as "they do not consider our opinions" and " they completely rejected what we suggest ". What is more, the teachers felt that the Ministry continuously and deliberately favoured the Anglo-Saxon materials, which may result in feelings of disempowerment and inferiority. Hence, the teacher's role was limited to one of implementer of orders coming from the top. Their role as transformative intellectuals, constant analyzers and sceptical questioners of what and how they teach seems to be somehow missing from the four colleges. The following response from the interview with one of the teachers, Suzan, explains this view clearly:

*"As you mentioned in the workshop, teachers need to be intellectually transformative, aiming to bring a change to the place where they teach. I do not feel such spirit in the ELC and the majority of the teachers do not really have the spirit to do something new and I feel we are not encouraged to share our own experience with other teachers because the focus is on teaching only."*

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an analysis of the data gathered from ELT teachers in four HE institutions in Oman through questionnaires, WEFs, lesson plans, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and

post-observation discussions with teachers. The findings revealed that the majority of the teachers were not aware of CP before the intervention (the article and the workshop). However, after the intervention, some teachers realized that they were using CP without knowing the term. This means that the workshop and the article helped them to be conscious of the technical term of the activities that they had implemented with their students where they aimed to create a change in their life. The analysis of the data also indicated that ELT teachers had various attitudes towards CP. While a majority of teachers fully agreed with it, some were wary about it and others were undecided for various reasons detailed in this chapter. The teachers also expressed the huge potential of implementing CP in Oman, but identified various challenges that they might encounter if they wished to implement it. These results will be discussed further in the coming chapter with reference to the aim of this study, the Omani context and the existing literature.

## Chapter Six: Discussion of the Findings

*"We as teachers are the front line as enablers of our students' empowerment. If we do not provide the space, and honor their dignity, our students cannot claim and embrace their power."*

(Wachob, 2009, pp.1-2)

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the major findings reported in the preceding chapter and relates them to the critical agenda of this study and the currently existing literature. To reiterate, the general aim of this study is to introduce concepts of Critical Pedagogy (CP) to ELT teachers at tertiary institutions in Oman. This overall aim is brought to fulfillment by several separate objectives: (1) to examine to what extent current ELT teachers at tertiary level are aware of the central tenets of CP, (2) to introduce CP to them through an action research methodology, (3) to explore their attitudes towards its implementation, and (4) to investigate the feasibilities and challenges of actualising CP in the ELT system at tertiary level. However, according to McLaren (2005, p. 33), "it is impossible to disclose all the operative principles of critical pedagogy [CP]" due to its multifaceted nature and its capacity to be modified according to its users' contexts and understandings. Thus, it is impossible for my study to cover all theoretical

principles related to CP. Therefore, I selected some tenets that I felt could be relevant to the Omani context, namely: education as a political enterprise, nature of knowledge, education for empowerment, education for transformation, integrating the world in the classroom, and the meaning of 'critical' within the CP framework. To this end, this chapter discusses the main issues suggested by the key findings of the study's four research questions. The first issue is related to the 'technicality' of the ELT system in the four colleges, while the second issue is related to the legitimacy of CP implementation. The third issue discusses the ELT teachers' limited understanding of CP after the intervention. The fourth issue portrays how the teacher is considered to be the crucial factor in the success of CP application; while the final issue is about the contextual factors that inhibit the implementation of CP. This chapter also provides a visual model to introduce CP in the ELT in Oman based on the research findings.

## **6.2 The 'technicality' of the ELT realm in higher education**

The first key finding is the strong suggestion arising from the data that the ELT system is dominated by technicality, where language is viewed as a mechanical enterprise (Al Issa, 2015; Luke & Dooley, 2009). The hegemony of mainstream methods and assumptions, such as communicative language teaching, the neglecting of students' L1, the packaged materials that do not take students' needs and interests into

account, the heavy reliance on tests, especially international tests such as TOEFL/ILETS, the passivity of students and the perception of teachers as implementers of policies, are all signs of this technicality that appears in the findings of this study. These echo the findings that appeared in other Omani ELT studies (Al Issa, 2015, 2014; Tanveer, 2013; Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Al Mahrooqi, 2012). It also unfortunately appears in the whole educational system in Oman (Al Issa, 2010; Al Nabahani, 2007) and the Arab World in general (Abu-Shomar, 2013; Nasser, Abu-Nimer & Mahmoud, 2014; Faour & Muasher, 2011; Masri & Wilkens, 2011). Therefore, few teachers in this study believe that Omani students are not ready for learning via CP, which makes some teachers, like Don, endorse the necessity for developing students' critical thinking and questioning skills before introducing CP at the tertiary level. This is in line with Belchamber (2013) and Pishghadam and Naji Meidani (2012), who maintain the need to develop students' skills for contesting ideas prior to introducing CP. This means launching criticality within the Omani educational system from the students' early years so that, when they reach HE, they would be ready to develop the basic skills to further their criticality. Unfortunately, despite massive investment in the educational system in Oman via constant reforms, the emphasis in schools is still on the neutral transmission of knowledge whereby students are trained to memorize and pass exams (AL Issa, 2010; Al Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). Disappointingly, it seems that the Omani Government's efforts for the past

forty-five years in constructing more schools, incorporating technology, producing more textbooks, bringing more international tests (such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), TOEFL & IELTS) and international consultants to think instead of Omanis of how to develop their educational system, have not produced critical citizens. This reflects educational imperialism (Khan, 2009) that occurs when developing countries like Oman borrow blindly from inner circle countries. By doing so, Oman sacrifices the quality of producing citizens who are able to think and initiate changes, and this negatively affects the economic and social growth of the whole country (Al-Issa, 2015, 2014). This is because the current era “requires levels of skills and judgment far beyond those involved in standardized test scores and simply delivering someone else’s prescribed curriculum” (Hargreaves, 2003, p.66). Therefore, one can argue that it is imperative for Oman to revisit its education philosophies and practices in general, and ELT in particular, in order to make CP a legitimate approach, as the next section elucidates.

### **6.3 The legitimacy of critical pedagogy in ELT in Oman**

Although most of the sample teachers were introduced to CP for the first time, most of them deem it as a legitimate approach in ELT. The reasons behind such an attitude are its ability to create a better generation who are prepared for dialogue and welcome different perspectives. It also assists

students to observe and negotiate problems from various points of views, resulting in students being critical yet tolerant of the 'Other'. This confirms Habbash and Troudi's (2015) perspective that raising students' critical awareness of their culture and other cultures in ELT classrooms will assist them "to better develop an attitude of tolerance and respect towards difference" (p.73). I would argue that we need such criticality and acceptance of the 'Other' now more than at any other time since the Middle East is undergoing so many social, economic and political conflicts (Rautins & Ibrahim, 2011, p.25). In a similar vein, Abu-Shomar (2013) contends that, due to the 'Arab Spring' which has brought new discourses of democracy, freedom and equality in the region, implementing a pedagogy of possibility, imagination, hope and social change becomes necessary. The young generation needs to be given an opportunity to discuss issues from different perspectives, reflect and challenge existing ideologies, and this may have political repercussions in the region. A note of caution, however: this is not to imply that CP will be the panacea to eradicate problems in the Middle East but it would be one of the critical interventions that need to be introduced since it would enable teachers to have voice and agency at this difficult time. According to Greene (2005):

"Educator[s] must be awake, critical, open to the world. It is an honour and a responsibility to be a teacher in such dark times—and to imagine, and to act on what we imagine, what we believe ought to at last be." (p. 80)

Furthermore, some participants in this study believed that being aware of CP encouraged them to rethink the dominant perspectives on ELT including their role as teachers, nativeness as a fundamental criterion of teachers' appointment, and the wide spread of English commercial materials with their white, middle class and Anglo-Saxon voices. Moody (2012) maintains that a significant "challenge to the ELT profession requires a rethinking of basic assumptions" (p.35). Therefore, it seems that one way to overcome such challenges is to endorse CP in ELT, as the participants in this study have highlighted. Penneycook (2001) asserts that introducing CP to the ELT field would encourage teachers to problematize the givens and give them the courage "that we can actually do something" (p. 127). This can be fulfilled via implementing the "concept of appropriation" (Kramsch, 1998, p.81) to "serve local interests" (Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006, p. 202) whereby English is adapted to students' interests and needs, which is one of CP's main premises. Nonetheless, contesting predominant ideologies and appropriating ELT to suit Omani contexts are not easy tasks; rather they represent significant challenges for teachers as will be discussed in the coming two sub-sections.

### **6.3.1 CP implementation and risks involved**

Some teachers in this study had concerns about the legitimacy of CP in ELT in the contexts where they taught because it involved dealing with

risky situations. The findings indicate that the first source of risk involved in putting CP into practice is that of questioning and challenging the status quo that may cause teachers' termination from their jobs. They were understandably concerned about taking up the struggle of examining and problematizing the institutional regulations and syllabuses. This is in line with the studies of Jeyaraj's (2014) and Sedeghi and Ketabi (2009) who found that some ELT teachers were cautious about CP because they were afraid of losing their jobs. Abednia (2012, p. 713) also asserted that:

"Teachers with money-making and job security at the top of the agenda are paralyzed with the fear of consequences of opposing the status quo, and, consequently, prefer to take the dystopian path of conformity, loss of voice, and lack of drive to reclaim their identities"

Nonetheless, towards the end of the whole teacher education course, Abdenia (2012) observed that her participants started to be more conscious of the limitations imposed on them by the institutions and mandated textbooks and began to claim their right to resist. Thus, the question to raise at this point is: would having a longer course on CP guarantee the ELT teachers' shift to a more critical stance in the four colleges? Or are there more factors that inhibit teachers from being critical regardless of the length of the CP course itself? (Refer to Section 6.6)

The findings indicate that the second source of the discourse of risk was CP's transformative dimension and its great influence by Marxism and critical theory. This is in tune with what Brookfield (2003, p.143) calls

"Marxophobia" which prevents teachers from drawing on Marx's work that would help them to encourage students to recognize and challenge dominant ideologies in their communities. Consequently, several teachers in this study perceived questioning students' assumptions and ideologies as unsafe since CP might lead students to places where they should not go. In other words, the ELT class could become a threat to students' established values and beliefs. Although data from several studies suggest a positive impact of CP on students' learning and thinking (Chi, 2011; Huang, 2011; Derince, 2011; Dorsey, 2009), other studies (Jeyaraj, 2014; Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012) found that introducing CP to students could open a Pandora's box. This is because challenging taken-for-granted issues and constructing new perspectives might be seen as dangerous for students. Such studies demonstrate that much investigation is needed on the appropriateness of the introduction of CP to EFL students. According to Royal (2010), "student perspectives and responses to critical pedagogy are largely missing in the language education literature" (p.10). To date, based on my knowledge, there have been no attempts to examine Omani students' reactions to CP. This is an important issue for future research since students play a great role in legitimizing or delegitimizing any teaching method (Tanveer, 2013; Royal, 2010).

From the above, it can be concluded that CP is not an easy trajectory to take and teachers might head down a dangerous route through their critical work (Penneycook, 2001; Jeyaraj, 2014). However, in the

postmodern world, it is necessary to remember that “risk is something to be embraced rather than avoided” (Hargreaves, 1994, p.254). Yet, this does not mean that teachers embrace risk haphazardly by implementing CP. Rather, they should equip themselves with strategies and knowledge of when, where and how to implement it (Kress, Degennaro & Paugh, 2013). One of the essential tactics in implementing CP is using critical dialogue (Sadegui, 2008; Chandella, 2011; Kincheloe, 2008b) which plays a crucial role in encouraging both teachers and students to question their assumptions and welcome other perspectives. However, the question is raised here: are ELT teachers at tertiary level in Oman prepared for a dialogical mode of teaching?

### **6.3.2 The ELT teachers' apolitical stance: A difficult transition!**

CP requires teachers to utilize dialogic teaching; nonetheless, Shor and Freire (1987) assert that dialogic classes are unpredictable and this requires teachers to be ready to encounter uncertainties. However, the results of this study indicate that some teachers are not prepared for such uncertainties because of their technical backgrounds where they aim to reach a particular conclusion by the end of their lessons. Besides, such a technical view of their role inhibits teachers from accepting CP since they believe that their role is to teach language skills and not to question ideologies or raise awareness. This corresponds to other studies that

found that ELT teachers view their role as apolitical, merely teaching the basics of reading and writing (Chandella & Troudi, 2013; Izadinia, 2012; Baladi, 2007; Crookes & Lehner, 1998). This is why the first tenet of CP, that education is a political enterprise, could not be grasped easily by the teachers in the study.

Therefore, teachers' practice is considered "Liberal Ostrichism" in Pennycook's words (2004, p.329), which buries its head under the ground of technicality and pretends that ELT has nothing to do with the broader social context. This apolitical stance can be attributed to several factors. First, the ELT teachers in the four colleges were teaching English in foundation programmes that prepared students for their 'real' academic departments (Troudi, 2009); thus, teachers seemed to concentrate more on teaching the technical elements of language. Second, the teachers were comfortable teaching in familiar ways; when they were suddenly introduced to the new approach of CP by a Ph.D. candidate, this might have made them feel quite uncomfortable (Moore, 2005; Zimmerman, 2006).

Bruce (2014) asserts that the shift to a critical approach in teaching is not an easy process since it involves feelings of worry, carefulness and loss of confidence. This is because "to begin a transformative journey is to give up an old perspective, to actually lose a sense of the former world before the new world is fully articulated" (Berger, 2004, p. 338). Nonetheless, it is

important to stress here that CP does not disregard existing textbooks and methods; rather, it adds a critical quality to them (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012, p.224). Put differently, teachers need to adopt Canagarajah's hybrid or 'third space' (1999) idea which encourages them to exercise their own and their students' voices in conjunction with improving their linguistic skills.

This suggests that much work at the teacher education level needs to be done before CP can be introduced to the ELT system in the four colleges by educating teachers to work as analyzers, problem posers and facilitators (Refer to Section 6.7.1), so that such qualities will be inculcated in their teaching. It is worth mentioning that, although most ELT teachers in these colleges (both expatriate and Omani) were M.A. or Ph.D. holders, their knowledge of CP as an approach was non-existent or very limited, which raises questions about the content of the teacher education programmes they attended. This finding is different from the results of Sahragard, Razmjoo and Baharloo (2014) and Mahmoodarabi and Khodabakhsh (2015), who found that ELT teachers with postgraduate degrees in Iran seemed to be aware of CP tenets. This can be attributed to the fact that postgraduate studies address CP to a greater extent than undergraduate studies in teacher education programmes in Iran. Haque (2007) asserts that TESOL teacher education programmes take place in linguistics departments, not in education departments, and that this results in teacher programmes being more closely attached to linguistics skills than to educational theories. Therefore, such teacher education

programmes "have failed to direct English teachers to tapping into sociopolitical issues, which are a central part of education within CP" (Byean, 2011, p.75).

## **6.4 Teachers' limited understanding of CP: Tension between theory and reality**

After the study's small intervention, teachers demonstrated limited or partial understanding of CP. This is in tune with other studies (Ruiz & Fernández-Balboa, 2005; Hollstein, 2006; Baladi, 2007; Sarroub & Quadros, 2015) that found ELT teachers lacked an understanding of CP. This limited understanding is manifested throughout the findings of this study as follows:

**Failing to go beneath surface:** Some teachers said that CP is a way to question the dominant dogmas in students' social context. However, analyzing the lesson plans and observing teachers in the classrooms revealed that this understanding was not applied and students were not encouraged to interrogate their assumptions about the topics. Teachers (except Nancy and Suzan) constrained their lessons to address issues, which were generative in nature, seeking only students' opinions and clarification of their arguments. This is to say that teachers failed to go beneath surface meanings and dominant dogmas. Thus, it seems that the teachers' understanding was more towards critical thinking and less on CP and its transformative nature (Refer to Chapter 3 Section 3.3.6). This is not

to say that critical thinking is not essential in making students critical. Rather, critical thinking is fundamental in CP but the former comforts whereas the latter disturbs since it leads to asking questions that are rarely asked (Wink, 2005). Therefore, the last tenet of CP that was introduced to teachers in this study, which is the meaning of 'critical' within the CP framework, was not clearly understood. This concurs with Sarroub and Quadros (2015) who maintain that one of the issues with CP is teachers' limited understanding of the implementation of "critical" (p.254) in their teaching. I believe there are three explanations that can elucidate this. First, large numbers of teachers have not heard of CP before the intervention, so defining and implementing it depends largely on their understanding of the article sent to them and the workshop. Nonetheless, the intervention of CP *per se* was too short in terms of helping teachers fully understand the meaning of 'critical' within the CP framework, as the teachers emphasized. Second, CP as an approach has been accused of offering very few strategies for putting it into practice (Evans, 2008; Breunig, 2009; Morgan, 2009) which limits it to the theoretical level. Third, the heavily linguistic and technical orientation of ELT in Oman (refer to Section 5.2.3 & 5.2.4 in the previous chapter & Section 6.2 in this chapter) might prevent teachers fully realizing the meaning of critical within the CP framework.

**CP as a stopgap strategy** - The teachers' limited understanding of CP was manifested when teachers proposed that CP could be implemented

as a stopgap strategy by devoting a few minutes or a lesson in a week to addressing CP in their teaching. This conflicts with how critical pedagogues' view of CP as a comprehensive way of living and teaching (Canagarajah, 2005a). This necessitates teachers demonstrating its tenets in every action they perform, including how to behave in their classrooms, how to approach students, how to present materials and how to assess them, among others. In Pennycook's words (1999), CP is more than "introducing a 'critical element' into a classroom, but rather involves an attitude, a way of thinking and teaching" (p.340). This implies that, if CP remains undefined, this allows for too many meanings to appear which might distance CP from its critical aim, as shown by the teachers in this study who limited it to a few minutes. However, defining CP is highly problematic and challenging because critical pedagogues avoid pushing it into "one right story" (Lather, 1998, p.497). Therefore, there is a need to maintain a balance between critical pedagogues' avoidance of defining CP and the teachers' need to be clear about what it is. Crookes (2013) maintains that more guidelines of how to put CP into practice "can serve a critical teacher's pedagogy, rather than replace the procedures of critical pedagogy" (p. 12).

**Utilizing a teacher-centred approach:** During the classroom observation, half of the teachers seemed to depend on a teacher-centered approach, although they discussed critical issues. They were unable to use dialogical methods as suggested by the CP framework to encourage students to

question, acknowledge multiple perspectives and form their own understandings. Put differently, teachers depend on monologue to impart particular views. This is in line with the findings of Fareh (2010) who found that most teachers in the Arab world talk most of the class time, and they do not provide students with opportunities to engage in dialogue. Nonetheless, Breuing (2011), in her study in the USA and Canada, found that even the most self-identified critical pedagogues taught "very traditionally and demonstrated a lack of congruence between [their] theory and practice" (p.20). It becomes apparent through Breuing's study and the current study that the aim of CP to encourage students and teachers to construct knowledge mutually may remain at the theoretical level and is not truly implemented in the classroom. This reminds educators that CP has its problems and challenges and its aims can be used merely as a slogan. This entails those who believe in it to remain critical of its assumptions, engage in praxis, search for ways to move from abstraction and narrow the gap between what they believe in and how they perform CP inside the classroom. In more precise words, CP "must be self-reflexive about its aims and practices" (Giroux, 2011, p.81).

**Addressing sensitive issues:** Teachers' limited understanding of CP was also manifested when some teachers understood that CP is about addressing sensitive issues such as politics, religion and sex that cannot be openly discussed in a society like Oman. Two issues should be addressed here. The first issue is about the reality that controversial

issues cannot be discussed in Omani society. Oman is considered to be an absolute monarchy with an authoritarian regime that does not allow people to freely voice their opinions in public regarding government policies and procedures. This results in oppression of people and especially of proponents of change. Recently, however, with technological advancements and the impact of the Arab Spring, there has been a slight difference with regards to voicing opinions and criticisms. In Al Issa's words, "the Omani people have [slowly but surely] developed a critical sense towards their country's situation and have stopped accepting being at the receiving end" (Al Issa, 2015, p.563). They have started to discuss issues in daily newspapers, online forums and social media networks that are related to government, race, gender discrimination, Arab spring, marriage, drugs, alternative interpretations of Islamic principles, women's rights, disabled people's rights and others. For instance, there is a programme called 'WallahNestahal' which means 'We deserve it' in YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/user/WallahNestahal>). This programme was produced by Omani youth on a regular basis to discuss critical issues such as matters related to the government (strategic plans, public transport, tourism), issues related to students (allowance, leadership, student hostels) and issues related to society (exercise, nutrition, consumerism). This indicates that Omanis have gradually begun to discuss sensitive and critical issues via various channels which necessitates HE institutions bringing such discussions to the heart of the

learning and teaching processes. This is because "honest discussion of difficult [and sensitive] topics is extremely healthy if we are to progress as a nation" (Al Shahri, June 2013, para.8).

The second issue to be addressed is that CP involves more than addressing religious or political issues. The study intervention did not associate CP with discussing sensitive issues or taboos. Rather, it emphasized that any topic could be discussed within the CP Framework (Shor, 1996) by providing teachers with plenty of examples of the students' everyday contexts and the current materials used in the four colleges. The intervention aimed to make teachers aware that CP is about realizing the complexity of education and the ideological nature of language teaching (Radawai & Troudi, 2013, p.80). Nonetheless, it seems that some teachers failed to understand that CP is not about what to teach but how to teach (Moorhouse, 2014). So the teachers' role is to "situate the experience of impossibility as an enabling site for working through aporias" (Lather, 2007, p. 16). It is therefore an urgent priority that much work at the teacher education level should be done before CP finds its path in the ELT system in the four colleges by educating and encouraging teachers to work as analyzers, problem posers and facilitators (Refer to Section 6.7.1).

## **6.5 ELT teachers as the key to successful implementation of CP**

Throughout the findings of the study, teachers appear at the centre of making CP possible in ELT. Teachers are the agents who can reject the banking model of education and propose dialogic methods, where generative themes are utilised to raise learners' critical awareness. For instance, the participants of the study emphasized that one of the conditions to implement CP was teachers' commitment. Additionally, the role of the teacher was manifested in Nancy's lesson when she succeeded in engaging students in critical dialogue despite their low language proficiency through codification, relating the content to students' concerns, making them work in groups and asking provoking questions. Peterson (2003) emphasizes that if teachers are committed to CP, they can implement it even with standardized curricula. Therefore, the participants of this study emphasized that, if teachers were not committed to CP, it would be much easier to teach through the given syllabus. This echoes Norooziasiam and Soozandehfar's findings (2011) that some teachers find teaching through CP very challenging, which pushes them to stick to the suggested syllabus. This is because teaching within the CP framework is not "a job like any other job, but a crucial site of struggle" (Giroux, 2011, p.160). It involves hard work in preparing materials, provoking students' questioning skills and linking what they learn in the classroom to the outside world.

However, the findings of the study reveal that teachers still felt incompetent to utilize CP in their teaching. Therefore, the question is: how can teachers be committed to implement CP if they are not conscious of it? To this point, the next section will turn.

### **6.5.1 Deficient knowledge of CP: Ways to increase awareness**

What is abundantly clear from the findings presented in the previous chapter is that the majority of the ELT teachers who participated in this study were not aware of CP as an approach that could be used in ELT. This is in line with other studies that found ELT teachers in different contexts were unaware of CP (Mohamed & Malik, 2014 in Sudan, Iran, Pakistan, India, America; Safari and Pourhashemi, 2012 in Iran; Byean, 2011 in Korea; Baladi, 2007 in Canada; Cox & Assis-Peterson, 1999 in Brazil). So, to raise teachers' awareness, two means are discussed based on the study's findings.

#### **6.5.1.1 Professional development programmes from within**

Some participants in this study raised issues directly linked to the importance of professional development programmes (PDPs) as an individual and collective responsibility. In other words, the participants in this study emphasized the necessity of looking at the PDPs 'from within',

which refers to successful handling of the profession by the group itself (Evetts, 2012). Some teachers proposed educating themselves about CP by reading about it while others endorsed teachers taking collective responsibility to widen their awareness of CP. This is in harmony with McArthur (2010) who asserts that CP is a complex approach and teachers need to link with other individuals to be able to implement it. In this vein, three participants asserted during the interviews the idea of sharing the 'best practice' among themselves to become aware of CP and make its implementation possible in ELT in Oman. This corresponds to Smith's idea (2014) to create a change in teachers' ways of teaching; they should share the best practice with colleagues. This is a paramount aspect of the teaching profession because it is a way to go beyond describing the problems to actual action. Thus, from the teachers' perspectives, sharing 'best practice' would be an effective way to initiate CP implementation via collectively reflecting on the experience and critically sharing their thoughts. In other words, teachers can enrich their knowledge about CP by developing a Community of Practice (COP), which refers to a group of people who share the same interests and collaborate to broaden their knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Such a COP would provide teachers with the collegial support needed when introducing CP in their classrooms. In her study, Sadeghi (2008) describes how implementing CP with 22 EFL learners in Iranian institutions make her feel isolated since her colleagues perceived her class as radical and became reluctant to share their ideas.

Consequently, forming COPs needs to be publicized among the ELT community where teachers can exchange ideas, support each other and improve their practice (AL Khayari, 2011) which would return its humanistic nature to the teaching profession in the ELT in Oman and other contexts as well.

Although this study emphasizes the necessity of the ELT teachers' professional development 'from within', it also stresses that these teachers do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of a larger system where they have experienced a lot of 'from above' policies and regulations that make them feel insecure, and marginalized (Refer to Section 6.6.4); thus, teachers need to be provided with a conducive environment that enables them to work collectively and act as agents of change (Refer to Section 6.7.2).

#### **6.5.1.2 Top-down professional development programmes**

The findings of this study suggest the necessity of having a series of workshops on CP, so teachers can widen their knowledge about this approach and be able to adapt it according to the needs and interests of their students. However, the question that one needs to ask at this point is how much training should be given to ELT teachers to be fully aware of CP?

