



Integrating Critical Thinking and Communicative Competence in English Public Speaking: A Qualitative Case Study of EFL Undergraduates

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This qualitative case study investigates how integrating critical thinking (CT) into an English Public Speaking (EPS) course supports Chinese EFL undergraduates' communicative competence. Six second-year English majors at a private university in Shaanxi participated in semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and analysis of their speech drafts and final scripts. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings show that CT-integrated tasks helped students organize arguments more coherently, use evidence more strategically, and adopt a more audience-responsive, persuasive delivery. At the same time, CT application was constrained by rote learning habits, public speaking anxiety, heavy workloads, and the cognitive load of thinking critically while speaking in English. Differences between early and later starters of English revealed distinct needs: early starters required scaffolding to deepen analysis, whereas later starters needed linguistic support to free cognitive resources for reasoning. The study suggests that differentiated scaffolding, interactive CT-focused activities, and explicit teacher feedback on reasoning are crucial for aligning CT development with communicative competence in EPS courses. It offers analytic generalization for CT-integrated EFL instruction in exam-driven, large-class contexts.

Keywords: critical thinking, English public speaking, communicative competence, Chinese EFL learners, qualitative case study, thematic analysis

INTRODUCTION

CT is a fundamental goal of higher education, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching (Hamdi, 2023; Jahn & Kenner, 2018). CT involves analyzing,

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evaluating, and synthesizing information, essential for problem-solving and decision-making (Facione, 1990b). With globalization, the demand for individuals who can think critically and communicate effectively in English has increased.

CT is not only an educational objective but also vital for navigating the complexities of the modern world (Ten Dam & Volman, 2004). Its significance is evident across disciplines; for example, habituation to higher-order science questions improves students' CT (Muhibbuddin, Artika, & Nurmaliah, 2023), while inquiry-based learning in EFL enhances both CT and academic performance (Carracedo, 2025). Bloom et al. (1956) categorized cognitive learning objectives into six levels—knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—placing CT within the highest tiers of cognitive functioning.

In EFL classrooms, CT supports deeper engagement with content, reflective learning, and communicative clarity (Burns & Joyce, 1997; Cosgun & Atay, 2021; Wale & Bishaw, 2020). It also underpins communicative competence, enabling students to present arguments clearly and persuasively. English Public Speaking (EPS) courses thus provide key platforms for cultivating both CT and communicative competence (Lucas, 2009; Tran & Duong, 2018; Wang, Luo, Liao, & Zhao, 2024). Activities such as debates and persuasive speeches help students organize ideas logically and present them coherently, with improved CT directly fostering clarity and persuasiveness (Iman, 2017).

However, despite the recognized theoretical benefits of integrating CT into EPS courses, Chinese EFL learners often experience limited improvements in their communicative competence in practice. This limitation arises from insufficient emphasis on CT in EPS instruction and challenges associated with effectively integrating CT into teaching practices (Alnofaie, 2013; Xie, Chen, & Shan, 2019). Teachers may lack effective methods for combining CT with EPS instruction or be constrained by traditional educational ideologies that hinder the development of CT skills. Consequently, students' communicative competence does not improve as expected, highlighting a gap between theoretical ideals and practical outcomes in the Chinese educational context.

Although situated in the Chinese EFL context, this study examines the challenges of integrating CT into instruction and fostering communicative competence through public speaking, particularly in relation to cultural and affective barriers that have been underexplored in previous EPS-focused research. While these issues are also relevant to global language education, there remains a lack of context-specific qualitative evidence documenting how Chinese EFL undergraduates experience and respond to CT-integrated EPS instruction. By exploring students' experiences with CT integration in an EPS course, the study identifies obstacles affecting their communicative competence and proposes strategies to enhance both CT and communicative competence in similar contexts. Accordingly, this study is guided by two research questions:

1. How do Chinese EFL undergraduates perceive and respond to the integration of CT into EPS instruction?

2. What strategies can be derived from the experiences and perceptions of Chinese EFL undergraduates to better support their development of CT and communicative competence in EPS courses?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Critical Thinking in English Public Speaking and Communicative Competence

In the EFL context, CT enables learners not only to acquire language but also to engage critically with content, fostering more thoughtful and reflective communication (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020; Yang & Gamble, 2013). Collectively, these studies suggest that CT plays a facilitative role in promoting deeper cognitive and communicative engagement in EFL learning. Integrating CT into EFL instruction encourages students to adopt a critical approach to learning, thereby enhancing their proficiency across reading, writing, speaking, and listening through deeper engagement with texts and ideas (Bean & Melzer, 2021; Crismore, 2000; Rapanta, 2019; van Gelder, 2005). In this context, EPS courses provide a unique platform for combining CT with communicative competence.

EPS courses encourage students to analyze, organize, and articulate their perspectives effectively through activities such as debates, group discussions, speech-making, and reflective exercises, enhancing both their language skills and communicative abilities. Public speaking requires learners to structure ideas clearly, present arguments coherently, and engage meaningfully with audiences (Lucas, 2010). According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence involves not only linguistic accuracy but also the effective conveyance and interpretation of messages across diverse contexts, making EPS courses an ideal environment for fostering both CT and communicative competence in EFL learners.

Research shows that developing CT contributes significantly to improvements in communicative competence, particularly within EPS contexts (Ghanizadeh & Mirzaee, 2012; van Gelder, 2005). Similar findings in higher education also confirm that active pedagogical strategies like cooperative learning significantly enhance students' critical and creative thinking (Silva, Lopes, Dominguez, & Morais, 2022). By incorporating CT into public speaking teaching activities, learners are encouraged to focus not only on language form but also on the logical and persuasive aspects of communication. This integrated approach enhances communicative competence across the dimensions originally proposed by Canale and Swain (1980). At the linguistic level, CT encourages learners to refine vocabulary choices and syntax through critical engagement with language. In terms of sociolinguistic competence, it fosters sensitivity to cultural contexts and audience expectations, thereby supporting more adaptive and context-appropriate communication. With respect to discourse competence, CT guides learners in structuring coherent and cohesive arguments, which directly benefits their performance in public speaking. Finally, strategic competence is strengthened as CT promotes problem-solving and enables students to manage communication breakdowns more effectively. Taken together, CT and communicative competence are thus deeply interconnected. Yet, integrating CT into EPS instruction often faces practical challenges, particularly in specific educational contexts like China, where cultural and

systemic barriers can hinder effective implementation. These challenges limit the extent to which communicative abilities improve, creating a gap between the anticipated benefits of CT and the outcomes observed in practice. This discrepancy highlights the need for practical approaches to better integrate CT into EPS instruction and support EFL learners' communicative competence.

