



# Indonesian EFL Teachers' Conceptions of Critical Thinking: Challenges, Strategies, and Implications for 21st-Century Education

**Bachtiar**

<sup>1</sup> Master of English Education, Graduate School, Universitas Terbuka

\* Corresponding Author. E-mail: [bachtiar\\_nur@ecampus.ut.ac.id](mailto:bachtiar_nur@ecampus.ut.ac.id)

*Receive: 27/07/2025*

*Accepted: 01/08/2025*

*Published: 01/10/2025*

## Abstrak

Berpikir kritis telah diakui secara luas sebagai salah satu kompetensi inti abad ke-21 yang membekali peserta didik untuk menganalisis, mengevaluasi, dan menciptakan pengetahuan, bukan sekadar mereproduksinya. Dalam konteks pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, khususnya di Indonesia, integrasi CT ke dalam praktik pembelajaran masih menghadapi kompleksitas akibat kendala kurikuler, pedagogis, dan sistemik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsepsi guru EFL Indonesia tentang CT, tantangan yang mereka hadapi dalam mengintegrasikannya ke dalam pembelajaran, serta strategi yang mereka gunakan untuk mendorongnya. Dengan menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari tiga puluh dua guru EFL tingkat SMA melalui kuesioner dan wawancara semi-terstruktur lanjutan dengan delapan partisipan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun para guru umumnya mengakui CT sebagai keterampilan penting untuk mengembangkan pemecahan masalah dan kemandirian belajar, pemahaman mereka masih terfragmentasi dan sering kali terbatas pada interpretasi yang dangkal. Guru melaporkan keterbatasan pelatihan, ketiadaan instrumen penilaian yang jelas, serta sistem pendidikan yang berorientasi pada ujian sebagai hambatan utama. Namun demikian, sebagian guru telah menerapkan strategi seperti debat, studi kasus, dan pembelajaran berbasis proyek. Penelitian ini menekankan perlunya pengembangan profesional yang berkelanjutan, keselarasan kurikulum, dan dukungan institusional agar guru dapat mengintegrasikan CT secara lebih sistematis dalam pembelajaran EFL.

**Kata Kunci:** Berpikir kritis, pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, konsepsi guru, tantangan pedagogis, kompetensi abad ke-21

## Abstract

Critical thinking (CT) has been widely recognized as a core 21st-century competency that equips learners to analyze, evaluate, and create knowledge rather than merely reproduce it. In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, particularly in Indonesia, the integration of CT into classroom practices remains complex due to curricular, pedagogical, and systemic constraints. This study aimed to investigate Indonesian EFL teachers' conceptions of CT, the challenges they face in integrating it into classroom instruction, and the strategies they adopt to promote it. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected from thirty-two senior high school EFL teachers through questionnaires and follow-up semi-structured interviews with eight participants. The findings revealed that while teachers generally acknowledged CT as essential for fostering problem-solving and independent learning, their understandings were fragmented and often reduced to surface-level interpretations. Teachers reported limited training, lack of clear assessment tools, and exam-

oriented systems as significant obstacles, though some implemented strategies such as debates, case studies, and project-based learning. The study underscores the need for sustained professional development, curricular alignment, and institutional support to enable teachers to embed CT more systematically in EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, EFL teaching, teacher conceptions, pedagogical challenges, 21st century

## Introduction

Panjang Critical thinking (CT) has emerged as a fundamental requirement in global educational agendas, recognized as vital for navigating the abundance of information, making judgments, and engaging in democratic discourse (Afrilyasanti, Basthomi, & Zen, 2025; Addinna & Oktaviani, 2023; Risanti & Pratolo, 2024). In the 21st century, language education is no longer merely about linguistic competence, but about developing learners' abilities to analyze, evaluate, and create arguments in varied contexts (Zhao, Pandian & Singh, 2023). Particularly in EFL settings, critical thinking aligns with communicative goals, preparing learners for academic, professional, and civic roles (Afrilyasanti et al., 2025; Adwitya & Maisarah, 2025).

Scholars define CT variously but generally agree it involves higher-order cognitive skills, such as analysis, evaluation, inference, as well as metacognitive regulation of one's own thought (Risanti & Pratolo, 2024; Alruwaili, 2024). Frameworks like Bloom's Taxonomy and Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Model continue to inform both research and practice, offering structured ways to conceptualize CT for design of tasks, classroom interaction, and assessment (Fisher & Scriven, 2024). These conceptual tools are essential for operationalizing CT in language classrooms, especially where teachers may have diverse understandings.

