Lecturers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices in Promoting Students' Critical Thinking Skills in a Language Research Class

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Abstract

Background: Developing students' critical thinking skills has become an essential goal that needs to be realized in the scope of EFL education learning. Still, the application of learning practices often experiences various challenges. Thus, this study explored how English language education lecturers' beliefs and their classroom practices in promoting students' critical thinking skills in Language Research classrooms.

Objective: The study aimed to examine English language lecturers' beliefs and how they are represented in their teaching practices.

Methods: This study used a qualitative case study research design involving English language education study program lecturers in the Language Research class. Data was obtained through various sources, including interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis, referring to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six analysis steps.

Findings: Lecturers believed positively in the importance of critical thinking skills, grounded in their educational background and teaching philosophy. In teaching practice, they used strategies including dialogic and Socratic questions, real-world case studies, inquiry-based approaches, collaborative learning and feedback.

Conclusion: This study concludes that although lecturers are relatively high agencies in the context of critical thinking promotion, there is a need that institutional and contextual support to maintain congruence between beliefs and practice. Further studies can explore the viewpoint of students and the effects of institutional arrangements on teaching critical thinking skills.

Keywords: critical thinking; EFL education; lecturers' beliefs; classroom practices; Language Research Class

Introduction

EFL teaching and learning, lecturers' beliefs influence the teaching practices and student learning outcomes differently. Beliefs serve as lenses through which lecturers make sense of the educational contexts, make instructional choices, and construct thoughts about teaching strategies, classroom discipline, and students' participation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Roose et al., 2019). On the other hand, exposure to recent frameworks that introduce lecturers to constructivist approaches in pedagogy will help them adopt practices that lean towards student-centred learning (Brooks & O'Shea, 2021; Mishra, 2023). However, Adams et al. (2023) observed that since many university lecturers are trained methodologically in teacher-centred classrooms, they can unwittingly replicate this teaching mode in the classroom. For this reason, it is needed that interactive collegial learning, where lecturers discuss and observe each other's practice, can enable attitudinal change toward constructive thinking (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Raravi & Madhusudan, 2017). Although there is a lot of information on the role of beliefs in informing teaching, little has been found out on how these beliefs, and especially regarding the matter of critical thinking skills, are in practice in cognitively demanding EFL classes such as academic research writing. The study is aimed to close that gap by targeting the Language Research class as a case where the beliefs of the lecturers and their practice on pedagogy have a direct influence on the development of critical thinking skills in students. The localised nature of this study is one of the main contributions of the research to the body of broader literature exploring the topic of EFL lecturers' cognition and classroom practice.

The lecturers' beliefs are also implemented through the classroom practices, and their implementation is crucial in the promotion of the critical thinking skills in students. In case lecturers feel that students are expected to be active and critical learners, they tend to use techniques like open discussions, problem-solving assignments, reflective writing, collaborative projects that cultivate critical thinking skills (Bellaera et al., 2021; Cassum & Gul, 2016; Ennis, 2018; Zhang et al., 2023). These assumption-based practices help learners to think critically at a deeper level, challenge assumptions, and express their thoughts in a clear way in which the major elements of critical thinking skills are implied (Facione, 2015; Gardner & Johnson, 2015). On the other hand, in case lecturers do not align their beliefs with their routines of teaching, or switch to using traditional, teacher-centered instruction, students may be crippled to the surface

learning levels with minimal possibilities to exercise their higher-order thinking skills (Al-Kindi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2017; Li, 2016; Masadeh, 2021). Hence, it is necessary to learn how lecturers can apply their beliefs to enhance critical thinking results in EFL classrooms.

Critical thinking is a crucial part of interpretation of texts, argument construction, and coherent academic writing on the university level. Some students are capable of using critical thinking in their writings without any direct guidance; however, many of them still require specific instructions and scaffolds to learn how to develop these skills (Khairuddin et al., 2022; Prayogi et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2021; Susilawati et al., 2019). The Language Research class, in the present analysis, refers to a final-year course which is available in the English Language Education Department at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. It is strategically aimed at assisting the students in the development of research proposals, scholarly literature analysis, and the building of reasoned arguments, all of which necessitate and support the critical thinking skills (Anggraeni et al., 2023; Daryanes et al., 2023; Facione, 2015; Rahman et al., 2022; Romadhoni et al., 2022). Even though the title of the class might differ in various institutions, similar classes on the academic research and writing can be broadly observed in most of the EFL teacher education programs, especially on an undergraduate level (Aunurrahman et al., 2017; Bui et al., 2023; Gandana et al., 2021; Haninda & Bram, 2022; Sung, 2021; Thanh Tuyen et al., 2016; Widyastuti, 2018). Activities in the related class normally entail conducting a literature review, finding research issues, selection of sources, justification of the methods, and arguing your case, which presupposes the application of higher-order thinking (Ennis, 2018; Ilyas, 2023; Liu et al., 2022; Suaidah et al., 2023). Thus, the concept of a class on Language Research, and similar classes, offers a framework of appropriate context where lecturers can convert their commitments towards critical thinking into pedagogical actions that result in student critical, reflective, and evaluative thinking. In this way, the lecturers will have the opportunity to directly promote the abilities of research and academic reasoning in students and in a field that inherently requires these skills.

