

Indonesian Pre-Service Teachers' View on Developing Critical Thinking in English Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

In modern times like today, nurturing critical thinking skills is essential, particularly among pre-service teachers, to enrich the educational process. This study focuses on the development of critical thinking skills in pre-service English language teachers, acknowledging the global significance of English. Employing a qualitative approach, this research involved 10 English major students from North Sumatra with both formal and informal teaching experience. As a phenomenological study, it explored pre-service teachers' comprehension of critical thinking, the instructional methods employed, and the challenges faced in integrating critical thinking into English language teaching. Thematic analysis was utilized to examine their understanding and application of critical thinking in the classroom. Data collection methods included interviews, questionnaires via Google Forms, and observation through photographs and videos during English lessons. Findings indicate that pre-service teachers possess a solid understanding of critical thinking and can apply effective teaching methods in schools. These methods range from contextual learning, encompassing lectures, discussions, and independent literacy, to student-centered approaches like projects and debates. However, challenges such as low student interest in English and insufficient facilities hinder the application of critical thinking. The study underscores the need for governmental support in training pre-service teachers to enhance their teaching effectiveness.

1. Introduction

Today, the demand for teachers to teach languages continues to increase from generation to generation. As technology advances and challenges are faced by the world, innovations in language learning are necessary. Due to the fact that language continually changes, it is important to encourage the students to think critically when they are learning a language. (ten Dam & Volman, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) quoted in (Ma & Luo, 2021). According to (Elder & Paul, 2013), critical thinking is the skill of individuals to take control of their own thinking and set acceptable standards and criteria for examining their own thinking. Furthermore, (Maiorana, 1992) states maintains, critical thinking tries to achieve understanding, evaluate alternative perspectives, and solve problems. English is becoming increasingly important in various social areas as a result of development of global integration and Indonesia's rapid economic expansion. At this time, it is imperative to improve students' proficiency in English and the quality of English teaching in general.

Critical thinking is widely understood to include both cognitive ability and emotional dispositions. (Facione, 2011). Critical thinking skills consist of skills such as comprehension, inference, assessment, self-regulation, and so on. Critical thinking qualities cover tendencies and personality factors associated to critical thinking. (Facione, Facione, & Sanchez, 1994). According to Smith et al. (2018), Critical thinking is fundamentally about reasoned argumentation. Through review, critical thinking can assist produce logical discoveries or responses. (Dwyer & Eigenauer, 2017), as well as enhance decisionmaking through the analysis of multiple evidence sources (Butler et al., 2012). Thus, critical thinking has been emphasized as a fundamental feature in enhancing college students' learning and establishing the foundations of representative citizenship, independence, and individuality. (Abrami et al., 2015). Furthermore, administrators and instructors are becoming more convinced.

Research on pre-service teachers in Indonesia in developing critical thinking tends to discuss

dispositions skills because they assess who pre-service teachers need to be measured to find out how far their abilities are in teaching (Tutyandari, 2020) and in exact scientific fields such as mathematics and science because they require problem-based learning methods because the science requires students to think more deeply about the material being taught (Kusaeri, 2019; Siahaan, 2023). In the context of pre-service English teachers, Indonesian teachers tend to discuss their self-efficacy, pedagogical skills (Hadi, 2019; Tutyandari, 2020), readiness and focus on their professional identity (Nue, 2022; Irwandani, 2024). This is because pre-service teachers in Indonesia generally require specialized training before teaching in formal education. So it is necessary to measure the ability of Indonesian pre-service teachers so that the government is able to provide facilities in accordance with the necessary educational needs. It is still very rare to find how pre-service teachers develop critical thinking in English teaching. Whereas English is an international language and is a language that is very necessary to learn both in formal and informal institutions. So this research investigates the extent to which Indonesian pre-service teachers develop critical thinking in teaching English and provides an understanding of how learning strategies are appropriate to the character of students in various types of classes both at the intermediate and upper levels

The process of critical thinking illuminates the importance of clearly delineating concepts. This attribute is quite meaningful, as when an individual can comprehensively analyze and define a phenomenon, as well as the terminology and labels used to name said phenomenon, it indicates that they have obtained an adequate level of understanding. Furthermore, if one can identify the relationship between two phenomena, they are able to construct an assertion expressing their perspective that is appropriate for discourse. This aligns with English language learning, which necessitates critical comprehension across the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. As a global language, English will invariably evolve over time, experiencing developments in both structure and semantics. Therefore, cultivating an understanding of critical thinking is imperative for prospective educators before entering the authentic context of pedagogy.

Therefore, the research question that arises in this study is:

- 1) What is the pre-service understanding about critical thinking in English language teaching?
- 2) How pre-service teachers use to applying critical thinking in English language teaching?
- 3) What difficulties do pre-service teachers face in applying critical thinking in English Language Teaching?

2. Literature Review

Critical thinking training relies heavily on teacher cognition (e.g., Gashan, 2015) (Ketabi et al., 2013; Li et al., 2016; Stapleton, 2011). Teacher cognition is defined as "what teachers think, know, and believe" (Borg, 2003, p. 81), and includes Teachers' knowledge and beliefs. Teacher cognition, a key aspect of teacher education studies, indicates that research has moved from emphasizing explicit teacher conduct to investigating implicit teacher thinking. (Borg, 2003, 2006; Li & Walsh, 2011). The existence of a beneficial relationship between teacher cognition and teaching practice has been demonstrated (e.g., Basturkmen, 2012; Li & Walsh, 2011; Pajaraes, 1992); Furthermore, teacher cognition influences Not just teachers' professional improvement, but also learners advancement in learning. (Borg, 2003).