In many language education contexts, especially in EFL classrooms, implementing CT is seen not just as desirable but necessary. Studies in Indonesia show that both pre-service and in-service teachers

increasingly recognize CT's importance and are willing to integrate it (Risanti & Pratolo, 2024; Adwitya & Maisarah, 2025). For example, in Bengkulu, many EFL teachers believe teaching CT is part of their responsibility, though fewer feel adequately prepared. Likewise, in the Malang region, a large majority assert that CT is essential for learners in secondary school (Anugerahwati & Astuti, 2023).

Yet there remain substantial challenges in translating belief into practice. Systemic constraints such as curriculum frameworks, exam-driven assessment, class size, teaching load, and limited material and professional development support often impede consistent CT integration (Alruwaili, 2024; Risanti & Pratolo, 2024; Adwitya & Maisarah, 2025). Pedagogically, teachers sometimes default to traditional, teacher-fronted instruction, with little opportunity for student-led inquiry or metacognitive reflection. Furthermore, there is evidence of variation in teachers' conceptual clarity about CT: what constitutes CT can range from higher-order thinking to simple criticism, reflection, or creativity (Ilyas, 2018; Mulatin et. al., 2024).

Beliefs about CT have a strong influence on what teachers design, how they facilitate classroom activities, and how they assess student thinking (Risanti & Pratolo, 2024; Zhao et al., 2023). Teachers with clearer, more complex conceptions tend to experiment with collaborative learning, questioning strategies, and feedback mechanisms that promote student autonomy. In contrast, when conceptions are superficial or vague, CT is marginal, often appearing only in isolated tasks rather than

as an integrated dimension of instruction (Alruwaili, 2024; Afrilyasanti et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian policy and educational context, recent reforms have explicitly included 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, in national curricula (e.g., Curriculum 2013, subsequent revisions). However, empirical findings suggest a gap between policy and classroom practice: much instruction still emphasizes linguistic form, grammar, and accuracy over critical reasoning, and assessments often reward recall rather than higher-order thinking (Risanti & Pratolo, 2024; Adwitya & Maisarah, 2025). Additionally, pre-service teacher education programs show uneven preparation for CT instruction: some courses address CT concepts and methods explicitly, but many do not, leaving teachers underprepared to design, scaffold, and assess CT effectively (Risk & Pratolo, 2024; Kummala et al., 2023).

Despite increasing research in Indonesia, there remains a relative paucity of studies that combine three dimensions: (a) how in-service EFL teachers conceptualize CT with nuance, (b) the lived challenges and systemic constraints they face in integrating CT in daily classroom instruction, and (c) the concrete strategies teachers adopt or avoid, along with their perceived effectiveness. Many existing studies focus on pre-service teachers or student outcomes (e.g., writing, speaking) rather than in-depth teacher beliefs and practices (Imaniar & Rakhmawati, 2024; Risanti & Pratolo, 2024). To address this gap, the present study aims to (1) elucidate Indonesian EFL teachers' conceptions of critical thinking in relation to language instruction; (2) identify structural, pedagogical, and assessment-related challenges that impede CT integration; and (3) document the strategies teachers currently employ to foster CT and their perceived effectiveness. Employing a qualitative design with open-ended

questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, this research captures richly contextualized insights from practising EFL teachers. By linking beliefs to practice, the study seeks to contribute actionable recommendations for teacher education, assessment reform, and curriculum policy, both for Indonesia and comparable EFL settings globally.

## **Metod**

### *Research design*

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to gain an in-depth understanding of EFL teachers' perceptions and practices related to critical thinking instruction. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it allowed the exploration of teachers' ideas, experiences, and beliefs as situated human actions embedded in specific educational contexts. Within this framework, critical thinking was interpreted comprehensively, not as an abstract construct, but through the meanings, expectations, and practices articulated by participants in their professional settings. Data was collected through two complementary sources, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, which enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

### *Research participants*

The study was conducted in two districts located in South Sulawesi and West Sulawesi Provinces of Indonesia. These sites were purposefully selected because they have a sufficient population of EFL teachers representing diverse teaching backgrounds. A total of 32 Senior High School EFL teachers participated in the questionnaire. Among them, 11 (36.7%) were male and 19 (63.3%) were female. The participants varied in teaching experience: novice teachers with fewer than five years of experience (20%),

experienced teachers with 5–15 years (53.3%), and very experienced teachers with more than 15 years (26.7%).