Cultural, Institutional and Affective Factors Influencing Critical Thinking in China

To understand the challenges of integrating CT into EPS courses within the Chinese EFL context, it is essential to consider the cultural, institutional, and affective influences that shape educational practices. Traditional Chinese education is profoundly rooted in Confucian values, which emphasize respect for authority, hierarchical relationships, collective harmony, and the importance of moral education (Li, 2012; Zhang, 2016). These values have historically prioritized rote memorization and the transmission of established knowledge over individual inquiry and critical analysis. Confucian educational philosophy promotes the idea that knowledge is something to be received from authoritative sources rather than constructed through questioning and debate (Bahtilla & Xu, 2021), which may limit opportunities for critical engagement. Students are often expected to demonstrate their learning by accurately reproducing information, reflecting a deep-seated cultural emphasis on memorization and conformity (Zhang, 2013). This approach can inadvertently suppress the development of CT skills, as students may become accustomed to accepting information passively rather than engaging with it critically.

Moreover, the exam-oriented education system in China reinforces these traditional values. High-stakes examinations like the Gaokao (National College Entrance Examination) prioritize standardized testing and factual recall, which leads educators to focus on teaching to the test (Liu, Mao, Frankel, & Xu, 2016), often at the expense of critical and communicative development. As a result, teachers may lack effective methods or feel constrained by traditional ideologies when attempting to integrate CT into EPS instruction. This limitation can hinder the development of students' CT skills and, consequently, their communicative competence.

These cultural and institutional factors present significant challenges when integrating CT into EPS courses. Students may exhibit reluctance to express personal opinions, challenge existing ideas, or engage in critical discussions due to ingrained respect for authority and fear of causing disharmony (Li & Wegerif, 2013). Such hesitation can hinder their ability to participate fully in EPS activities that require critical engagement and interactive communication, which are essential for developing communicative competence.

Beyond these cultural and institutional influences, affective factors such as anxiety and low self-efficacy can impair both CT application and communicative performance. Public speaking anxiety, in particular, is a substantial barrier to effective CT application (Lucas, 2013). High levels of public speaking anxiety reduce cognitive resources available for critical analysis and hinder clear expression of thoughts (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Motivation and self-efficacy also play crucial roles in CT development. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy influences the effort students invest in

learning and their persistence in the face of challenges. Students with higher motivation and confidence are more likely to engage actively in CT activities, whereas those with low confidence may avoid participation (Dörnyei, 2001; Zhang & Sternberg, 2010). Consequently, when CT development is hindered by low motivation and self-efficacy, students' communicative competence cannot be deeply enhanced, as they are less inclined to participate in activities that require critical engagement and effective communication. This interplay between affective factors and communicative competence highlights the importance of creating supportive learning environments.

Given the significant cultural and affective challenges that impede the effective integration of CT and the enhancement of communicative competence among Chinese EFL learners, it is essential to review empirical studies that have addressed similar issues across global EFL contexts. These international studies—particularly from Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East—offer valuable insights into how CT can be promoted through collaborative learning, debate-based instruction, or problem-solving tasks. However, many of these strategies were developed in socio-educational settings that differ significantly from the Chinese context in terms of classroom culture, teacher roles, and assessment practices. As such, while global pedagogical approaches provide important reference points, they may require adaptation to be effective in Confucian-heritage cultures. This gap underscores the need for localized research that considers both the constraints and opportunities unique to China's EPS courses. These relationships are summarized in Figure 1, which illustrates how cultural, institutional, and affective factors intersect with CT to shape communicative competence in EPS contexts. Therefore, this study not only informs localized approaches to CT integration in China's EPS courses but also offers insights for contextualizing CT-integrated instruction in diverse EFL settings.

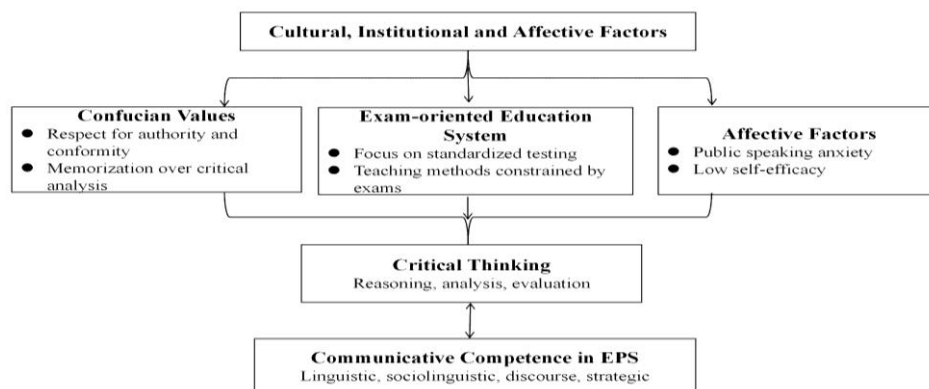


Figure 1

A synthesis of Critical Thinking, Communicative Competence, and Contextual Factors in EPS

Empirical Studies on Integrating Critical Thinking into EFL Instruction

Building on the challenges faced by Chinese EFL learners, this section reviews empirical studies that explore CT integration in EFL, particularly within EPS courses.

Taken together, these studies suggest a growing recognition of the role of CT in enhancing EFL learners' communicative competence; however, they also reveal persistent contextual and methodological gaps that warrant further investigation.

Empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating CT into EFL instruction in enhancing both CT skills and communicative competence. However, many of these studies have concentrated on instructional outcomes rather than on learners' contextual experiences, and have not fully addressed the specific cultural and affective factors unique to Chinese learners, highlighting a need for research focused on this context.

For instance, Yang and Gamble (2013) conducted an experimental study that provided robust evidence supporting the integration of CT into EFL instruction. Their study demonstrated that students who engaged in CT-enhanced activities, such as debates and argumentative writing, showed significant improvements in both their English proficiency and their CT skills, as compared to a control group. This research highlights the dual benefits of integrating CT with language learning, particularly in enhancing students' ability to think critically and communicate effectively. Nevertheless, the study was conducted in a non-Chinese context and focused primarily on measurable outcomes, offering limited insight into the lived experiences and contextual constraints of learners in exam-oriented educational environments.

More recently, Carracedo (2025) demonstrated that inquiry-based learning in phonetics and phonology courses could substantially enhance both CT skills and academic performance among EFL undergraduates, providing strong evidence for learner-centered approaches in higher education.