The answer to the above question is not straightforward. However, there was an agreement among the ELT teachers who participated in this study that one workshop of three hours was not enough. This finding is different from Baladi's (2007) who suggested that conducting a one hour workshop on CP would be sufficient for raising teachers' awareness of CP. A possible explanation for this might be, as explained previously, that CP cannot be reduced to a monolithic body of discourse (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003; Giroux, 2011). Hence, teachers need comprehensive guidelines and sufficient time to be able to transfer its premises to their teaching. An alternative explanation is that most ELT teachers in Oman prefer formal training as a means to develop professionally since such workshops provide teachers with theoretical underpinnings and practical activities to implement in their classrooms (AL Lamki, 2009; Al Hinai, 2003). Therefore, Al Jadidi (2009) and Khan (2011) state that there is a pressing need for systematic and structured PDPs for ELT teachers at HE institutions in Oman (for both Omanis and expatriates) since they are fundamental in teachers' careers if they want to:

“remain up to date in their knowledge of the curriculum, wise in their selection and use of a repertoire of pedagogical skills, committed and enthusiastic about their work and the students they teach, self-confident, and clear about their purposes.”

(Day, 1999, p.221)

Nonetheless, in-service PDPs are very limited in the four colleges of technology as in many institutions in Oman (AL Jadidi, 2009; Khan, 2011). Being a teacher in one of these colleges, PDPs are scarce despite the fact that GFP standards, which most of these colleges aim to achieve, maintain that such PDPs are essential to inform teachers about the current methodologies and procedures in ELT (Oman Accreditation Council, 2005). Beside their scarcity, these PDPs are done in 'one shot' workshops in a fragmented way without clear vision or outcomes. This is to say that these programmes are deemed as events rather than processes (Harwell, 2003). The rationale behind such absence of clear vision for PDPs in HE in Oman, as in other GCCs, might be the shortage of budget specified for PDPs and recruitment policies that allow colleges to quickly terminate inefficient teachers and replace them with competent ones (Hudson, 2013; Baalawi, 2008). However, by doing so, these HE institutions "disadvantage **young local faculty**, who are not afforded the possibilities to develop their skills that their older, foreign colleagues may have had" (Hudson, 2013, p.84, emphasis added). The next section will discuss the role of local faculty in implementing CP.

### **6.5.2 Omani ELT teachers: Are they competent to implement CP?**

There was a consensus across the participants in this study that Omani ELT teachers should initiate the implementation of CP since they are the

owners of the country. This might be because Omanis are privileged compared to their expatriate counterparts who feel that their voice is not legitimized, and their suggestions are not taken seriously by the administration, as detailed in the previous chapter. This is in line with Khan's study (2011) who found that expatriate teachers in Oman feel marginalized and "eventually become silent, not just verbally, but also metaphorically in terms of work and contribution of ideas towards educational improvement and reform" (p.154). In a similar vein, Baalawi (2008) found that expatriate teachers in the UAE have the feeling of 'outsiderness' (p.74) which makes them stick to what is suggested by the system without initiating ideas for change. However, the question that is raised here is whether ELT Omanis teachers are competent to implement CP.

The answer is not straightforward. However, observing teachers in the classrooms, expatriate teachers (Nancy and Suzan) held an edge over the Omani ELT teachers (Basma and Salima) in implementing CP. The reason for this finding can be summarized in three main points. Both expatriate teachers are from countries (India and the Philippines) where critical approaches were put into practice when they were learners, as they claimed in the post-lesson discussion, unlike the Omani ELT teachers who had not experienced criticality when they were learners or pre-service teacher trainees. Al Issa (2005) maintains that Omani ELT teachers are not pedagogically competent due to the influence of the banking model. In

addition, the teacher education programme in Oman seems to care more about "how to", "what works" and acquiring the best way to teach (Giroux, 1988, p.124). For instance, in their study, Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2010) found that the teacher educators at SQU dictate to the pre-service teachers what and how to teach. They conclude that the teacher education at SQU is not adequate for preparing Omani pre-service ELT teachers methodologically to be reflective practitioners. Hence, in-service Omani ELT teachers do not appreciate the value of reflection as a means to improve themselves professionally when they start teaching (Al-lamki, 2009).

Second, the two expatriate teachers had more than twenty years of experience in teaching ELT outside and inside Oman while Omani teachers had only three or four years of experience. Therefore, the two expatriates seemed to be more capable of tailoring their teaching to suit CP. This finding is different from Abednia's study (2012 in Iran) and Hargreaves (2005 in Canada) who maintain that teachers with massive teaching experiences are less amenable to change from their traditional teaching methods. However, the two expatriate teachers in the current study seemed to be open, which appeared through their willingness to participate in the observation phase in this study. This might help them implement CP successfully since "open-mindedness fosters willingness to revise earlier beliefs" (Chandella & Troudi, 2013, p.43), and to incorporate new thoughts and practices.

Third, the two Omani teachers were involved in other administrative duties such as QA Committee, Testing Committee or other committees in their colleges. This meant they were busy with other tasks than the endeavour of teaching while the expatriates were not involved with other administrative duties. As a result, the expatriate teachers seemed to devote more time to class preparation through using codification such as pictures and newspaper articles. It is worth mentioning that the policies in these colleges aim to give Omanis more administrative duties as one way to achieve Omanization. Khan (2011) and Neal (2010) assert that ELT Omani teachers are given privileges in terms of taking administrative responsibilities because of their nationality and not because of their qualifications or experience. In addition, Omani teachers like to take such responsibilities because chairing a committee or coordinating a programme releases them from teaching duties. It is also a path to promotion. The current system gives no credit to teachers (Omani or expatriate) who use creative and innovative teaching inside the classroom. Furthermore, the incentive and promotion decisions in the colleges of technology, as with other HE institutions, are taken centrally based on the Civil Service Law issued by Royal Decree No. 120/2004. These promotions and incentives are based on seniority rather than creativity or innovation (AL Yahmdi, 2012) which might discourage teachers from engaging in a creative and critical mode of teaching. It is important to

stress the significance of financial and moral incentives for teachers to initiate positive changes in their teaching which impact the students' learning experience. Al Issa (2014) asserts that teachers' "innovative and creative teaching approaches, methods, and methodologies and critical reflective skills can have positive and direct implications for influencing change in the Oman ELT education system" (p.20). This urges the policy makers to review the current policies for promotion and incentives provided to ELT teachers in Oman.

## **6.6 CP constraints: Contextual factors that hamper its implementation**

Although most of the findings of the current study indicate that CP has potentialities in ELT in HE institutions in Oman, there is also evidence in the findings that CP would be constrained by many factors, including unmotivated students, their religious beliefs, teachers' cultural unawareness and the oppressive system that currently operates.

### **6.6.1 Unmotivated students**

Students are crucial in determining the success or failure of the implementation of any teaching approach. The findings of the study indicate that students in the four colleges of technology were demotivated and unwilling to take responsibility for their learning, and that this would

hamper the implementation of CP. This corroborates other nation-wide studies that assert that Omani students have little motivation (Tanveer, 2013; Al Mahrooqi, 2012; Al Issa, 2010; Al Jadidi, 2009). For instance, Tanveer (2013) maintained that:

"If students do not seem to be motivated to learn, are unwilling to take the responsibility for their own learning and exhibit an indifferent behavior towards their learning, there is a limit that any teaching methodology, a course and an institution can do."  
(p.184)

From the participants' perspective, the reason behind students' low motivation was the free education provided by the government that resulted in students being unappreciative of the value of learning itself. This is in line with Baporikar and Shah (2012), who assert that providing free education to Omani students contributes to their lack of motivation towards learning. Another possible reason for students' low motivation is that, in recent years, the entry requirement for most higher education institutions were lowered, resulting in an increased intake of poorly motivated students (Khan, 2011). Besides, colleges of technology are considered the last choice for students who would prefer to join other HE institutions (Al Hussini, 2004; Al-Hinai, 2011). This necessitates reviewing the admission criteria to HE institutions.

What is manifested in the findings of this study is that the majority of teachers used a discourse of blame (Al Maamari, 2011) rather than a discourse of possibility when they addressed students' motivation.

However, "motivation is no longer an individual construct, but one that is shaped by the cultural, social and educational context in which the learner is operating" (Engin & McKeown, 2012, p.2). In their study, Engin and McKeown (2012) investigated the cultural influences on motivation in students in the UAE, which is culturally and socially similar to Oman. They found that students in English preparation programmes were extrinsically motivated by other people and by society. This means that these students perceived motivation as a force coming from outside rather than having their own self-direction and internal goals.

The findings of this study clearly reveal that one reason behind students' low motivation was the materials used in ELT. From the teachers' perspectives, these materials were de-motivating since they included topics and issues far removed from students' interests and concerns. Ahmed (2011) asserts that "Arab culture is minimally represented in the English curriculum, and usually only superficially" (p.119), which affects the students' motivation and academic success (ibid). This highlights the necessity for reviewing the currently used materials and for incorporating students' concerns and cultures in them.

In addition, the findings of this study reveal how teachers' commitment to students' learning can motivate them to participate actively in class (refer to Section 6.5). According to Wachob (2006), "motivation for students more often comes from the teacher and what s/he does and says in the

classroom" (p.113). Furthermore, parents could be a massive resource for students' motivation, as Engin and McKeown (2012) have shown in their study. Nonetheless, based on my experience, the parents' role is currently restricted to informing them if their children have had any academic or behavioural problems. The reasons for such ignorance of the parents' role might be attributed to the workload of teachers and administrators which inhibits them from creating a bridge of fruitful communication. It could also be due to the ideological assumption that educating students at the tertiary level is the responsibility of the HE institutions only. However, Harper, Sax and Wolf (2012) contend that parental contact and involvement affect students' personal, social and academic development. Therefore, HE institutions should strategize ways to encourage parents' involvement in their children's learning experiences to make them more effective.

### **6.6.2 Islamic beliefs of Omani students**

Some ELT teachers state that Muslim beliefs preclude the implementation of CP since teachers will not be able to question students' beliefs and assumptions. This challenge has mainly been reported by expatriate teachers who believe that CP contradicts students' religious and cultural beliefs. This is in line with Hudson (2013) and Akbari (2008b) who state that many expatriate teachers are cautious about practising criticality with their students in Islamic contexts because of the 'no religion, no politics'

mantra. I could feel that the non-Muslim ELT teachers in this study were hesitant about the applicability of CP because they had become accustomed to avoiding criticality and sticking to the textbook to be on the safe side.

However, as explained in Chapter 3, Islamic principles and CP are in agreement in terms of advocating questioning and aiming towards emancipatory knowledge. Therefore, the teachers, especially the Muslims in this study, emphasized after the intervention that they were in total agreement that students' religious beliefs should not be considered as an obstacle since Islamic principles share basic tenets with CP. This is in harmony with other studies that emphasize that CP and other religions such as Christianity (Jeyaraj, 2014) and Buddhism (Hattam, 2008) share the same tenets. In accordance with that, Jeyaraj, (2014) believes that "one reason why critical pedagogy is easily adopted by different faiths is because it champions universal values such as love, respect and justice for all" (p.154).

The findings of the current study reveal that teachers' understanding of Islamic principles play a great role in accepting or resisting CP as an approach. It is worth mentioning that the relationship between Islamic principles and criticality has been consistently debated in Islamic contexts. While some literature indicates that there is no contradiction between Islamic principles and questioning (Mahmood, 1986; Kazmi, 2000; Al Issa,

2010), there are other studies which show that Islamic principles handicap people's ability to question and think (Al Adham, 1970; Picard, 2006). Nonetheless, all these studies are rooted in assumptions, historical episodes and religious texts. There is a lack of empirical studies on the role of Islam as a salient factor in all Islamic countries, including Gulf States, in facilitating or hindering students' abilities to think critically and question constantly. In addition, there is a scarcity of research on Islam and its impact upon ELT (Hudson, 2013). The results of such studies could have a great impact on interrogating the potentialities and challenges of CP implementation in education since Islam is "a complete and comprehensive way of life" (Mansour, 2011, p.287) which could directly affect students' learning and teachers' teaching (Baalawi, 2008). Therefore, it is essential that regional organizations, such as the Islamic Education, Science and Culture Organization (ISESCO), play their role in intensely scrutinizing Islamic principles and their impact on education. In addition, regional researchers should play their role by delving into Arabic and Islamic resources when they research about implementing critical approaches in teaching and learning and not limit themselves to foreign resources which might result in perpetuating the essentialist discourses of 'superior West' and 'inferior East'.

### **6.6.3 Expatriate teachers' lack of cultural awareness**

One of the challenges reported by ELT teachers in applying CP would be their insufficient knowledge of the students' culture. This confirms Sahragard, Razmjoo and Baharloo's study (2014) in ELT in Iran who found that teachers' insufficient information about the learners' background prevented them from implementing CP. This is because implementing CP requires, 'local situatedness' (Canagarajah, 2006, p.10) of its tenets to meet students' needs and interests. Nonetheless, Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova (2014) assert that most instructors at HE institutions in Oman have cultural backgrounds different from the students' own which makes them incapable of modifying ELT materials. In the same vein, Shah, Hussain and Nasseef (2013) assert that expatriate ELT teachers in Saudi Arabia, especially non-Arabs, experience a lot of difficulties in modifying the materials used due to their lack of cultural awareness. Similarly, Akbari (2008b) states that many expatriate teachers:

" are wary of a critical orientation in their classes because they do not yet know the red lines and taboos; in addition, they do not know about learning and teaching traditions of their students in the new setting." (p.648)

Therefore, Ahmed (2010) asserts that GCC countries, to which Oman belongs, encounter significant challenges to achieving individuals' education and countries' growth without disrupting beliefs and traditions. This raises the necessity of having constructive PDPs to inform these

expatriate teachers about Omani students' cultures and needs (Chirciu, 2014).

It is suggested that the teacher preparation programmes should consist of three main stages: initial teacher training, induction and in-service continuing professional development (MOE Report & The World Bank, 2012). Of these three stages, "induction tends to be the most neglected" (ibid, p.129). Talking about the induction phase in the four colleges, it took the form of handing over the booklet containing the college rules, expectations and regulations, and information on places that teachers could visit in Oman. Additionally, it happens only once, upon new teachers' arrival. However, ELT teachers need to be offered ongoing induction programmes that make them feel that they belong to the place. This would help them fulfill their jobs successfully and learn about the Omani culture and students' needs, which cannot be limited to one shot of orientation or a hard copy of a booklet as the participants of this study brought to light. Therefore, teachers should be supported in learning a very complex concept like culture (This will be discussed in depth in Section 6.7.1).

Although the above accentuates the responsibility of the colleges to familiarize the expatriate teachers with Omani culture, it is also the teachers' responsibility to learn about the students' culture. According to Troudi (2005), the EFL teachers should have a cultural knowledge of the

context where they teach that goes beyond the mere background of student life. Rather, this cultural knowledge:

“needs to be informed by a deep sense of commitment on the part of the TESOL teacher to understand his/her students’ social and cultural contexts and how these shape their approach to learning and attitudes to English as a second or foreign language.” (ibid, p.115)

This requires teachers to be immersed in the culture for sufficient time to be able to understand it, so teachers need to spend time in the country and feel secure in their jobs. However, teachers' insecure status in their jobs might prevent them from learning about Omani culture. Most expatriate teachers are recruited by 'outside' agencies that have nothing to do with ELT. Such companies place teachers on one-year contracts that are renewed or ended towards the end of the academic year (Carroll et al., 2009). Indeed, there are critical concerns that need to be addressed here regarding such recruitment policies. First and most importantly, such policies cause a feeling of job insecurity among expatriate teachers that makes them continually seek other employment opportunities and this affects the way they teach and their commitment to the institutions where they work (Raza, 2010; Austin et al., 2014).

Second, such job insecurity prevents them from engaging with the system (Hudson, 2013; Shah, Hussain & Nasseef, 2013; Austin et al., 2014).

According to Troudi (2009, p.64):

"job security and the spectre of job loss and uncertainty about one's future are a looming threat that is perpetually affecting teachers' morale, peace of mind and self-esteem."

It is noteworthy that it is difficult to fire an Omani employee (Al Barwani et al., 2009) but it is easy to terminate the expatriate member of staff (Neal, 2010); in addition, the absence of legislation or trade unions protecting the labour force adds further job insecurity to the expatriate teachers. Therefore, it has been found that expatriate teachers tend not to be motivated to initiate change or transform the current situation (Syed, 2003; Khan, 2011). This is because they are seen as expendable and effortlessly replaced by others (Hudson, 2013; Austin et al., 2014) which leads to feelings of marginalisation, and marginalised teachers are unlikely to play their role as transformative intellectuals.

Third, expatriate teachers form the majority of the teacher workforce in the ELT realm in Oman (Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014; Khan, 2011; Al Jadidi, 2009) which makes their role critical in determining the quality of education provided to students. Hence, providing them with a conducive work milieu is necessary. Mousavi (2007) maintains that, although teachers are the backbone of the teaching process, ironically their needs are not adequately addressed. This is very true about the ELT realm in Oman where teachers' needs, especially expatriates', are not sufficiently scrutinized. Apart from a few studies (Khan, 2011; Neal, 2010), there is a lack of research on expatriate teachers and the factors that affect their

work either positively or negatively. Therefore, the national rules and regulations need to be investigated to improve the quality of education provided by these expatriates.

#### **6.6.4 Oppressive system**

One of the key findings regarding challenges is the perception that the ELT realm embodies a top-down approach. This means the teachers' views of curriculum, tests and teaching methods are delegitimized, neglected and disregarded. In other words, it appears that the teachers' involvement is limited to the implementation of pre-designed packages of teaching materials (El-Okda, 2005; Al-Issa, 2007, 2009). Within such realities, teachers appear to be demotivated (Hudson, 2103) and seldom, if ever, think deeply about their role as social agents and critical educators (Evan, 2008) who play a great role in their students' learning and the country's growth. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the involvement of all staff in developing the education system, which would increase their level of support and commitment. Troudi (2009) succinctly writes:

“if teachers are given choices and asked for their views on various educational issues they will cooperate while marginalizing will only alienate them further.” (p. 66)

The findings of this study also indicate that the teacher appraisal system was considered to be one of the challenges for implementing CP in the ELT realm in Oman. This is because the current appraisal system focuses

on assessing teachers' capacity to perform technically oriented tasks like utilizing specific teaching methods and managing the classroom, as the teachers reported. This coincides with the findings of Mazier's study in Canada (2014), who found that depending on quantitative measures of teachers' performance hindered the implementation of CP. Added to this, Izadinia (2011) argues that the current teacher evaluation scales in most contexts suffer from the absence of CP and/or its premises, and that this dissuades teachers from implementing CP.

Furthermore, part of the teacher appraisal system is the students' evaluation form that also determines teachers' existence in the college. This corresponds to other studies from Oman (Khan, 2011) and other Gulf countries (Shah, Hussain & Nasseef, 2013; Hudson, 2013; Raza, 2010) that indicate the power that students are perceived to hold over their teachers that might affect the implementation of CP in two ways. First, teachers in this study maintained that students might not like to be taught through CP where they would be required to work hard and study independently. Implementing CP with Omani students would result in teachers having a low score on their evaluation that might lead to their termination from the College. Second, since Omani students are grade oriented (Al Issa, 2010; Tanveer, 2013), and in their attempt to avoid low scores in their students' evaluation, teachers are pushed towards the banking model where they teach for the test. By doing so, teachers seem

to manipulate the system for the sake of having good evaluation scores and this has a detrimental effect on the quality of education students are receiving. In addition, this might demotivate those teachers who believe in their role in creating change in their students' lives, as this study has shown.

This necessitates revising the current system of evaluating teachers. The vision of utilizing teacher evaluation for developmental purposes is entirely missing from these colleges, as from other institutions in Oman (Al Yahmadi, 2012). This vision could be fulfilled by other means of teacher evaluation, such as portfolio, action research, peer observation, or community service, which are currently missing from the teacher appraisal system.

In addition, the findings of my study show that teacher evaluation is conducted by administrators who might have no idea about CP, which also hinders teachers from implementing it. Giroux (2011) states that most educational institutions are "increasingly run by administrators who lack either a broader vision or a critical understanding of education" (p.152), which leads to the continuation of teaching through the banking model. In the same vein, Crookes (2013) emphasizes that, for CP to find its path in any educational institution, it needs critical administrators (p.151).

It is noteworthy here that the administrators of ELCs were originally teachers who had been promoted to become administrators without even providing them with professional development in leadership or administration skills. Neal (2010) emphasizes that in colleges in Oman, and other in GCCs, where there is diversity of teacher ethnicity, education, and experience, it is necessary to give administrators courses in sensitive leadership which can promote the benefit of this diversity. This suggests the necessity of enrolling administrators in PDPs about critical education and educational leadership for social justice, in order to instill the skills of questioning and critiquing current institutional structures and to convey such skills to their teachers. Put differently, such PDPs should produce an administrator "who persuades, leads and above all educates, rather than merely as a bureaucrat or timekeeper" (Crookes, 2013, pp. 171-172). Nevertheless, such PDPs are still underdeveloped within the educational literature worldwide (ibid). Thus, more theoretical and empirical studies on critical education or leadership for social justice are needed so that CP can find its path in the educational system in Oman and the world in general.

## **6.7 CP as an alternative approach: visual model for the introduction of CP in the ELT system in Oman**

The findings of this study show that the majority of the teachers had positive attitudes towards CP and regarded it as an approach with great

potential for ELT in Oman. Therefore, this part of the chapter suggests a model to be implemented in order for CP to find its way in ELT in Oman based on the results described in the previous chapter and the issues discussed in this chapter.

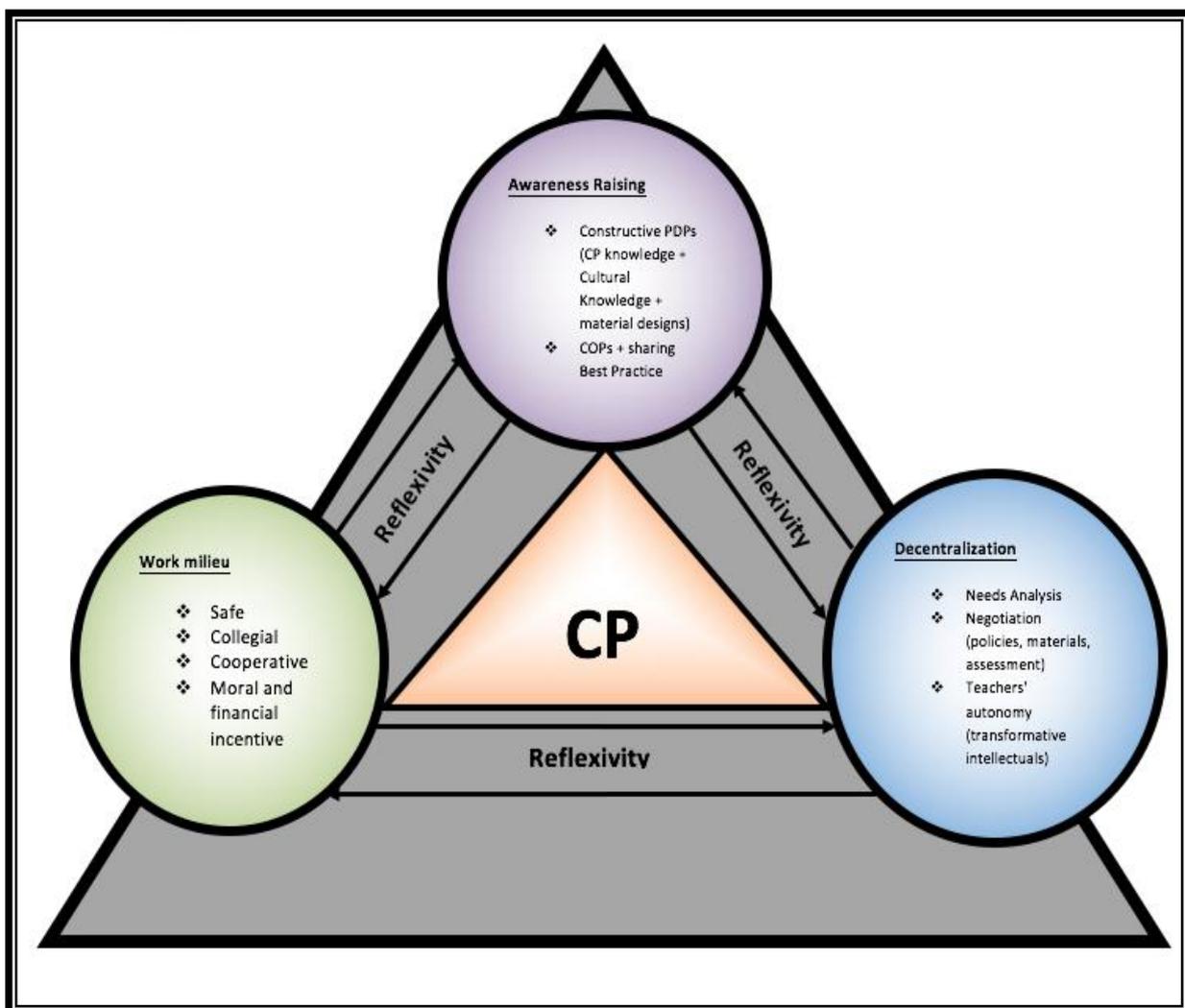


Figure 6.1 Visual model for the introduction of CP in the ELT system in Oman

Figure 6.1 demonstrates this model, which consists of three principal components, namely: awareness raising, work milieu and decentralization.

Reflexivity, in the proposed model, is the engine that operates on the three components by encouraging practitioners to remain reflexive about CP and involved in 'praxis', which is the heart of any critical work.

### **6.7.1 Awareness raising**

This study suggests that teachers need to be aware of CP and this could be fulfilled via various channels. First, constructive PDPs, where teachers are active and engaged in critically analyzing and reflecting (playing their role as transformative intellectuals), should be conducted for ELT teachers. Put differently, these PDPs should not give teachers recipes for how to perform certain tasks in the classroom, rather they need "conceptual tools" (Kirk, 1986, p.157) which would embolden them to go beyond technicality and realize the political dimensions of schooling and possess reflective capacity to make constructive judgments on what they teach and why.