According to Borg (2006), research on teacher cognition focuses on experienced instructors, while research on pre-service teachers is limited. The pre-service educational program influences pre-service teachers' cognition and prospective teaching methods. (Gashan, 2015; Petek & Bedir, 2018). To put it a different way, a review of pre-service teachers' teaching concepts is required to improve their knowledge and practice. Furthermore, pre-service teachers' awareness of the notion of critical thinking and its instruction is crucial for improving students' critical thinking capacity. (Kagan, 1993; Petek & Bedir, 2018). As a result, researchers attempted to investigate Indonesia pre-service teachers' perceptions on integrating critical thinking in Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL).

Many scholars have suggested that students' critical thinking growth cannot occur without qualified educators who are equipped with both critical thinking abilities and critical thinking-oriented pedagogies (Cáceres et al., 2020; Yuan & Stapleton, 2020). This point of view emphasizes the crucial importance of implementing critical thinking into pre-service teacher education programs in order to increase potential teachers' critical thinking and prepare them for critical thinking teaching. Pre-service teachers need to be equipped with an in-depth understanding of critical thinking because writing is the most frequent use of critical thinking in student learning (Petek & Bedir, 2018). In addition, the purpose of applying critical thinking skills to pre-service teachers is so that educational goals are achieved and students are able to solve problems in learning by themselves so that students have a deep understanding of writing classes in efl (Alwan, 2022).

Although they have reached consensus on essential features of critical thinking, there are additionally particular comprehensions of critical thinking abilities and traits in many sectors. (Abrami et al., 2015; Facione, 2011; Moore, 2011; Smith et al., 2018). English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors

define critical thinking as a variety of additional abilities that include evaluating, summarized, identifying patterns and structures, figuring out solutions, negotiating solutions with peers, and articulating rational arguments supported by evidence, among others. (Yang & Gamble, 2013). The benefits of developing critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom EFL learners' mental power, language competence, and non-cognitive abilities (Alnofaie, 2013; Yang & Gamble, 2013). Evidence, discussion, and correction are all important, but so is the act of thinking (Hashemnezhad & Hamshenezhad, 2012). Teachers of English with professional education backgrounds have showed the capacity to incorporate critical thinking skills into their lesson plans. They possess substantial practical experience of critical thinking processes. (Muhsin et al., 2023). In some places, service teachers also still experience problems in applying critical thinking in English language learning. This is because a number of service teachers do not have a good understanding of critical thinking and also the classroom situation does not support being an obstacle in applying critical thinking in English classes (Gandana et al., 2021).

The need for research on pre-service English teachers is underscored by the pivotal role of critical thinking in the learning process, as delineated in the 2013 curriculum (Mulyani, 2018). Within the Indonesian context, there appears to be a paucity of discourse concerning the cognitive approaches of pre-service teachers towards English language pedagogy. This gap in scholarly discussion warrants attention, given the critical importance of fostering thinking skills not just in everyday life but also in the multifaceted realm of language learning. The elements of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in language education are fundamental; without the effective application of critical thinking strategies, students may struggle to assimilate and comprehend the knowledge imparted by their educators. Hence, exploring the cognitive strategies and understanding of pre-service English teachers becomes essential, as it relates to their capability to integrate critical thinking into their teaching methodologies. This exploration is vital for ensuring that students are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate through the complexities of language learning, thereby enhancing their overall academic and real-world communication competencies.

This is because pre-service teachers in Indonesia generally require specialized training before teaching in formal education. So it is necessary to measure the ability of Indonesian pre-service teachers so that the government is able to provide facilities in accordance with the necessary educational needs. It is still very rare to find how pre-service teachers develop critical thinking in English teaching. Whereas English is an international language and is a language that is very necessary to learn both in formal and informal

institutions. So this research investigates the extent to which Indonesian pre-service teachers develop critical thinking in teaching English and provides an understanding of how learning strategies are appropriate to the character of students in various types of classes both at the intermediate and upper levels.

3. Method

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, as defined by Creswell (2013), which is considered a robust approach for "exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to social or human problems." The essence of this study is phenomenological in nature, focusing on delving into the experiences of pre-service English teachers as they navigate through the process of developing critical thinking skills within the realm of English language teaching. Phenomenology, as articulated by Maruna and Butler (2005, p. 2), is primarily concerned with "the description and comprehension of lived human experiences through observable types of direct mental activity and reflective analysis." This methodological stance is highly valued for its effectiveness in probing the depths of human experiences, as underscored by Wimpenny and Gass (2000).

Therefore, the decision to employ this phenomenological approach was made to gain deeper insights into the subjective experiences and challenges faced by pre-service English teachers in integrating critical thinking skills into their pedagogical practices. This choice is predicated on the belief that a phenomenological perspective provides a nuanced understanding of the complexities and nuances involved in teaching and learning processes, particularly in the context of fostering critical thinking abilities in the domain of English language education..