Another notable example is a study by Sun (2021), which explored how Socratic circle approach was adopted and adapted in secondary EFL classrooms, showing its effectiveness in promoting CT and student engagement through discussion. While situated in a secondary education context, the study highlights the potential of adapting pedagogical methods to local needs to foster CT in EFL learners. However, both of these studies were carried out outside the Chinese tertiary EPS context, and therefore leave open questions regarding how cultural, affective, and institutional factors in China might influence the implementation and outcomes of such approaches.

In contrast, Bao (2018) conducted a qualitative study on the impact of EPS training on college students' CT skills in a Chinese context. By analyzing students' speech drafts and conducting interviews, Bao found that such training improved students' CT skills in the short term and raised their awareness of independent thinking. However, the study also indicated that teachers faced challenges in effectively integrating CT into their instruction due to a lack of adequate training and resources. The study also noted that the program's limited duration and small sample size restricted the generalizability of its findings, and suggested that integrating such training more systematically into the college English curriculum could enhance its long-term effectiveness.

Despite these valuable contributions, empirical research that specifically examines Chinese EFL undergraduates' perceptions and responses to CT integration within EPS courses remains limited. There is also a lack of qualitative, student-voice-focused

studies that explore how contextual barriers such as exam pressure, language anxiety, and deeply rooted educational beliefs shape learners' engagement with CT in oral communication tasks. Understanding students' experiences and developing strategies to support them are essential for enhancing both CT and communicative competence. While this study focuses on the Chinese context, its findings about balancing CT with language proficiency, managing public speaking anxiety, and negotiating cultural expectations may also inform teaching practices in other global EFL and ESL settings.

Given these insights, this study seeks to address a research gap by adopting a qualitative case study approach. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of Chinese EFL students' perceptions and experiences regarding CT integration within EPS courses. By focusing on how students perceive and respond to CT integration and identifying strategies that support their development, the study aims to contribute to more effective and globally relevant EPS instruction.

METHOD

Research Setting

This qualitative case study was conducted at a well-established private university in Shaanxi Province, China, recognized for its innovative English language education. The university was among the first private institutions in China to integrate CT into its EPS curriculum, aiming to enhance students' communicative competence through critical engagement. Despite this pioneering approach, the institution faces challenges typical of the broader Chinese EFL context. While the EPS syllabus emphasizes CT-integrated activities to help students organize, articulate, and present ideas in English, students often struggle due to cultural traditions, limited proficiency, and affective factors such as anxiety. Teachers, though committed, may also lack sufficient training or resources to foster CT and communicative competence effectively. These conditions make the university an ideal setting for the study, as its early adoption of CT and the obstacles encountered provide a rich context to examine students' perceptions of CT integration and the gap between theoretical aims and practical outcomes.

Participants

The study involved six second-year English majors enrolled in the mandatory EPS course. Using purposive sampling, participants were selected to ensure diversity in gender, academic performance, geographical background, and English learning experiences. The sample included three males and three females from provinces such as Shaanxi, Henan, Xinjiang, Sichuan, Shanxi, and Jiangxi, with English learning starting between ages 3 and 10. Academic achievement was determined by the average of their final exam scores from two first-year prerequisite English Speaking Courses. This diversity allowed the study to capture a wide range of perspectives on CT integration and to identify challenges with potential relevance beyond a single local context.

Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all students. Participants were assured of confidentiality and the option to withdraw at any time without academic repercussions. In qualitative case study research, a small and information-rich sample is considered appropriate for developing in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalization. In this study, saturation was reached

when no substantively new themes emerged in the final round of interviews and focus group discussion, indicating that the six participants were sufficient for analytic generalization (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Ethical approval for this study was granted by the relevant university committee prior to data collection.

Table 1
Overview of Participants¹

Anon. Initials	Gen.	Age	From	Grade	Started Learning English
St.	F	20	Weinan, Shaanxi	sophomore	Grade 1, age 7
Fr	M	20	Zhengzhou, Henan	sophomore	Grade 1, age 7
La	M	21	Wujiaqu, Xinjiang	sophomore	Kindergarten, age 3
Ap	F	21	Chengdu, Sichuan	sophomore	Grade 3, age 10
Si	M	20	Lvliang, Shanxi	sophomore	Grade 3, age 10
Ke	F	22	Nanchang, Jiangxi	sophomore	Grade 1, age 7

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection drew on multiple qualitative sources, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and analysis of student speech scripts.

Each of the six participants took part in two rounds of semi-structured interviews: one at the beginning of the semester (Week 1) and another at the end (Week 16). Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The interview guide covered broad themes such as students' perceptions of CT and communicative competence, experiences with EPS classroom activities, and challenges encountered when applying CT during public speaking. While sample questions included prompts such as "How do you perceive the role of CT and communicative competence in your English Public Speaking course?" and "Can you describe activities that have helped you develop CT and communicative competence?", the interviews remained flexible, allowing the researcher to probe further based on participants' responses. This ensured that data captured both anticipated and emergent themes. These interviews primarily addressed research question 1 by exploring students' perceptions and responses to CT integration, and also contributed to research question 2 by generating insights into potential support strategies.

Two focus group discussions were conducted with all six participants: one in Week 2 to capture baseline perceptions and another in Week 16 to reflect on collective experiences after a semester of CT-integrated EPS instruction. Each session lasted around one hour. The discussions encouraged participants to share and contrast their perspectives in a collaborative setting. Guiding questions included themes such as challenges in applying CT, the relationship between CT and communicative competence, and examples of classroom situations where CT had enhanced or hindered communication. As with interviews, these prompts were illustrative rather than exhaustive, and participants were encouraged to raise issues beyond the prepared guide. The focus group discussions further supported research question 1 by capturing shared perspectives, while also

¹ Note: Gen. = Gender; Grade refers to academic year (all participants were second-year English majors); Age indicates self-reported age during the time of data collection.

informing research question 2 through collective reflection on effective and ineffective learning practices.

Four classroom observations were conducted across the 16-week semester (Weeks 1, 6, 11, and 16). Each observation focused on student engagement, the application of CT skills in speeches and group tasks, communicative competence development, and teacher–student interactions. Field notes documented students’ behaviors (e.g., turn-taking, use of evidence, rhetorical strategies), affective responses (e.g., signs of anxiety or confidence), and the instructional techniques used by the teacher. The classroom observations complemented the interview data by providing contextualized, behavioral evidence relevant to both research questions, particularly in relation to students’ real-time application of CT and communicative competence.