The post-transmission perspective (Kumaravadivelu, 2011) is useful when introducing CP to teachers since it focuses on inquiry-oriented instead of an information-oriented professional development (p.9) to enable teachers to become self-determining practitioners. In addition, these PDPs should be constructed in a way that encourages teachers to confront their beliefs about learning and teaching English and think 'out of the box' by promoting questions of why and why not.

Second, teachers should formulate their COPs at the college and national levels or participate in virtual COPs, especially with the increase of online forums and discussion boards. For instance, with the rise in MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) which are available to everybody for free, teachers could interact with other teachers who are interested in injecting CP in their classroom in different contexts (<http://www.digitalpedagogylab.com/hybridped/mooc-mooc-critical-pedagogy/>: an example of MOOC). Through such COPs, teachers could find intellectual and procedural knowledge about CP. They could discuss their concerns and get guidance and support from others. Ruiz and Fernández-Balboa (2005) maintain that it is “through union and networks of solidarity that transformation becomes possible” (p.259). Teachers could also share best practice, materials, techniques and procedures of how to implement CP. Furthermore, at the college level, teachers could widen their knowledge about CP through shared reading, through reflecting together on what they had read, and thinking about ways to transfer this new knowledge into their classrooms, especially since many studies have shown that group reflection is effective (AL Hakamni, 2011; Kiely & Davis, 2010). This might help teachers to reach situatedness or appropriateness when they implement CP, which is necessary in a postmodern world.

Equally important is the need for raising awareness about cultures in order to address students' needs and concerns, especially for small cultures (Holliday, 1999), which rejects the perspective and normative notions that

particular groups have different cultures and then searches for details to confirm assumptions. Rather, it is concerned "with social processes as they emerge" (ibid, p.240) which encourages teachers to research about their institutions', colleagues' and students' cultures in order to inform their practice. Additionally, cultural orientation programmes should be looked at as part of an on-going process rather than as a one-shot event, where the former focuses on the small cultures where the latter focuses on the large cultures, resulting in "reductionist overgeneralization and otherization" (ibid, pp. 237-238).

Aspects of awareness raising are engaging teachers in constructive PDPs on materials design since materials are regarded as a significant challenge to implementing CP in the ELT, as this study has revealed. This corresponds to Crookes (2010) who suggests that materials within the CP framework are underdeveloped, and teachers need "a core of materials to start with" (p.10). Ko and Wang (2009 in Taiwan) and Moorhouse, (2014 in Hong Kong) also assert that one of the challenges of implementing CP is teaching materials since there have been very few publications on materials within a CP framework (Rashidi & Safari, 2011). Therefore, the PDPs should engage teachers in analyzing and designing local materials within the CP framework. Crookes (2013) maintains that the availability of "locally developed materials will make a considerable difference to the confidence of a teacher" (p.9).

## **6.7.2 Work milieu**

The second component of the model focuses on the work sphere that should be provided for teachers to implement CP. Kumaravadivelu (2011) asserts that the educational environment where teachers work demotivate teachers "to embark on a critical and a continual examination of issues big and small" (p.129). Therefore, it is essential to provide teachers with conditions where they become critical and committed to their work, as this study has shown. This includes job security for expatriate teachers who are employed via external agencies on an annual contract basis. Teachers should feel safe to espouse CP tenets in their teaching and vision as well. Teachers should also be provided with a collegial atmosphere that would enable them to share their concerns and suggestions to improve the ELT system, especially as the faculty includes such a diversity of teachers. In other words, conditions such as "equity, autonomy and academic freedom, flexibility, professional growth, and collegiality" (Austin et al., 2014, p.554) should be provided to teachers to encourage their criticality and intellectuality. The managerial environment that is currently operated by the HE institutions will result in the further marginalization of teachers and this negatively affects their teaching, which impacts on their students' learning. Additionally, teachers who initiate changes and creativity should be offered moral and financial incentives. According to Albelushi (2003) and Khan (2011), the majority of EFL teachers maintain that recognition

and incentives sustain their enthusiasm to initiate changes and perform well.

### **6.7.3 Decentralization**

The third component of the proposed model for the introduction of CP in the ELT system in Oman is decentralization of the system itself. This is because, as shown in the results of this study, a central system with its detailed syllabus and suggested textbooks prevents teachers from implementing CP. HE institutions prefer to promote a single framework that fits everybody but which reduces ELT to a system where everything is teachable, testable and assessable in a reductionist way. According to Akbari (2008a), "decentralization of decision-making (in terms of content, teaching methodology, and testing) is of crucial importance" (p.282) in order for CP to find its path in ELT. A note of caution, however: the decentralization that this study is calling for does not mean that teachers do whatever they want in their classrooms. Rather, it " should ideally promote improvements in the quality of learning [and teaching]"(Sayed, 2002, p. 36). This requires teachers to play their role as analyzers, critical thinkers, evaluators, researchers and practitioners, and this cannot be attained unless teachers have awareness (refer to Section 6.7.1). This means that negotiation is a crucial strategy in this decentralization processes. Negotiation needs to be implemented in order to discuss

policies, contents and assessment among teachers, students, management and parents. Furthermore, decentralization would provide teachers with the freedom and autonomy that are crucial elements of creativity and innovation. This contrasts with centralization and routines that keep people in technicality and which act like a prison (Mohamed, 2006; Canaan, 2011; Austin et al., 2014).

#### **6.7.4 The role of 'reflexivity' in the proposed model**

Attempting to move towards CP via establishing the above-mentioned components (awareness raising, work milieu, decentralization) surely requires the practitioners to critically and continuously assess these. This can be achieved through engaging in 'reflexivity', which can be defined as a process in which practitioners "routinely 'keep in touch' with the grounds of what they do as an integral element of doing it" (Giddens, 1991, p.36). Grenier (2015) stated that the relationship between establishing CP and engaging in reflexivity is mutually reinforcing. This is to say that, in order to establish criticality in the ELT context, the model proposes that policy makers, administrators and teachers develop reflexive dialogical conversations which open up the three elements to critical questioning, rather than validating opinions. This would assist them to explore what further elements that may need to incorporate to establish critical teaching by having the 'preferred future' (Penneycook, 2001) as their goal. It is

worth mentioning that 'reflexivity' should be multi-directional between the three main elements of the proposed model in order to realize the conditions under which CP could flourish. Using such reflexive critical insight entails practitioners to engage as honestly as they can with their mind-sets, habits and practices in order to challenge them and ameliorate them.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

This chapter critically discusses the main findings of the study in the light of its aims, the existing literature and the particular contextual features of ELT in HE in Oman. The first issue is related to the domination of a technical approach towards ELT in the four colleges. The second issue is related to the possibility of implementing CP. The third issue discusses ELT teachers' limited understanding of CP after the intervention. The fourth issue portrays how the teacher is deemed the key to successful implementation of CP, while the final issue is about the contextual factors that hamper its implementation in ELT in the four colleges. The last section provides a model for introducing CP to ELT in Oman. The following chapter attempts to provide a summary of the main research findings and discusses their practical and theoretical implications. It also consists of my personal reflections through the journey of conducting this research.

## **Chapter Seven: Implications, Further Research and Conclusion**

*"In the process of doing a research project, is always the most difficult that of finishing"*

(Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p.85)

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a brief summary of the findings, based on the four main research questions. It also summarizes some critical contributions to knowledge in the area of CP and the methodology utilized in this study. Additionally, it provides some pedagogical implications for teachers, teacher educators and policy makers at macro and micro levels. This will be followed by some recommendations for future research and my personal reflections on the journey I undertook in conducting this study.

### **7.2 Summary of the findings**

The principal aim of this study was to introduce CP to ELT teachers in four Colleges of Technology in Oman via action research methodology. More specifically, it aimed to investigate teachers' awareness of CP before the intervention. Then, it sought to explore their attitudes towards CP and the potentialities and challenges of implementing it in the ELT realm after the intervention.

The findings pertinent to the first research question on teachers' awareness of CP before the intervention showed that there was widespread lack of awareness of the concept of CP among ELT teachers. Nonetheless, there was a minority of teachers who were aware of CP with limited implementation in their classes; on the other hand, there were teachers who were aware of CP but who did not implement it. The results of the study also indicated that the ELT in the four colleges was governed by a banking model and mainstream ideologies.

As regards the second research question, findings showed that the intervention played an important role in raising teachers' awareness about CP. For some teachers, the workshop and the article helped them to be conscious of the technical term of the activities that they had implemented with their students where they aimed to shake them intellectually. Other teachers expressed the opinion that attending the workshop gave them strategies to discuss issues with their students in depth and that gave them more opportunities to create a change in their learners' views. What is more, attending the workshop helped other teachers to rethink their attitudes to CP and its application in the classroom. Therefore, it could be said that the study's intervention was a sort of wake-up call for teachers to know about CP and rethink how to implement it.

In addition, findings showed that the majority of teachers were enthusiastic to implement CP in their teaching for several reasons including creating a meaningful learning experience for their learners, engendering a

generation capable of voicing their opinions, and fulfilling the real meaning of education by creating an impact on their students' lives. Nonetheless, there were teachers who showed their concerns towards implementing CP for many reasons, such as students' being not ready to accept this approach or teachers' technical ways of looking at their role. There was a minority of teachers who showed resistance to CP and preferred to use the communicative approach. Other teachers fell in between these two views. In other words, they considered CP to be a double-edged sword: as a means to enrich and strengthen students' learning experience, and a threat to teachers' existence and job in the colleges of technology on the other hand.

Regarding study's third research question about CP potentiates in ELT, findings reveal that CP would be feasible in the four colleges for several reasons and with certain conditions. With regard to proposals to implement CP, the participants asserted that CP would help Omani learners to think critically and participate in building their nation by understanding their communities, evaluating different perspectives and positioning themselves accordingly. Furthermore, other teachers expressed that CP would have an excellent opportunity in ELT since implementing it would motivate the students because it addressed their concerns and interests. Other teachers viewed that applying CP would help in rethinking dominant ideologies in ELT including its spread, nationality as a criterion to appoint

teachers, and English varieties of the center that were currently addressed in the ELT syllabus and textbooks.

With regards to conditions of making CP feasible in ELT in the four colleges, the participants emphasized the necessity of change as the first step to implementing CP. Teachers highlighted that all stakeholders including policy makers, administrators, teachers and students needed to realize the need of moving from the technicality that governed ELT to a more critical stance. Such an endeavor requires time to grasp what CP is all about. Additionally, the results showed that the Omani ELT teachers should initiate the implementation of CP since they had more legitimate voices and rights compared to their expatriate counterparts. Teachers' commitment and willingness to apply CP was another condition mentioned by participants in this study because the teacher is considered to be the critical factor in the success of students' achievement regardless of all other factors including the syllabus or the system as a whole (Chapman et al., 2012; Al Mahrooqi, 2012).

Although the findings of the study indicate a great potential for CP to be implemented within ELT, the participants acknowledged that there were a lot of challenges that would hamper its implementation including challenges related to students, teachers and the college system. First, there was the issue of students' low motivation and English proficiency, passivity and their religious and cultural beliefs. Second, there was teachers' resistance, lack of knowledge about students' culture,

unawareness of CP and teachers' job insecurity in the four colleges. Finally, challenges related to the college system included lack of materials, teachers' appraisal system, and heavy reliance on tests, detailed syllabus and teachers' marginalization.

The above summary of the main findings of the study revealed that introducing CP into the ELT system in the four colleges was not a straightforward enterprise. Rather, it was full of complexity and contradiction, illustrating that creating a change is a complicated process with enormous factors involved.

I now move to consider the contributions of the study to existing knowledge.

## **7.3 Contributions to Existing knowledge**

This study has theoretical and methodological contributions. The following two sub-sections will detail these contributions respectively.

### **7.3.1 Theoretical contributions**

First, this study is based on four colleges in Oman, with student and teacher bodies typical of other Omani colleges, so it adds to a growing body of international literature exploring CP, which is deemed to be one of the most analytical contested approaches in teaching. McArthur (2010) states that CP "needs to gain strength from different perspectives, contexts, and ideas – shared and argued over in safe, creative public

spaces" (p. 501). Therefore, this study exemplifies an attempt to strengthen CP in ELT via scrutinizing CP in the Omani ELT context, which may contribute to deepening the understanding of CP and how teachers perceive it, especially that "very few studies have intended to explore [CP] on the part of [in service] instructors and consider their attitudes toward this approach" (Sahragard, Razmjoo, & Baharloo, 2014, p.180-181).

Additionally, since this study tackles how teachers define CP, it contributes to the literature on teachers' conceptualization of CP, especially as there is a "paucity of empirical studies related to definitions and aims and purposes of [CP]" (Breuing, 2011, p.5). The findings of this study reveal two issues with regards to the definition of CP. The first question relates to the heterogeneity of CP's meanings and its ability to be used for transformative education in various ways and from multiple perspectives (Smith, 2014). The second issue relates to the indefinite and partial definitions of CP that were articulated by the teachers in this study might lead to teachers' unsuccessful implementation of it. Given this situation, this study highlights the necessity of consistent work at the level of making teachers more aware of this approach via providing them with more guidelines of what CP is about which could assist them to understand its meanings, central tenets and aims.

This study has also filled a lacuna in studies related to CP in the Arab world in general and Gulf countries in particular as few studies have been conducted to investigate CP (Abu-Shomar, 2013; Raddawi, 2011). These

few publications on CP in the Arab world have dealt with theoretical aspects such as its tenets and the rationale behind the necessity of implementing it (Raddawi & Troudi, 2013; Raddawi, 2011; Chandella & Troudi, 2013). Also, others have concentrated on introducing CP to students and discussing its impact on their learning (Ibrahim, 2013; Chandella, 2011; Fairley, 2009). Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards CP were not considered. Therefore, to the best of my knowledge, the present study is the first study in the Arab context that investigated the perceptions of teachers about CP, its potentialities and challenges in implementing it in ELT.

Besides, this study is the first of its kind that has tried to introduce CP in ELT in Oman and to criticize the mainstream teaching methodologies, especially the communicative approach that has been popularized in the ELT realm at tertiary level (Al Jadidi, 2009; McLean, 2011). This study provides a glimpse of what CP is all about and proposes some activities to put this approach into practice inside ELT classrooms in Oman.

In addition, the conceptual framework of this study is unique since it relates CP to Islamic principles. To illustrate, in order to introduce CP to ELT teachers in the four colleges, I started by reviewing the literature on CP and its tenets and how these appear in the ELT realm in terms of aims, materials, methods and assessment. However, this study was conducted in Oman, which is a Muslim country and where Islam is more than a religion; it is a way of life and a means that shapes most people's

worldview. Therefore, I thought to review Arabic and Islamic resources in order to make a comparison between CP's main tenants and Islamic principles and I found that they share some tenets. Hence, I developed a conceptual framework to introduce CP to ELT teachers in Oman.

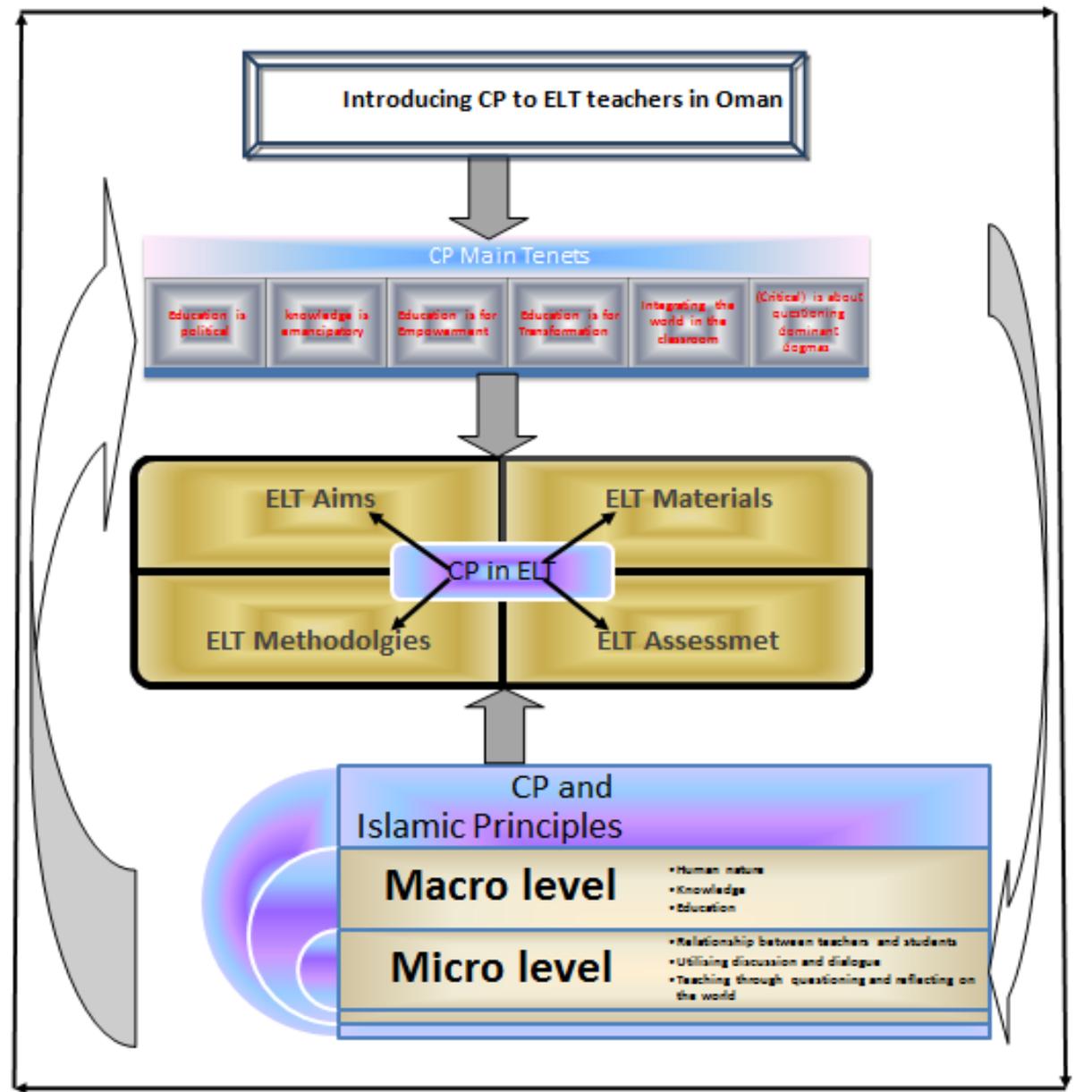


Figure 7.1 Conceptual framework to introduce CP to ELT teachers in Oman

Figure 7.1 demonstrates this framework that contains three main components: CP's main tenets, how they appear in ELT in terms of aims, materials, methods and assessment, and how CP and Islamic principles are similar at the macro and micro levels. This is deemed as a significant plea for ELT researchers and practitioners to think locally when they initiate changes that would enable them to act globally. This is because by integrating local and global principles, the possibilities in reinventing CP and other approaches in the educational system in a country like Oman would be strengthened and nurtured.

This study also offers a visual model that could contribute to establishing more critical approaches to ELT in HE institutions in Oman. This model, which has been explained in detail in the previous chapter (Section 6.7), consists of three components: raising awareness, work milieu, and decentralization. This model is useful in some respects. First, it emphasizes that for CP to be established, teachers must have knowledge of it, which can be raised through practical workshops, reading and forming COPs in real and virtual settings. Second, the model also underscores that teachers cannot implement CP in a committed way unless they are provided with a collegial and safe work environment. Third, decentralization concerning rules, regulations, teaching materials and assessment should be the approach that enables teachers to act as transformative intellectuals. Finally, this model also accentuates that reflection should be the engine that operates between the three

components which boosts teachers to engage in critical praxis and engender the success of CP.

### **7.3.2 Methodological contributions**

To start with, this study integrates critical theory and postmodernist paradigms to critique the status quo and envision new possibilities (Creswell, 2013). By doing this, this study emphasizes the necessity of examining the historical, political and socio-economic contexts (Scott & Usher, 1998, p.2) which offer a more comprehensive vision of what is going on in the ELT realm. Although there has been a plethora of research studies that concentrate on English skills and pedagogies, these studies in Oman and the Gulf remain restricted to technicalities (Al Issa, 2015; Al Mammari, 2011; Habbash, 2011) where knowledge proceeds in an undeviating and cumulative way. Troudi (2015) succinctly maintains that "Critical [and postmodernist] Research in TESOL and language education is still in its infancy and is considered as a newcomer in comparison to more established traditions" (p. 89) such as positivism and interpretivism. By conducting this research, it is hopefully ELT practitioners in Oman and the large ELT community, in general, would start doing research taking these two paradigms into consideration. This is because these paradigms encourage researchers and practitioners to think about ELT theories and practices as complex, fluid and unfixed via problematizing the givens, raising awareness, initiating changes, boosting people to interact and engage in praxis (Freire, 2007; Giroux, 2011).

Additionally, critical AR is a methodology infrequently used in the Gulf in general (Troudi, 2006) and in Oman in particular (Al Hamdi, 2014; Al Issa, 2015). Critical AR can be a tool for change, question the status quo (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013) and contribute to teachers' professional growth and empowerment (Troudi, 2006). Nonetheless, for many reasons, including hegemony of mainstream methodologies and the top-down approach to language education, there has been a "general reluctance and resistance to critical work and emancipatory action research in TESOL" (ibid, p. 286). By undertaking this study, it is hoped that the current study will rouse some interest among ELT teachers and researchers in the Omani context and the ELT community, in general, to practise this methodology. This would assist in moving from articulation to thinking about alternatives, evaluating them and engaging in praxis.

Last but not least, most studies in the international context have not utilized classroom observation as a tool to explore issues related to CP. For instance, some studies depend on using questionnaires to explore teachers' awareness and attitudes towards CP while others depend on using interviews to investigate similar issues, and CP's potentialities and challenges. Hence, this study has contributed to the literature on how to investigate CP by employing classroom observation. This is because using such means in data collection allows the researcher to collect live and authentic data (Cohen et al., 2011; Flick, 2014) which would complement the data collected from other data collection tools such as questionnaires

or interviews. Such triangulation in data gathering methods provides a comprehensive and profound account of teachers' awareness of CP, their attitudes, feasibilities and challenges to its implementation in the classroom.

## **7.4 Pedagogical implications**

Based on the findings of this study, it is strongly suggested that CP should be put into practice since its implementation was considered to be a necessity by the majority of the participants. This is because "times have changed and so have the purposes and methods underlying teaching and learning English" (Al-Issa, 2005, p.32). We are witnessing an era in which being literate does not only mean the person's capacity to read and write. Rather, it involves having a "critical mind to see through the assumptions or positions hidden in the text" (Ko, 2013, p.17). Thus, there is a pressing need for pedagogy that takes students' needs, cultures, and experiences as a first departure point in any English classroom. In addition, continuing to use the 'banking model', based on authoritative teachers delivering and memorizing facts, passive reception of knowledge and utilizing ready-made inner-circle textbooks, would result in producing citizens who are not capable of handling the rapid changes in the world. In what follows, I draw some pedagogical implications based on the study's findings. However, these implications should not be seen as a step by step blueprint (Kincheloe, 2012) for how CP should be implemented; rather they should be seen as multiple discourses of how and when CP (s) could be

implemented in the ELT realm in Oman. To this end, these implications are concerned with teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers (refer to Figure 7.2)

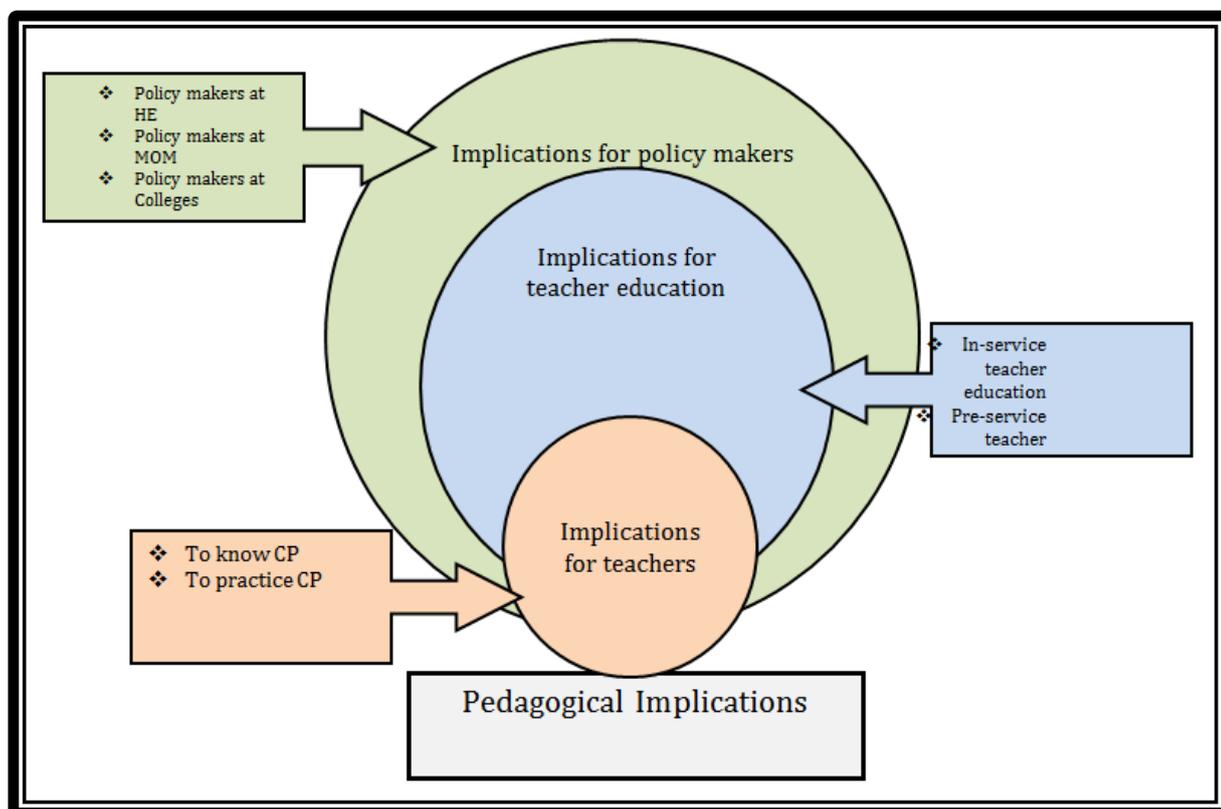


Figure 7.2 Pedagogical implications for main stakeholders

## 7.4.1 Implications for teachers

### 7.4.1.1 Teachers should learn more about CP

The findings of the study reveal that very few teachers showed resistance to CP, for the reasons detailed in Chapter Five. Therefore, to introduce CP into ELT, teachers should have qualities of openness and flexibility (Sadeghi & Ketabi, 2009; Chandella, & Troudi, 2013). With such qualities,

teachers become willing to explore this approach and critically engage in debate in order to embrace changes in their practice and their students' learning experience. Such openness itself is a kind of critical awareness. So, the principle message of this research for ELT teachers is that they should not close the doors against any opportunity to know about a new approach, and they should not be prisoners of conventional methods such as the communicative approach.