3.1 Research Participant

Participants were selected based on purpose sampling which participants were pre-service teachers who have teaching experience in both formal and informal institutions. The participants selected were those who volunteered and were willing to be researched in the English language teaching process with their identity and personal information disguised. The participants comprised 10 seventh-semester English majors from the same university. These participants are students who have not yet fully transitioned into teaching roles, only instructing for relatively brief periods through activities like community service, school internships mandated by the university, and volunteering in neighborhood communities for approximately one month. As novice educators with limited practical experience, analyzing their perspectives on critical thinking integration provides insight into developing pedagogical approaches prior to prolonged classroom teaching.

Table 1. Table of Participants

No	Name	Gender	Age	Teaching Experiences
1	Amelia	Female	20	5 Months
2	Vania	Female	21	10 Months
3	Rachel	Female	22	7 Months
4	William	Male	21	4 Months
5	Sarah	Female	20	11 Months
6	Yosephine	Female	23	5 Months
7	Naura	Female	21	6 months
8	Erick	Male	20	9 Months
9	Felia	Female	22	8 Months
10	Dandy	Male	21	12 Months

3.2 Instruments

According to [Li & Walsh, 2011](#), in studies on teacher cognition, survey responses, observations, field notes, interviews, or exams were utilized to examine their true knowledge and beliefs.. This study used interview instruments, questionnaires and field notes. Interviews were conducted between individuals with semi-structured questions and measured pre-service teachers' understanding of critical thinking.

Then questionnaires and field notes were conducted to provide insight to researchers on how pre-service teachers implement learning strategies that suit students and the obstacles faced by teachers to develop this critical thinking skill. Field notes were used during the English teaching process when pre-service teachers were teaching.

3.3 Data Collection

Before initiating data collection, the researchers inquired about the participants' willingness to participate through face-to-face meetings and private chat messages. They also requested information pertinent to the study, such as the participants' teaching schedules, their duration of teaching experience, and the educational level of the schools where they teach. Two days later, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with the pre-service teachers, allocating 10 minutes for each interview. To further validate their responses, the researchers distributed a questionnaire filled with open-ended questions centered on critical thinking. On the following day, the researchers observed the pre-service teachers during their instruction in various

classes, noting the different school levels and student demographics.

3.4 Data Analysis

This research using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves coding original data, creating themes and maps, and then interpreting these themes ([Castleberry & Nolen, 2018](#)). Thematic analysis enhances qualitative research by providing thorough records and information, allowing readers to assess study credibility and effectiveness ([Nowell et al., 2017](#)).

During the initial cycle, all interviews and field notes are thoroughly transcribed to avoid bias from selective transcription. The transcripts were then emailed back to the participants for approval. In the second cycle, data were analyzed using [Braun & Clarke, 2006](#) six-step technique based on sociocultural theory.

The first author attentively reviewed the transcribed material and took initial notes. The original code was produced and organized based on the content. Tables and thematic maps were used to categorize the codes according to their content. The motifs were identified at the semantic level, without explanation.

The preliminary concepts were discussed alongside samples of coded data for each theme. As a result, certain themes may be rejected while others are developed. We tweaked and explained each theme to capture its essence. Finally, the themes were identified, analyzed, and presented.

4. Result

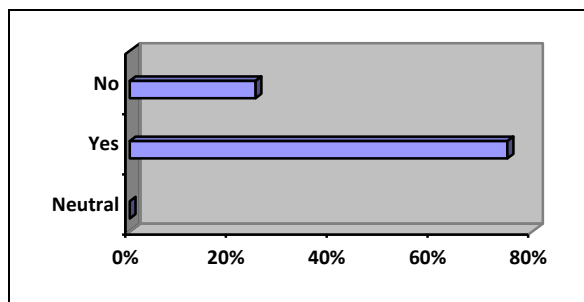
4.1 Teacher Cognition of Critical Thinking

From the research conducted, there are findings obtained from participants related to pre-service teachers' cognition of teaching critical thinking in English as a foreign language.

4.1.1. The important of Critical Thinking On English Language Teaching

From the data obtained from the questionnaire, most pre-service teachers believed that the application of critical thinking in English language learning is important.

Table 1 The importance of Critical Thinking in Teaching English language teaching.



The results of a survey conducted by researchers on a number of participants were 75% of the participants or 7-8 people chose that critical thinking was necessary in learning English. While 25% of the participants or 2-3 chose to disagree with the application of critical thinking in teaching English as a foreign language. From the answers obtained by researchers, pre-service teachers agree with the application of critical thinking needs to be done so that students are able to solve problems and wise. Like the participant 3 states such a

“[...] I think critical thinking is very important to make mature and wise decisions. [...] Critical thinking also can help us because we won't be easily provoked and take information at face value.”

Excerpt 1, p.3- 2'-4”

Participants agreed because English has a broad scope so it is necessary to have critical thinking skills in learning and teaching at school. The English language that changes every time makes humans who use it as a means of communication need to instill critical thinking skills in everyday life.