Students’ drafts and final speech scripts were collected for analysis. These texts were examined for indicators of CT integration and communicative competence, including structural organization, logical coherence, use of evidence, rhetorical devices, and audience adaptation. Comparing early and revised drafts provided insights into how CT-informed instruction shaped students’ speech development over the semester. These documents were primarily used to address research question 1, as changes in structure, coherence, and rhetorical strategies reflected students’ developing understanding of CT-integrated speaking.

Data from interviews, the focus group discussion, classroom observations, and speech scripts were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Open coding was first conducted to identify recurring patterns and meaningful units, followed by axial coding to group related codes into broader categories. These categories were then refined into overarching themes through iterative comparison across data sources. Codes were organized into themes, reviewed, and refined to accurately represent the findings. To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, a brief summary of preliminary themes was shared with participants for member checking, and their feedback confirmed the accuracy of interpretation. In addition, emerging codes and themes were discussed with a peer for debriefing, which helped minimize individual bias and strengthen analytic rigor.

To ensure clarity and transparency in data presentation, all participant names are presented as pseudonyms. Data sources are indicated in parentheses following each quotation or description. Three main sources are referenced: individual interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and classroom observation notes (CON). For example, quotations from individual participants are marked with both their pseudonym and the data source (e.g., Fr, Interview), while statements from the focus group are labeled as (e.g., Ke, FGD). Observational data are referenced as (CON). An example of the coding process from raw data to final themes is provided in Appendix B.

FINDINGS

Findings from interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and speech scripts addressed the two research questions. For RQ1, students perceived CT as enhancing communicative competence but also reported challenges in applying it during EPS. For RQ2, instructional support such as interactive tasks, feedback, and scaffolding helped

them overcome these challenges. Table 2 presents the thematic coding framework, illustrating the relationship between major and minor themes, together with frequency indicators (n) and representative excerpts.

Table 2
Thematic Coding Framework with Frequency Indicators and Illustrative Excerpts

Theme	Sub-theme	Evidence Type	Illustrative Example
RQ1: Students' perceptions and responses to CT integration in EPS			
Critical Thinking– Enhanced Communicative Competence in EPS	Clarity and logical structure (n = 5/6)	Student quote	“Before this course, my speeches were often scattered and lacked coherence. Learning to critically analyse my arguments has helped me structure my thoughts clearly.” (St, Interview)
	Persuasiveness and engagement (n = 4/6)	Student quote	“Now, I focus on understanding and evaluating the content, which makes my delivery more natural and convincing.” (Fr, Interview)
	Confidence and expressive ability (n = 4/6)	Student quote	“Initially, I was very nervous ... but as I practiced and applied CT, I became more confident.” (La, FGD)
	Rhetorical effectiveness (n = 3/6)	Student quote	“By carefully selecting rhetorical devices such as alliteration and proverbs, I’ve learned to enhance the clarity and emotional impact of my speeches.” (Si, FGD)
	Perspective-taking (n = 4/6)	Student quote	“By critically analyzing the concept of win-win situations ... I’m now able to anticipate and address opposing viewpoints.” (Ke, FGD)
Challenges in Applying Critical Thinking in EPS	Transitioning from rote learning (n = 5/6)	Student quote	“Before this course, I never really thought about CT. It was all about memorizing and repeating.” (La, Interview)
	Balancing language demands with CT (n = 4/6)	Student quote	“It’s hard to think critically and speak in English at the same time, especially under pressure.” (Si, Interview)
	Public speaking anxiety (n = 4/6)	Observation	Several students gripped their scripts tightly, avoided eye contact, and accelerated their delivery, showing that anxiety overrode critical engagement. (CON)
	Time & workload constraints (n = 4/6)	Student quote	“We have so many assignments and quizzes that I barely have time to think deeply about my speech topics.” (Ap, Interview)
RQ2: Strategies to support CT and communicative competence development			
Instructional Strategies Supporting CT and Communicative Competence Development	Interactive activities (n = 5/6)	Observation	During a debate on “technological innovation and social equality,” students exchanged notes and whispered rebuttals before sending two representatives to present. (CON)
	Instructor feedback (n = 4/6)	Student quote	“Our teacher gives detailed feedback on our speeches, pointing out where we can improve our critical thinking.” (Ap, FGD)
	Instructor scaffolding (n = 3/6)	Observation	The teacher paused a speech to ask, “What assumption are you making here?” prompting students to revise their arguments with deeper analysis. (CON)
	Need for creative CT tasks (n = 3/6)	Student quote	“More creative and interactive tasks could make the learning process more enjoyable and beneficial.” (St, Interview)

Theme 1: Critical Thinking Enhances Communicative Competence in EPS

Overall, participants consistently acknowledged that CT was integral to developing their communicative competence in EPS. Across interviews and discussions, students emphasized that CT skills—such as analyzing arguments, evaluating evidence, and synthesizing information—enabled them to structure their ideas more coherently, deliver messages persuasively, and engage audiences more effectively. This perception was reported by multiple participants across the dataset.

Clarity and Logical Structure

Several students described how CT transformed the organization of their speeches. St explained that his speeches were previously “scattered and lacked coherence,” but that critically analyzing his arguments “helped me structure my thoughts clearly and make my points more effectively” (St, Interview). Similarly, Fr reflected that “before, I just memorized paragraphs and repeated them. Now I think about how ideas connect, so my speech has a clearer flow” (Fr, FGD). These accounts indicate increased attention to coherence and logical progression in students’ speech preparation.

Persuasiveness and Engagement

Students described how CT influenced the persuasiveness and engagement of their speeches. Fr noted that before applying CT, he relied on memorization; after practising CT, he focused on “understanding and evaluating the content,” which made his delivery “more natural and convincing” (Fr, Interview). Similarly, Ap shared that “when I evaluated the strength of my arguments, I realized my examples needed to be more convincing. That change made my delivery more engaging for the audience” (Ap, Interview). These descriptions reflect a clearer focus on content evaluation and audience impact.

Confidence and Expressive Ability

Participants described increased confidence and expressive ability as they practiced CT in EPS. La explained that repeated CT practice reduced her nervousness and enabled her to “speak out my thoughts clearly and convincingly” (La, FGD). Similarly, Si noted that “practicing CT gave me confidence because I knew my ideas were solid, not just memorized lines” (Si, Interview). These accounts demonstrate a clearer sense of confidence grounded in reasoning rather than memorization.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The development of rhetorical depth was most evident in Si’s progression from his first to final speech draft on the theme of win–win situations. Si reflected that “carefully selecting rhetorical devices such as alliteration and proverbs” helped to enhance both clarity and emotional impact (Si, FGD). La similarly noted that “adding analogies and asking questions made the audience respond better,” which differed from simply reciting facts (La, FGD).