Given that teachers' insufficient knowledge of CP has been a major obstacle to putting CP into practice, the results of this study show that teachers can overcome their little lack of awareness of CP in many ways. For instance, teachers can read more about CP; thus, the study recommends that they start to read a book by Wink (2005) entitled 'Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World' which is considered to be an essential introduction to what CP is all about and a practical manual of how to put it into practice. There are also many publically accessible publications by major authors and teacher educators available online, including articles, presentations, research papers and recordings on YouTube. Furthermore, teachers can cooperate with their colleagues who are also interested in CP, and share their ideas and concerns to strengthen their knowledge about CP. Braa and Callero (2006) maintain that CP could be best implemented if cooperation among teachers in any institution is established. Finally, with technological advancement, teachers can join online virtual forums to increase their awareness of CP.

### **7.4.1.2 Implications for putting CP into practice**

It is crucial to integrate students' cultures and concerns in ELT classrooms as this should arouse their interest and increase their motivation (Al-Siyabi, 2012), which is considered to be an issue in Oman. Additionally, such integration should raise students' awareness by contrasting and confronting their own cultures and the English speaking cultures. This should result in "empowering the learner to build more confidence in his culture through his exposure to another" (Zughoul, 2003, p. 133). However, teachers cannot do that unless they themselves are aware of their students' cultures. Therefore, teachers should realize that their linguistic and academic competencies are not enough to teach Omani students. Cultural competency (Troudi, 2005; Wachob, 2006) that includes teachers' willingness to find out about their students' cultures, needs and concerns is essential to succeed in their jobs as language teachers. This can be done by many ways such as looking at the classroom as a community of inquiry (Troudi, 2005), reading deeply about their students' cultures, discussing issues with their colleagues and other students and attending cultural events in their colleges and communities.

In addition, teachers should allow their students their own linguistic space to claim their voice in the ELT classroom through using dialogue. Put differently, students should be permitted, "to become authors of at least part of their worlds" (Pennycook, 1997, p. 49). Via dialogue, negotiation and mutual construction of knowledge, teachers would encounter critical

moments that they could use to raise their students' awareness of certain issues and challenge particular dogmas. In Pennycook's words, "trying to be a critical educator is more often about seeking and seizing small moments to open the door to a more critical perspective" (Pennycook, 2004, p. 341). In order to do this, teachers need to have a teachable heart and critical eye. They also need to provide their students with adequate wait time to process the critical issues that are discussed. Via implementing group work and paraphrasing the questions, students can show criticality when they discuss, as Nancy's lesson in this study has demonstrated.

Another recommendation of how to put CP into practice is that teachers use "screen culture" (Giroux, 2011, p.102) that includes videos, films, the Internet, podcasts and other forms of technology inside their classroom as codes to introduce critical issues. The argument for these types of codes is twofold. First, with its visual and aural features, it helps learners to visualize and describe the issue, as this study has suggested. Álvarez et al. (2012) maintain that using films (including YouTube clips) assists in making students critical of the discussed issues. Second, such technologies have become fundamental parts of the new generation that shape their values, desires and identities (ibid). So incorporating them into the classroom makes teachers' pedagogy more inclusive.

In addition, the findings of the study reveal that one strong strategy to implement CP in the classroom is to provoke students' imagination by

asking them to imagine alternatives for issues discussed in class, imagine themselves in a different part of the world, imagine themselves in a situation with others, imagine themselves in the future and then ask them about how would they feel about it and how they would behave and, most importantly, ask them "why" or "why not" in order to provoke more understanding and examine the underpinning assumptions of their reactions. Such imaginative activities will assist learners to anticipate the future with an optimistic view, or 'hope' in Freire's terms. Hope is "an enabling, imaginative vision that takes us beyond the given and commonplace" (Giroux, 2011, p.5). It is important to stress that we are in need of hope since we live in an era characterized by increasing violence, suicide, murders, crimes, wars, and poverty, which make people feel desperate. Thus, education should be rooted in giving students hope for the possibility of a better future (Simon, 1992). This also corresponds to what Penneycook envisions as 'preferred futures' which are based on "an ethics of compassion and model of hope and possibility" (2001, p.9). This means that CP is not about making radical changes, as some participants of this study believed, but rather it is a pedagogy that opens up opportunities for students to think outside the boundaries and ponder about themselves and 'Others'.

A note of caution, however, such recommendations cannot be put into practice unless teachers have enough time to perform their tasks within the ELCs' overloaded programme of activities, and unless there is a

discursive collegial environment where teachers can support each other (refer to Section 7.4.3).

## **7.4.2 Implications for teacher education programmes**

### **7.4.2.1 Implications for in-service teacher education programmes**

The current limited PDPs that focus mainly on teaching methods and strategies are not adequate for enabling teachers to critically teach English. What is needed is a constructed system of in-service teacher education programmes in HE institutions to raise ELT teachers' awareness of the socio-cultural and socio-political complexities surrounding learning and teaching English (Mohd-Asraf, 2005). Hence, teachers could be prepared to move beyond 'how' to do things to question 'why' certain things are the way they are. Put differently, "to put such issues on the agenda, to question the hegemony and supremacy of English and to engage teachers in discussions and projects about them" (Troudi, 2005, p. 121).

The results of the study reveal that teachers need more workshops on CP to be capable of implementing its tenets in their teaching. Therefore, serious workshops or a whole course on CP should be conducted. Nonetheless, "one cannot give a procedural guideline for implementing critical pedagogy into a program of teacher education" (Bercaw and

Stooksberry, 2004, p. 3). Consequently, this study's findings indicate that one way to introduce CP to ELT teachers is through presenting the teachers with their situations as problems where they can analyze, reflect and act.

It is naively assumed that EFL teachers will manage the implementation of CP by themselves, especially at the beginning of the implementation process. Thus, regular meetings should be organized between teachers, experts, and administrators in order to keep track of the kinds of challenges EFL teachers might encounter so that ongoing support can be provided for them. To give concrete examples of how to handle such meetings, according to colleges' policy, the teachers at ELCs should conduct meetings with each other every two weeks where they can discuss concerns and issues. During such meetings, an expert or a teacher who is knowledgeable about CP could demonstrate an appropriate model for lessons where CP is implemented. Such a lesson model where CP is utilized could also be provided through team teaching between teachers and various experts. In addition, during these meetings, teachers could present articles that discuss any issues related to implementing CP and teachers could then be engaged in shared readings where they read together, critically discuss the usefulness of the articles and the challenges they may face if they implement similar strategies in the articles (Kiely & Davis, 2010). Teachers could also discuss how they could overcome the challenges. For instance, teachers could pick a

common concern related to CP and conduct a collaborative discussion where a dialogic and discursive atmosphere is promoted through teachers' creativity and ability to suggest ways to overcome such challenges. In Canagarajah's words, these meetings "would require an attitude of genuine curiosity, intellectual humility, and critical reflexivity" (2005b, 746)

#### **7.4.2.2 Implications for pre-service teacher education in Oman**

The results of the study show that Omani ELT teachers are less capable of moving their teaching to suit CP tenets compared to their expatriate counterparts. This entails critical (re)examination of how the current pre-service teacher education programmes are structured in Oman. The Omani pre-service teachers need to be encouraged to work as transformative intellectuals who are capable of evaluating, making decisions and finding alternatives. In other words, such programmes should concentrate on helping pre-service teachers to realize the broader dimensions of their role as educators, not only as instructors who need to acquire academic skills that help them to perform teaching. This can be achieved through engaging pre-service teachers in "ongoing philosophical discussions about what education is" (Troudi, 2005, p.119) including questions such as: is education a job or a moral act? Does it require skills, passions or both? Is technical knowledge enough for English teachers or do they need to be aware of socio-political issues surrounding English? In addition, topics such as ELT as a political enterprise, English varieties,

English ownership, monolingual fallacy, native fallacy, critical literacy, dialogic teaching and other critical topics should be at the heart of the future ELT teachers who can engage themselves in the debates surrounding ELT. Added to this, pre-service teacher education programmes should encourage teachers to view their society critically, to enable them to motivate their students to do likewise when they start their teaching career. Therefore, future pre-service teacher education programmes should include a course on sociology where students learn about society and power and the impacts of these on the education system in Oman.

Furthermore, it is necessary for teacher education programmes to avoid pushing pre-service teachers to find one coherent and overarching way to perform teaching. Rather, they should implement 'postmodernist perspectives' (Kumaradivilue, 2011) that "celebrate differences, challenge hegemonies and [seek] alternative forms of expression and interpretations" by "posting questions at the boundaries of ideology, power, knowledge" (p.5). Liston and Zeichner (1987) propose five specific strategies to enhance CP through teacher education: (1) action research, (2) ethnographic studies, (3) journal writing, (4) curriculum analysis and development, and (5) supervisory approaches with an emancipatory intent. However, the question should be asked here: are teacher educators in Oman ready to incorporate such postmodernist perspectives and implement the above strategies in the pre-service teacher education

programmes in Oman? Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2010) found that many teacher educators at SQU depended on telling their students how to teach without engaging them in reflective tasks or research assignments that would encourage them to investigate issues related to ELT. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge the urgent need to prepare teacher educators beforehand to implement critical approaches in their teaching before they can be expected to incorporate these approaches with their pre-service teacher students.

### **7.4.3 Implications for policy makers**

This study has revealed significant implications for policy makers in HE, MOM and colleges, as illustrated in the following three subsections.

#### **7.4.3.1 Implications for policy makers in HE**

The results of this study reveal the need to instil criticality from the early stages of the education system to enable students to comprehend the transformative nature of CP when they reach tertiary level. It is recommended that planners and decision-makers in HE strive to cooperate with the MOE to launch radical reforms that would teach young people to think critically about the issues surrounding them locally and globally.

Moreover, the results indicate the need to include criticality in the missions of HE institutions. The learning environment, facilities, teaching methods, materials, activities and student-teacher relationship need to be considered in order to implement criticality within HE. Related to this is the need to include the students' ability to think critically as part of the national criteria, such as the GFP, as such criteria are currently absent. Criticality should appear in every aspect of these criteria, including goals, activities, methods and assessment.

Talking about ELT, which is the focus of this study, the results have shown that it has been governed by technical ideologies and standardization in the four colleges. In more precise words, ELT is based on "a technocratic approach to policy that treated language as a scientific, technical and ideologically neutral phenomenon" (Luke & Dooley, 2009). There is a pressing need for a critical re-examination of language policies and planning, taking into account Omani students' specific linguistic and cultural needs. There is also a need to move from a top-down approach with its rigid and inflexible ELT syllabuses that are deemed by the participants as one of the challenges of CP implementation.

As Hargreaves (1994) contends, mutual dialogue among key players is vital to bring about fruitful change. Therefore, in order to instil criticality within HE institutions, all parties, including the authorities at ministry level, the deans in the institutions, the teachers and the students, should be involved in the criticality project. Such involvement of all stakeholders

would minimise the fear and resistance to criticality within HE institutions, as all those involved would feel that their voices were legitimised. This could be done through forming joint committees to establish mutual rapport among all the stakeholders. This could lead to agreement regarding the aspects to develop in order to approach teaching and learning as critical enterprises.

CP, as an approach to teaching, has been constantly developed and debated. In this regard, it is important for HE authorities to set up an agenda to organize an international conference on CP to help disseminate the concept of CP among teachers. Teachers' understandings of CP could be enhanced through exchange of their knowledge and experience of CP with other teachers, both locally and internationally.

#### **7.4.3.2 Implications for policy makers at MOM**

There is a need to move from a top-down approach with its rigid and inflexible ELT syllabuses that are deemed by the participants as one of the challenges of CP implementation. Thus, teachers should be given more freedom in implementing the syllabus so they can incorporate some, if not all, the principles of CP. For instance, they should be given the opportunity to choose topics through negotiation with their students. In this case, teachers would experience autonomy, which would affect their motivation for improving their practice and would also help their students

to understand their world in a better way, rather than viewing themselves as consumers of policies and regulations.

It is highly recommended the policy makers (re) examine the materials used in ELT taking into account Omani students' specific linguistic and cultural needs, especially as the results of this study have shown that the materials currently used in the four colleges are irrelevant to Omani students. Depending totally on borrowed approaches and materials from the West, results in students remaining unmotivated and detached from their language learning. Therefore, it is urgent that such materials are scrutinized and modified to address students' needs.

The results of this study reveal that Omani ELT teachers are seen as initiators of any change in ELT. Therefore, policy makers ought to review their recruitment policies and hire more local teachers. Studies have shown that local EFL teachers can be more empathetic listeners for beginners and weak students, better at analyzing needs, and can act as agents of change (Mahboob & Golden, 2013), and that Omani students in HE institutions prefer to be taught by Omani ELT teachers (Al-Hinai, 2011). Additionally, this study shows that expatriate teachers view themselves as outsiders who cannot initiate changes. Hence, for the long term, Omani TESOL teachers and their expertise should be employed more in higher institutions, and they should receive continuous support to participate in the changes of life in general and education in particular across Oman.

One example of the support that these Omani teachers should receive to develop their skills and expertise is in-service programmes on materials design, especially since Omani ELT teachers lack experience in writing their own materials, as the study has indicated. This can be fulfilled by appointing them to co-write Omani syllabuses with international experts to get first-hand experience, as is the case with the MOE in Oman. Such endeavors would yield twofold advantages. First, Omani ELT teachers would improve their skills in materials design. Second, it would build their confidence in themselves and make them feel entitled to design their own materials in the future. In the end, local teachers are in the best position to understand their students' needs and concerns (McKay, 2002).

Moreover, this study suggests establishing a unit for professional development and research, especially as such a unit is absent from the colleges of technology. I believe that such a unit could assist in identifying the teachers' needs and concerns, designing PDPs that suit such needs, and developing critical materials. In addition, such a unit would play an important role in spreading the culture of research which is currently missing from the colleges of technology.

Furthermore, the results of the study reveal that there is an existing hierarchy among ELT teachers in the four colleges based on ethnicity and nationality: NESTs vs. NNESTs, Omanis vs. non-Omanis which results in huge differences in wages, promotions, and voice legitimacy. Therefore, such ideologies need to be challenged and problematized. The policy

makers should realize that an academic is an academic regardless of their nationality (Neal, 2010) and attempt to achieve equality among ELT teachers in different dimensions including salaries, promotion and voice that will positively affect their criticality, innovativeness and creativity.

Related to this is the necessity of reviewing the current recruitment policies that place expatriate teachers on a one-year contract that makes teachers feel insecure, as this study has earlier discussed. It is fundamental to implement policies that provide teachers with more job security since it plays a great role in teachers' motivation and innovation (Khan, 2011). It is also essential to provide financial and moral incentives to teachers who initiate teaching innovation and creativity, as the current system gives no credit to such teachers.

Finally, the results of the study also reveal that one of the challenges for CP implementation is the semester length that allows less than ten weeks for teaching. The policymakers need to review the length of the semester to examine the actual time for teaching and learning. It is worth mentioning that, at the time of conducting this study, there is a proposal at the Ministry level to lengthen the semester to 15 weeks.

#### **7.4.3.3 Implications for policy makers at colleges**

Some teachers are hesitant to implement CP because they are concerned about its conflicts with college regulations and expectations, as the findings of this study have shown. Therefore, it is suggested that the

college leaders attend such PDPs on CP and broaden their knowledge of it. Furthermore, the leaders' attendance might provide a great opportunity for building a consensus on how to implement CP tenets that could encourage teachers to move towards a critical stance in their teaching.

Since most English language centres have many expatriate EFL teachers who may not be familiar with the Omani culture, which is essential to implement CP, ongoing supportive orientation programmes are needed for those teachers (Swetnam, 2010). Such programmes can include cultural nights or gatherings (Al-Siyabi, 2012), group trips to certain Omani places where Omani culture can be introduced to them, and hosted lunches or dinners for those EFL teachers. Such cultural activities would play a role in familiarizing EFL teachers with Omani culture, creating a more collegial atmosphere at ELC, which can crucially and positively affect teachers' motivation to play their role as agents of change. In addition, the administrators in the college could assign mentors who were knowledgeable of Omani culture to help expatriate teachers learn about their students' cultures.

The assessment system in the four colleges, which relies heavily on testing, is regarded as an obstacle to CP implementation. The current "testing [assessment] has been exploited as a method of control and power – as a way to select, to motivate, to punish" (Spolsky, 1995, p.1) for both teachers and students. Therefore, reforming the examination system is essential to the implementation of CP. The participants in this study

suggested that some aspects of Critical Language Testing (CLT) need to be adopted. For instance, alternative assessments, such as a portfolio, would be given equal weight in students' final grades, which would not depend on one final test to determine their ability and future. Another idea is to use projects as a way to assess students via asking them to examine issues related to their lives and to think about ways to ameliorate their situations. Also, an assessment should include both formative and summative assignments and should be used to inform teaching, not only to measure students and filter them.

Since the evaluation of the teacher plays a crucial factor in keeping or firing teachers in the colleges where this study took place, as the results showed, it is necessary to alter the current evaluation system to be more developmental than judgmental. It is also fundamental for colleges of technology to review their methods of evaluating teachers, so that some of the CP tenets could be incorporated which may embolden teachers to implement it. For example, the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals could be incorporated into their evaluation, such as involving students in critical dialogue and decision-making which enable students to play their roles as agents of change in their society (Izadinia, 2011). Besides, the teachers' evaluation forms could consist of items related to their ability to contextualize material and relate them to students' concerns and interests.

## 7.5 Recommendations for further research

Based on the study's findings, some recommendations for future studies are put forward. First, it seems that research on CP is still in its infancy in Oman, so it is suggested that this study is replicated on a national scale to examine teachers' awareness and attitudes towards CP. This is of high importance, given the fact that knowledge about teachers' attitudes towards CP's premises can be determinant in including them in the ELT syllabus at tertiary level in Oman. According to Borg (2015), teachers' attitudes and beliefs about any innovation have a major impact on the extent to which instructors will be engaged in or resist it. Second, since this study is limited regarding introducing CP to ELT teachers and tracing their attitudes towards it, another opportunity for further research in Oman may be that of introducing it to other stakeholders. For instance, CP could be introduced to policy makers, administrators and students, and their attitudes towards teaching and learning via CP could be scrutinized. This would highlight any consensus or disagreement among the various stakeholders. Such research would broaden and deepen our understanding of the feasibilities and challenges of implementing CP in Omani contexts.

Fourth, this study suggests conducting longitudinal individual case studies or critical ethnography research over the period of a semester or a whole academic year. These case studies could trace how teachers' practice or students' learning may evolve because of implementing CP, especially as

"concrete examples of transformative pedagogies have been in relatively short supply" (Morgan, 2009, p. 89). Such studies could utilize multiple data collection methods including questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews, and documentary analysis and teachers' and students' diaries.

Fifth, due to the limitations of any PhD project, this study has given a general picture of the potentialities and challenges of CP in ELT in HE institutions in Oman. Therefore, in order to have a more comprehensive view, future research could focus on the nature of each of them and explore them in depth. Relating to this, future research could focus on feasibilities and challenges of CP in various language skills such as writing, reading, speaking and listening.

Sixth, this study shows that students' low motivation is an issue in Oman that needs to be looked at seriously. It is difficult to discuss students' motivation without discussing teachers' motivation that has also been neglected in research in Oman (Khan, 2011). Therefore, future research should on factors that motivate teachers and attempt to put the recommendations of such research into practice. Related to this, it is necessary to investigate the factors that motivate/demotivate expatriate teachers who form the majority in ELT in the four colleges and other HE institutions (Al Mamari, 2012).

Finally, CP does not come without its limitations and challenges. Therefore, it is suggested that future research tackle such limitations by

addressing teachers' and students' resistance, discomfort and anxiety about implementing CP in the Omani ELT context. It is suggested that ideology critique and critical discourse analysis studies should be utilized to problematize some taken-for-granted practices and ideologies, such as ELT teachers' recruitment and job security (Troudi, 2015) and how they are legitimized in Oman. Besides, such studies could reveal how hierarchical power relations and ideologies are (re) contracted and (re) produced by different agents in the educational organizations including students, teachers, administrators and policy makers.

## **7.6 Personal reflection: CP becoming part of me**

The past three years of my life has been a time of continuous reading, thinking and reflecting on CP. Although I faced a lot of challenges while conducting this research, it was informative in developing my understanding of research and of CP.

First, at the research level, the completion of this study has been a great shift in my ontological and epistemological assumptions about what society is, what knowledge is and what education is. It has disillusioned me from the apolitical conceptualization I used to have about what goes on around me. I have been challenged and confronted by my supervisor on my well-established ways of "knowing and being" (Bruce, 2013, p. 817). I was also challenged by the problematic nature of the critical theory

paradigm and the unsettled characteristic of the postmodernist paradigm. However, "the point ...[I constantly] remember is that if we have been made, then we can be 'unmade' and 'made over'" (McLaren, 2003a, p. 92). This encourages me to continuously grapple between what I was before my doctoral studies and what I have tried hard to become while conducting this study and (maybe) in the future. Such a transformative journey was scary at the beginning and full of contradictions that made me become ambivalent with regards to some issues that I encountered. Nonetheless, the more I read and engaged in my project, the more I started to feel secure and comfortable. I started to realize that ambivalence is a human status that is necessary for a person to be skeptical and doubtful about what is going on around them. Looking for truths, indeed, are simplifications restricting one's ability to think about other alternatives. Such transformative crossing makes me tolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty and that always encourages me to seek knowledge, evaluate various perspectives, investigate realities and ameliorate my thinking by equipping myself with love of knowledge and imagination. It keeps "[my] perceptions constantly under scrutiny, tracing the origins and implications of...[my] assumptions" (Andreotti, 2010, p. 242).

Second, investigating CP and its potentialities in ELT has not only been a matter of doing research for getting a doctorate; it has become a part of me that I have started to implement in my life with my family and

colleagues. I started to think about how I became a product of my culture and society as a female NNEST and how these two identities have marginalized me. Nonetheless, working on CP has encouraged me to start challenging such "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1991) and begin looking at myself as an empowered person. Additionally, working on CP has encouraged me to look at criticality within Islamic and Arabic resources and this has strengthened my knowledge about this approach and reject essentialist discourses that depict the West as superior and the East as inferior. I discover that by integrating local and global resources a person can reach 'situatedness' which is the core for CP.

Making the world better, more just and equal have become frequent topics with my family and colleagues. They sometimes interact energetically in the discussion, yet on other occasions they would stop the conversation with comments such as 'we are not going to fix the world'. Such comments have not discouraged me and, enthusiastically and optimistically, I reacted that 'being aware of the problem is the first step towards emancipation'. CP gives me the courage to catch critical moments and build on them to raise awareness with my children, parents, colleagues and (hopefully) students in the future. In a world full of messiness, uncertainty, information, ideologies, and contradictions, I feel CP gives an opportunity to reflect, question, shape one's position, react and (hopefully) move to action. Besides, CP gives me an opportunity to instill such qualities, and I am now more determined to go back to my work and continue what I have

started through my Ph.D. thesis with my colleagues and students to problematize the givens and act accordingly. However, I would complete this by putting CP itself under the critical lens to make the process ongoing.

## **7.7 Closing and opening: CP as an unfinished project**

I have argued throughout this study the necessity of implementing CP as one of the alternatives to move from the banking model that currently operates in ELT in the four colleges. It might be too difficult to tell if this study has achieved its aims. Some ELT teachers might not fully comprehend what CP is all about, yet I feel that I have succeeded in raising their awareness that something called CP exists as a teaching approach and that this might push them to explore, problematize and contextualize its premises. Some teachers, after the workshop, asked me for more articles on CP, others asked me to write the names of authors who have consistently written on CP and others expressed their appreciation for giving them the opportunity to come across such an approach. Pennycook (2007) states, "consciousness is the first step towards emancipation" (p.23). In a similar vein, Troudi (2015) emphasized the necessity for acknowledging that changes in attitudes and practices are frequently very slow, which requires consistent problematization and awareness-raising.

Since its appearance in the sixties, CP has long been a point of contention for teachers, practitioners and researchers. However, as is evident from the previous studies and this research, we still have much to learn about it and about how teachers conceptualize and practise it. Indeed, this study raises more concerns than providing affirmation about its meanings, potentialities and challenges. There is a lot left to be investigated before one can articulate confirmatory answers (if we ever can). Therefore, the majority of critical pedagogues refer to CP as incomplete, which corresponds to what Freire (2003) called "the unfinished character" (p.66) of the human being's state. In other words, CP is deemed as an infinite enterprise that boosts the person to interrogate, deconstruct, reconstruct, act and react to develop "a more just, humane, and equitable social order, both within and outside schools" (Giroux, 2009, p. 443). Hence, it is hoped that my research could add a constructive contribution that opens new angles for other ELT teachers, practitioners and researchers. They may look at CP as a constant discussion of "where it can, how it can, with whom it can, when it can" (Freire, 2007, p. 64), so it remains unfinished and reflexive.