From the questionnaire respondents, eight teachers were purposefully selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews. This purposive sampling strategy ensured variation in school locations (urban, suburban, rural) and teaching experience, thereby enriching the data and ensuring relevance to the research objectives. The pseudonyms and demographic information of the interview participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participants in the interviews*

No	Gender	School Location	Teaching Experience
1	Female	Urban	19 years (VET)
2	Male	Suburban	14 years (ET)
3	Female	Urban	4 years (NT)
4	Male	Rural	17 years (VET)
5	Female	Rural	9 years (ET)
6	Male	Urban	16 years (VET)
7	Female	Suburban	10 years (ET)
8	Female	Suburban	3 years (NT)

**Note:** VET (a very experienced teacher); ET (an experienced teacher); and NT (a novice teacher)

#### *Research instruments*

Two instruments were employed: an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire, distributed via Google Forms, consisted of four open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' understanding and experiences of critical thinking in EFL classrooms. The questions were:

1. What do you understand about critical thinking?
2. What is the importance of applying critical thinking in EFL classrooms?
3. What strategies do you consider effective for promoting critical thinking in EFL classrooms?
4. What challenges have you faced in implementing critical thinking in your teaching practice?

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of

confidentiality, and reminded that their responses would not be used for evaluative purposes. Their voluntary participation was emphasized to encourage candid responses.

The semi-structured interviews followed the same key themes as the questionnaire but allowed for deeper exploration. The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to probe unexpected but relevant issues that emerged during the discussions. Interviews were conducted individually via video calls at times convenient to participants, audio-recorded with consent, and supplemented by field notes highlighting key points and contextual details.

#### *Data analysis*

The data were analyzed using a thematic approach, which is widely recognized as a flexible and rigorous method for examining qualitative responses. An inductive model guided the analysis, allowing categories to be constructed closely from the data rather than being imposed a priori. The coding process involved iterative refinement: initial categories were progressively condensed until core themes emerged. As Bachtiar (2024) notes, the careful selection and organization of categories enable researchers to represent participants' perspectives systematically and meaningfully.

The units of analysis included sentences, phrases, paragraphs, and broader topics that could be clustered into themes and subthemes. Participant responses from both the questionnaires and interviews were collated, compared, and integrated. Recurring elements were prioritized in the thematic framework, with frequently mentioned ideas forming the higher-order categories and less common responses noted in subordinate positions. This process ensured that the analysis captured both the shared and diverse perspectives of teachers

while maintaining close fidelity to the participants' original expressions.

## Results and Discussion

The findings from this research are organized and discussed within the categories that arose from the responses of the participants, both in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. The findings and discussion are chronologically presented based on the main questions that were asked of the participants.

### *Teachers' Varied Conceptions of Critical Thinking*

Many teachers in this study perceive critical thinking (CT) primarily as a cognitive skill that helps students shift from passive receivers of information to active constructors of knowledge. They believe CT enables clearer reasoning, greater responsiveness, and deeper understanding as learners engage with subject content (e.g., analyzing, interpreting). A notable portion, eight questionnaire respondents, admitted they had limited or no formal training in CT and thus felt uncertain about defining or measuring it within EFL instruction. This pattern of conceptual ambiguity has been documented elsewhere: for instance, Li et al. (2023) found that Chinese EFL teachers also recognize 'analysis', 'evaluation', and 'inference' in CT but struggle with operational definitions and classroom assessment. Similarly, Ilyas (2022) in the Indonesian context reported that many teachers believe in CT's value but express uncertainty about how to teach it in practice.

Beyond uncertainty, the majority of participants in your study emphasized CT's importance, linking it to skills such as problem solving, evaluation, and the generation of ideas. One teacher said, "CT is a skill that students need since it will enable them to be more effective learners during

the classroom activities and even become responsive learners," illustrating the conviction that CT supports both learning outcomes and learner agency. However, despite this endorsement, some teachers prioritize grammatical accuracy or communicative competence over CT, viewing the latter as secondary or difficult to assess. In comparison with recent literature, Marin and Pava (2017) observed a similar tension among EFL teachers who value CT but feel constrained by curricular demands and assessment frameworks. Studies from Bengkulu, Indonesia (Dhari & Maisarah, 2025) show that high percentages of teachers believe CT should be part of the EFL curriculum, even as many admit they are unsure what CT fully entails.