Si’s first draft, *From Zero-sum Game to a Win-win Situation*, resembled a textbook-style explanation with limited audience engagement. In contrast, the final draft, *Competition vs Cooperation*, demonstrated a more deliberate rhetorical orientation. The

use of alliteration in the title and the numerical analogy—“1 minus 1 equals 0; 1 plus 1 equals 2”—provided a clearer framing of competition and cooperation. Personal anecdotes, proverbs, and historical references were later incorporated, strengthening audience relevance and impact.

This shift was also reflected in observational data, where students increasingly used rhetorical questions, analogies, and concrete examples to connect with audiences. Table 3 summarizes the changes in Si’s drafts in relation to structure, evidence, rhetorical choices, audience relevance, and overall communicative effectiveness (see Appendix A for excerpts).

Table 3
Comparison of Si’s Drafts Before and After CT Integration

Aspect	First Draft (Before CT)	Final Draft (After CT)	Observed Improvement
Title & Rhetorical Framing	<i>From zero-sum game to a win-win situation</i> : descriptive, explanatory, textbook-like.	<i>Competition vs Cooperation</i> : concise, memorable, uses alliteration to engage audience.	Clearer rhetorical awareness; title itself signals persuasiveness.
Structure & Coherence	Simplified, descriptive explanation of globalization; loosely connected points.	Organized around numerical analogy; coherent progression from anecdote to global events.	Stronger logical flow.
Use of Evidence	General references to trade and protectionism; abstract treatment.	Concrete examples: personal table tennis experience, Ping-Pong Diplomacy, historical conflicts.	Greater credibility and resonance.
Critical Depth	Limited analysis; globalization presented as mostly beneficial.	Analytical, linking cooperation to peace and critiquing costs of war.	Deeper critical reflection.
Audience Relevance	Generic, academic style with minimal personalization.	Relatable storytelling tied to broader global citizenship.	Stronger audience connection.
Rhetorical Effectiveness	Minimal rhetorical appeal; technical language.	Use of alliteration, analogy, proverb, and emotional appeal.	Enhanced persuasiveness and impact.

Perspective-taking

Another prominent pattern in the data was students’ increasing ability to adopt multiple perspectives. Ke explained that “by critically analyzing the concept of win-win situations... I’m now able to anticipate and address opposing viewpoints” (Ke, FGD). Similarly, St noted that “when I tried to see the issue from the other side, I became less nervous about being challenged, because I was ready with responses” (St, FGD). These accounts indicate that students were beginning to consider alternative viewpoints and adjust their responses accordingly during public speaking.

Taken together, the data show that when students engaged in CT-related activities, changes were observed in multiple aspects of their speaking performance, including structure, persuasiveness, confidence, and rhetorical use. Although individual emphases varied, most participants demonstrated observable development in these areas over time.

Theme 2: Challenges in Applying Critical Thinking in EPS

Transitioning from Rote Learning

However, despite recognizing the importance of CT, students encountered recurring challenges that limited their ability to apply it effectively in the EPS classroom. Many participants reported difficulty moving away from long-established habits of rote

memorization that had shaped their previous learning experiences. La admitted that before this course, learning had been “all about memorizing and repeating” and that he “didn’t know how to evaluate or analyse information deeply” (La, Interview). Similar views were shared during the focus group, where students described the challenge of shifting from reproducing prepared content to engaging in analysis and evaluation. Classroom observations supported these accounts: when asked to respond critically to questions, several students paused, looked at their notes, or returned to memorized statements rather than offering analytical responses (CON).

Balancing Language Demands with Critical Thinking

However, this struggle was compounded by the pressure of performing in English as a second language. Several students noted that the cognitive load of simultaneously finding words and thinking critically created a constant tension. Si explained that “it’s hard to think critically and speak in English at the same time, especially under pressure” (Si, Interview). Ap, who started learning English relatively late compared to her peers, highlighted that much of her energy went into word retrieval: “Sometimes I spend so much effort finding the right English words that I forget to focus on my ideas” (Ap, Interview).

By contrast, La, who began English at age three, reported fewer problems with vocabulary but still found it difficult to “evaluate arguments on the spot” (La, Interview) when standing before an audience. This contrast suggests that while early starters may be more fluent, even they are not exempt from the cognitive burden of applying CT in real time, whereas later starters often face a dual challenge of linguistic retrieval and critical engagement.

An additional layer of complexity revealed in this study concerns the differential experiences of students who began learning English earlier versus later in life. While early starters like La demonstrated greater automaticity in language retrieval, they still struggled with applying CT spontaneously in public speaking. By contrast, later starters such as Ap reported that limited lexical access often diverted cognitive resources away from critical analysis, leaving less capacity for higher-order thinking.

Public Speaking Anxiety

Affective factors further hindered students’ use of CT in English public speaking. Ke confessed that her nervousness caused her to “forget to use CT skills” (Ke, Interview), despite knowing their importance. Fr similarly explained that anxiety led him to rush through his points without elaboration. Classroom observation confirmed these accounts: several students gripped their scripts tightly, avoided eye contact, and accelerated their delivery, indicating that anxiety often overrode critical engagement (CON). In this sense, anxiety not only shaped delivery style, but also interfered with the cognitive space required for applying CT.

Time and Workload Constraints

Similarly, time pressure and heavy academic workload further limited students’ capacity to engage in deep CT. Ap described being overwhelmed by multiple

assignments and quizzes, which left her with little opportunity to think carefully about her speech topics (Ap, Interview). La also noted that online tasks consumed a significant amount of time without directly contributing to the development of CT skills. As a result, classroom observations showed that although students often submitted grammatically accurate drafts, many lacked analytical depth, reflecting surface-level preparation rather than sustained critical engagement (CON).

Taken together, these findings reveal that students' educational habits, language proficiency, anxiety, and workload converged to constrain their ability to apply CT during public speaking. The comparison between early and late English learners shows that while starting age shaped the nature of the challenges experienced—greater fluency versus increased word-search pressure—the broader difficulty of balancing cognitive, affective, and structural demands was common across participants.

Theme 3: Instructional Strategies Supporting CT and Communicative Competence Development

Students consistently identified classroom strategies as central to the development of CT and its application in EPS. As in many tertiary EFL contexts, the EPS course was delivered in a large-class format, which made it impractical for every student to present a full speech in each session (Huong, Tung, & Hong, 2023). To address this constraint, the instructor employed interactive approaches such as small-group discussions, structured debates, and role-plays to ensure student participation. Typically, groups prepared arguments collaboratively and selected representatives to present, followed by peer evaluation on the teaching platform. This recurring cycle of preparation, performance, and feedback provided multiple opportunities for students to construct and critique ideas, thereby supporting the development of both CT and communicative competence.

