ELT IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: THE BOUNDARIES AND BEYOND

Critical thinking representation in EFL pre-service teachers' lesson plans

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Abstract

Critical thinking is a highly valued generic skill in education around the world. Teachers and pre-service teachers at education faculties have to acquire critical thinking skills to meet the expectations and demands of their future profession. The purpose of this study was to examine pre-service teachers' lesson plans to see how critical thinking is included in EFL lesson plans. Content analysis is employed to determine to what extent the instructions and tasks in EFL pre-service teachers' lesson plans promote and strengthen students' critical thinking skills. For analytic categories, the study used Revised Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). The study found that critical thinking skills were incorporated into the instructions and tasks of EFL pre-service teachers' lesson plans. However, the proportion should be improved to accommodate all cognitive processes evenly, particularly for higher-order thinking skills. The findings should help EFL pre-service teachers identify critical thinking skills to be infused in their lesson plans and used in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, the findings also provide educational policymakers insight into critical thinking as a considerable skill to be incorporated in the teacher education program.

Keywords: critical thinking; EFL classroom; lesson plan; pre-service teacher

Introduction

Critical thinking has grown more influential in language education in the 21st century (Ab Kadir, 2017; Li;2016; Wilson; 2016). Since students are increasingly confronted with a flood of information and opinions on the internet, it is difficult for them to filter the information received. Critical thinking becomes essential to assist students in selecting the information they encounter. Aside from reflective thinking, critical thinking is an element of higher-order thinking skills (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020). All the processes related to higher-order thinking skills are needed for critical thinking (Ab Kadir, 2017). Critical thinking is the ability to evaluate different types of information obtained from different sources, process it creatively and rationally, challenge it, analyze it, and come up with conclusions (Mook, 2008). Paul & Elder (2002) defined critical thinking as the disciplined art of ensuring that we apply our best thinking in any situation. It includes some skills such as gathering relevant information, making logical inferences, and double-checking information for

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accuracy (Haberlin, 2018). However, Language teachers faced various barriers in critical thinking integration into EFL classrooms. One issue is that they have a limited and erroneous understanding of critical thinking (Gustine, 2018).

In education, critical thinking may support more in-depth learning. It occurs when students are supported to not only accept but also to critique information. Furthermore, without knowledge, critical thinking is impossible. This knowledge includes both broad and specific knowledge gained through life experience. Critical thinking is a cognitive activity that focuses on reasoning and involves the mind (Cotrel, 2005). Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) reexamined the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy and modified the six categories of cognitive process dimension known as Revised Bloom Taxonomy. The first domain is recalling or retrieving previously learned knowledge, referred to as remembering. Understanding is comprehending the meaning, translation, interpolation, and interpretation of instructions and problems (e.g., articulating a problem in one's own words). Applying relates to using a concept in new circumstances or using an abstraction spontaneously. To put it more simply, it is the employment of what we have learned in class to new scenarios in the workplace. The fourth domain is analyzing; it is breaking down a notion into its constituent parts to make the organizational structure more understandable and identify facts from inferences. Evaluating represents making judgments about the significance of ideas, while creating refers to putting parts together to make a whole to develop a structure or pattern, emphasizing the creation of a new meaning or structure (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020).

Numerous extensive literature has developed on critical thinking integration in EFL teaching and learning. Some studies showed that the infusion of critical thinking in EFL teaching and learning positively affects education (Cottrell, 2011; Elder & Paul, 2009; Heidari, 2020; Wilson; 2016). Lu & Xie (2019) investigated the benefits of critical thinking integration on students in EFL classrooms. The study scrutinized the impacts of an instructional pattern that involved Paul and Elder's International Critical Thinking Reading and Writing Test (ICTRWT) framework into a postsecondary EFL argumentative writing course. To achieve the aims of the study, the researchers used a mix of methods. The experiment included two groups of students: one who received the instructional intervention (treatment group) and another who received regular instruction (control group) in a tertiary argumentative writing course. The study found that in terms of overall critical thinking skills and skills for identifying and analyzing the components of thoughts, students who received the instructional treatment outperformed students in the control group. In addition, Zhang (2018) examined how online resources, informed by systemic functional linguistics (SFL), influenced the EFL students' writer improvement of critical thinking. The data was gathered through students' written documents, and student-teacher interactions, interviews with students. The case study found that despite the challenges the students encountered, EFL writers built critical thinking abilities about the production of excellent academic writing.