Although the significance of critical thinking skills in EFL education is becoming increasingly evident, there is still a gap in the studies that explicitly examine how lecturers' beliefs of critical thinking skills are related to classroom practices, especially when it comes to academic research-based courses, such as the Language Research class (Elfatihi, 2017; Gandana et al., 2021;

Ilyas, 2023; Kummala et al., 2022; Li, 2023). This class is one of the high stakes, cognitively challenging environments in which critical thinking skills is not only encouraged but must occur to achieve success as a student (Facione, 2015; Khan, 2017; Schmidt, 2017). However, there has been a problem in the practice where despite the best intentions, lecturers will find it difficult to translate their beliefs into practice because of reasons including institutional pressures, schedule conflicts, and student readiness (Al-Kindi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2017; Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Muhsin et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2020). The tensions may cause divergence between what lecturers believe pedagogically and what they can do in the classroom (Dong et al., 2018; Sun & Zhang, 2024). Such misalignment may affect the direct development of academic reasoning and inquiry skills, which are expected of the students in the Language Research class to formulate research problems, evaluate literature, and build arguments (Ali & Ulker, 2020; Dikilitas & Bostancioğlu, 2019; Khairuddin et al., 2022; Sokolova & Gilmutdinova, 2019; Susilo et al., 2021). Consequently, the present study was intended to reflect not only what lecturers might think of critical thinking, but also how these beliefs are realized in the classroom, and whether there are any contextual factors that influence this process. Therefore, the current study aimed to answer two research questions: (1) What were the beliefs of English language lecturers in promoting students' critical thinking skills in Language Research class? (2) How were the beliefs of English language lecturers in Language Research class manifested in their classroom practices?

Literature Review

Lecturers' Beliefs in EFL Education

Lecturers' beliefs play a fundamental role in the instructional practices and interactions in learning environments for EFL, which have strong influences in how they interpret curriculums and promote students' critical thinking skills. These beliefs, sometimes anchored in lecturers' previous learning and training, have a significant effect on instructional choices and the inclination to innovations, as well as incorporating critical thinking in language classrooms (Fives & Buehl, 2015; Kummala et al., 2022; Tuzlukova et al., 2017). In the Indonesian EFL context, the lecturers' beliefs in critical thinking skills have been found to be influenced by their understanding of its pedagogical value and it is fit to academic goals (Gandana et al., 2021; Kummala et al., 2022; Muhsin et al., 2023). Lecturers that believe that critical thinking is key in

language learning are more likely to design classroom settings that encourage inquiry, discussion, and argumentation (Elfatihi, 2017; Fitriati & Yonata, 2017; Indah et al., 2022; Khairuddin et al., 2022). Nevertheless, research has revealed a persistent difference between belief and practice, which is usually associated with such constraints as rigidity of curricula, large class size, precedence of the institutional agenda, lack of institutional support, etc., which too often prevent lecturers from following their pedagogical idealism (Al-Kindi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2017; Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Ilyas, 2023; Muhsin et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2020). The same degree of mismatch also occurs when lecturers do not possess specific strategies of implementing abstract ideas into the classroom practices, or when the assessment system advocates for rote learning rather than skills of higher orders (Dong et al., 2018; Dwyer, 2023; Long et al., 2019; Sun & Zhang, 2024). Hence, knowing beliefs of lecturers is not just important for studying instructional practices of lecturers but also important for structuring policies and training programs for teaching students to be critical thinkers (Eze et al., 2022; Lithoxoidou & Georgiadou, 2023; Sathorar & Blignaut, 2021). To conclude, it is important to understand lecturers' beliefs not only for the analysis of their instructional practices, but also for influencing the creation of effective policies and programs for training the lecturers with the purpose of improving the skills of students to think critically. By resolving the gaps between belief and practice and the provision of the necessary support and resources, educational stakeholders can establish an environment that enables lecturers to deliver pedagogical ideals in their classrooms and hence improve the quality of EFL education in Indonesia.