Interactive Activities

Interactive methods such as debates and role-plays were identified by students as particularly effective in fostering CT. Fr noted that “group discussions and debate tasks force me to think on my feet and use evidence to support my arguments” (Fr, Interview). Similarly, St remarked that debating required him to defend his position while responding to counterarguments, which sharpened his clarity of thought. Classroom observations supported these accounts. For example, during a debate on whether technological innovation promotes or hinders social equality, students engaged in collaborative preparation and presented structured arguments in front of the class, indicating that interactive tasks encouraged both spontaneous reasoning and peer-supported critical engagement (CON).

Instructor Feedback

Instructor feedback further reinforced students' CT development. Rather than focusing only on language errors, the teacher highlighted reasoning and evidence. As Ap explained, “Our teacher gives detailed feedback on our speeches, pointing out where we can improve our critical thinking. For instance, she would note if our arguments lacked depth or if we missed considering alternative perspectives” (Ap, FGD). Similarly, Fr

recalled that “instead of just saying ‘good job,’ the teacher would challenge us by asking if our examples really proved the point, or if we needed stronger evidence” (Fr, Interview). Classroom observation further confirmed that feedback often targeted the strengthening of causal links, clarity of reasoning, and consideration of counterarguments, which prompted students to revise their drafts with greater analytical depth (CON).

Instructor Scaffolding

Classroom observations showed that scaffolded questioning was used to prompt deeper analysis. During practice sessions, the instructor posed probing questions such as, “What assumption are you making here?” and “If you were the opposition, how would you challenge this point?” (CON). These prompts encouraged students to revisit their drafts, add clearer examples, and consider counterarguments.

For example, when one group prepared a speech on “the impact of internet slang on youth language development,” their initial focus was limited to humorous cases. After the teacher asked, “What long-term cultural implications might this have?”, the group revised their content to include sociolinguistic perspectives, indicating increased analytical depth (CON).

Need for Creative CT Tasks

Students indicated that repetitive or loosely structured activities often led to superficial contributions, whereas well-designed tasks stimulated deeper critical engagement. Ke noted that “more practice with critical thinking tasks that are directly related to our speeches” would help improve application (Ke, Interview), and St added that creative and varied activities increased motivation.

Classroom observations confirmed these perceptions. In unguided discussions, students tended to repeat similar points, but when given more structured prompts—such as identifying underlying assumptions or generating counterexamples—their responses became more analytical and nuanced (CON). In the final round of presentations, representatives from two groups debated publicly and were evaluated by peers online. Students increasingly anticipated opposing views and framed their responses with expressions such as, “Some of you might argue... but we believe...” (CON), indicating growing awareness of audience and counterargument.

Taken together, the data indicate that structured group activities, targeted instructor feedback, and clearly designed CT-integrated tasks supported students’ engagement with both CT and communicative competence. Despite the large-class format, practices such as group debates, representative presentations, and peer evaluation enabled broad participation and sustained analytical engagement (CON).

DISCUSSION

CT as a Catalyst for Communicative Competence

Findings from this study confirm that Chinese EFL undergraduates perceived CT as integral to enhancing their communicative competence in EPS. Skills such as analyzing

arguments, evaluating evidence, and synthesizing ideas were not only associated with clearer organization and stronger persuasiveness, but also enabled a shift from text-bound reproduction towards more audience-centred, logically structured communication. In this sense, the present study both reinforces and specifies earlier research highlighting the role of CT in structuring ideas, analyzing multiple perspectives, and constructing compelling arguments (Facione, 1990a; Davidson & Dunham, 1997; Paul & Elder, 2014; Wang et al., 2024).

Beyond its structural function, CT was also experienced as a source of affective support. Students' increased confidence and expressive clarity suggest that engaging in CT practices helped reduce performance anxiety and foster a greater sense of control over speech production. This finding aligns with research linking confidence regulation and anxiety management to communicative effectiveness in a second language (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Yang, Wei, & Liu, 2025). At the same time, participants' growing rhetorical adaptability—reflected in their anticipation of counterarguments, strategic use of rhetorical devices, and connection of abstract ideas to personal experience—supports Brookfield's (2012) view that sustained engagement with CT is essential to the development of rhetorical depth and higher-order communication skills.

Taken together, these insights suggest that CT functioned for participants not as an isolated cognitive technique, but as an embedded and multifunctional communicative resource, strengthening both the cognitive and affective dimensions of effective public speaking.

Barriers to Applying CT in Public Speaking

Despite recognizing its value, students encountered multiple barriers when attempting to apply CT in public speaking contexts. At the core of these difficulties was the transition from deeply entrenched habits of rote memorization to more analytical and generative modes of thinking. This shift demanded considerable cognitive adjustment, which became especially pronounced under the additional pressure of functioning in a second language. The documented tension between linguistic retrieval and higher-order processing is well established in applied linguistics and cognitive load theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Kormos, 2006; Alsaleem & Hamzah, 2023; Chi, 2022; Dörnyei, 2005; Veliz & Veliz-Campos, 2019), and the present findings extend this understanding by illustrating how such cognitive competition specifically constrains real-time critical engagement in public speaking.

Differences between early and later English learners further complicate this picture. Although early starters demonstrated greater automaticity in language retrieval, this advantage did not necessarily translate into spontaneous critical engagement. Conversely, later starters reported that limited lexical access consistently diverted cognitive resources away from analytical processing. These patterns align with second language acquisition research showing that age of onset affects fluency and automaticity, yet does not eliminate the substantial cognitive demands required to integrate CT into real-time communication (Muñoz, 2014; DeKeyser, 2012). This suggests that linguistic fluency alone is insufficient to ensure critical engagement;

rather, explicit pedagogical scaffolding remains essential for learners across proficiency backgrounds.

Affective and socio-cultural dimensions further constrained students' ability to enact CT. Performance anxiety frequently pushed participants back toward memorized scripts rather than on-the-spot reasoning, confirming long-standing links between anxiety and reduced cognitive flexibility in language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986) and more recent findings that performance pressure can trigger surface-level strategic behavior (Yang et al., 2025). While Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions offer a useful lens for interpreting hesitation in high power-distance contexts—where questioning authority may be discouraged—this study also highlights important limitations of an exclusively cultural explanation. Evidence from lower power-distance contexts, such as Australia (Thompson, 2002), demonstrates that similar reluctance can emerge where students lack prior exposure to CT-integrated pedagogies. This convergence suggests that institutional norms and academic socialization may be more decisive than national culture alone, echoing arguments made by Tan (2017), Atkinson (1997), and Muega, Acido, and Lusung-Oyzon (2016). In this sense, CT engagement should be viewed less as a culturally fixed disposition and more as a learned academic practice shaped by educational histories.