When asked about the specific cognitive components of CT, responses clustered around analysis, inference, perspective-taking, and justification. Three teachers described perspective-taking and questioning as vital, whereas four others emphasized investigative inquiry, seeing CT as interpreting evidence or exploring viewpoints beyond the immediate text. Participants also noted that scaffolding is essential, especially for learners with lower proficiency, so that tasks requiring CT are accessible while still challenging. This aligns with findings from Li et al. (2023), which highlight that effective CT pedagogy involves scaffolding, genre awareness, and cultural sensitivity. Also, Ilyas (2022) found that varied CT subskills emerge when teachers are asked how they would design their instruction; yet implementation often depends on teacher beliefs and resource availability.

Additionally, teachers in your study reported several barriers that shape their conceptions of CT and its integration. Chief among these were inadequate professional development, lack of clarity about how to assess CT, and systemic pressures (such as examination-focused curricula) that

prioritize measurable outcomes over higher-order thinking. These constraints contribute to resistance or reluctance in fully embracing CT instruction. Such findings are echoed in Al Zahrani and Elyas (2017), who, in a Saudi EFL context, observed that teachers saw CT as valuable but experienced obstacles related to assessment and institutional support. Furthermore, Dhari and Maisarah (2025) reported that over 65% of EFL teachers believed they needed additional training to teach CT effectively, highlighting that belief alone does not ensure readiness.

### *Critical Thinking in EFL: Essential Yet Overlooked*

Most participants highlighted critical thinking (CT) as a core competence for 21st-century learners, emphasizing its role in helping students construct knowledge, express opinions from broader perspectives, and solve problems collaboratively. One teacher explained that CT enables students to “select and distinguish reliable information from fake ones,” pointing to its importance in the digital age. These views mirror international findings that link CT with higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), including analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, which are considered essential for academic and professional success (Hashemi, 2022; Li et al., 2023). Similarly, Elfatih (2021) argues that combining factual knowledge with opportunities for critical evaluation in EFL classrooms provides a powerful platform for cultivating CT, while Goodsett (2020) stresses that explicit instruction in reasoning processes equips learners to manage complex information effectively.

Despite widespread recognition of its importance, many teachers admitted that CT is rarely emphasized in everyday EFL lessons. The majority of classes remain focused on linguistic competence, grammar, and communicative skills, with several teachers expressing uncertainty about CT’s relevance to language teaching. As one participant put

it, “I don’t believe I have introduced critical thinking in my English classroom activities because it is not required for English language acquisition.” This perception aligns with findings by Marin and Pava (2017), who reported that many instructors view grammar and communicative competence as primary goals, sidelining CT in practice. In contrast, Liu (2019) argues that language learning is inherently tied to identity, social context, and meaning-making, dimensions that require students to think critically about how language positions them in relation to others. These tensions reveal the gap between the rhetorical importance of CT and its practical neglect in classrooms.

Other participants reflected ambivalence, recognizing CT as an educational priority while simultaneously admitting that they lacked sufficient knowledge or strategies to integrate it. When asked which CT skills should be prioritized, several teachers pointed to HOTS such as analysis, comparison, and critique, while others confessed that they rarely emphasized CT in their lessons. This variability resonates with evidence from Indonesian and broader EFL contexts, where teachers acknowledge the value of CT but struggle with implementation due to limited training and resource constraints (Ilyas, 2022; Dhari & Maisarah, 2025). Moreover, recent studies show that without adequate scaffolding and teacher support, students may revert to rote responses rather than genuine inquiry (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021; Rahmat et al., 2022). Thus, teachers’ uncertainty both affirms CT’s perceived importance and exposes the structural challenges of embedding it meaningfully in EFL practice.