Classroom Practices to Promote Critical Thinking Skills

The learner-centered approach can be effective in encouraging critical thinking in EFL learning but have significant obstacles that require understanding policies and training of lecturers. These methods engage students in the learning process with discussion, inquiry, reflection, collaboration and methods such as group work, problem-solving, peer review, projects and guided questioning (Bellaera et al., 2021; Cassum & Gul, 2016; Ennis, 2018; Zhang et al., 2023). In addition, learner-centered approach switch the emphasis upon the passive consumption of the information and active discovery and critical learning of the knowledge, so they are particularly successful in developing the capacities of critical thinking of students (Fitriati

& Yonata, 2017; Indah et al., 2022; Khairuddin et al., 2022). To achieve this, in the EFL classrooms, these practices must be adapted to both linguistic and cognitive skill development. Ihtada et al. (2024) discovered that employing strategies such as Student Team Achievement Division (STAD) and Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) greatly enhanced students' reading understanding and motivation, which are both cornerstones of critical thinking development. Not only that, positive effects of such strategies as the 5E instructional model and problem-based learning on students' capacity to reason and develop arguments (Boleng et al., 2020; Indah, 2017; Oktaviah et al., 2021). Other technological instruments such as Google docs, Padlet, electronic forums have also enabled collaborative learning and asynchronous critical discussion, but the efficacy depends upon deliberate teacher utilization (Dogani, 2023; Ma'fiyah et al., 2023; Merta et al., 2023). Those lecturers who use real-life issues, case analysis, and organised debates tend to notice that students can be more interested in the learning process and show stronger evidence-based reasoning (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Hikmahyanti & Neisya, 2019; Khairuddin et al., 2022; Sembiring et al., 2024; Utami et al., 2024). Despite these, challenges continue, especially in settings where preparation for exams and completion of syllabus have been given priority in teaching, thus, hindering opportunities for deep thinking (Al-Kindi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2017; Ilyas, 2023; Mbato, 2019). Furthermore, critical thinking tasks students need scaffolded instruction and formative feedback throughout the process, and this may be challenging to achieve in an institution without commitment and reasonable teaching load (Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Dwyer, 2023; Prihandoko, 2024). Therefore, lecturers require professional development and supportive policy environment for implementing these practices in the regular instruction (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Lithoxoidou & Georgiadou, 2023). In conclusion, the classroom practices that encourage critical thinking in EFL settings are most pivotal for the development of the analytical and evaluative skills among the students, which, however, depends on the positive educational environment. Only these all-rounded supports can enable the transformative capacity of critical thinking practices to be achieved in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Critical Thinking Skills in Language Research Class

Most undergraduate EFL teacher education programs will likely make students enroll in a type of upper-level course that specifically addresses academic reading and writing as well as research skills (usually as a pre-requisite to their final project or thesis). Such course in the perspective of this study is referred to as the Language Research class. The learning outcomes of this course are to teach the students the necessary research skills such as; development of research problem statement, review of scholarly literature, development of logical arguments, and proposal design. These activities do not aim at developing academic literacy only but demand the students to use higher-order thinking based on analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and reflection as the main elements of critical thinking (Ennis, 2018; Ilyas, 2023; Liu et al., 2022; Suaidah et al., 2023). Studies carried out recently in Indonesian Universities reveal that students make better academic reading and research design if lecturers explicitly teach through critical thinking lenses (Gandana et al., 2021; Pelenkahu et al., 2024; Prihandoko, 2024; Susilo et al., 2021; Widyastuti, 2018; Yeni et al., 2024). However, there are still the challenges, especially when it comes to lower metacognitive awareness among students, linguistic barriers, and scantiness in exposure to academic discourse that tend to lead to the surface analysis and formulaic writing (Al-Kindi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2017; Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Ilyas, 2023; Khairuddin et al., 2022; Muhsin et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2020). Lecturers also state that without institution policies in place to support inquiry-based learning or adequate instruction time it becomes challenging to provide the uninterrupted guidance for deep thinking (Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Dogani, 2023; Oktaviah et al., 2021). However, upon the deliberate construction of the Language Research course as a space for critical thinking with support of explicit strategy instruction and collaborative exploration, it has the possibility to transform the students' academic reasoning and research literacy (Ma'fiyah et al., 2023; Merta et al., 2023). By deliberately positioning the Language Research class as a critical thinking ground and dealing with the existing issues, lecturers can actually help students improve their academic reasoning and research ability resulting in their readiness for more challenging academic studies.

Research Gaps and Contributions

Although several studies have been done on the significance of promoting critical thinking skills in the teaching and learning of EFL, not much has been done to investigate how the beliefs about critical thinking by English language lecturers are performed in the classroom setting especially in the teaching and learning of academic research and writing courses. Most of the time, these courses are labelled variously, as in Research Methods, Academic Writing, or Research Project, but are a standard requirement in the undergraduate programs that educate English language lecturers. Currently, they have been tailored to make students have the ability to pose research problems, critically evaluate the literature and put across well-reasoned arguments, which are all inherently critical thinking processes. Nevertheless, how the beliefs of lecturers concerning critical thinking skills are reflected in their teaching practices in these cognitively demanding courses has not been explored exhaustively. To fill that gap, the research focuses on how lecturers in an EFL teacher education program in Indonesia act upon their beliefs in a course called the Language Research class, providing insight that can perhaps be applicable in similar cases in other institutions and regions. Additionally, much research is concerned only with the outcomes of students' critical thinking or the effectiveness of teaching models (Boleng et al., 2020; Elfatihi, 2017; Indah, 2017; Khairuddin et al., 2022; Oktaviah et al., 2021; Prihandoko, 2024). Furthermore, there is a lack of research devoted to the investigation of how the institutional processes of the university such as the structure of a curriculum, assessment system, etc., affect the correlation between the pedagogical convictions of lecturers and their teaching behaviour (Al-Kindi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2017; Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Muhsin et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2020; Oktaviah et al., 2021; Sun & Zhang, 2024). In this study, the sources of institutional influences were studied through the investigation of curriculum documents (e.g., syllabi and lesson plans) and interview questions encouraged lecturers to think about the influences of external requirements when making teaching decisions. This enabled study to take an account of how the broader academic policies and course expectations influenced the implementation of critical thinking instruction.