Institutional and curricular structures further restricted sustained engagement with CT. Heavy workloads and limited instructional time reduced opportunities for extended reasoning and reflective practice, a pattern commonly observed in exam-driven and content-dense systems (Paul & Elder, 2014; Liu, Frankel, & Roohr, 2016). From a cognitive standpoint, Willingham (2008) emphasizes that CT requires not only explicit instruction but also deep domain knowledge and repeated, deliberate practice—conditions that are often difficult to achieve within tightly constrained language curricula. Similarly, Abrami et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis demonstrates that, while structured interventions can support CT development, institutional limitations frequently undermine their long-term effectiveness.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the challenges surrounding CT integration in EPS extend beyond individual learner ability. Rather, they emerge from an intersection of cognitive load, affective vulnerability, educational socialization, and structural constraints. Importantly, these barriers are not unique to the Chinese EFL context; instead, they reflect a broader global tension between the ideal of CT-integrated pedagogy and the practical realities of language education systems.

Instructional Pathways to Support CT and Communicative Competence

Findings also identified a range of strategies that students found supportive in overcoming challenges and developing both CT and communicative competence. Interactive methods, particularly debates and role-plays, were consistently described as effective in fostering spontaneous reasoning and collaborative problem-solving. This aligns with earlier findings that collaborative learning tasks enhance students' engagement with CT and foster higher levels of cognitive processing (Gokhale, 1995). Moreover, students' expressed preference for varied and creative tasks resonates with

evidence that context-sensitive and well-designed activities can enhance both motivation and critical engagement (Sun, 2021; Akatsuka, 2020).

Instructor feedback and pedagogical scaffolding also emerged as pivotal. Students emphasized that feedback focusing on reasoning processes and evidence—rather than exclusively on linguistic accuracy—enabled them to identify weaknesses in argumentation and anticipate alternative perspectives. This supports Hattie and Timperley’s (2007) assertion that targeted, process-oriented feedback is essential for developing higher-order cognitive skills such as CT. Similarly, the observed use of probing questions (e.g., “What assumption are you making here?”) reflects Ennis’s (1993) call for the explicit integration of CT instruction into subject-specific learning, demonstrating how teachers can actively mediate students’ reasoning in real time.

Importantly, these findings carry direct implications for teacher training and curriculum design. First, they suggest that EFL teacher education programmes should include formal preparation in CT-integrated pedagogy, including the design of argumentative tasks, the use of Socratic questioning, and the provision of feedback that targets reasoning rather than surface-level accuracy alone. Second, they indicate that EPS curricula may need to be rebalanced to prioritize depth over breadth: reducing the number of surface-level assignments and allocating greater time for iterative drafting, reflection, and peer evaluation can create the necessary conditions for sustained critical engagement. These recommendations are consistent with Yang and Gamble’s (2013) argument that meaningful CT development requires space for reflection, as well as with Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, and Jahedizadeh’s (2020) emphasis on pacing and continuity in CT instruction.

Taken together, these pedagogical and structural pathways suggest that CT integration in EPS is most effective when supported through a combination of interactive task design, targeted instructor scaffolding, feedback focused on reasoning, and curriculum structures that allow sufficient time for reflection and revision. Rather than treating CT as an “add-on” skill, the findings of this study demonstrate the importance of embedding it systematically within the instructional ecology of EPS.

This interrelated process is visually represented in Figure 2, which conceptualizes CT integration in EPS as:

- (1) a catalyst for the development of communicative competence,
- (2) a process shaped by cognitive, affective, cultural, and institutional barriers, and
- (3) an outcome supported through specific instructional and curricular pathways.

By visualizing the relationship between these dimensions, the figure clarifies how CT can be implemented in EPS classrooms to support the communicative development of EFL learners.

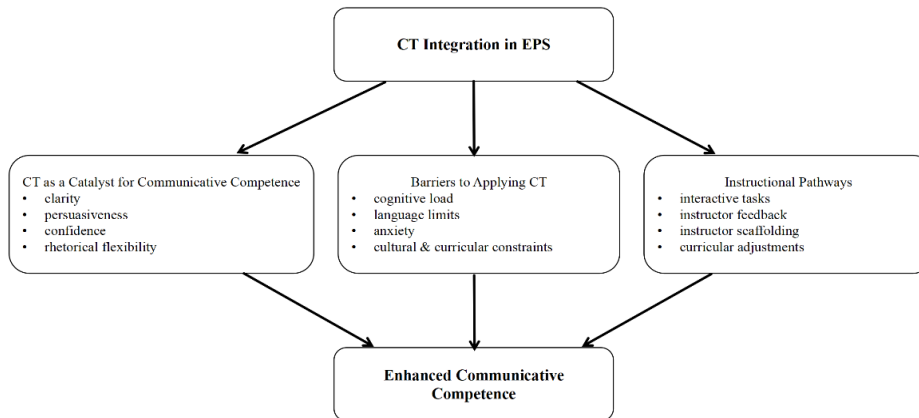


Figure 2
Conceptual Representation of CT Integration in EPS

This study offers clear responses to both research questions. In relation to RQ1, Chinese EFL undergraduates perceived CT not as an abstract concept, but as an essential communicative resource that enhanced clarity, rhetorical awareness, confidence, and audience engagement in EPS. This finding extends previous research by showing how CT becomes visible in spoken performance rather than remaining confined to written or theoretical domains.

Regarding RQ2, the study identifies practical pathways for integrating CT into EPS, including interactive tasks, scaffolded questioning, feedback focused on reasoning, and curricular structures that allow time for reflection and revision. These approaches demonstrate that CT can be systematically embedded into everyday classroom practice rather than treated as an add-on skill.

Taken together, the findings highlight the study's central contribution: a contextualized, practice-oriented understanding of how CT can be operationalized in EFL public speaking to strengthen learners' communicative competence.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses the two research questions by demonstrating, first, that integrating CT into EPS courses can make a meaningful contribution to the development of Chinese EFL undergraduates' communicative competence. Students consistently reported that CT enabled them to structure ideas more clearly, evaluate arguments more carefully, and deliver speeches that were more coherent, persuasive, and responsive to audience needs. These gains marked a shift away from rote reproduction of memorized content towards more reflective, purposeful, and interactive communication. At the same time, students acknowledged persistent difficulties, particularly the cognitive tension of thinking critically while speaking in a second language, as well as performance anxiety in front of peers.