My study only lasted a few months. With more time, more critical reflection and dialogue among all stakeholders, will CP find its path within ELT in Oman? Will teachers take further steps to play their role as transformative intellectuals? Why or why not? However, before thinking to answer such questions, teachers, administrators and policy makers should remember

that any educational experience "that offers students an uncritical master plan for curriculum development is only offering a recipe for disaster" (Slattery, 2006, p.31).

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## Appendix (1)

### The GFP learning outcome standards for English language

- a) Actively participate in a discussion on a topic relevant to their studies by asking questions, agreeing/disagreeing, asking for clarification, sharing information, expressing and asking for opinions.
- b) Paraphrase information (orally or in writing) from a written or spoken text or from graphically presented data.
- c) Prepare and deliver a talk of at least 5 minutes. Use library resources in preparing the talk, speak clearly and confidently, make eye contact and use body language to support the delivery of ideas. Respond confidently to questions.
- d) Write texts of a minimum of 250 words, showing control of layout, organisation, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary.
- e) Produce a written report of a minimum of 500 words showing evidence of research, notetaking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarising, use of quotations and use of references.
- f) Take notes and respond to questions about the topic, main ideas, details and opinions or arguments from an extended listening text (e.g. lecture, news broadcast).
- g) Follow spoken instructions in order to carry out a task with a number of stages.
- h) Listen to a conversation between two or more speakers and be able to answer questions in relation to context, relationship between speakers, register (e.g. formal or informal).
- i) Read a one to two page text and identify the main idea(s) and extract specific information in a given period of time.
- j) Read an extensive text broadly relevant to the student's area of study (minimum three pages) and respond to questions that require analytical skills, e.g. prediction, deduction, inference.

Oman Accreditation Council (2010, p.10)

## Appendix (2)

### English education degree plan at SQU

FIRST YEAR					
SEMESTER ONE		Cr. H	SEMESTER TWO		Cr. H
ARAB1001	Arabic Language	3	PSYC 1000	Intr. To Edu. Research Method	1
****	Elective I (Univ.)	2	COMP1100	Introduction to Personal Computer & its Applications	2
****	Elective II (Univ.)	2	EDUC2003	Foundations of Education	3
LANC1113	Language Skills I	3	LANC1118	Language Skills II	3
LANC1115	Reading & Vocab I	3	LANC1119	Reading & Vocabulary II	3
LANC1117	Writing I	3	LANC1120	Writing II	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>15</b>
SECOND YEAR					
SEMESTER THREE		Cr. H	SEMESTER FOUR		Cr. H
SOCI 3320	Modern Omani Society	1	PSYC 2001	Educational Psychology	3
EDUC2009	Educational Aims	3	ENGL2134	Critical Reading	3
ENGL2108	Modern English Grammar	3	ENGL2135	Effective Writing	3
ENGL2109	Effective Reading	3	ENGL2327	Phonology & Morphology	3
ENGL2320	Introduction to the Study of Language & Phonetics	3	ENGL2226	Introduction to Literature II	3
ENGL2225	Introduction to Literature I	3	HIST1010 Or ISLM1010	Oman & Islamic Civilization Or Islamic Culture	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>17</b>
THIRD YEAR					
SEMESTER FIVE		Cr. H	SEMESTER SIX		Cr. H
TECH3008	Intro. to Educational Technology	3	CUTM3007	Educational Curriculum	3
PSYC3001	Counseling and Development	3	CUTM3012	Methods of Teaching Eng. (1)	3
ENGL3127	Academic Writing	3	ENGL3129	Research Project	3
ENGL3128	Speaking	3	ENGL3324	Techniques in Translation	3
ENGL3217	Children's Literature	3	ENGL****	Elective I (Dept)	2
ENGL3329	Syntax and Semantics	3	.....	Elective III (Univ.)	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>16</b>
FOURTH YEAR					
SEMESTER SEVEN		Cr. H	SEMESTER EIGHT		Cr. H
CUTM4012	Methods of Teaching English (2)	3	CUTM4500	Teaching Practice	9
EDUC3117	Edu. Sys. and Its Ad. in Oman & the Gulf	3	PSYC4001	Educational Measurement and Evaluation	3
ENGL3328	Language in Society	3	ENGL4325	Applied Linguistics	3
ENGL4421	Language Acquisition	3			
ENGL3417	Studies in Longer Fiction	3			
ENGL****	Elective II (Dept)	2			
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>17</b>

## Appendix (3)

### English education degree plan at Rustaq TTC

Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 1224	Listening and Speaking	3	2	2	Foundation
COMP 2001	Introduction to Computer I	2	1	2	Foundation
ENSP 1122	Advanced Writing I	3	2	2	Foundation
ENSP 1121	Advanced Reading and Vocabulary	3	2	2	Foundation Year
ENSP 1123	Grammar and Usage I	3	2	2	Foundation
ENSP 1212	Phonetics and Phonology	3	2	2	Foundation Year
		17	11	12	
Semester 3 Academic Year /					
Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2113	Morphology and Lexical Semantics	3	2	1	ENSP 1111
ENSP2228	Report Writing	2	2	-	ENSP 1225
ENSP 3217	Readings in Applied Linguistics	3	2	1	ENSP 1111
ENSP 3134	Reading and Writing Skills Development	3	2	2	
PSYC 210	Educational Psychology	2	2	-	
ISLM4405	Islamic Culture	2	2	-	
Arab 2003	Practical Arabic Language Skills	2	2	-	
		17	14	4	
Semester 5 Academic Year /					
Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2232	Initial Literacy Skills Development	3	2	2	
ENSP 4221	Advanced Listening Comprehension	2	1	2	
ENSP 4222	Creative Writing				
ENSP 4223	Debating and Communication				
ENSP 3228	Error Recognition and Correction	3	2	2	
EDUC 800	School Management	2	1	2	
CURR 170	Practicum 1	3	0	6	CURR 107
ENSP 4245	ELT School Curriculum Analysis	2	1	2	
PSYC 250	Assessment	3	3	-	
		18	10	16	
Semester 7 Academic Year /					
Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2231	Communicative Language Teaching Development	3	2	1	CURR 107
ENSP 3241	Language Through Stories	3	2	2	
ENSP 3116	General Translation	3	2	1	
ENSP 4251	World Literature	2	1	2	ENSP 2151
ENSP 4252	Literature 2				
ENSP 4253	Contemporary Literature and Poetry				
CURR 190	Practicum 3	5	0	10	CURR 180
		16	7	16	
Semester 8 Academic Year /					
Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 4143	Differential Learning and Independent Learning	3	2	2	
PSYC 4138	& Research Methodology Statistics	2	1	2	
ENSP 4142	Language through the Arts	3	2	2	
CURR 200	Practicum 4	5	0	10	CURR 190
		13	5	16	

## Appendix (4)

### Programme structure and description in GFP in All Colleges of Technology

Courses	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
	No. of Hrs	No. of Hrs	No. of Hrs	No. of Hrs
writing	4	4	5	6
Reading	5	4	4	4
Litening & Speaking	5	4	4	4
Core course	4	4	4	NA
Learning skills	1	1	NA	NA
Project & presentation	NA *	NA	NA	3
Multi media	1	1	1	1
Total Hours	20	18	18	18
Mathmatics	NA	4	NA	NA
IT	NA	NA	4	NA

### The breakdown of marks for CA

Level	Learning skills	oral	Writing assignments	Reading Assignments	CA total
Pre-elementary	5%	5%	5%	5%	20%
Elementary	5%	5%	5%	5%	20%
Intermediate	NA	5%	7.5%	7.5%	20%
Advanced	Project and presentation 10%		7.5%	7.5%	20%

## Appendix (5)

### Critical Pedagogy Workshop Planning

#### **Task one: Introduction** (10 minutes)

**Aim:** *Talk about the factors that shape learning experience and show participants that the teacher plays a great role in shaping students' learning experience*

1. Recall an unforgettable episode from your learning experience when you were a student which you feel has shaped your learning. It can be a happy, sad, shocking or transformative episode.
2. Now, get ready to share your experience with other members in your group.
3. Reflect together and summarise the factors that could shape the student's experience of learning.
4. Elicit ideas from the participants. Make the point that the teacher has a great role to play in shaping learners' experience.

#### **Task two: Types of Pedagogy** (10 minutes)

**Aim:** *Introduce models of pedagogy and relate them to the participants' context*

1. Ask teachers to think of few words that describe their approach to teaching
2. Show the participants three pictures exemplifying three models of pedagogy (Transmission, Generative, Transformative).
3. Ask participants to work in their groups and write three characteristics of each model.
4. Ask participants which of these models is more popular in their context? Which model do they use more? Generate more discussion by asking the participants questions, such as why a certain model is more popular, why a certain model is absent.
5. Have a plenary discussion.

#### **Task three: Introducing Critical Pedagogy** (25 minutes)

**Aim:** *To understand the meaning of critical pedagogy*

1. Give participants Handout (1), where they read a passage about critical pedagogy
2. Hold a plenary discussion
3. Have a mini lecture where I describe/ talk about the six tenets that guide the definition of critical pedagogy in my study

T. Al

Education is political
Education should address emancipatory knowledge
Education should aim for empowerment
Education should aim for transformation
Integrating the world in the classroom
The meaning of critical

4. Ask participants to reflect on the main tenets
5. Do they agree/disagree?
6. Encourage participants to give their opinions using examples from their experience

**Task four: Introducing the banking model and problem posing model (15 minutes)**

**Aim:** *To compare between the banking model and the problem posing model*

1. Give each group cut-out characteristics of the banking model and the problem posing model
2. Participants work in their groups and sort out which characteristics belong to each model
3. Each group creates a poster of the characteristics of both models
4. Have a group discussion on both models and ask participants to reflect on which model is more feasible in their context
5. Ask participants if they are satisfied with the model used in their contexts

**Task five: Examining ELT textbooks used in their context (15 minutes)**

**Aim:** *To raise ELT teachers' awareness of the ideologies presented in ELT textbooks; realise the importance of implementing aspects of critical pedagogy in the ELT realm.*

1. Distribute Handout (2), which includes examples from ELT textbooks used in the college
2. Ask participants to work in groups and examine the examples
3. Ask participants to work in their group and answer the following questions:
  - a. How do you think such passages or activities will affect students in your context?
  - b. What kind of ideologies do they represent?
  - c. Do you think that students in your context need to discuss these topics? Will these topics affect students' lives? Will they contribute to bringing changes in their lives?
  - d. Can you approach such activities as they are without modifying them?
  - e. What will happen if we, as ELT teachers, approach these topics unproblematically?
  - f. Be ready to share your thoughts with other groups.
4. Hold a group discussion allowing participants to share their thoughts and reflect on their experiences.

**Task Six: Critical Pedagogy in practice (40 minutes)**

**Aim:** *Give teachers examples of how to put critical pedagogy into practice*

1. Give a mini lecture about how critical pedagogy can be put into practice at the level of ELT aim, materials, methods, assessment
2. During the mini lecture, provide examples of how to use aspects of critical pedagogy using the materials used in the study context (Handouts 3,4,5)
3. Ask participants to reflect on the content of the lectures in terms of their feasibilities and challenges

4. Provide more examples of how to use aspects of critical pedagogy using critical issues (Handouts 6 &7)
5. Ask participants to reflect on the examples provided in terms of their visibilities and challenges

***BREAK (10 minutes)***

**Task Seven: Classroom Scenarios (15 minutes)**

**Aim: *Determine the level of criticality in the given classroom scenarios***

1. Give each group five scenarios and the degree of critical pedagogy chart (handout 8).
2. Ask them to work in their groups and fill in the chart.
3. Encourage the participants to provide reasons for their choice.
4. Hold a plenary discussion.

**Task Eight: Critical pedagogy and Islamic principles (10 minutes)**

**Aim: *To raise teachers' awareness of the similarities between CP tenets and Islamic principles.***

1. Give a mini lecture about the similarities between CP tenets and Islamic principles.
2. Ask participants to reflect on the content of the mini lecture and have a whole group discussion.

**Task Nine: Designing a lesson plan using aspects of Critical Pedagogy (30 minutes)**

**Aim: *Collaborate with others to put the critical pedagogy aspects into practice***

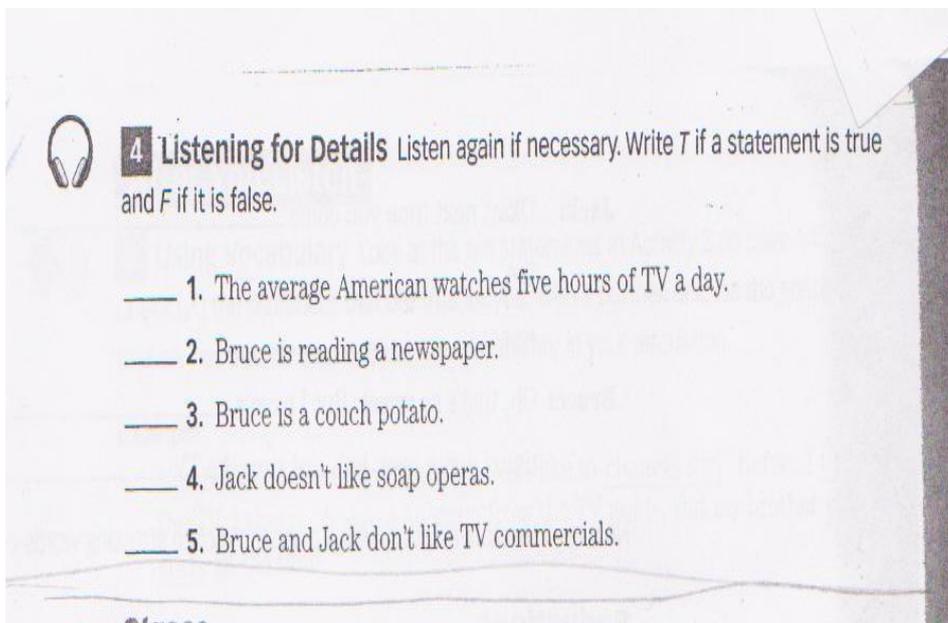
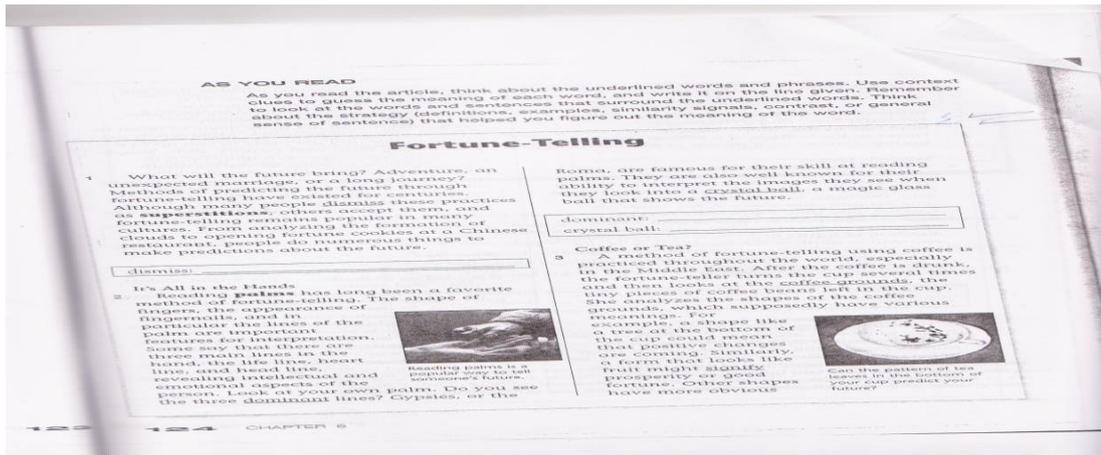
1. Ask teachers to work in their groups and design a lesson plan using aspects of critical pedagogy.
2. Remind the teachers of the steps of the problem posing model.
3. Ask teachers to present their lesson plans to the whole group.
4. Encourage other groups to comment on each other's lesson plans.
5. Hold a plenary discussion.

**Task Ten: Comments and feedback (10 minutes)**

1. Explain to participants that, in the time left, you would like to get feedback from them about the workshop.
2. Distribute the workshop evaluation form.
3. Thank the participants.

Handout (1): Examining ELT textbooks

**Step one:** Look at the following passages and activities taken from the textbook used in ELT





**Talk It Over**

**1 Discussing Birthday, Graduation or Dinner Parties** Answer the following questions with a small group.

1. Describe a typical, enjoyable party for people in your age group. Think of the kind of parties you might go to. Include the following information.
  - a. Where is the party held?
  - b. What time does the party start?
  - c. What food is served?
  - d. What kind of entertainment is there?
  - e. Do you bring a gift for the host?
  - f. When does the party end?
2. Why do you think some young people like to have a birthday party or a graduation

**Share Your Thoughts**

**A.** Work with a small group and discuss these questions.

1. Have you ever visited Seattle? If not, would you like to?
2. Why do you think Seattle is the home and headquarters of so many big companies?
3. Would you like to live in a city like Seattle? Give some reasons to support your answer.
4. What do you think Chief Seattle meant when he said, "This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected." Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

... of the questions in Exercise A and write a paragraph about it.

## Part 2 Conversation: Arranging a Match

**Before You Listen**

**1 Prelisting Questions** Before you listen, talk about social life with a classmate.

1. Is socializing common in your culture or circle of friends? If yes, how do you meet people? If no, explain how you like to socialize with friends.
2. What are the most important things to look for in a husband or wife?
3. Would you trust your family members (parents or brothers and sisters) to select a husband or wife for you? Why, or why not?

## Part 4 Real-World Tasks: Entertainment

**1 Prelisting Discussion** Look at the advertisements for entertainment below and on page 177. Answer the questions with a small group.

1. What type of entertainment is each poster advertising?
 

a movie	a live music show
a classical music concert	an opera
2. Discuss which of these things you might like to do tonight. Decide on one activity with your group.
3. Discuss which activity you chose with the class.

**Step two:** *Work with your group and discuss the following question*

1. How do you think such passages or activities will affect students in your context?
2. What kind of ideologies do they represent?
3. Do you think that students in your context are in need to discuss these topics? Will these topics affect students' lives?
4. Can you approach such activities as they are without modifying them?
5. What will happen if we as ELT teachers approach these topics unproblematically?
6. What is your role as ELT teachers?

Handout 2

**Living far away from your family**

1. **Divide them into 3 or 4 groups.**
2. **Ask them to think about the following questions?**

- a. What do you feel about living far away from your family?
- b. What are the disadvantages of living far away from your family?
- c. What are the advantages of living far away from your family?
- d. What kind of advice will you give to a person who lives far away from his family?

3. **Ask each group to report the summary of their answers to the whole class.**
4. **Ask the students to discuss the following two questions:**

- a. Have you ever thought about people who have lost their families in wars or car accidents? How would they feel?
- b. What can you help such people? What things can you as a person do? What can the government do for them?

5. **Have a whole class discussion.**

Handout 3

## Marriage Ceremony in Oman

1. Show the students different pictures of a Marriage ceremony in Oman. (You can also show them a video clip.
2. After seeing the pictures or viewing the video clip, ask students to think for a moment of how they feel about what is happening in the marriage ceremony.
3. Ask them to express their position by writing 'for' or 'against' on a sheet of paper.
4. Count the scores and write them on the board, calculate the percentages and write these on the board. For example: Total in class 32, against: 22 (69 percent), for: 10 (31 percent).
5. Ask students to give reasons for their opinions. (This is can be done individually or in groups.)
6. Ask students the following questions:
  - a. Should Omanis keep the same marriage customs or not?
  - b. What is their responsibility to keep or get rid of these customs?
7. You can write on the board the customs Omanis should keep and customs Omanis should get rid of? Ask students to give reasons for their answers.

Handout 4

## Diabetes in Oman

1. **Make sure that the students understand the meaning of diabetes/diabetics/causes/effects**
2. **Give students the following reading passage. Ask them to read it individually (*you can also use videos to show them about the disease*)**

Here are some facts that you probably didn't know about diabetes. It is the world's fastest growing disease. It is the world's 6th leading cause of death. Many people have it though 50% of those are as yet unaware. Every 10 minutes someone is diagnosed with diabetes. So much for the facts but what exactly is diabetes?

Diabetes is the name given to a group of different conditions in which there is too much glucose in the blood. Here's what happens: the body needs glucose as its main source of fuel or energy. The body makes glucose from foods containing carbohydrate such as vegetables containing carbohydrate (like potatoes or corn) and cereal foods (like bread, pasta and rice) as well as fruit and milk. Glucose is carried around the body in the blood and the glucose level is called glycaemia.

Glycaemia (blood sugar levels) in humans and animals must be neither too high nor too low, but just right. The glucose running around in the blood stream now has to get out of the blood and into the body tissues. This is where insulin enters the story. Insulin is a hormone made by the pancreas, a gland sitting just below the stomach. Insulin opens the doors that let glucose go from the blood to the body cells where energy is made. This process is called glucose metabolism. In diabetes, the pancreas either cannot make insulin or the insulin it does make is not enough and cannot work properly. Without insulin doing its job, the glucose channels are shut. Glucose builds up in the blood leading to high blood glucose levels, which causes the health problems linked to diabetes.

**3. Ask them to work in groups and give them to think about the following questions**

1. Do you have a relative who suffers from diabetes? Who is he or she?
2. What are the causes of diabetes?
3. What are the effects of diabetes?
4. What can you do at the personal level to help people to avoid diabetes?
5. What can the government do to help people to avoid diabetes?
6. Do you expect that Oman will have more or less diabetics? Why?

4. Ask each group to present their ideas for the whole class. Encourage students to talk as much as they can
5. You can do the same activity to talk about various diseases that people suffer from in Oman (AIDS, High blood pressure, heart diseases)

Handout 5

**What is poverty to you?**

**Level:** Pre-intermediate and above

**Time:** 30-40 minutes

**Procedures:**

**Step one:** Ask the students the following questions, giving them time to think and write down a few responses:

1. Do you consider yourself to be rich or poor?
2. How much do you spend on yourself per day?
3. What do you buy?
4. Do you know anyone who is really poor?
5. What do they not have?

Teacher elicits answers

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**Step two:** ask the students to try to define the term 'poverty'

For instance, people are poor when they have no.....  
Elicit answers and write a few suggested definitions on the board

---

**Step Three:** Distribute copies of the following passage on poverty. Read the passage together, making sure any difficult language is understood

World poverty is on the increase again after 50 years of poverty reduction. People are regarded as poor when they have no access to the basic rights most people in the Gulf take for granted: food, shelter, clothes, proper health care, clean water, and education.

Many people and organizations define 'poor' as one of the over 1.2 billion people (out of the world total of 6.3 billion) who live today on less than two dollars (one rial) a day. But poverty is not about money. It is about access to the basic rights of food, education, shelter, clean water and proper health care.

1. According to the passage, what does poverty mean?
2. Could you and your family live on less than two dollars (one rial) a day? Why?
3. How could the world guarantee that everyone has access to the basic rights in the statement?

Elicit answers

---

**Step Four:** put the class into small groups and ask them to brainstorm:

1. A new definition of 'poverty'
2. What could be done to fight poverty at international and national level
3. The role of the government/non government organizations

Elicit answers and write them on the board. Ask the students for any ideas they would be willing to take action on.

---

**Follow up:**

Teacher can ask students to

\*\*Find out if there are pockets of poverty in their country or in neighboring countries. They prepare a report describing that type of poverty, either in writing or orally

**Or**

\*\*Students research updated statistics on world poverty and prepare a presentation

**Note: This activity is adapted from Global Issues by Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004, pp 47-49**

## Handout 6

### What is home?

Aim: students discuss basic human needs and examine the problem of homelessness  
Vocabulary related to do with houses and homes. Using would for likely outcome  
Time: 30-40 minutes

Procedure:

1. Write up on the board the following dictionary definition of 'house' and 'home'

House: a building that is made for one family to live in

Home: The place where you live and where you feel that you belong

2. Ask the students to take two minutes' silent time, thinking on their own and making notes on the following questions:
  - a. What turns a house into home?
  - b. Why is a home important?

Make sure that the students understand the difference between the words 'house' and 'home'

3. Give out photocopies of 'House Chart'

Needs that the room helps to satisfy			
Room in the house	Physical	Emotional	Social

Appendix ( 5 )


4. Ask the students to get into pairs but stress that they each need an individual copy of the chart
5. Elicit the names of the most important rooms
6. Emphasize the words physical, emotional, and social in the chart and discuss with the whole class what these words mean in everyday life, concentrating especially on the difference between emotional and social. Ask the pairs to discuss the needs that each room helps to fulfill.
7. Ask the students to share their responses and write some on the board.
8. Ask them to think about what happens with those needs (emotional, physical, and social) when people haven't got a home (are homeless). Ask them how they would feel if they were homeless.

Follow up

Ask the students to think about how they react individually to homeless people. They can write a report or they can do a short oral presentation

Or

The students do research into the cause of homelessness (unemployment, family breakdown, mental illness). They can also search for other reasons.

**Note: This activity is adapted from Global Issues by Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004, pp.93-94**

**Handout (7) Degree of Critical Pedagogy**

Sort out the given scenarios using the following chart:

	<b>Highly Critical</b>	<b>Somewhat Critical</b>	<b>Somewhat Noncritical</b>	<b>Highly Noncritical</b>	<b>Comments (provide reasons for your choice)</b>
<b>Scenario 1</b>					
<b>Scenario 2</b>					
<b>Scenario 3</b>					
<b>Scenario 4</b>					
<b>Scenario 5</b>					

**Classroom Scenarios**

**Scenario 1**

Jack is an ELT teacher who decided to modify the textbook that is used in his institution. He introduced provocative topics that are related to students' lives, such as arranged marriage, women's work, and rural and urban cities. For all generative topics discussed, the class started with a codification such as a video or picture or phrase. Then students were asked to work collaboratively to talk about the advantages and disadvantages of each topic. At the end of the lesson, students were asked to write an essay about each topic.