The study contributed to an under-researched area of the belief-practice relationship, contextualizing it in the EFL culture of Indonesia where national education policy gives priority to critical thinking skills but classroom practice using critical thinking tends to be poorly

developed due to systemic and cultural factors (Ilyas, 2023; Khairuddin et al., 2022; Susilo et al., 2021). As an example, EFL lecturers in many cases still encounter problems in facilitating critical thinking, and although the national curriculum requires the teaching of higher-order thinking skills, the reality on the ground is that many of these lecturers are not sufficiently trained to adopt this approach, often due to an exam-focused training system and exam-skill-based instructional cultures, the latter of which may further be informed by institutional cultures and mindsets (Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Ilyas, 2023; Mbato, 2019; Muhsin et al., 2023; Susilo et al., 2021). On the one hand, exploring this problem within the framework of a research-based writing course, the study presents some information that can be relevant to other postcolonial, exam-oriented EFL systems, where the gap between policy and reality in the classroom is no less acute.

Method

This study used a qualitative case study to investigate English language lecturers' beliefs and classroom practices in promoting students' critical thinking skills in the Language Research class. This method was chosen because it involves a deep examination of the bounded context in detail using different sources of data such as interviews, observation and documents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018). Through an analysis of a particular course and its lecturers of this study, there was a contextualized understanding of the way in which critical thinking was constructed and practiced in the Indonesian EFL higher education.

Research Participants

The study was conducted with two English language lecturers in English Language Education Department at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. The decision to use two participants is aligned with the condition of qualitative case study that focuses more on depth rather than breadth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The two lecturers were chosen since they both happen to teach the course of Language Research which was one of the major courses in the sixth semester curriculum and have over twenty years of experience in participating in curriculum design and curriculum implementation in the classroom using research based instruction.

Moreover, the purposive sampling strategy was employed, as it was necessary to make sure that the participants were well-equipped with the front knowledge on the language pedagogy teaching and critical thinking skills (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). To validate this, the researcher examined the teaching portfolio, course syllabi, as well as professional growth records of each of the lecturers. Both participants showed their active engagement in planning tasks and tests in the context of developing analytical and evaluative abilities of students.

Table 1. Descriptions of Participants

Lecturer Code (pseudonym)	Gender	Qualification	Field of Expertise	Teaching Experience (in years)
Ms Melati	F	Dr	English Language Education, Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) and English Language Teaching (ELT).	>20
Ms Kenanga	F	Phd	English Language Teaching and Learning, Teaching Methodology and Curriculum Development	>20

As depicted in Table 1, the researcher used lecturer codes/pseudonym to maintain the anonymity of the research participants. In addition, the two lecturers were doctoral and PhD graduates in ELT, respectively.

Data Collection

Firstly, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to explore the assumptions of the participants on critical thinking skills and their pedagogical understanding. The approach enabled the researcher to collect contextualized and rich information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, the interview data was supportive in developing the background that would allow the researcher to perceive the conceptual framework held by each lecturer, teaching priorities and internal reasoning as to why the promotion of critical thinking skills should be the priority in classroom activities of each lecturer.

Secondly, observation in the classroom setting was carried out in the form of field notes, observation checklists, and video recording. The steps followed the concept as it was proposed by (Macdonald, 2016) who argues that the combined application of structural measures and

documented technological assets is an activity leading to a more accurate and meaningful observation data when it is used as an artificial agent in the context of the examination of pedagogical communication. Moreover, the process of observation was performed during four meetings in the classroom, two meetings with each lecturer between November 25, 2024, and January 11, 2025. The choice of these sessions was made after the discussion with the lecturers and considered sessions dedicated to the lessons that touched the main phases of preparing a thesis (e.g. introduction, literature review and methodology writing) that require analytical and evaluative thinking most often. The rationale of choosing the specified meetings was to see how critical thinking skills were being incorporated in applied research-based teaching. Such observations indicate the extent to which beliefs are always applied in direct classroom communication and in teaching decisions.