In relation to the second research question, the findings highlight the mediating role of pedagogy in supporting students' engagement with CT. Structured debates, scaffolded

teacher feedback, and peer evaluation provided opportunities for students to rehearse analytical reasoning, anticipate counterarguments, and refine their rhetorical strategies. Such practices not only supported students' immediate speaking performance but also fostered more transferable habits of critical reflection and communicative adaptability.

Beyond the immediate classroom context, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on how CT can be meaningfully embedded in EFL instruction. For teachers, the findings emphasize the importance of designing CT-integrated activities that balance linguistic demands with higher-order thinking. For curriculum designers, the results point to the value of embedding more reflective and interactive components within assessment structures in order to create sustained opportunities for CT practice. Taken together, these insights offer practical guidance for educators working in exam-driven and hierarchical educational contexts, where the development of both CT and communicative competence remains a pressing goal.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is subject to several limitations which, at the same time, point toward important directions for future research. First, the relatively small sample size and the focus on a single institutional context limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to broader populations. Second, the emphasis on second-year English majors in one private university means that the perspectives of students from other academic disciplines and institutional types remain underexplored. Third, while self-reported perceptions and classroom observations provided rich insights, they may not fully capture the complexity of students' cognitive and affective processes during public speaking.

These limitations suggest several productive avenues for further investigation. Future research could involve larger and more diverse participant groups to enhance representativeness across regions and institutional settings. Longitudinal studies would be particularly valuable in examining how CT and communicative competence develop over extended periods, beyond a single semester. In addition, research could more closely examine the role of teacher training interventions in CT-integrated pedagogy, investigating how specialized professional development influences instructional practice and student outcomes. Comparative studies across different cultural and educational systems may also provide deeper insight into how contextual factors shape students' engagement with CT in public speaking. Finally, mixed-methods approaches combining qualitative data with quantitative measures of learning outcomes would help build a more comprehensive evidence base for the long-term effects of CT-integrated instruction on both communicative competence and broader academic development.

By reframing these limitations as opportunities for further inquiry, future studies can extend the present findings and contribute to a deeper, more systematic understanding of how CT-integrated approaches can be implemented and sustained in EFL contexts worldwide.

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APPENDIX

A. Excerpts from Si's Drafts Before and After CT Integration

Before CT Integration (Original Draft Excerpt)

From Zero-sum Game to a Win-win Situation

When we discuss globalization we often take into account the fact that both countries that are partners in trade benefit from the exchange. What this means is that a country A that specializes in a particular good or service can trade with country B that specializes in another good or service. In this way both countries stand to gain as they import the goods that are cheaper to make in the other country and export the goods that are cheaper to make in their countries. This is the classic version of the win-win situation that globalization and free trade bring to the table. However, this is a simplified explanation of the globalization phenomenon and as the experiences of many countries show international trade is not linear but a complex activity that is beset with protectionist rhetoric, subsidies to one's farmers and traders as well as skewed rules and regulations.

After CT Integration (Revised Draft Excerpt)

Competition vs Cooperation

Respected judges, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Zero-sum games and win-wins are combinations of three numbers: 0, 1, and 2. If two parties compete, then 1 minus 1 equals 0. If two parties cooperate, then 1 plus 1 equals 2—or even produces an effect greater than 2. In other words, collaboration brings win-win benefits. As the saying goes, when everybody adds fuel to the fire, the flames rise high.

I learned this lesson the hard way when I was practicing table tennis. There was a time when I always trained alone, refusing to communicate with my teammates because I was afraid they would discover my new skills and overtake me. But I found that isolating myself only held me back. Later, I began training with my teammates, sharing techniques and experiences, and we all made great progress. It was the power of togetherness that led us to a win-win situation.

This reminds me of the famous Ping-Pong Diplomacy. The friendly exchanges between the Chinese and American table tennis teams contributed to the normalization of relations and promoted cooperative diplomacy between the United States and China. The Chinese people deeply cherish the value of peace and understand that development gains do not come easily. Over the past century and more, humanity has endured bloody hot wars and the chilling Cold War. Wars may bring political, economic, or military benefits to the victors, but these so-called triumphs come at devastating costs: the bodies left on battlefields, children succumbing to malnutrition caused by deprivation, and the suffering of women subjected to violence as an instrument of conflict. The victory of one side is built upon the pain of others.

We global citizens can certainly do better!

B. Example of Coding Process from Raw Data to Themes

Raw data (excerpt)	Initial code	Sub-theme	Final theme
“Before this course, my speeches were often scattered and lacked coherence. Learning to critically analyze my arguments has helped me structure my thoughts clearly.” (St, Interview)	Lack of coherence before CT	Clarity and logical structure	Critical Thinking–Enhanced Communicative Competence in EPS
“Now, I focus on understanding and evaluating the content, which makes my delivery more natural and convincing.” (Fr, Interview)	Content evaluation	Persuasiveness and engagement	Critical Thinking–Enhanced Communicative Competence in EPS
“Initially, I was very nervous... but as I practiced and applied CT, I became more confident.” (La, FGD)	Anxiety + confidence growth	Improved confidence	Critical Thinking–Enhanced Communicative Competence in EPS
“By carefully selecting rhetorical devices...” (Si, FGD)	Rhetorical awareness	Deliberate rhetorical choices	Critical Thinking–Enhanced Communicative Competence in EPS
“Before this course, I never really thought about CT. It was all about memorizing and repeating.” (La, Interview)	Rote learning habit	Difficulty shifting to CT	Challenges in Applying Critical Thinking in EPS
“It’s hard to think critically and speak in English at the same time.” (Si, Interview)	Cognitive overload	Language vs CT tension	Challenges in Applying Critical Thinking in EPS
Students avoided eye contact and held scripts tightly. (CON)	Anxiety behaviors	Anxiety inhibits CT	Challenges in Applying Critical Thinking in EPS
“Group discussions and debate tasks force me to think...” (Fr, Interview)	Interactive learning	Collaborative CT	Instructional strategies supporting CT and communicative competence development
Teacher asked: “What assumption are you making here?” (CON)	Guided questioning	Instructor scaffolding	Instructional strategies supporting CT and communicative competence development
“Our teacher gives detailed feedback on our speeches...” (Ap, FGD)	Feedback on reasoning	Instructor feedback	Instructional strategies supporting CT and communicative competence development
“More creative and interactive tasks...” (St, Interview)	Desire for task variety	Need for creative CT tasks	Instructional strategies supporting CT and communicative competence development