In different way, critical thinking needs to be taught in English language learning because language is a tool in communication, people needs to think about what he wants to convey before the communication process occurs. as explained by participants 4:

“Because language is an intermediary in communicating or in terms of responding to something [...] , so critical thinking is important before conveying something”

Excerpt 2, p.1 – 1'-2.45”

However, there are some who argue that critical thinking is not important. Critical thinking is only needed for learning that requires problem solving such as arithmetic or other sciences. As stated by participant :

“[...] In the language itself, critical thinking is not too emphasized, sometimes we have to think critically but not all the time [...], because this is not a mathematic lesson, [...] so, for me it is not too emphasized to think critically.”,

Excerpt 3, pt.6-- 6'- 8.10”

This difference in opinion occurs due to the different teaching experiences of each pre-service teacher. Pre-service teachers who have been teaching longer certainly have different experiences and different students compared to pre-service teachers who teach for a short period of time. In addition to different teaching experiences, another thing that underlies this difference of opinion is the background knowledge that pre-service teachers have between each of them. On the other side Teaching English as Foreign Language is also not limited to the language used or the information we receive when communicating. More than that there are symbols. A symbol or sign that has its own character that must be able to be understood by fellow humans.

However, from the data collected, there were no pre-service teachers who thought that critical thinking did not need to be carried out in English language teaching. They all considered that critical thinking needs to be done in English language teaching to stimulate students to think deeply about problems in learning and find creative solutions in solving these problems. As English teachers, they are aware that critical thinking not only needs to be taught to students, teachers also need to apply it to create learning that is fun and easy to understand considering that many Indonesian students don't like English lessons.



Picture 1. Pre-service teacher teaching in the classroom

The picture was taken on October 18, 2023, at one of the junior high schools during English language learning guided by the pre-service teachers who teach. In the documentation, the teacher is seen involving students in the learning process by inviting students to elaborate their opinions related to the material being studied. The pre-service teacher did this to encourage students' critical thinking skills and increase their self-confidence.

-Observation documentation-

4.1.2. Pre-Service Teachers Understanding About Critical Thinking

Based on the data collected, pre-service teachers have demonstrated a proficient understanding of what constitutes critical thinking. They are able to articulate their individual interpretations of the concept, yet there exists a consensus among them that critical thinking encompasses the process of tackling problems with innovative solutions. This shared perspective is elaborated upon in the excerpt below:

“Critical thinking is [...] a human way of thinking to respond to someone by analyzing facts to form a judgment. The subject is complex, [...] and there are several different definitions of the [...] concept, which generally include rational analysis, skepticism, unbiasedness, or evaluation of factual evidence.”

Excerpt 3, p.5- 6'-9”

The quote above explains that how the concept of critical thinking and its use in everyday life. With critical thinking skills, one is able to prevent misinformation, prejudice and other negative things. This needs to be applied in English teaching because English is a global language where all countries use it so that information can be accessed not only by someone who is a native English speaker. On the other hand, critical thinking is how they think seriously to solve problems and find solutions. This is certainly needed in teaching English because English which consists of reading, writing, listening and speaking certainly has its own difficulties when learning. The tasks given by the teacher will also be different in each aspect so that critical thinking skills are very important to be taught to students so that they are more creative and able to understand lessons according to their passion. As stated by participant 10 in the quote below:

“Critical thinking is a complex way of thinking where someone can think critically about a problem they are facing to find the best answer or solution as desired.”

Excerpt 4, p.10 1'-3”

It is obvious that pre-service teachers grasp the idea of critical thinking and how it might be applied to teaching English as a foreign language. With various teaching experiences, the average pre-service teacher

can adequately describe the concept of critical thinking and the importance of applying this ability in teaching English as a foreign language.



Picture 2 Pre-service teacher show a picture to students

The picture was taken on October 9, 2023, at one of the junior high schools during English language learning guided by the pre-service teacher. In the picture, you can see the pre-service teacher using small pieces of pictures that are shown to students. He did this before the class started by asking what the picture meant. By doing this, students become more curious about the meaning of the picture shown by the teacher so that they think critically about how and what the teacher means by the picture. By checking students' knowledge before learning, pre-service teachers find it easier to choose the starting point of the material to be taught.

-Observation Documentation-

4.2. How Pre- Services' Teacher Developing Critical Thinking

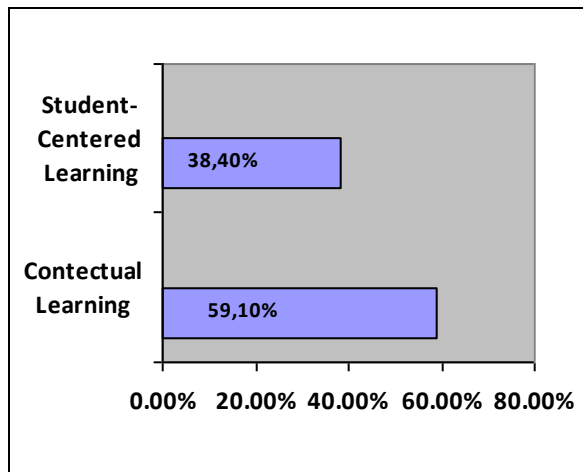
The data gathered from field notes reveal a variety of learning techniques employed by teachers in integrating critical thinking into the instruction of English as a foreign language. These differences underscore the diversity of pedagogical approaches adopted to enhance students' critical thinking capabilities. Teachers' strategies for fostering critical thinking skills in their students vary, reflecting a broad spectrum of methods tailored to the unique demands of teaching English to non-native speakers. This diversity in teaching practices not only highlights the creativity and adaptability of educators but also points to the multifaceted nature of critical thinking itself. Through a closer examination of these varied approaches, we gain insights into the complexities of teaching critical thinking within the context of English language learning, offering valuable perspectives on effective pedagogical strategies.