A smaller group of teachers, however, demonstrated more advanced awareness, reporting that they sometimes integrated CT strategies into classroom activities. These teachers described encouraging students to “think deeply about the learning contents”

and linked CT not only to academic success but also to preparation for social life beyond school. One participant emphasized that while linguistic mastery remains the central objective, he has sought to integrate CT as one of the 'priority 21st-century skills' in his lessons. This perspective is consistent with Goodsett (2020) and Elfatih (2021), who argue that language learning activities involving inquiry and problem solving provide fertile ground for practicing CT. Empirical studies further confirm that communicative language teaching methods naturally embed opportunities for CT, requiring students to evaluate, infer, and generate new ideas as they engage with texts and peers (Rahmat et al., 2022; Li et al., 2023). Such examples illustrate that EFL classrooms can serve as effective environments for CT development when teachers intentionally align language tasks with critical inquiry.

#### *Designing Classroom Practices that Nurture Critical Thinking in EFL Learners*

Teachers in this study emphasized that promoting critical thinking (CT) in EFL classrooms requires going beyond grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, shifting toward fostering creativity, self-reflection, and problem-solving skills. Several participants explained that students need to be placed in communicative environments where they can express opinions and justify their reasoning. Strategies identified included encouraging students to explain ideas related to classroom topics, guiding them to evaluate their own learning, posing questions that stimulate prediction, and creating opportunities to solve real-life problems. These recommendations are consistent with recent research highlighting the integration of CT into language teaching through carefully designed tasks, learning materials, and assessment methods (Hashemi, 2022; Li et al., 2023). Moreover, Okolie et al. (2022) argue that CT can be

cultivated when teachers deliberately incorporate tasks that require inquiry, reflection, and decision-making.

Participants also stressed that CT strategies can be adapted across all proficiency levels, from beginner to advanced, with adjustments in complexity depending on the objectives of each lesson. Teachers recommended using case studies, debates, role-plays, group discussions, and project- or problem-based learning as effective ways to embed CT into communicative practices. These strategies align with global findings suggesting that small group discussions and project-based learning create authentic contexts where CT can flourish (Abrami et al., 2015; Rahmat et al., 2022). Similarly, Marin and Pava (2017) highlight the role of dialogue, peer evaluation, and problem-solving exercises in developing CT dispositions among EFL learners. When structured appropriately, such strategies transform routine classroom interaction into spaces where students actively analyze, evaluate, and generate knowledge.

At the same time, several participants acknowledged that teachers' roles as facilitators are central to creating a culture of CT. As one teacher noted, CT can be promoted holistically by combining grammatical and communicative competence with opportunities for self-assessment. This perspective underscores the view that teachers must provide structured guidance while gradually transferring responsibility to learners. Recent studies echo this finding: Kim and Pollard (2019) emphasize that teacher facilitation is critical to sustaining CT development, while Lunney et al. (2021) highlight that students should also be explicitly taught how to ask meaningful questions that challenge assumptions and evaluate sources.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that many Indonesian EFL teachers are aware of

practical strategies to foster CT and have attempted to integrate them into their lessons, even while acknowledging gaps in their own knowledge. Both questionnaire and interview data suggest that professional development is urgently needed to equip teachers with practical tools for CT instruction. Prior research supports this recommendation, noting that training in CT pedagogy enhances teachers' confidence and classroom practice (Goodsett, 2020; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). As Saleh (2020) and Dhari & Maisarah (2025) argue, CT can be effectively embedded into English instruction through instructional design, task-based activities, and formative assessment methods. Such approaches can engage learners in sustained inquiry, encouraging not only language development but also the cultivation of reflective, autonomous, and socially responsible thinkers.

#### *Barriers to Critical Thinking Integration in EFL Classrooms*

A central challenge identified by participants is teachers' limited knowledge and training in critical thinking (CT). Eight teachers in the survey admitted they had never formally studied CT, leaving them uncertain about its definition, subskills, and pedagogical applications. For these teachers, CT was often equated with criticism or finding solutions based on prior knowledge rather than a systematic set of higher-order skills. They stressed that teachers themselves must first acquire CT knowledge and strategies before they can effectively promote it among students. These findings are consistent with recent research showing that teachers' limited conceptual understanding of CT hampers integration in EFL instruction (Hashemi, 2022; Ilyas, 2022). Studies also highlight that building teachers' professional capacity through targeted training is essential for fostering classroom

practices that nurture CT (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021; Li et al., 2023).