**Scenario 2**

Sameera showed her students two pictures (an Indian man and a European woman) and asked her students to predict their background, occupation and education. Her students assumed the Indian man would not be educated and would work in poorly-paid jobs, while associating white Europeans with a good education and career. Sameera invited the man and the woman in the pictures to talk to her students to show that the man was actually well educated; the students then realised their discrimination was based on images that are perpetuated in society and discovered their cultural prejudice.

**Scenario 3**

Amal is a student at advanced level at college. One day, she didn't understand some words, especially that her teacher had asked them to say something if they didn't

understand, so Amal asked what the words meant, but her teacher turned to her and said (basically), 'you're a bad student; you already finished intermediate level and you don't know the meaning of these words. You should be ashamed for not knowing!' Amal replied sarcastically and hurtfully in English, 'Thank you.' Amal stopped asking or even participating in the class from that day forth.

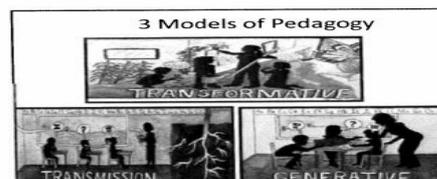
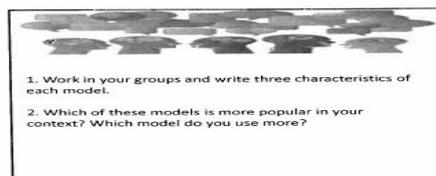
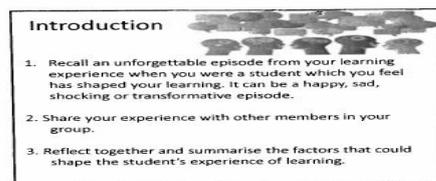
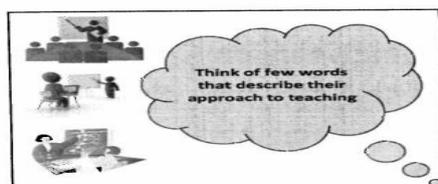
#### Scenario 4

Nancy is a new teacher in an Omani institution. In her first semester, she used her authoritative role as a teacher, was inconsistent in dealing with specific issues in the classroom and did not offer students choices in classroom activities. Such practice generates very negative attitudes that adversely affect students' learning. However, through self-reflection, Nancy discovered that her pedagogical procedures should be changed, so she allowed her students more power and linguistic space. Thus, she changed her pedagogical practice by giving students some power and making them feel supported. She did that by negotiating the attendance policy with the students, rearranging seating in the classroom into a circle to boost students' empowerment rather than seating students in rows. She also gave students the choice of certain types of activities and partners to work with, depended more on group work, and allowed students to postpone quizzes if they were not ready.

#### Scenario 5

David works in an institution where tests are given high weight in students' assessments. However, David believes that students should be given a voice in assessing their performance. Thus, during their presentations, he asked his students to assess their performance by providing them with a form that included some of the criteria that were used to assess them. The students left it empty. He realised that giving students a voice should be a gradual process and students should first realise the benefits of assessing themselves. David explained for his students the necessity of reflecting back on their presentation by themselves. He asked his Omani colleague to translate the criteria in Arabic and he gave the form to his students in both Arabic and English.

### Task 1 & 2: Introduction



### Task 3: Introducing CP

**Main Tenets of critical pedagogy**

**1. Education is a political enterprise**

- >Education is not an apolitical and innocent act that contributes to the person's common good, where true facts are transferred to learners.
- >The school structure, curriculum and classroom are value laden, which results in socialising people in terms of how to think, feel, speak and act

**Now**



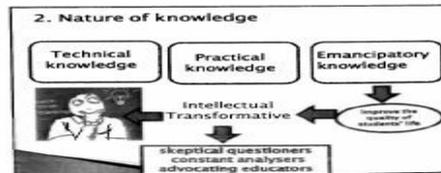
- ↻Look at the following pictures.
- ↻What can you tell about each picture?



**Teachers' role**



- ✓Interrogating what is going on in their schools
- ✓Taking a skeptical stance towards the teaching and learning process.

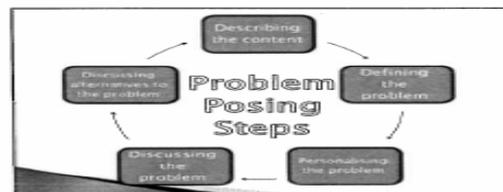


**3. Education for empowerment**

- ✓This empowerment can be attained by giving students a voice, legitimising their experiences and encouraging them to question ideologies that frame their realities



**Problem-posing education**



**4. Education for transformation**

**Conscientisation**

The process by which students as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacities to recreate them.

- >Raising conscientisation is not a rational, intellectual explanation of what is wrong with the topic discussed
- >It requires teachers to confront students' experiences and ideologies through a critical dialogue and reflection that leads to raising awareness and hopefully action

**IMAGINATION**      **HOPE**

asking students to imagine alternatives for issues discussed in the classrooms, imagine themselves in a different part of the world, imagine themselves in a situation with others, imagine themselves in the future

An enabling, imaginative vision that takes us beyond the given and commonplace. Education should be rooted in giving students hope for the possibility of a better future



**5. Integrating the world in the classroom**

- >What happens in the classroom should end up making a difference to the world
- >presenting students with generative themes
- >The theme should be closely relevant to students every day concerns and experience, a phenomenon or a problem in the community, news that can engender students' interest and motivation
- >It must focus on questions of inclusion, empathy, power, inequality, discrimination, ethics, love, care, resistance and struggle

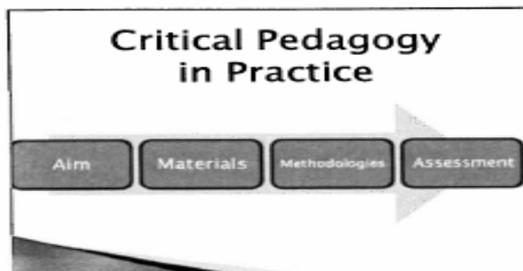
**6. What does critical mean?**

- >There is a difference between critical thinking and critical pedagogy
- >Critical pedagogy questions assumptions, ideas that have become naturalized, notions that are no longer questioned
- >Critical thinking is concerned with analysing the situation, providing reasons for arguments
- >Critical pedagogy should lead to change

**Example**  
Women going to work

<p><b>Critical Thinking</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. what are the advantages of women working?</li> <li>2. what are the disadvantages of women working?</li> <li>3. What are the reasons behind their opinions?</li> </ol>	<p><b>Critical Pedagogy?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. why does society hold such debates about women's work and not men's work?</li> <li>2. Why are women responsible for housework?</li> <li>3. Who gives them such a responsibility?</li> <li>4. Have male students thought about helping their wives with the housework in the future? Why? Why not?</li> </ol>
---	---

**Task 6: Critical Pedagogy in practice**



**Aim**

- >The purpose of ELT programmes is to enable students to master the language in conjunction with raising their consciousness of the world around them.
- >In other words, ELT should aim to:
  - (1) improve students' communicative abilities
  - (2) raise students' awareness of the world
  - (3) embolden students to act in order to improve their situations

**ELT Materials**

- >Teachers should question ELT materials that are produced in the centre and reach the periphery in full packages.
- Most coursebook dialogues worry about where to spend vacations, how people celebrate different occasions and what to wear for a friend's party.
- >Teachers should base their teaching on students' concerns and interests through focusing on provocative topics.

**Examples**

This can be done through talking, reading and writing about topics such as

- Kinds of challenges encountered by foreign workers when living in Oman.
- Omani students/families introducing non-Omanis to cultural activities/ celebrations in Oman.
- Spending their monthly allowance wisely
- Unemployment
- Expired food
- Living far away from their families
- Protecting the earth
- Expensive life
- Traffic jams

**Chapter 9: social life  
Handout 3**

- >Base some of your teaching on students' local culture

People involved in communication want to express who they are and what kind of cultural background they represent.

Enabling learners to think about the different aspects of the culture in which they live and find ways to bring about changes in the society where change is needed.

Make learners critically aware and respectful of their own culture and prevent the development of a sense of inferiority which might result from a total reliance on the target language culture

**Examples**

**Chapter 6: Cultures of the world  
Handout 4**

**Chapter 7: Health  
Handout 5**

➤Familiarise students with 'critical multiculturalism'

It is not enough to acknowledge the difference and similarities between cultures.

It problematises differences and advocates a critical understanding of different cultural groups.

Teachers motivate their students to question the images to which certain cultures are attached.

**Make your learners aware of issues faced by marginalized groups**

Most learners are unaware of the way the majority of other people negotiate their day-to-day lives or even their survival:

**Examples**

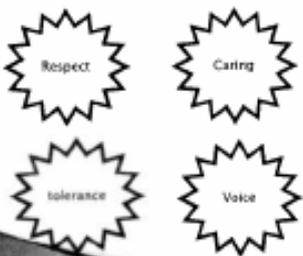
- Human rights
- Children's rights
- Women's rights
- Poor people
- Disabled people
- Old people

➤Presenting students with various varieties of English

- (1) raising students' awareness that English is not monolithic
- (2) enabling learners to successfully communicate in a globalised world where English is widely used
- (3) emphasising one or two varieties of English may disempower students who think that successful English learning means reaching one of these standards

**ELT methodologies**

**Creating a positive classroom atmosphere**



**How to give students a voice?**

- Negotiating classroom policies and the syllabus (content, modes and ways of working)
- Reflecting on what is helpful or unhelpful during the class, and adjust their teaching accordingly

Note of caution, however: giving students freedom does not mean that they do what they want and gain the impression that they are equal to the teachers

**Utilizing a dialogical method**

Dialogue empowers students and shifts them from their passivity to become subjects

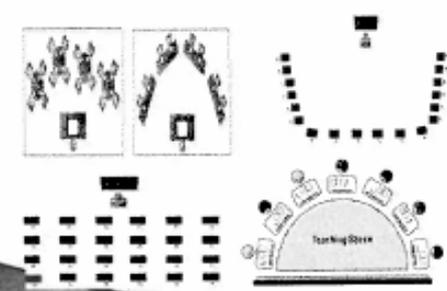
Students learn from teachers and teachers learn from students, which eliminates a hierarchical teacher-student relationship

Note of caution, students should not be expected to engage easily in dialogical methods, especially if they come from a banking model approach

**Regard learners' L1 as a resource to be utilized**

- The common practice in L2 professional literature has been the rejection of learners' L1 as a negative force.
- A learner's L1 can be regarded as an asset that can facilitate communication in the L2.
- L1 can be successfully used to maintain discipline in the classroom or to provide instruction for certain activities. It can also be used for explaining delicate grammar points or abstract vocabulary items.

**Classroom arrangement**



The diagrams illustrate three different classroom seating arrangements. The first shows a U-shaped arrangement with desks facing inward. The second shows a semi-circle arrangement with desks facing a central point. The third shows a grid arrangement with desks facing forward. A teacher's desk is labeled 'Teacher's Desk' in the grid arrangement.

**ELT assessment**

- We live in an era characterised by heavy reliance on tests as the only valid and objective way of assessing students.
- Tests negatively affect students by forcing passivity onto them, decreasing their self-confidence and interest in learning English.



The illustrations include a close-up of a test paper with a pencil, a cartoon student sitting at a desk reading, and a sign that says 'PASS' with a checkmark and 'FAIL' with an empty box.

**Critical Language Testing**

**ELT assessment**



The flowchart shows a cycle: 'Learn' leads to 'Learn the test', which leads to 'Learn to pass', which leads to 'Learn what to learn', which then loops back to 'Learn'. A cartoon character is shown next to the flowchart.

- Rejects a one-time pencil and paper test
- Tests should be utilised to inform teaching and learning
- Have a voice to decide on the date and venue of the test and be given at least two or three topics from which to choose during the tests
- Questions on the test should be open-ended
- Alternative assessments

## Appendix (6)

Final version of the questionnaire



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

### **Questionnaire about the Current Practice of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Higher Education Institutions in Oman**

Dear teacher,

I am a PhD candidate at the University of Exeter. I am currently working on my thesis and part of its requirement is the enclosed questionnaire. It aims to collect data regarding your opinion about the current practice of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the higher education institutions in Oman. Your participation is voluntary and you can choose not to take part. However, your decision to participate will not only help me in my research but also provide you, as teachers experiencing the situation, with important information. Your answers are valuable in providing a deeper insight into the de facto practices, and hopefully, reflect your voice in order to improve the ELT realm in Oman. Please note that all your responses will be used confidentially for research purposes only. Estimated time to read and answer the questions will be 30 minutes.

Yours Sincerely  
Thuraya Al-Riyami  
PhD Candidate  
[tksa201@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:tksa201@exeter.ac.uk)

## **SECTION ONE**

### ***Personal Information:***

Please put (√) next to the appropriate response:

#### **1. Education level:**

- Bachelor Degree  
 Master Degree  
 Doctorate Degree

**2. Gender:**             Male                             Female

**3. Nationality:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **4. Years of experience in ELT:**

- Five years or less  
 Ten years or less  
 Twenty years or less  
 More than Twenty years

#### **5. Years of experience in ELT in Oman**

- One year or less  
 Five years or less  
 Ten years or less  
 More than ten years

## **SECTION TWO**

### ***To what extent do you agree with the following statements?***

Please put (√) in the appropriate box.

#### **(1) English Language Teaching (ELT)**

The Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.1 Equipping students with skills to find a job is the main purpose of ELT.					
1.2 The English language is privileged compared to other languages.					
1.3 An English teacher should be able to speak like a native speaker.					
1.4 The aim of ELT is to help learners attain native-like proficiency					

Appendix ( 6 )

1.5 The spread of ELT should be looked at as unproblematic.					
1.6 Students should be taught only Western culture in ELT classrooms.					
1.7 Non-native English teachers can be as effective as native English teachers.					
1.8 ELT should aim to create a change in students' lives.					
1.9 ELT perpetuates the superiority of English speaking countries (UK, USA, Canada, etc.).					
1.10 The current ELT programme in Oman provides conditions to develop students' critical awareness of the world around them.					
1.11 Aspects of the Western lifestyle included in the imported ELT instructional materials can gradually interest the Omani students in Western ways of life.					

**(2) ELT materials**

The Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2.1 Good ELT textbooks are the ones which are free of controversial issues.					
2.2 The majority of the topics discussed in the ELT textbooks are not relevant to Omani students.					
2.3 ELT textbooks designed by Omani experts will not be as good as the ones designed by native English experts.					
2.4 English textbooks used in Oman should be free from Western cultures that are incompatible with Omani values.					
2.5 ELT Materials should reflect an integrated approach to the teaching of skills.					
2.6 The ELT curriculum should encourage students to discuss the social/economic issues surrounding them.					
2.7 ELT textbooks produced in English speaking (the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia) countries aim to Westernise young adults.					
2.8 The topics in ELT materials should be based on the students' specific history and contexts.					
2.9 British/ American curricula are the best model for learning English.					
2.10 The ELT materials should make students aware of other varieties of English, such as Indian English, Malaysian English.					

**(3) ELT Teaching Methods**

Appendix ( 6 )

The Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3.1 The ELT teaching in my college is based on the communicative English teaching approach.					
3.2 English should only be taught through English.					
3.3 I do not follow one approach while teaching.					
3.4 I modify the content to suit my students' backgrounds and cultures.					
3.5 Arabic usage in the classroom facilitates English learning.					
3.6 Lecturing is the best way of teaching.					
3.7 ELT teaching methods should raise students' awareness of social, economic, etc.issues in their society.					
3.8 Arabic usage in the classroom hinders students' exposure to English.					
3.9 Negotiating what and how to teach ELT with students leads to chaos.					
3.10 Policies and rules at the classroom level should be set by the teachers and students should follow them.					

**(4) ELT Assessments**

The Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4.1 Testing is the best way to assess students in ELT.					
4.2 Quizzes and tests objectively measure students' ability in English.					
4.3 Portfolio as a way to assess students is not appropriate for the context of Oman.					
4.4 Teachers cannot postpone quizzes for students without referring to the administration.					
4.5 TOEFL/IELTS is a good indication of students' English proficiency.					
4.6 The ELT tests should be more towards open-ended questions.					
4.7 Students should be consulted on the content of the tests.					
4.8 Students should be trusted to self-evaluate their presentations/projects.					
4.9 ELT teachers' should consult their students about where and when to take tests.					
4.10 The ELT tests should be more towards close-ended questions.					

Appendix ( 6 )

4.11 Projects are as valid as tests in assessing students' English ability.					
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**(5) Teachers' Role in ELT**

The Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5.1 English teachers should question the spread of ELT.					
5.2 The role of the ELT teacher is to transfer the language to his/her learners.					
5.3 ELT teachers' responsibility is to teach students from the textbooks					
5.4 ELT teachers' main role is to train students for the tests.					
5.5 ELT teachers should encourage students to choose topics for classroom discussion.					
5.6 ELT teachers should use the current issues in the media as a basis for the classroom.					
5.7 ELT teachers' role is to raise students' awareness of other varieties of English, such as Indian English, Malaysian English, even if they are not addressed in the textbooks.					
5.8 ELT teachers should help students problematise issues in their society					
5.9 ELT teachers should teach the prescribed textbook than critique it or change it.					
5.10 ELT teachers should work towards bringing about social changes in the contexts where they teach.					

**(6) Students' Role in ELT**

The Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6.1 Students' previous knowledge about the discussed topic should be the starting point of the class.					
6.2 Students have the right to contest what their teachers say.					
6.3 Students are receptive to what the teacher is telling them to do.					
6.4 Students can be engaged in dialogue regardless of their level of proficiency.					
6.5 A good student is the one who always asks questions.					
6.6 Students can contribute effectively to the decisions made in the classroom.					
6.7 Students can decide for themselves what to learn in an ELT course.					
6.8 A good student is the one who obeys rules.					

6.9 The learners can play the role of the teachers sometimes and teach their teachers.					
6.10 A good student is the one who challenges taking for granted issues in his/her society.					
6.11 Students can contribute effectively regarding what to include in the ELT syllabus.					

### **SECTION THREE**

***Please answer the following questions:***

1. Have you heard of ***critical pedagogy***? (If No, please go to question 4)

.....

If yes, where did you hear about it?

.....

Can you define it?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Have you already used it in your teaching?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. Do you think ***critical pedagogy*** can be implemented in the ELT system in Oman? Why or why not?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. What are some of the challenges that can hinder the implementation of CP in the ELT system in Oman?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. Would you like to attend a workshop about critical pedagogy? *This workshop will shed light on the main tenets of critical pedagogy and*

*Appendix ( 6 )*

*provide practical activities of how to implement these tenets in ELT classrooms.*

**YES**

**NO**

If **YES**, please can you provide me with your email address?

Email address: .....

***Thank you for your cooperation***

## Appendix (7)

### An example of a lesson plan

**Skills:** Speaking and writing

**Level:** 4

**Topic:** Car accidents

**Aim:**

- To discuss the issue of car accidents in Oman
- To raise students' awareness about how to minimize car accidents

**Steps**

**1. Describing the topic**

Show students some pictures of car accidents  
Ask them to describe them and how they feel about them

**2. Personalization**

Ask students if they have had any car accident  
Ask them about the reasons of their car accidents  
Ask them about their feelings

**3. Discussion**

Students work in groups to discuss the reasons of the car accidents in Oman and their effects  
Have a whole class discussion

**4. Thinking about solutions**

Students work in groups to discuss solutions for this problem. Teachers raise their awareness to think about their social responsibilities as drivers and passengers  
Have a whole class discussion

**5. Follow up**

Students brainstorm for a problem solution essay about car accidents and bring their ideas next class

## Appendix (8)

### Workshop evaluation form

#### Critical Pedagogy Workshop

#### Feedback

	Yes	Don't know yet	No
<p><b><i>Now that you have attended the workshops do you feel able to:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Understand the rationale behind the necessity of implementing critical pedagogy in ELT</li><li>○ Understand the main tenets of critical pedagogy</li><li>○ Implement some aspects of critical pedagogy in your teaching</li><li>○ Include activities in your teaching using some tenets of critical pedagogy</li></ul>			

Are you willing to implement critical pedagogy in your teaching? **Please provide reasons for your answers.**

What were the <b>most applicable</b> tenet(s) of critical pedagogy in Omani EFL classroom?
What were the <b>least applicable</b> tenet(s) of critical pedagogy in Omani EFL classroom?
Any other comments or suggestions

**Further participation:**

I would also like to interview teachers and discuss the issues covered in the workshop in more details. Would you be interested in being interviewed?

YES                       NO

If YES, please can you provide me with your details?

Name: .....

Email address: .....

Phone Number: .....

## Appendix (9)

### The interview protocol

<b>Interviewee:</b> .....
<b>Number of interviewee:</b> .....
<b>Level teach/skills:</b> .....
<b>Location of the interview:</b> .....
<b>Date:</b> .....
<b>Length of the interview:</b> .....

***Note:*** The interview questions will vary from one teacher to another based on their responses during the interview. However, here are some questions to be presented to all participants:

Topics	Questions
General information about the participant	Can you please introduce yourself? (Background, nationalities, years of experience in ELT, years of experience in the ELT in Oman?)
Research question (1) Teachers' awareness of CP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe your teaching philosophy?</li> <li>2. What are your goals as an ELT teacher?</li> <li>3. From your own perspective, what is the aim of ELT?</li> <li>4. Have you come across CP before the workshop?</li> </ol>
Research question (2) Teachers' attitudes towards CP after the intervention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What have you learned from the workshop? Did it add anything to your understanding of Critical Pedagogy (CP)?</li> <li>2. How would you define CP?</li> <li>3. What do you think of using English as a means to raise students' awareness of themselves and the world around them?</li> <li>4. What do you think about engaging students in dialogue and maximize their participation in your class?</li> <li>5. Do you think that you are willing to implement CP in your teaching?</li> <li>6. What is your overall reflection of the CP workshop?</li> </ol>

<p>Research question (3) The potential of CP in ELT</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can the teacher make a balance between the assigned textbooks and addressing students' concerns and cultures?</li> <li>2. As a teacher, do you think that you should have the choice to decide on what you teach based on your students' needs and concerns?</li> <li>3. Do you think that students should be consulted on what to learn and what to be tested on?</li> <li>4. Can CP find its path into ELT in your college? why</li> </ol>
<p>Research question (4) The challenges of implementing CP in ELT</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are some factors that would facilitate its implementations?</li> <li>2. What are some challenges you may encounter in implementing CP?</li> <li>3. After being exposed to CP, what do you wish to see different or changed in the ELT system in the higher education institutions in Oman?</li> </ol>
<p>Other comments</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you have anything you'd like to say?</li> <li>2. Do you have any questions?</li> </ol>

**Further participation:**

I would also like to observe some of your classes and to observe how teachers can put CP in practice. Would you be interested in being observed?

YES                       NO

If YES, please can you provide me with your details?

Name: .....

Email address: .....

Phone Number: .....

## Appendix (10)

### The Semi-structured observation form

#### Classroom Observation

Areas	Note
<b>1. Lesson aim</b> Pedagogic aim, Linguistic aim, <b>Social aim</b> (critical)	
<b>2. Choice of materials/topics</b> (Does the teacher use generative themes? Does the teacher base his/her teaching in the students' cultures, concerns? Does the teacher discuss global issues? Any type of codification of the textbook's materials)	
<b>3. Classroom atmosphere</b>	

<b>4. Given Students' voice</b> <i>Who chooses materials?</i> <i>Who chooses topics?</i> <i>Who chooses activities?</i> <i>Patterns of interactions?</i> <i>Seating arrangements?</i>	
<b>5. Utilizing a dialogical method</b>	
<b>6. Teacher's role</b>	
<b>6. Learners' role</b>	
<b>7. Language Use</b> (English only, Arabic, other English varieties)	

8. Classroom sitting arrangement	

Other Comments

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## Appendix (11)

### Post observation interview protocol

<p><b>Name of the teacher:</b>.....</p> <p><b>Level teach/skills:</b>.....</p> <p><b>Location of the observation:</b>.....</p> <p><b>Date:</b>.....</p>
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#### ***Opening statement***

The purpose of this interview is to help me understand more clearly the lesson that I recently observed. I would like to focus specifically on how you have implemented CP. This will take about fifteen minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

#### ***Warm-Up***

1. Please tell me about your lesson. What were your intended aims and objectives of it.
2. Do you think you achieved those aims?
3. Generally speaking, how did the implementation of some of CP tenets go?

#### ***Experience in the classroom using CP***

1. Can you describe the students' reaction towards the lesson?
2. Did all students take part equally?
3. Have you discussed similar issues in the past? If not what are some of the differences between your lessons in the past and this lesson?
4. How do you feel about implementing some of CP premises in the future?
5. What kind of challenges did you face in preparing and delivering this lesson?

#### ***Concluding Questions***

1. Do you have anything you'd like to say?
2. Is there anything that I haven't asked about and that you think I should know to help me better understand what went on in your class today?
3. Do you have any questions?

## Appendix (12)

### Transcribed post observation interview

**I:** *I would like first to thank you for your willingness to participate in my study and I would like to thank for your lesson as well. The purpose of this interview is to help me understand more clearly the lesson that I recently observed. I would like to focus specifically on how you have implemented CP. This will take about fifteen minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Basma: No thank you. I just want to thank you for observing my lesson and I am sure you are going to give me valuable comments.

**I:** *Please tell me about your lesson. What were your intended aims and objectives of it.*

Basma: It is a reading class. So my aim was to identify the contents of some products' advertisements and their purposes and goals. I wanted also to identify the effects of advertisements on their lives.

**I:** *Do you think you achieved those aims?*

Basma: I think I succeeded in linking what was in the lesson to a current issue which is being consumers of products because of the advertisements we watch or see around us. I also succeeded in engaging students in dialogue and discussion. However, during the lesson, I feel that students were not that motivated. They were silent because expected me the teacher to do everything, they want to teachers to tell them what to do, they will do it and this is the end of the story.