4.2.1. Contextual Learning

From the data collected, there were some teachers who indicated to create varied learning methods to implement critical thinking in teaching English. This is because each teacher faces different classroom

situations and different agencies. However, there are 3 methods that are often used by teachers to apply critical thinking when teaching in class, namely class discussions, lectures, and also independent literacy. As shown in the table below:

Table 2 Graphic of Learning Methode of Pre-service taecher applied in English Languange Teaching



This significant difference occurs because the teaching experience and classroom situations faced by each participant are different. According to most participants, discussion is an effective method for implementing critical thinking in teaching English as a foreign language, this is because with discussion students are able to feel they understand the material presented better with a combination of explanations between the teacher and students. As quoted from participant 2:

"In my opinion, discussion is an effective method for applying critical thinking.[...] Because students usually understand the explanations given by their friends better than the teacher. With discussions, they are also trained to speak in public to get used to it [...]."

Excerpt 5, p.2 9- 11'25-13"

However, on the other hand, pre-service teachers revealed that the lecture method was the right method for applying critical thinking. Because when students are left to study alone, classroom conditions are not conducive. However, in reality, in each learning hour, not only the lecture method is used, but in the middle or end of the class the teacher also provides quizzes or games that hone students' critical thinking skills so that students don't get bored while studying and understand what they are learning. This can certainly increase students' vocabulary because usually teachers will use many words for games during learning. As quoted from participant 6:

"I chose the lecture method because it is very difficult to control students when I enter the class [...] if I only rely on them in learning (student-centered). [...] However, when I give quizzes or

games related to the material, students will be more enthusiastic about learning and also find it easier understand the material [...] in a unique way that will stick in their memory."

Excerpt 6, p.6 10'10-12'39"

On the other hand, there are also those who apply the concept of independent literacy, namely directing students to read more actively and enrich their knowledge of the material being taught before entering class. This is because the teacher wants students to have background knowledge first before the material is taught. Then the teacher will ask students to briefly explain what they understand about this material, then the teacher will explain in more depth so that students understand it more easily. As quoted from participant 1:

"In my opinion, independent literacy can be applied to build students' critical abilities because the books they read provided by schools contain [...] very little detailed information. Meanwhile, now there is the internet and social media [...] which makes it easier for them to read and prepare information related to the material to be studied. However as a teacher, of course I will still explain to them in detail the material they will study."

Excerpt 7, pt. 1 12' -14"



Picture 3 Pre- service teacher that using contextual learning with lecturing methode

The picture was taken on October 12, 2023, at one of the high schools during English language learning guided by the pre-service teachers who teach. It can be seen that students are more conducive and pay close attention to the teacher with a learning strategy using the lecturing method because the teacher takes full control of the class. However, during the field observation, the pre-service teacher also asked interactive questions to the students to build trust between the teacher and the students. So, this does not make students feel overwhelmed by the pre-service teacher who is teaching.

-Observation Documentation-

4.2.2. Student-Centered Learning

The field notes collected by the author reveal that several teachers possess knowledge of and have prepared for teaching critical thinking in English as a foreign language. They are familiar with learning activities and methods that foster critical thinking, including problem-solving, student-centered learning, and peer discussions.

“I believe, student-centered learning is the correct way to implementing critical thinking [...] because student can gain more information about english language more than teacher do. Especially know students use social media a lot [...].”

Excerpt 8, pt.7 8’-9’25

Participant 7 highlighted that student-centered learning is an effective method for incorporating critical thinking into the curriculum. He emphasized that this approach allows students to delve deeper into topics beyond the teacher's instruction, utilizing resources like social media to access English language education at any time and place. Student-centered learning promotes independence and comfort, with teachers acting as guides to clarify any misunderstandings, thereby alleviating the pressure on students about the accuracy of the knowledge they acquire. This perspective is further endorsed by a statement from participant 8, reinforcing the value of fostering an environment where students can explore and learn without fear of making mistakes:

“I recommended to make peer discussion among student in my english class. Because when i was at school, is more easier to understand our friends explanation behind my teacher explanation. But i also re-check them again in the end of the class to make sure they dont misunderstanding.”

Excerpt 9, pt 8 10’18-13”

Furthermore, the project based learning method is considered capable of honing students' critical thinking abilities. This is because by working on projects created by themselves, students are able to explore a lot of information and deepen their vocabulary in English. Usually projects that are suitable for improving students' English skills are presentations, games that are adapted to the material being taught, whether writing, reading, speaking or listening. This is in accordance with the quote made by participant 9:

“In my opinion, the best learning methode to apply using critical thinking is problem solving methode [...]. For example, i can ask my student to make project [...] by themselves. It also can improve their creative skill because my students mostly like when using visual learning media”

Excerpt 10, pt. 9 12’ -14”

Pre-service teachers who choose this method are those who have long teaching experience and understand the conditions of their students so that they are able to say and describe this method well. They have also applied this method directly when they teach English. In their observations, this is quite effective in developing students' critical thinking abilities. Apart from that, students' public speaking skills are more honed with this method because the teacher does not judge students if their pronunciation or explanation is wrong.