Finally, the findings in terms of interviews and observations were narrowed down by formulating conclusions by the means of document analysis. These documents were comprised of syllabi and lesson plans. Such document analysis can be viewed as an important complement to the data obtained in the classroom, particularly when it is necessary to assess the similarity between pedagogical intentions and the work actually produced by the students (Patton, 2015). This type of analysis enabled the researcher to track the ways in which the intentions of lecturers were represented in planning documents and the ways in which intentions were reflected in the ways that student outcomes could be measured.

Research Procedure

This study utilized a qualitative exploratory case study design in exploring how the English language lecturers' beliefs relate to their classroom practices relative to promoting students' critical thinking skills. This design is specifically suitable for an in-depth examination of a bounded system utilizing several sources of information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018). To align with qualitative standards, several contact points with participants contributed to the establishment of trust and refined understanding of their pedagogical beliefs and practices in a classroom (Braun et al., 2021; Miles et al., 2016). Through the adoption of a qualitative

exploratory case study design and ethical accountability, this study aimed to offer a complete picture of congruency between lecturers' belief and practice in the classroom, thus benefiting from the insight into the promotion of critical thinking skills in EFL education.

Data Analysis

The data that has been collected is then analyzed using thematic analysis. This analysis was conducted according to Braun and Clarke (2006) model with six steps, namely (1) familiarity with the data, (2) initial code generation, (3) theme search, (4) reviewing themes, (5) definition and naming themes and (6) report production. This practice is appropriate for evaluating qualitative data because it can help the researchers organize interpretation around shapes and ideas of human experiences and beliefs (Nowell et al., 2017; Terry et al., 2017).

During the familiarization process, the researcher read through all the data sources and made notes and reflections repetitively. This was followed by coding which integrated both deductive and inductive approaches which were a result of the theoretical framework and of the research questions as well as coming out directly as a result of the data. The code was assigned separately by source (interviews, observations and documents) and then compared between sources to reveal patterns, consistencies and contradictions.

By combining related codes into higher order groups, themes were created that were able to represent both the beliefs and classroom practices about critical thinking skills. The themes were checked against each other across data sources to ensure internal coherence and analytic depth of the themes. This triangulated methodology not only increased the study rigor but also enabled the researcher to investigate the consistency of the lecturer professed beliefs, their behaviors, and their instructional planning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As a result, the last themes were utilized to create an inclusive narrative that summarizes lecturers' beliefs, practices, and their orientation to critical thinking pedagogy.

Findings and Discussions

This section discusses the findings on English lecturers' beliefs and classroom practices in promoting students' critical thinking skills in Language Research class at English Language Education Department of one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. The data were collected using interviews, classroom observation and document analysis and processed using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's six phases. Results were presented under two broad themes: (1) lecturers' beliefs regarding critical thinking skills; and (2) classroom practices in promoting students' critical thinking skills. The explanation of each theme is divided into several subthemes. The report includes explanatory quotes from participants and observation notes. These findings are also supported by discussions related to the opinions of experts.

Table 2. The Summary of Theme, Code, and Subtheme

Theme	Code	Subtheme
Lecturers' Beliefs regarding Critical Thinking Skills	Critical thinking as logical development	Logical & Reflective Thinking
	Research should be published	Academic Responsbility
	Lecturers act as facilitators and implement student-centered learning.	Students as autonomous learners
	Critical thinking embedded in research process.	Critical thinking as research skill
	Critical thinking as knowledge validation	Epistemological beliefs
Classroom Practices in Promoting Students' Critical Thinking Skills	Open-ended questioning; Socratic questioning strategy	Dialogic and Socratice Questioning
	Case study analysis	Real-World Tasks
	Inquiry-based approach, Inquiry-driven tasks	Inquiry-based learning
	Collaborative learning strategy, Case-based learning	Collaborative learning; Think–Pair-Share
	Peer and lecturer feedback	Reflection from Feedback

Lecturers' Beliefs regarding Critical Thinking Skills

The beliefs identified by the participants are explained through several subthemes such as:

Developing Critical Thinking Skills through Logical and Reflective Processes

This belief implied that the students must read beyond the surface and produce a rational argument founded upon logical progression. The lecturer emphasized that critical thinking skills involved reasoning logically and systematically in academic tasks. Being logical meaned building sound arguments that demonstrate the academic maturity. This subtheme showed that the students are expected to form clear arguments, relate different ideas to one another, and support their conclusions with evidence.

The explanation above was in line with what Ms Kenanga emphasized in the following interview answer:

"Students must be able to develop their ideas logically. So, critical thinking is important because students must be able to develop their ideas logically, not just repeating other people's opinions without reason." – (Ms Kenanga)

This statement showed the importance of logical thinking as an aspect of critical thinking skills. It implied that the students must read beyond the surface and produce a rational argument founded upon logical progression. This understanding was consistent with (Gandana et al., 2021; Kummala et al., 2022; Muhsin et al., 2023; Yunus & Ubaidillah, 2021) assertion that critical thinking requires clarity, relevance, and fair-minded structure. Similarly, Facione (2015) also contends that logical reasoning and reflection are the heart of critical thinking. Such themes are also reflected in Khairuddin et al. (2022), who reported that L2 learners performed differently not only in terms of the ability to sequence information logically, but also the ability to construct an argument in academic writing, indicating the need for explicit instruction on systematic thinking and reasoning.