Another recurrent barrier is the lack of explicit guidance and assessment tools for CT. Although some teachers mentioned using oral and written tasks that incidentally touch on CT, they admitted these practices were often unplanned and unmeasured. As one teacher explained, "I am eager to apply critical thinking... but I lack knowledge of the appropriate strategies and do not know how to measure its achievement." This reflects broader concerns in the literature that CT is often promoted implicitly rather than systematically in EFL classrooms (Rahmat et al., 2022; Marin & Pava, 2017). Scholars argue that without clear indicators and assessment frameworks, teachers cannot track students' CT growth, and instruction risks being superficial (Goodsett, 2020; Elfatihi, 2021). Addressing these gaps requires developing user-friendly rubrics and embedding CT assessment within language learning objectives.

The persistence of traditional, teacher-centred practices presents another obstacle to CT integration. Several participants admitted that classroom instruction continues to emphasize content transmission and memorization rather than inquiry and exploration. One teacher noted that students are "conditioned to passively absorb" knowledge rather than engage critically with it, a concern echoed in international studies documenting resistance to pedagogical innovation in EFL contexts (Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki & Yaghoubi-Notash, 2017; Yanning, 2019). This reliance on transmission-based approaches reflects systemic inertia and reinforces the prioritization of grades over thinking processes. Research suggests that shifting toward student-centred methods, such as collaborative learning, inquiry-based projects, and reflective dialogue, is essential to disrupt entrenched teaching traditions



and cultivate CT dispositions (Kim & Pollard, 2019; Okolie et al., 2022).

Finally, structural and institutional constraints also inhibit CT adoption. Teachers reported that professional learning groups seldom discuss CT, leaving little space for knowledge sharing or collaborative exploration of CT pedagogy. Moreover, exam-driven education systems reinforce an emphasis on rote learning and linguistic accuracy over higher-order reasoning. Such systemic pressures often discourage experimentation and sustain teachers' skepticism about CT's relevance to language learning. These challenges align with studies showing that teachers' positive attitudes toward CT must be reinforced by institutional support, policy alignment, and professional development opportunities (Dhari & Maisarah, 2025; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). Without systemic reform, CT risks remaining rhetorically valued but practically neglected in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

## Conclusion

This study investigated Indonesian EFL teachers' conceptions of CT, the challenges they encounter in integrating it, and the strategies they employ to promote it in classroom practices. The findings revealed that teachers generally recognized CT as a crucial 21st-century skill that empowers students to move beyond rote learning toward deeper reasoning, problem solving, and independent inquiry. However, their conceptualizations of CT were diverse and often fragmented, ranging from higher-order thinking processes to simple acts of criticism or evaluation. Despite acknowledging CT's importance, many teachers reported prioritizing grammar and communicative competence over critical inquiry due to curricular and assessment pressures. At the same time, some participants demonstrated emerging practices, such as using debates, problem-

based learning, and peer evaluation, that aligned with communicative and inquiry-based pedagogy. Overall, the results confirm a gap between teachers' positive beliefs and their limited readiness to integrate CT systematically, shaped by insufficient training, lack of assessment tools, and systemic constraints in Indonesian EFL education.

The study carries several implications for policy, practice, and research. For practice, the findings highlight the urgent need for sustained professional development programs that equip EFL teachers with both conceptual clarity and pedagogical strategies for embedding CT into everyday language teaching. For policy, alignment between curriculum goals and classroom realities is essential, particularly in reducing exam-driven practices that privilege memorization over inquiry. For research, the study underscores the importance of exploring not only teacher conceptions but also student perspectives and learning outcomes to capture a fuller picture of CT integration. Nonetheless, the study is limited by its focus on two districts in Sulawesi and a relatively small sample size, which constrains generalizability. Future studies should employ longitudinal and mixed-method designs across wider contexts to examine how teachers' conceptions, practices, and systemic supports evolve over time.

## References

- Abrami, P. C., Bernard, R. M., Borokhovski, E., Waddington, D. I., Wade, C. A., & Persson, T. (2015). Strategies for teaching students to think critically: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 85(2), 275–314. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654314558493>
- Adwitya, W., & Maisarah, I. (2025). Integrating critical thinking into