**I:** *Generally speaking, how did the implementation of some of CP tenets go?*

Basma: I modified it a lot and I incorporated some of CP tenets. I wanted to raise their awareness of the concept of materialism. If we talk about Gulf people in general and us as Omanis, we are consumers. We like to buy things. Saving is not in our agenda. I was very curious to know what the students think and how they think. I wanted to know to what level they are aware of this concept.

**I:** *Can you describe the students' reaction towards the lesson?*

Basma: As I told you, some students were enthusiastic to participate; whereas, some students were reluctant to participate in the discussion. You know our students, they are not motivated and I talked about this in the interview we had. The books we currently use, excuse me for the word, are rubbish and they bring rubbish to the class. I mean they do not add anything to students' way of thinking, so they cannot add a lot to their linguistic abilities. Whoever designing the books we used, they

don't have such cultural awareness. They do not have enough or any backgrounds about our students. They do not know their needs. So, some students detached from the classroom even if the teacher is killing herself. We should do our best, if it works, then it works, if not at least we have tried our best.

**I: Then, how can this problem be solved? I mean how can we encourage them?**

Basma: Discussing critical issues I think affect their [students] motivation. They become motivated to come to class. They really feel that they are important people and have a voice on what they face in their daily life. You what they hear about this idea that colleges of technology are not colleges of choice, so they are here because of their low score in high schools. So they always think that they are in the bottom of the hierarchy comparing to students who join SQU or going to study abroad that are the elites, and are self motivated. But Our students are different. They are not dump people, they are just not motivated and unless you work on their motivation, they won't learn. And I think CP is one way to do this through relating what they learn to their own life and discuss current issues with them.

**I: But you have discussed consumerism and advertisement which are critical issues but some students remain passive?**

Basma: Our students have not been exposed to such pedagogy and they might have difficulties in understanding the aim of such pedagogy, or they might not be able to say their opinions about the discussed topic especially they are weak in the language, sometimes our students cannot express their opinions because they do not have the language to do so. Talking about our students for example if we say intermediate level, we really give the wrong impression, they are not intermediate. Their actual level may be beginner or low intermediate. Similarly, when we say advanced students, they are not actually advanced, they are intermediate or upper intermediate. So our students are not weak though they are not very good. But this does not mean that we give up. We need to try. Students need time to get used to it. Also, we need to encourage students to read more when students have enough backgrounds, then they will be able to participate and then they will be able to enjoy the advantages of critical pedagogy. I think we need to give our students opportunities to acquire life skills because we really need to question things around us

**I: Have you discussed similar issues in the past?**

Basma: In the past, I discussed social issues in passing only, without the needed focus to drive home the point of the lessons using CP. But with this lesson, I was conscious in incorporating CP in all stages: from

motivation to materials and the outputs. I think if we teachers bringing such issues in the classroom, maybe we can create a change on students' way of thinking because you know students take their teachers as model for them.

**I: Can you please tell me more about the difference between your lessons in the past and this lesson**

**Basma:** As I told you in the past I brought critical issues to link what students learn to their backgrounds without aiming to create a change on their life but in this lesson I had an aim which is raising students' awareness of consumerism as I said. The other difference is using imagination in my lesson. I mean I have not involved my students in imaginative activities before. But, as you saw in my lesson, the students engaged more in the discussion when I asked them to imagine themselves without money and how would they feel about this and how they would deal with the situation. They came up with various interesting points. I like the concept of imagination and I am planning to implement it in my future classes because in an imaginative situation, we are asking our students to imagine, so there is no correct answers and in this way we can encourage them to speak and justify their ideas. I think this is a powerful tool for students to think and speak.

**I: I want to ask you how do you feel about your lesson?**

**Basma:** I feel self satisfied; at the end you are trying your best as a teacher to bring a change in your students' life.

**I: How do you feel about implementing some of CP premises in the future?**

**Basma:** As an English teacher, I will try to expose my students as much as possible to critical topics and use English to raise their awareness of what is going on around them. They need to learn to be critical. I think I can do this in the future through discussion or reading. I believe since we started learning about how to teach English, grammare, vocabulary have been the focus and I think your workshop opens up new ideas about how to teach English, so we can play our role as agents of change in our students' life and in our society. Howvere, we need first to understand this approach more.

**I: What kind of challenges did you face in preparing and delivering this lesson?**

**Basma:** The main challenge is students' reluctance, trying to simulating them for various thought processes and involving them in the classroom. The other challenge is materials. As I said before the current materials we used do not correspond to the CP premises. I spent a lot of times modifying the syllabus because I have to teach what is required. So such modification took a lot of time. Preparing visual aids to make the students understand the process and the expected output was also challenging.

**I: Thank you for your valuable comments. I really appreciate it. Do you have anything you'd like to say?**

Thank you. I really enjoyed doing this lesson. I am open to learn if there is any special training being given to make it better towards the benefit of the students' better understanding. As I said before, CP is a very important approach if we want our learners to be critical thinkers and to be aware of the social issues. However, teachers need to be trained extensively to effectively implement this. It has to start from elementary and high school, to be followed up in the college and university levels.

**I: Is there anything that I haven't asked about and that you think I should know to help me better understand what went on in your class today?**

Basma: It is possible to use CP in teaching English in Oman. It is a challenging task for materials preparation and classroom activities. However, it is also something that students will find interesting and engaging because they are aware, as it turned out, of the social issues in their country. They can connect what's going on in their society with language learning, making it significant in their lives.

**I: Do you have any questions?**

Basm: No. Thanks a lot

**I: Thank you**

## Appendix (13)

### Notes from semi-structured observation

<b>Teacher:</b> Salima <b>Students' level:</b> Advanced (level 4) <b>Location of the observation:</b> Institution 3 <b>Date:</b> 8/10/2014	
Areas	Notes
<b>1. Lesson aim</b> Pedagogic aim, Linguistic aim, <b>Social aim</b> (critical)	-The teacher aim is for students to be able to discuss problems and suggest solutions to solve the problem. It is the first lesson in how to write problem-solution essay (linguistic) -The teacher also aims to raising students' awareness of some problems that related to their academic and social life (social/critical )
<b>2. Choice of materials/topics</b> (Does the teacher use generative themes? Does the teacher base his/her teaching in the students' cultures, concerns? Does the teacher discuss global issues? Any type of codification of the textbook's materials)	-The teacher starts by asking students to suggest some problem they like to discuss. No responses from students -The teacher uses whole classroom discussion. She does not put students in groups. I feel that she does not give students time to think. -It seems that the students' silence makes her nervous and she starts to suggest some problems to discuss. The first problem is why students get bad marks in the college. She then discusses 'car accidents', 'smoking in the college' 'expensive life' and 'failing on the exam' -This means that she relates the content of the lesson to students' context and using generative themes. She discusses local concerns. -The does not use the topics suggested by the textbook such as cultural shock, insomnia, over population since she feels that are irrelevant to students. -The teacher does not use any picture or video. She just writes the problem on the board and she has whole class discussion.
<b>3. Classroom atmosphere</b>	-The classroom is relaxing and teacher uses some humor. When teacher discusses a problem about ' smoking in the college', one student said that he smokes in the college and nobody catches him. Everybody laughs. Teacher said 'I will inform the administration and you will be caught'.

	<p>Everybody laughs and teacher said 'I am just kidding'. The students laugh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The teacher praises students whenever they provide good answers which motivate students to participate.</li> <li>-The teacher calls students with their names which reveal that she cares about them since she remembers their names after one month and a half.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Given Students' voice</b>  <i>Who chooses materials?</i>  <i>Who chooses topics?</i>  <i>Who chooses activities?</i>  <i>Patterns of interactions?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The teacher asks students at the beginning of the class ' any problem you would like to find solutions for?'</li> <li>-No answer from students</li> <li>-Teacher does not paraphrase her question. She keeps repeating the same question</li> <li>-No answers are from students</li> <li>-The teachers depend on whole classroom discussion where she initiates the discussion and some students are completely silent.</li> <li>-There is no use of group work, so no interaction is going on between students and students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Utilizing a dialogical method</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The teacher does not use the problem-posing model when she discusses issues.</li> <li>--The teacher does not promote the dialogue by asking students 'why' questions and she only elicits solutions for the problem they discuss. So, the teacher dominates the class. No real dialogue is going on.</li> <li>-Her codification is limited to writing the problem on the board. She does not ask students to describe the problem and she does not ask them about their feelings. She immediately asks students to suggest solutions to the problem discussed.</li> <li>-She does not give students time to think about the problems. She expects them to answer immediately. There is no thinking time.</li> <li>-Most Students are silent again. She elicits answers from students who are willing to participate. One excellent student called 'Moosa' dominates the dialogue. I feel that the dialogue is only between the teacher and Moosa (the excellent student)</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Teacher's role</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Teacher is in the front centre of the class most of the time. This gives me the impression that she holds power and controls everything.</li> <li>-The teacher talks a lot during the lesson and the students' talking time is limited to answering the teacher's questions</li> <li>-She is information provider. She writes on the board and the students copy them on their notebook</li> <li>-She has a smiling face</li> <li>-The teacher discusses with students 'Expensive life' but</li> </ul>

	<p>she does not write on the board. One student asks her to write the solutions on the board, so they can copy them in their notebook. The teachers writes them on the board.</p>
<p><b>7. Learners' role</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-They answer teacher' questions</li> <li>-They sometime gives examples to confirm their understanding</li> <li>-They use the new vocabulary in their own sentences</li> <li>--students remain passive sometime although teacher is trying hard to involve them. Is it because they lack English? I feel that their English proficiency is low although they are at advanced level</li> <li>-The learners expect teachers to write everything on the board and they copy them on their notebook. The seem to be receptors of what teacher says.</li> <li>- Since I sit at the back of the classroom, towards the end of the lesson, there is one students who is busy playing with his phone and at the other side there is -another female student is busy with her phone</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Language Use</b> (English only, Arabic, other English varieties)</p>	<p>-Teacher used English most of the time but in one occasion teacher gives the equivalent in Arabic for the words student do not understand. For example, teacher give the equivalent of Arabic for 'law', 'civilization'. _The teacher is tolerant to students' usage of Arabic when they express their ideas.</p>
<p><b>8. Classroom arrangement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-At the beginning, the class is arranged in rows. All the male students are sitting on the right-hand side of the class while the female students are sitting on the left.</li> <li>-The teacher's table is in the middle front of the classroom near the board.</li> <li>-The students work individually during the class.</li> <li>-The classroom arrangement does not allow interaction between students. Therefore, most interaction goes between teacher and students.</li> </ul>

## Other Comments

-It seems that teacher has both linguistic and social aims, so she is able to relate the content of the lesson to outside world and make students (to some extent) familiar of some problems in their contexts.

-At the beginning when I enter the classroom, the arrangement of the class reflects teacher's power. Such seating in rows hinders group work and students' interaction with each other. It is also reflects the banking model where the teacher is the knowledgeable person and the students are receptors of what she is saying.

-The teacher starts the class by reminding students that they have an exam in two weeks and they need to study hard. This is reminiscent of the importance of the exam to success in the college.

-During the lesson, Salima tried to engage her students in critical classes by giving them the opportunity to decide on any problem they would like to discuss. The students remained silent and did not suggest any topics. Such students' reaction pushed the teacher to depend on the banking model, where students were totally powerless and the teacher took control of the classroom by providing them with problems to discuss.

-The teacher continues repeating questions without paraphrasing them. Also, she does not ask them to take few minutes to think about the problems. She does not activate group work and she does not encourage students to share ideas with others.

## Appendix (14 )

### Transcribed interview

**I: Could you please introduce yourself (Your background, how many years of Experience you have in general and in Oman in Particular)?**

Don: My name is ..... I have my Master from my country and I am from Philippine and I have 6 years of experience in general and 1 year in Oman.

**I: Can you describe your teaching philosophy?**

Don: for me whenever I am teaching my students, I usually go for the practicality of the materials I am using with my students. For example, if I have a chance to present newspapers clipping I usually use that as a better materials compare to the one I use from the textbooks because I am thinking in the long run my students have to read newspaper articles and at some point I want them to be exposed to such materials. That's why I am using authentic materials

**I: How do you see your role as an English language teacher?**

Don: In this particular setting, it is quite different from the Philippine because the Philippine using English as a second language but here since English is as a Foreign language, there is a difficulty in the vocabulary and spelling. Right now, I teach as a model for my students, especially when we are doing the different conjunctions of the verbs or for example the grammar rule, so I start with that process of being teacher's model for the students, then latter on if I am comfortable with my class, then I engage them with cooperative learning activities. Also, at some points, I make them have presentations inside the classroom.

**I: From your own perspectives, What is the aim of ELT from?**

Don: what we have here English as a medium of instruction, it fosters unity basically cooperation not just among Omanis also for the international global scenario because right now English the only language that used for business, law, proceeding higher education and even in technology use we use English for that matter.

**I: Have you come across CP before the workshop?**

Don: Yes, I have experienced it when I was in my country. It is a good approach since it makes students strive to be at their best academically and behaviorally. It encourages them to ask questions and show curiosity and inquisitiveness in learning. It also make them responsible and dutiful in their own learning by reading and using materials that can enhance and improve knowledge acquisition and language learning

**I: What have you learned from the workshop? Did it add anything to your understanding of Critical Pedagogy (CP)?**

Don: I am going to focus on one aspect which is curriculum and materials development because we are currently using materials that are quite let me say materials which has not been scruntize with the cultures of Oman and I have to say that if we want to make use of this teaching approach, we need a review of the materials we are using, basically some of the reading passages are not at the scope of interst and experience of the students, so even if I want it to for example there is one chapter looking for a job, when you are in the college, you are supposed to study and you are not yet in that moment when you are going to look for a job, so why introduce such kind of topics when it is not yet in the experience of the students and for one thing there are materials which include something (haram) in their religion such as Music or Wine what if in the passage there you have a musician and I cannot make them listen to the music of these people because they cannot appreciate the reading passage without listening to the materials, so if we are going to review those materials in conjunction of critical pedagogy that you introduced, then we will have a more meaningful experience for both teachers and students' perspective.

**I: Can you elaborate on how such topics can affect the students' learning experience?**

Don: There were some students who were moving their heads as disapprovals though some were enthusiastic about such topics, one student's disapproval is already enough for me to stop the discussion. In particular here in Nizwa, the students here are quite conservative and this is something I reached from the research I did about the country as well because Nizwa is used to be the capital of Oman. If this is the central of the cultural tradition and heritage, then the people would basically follow this kind of mentality. No it quite different and I have to adjust with this kind of situation and find alternative ways . I presented them with other ways appreciating the passage but not as effective as I wanted it to be before.

**I: How would you define CP?**

Don: CP is to encourage learners to become critical individuals and take active parts in the debated issues in and outside Oman. It is about social transformation and it has been done in the Philippine this kind of way of thinking about the language and how it is powerful for people to liberate themselves. It is something that it is used by people to express themselves to provide their decent and discontentment from the government and policy. However, for me CP is something that would have to have a foundation, because without a foundation, students will lack exposure to sensitive issues and concerns, and then it would affect the real purpose - maybe because it would shock them. It would not transform them in a positive way but rather it would make them negate more of the ideas.

**I: What do you think of using English as a means to raise students' awareness of themselves and the world around them?**

For me it is very important because I have been reading quite a lot about the current issues in Oman such as unemployment, if we graduates who are unemployed, then this makes a social issue for them and basically at this point in time, they should be able to realize that they are advantages and disadvantages of getting college education at first place. I have been telling my students that it is not an easy ride to simply get into a job when they are also pertaining for a job will be their social role. For example, as they are future parents if you want to get married there is the idea of dowry and I ask my Omani friend who has this frustration because he wanted to get married but because of the high dowry he needs to have, he cannot afford it and this is culturally an issue for him. So these students that we have right now, they are aiming for high marks that would give them the best initial job offering in engineering in IT, so but they are not concerned with other things that matter outside, for them it is marks that matter, so what is the point of doing CP that aims for lifelong learning? What is for example I end up like this. They do not have this kind of options yet. They do not see themselves doing other jobs than the one they have dreamt of? What If it does not come true, so those are realities we need to bring to the classrooms? In the same melting part of unemployment, social problems that they are currently facing but because we are in that position, we have this kind of experience that we need to address in the classrooms. I have to say that we need to help them to see other realities through incorporating critical pedagogy.

***I: What do you think about engaging students in dialogue and maximize their participation in your class?***

Yes, I think, in the writing assignment, for me if in the higher level, we already talk with them, we discuss the content in terms of the essay, topics but as teachers, we present them with verities of topics which we think as teachers that they can choose from, so we do not limit them with one or two topics and in term of assessment if I have to say if the students are to be given more of the enough time to do their tasks outside the exam time. For me it is hard to think of the essay in an hour after taking grammar, reading and listening exams. Then you are suddenly asked to write an assay of 250 words. For me this is like gasping for air because you can no longer think rightly about the topic you are asked to write about as writing is a highly demanding task. If we expect our students to really polish their writing, then they should be given enough time to proofread, edit their work, consult you with what is wrong I mean what kind of improvement they can bring to their writing but because we have formal assessment, we do not have that in the midterm and final examination. Maybe if we have this kind of assessment, the written input inside the classroom can be more of one to one consultative that is way it is easier for us really know about what is going on in our students' minds and why they have written about this or that.

**I: Do you think that you are willing to implement CP in your teaching?**

Don: Well I am quite challenge with it in terms of the materials that I want it to use especially if I could be able to make them realize something, so I am open to it and if there will be materials and latter on discussion in how it is going to be implemented, then I am quite happy share my knowledge and insight about it.

**I: What is your overall reflection of the CP workshop?**

Don: The workshop provided me with valuable insights into the many methodologies and techniques that may be used in language classes. I believe CP is needed to make learners understand the relationship between language and socio-cultural considerations. Such understanding will make the society more flexible and progressive as it will open venues where learners can fully participate in the identification and recognition of basic principles of citizenship and social responsibility.

**I: How can the teacher make a balance between the assigned textbooks and addressing students' concerns and cultures?**

Don: I myself would be able to think of topics that could be explored CP like the one you presented for us and then plan it out where we could put it in our syllabus and curriculum and in our lesson plan. For me there is an opportunity, the idea of the students getting not only to know about their own village or country but to know about other countries in the world. For example, Oman and the Philippine have the same land area but we are 100 millions and Omanis are only 2 million. These realities could be presented for students to compare population of different countries like describing a graph that way we trash out like if we have a lot of people in this country, you ask propping questions at the beginning of the lesson to provoke social imagination and ask them if they can see yourself or your friends, your families. That way, in a step-by-step process, we could open up critical pedagogy for the students. But it is not an overnight step though

**I: As a teacher, do you think that you should have the choice to decide on what you teach based on your students' needs and concerns?**

Don: right now, I see the institution provides us with opportunity to do what we want to do inside the classroom, once I close the door of my class, I would usually have my own set of activities there, I customize a lot of my materials of my class. I only concern about the kind of the assessment that we currently use. It is already laid out and may be a portion of classroom participation; class standing would help us push students' participation in the classroom because in level 1 and 2 students participate more in the classroom but once they reach level 3 and 4, they look more for formal assessment the midterm exam, the quizzes and final examination. May be an alternative assessment could be done see for example my students let compile their materials, their output in the class but this is for the sake of compilation we have not got the session to truly

reflect why did the teacher make us compile these materials I could simply leave them at home I have not reached that kind of level where I could openly discuss look at your materials do you see any improvement in your writing I hope to achieve that but at the moment I do the compilation for example for them to be able to review the materials for the exam not for the portfolio.

**I: Do you think that students should be consulted on what to learn and what to be tested on?**

Don: It is very important to consult the students by designing a questionnaire that will test their general knowledge. This will help the curriculum designers to pattern the course delivery plans, course syllabi and materials on what the students know and do not know, the type and the content of the assessment, and the methods, approaches and class activities to be used in the language classes. In this manner, there is a genuine effort to empower the students and it will make them important stakeholders in language learning.

**I: Can CP find its path into ELT in your college? Why?**

Don: I think eventually in Oman if the Omanis latter as professionals, they create their own associations like engineers, teachers associations, then they would be able to iron out what can be done to contribute to the development of this country because as future professionals, the students if they are able to visualize the future of Oman , then it would make a difference because right now the trace of the government is Omanisation but Omanisation does not stop by simply having to fill in the job of the Indians, Philippines or Indonesians who are working there but that there is also the idea that getting them socially acceptable there are certain jobs Omanis refuse to be in, why is that why this kind of resistance that is something that could be latter the contribution of critical pedagogy because if there will be in the long run too much depending on expert labor force, then Oman will simply continue depend on them it is not sustainable if the field of work expertise diversify then the critical pedagogy will come in in making the policies would save guard people from different concerns

**I: What are some factors that would facilitate its implementations?**

Don: I believe that we need to revise the current materials. Textbooks are useful when it comes to covering the contents prescribed in the curriculum. Real texts (e.g. newspapers, documentaries of events, etc) may be used to supplement textbooks while making sure that the one does not over-emphasize the other. There is no way for students to learn if they use materials the content of which is alien or unknown to them because this will not facilitate the formation of ideas and opinions of what is good or bad for them since they lack content and insights into the subject matter at hand.

***I: What are the challenges teachers may face if they want to implement CP?***

Don: As an expatriate, the main challenge is to go into the culture because culture is not stated in a handbook or manual. It is something that you learn as you go along. Say there are some cultural norms I am not familiar with and I am still looking into that aspect - so cultural awareness will play a very important role if all teachers are able to embrace - because the success of CP would depend on our awareness of the For example, I try my best to know more about Omani cultures but still I am not able to explore the sensivity of the people themselves. When I came to this college, I had no ideas about the system here, I tried to read through the website of the college but in terms of the content it has been taught, I was able to know about it when I emerge myself in the system. Language is always tight with culture and if it now, still I have certain limitations that I have including cultural norms that I have to absorb and this particular aspect is the one looking for support really because I need to know the culture itself especially I encountered at some point in my teaching when I already had the materials I am using in the classroom, what my students simply said No, this is for me means to step back and simply do not use such issues in the classroom despite my interest in open up certain materials to them but since culturally I have to be sensitive to that one. I am limited to the kind of exposure that I have. Another point, for example, I cannot mix the boys and the girls in the class but there is that vision that in the future they will find themselves working a alongside with opposite sex and that is for me is quite enigmatic and puzzled with it, the government is targeting to have them work together and we cannot mix that in the college. For me this is still something needs to be iron up as an educator. Also, as an expatriate, I am not well perceived in Arabic but I try to learn some of the words that I could think of Tawal, mesbah, kursi that help me connected with my students and this is of course is political in nature because if I don't reach them out, it is quite hard to them to reach me out eventhough they are interested in the Philipines culture, that is not yet the moment they have to explore my cultures. This is for me to go and amerce myself to their cultures and from that we explored the target which is the language which is English. Another challenge is with the types of the materials because materials are quite difficult to accustimize, so we need a lot of efforts and time to develop materials related to critical pedagogy and materials play an important role. It means also extensive assessment and evaluation of the appropriateness of these materials. So for me these are a quite challenge for me cultural awareness and sensivity and the second one is the materials we have.

***I: After being exposed to CP, what do you wish to see different or changed in the ELT system in the higher education institutions in Oman?***

Don: When I first came here, I had the fervent wish to contribute to the education and transformation of the Omani society through teaching.

Being passionate about teaching minds and transforming hearts of young learners under my care, I wish to see them become good citizens of their country. This might only be done by raising their awareness on how they can learn the English language yet with a more practical application of their learning. This practical application must not only be assessed through tests and exams, but more so on the experiential aspect of performing a task. Learners have their own set of unique skills and abilities that must be tested by requiring them to produce an output from their imagination and learning. Therefore, there must be varied types of tests that will assess language acquisition skills and critical appreciation of the society.

**I: Anything you would like to add at the end of the interview?**

Don: for me I really appreciated the workshop and it made me remember and think about the way we do English language teaching in the Philippine where we incorporate Critical pedagogy and I wish I could do it here as well where we can discuss openly the current issues such as environmental issues, news in the media and staff like that. I think it is a very good thing. I think your workshop can be an initiative to start critical pedagogy in Oman. It has to do with continuously looking at the bigger framework first because the teachers cannot do a lot of things because they follow the guidelines of the framework. There are opportunities for critical pedagogy in the college here, see we have environmental awareness day and cultural week for example and these are very basic examples but latter in the future it can be developed further into more engaging activities in a way that students can feel through such activities that they are empowered to pursue what could improve them more as a student and a person and as an Omani citizen as well.