Maintaining Academic Integrity through Responsible Research

Another essential notion based on the lecturer's view is the belief that critical thinking skill are not merely a thinking process but an academic integrity through responsible research publication. This subtheme further demonstrated the epistemological perspective that knowledge is not burdened but becomes meaningful and valuable when published to the academic community. Ms Melati as the lecturer considered the research process as "unfinished" if the students did not participate to some extent in scholarly communication, particularly in publication. The lecturers stressed that critical thinking skills must result in real academic

products: journal articles or conference presentations. Therefore, publication was seen as a product and as part of the reflective and evaluative thought process.

The explanation above was emphasized by Ms Melati that:

"For the practice of writing scientific papers, I emphasize that it must be published. Because research without publication is a lie. And it will only make it pile up and useless. So, the purpose of research is to be transmitted for the development of findings or for new knowledge. But what if it is not published?" - (Ms Melati)

According to this statement, Ms Melati believed that critical thinking skills should generate substantial and observable results. In addition, Ms Melati viewed academic knowledge contribution through publication as having a dual purpose: to advance knowledge and enforce student intellectual accountability. The statement emphasized making research accessible to others for review and validation purposes. This approach demonstrated how critical thinking functioned as a socially and academically responsible practice that required the students to generate and refined ideas through formal defense. This belief is in line with Gandana et al. (2021), Kummala et al. (2022), Muhsin et al. (2023), Pelenkahu et al. (2024), Prihandoko (202), Susilo et al. (2021), Widyastuti (2018) and Yeni et al. (2024), who explained that the Indonesian lecturers often link critical thinking to research activities and academic contributions, which supports the idea that critical thinking goes beyond classroom discussions to produce scholarly work. In summary, the lecturers establish an educational approach that values intellectual integrity by connecting critical thinking and academic responsibility.

Encouraging Independent Learning with Lecturers as Facilitators in Student-Centered Learning

The third subtheme highlighted the lecturer's belief in student agency as a central element in developing critical thinking. Ms Kenanga as the lecturer adopted the role of facilitators rather than authority figures, providing the students with space to explore, question, and assume learning responsibility. This subtheme aligns with a student-centered model of learning where the students are encouraged to participate in decision-making and self-regulation. With this pedagogy, it was thought that the students would build their knowledge by being reflectively and actively engaged instead of passively receiving information.

This explanation was related to what was conveyed by Ms Kenanga that:

"My belief is that for the Language Research class, I am only a facilitator. I give a higher level of independence learning to students. This is reflected in how I give them the freedom to choose the topic they want to research. Students must be able to explain what is in their minds, explain their ideas to me, to others, so that they can be understood" - (Ms Kenanga)

The belief is consistent with the transformative learning framework, as explained by (Facione, 2015; Paul & Elder, 2006), which encourages learner autonomy and critical reflection. It can be a role that entails permitting the students to devise their research questions, critically appraise evidence for themselves, and manage their learning journey. In addition, the lecturer believes that their students are capable of higher-order thinking when given adequate space and guidance. By becoming the facilitators, the lecturer sought to minimize dependency and intellectual independence in the students.

Enhancing Research Quality through Embedded Critical Thinking Skills

A further belief of the lecturers was that critical thinking skills is always linked to conducting research. It was clear from the data that Ms Melati view as a lecturer that critical thinking skills as essential throughout every phase of academic research. Critical thinking skills were considered the primary source of thought in this field, from framing questions to analyzing results. The subtheme highlighted that critical thinking skills were viewed as a way of studying and a helpful process for achieving high-quality student research.

The explanation above was in line with Ms Melati's argument which stated that:

"Critical thinking does not stand alone, but it is the basis of the research process from beginning to end. The process starts from choosing a topic to constructing an argument. It happens when students can re-enter the topics and methods they choose. So, critical thinking should continue to exist from the beginning to the end of the research process." - (Ms Melati)

This approach is aligned with thinking (Ennis, 2018; Ilyas, 2023; Liu et al., 2022; Suaidah et al., 2023), who describes critical thinking skills as having both a step-by-step process and visible results. Critical thinking skills in this scenario leads the students to examine their assumptions, search for biased information in sources, and form solid methods for research. It is also consistent with the constructivist view by Vygotsky (1978) that students form their knowledge by engaging in guided activities and exploring the world. For this reason, using critical thinking skills take research beyond a set of steps and help students to evaluate, analyze, and study the

material. By following this approach, the students gain the knowledge and skills needed to participate actively in broader discussions in their field

Critical Thinking Skills as a Way of Knowing and Validating Knowledge

The lecturers also indicated the ideas about knowledge that help define and promote critical thinking skills. This subtheme relates to the concept that Ms Kenanga used critical thinking skills to judge the truth, credibility, and sources of knowledge. Rather than requesting that the students absorb information as accurately as possible, the lecturers wanted them to question and analyze everything they studied. In this understanding, critical thinking skills allowed to test the trustworthiness of ideas, evaluate hidden beliefs, and review the basis of any academic statements.