Picture 4 Students made a mind mapping project about mathematic operation

This picture was taken on November 1, 2023, at one of the junior high schools where the pre-service teachers were teaching English. The picture shows that students are invited to make their own creations by drawing and making mindmaps with the material that the pre-service teacher teaches. This is because the material explained is a little difficult if only explained with material so that with the practice of making mindmaps students will remember every information they are looking for about what they want to describe. This is an effective way to help students remember English lessons.

-Observation Documentation-

4.3. Difficulties in Cultivating Critical Thinking

Incorporating critical thinking into Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) presents notable challenges. Teachers often grapple with students' diminished interest in learning English, which directly impacts the cultivation of critical thinking skills. Additionally, the inadequate support from educational facilities poses a significant barrier, limiting the effectiveness of teaching methods aimed at enhancing critical thinking in an English learning environment. These issues require careful attention and strategies for improvement.

4.3.1 Lack interest of student in learning english

In teaching English, it is not uncommon for teachers to encounter students who are lazy about learning English. Students in Indonesia have the perception that English is as difficult as mathematics, so this is what causes students to not be interested in studying English in depth. This is in accordance with the quote conveyed by participant 3:

"When I enter the class, usually students will complain about not having to study [...], especially if they enter a numeracy class [...]before my class or a class that is difficult for them to understand [...]."

Excerpt 11,pt.10 13'12-14.50"

Things like this can happen because English has a different language structure from English, making it difficult for students to understand English. Apart from that, English also has different pronunciation from English and they have difficulty imitating teachers in pronouncing vocabulary in English. Most students understand what the teacher says, but repeating what the teacher says using English is also difficult for students. This is in accordance with what was quoted from participant 2:

"Students feel that there are so many differences between English and Indonesian [...], such as writing and pronunciation. They are able to understand what I say [...], but they have difficulty answering the questions [...] I ask in English. Maybe because they are not used to speaking English [...] in their daily lives."

Excerpt 12, pt. 211.50-13"

4.3.2 Facilities to do is not support

Another obstacle to applying critical thinking in learning English is facilities that do not support it. Not all schools where they teach have facilities that support the application of critical thinking. So the teacher himself can create ideas or learning media that are interesting and easy to carry when going to school and teaching English. Usually this is caused by the school's budget not being optimal for facilities or other things. As quoted by participant 7:

"I bring my own learning media[...] if I want to teach English. Because the facilities at the school where I teach are[...] not good enough. So I create my own media [...] that is suitable for honing my students' critical thinking skills."

Excerpt 13, pt.7 12'43 -13'30"

On the other hand, other non-supportive facilities come from the curriculum used by the school. Pre-service teachers find it difficult to apply these skills because not all schools use the curriculum set by the government. Some schools still use the old curriculum,

making it difficult for teachers to apply these skills because it is feared that students will feel burdened and it will become increasingly difficult for them to understand English. This is In accordance with the quote from participant 1:

"The obstacle I experienced was [...] the curriculum at the school where I teach. Because they still use the old curriculum [...] which doesn't really require students to think critically[...] so I'm worried that if this skill is applied to students [...]they will increasingly not understand English."

Excerpt 14, pt.1 10'29-14'37"

In Indonesia, differences in curriculum are very common between schools of the same level. This difference in curriculum is usually due to several factors that cannot be fulfilled by the school, one of which is school facilities as an important thing in advancing the quality of education in the school. However, the curriculum issued by the government must be used for schools that meet the requirements and have good quality in terms of facilities and infrastructure and other aspects.



Picture 5 Classroom situation while English language class guided by pre-service teachers

This picture was taken on November 16, 2023, at one of the junior high schools where the pre-service teachers were teaching English. The picture shows that students are not giving their full attention to the teacher in front. It can be seen that some students are sleepy, and their heads are bowed, indicating that their enthusiasm for learning is lost. This can happen because the previous lesson drained their minds and also the subject hours were in the afternoon so they felt sleepy. This makes it difficult for them to concentrate when the teacher teaches in front of the class.

-Observation Documentation-

5. Discussion

The Indonesian government mandates English as the primary foreign language in education, spanning from elementary school to university, emphasizing its role in global communication and understanding

(Alwasilah, 2013). English proficiency is crucial for passing national exams in junior and senior high schools, having been a staple in the curriculum for years (Wang, 2023). Research highlights the importance of nurturing critical thinking in pre-service English teachers to prepare them for diverse classroom situations. Enhancing critical thinking is vital, necessitating collaboration between the government and educational bodies to improve educator quality through targeted training. This study focuses on the critical thinking skills of Indonesian pre-service English teachers, acknowledging their readiness to integrate these skills despite challenges. It calls for further research on leveraging technology in teaching to bolster critical thinking. Adopting a phenomenological approach, the research delves into the dynamic interaction between teachers and students and the adoption of effective teaching strategies to enhance learning.