- Indonesia's EFL curriculum: Insights from Bengkulu teachers. *Journal of English for Specific Purposes in Indonesia*, 4(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.33369/espindonesia.v4i1.34754>
- Addinna, A., & Oktaviani, L. (2023). Boosting critical thinking: A prominent aspect to uphold learners' autonomy in the EFL classroom. *Lingua Didaktika: Jurnal Bahasa dan Pembelajaran Bahasa*, 17(2), 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.24036/ld.v17i2.123970>
- Afrilyasanti, R., Basthomi, Y., & Zen, E. L. (2025). Fostering creativity and critical literacy: Transforming EFL classes with engaging critical media literacy integration. *Asian Education and Development Studies*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-06-2024-0124>
- Alruwaili, A. R. (2024). Barriers to promoting critical thinking skills: An empirical study of female pre-service English teachers' perceptions in Jouf University in Saudi Arabia. *SAGE Open*, 14(4), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241227775>
- Al Zahrani, B. S., & Elyas, T. (2017). The implementation of critical thinking in a Saudi EFL context: Challenges and opportunities. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 1(2), 149–162. <https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v1i2.21>
- Elfatihi, M. (2021). Developing critical thinking skills in EFL classrooms: Approaches and challenges. *Journal of Language and Education*, 7(4), 78–90. <https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2021.12213>
- Goodsett, M. (2020). Best practices for teaching and assessing critical thinking. *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*, 35(2), 36–48. <https://doi.org/10.5840/inquiryct202035221>
- Hashemi, M. R. (2022). Teachers' conceptions of critical thinking and its integration in EFL classrooms. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 45, 101058. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2022.101058>
- Ilyas, H. P. (2018). Indonesian EFL teachers' conceptions of critical thinking. *Journal of ELT Research: The Academic Journal of Studies in English Language Teaching and Learning*, 3(1), 29–37. [https://doi.org/10.22236/JER\\_Vol3Issu e1pp29-37](https://doi.org/10.22236/JER_Vol3Issu e1pp29-37)
- Imaniar, F., & Rakhmawati, R. (2024). Incorporating critical thinking skills in English classroom instruction: A case study of Indonesian pre-service teachers. *Leksika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra dan Pengajarannya*, 18(2), 117–125. <https://doi.org/10.30595/lks.v18i2.25974>
- Kim, M., & Pollard, V. (2019). Teachers as facilitators: Fostering a culture of critical thinking in EFL classrooms. *TESOL Journal*, 10(3), e00415. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.415>
- Li, L., Wegerif, R., & Yang, Y. (2023). Critical thinking from the ground up: Teachers' conceptions and practice in EFL classrooms. *Teachers and Teaching*, 29(5), 571–593. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2023.2191182>
- Liu, K. (2019). Critical thinking and language learning: Identity, agency, and power. *Language and Education*, 33(4), 343–357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2018.1545782>
- Lunney, D., McAllister, S., & Reid, K. (2021). Teaching students to ask critical questions: Developing evaluative

- judgement in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 46(7), 1047–1061. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1835821>
- Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki, M., & Yaghoubi-Notash, M. (2017). Critical thinking in EFL classrooms: Teachers' attitudes and practices. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(2), 349–364. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jlls/issue/36124/406495>
- Marin, L. M., & Pava, L. (2017). EFL teachers' conceptions of critical thinking and its integration in language teaching. *English Language Teaching*, 10(8), 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v10n8p57>
- Nguyen, H. T., & Nguyen, T. N. (2021). Critical thinking in Vietnamese EFL classrooms: Teachers' practices and challenges. *Asian EFL Journal*, 28(2), 145–170.
- Okolie, U. C., Igwe, P. A., & Nwosu, H. E. (2022). Embedding critical thinking skills in teaching and learning: Evidence from higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 46(5), 635–648. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.2001234>
- Rahmat, A., Widodo, H. P., & Abdullah, F. (2022). Scaffolding critical thinking in EFL classrooms: Teacher practices and learner responses. *Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(1), 23–38. <https://caes.hku.hk/ajal/index.php/ajal/article/view/890>
- Risanti, F. V. D., & Pratolo, B. W. (2024). Critical thinking in ELT among Indonesian pre-service teachers: Understanding and practice. *Jurnal Pendidikan: Teori, Penelitian, dan Pengembangan*, 9(3), [page numbers pending].
- Saleh, S. (2020). Strategies for promoting critical thinking in EFL classrooms. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(3), 383–398. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2020.13326a>
- Yanning, Z. (2019). Teaching 'what to think' versus 'how to think': Rethinking critical thinking in language education. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(5), 1045–1053. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1005.13>
- Zhao, C., Pandian, A., & Singh, M. K. M. (2023). Instructional strategies for developing critical thinking in EFL classrooms. *English Language Teaching*, 16(10), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n10p14>