Through the explanation above, Ms Kenanga also emphasized that:

"I want students to not just accept information. I must ask: "Is this true? Is the source trustworthy?" That's part of scientific thinking. Students must be able to see which information is credible and which is not, not just use it." - (Ms Kenanga)

The statement above clearly showed that the lecturer focused on helping the students discern different types of knowledge and how it is created. Ms Kenanga encouraged the students to look carefully at the information given and question whether it is valid and accurate enough. The lecturers also emphasized that they want students to question information and analyze it so that it can be learned so that it can promote students to have a critical and positive mindset. This statement is closely linked to critical pedagogy, which supports students' efforts to resist false claims, question lecturers, and form their own opinions (Ennis, 2018; Ilyas, 2023; Liu et al., 2022; Suaidah et al., 2023). If the students learn to examine information closely, they will memorize facts and details. Therefore, this subtheme implies that encouraging critical thinking means more than training teaching methods; it also means developing a critical perspective. In the end, practicing critical thinking skills trains the students to act and think analytically, carefully, and responsibly.

Classroom Practices in Promoting Students' Critical Thinking Skills

The classroom practices identified by participants are explained through several subthemes:

Stimulating Analytical Thinking through Dialogic and Socratic Questions

This part of the subtheme revealed how dialogic questions prompted them to reflect, justify, and evaluate their ideas. As observed in the classroom, Ms Melati as the lecturer prompted the students with dialogic questions, encouraging discussion. For example, in the observation, Ms Melati asked: *'Why did you choose that topic? Is there a real problem there?'* These dialogic questions were used throughout the class to trigger analytical thinking and required the students to justify their choices and reasoning processes. This method worked better because it required the students to talk about the subject, rather than simply recitation. It also indicated to the students that multiple perspectives were valid and that asking questions was a standard approach to learning

The lecturers also used Socratic questioning as a conscious tool to elicit higher-order thinking and to reinforce student understanding. This describes how the lecturers used follow-up questions to check understanding, challenge assumptions, elicit reasoning, and prompt further explanation. As captured in classroom observation, Ms Melati always reaffirm the students' understanding through the process of asking questions to promote the students' critical thinking skills. For example, when a student gives an answer, Ms Melati followed up with: *'What is your reason for thinking that way?'* or *'What are the implications if you use that method?'* These recursive questions help deepen the students' reasoning. These methods are known in the literature to be effective strategies to engage students' critical and evaluative skills (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Boleng et al., 2020; Ennis, 2018). Discussed as observed in classroom observations, recursive questioning methodologies facilitated deeper engagement and promoted students to clarify their ideas.

Bridging Theory and Practice through Real-World Case Studies

This belief reveals Ms. Kenanga's intention as a lecturer on how the lecturers incorporated authentic materials and real-life scenarios in their lessons to challenge the students to relate theoretical knowledge to practical learning. The motive behind such practice was to make learning more applicable by closing the gap between academic theory and real-life

problems. Real-life application fortified critical thinking skills, necessitating the students to break down complicated problems, consider multiple factors, and suggest informed recommendations.

The explanation above was supported by an explanation from Ms Kenanga who stated that:

> *"Sometimes I use case studies so they can analyze real situations. For example, I once gave them a case study about problematic proposal writing, then I asked them to fix it and explain why the approach was inappropriate. From there I could see their way of thinking in solving problems."* - (Ms Kenanga)

This method filled in every gap between theory and application in which the lecturers who use real-life issues, case analysis, and organised debates tend to notice that students can be more interested in the learning process and show stronger evidence-based reasoning (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Hikmahyanti & Neisya, 2019; Khairuddin et al., 2022; Sembiring et al., 2024; Utami et al., 2024). Students were challenged to understand and use, analyze, and produce, as is characteristic of higher-level thinking. Furthermore, the real-world application helped the students to see the relevance of their learning, increasing motivation and engagement. It also nurtured a sense of academic responsibility by connecting theory with practice and encouraging thoughtful action. With case studies, the lecturers aimed to cultivate the students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and solve problems in a guided but open concept learning environment.

An Inquiry-Based Approach to Promotion Critical and Independent Learners

One key approach employed by the lecturers to promote critical thinking skills was to enable the students to follow their research interests through inquiry-based learning. This subtheme pointed to how the student's autonomy was promoted by assigning learners control over choosing and exploring topics of significance to themselves.

As emphasized in the observation, the students were asked to identify their own research topic, write it down, and are asked for their opinions. In class, Ms Melati and Ms Kenanga asked the students: *'What research topics are interesting and relevant? Are there any similarities and differences with your research? Find the latest journals or articles, especially those from the last 10 years! Where is the research? When? Whom? What method do you want to use? Qualitative, quantitative, or mixed?".* Once the students have chosen their topic; they are given time to explore it independently before submitting their plans for feedback.