5.1. Pre Service Cognition about Critical Thinking in English Language Teaching

Pre-service teachers have different opinions regarding the importance of critical thinking in teaching English. Most of the participants answered that this was important because critical thinking stimulates students to think more deeply about a topic being studied according to their abilities (Mahdi, 2020). Pre-service teachers have different opinions regarding the importance of critical thinking in teaching English. Most of the participants answered that this was important because critical thinking stimulates students to think more deeply about a topic being studied according to their abilities. Critical thinking oriented teaching in English classes promotes the ability to recognize, defend personal views, find new ideas, critically analyze problems, participate in debates, and rethink actions and arguments (Kertaeva, 2022).

Meanwhile, pre-service teachers who consider that critical thinking in English language teaching is not important mean that English language teaching is not as complex as learning arithmetic or learning that requires other problem solving so this is considered not important. English and mathematics have similar patterns of thinking, which can be compared and analyzed to find new approaches to language learning and teaching.

Participants who are pre-service teachers who teach English have been able to know the definition of critical thinking according to themselves according to the experiences they have faced. As a pre-service teacher in today's digital era, critical thinking is something that every teacher must have. Teachers must think creatively not only in providing teaching, but how to ensure that students are also able to think creatively in acquiring knowledge (Tari, 2019).

English as an international language is something that is no longer foreign to Indonesia, because in formal education institutions English has been taught from elementary school to high school (Prihatin, 2019). Indonesia, which is a non-English speaking country, feels that English is something that is difficult to learn so students have less motivation to learn. For this reason, teachers need to think creatively about how learning English can be easy and fun for their students.

Broadly speaking, pre-service teachers in Indonesia are able to describe the concept of critical thinking well and are able to provide their own definition of what this means. Indeed, critical thinking is a skill that needs to be taught both in formal education and informal education because with critical thinking a person is wiser in making decisions and acting. In English language teaching, this is considered important because English is constantly evolving and also the increasingly sophisticated learning media makes one need to think critically in this learning. Learning math and English is not something that can be equated because both have different levels of difficulty, so this cannot be used as an excuse that critical thinking in English lessons is not something that is important to teach.

5.2. How Pre-Service Teachers Apply Critical Thinking in English Language Teaching

The pre-service teachers in this research are those who teach English in various different school levels, there is middle school and high school. The different characteristics of students also make pre-service teachers have to think creatively about how students can understand English well, even though not all students will understand it perfectly.

Participants assessed that there were two learning strategies that suited the needs of students at the school where they taught. Pre-service teachers who choose contextual learning methods are those who have short teaching experience and tend to try to control the class with teacher-centered learning. However, at some times, pre-service teachers will invite students to share information about the material being taught according to the students' understanding. (Demirkan, 2019). By linking English language learning to everyday life topics, contextual learning significantly improves students' critical thinking skills, resulting in higher average test scores. (Ningrum, 2023; Ramadansur, 2023). Additionally, it can encourage the development of critical thinking and practical skills in students. (Tari, 2019)

Johnson (2002) defines contextual teaching as engaging students in meaningful activities that connect academic courses to real-world contexts and prior experiences. Students might discover meaning in their education by making these connections. Students' critical thinking and application skills must be cultivated through learning activities (Rahman,

2019). Teachers should construct learning activities that promote critical thinking and practical skills (Saleh, 2019). Learning should be structured in order to foster active participation in learning activities. To make learning more meaningful for pupils, educational materials should be relevant to their daily life. Effective learning requires careful consideration of the approach. Although the participants' teaching experience is relatively short, they are able to understand well what is appropriate and needed by their students. This is also influenced by the documentation in observation field, that teachers do before entering the classroom, such as throwing questions to students before starting the material, brief introductions between students and teachers, and ice breaking that triggers emotional closeness between teachers and students (Chania et al., 2017).

From the data collected, pre-service teachers assess that this can improve students' critical thinking abilities. Critical thinking carried out by teachers can be carried out in various ways using this method, such as playing games according to the material being taught, lecture methods using quizzes and independent literacy. Some teachers choose this method because class conditions must be completely controlled by the teacher and teachers have relatively short teaching experience compared to others. Teachers' lack of experience makes it difficult for them to determine what learning methods are appropriate for applying critical thinking to students (Bezaniilla, 2019). They also provide their own media and teaching aids according to the needs of the topic to be taught. Usually they use PowerPoint, laptops, cardboard containing mindmaps that they have made themselves or playing games provided by the school to make it easier for students to understand the topics they are studying.

However, some teachers actually agree to use the student centered approach as an effective teaching method for applying critical thinking. This is because students explore more in-depth information regarding the topic being taught apart from the teacher's explanation (Shaumiwaty, 2020). They assess that the student-centered learning method is able to make it easier for students to learn English because they are too reluctant to discuss directly with the teacher or do not understand the teacher's explanation, whereas with explanations with peers it is easier for them to understand the material presented and are not reluctant to discuss further. carry on (Kumar et al., 2023).

A student-centered approach in the classroom encourages active learning and critical thinking, leading to changes in student attitudes and improved learning outcomes (Justino, 2021). Critical thinking in English lessons helps students develop 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, by observing

objects from different angles and questioning preconceptions.(Shalikian, 2021).