**I: Thank you so much. I really appreciate your insights and comments.**

Don: Thank you

## Appendix (15)

### Lesson plans' analysis chart

N	Topic	Language Skills	Aim	Procedures
1	Car accidents	Speaking and writing	<p>1. To discuss the issue of car accidents in Oman</p> <p>2.To raise students' awareness of how to minimize car accidents</p>	<p><b>Describing the topic:</b> Show students some pictures of car accidents. Ask them to describe them and how they feel about them.</p> <p><b>Personalization:</b>Ask students if they have had any car accident. Ask them about the reasons of their car accidents. Ask them about their feelings.</p> <p><b>Discussion:</b> Students work in groups to discuss the reasons of the car accidents in Oman and their effects. Have a whole class discussion</p> <p><b>Thinking about solutions:</b> Students work in groups to discuss solutions for this problem. Teachers raise their awareness to think about their social responsibilities as drivers and passengers. Have a whole class discussion</p> <p><b>Follow up:</b> Students brainstorm for a problem solution essay about car accidents and bring their ideas next class</p>
2	Extensive use of Plastic	Reading and writing	<p>1. Enhance Critical analysis and social awareness of the students through discussion, reading, writing and doing a project on extensive use of plastic</p>	<p>The teacher asks and tries to elicit one of the most threatening problems to the society, extensive use of plastic.</p> <p>Class is divided into four groups and each group is given to discuss the impact of undestroyable use of plastic.</p> <p>Open a discussion on the increasing use of plastics and its impact directly or indirectly on the human beings, animals and the ecosystem.</p> <p>Teacher distributes copies of a small article on the extensive use of plastic to pairs of students. Teacher helps the students to understand the difficulties if any in understanding a few words.</p> <p>The teacher gives a project work on making any item of the students' choice using the waste material.</p> <p>Teacher asks the students to write a cause and effect essay on "use of plastic" and a problem solution essay on "Use and abuse of plastic."</p> <p>Present a research project on "how to ban plastic?"</p>
3	Disabled people	Speaking And writing	<p>1.To talk about our responsibilities towards disabled people in Oman</p>	<p>Show students video about disabled people. Ask students to reflect on what they have watched on the video. T encourages students to talk and share their feelings.</p> <p>Personalize the topic. Ask Ss if they have any disable people in their family, their relative or society. Ask</p>

				<p>them to describe them, their feelings and how did they help them</p> <p>Group work: Ask students to work in groups and discuss the difficulties that the disabled people face in their lives, how would they feel, how could they help them</p> <p>Have whole class discussion</p> <p>Group work; Now ask students if they were disabled, how would they feel, how would they live their life and have a whole class discussion</p> <p>Follow up: Ask students to write an essay describing how they should help the disabled people</p>
4	Employment in Oman	Listening and Speaking	<p>1. identify the requirements of finding a good job;</p> <p>3. analyze the skills requirements of different jobs;</p> <p>4. analyze the job market and employment trends in Oman and</p> <p>5. discuss the problems/issues in looking for a job in Oman</p>	<p>Present to the class different pictures of jobs and let them speak about the jobs: Nature of work, Requirements</p> <p>Opportunities, Challenges.</p> <p>The teacher will invite one of the college's IT experts for a discussion about his current work in the field of IT. Each student will ask questions after the sharing of the IT specialist.</p> <p>The teacher will hold discussion about the problems/issues in looking for a job in Oman.</p>
5	Arranged marriage	Speaking And Writing	<p>To discuss the pros and cons of arranged marriage</p> <p>To raise students' awareness of different perspectives of arranged</p>	<p>Write the phrase arranged marriage on the board</p> <p>Ask students to work in groups and define it and have a whole class discussion</p> <p>Group work: Ask students to work in groups and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of arranged marriage and love marriage</p> <p>Have a whole class discussion</p> <p>Encourage students to give reasons for their opinions</p> <p>Follow up: Ask students to write an essay describing their opinion about arranged marriage</p>
6	Benefits of Failure	Listening and Speaking	<p>1. Predict &amp; understand speaker's message.</p> <p>2. Relate message to personal experiences &amp; analyze them.</p> <p>3. Apply the acquired knowledge to improve real life.</p>	<p>Teacher asks students to narrate some personal experiences of success and failure and their reactions to them</p> <p>Listen to the passage</p> <p>Students are asked to give a brief insight into the experiences of the people in the listening</p> <p>Group work: Recollect and narrate an experience where you / someone you know succeeded in something after failing. Did the failure help?</p> <p>Extended activity: Write a short paragraph on any one of the following topics:</p> <p>Failure – a stepping stone to success.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Failures are important for a successful life.</p>

# Appendix (16)

## A sample of coded process using Nvivo 10

The screenshot displays the Nvivo 10 software interface. The top menu bar includes File, Home, Create, External Data, Analyze, Query, Explore, Layout, and View. Below the menu is a ribbon with various toolbars for workspace, item, clipboard, format, paragraph, styles, editing, and proofing. The main window is divided into several panes. On the left, the 'Nodes' pane shows a hierarchical tree of themes and relationships. The central pane, titled 'All themes', contains a table with columns for Name, Sources, References, Created On, Created By, and Modified On. The table lists various themes such as 'ELT teachers awareness before the intervention', 'ELT teachers' attitudes towards CP after the intervention', and 'Teachers' sentiments towards CP'. The right pane shows a search bar and options for finding and clearing search results.

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On
ELT teachers awareness before the intervention	1	3	10/12/2014 09:24	T	17/12/2014 08:09
Being aware of CP and limited implementation of it	1	5	11/12/2014 08:31	T	11/12/2014 08:33
Being aware of CP without implementing it	1	5	10/12/2014 09:25	T	10/12/2014 09:25
ELT teachers' attitudes towards CP after the intervention	1	1	11/12/2014 08:36	T	11/12/2014 08:36
Power of imagination	4	5	22/12/2014 07:50	T	17/12/2014 07:55
The term is new but the idea is not totally new	5	7	11/12/2014 08:37	T	17/12/2014 07:55
Arousing call	5	5	22/12/2014 07:43	T	02/01/2015 14:35
CP definition in teachers' own words	4	4	04/11/2014 17:30	T	17/12/2014 08:10
Empowering approach	15	18	10/11/2014 02:34	T	17/12/2014 08:02
Holistic approach	6	7	19/11/2014 18:56	T	17/12/2014 08:03
Humanizing approach	4	4	20/11/2014 06:05	T	17/12/2014 08:04
Mutual constructing of knowledge	6	7	20/11/2014 06:04	T	02/12/2014 00:32
Questioning dominant dogmas	5	6	15/11/2014 07:12	T	02/12/2014 00:35
Teachers' sentiments towards CP	1	1	26/11/2014 17:12	T	26/11/2014 17:12
Acceptance of CP	14	22	15/11/2014 07:16	T	17/12/2014 07:56
Concerns of CP	8	12	17/11/2014 04:20	T	17/12/2014 07:56
Resistance to CP	2	3	02/11/2014 14:10	T	20/11/2014 06:08
Rejecting L1	3	3	21/11/2014 09:36	T	02/12/2014 00:35
In betwens	8	9	17/11/2014 04:35	T	17/12/2014 07:56
Feasibility of implementing CP	1	1	26/11/2014 17:18	T	26/11/2014 17:18
Reasons for implementing CP	1	1	26/11/2014 17:20	T	26/11/2014 17:20
Enhancing future generation	5	7	26/11/2014 17:21	T	24/12/2014 17:24
Boosting students' motivation	9	11	05/11/2014 17:42	T	17/12/2014 07:56
Rethinking dominant ideologies	3	4	22/11/2014 04:53	T	24/12/2014 17:28
Better learning experience	5	7	21/11/2014 09:22	T	17/12/2014 07:56

## Appendix (17)

### Certificates of conference participations



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge  
Knowledge for All

*Certificate*

This is to certify that

*Thariya AL Riyami*

has presented a paper on

**Introducing Critical pedagogy in ELT as a way to expand learning outside the classroom:  
Potentialities and challenges**

in the workshop entitled

**Enhancing the Learning Ecosystem in the GCC: Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC)**

of the

**Gulf Research Meeting 2014**

held at the

**University of Cambridge**

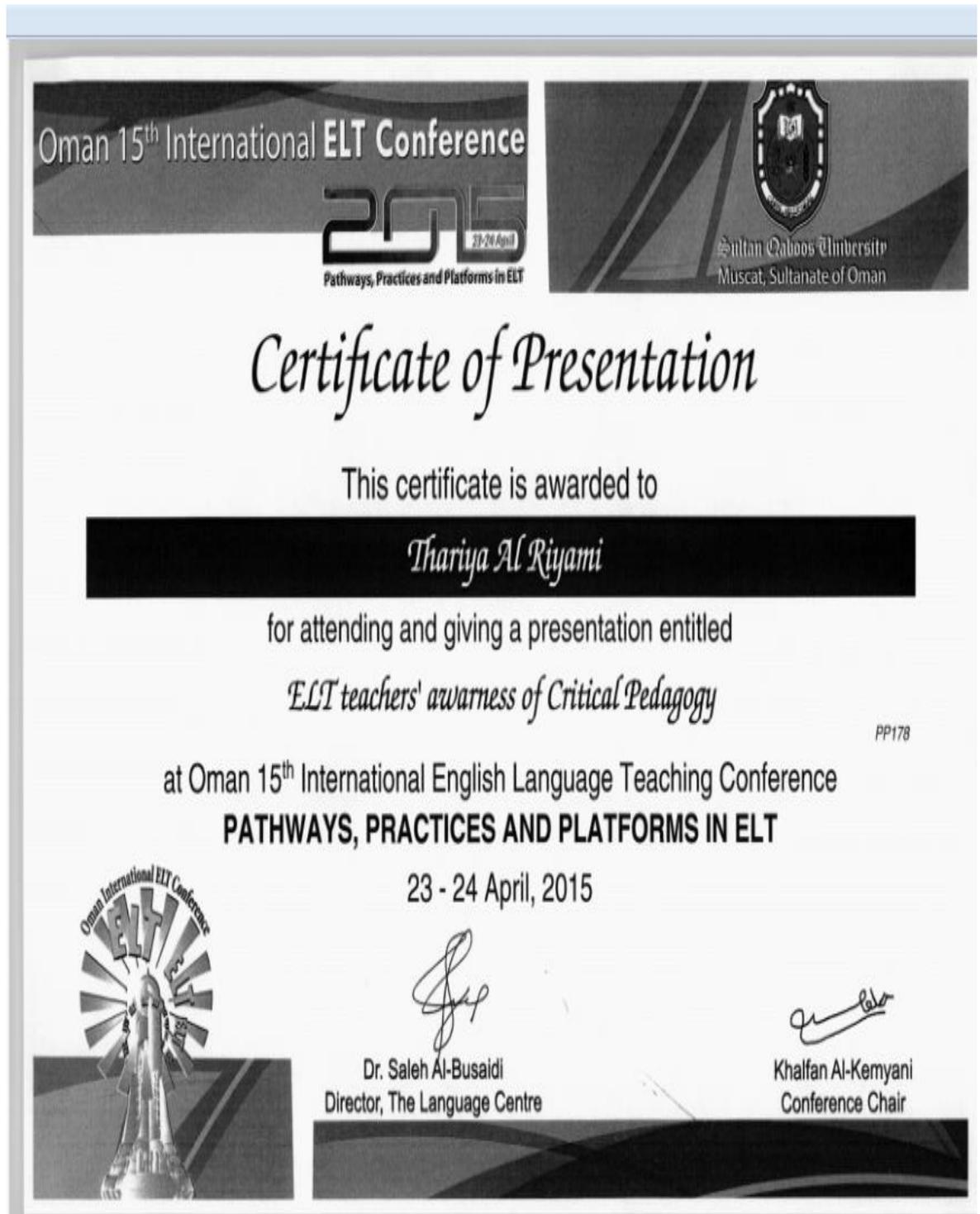
from

**August 25 to 28, 2014**

Oskar Ziemelis

Director  
Gulf Research Centre Cambridge





## Appendix (18)

### The letter to the Deputy Head of Technical Education in the MoM

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الفاضل: مدير التعليم التقني  
المخترم

تحية طيبة وبعد

الموضوع: طلب الموافقة على اجراء بحث الدكتوراه في مراكز اللغة الانجليزية بالكلية التقنية

أنا ثريا بنت خليفة الريامي محاضره في مركز اللغة الانجليزية بالكلية التقنية بآبراء-وحاليا أدرس الدكتوراه في طرق تدريس اللغة الانجليزية لغير الناطقين بها في جامعه اكستر بالمملكة المتحدة ضمن برنامج الألف بعثة.

عنوان بحثي (استخدام النظرية النقدية في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية: الامكانيات والتحديات) والذي يتضمن اجراء دراسته ميدانية في مراكز اللغة الانجليزية بالكلية التقنية لتجميع البيانات من معلمي اللغة الانجليزية حيث يتطلب:

- 1) تعبئة استبانات لقياس مدى وعي معلمي اللغة الانجليزية بالنظرية النقدية (منتصف شهر يونيو)
- 2) حضور معلمي اللغة الانجليزية لورشه عمل لمدة ثلاث ساعات لتعريف بالنظرية النقدية وكيفية تطبيقها في التدريس (بدايه شهر سبتمبر)
- 3) اجراء مقابلات مع المعلمين لتعرف على ارائهم حول النظرية النقدية وامكانيه تطبيقها واهم التحديات التي تواجههم (سبتمبر واکتوبر)
- 4) اجراء ملاحظات صفيه لقياس تأثير ورشه العمل على ممارسات المعلمين الصفيه (خلال شهري اكتوبر ونوفمبر)

حيث اني سوف اقوم بالاشراف على تعبئة الاستبانات و اجراء الورشه والمقابلات والملاحظات الصفيه في مراكز اللغة الانجليزية بعد التنسيق مع كل كلية.

لذلك التمس موافقتكم على اجراء الدراسة و اخطار رؤساء مراكز اللغة الانجليزية بالكلية وتزويدي بوسائل الاتصال معهم حتى اتمكن من التنسيق معهم، شاكره لكم حسن تعاونكم معي.....

هذا وتقبلوا فائق التقدير والاحترام

مقدمة الطلب: ثريا بنت خليفة الريامي

[Tksa201@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:Tksa201@exeter.ac.uk)

[Thuraya-2006@hotmail.com](mailto:Thuraya-2006@hotmail.com)

## Appendix (19)

### The MoM 's permission to conduct the study

**Sultanate of Oman**  
**Ministry of Manpower**  
Directorate General of Planning and Development

**سلطنة عمان**  
**وزارة القوى العاملة**  
الديرة العامة للتخطيط والتنمية

Ref. No. :  
Date :

الرقم: ١٧٢٩  
التاريخ: ١٧/٤/٢٠١٤

إلى من يهمه الأمر

تشهد وزارة القوى العاملة بأن الفاضلة/ ثريا بنت خليفة الريامية تعمل لديها اعتباراً من ٢٠١٣/٢/١٠ م ، وقد تم إيفادها في بعثة دراسية على نفقة وزارة التعليم العالي إلى جامعة (Exeter) بالملكة المتحدة خلال الفترة : من ٢٠١٢/٩/٨ م ، وحتى : ٢٠١٦/٩/١٦ م لنيل درجة الدكتوراه في اللغة الانجليزية (موضوع الدراسة= استخدام النظرية النقدية في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية :الإمكانيات والتحديات) .

لذا تأمل الوزارة نحو تقديم التسهيلات اللازمة التي تحتاج إليها الباحثة لإجراء الدراسة الميدانية .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام

  
عميسى بن حمدان العامري  
نائب مدير دائرة تنمية الموارد البشرية



## Appendix (20)

### Certificate of ethical research approval

MSc, PhD, EdD & DEdPsych theses.



Graduate School of Education

### Certificate of ethical research approval

MSc, PhD, EdD & DEdPsych theses

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications> and view the School's Policy online.

**READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Theriya Al Riyami

Your student no: 620032128

Return address for this certificate: 165 Monks Road EX4 7BQ

Degree/Programme of Study: PhD

Project Supervisor(s): Salah Troudi

Your email address: tksa201@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 07721479371

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:  date: 26/05/2014

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: March 2013

## Certificate of ethical research approval

**TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT:** Potentialities and Challenge of Implementing Critical Pedagogy in EFL classrooms at Tertiary Education in Oman

### 1. Brief description of your research project:

In recent decades, the higher education system in Oman has achieved substantial growth in terms of quantity including the number of institutions, enrolled students, hired teachers and specialization diversities. Every year hundreds of Omani students join higher education institutions to continue their first degrees where English is used as a Medium of Instruction. These students aim to develop their English and obtain professional skills and knowledge which enable them to be competent in a market economy as English is considered the gatekeeper to find jobs, access technology and modernity. However, there is a lively discussion about the quality of graduates of these higher education institutions including their proficiency in English. This could be attributed to the fact that Education in general and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular are centered around passive learners, authoritative teachers, centralized system, ready-made materials that do not correspond to the students' needs or cultures and depending on tests that require mostly memorization.

Thus, there is a pressing need to revolutionize the ELT system in Oman in order to overcome the challenges that face Oman including globalization and advancement of knowledge and technology where English is mainly used as a global language. Adding to this, recently, there is a growing interest in viewing learning English as not "simply a means of expression or communication; rather, it is a practice that constructs, and is constructed by, the ways language learners understand themselves; their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future. Learning English is received as a complex sociopolitical process which cannot be fulfilled by mainstream teaching methodologies where the role of the students are marginalized and teachers are consumers of the Anglo American methods and materials. Thus, Critical Pedagogy has been viewed as one of the alternative pedagogies capable of meeting the demands of the complication of teaching English within its sociopolitical context.

Critical Pedagogy is a philosophy that enables teachers and learners to work together to localise learning, interrogate issues that are taken for granted and legitimise their voice through critical dialogues of the phenomenon surrounding their schools, families and communities for the sake of empowerment, and hopefully change through seeing aspects from new and multiple perspectives. Thus, the general aim of this study is to introduce some tenets of critical pedagogy to EFL teachers at a tertiary education in Oman.

This overall aim is brought to fulfilment by several separate objectives:

1. To examine to what extent current EFL teachers at tertiary level are aware of the main tenets of critical pedagogy.
2. To introduce critical pedagogy through an action research methodology to EFL teachers at tertiary level.
3. To explore their attitudes towards its implementation at the EFL system in Oman.
4. To investigate the visibilities and challenges of implementing critical pedagogy in EFL system from teachers' perspectives.

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: March 2013

Practically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Are ELT teachers at tertiary education in Oman aware of Critical Pedagogy?
2. What is ELT teachers' attitude towards Critical Pedagogy?
3. What are the potentialities of applying Critical Pedagogy in EFL classes from teachers' perspectives?
4. What are the challenges of implementing Critical Pedagogy in EFL classes from teachers' perspectives?

**2. Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

In locating research sites, the researcher needs to locate individuals who can be representatives of the targeted group (EFL teachers at tertiary level in this study). Ideally, the research design would incorporate a wide number of EFL teachers from different higher education institutions in Oman. However, from practical perspectives, this choice was difficult to implement for several reasons. First, trying to incorporate EFL teachers from various tertiary institutions entails high demands on time, effort and resources that deemed to be impossible taken into consideration the time framework located for this research, and the geographical characteristics of Oman. Second, various higher education institutions in Oman are supervised by various ministries which means that the researcher needed to seek permissions from different authorities in order to get access to EFL teachers. Thus, in, it is decided to include 7 institutions which are supervised by one Ministry for the sake of easy institutional access. In addition, it happens that the researcher is working of the one of the institution that is supervised by the same ministry (the piloting study will be conducted in the researcher's own institution).

The participants in this research are EFL teachers in 7 higher education institutions in Oman. They are of various nationalities including Indians, Pakistanis, Iranians, Arabs (Jurdanians, Tunisians and Sudanese), Canadians, Americans, British, Australians and South Africans. The Omani EFL teachers are really few as the case in many higher education institutions. The majority of the teachers are between 30 and 50 years old. Most teachers are Master holders of English language teaching or relevant subjects with two or more years' experience in tertiary level. However, some are bachelor holders of English language teaching or relevant subjects with an English language teaching qualification such as CELTA or TEFL certificate. Their overall teaching experience ranged from 7 years to 33 years. Their teaching experience at Omani higher education institutions vary from one year to 10 years.

**3. Informed consent:**

All the respondents will be recruited on a voluntary basis and will be informed that they are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Consent will be collected in written forms. Participants will be approached in advance when the research will be explained and they will be asked for their consent. Enough time will be given so that people have time to consider whether to take part or not, or come back with more questions. Only when consent has been given will a date for collecting data be set.

**4. anonymity and confidentiality**

All the data gathered will be dealt anonymously with no reference to any particular participants once it has been collected. All data will be kept strictly confidential, so the original list of participants will be held by the researcher only. All participants in the questionnaires will be given numbers. However, all participants in the interviews and observations will be given a code or secret name so that you cannot be identified. If necessary, any details that could identify participants will be changed.

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
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**Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

I will utilize multiple methods to produce different kinds of data. Firstly, I will use a questionnaire to trace teachers' perceptions of critical pedagogy before intervention. The study questionnaire includes two sections. In the first section, the researcher utilizes the rating scales where participants responded using the five likert scale (rating on five point scale from totally disagree to totally disagree) to the statement that is closest to their opinions. The second section consists of 4 open-ended questions.

Secondly, I will use interviews to evaluate the effect of the intervention on their perceptions and to tackle the potentialities and constraints in applying critical pedagogy. Specifically, I will use semi-structured interviews because of the advantages in terms of giving the interviewees a degree of power and control over the course of the interview and giving the interviewer a great deal of flexibility. Then, I will use semi-structured observation to investigate the teachers' practice in order to notice if they will implement critical pedagogy in their classrooms.

The procedure of the study was as follows:

- Sending the questionnaire to all EFL teachers at 6 higher education institutions in Oman to examine their awareness of critical pedagogy before the interventions. I will administrate the questionnaires by myself to all teachers because I am aiming to include as many teachers as I could.
- Conducting a workshop for the teachers about Critical pedagogy. The workshop will be scheduled for 4 hours with 30 minutes break in between.
- Interviewing teachers to ask them about their understanding, possibilities and challenges of implementing critical pedagogy while teaching at tertiary level. After the workshop, I will ask teachers to sign the consent form if they would like to be interviewed to talk about the implementation of critical pedagogy in their institution, its potentialities and its challenges. I am aiming to interview 20-30 teachers.
- Observing EFL teachers to investigate their actual practices and observe the impact of the workshop on their classrooms. In addition, one aim of the observation is to encourage teachers to look critically at their practice and raise their awareness of their classroom realities.

Regarding the data analysis, the close ended questions in the questionnaire will be fed into the SPSS program after they are numbered and coded using nominal scale for part one in the questionnaire and ordinal scale for subsections in part two. This study will utilize descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations and frequency distributions. The open ended questions, the interviews and the observations will be analyzed qualitatively (themes and categories).

The avoidance of harm is an important ethical consideration that I am aware of while conducting this study. Thus, I will make sure that my participants' dignity is protected by asking their permission to participate in the study. They will be also assured that they can withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, I will assure them that their reactions toward the research and the data collected from them would by no means affect their jobs. In some cases, the participants may reveal opinions which might seem contradictory to the authorities' views in Oman. The researcher will present results through focusing on "a composite picture rather than an individual picture. In addition, part of respecting EFL teachers in this study is the fact before the interview and observation; the teachers will be reminded about the purpose of the interview and the observation. In addition, with regards of the observation, the teachers will be shown the observation form before observing. During the various phases of the study, the participants were reassures that the nature of the participation is voluntary and they can refuse to participate at any phase. In addition, it will be made clear to all participants that the data

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approved: March 2013

gathered will be used for research purposes only. Furthermore, I will take the preliminary analysis, including a description of the themes, back to them to make sure that there is no theme that would hurt them if I mention it in my analysis. It is not though that participants will be subject to increase risk of physical or psychological harm through taking part in this study. Questionnaires, interviews and observations will be carried out in locations in which the respondent is comfortable - most commonly their place of residence

**5. Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project - e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires, or**

All hard data: questionnaires, field notes, printed transcripts and video recordings will be securely stored in a locked cabinet. With regards to digital data, they will be kept on a computer with a username and password only known by the researcher and only used for the purpose of this study.

**6. Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

The researcher is not aware of any exceptional factors that might raise ethical issues at this stage of the research. Nonetheless, if any potential issues are likely to arise, a further form will be completed and sent to the related office at Exeter University.

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*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

*N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor*

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**This project has been approved for the period:** *1st June 2014* **until:** *May 2015*

**By** (above mentioned supervisor's signature): *Sabah P. Al-Riyami* **date:** *26/05/2014*

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

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**GSE unique approval reference:** *D/13/14/31*

**Signed:** *P. L. D.* **date:** *28/5/14*  
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: March 2013

## Appendix (21)

### Consent Form



#### GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

I have been fully informed that the purpose of this study is to introduce critical pedagogy in English language teaching at tertiary level in Oman. This study also aims to explore EFL teachers' attitudes towards its implementation at the EFL system in Oman and to investigate the visibilities and challenges of implementing critical pedagogy in EFL system from teachers' perspectives. My participation in this study will be through interviewing me for 30-40 minutes. The interview will be recorded. However, all information I give will be treated as confidential and the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity. I understand that there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation. I also understand that any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications.

.....

(Signature of participant )

.....

(Date)

.....

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher

Contact phone number of researcher: 0096899328802/07721479371

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Thariya Al-Riyami ([tksa@exeter.uk.co](mailto:tksa@exeter.uk.co))

Or

Salah Troudi, ([S.Troudi@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:S.Troudi@exeter.ac.uk))

## Appendix (22)

### Teachers' responses to the statements reported in the Findings Chapter

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Equipping students with skills to find a job is the main purpose of ELT.	20.6%	43.4%	10.9%	23.4%	1.7%
The spread of ELT should be looked at as unproblematic.	5.7%	55.7%	27.3%	9.7%	1.7%
The ELT teaching in my college is based on the communicative English teaching approach	14.7%	65.5%	11.3%	7.9%	.6%
English should only be taught through English.	28.1%	44.4%	11.2%	11.8%	4.9%
Arabic usage in the classroom hinders students' exposure to English.	16.4%	36.7%	21.5%	20.3%	5.1%
Testing is the best way to assess students in ELT.	9.6%	52.5%	12.4%	23.7%	1.7%
Quizzes and tests objectively measure students' ability in English.	12.4%	52.5%	12.4%	19.8%	2.8%
Students can contribute effectively to the decisions made in the classroom.	20.9%	68.9%	8.5%	1.7%	-
ELT should aim to create a change in students' lives.	25.4%	52%	16.4%	6.2%	-
Aspects of the Western lifestyle included in the imported ELT instructional materials can gradually interest the Omani students in Western ways of life.	4.5%	47.8%	29.8%	14%	3.9%
The topics in ELT materials should be based on the students' specific history and contexts.	10.7%	40.7%	20.3%	26%	2.3%
ELT textbooks designed by Omani experts will not be as good as the ones designed by native English experts.	18.7%	45.6%	23.4%	10%	2.3%
ELT teachers' role is to raise students' awareness of other varieties of English, such as Indian English, Malaysian English, even if they are not addressed in the textbooks.	10.1%	47.2%	21.3%	18.0%	3.4%
The ELT materials should make students aware of other varieties of English, such as Indian English, Malaysian English.	15.7%	50.6%	16.3%	14.6%	2.8%
Students can be engaged in dialogue regardless of their level of proficiency.	23.2%	61.0%	7.3%	8.5%	-