Permitting students to establish their research interests and pursue them independently promotes curiosity and autonomy, the main elements of critical thinking skills (Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Dogani, 2023; Ennis, 2018; Oktaviah et al., 2021). This process aligns with the constructivist paradigm, whereby learners build knowledge through exploration and reflection (Vygotsky, 1978). Language Research class was used to encourage students to pursue academic inquiry, increasingly developing research literacy and metacognitive awareness.

Collaborative Learning for Active and Engaged Students

This subtheme describes how both lecturers combined group-based collaboration with case studies of real-life scenarios to promote critical thinking skills among the students. As highlighted in the lesson plan that the lecturers implement a learning system that uses a group discussion approach and presentations in class. . Collaborative learning provided a forum for students to discuss, challenge, and reflect in groups, while case-based activities provide complicated, real-life problems demanding multi-perspective solutions. Each group was assigned a theoretical topic and asked to discuss it before presenting their understanding and critique in front of the class.

The explanation above was in accordance with what happened in classroom practices and was supported by the statement from Ms Melati that:

> *"So, they are divided into groups of four. Because my class has 36 students, I divide them into 4-4-4, then for example, in the first week, group 1 presents the results and reads, what's the name, chapter 1, then there are 8 groups, they present it, the others also read, then later there is a discussion. The group discussion, the other groups ask or give input on what has not been explained at the time... the group that is given the task to present." - (Ms Melati)*

This classroom practice was manifested in a structured way in the lesson plan where the lecturers applied a learning system that used a group discussion approach and presentations in class. Group discussion, peer assessment, and collaborative presentations allowed students to interact with various perspectives and confront one another's ideas. Such interactive activities promoted enhanced understanding and reasoning, as echoed by (Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Ilyas, 2023; Mbato, 2019; Muhsin et al., 2023; Susilo et al., 2021). The students could share information, challenge other students' presumptions, and collaboratively construct meanings from real-life scenarios, increasing their understanding and honing their critical thinking skills.

Feedback as a Catalyst for Reflection and Continuous Learning

This subtheme mirrors a commitment to a broad definition of assessment as judging not only the students' work but also influencing learning and encouraging enhanced reflection. As defined by Ms Melati as a lecturer who conceptualized feedback as an ongoing interaction process in which students could revisit, refine, and develop their thinking. Instead of issuing grades in isolation, they focused on providing feedback on reasoning, planning, and students' argument logic. The feedback process was conceptualized as developmental and supportive, to develop the students to conduct independent and critical inquiry incrementally.

The learning practice was emphasized by Ms Melati in an interview that :

"I guide the students slowly. When I give feedback, I usually don't immediately say it's right or wrong, but I invite them to think again. For example, I ask back: 'Why did you write this part like this?' so that they realize their own weaknesses." - (Ms Melati)

Rather than grading students on correct answers, lecturers applied feedback to stimulate continued thinking. They provided reflective questions and invited revisions, enabling students to recognize gaps and enhance their reasoning. This type of formative assessment is crucial in developing critical habits of mind (Defianty & Wilson, 2022; Dwyer, 2023; Prihandoko, 2024). The students were not just encouraged to respond, but to think why and how, which fosters intellectual responsibility. However, the lecturers' practice of meeting students through multiple revisions and individualized feedback was central to making students clear about the expectations of critical thinking skills. It also created a learning context in which the students empowered to experiment and develop their thinking in collaboration.

Conclusion and Implication

The current study adds to the realm of under-researched field of belief-practice nexus in critical thinking skills within Indonesian EFL education. It especially throws some light on academic research-oriented classes, including the Language Research class, being an excellent ground where to introduce instruction on critical thinking. Practical implications are numerous, teacher education programs must include the focus on reflective practice, inquiry-based strategies, and belief practice alignment. Moreover, institutional practices must offer space to pedagogical flexibility, cooperative learning, and formative responses designs.

Another aspect that the study raises is the necessity of professional development to give lecturers practical tools to deliver instruction on critical thinking and provide solutions on how to deal with institutional constraints. As suggested by Sun and Zhang (2024), collaborative action research and recurring contemplation are possible support arrangements to energise belief transformation, which means that the collaborative makes coherence and flexibility in pedagogy stronger.

In conclusion, there is a need to conduct research on the views that students hold on learning critical thinking skills, challenges faced in applying it and the effectiveness of various forms of instructions. Moreover, research conducted on various locations or universities may empirically demonstrate the influence of the environmental variables on the potential of the students to employ critical thinking skills. Overall, future studies need to bridge the gap between scholarly knowledge and classroom education and inform policymaking. In addition, questioning the student perceptions and reactions to the critical thinking instruction might further enhance our insights concerning its practical implications on learning.

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