The learning methods used by teachers are usually in the form of group discussions between students, peer teaching, student presentations, making projects according to the material being studied (Bozzi, 2021). Pre-service teachers who choose this method as an effective method for applying critical thinking in English learning are teachers who teach in schools where students are easy to manage and teachers who have relatively long teaching experience. So even though students study in their own groups, teachers still need to monitor the learning process.

From both learning methods, contextual learning and student-centered learning, students' critical thinking abilities are significantly starting to develop with the help or stimulants provided by pre-service teachers. This is due to choosing the right strategy, so that students can quickly understand English. The contextual learning method helps students to understand the material explained by the teacher and then they can apply it if helped by peers. This student-centered learning method is able to build students' creative spirit because students are freer to express their learning styles through projects or peer teaching if they cannot understand the material presented by the teacher. Judging from this learning method, pre-service teachers have been able to have emotional closeness with students, although not completely well

5.3. Difficulties in Cultivatng Critical Thinking English Language Teaching

Applying critical thinking in teaching English as a foreign language at school is certainly not easy and various kinds of challenges are faced by pre-service teachers (Pusparini, 2021). This is due to the uneven progress of education in Indonesia and the public stigma that English is a language that is difficult to learn makes some students feel reluctant to study English in more depth (Indra, 2023). Integrated curriculum systems promote active learning and critical thinking skills (Snyder & Dillow, 2008). Teachers have a crucial role in developing students' critical thinking skills, in addition to instructing and facilitating their learning. Teachers facilitate a critical thinking environment, as advocated by Kim and Pollard (2017). To integrate critical thinking abilities to content, instruments must be designed that focus on content application, learning processes, and assessment approaches.

The different curriculum in the schools where they teach is a challenge for pre-service teachers (Napanoy, 2021). If the curriculum used by the school is in accordance with that set by the government, it will be very easy to apply critical thinking in the school (Itmeizeh & Hassan, 2020). However, on the contrary, if the curriculum is still using the old curriculum, then the more effort the teacher must exert to apply critical

thinking (Ayicek, 2021). In Indonesia, the English language is among the topics that must be studied in schools from the middle level to the senior high school level, and the hours given are usually 2 meetings per week depending on the policies carried out by the school. (Indah & Kusuma, 2016)

Even so, many students feel burdened by learning English because the structure, vocabulary and grammar are very different from Indonesian and difficult to imitate so that pre-service teachers tend to build emotional closeness first with students, because with students feeling close to the teacher, learning will be very easy to understand. So pre-service teachers need to apply critical thinking in teaching English, so that students do not think that English is something difficult to learn (Mbato, 2019). The government should be able to facilitate and provide comprehensive attention regarding education in Indonesia, especially English language education, by paying attention to the welfare of both pre-service and post-service teachers who have been dedicated to the country.

Pre-service teachers need to be trained to have sharper critical thinking skills given the increasing complexity of educational problems and also the advancing technology (Valtonen, 2021). In Indonesia, it is rare to find training organized for pre-service teachers on this subject, and usually they have to take another semester or year of education. Pre-service teachers are able to enhance their critical thinking teaching abilities in the language classroom, given the correct circumstances and adequate support. (Petek & Bedir, 2018; Yang, 2012). Although the cultivation of critical thinking is important, current teacher education is still inadequate (Li & Walsh, 2011; Zhu & Zhu, 2017). As a result, teacher training on how to improve students critical thinking skills is required.

It cannot be denied that to develop critical thinking in teaching English, there are many challenges that pre-service teachers must face as educators in the future. Things such as lack of student motivation in studying are very common things that happen in Indonesia. But that doesn't mean we just keep quiet and accept fate. Teachers must have brilliant learning innovations so that students feel happy when the teacher's lessons come to fruition. In terms of curriculum, in Indonesia, which is very large, it is difficult to equalize the education system, especially for remote areas. The curriculum in Indonesia changes from time to time, making it difficult to evenly distribute the progress of the education system, considering that Indonesia is a very large archipelagic country. It is hoped that given the shortcomings in the education process, the government will soon find the right solution for Indonesia's progress.

6. Conclusions

This study illuminates the intricate process by which Indonesian pre-service English teachers understand and implement critical thinking in their teaching practices. By engaging with 10 pre-service teachers through a qualitative, phenomenological lens, the research uncovers the nuanced comprehension these educators hold towards critical thinking, alongside the diverse instructional methods they employ. A key finding is the consensus among pre-service teachers on the essence of critical thinking as an indispensable skill in resolving problems through innovative solutions. Despite their readiness to integrate critical thinking into English language teaching, they face notable challenges, such as varying student interest and inadequate educational infrastructure. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the cognitive and pedagogical strategies pre-service teachers in Indonesia use to embed critical thinking in English language education, a topic previously underexplored within this specific educational context. It reveals a critical gap in the existing teacher education programs, emphasizing the need for a more robust framework that prepares educators not just in theoretical understanding, but in practical, adaptable teaching strategies that cater to diverse classroom realities.

The implications of this study extend beyond the Indonesian context, highlighting the universal importance of fostering critical thinking skills in global language education. It advocates for a concerted effort from educational policymakers, institutions, and practitioners to prioritize and support the development of critical thinking capabilities in future educators. This, in turn, will equip students with the critical acumen necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern world, underscoring the study's significance in contributing to the broader discourse on enhancing educational quality and efficacy through critical thinking.

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