Some studies underlined the manifestation of critical thinking in EFL textbooks (Birjandi & Alizadeh, 2013; Ilyas, 2015; Sholihati & Hikmat, 2018). Birjandi and Alizadeh (2013) used Bloom's taxonomy to examine three Iranian EFL textbooks. The study found that the three textbooks contained categories of comprehension, application, community thinkers, and knowledge skills were the most often cited categories, followed by analysis, creative thinking, synthesis, and deduction skills. Sholihati & Hikmat (2018) employed content analysis to see if the assignments in the textbooks stimulate and enhance students' critical thinking skills. The study revealed that there were few critical thinking activities in the textbooks. Aside from that, assignments that could encourage students to think critically were not diverse. The findings suggest that textbook authors should incorporate more critical thinking exercises in their texts since critical thinking is one of the country's educational goals.

There are growing appeals for researching critical thinking from teachers' perspectives to address the gap between theory and practice. Aliakbari and Sadeghdaghighi (2013) scrutinized 100 EFL Iranian teachers on what challenges they experience in integrating critical thinking. The study underlined three significant challenges to the teachers' integration of critical thinking and teaching strategies: students' attitudes and expectations, self-efficacy constraint, and teachers' lack of knowledge. This study was expected to offer insight into teachers' perceptions of the restrictions on their thinking skills. It might also make recommendations for in-service training for enhancing teaching quality. Under the term critical literacy, Gustine (2018) conducted a study on Indonesian in-service English teachers; the study discovered that critical literacy competence among English in-service teachers is still lacking. However, they tried to include critical literacy and its pedagogical approach into their EFL classes. Furthermore, the study provides an insight into how to develop an English classroom that fosters critical literacy.

Critical thinking is crucial not only for in-service teachers but also for pre-service teachers. Particularly for pre-service language teachers, Yuan & Stapleton (2019) stated that pre-service language teacher education should involve critical thinking to help them enhance their critical thinking and pedagogical skills. Since pre-service teaching is such a critical period, some study has explicitly concentrated on it. Ma & Luo (2020) used a qualitative method in naturalistic settings to investigate EFL pre-service teachers' perception of critical thinking and its infusion. The data was collected through interviews and observations, and then theme analysis was utilized to examine it. Prior learning experience, training experience, cultural value, and evaluation system are all possible influences on pre-service teachers' cognitions on critical thinking. Although critical thinking is crucial in English language education, to our knowledge, almost no study has focused on pre-service teachers' lesson plans to learn more about critical thinking integration in EFL classrooms. To fill this gap, the current study intends to determine the extent to which the tasks and the instructions in the lesson plans can assist EFL pre-service teachers in teaching critical thinking skills. The results of this study may encourage pre-service teachers to incorporate more critical thinking tasks in their lesson plans, which they can then execute in EFL classes.

Research Methodology

The study employed qualitative content analysis to scrutinize the extent to which tasks (questions and instructions) in EFL pre-service teachers' lesson plans promote critical thinking skills. Krippendorff (2004, p. 18) claims content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use." The study examined EFL pre-service teacher's lesson plans from a practicum program of an Islamic university's education faculty in Indonesia. The practicum consists of three stages, from practicum one to three. Practicum one enables pre-service teachers to observe the school setting in which they will work in the future. During the faculty's second practicum, pre-service teachers learned to design a lesson plan with the assistance of the in-service teachers. In the last practicum, the pre-service teachers can undertake teaching practice in the classrooms.

The study adopted Revised Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) for the analytic categories. Bloom's taxonomy has long been viewed as a set of classifications that could facilitate higher-order thinking, a closely linked idea to critical thinking. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) proposed six domains of cognitive process arranging from the lowest to the highest stage. The modified categories range from remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Each category is characterized by some particular words that promote teaching and learning activities. The analyzed data included tasks, activities, and questions or instructions. These data are examined and categorized based on the above domains.

There were various stages to this research. The study first identified or generated research questions, the research question is to what extent the tasks and instructions in the lesson plans involve the components of critical thinking. Then, the units of analysis were determined after constructing the analytic categories. The unit of analysis included all types of tasks, activities, questions, or instructions found in the EFL pre-service teachers' lesson plans. Third, coding was completed, with hypothesis coding used in this investigation (Saldana, 2009). Then, potential categories were examined. All tasks, activities, and instructions/questions discovered in lesson plans were presented during the analyzing process. The data were transcribed and linked to the analytic categories determined. Finally, the data were interpreted and the results were reported in the findings.

Findings and Interpretation

The present study confirmed the findings of critical thinking representation in EFL pre-service teachers' lesson plans. The result demonstrated that EFL pre-service teachers include the components of critical thinking skills into their lesson plans. The infusion can be seen from the tasks, activities, and questions employed in the lesson plans. The findings are presented in terms of Revised Blooms' Taxonomy as follows:

Remembering

Remembering is the lowest stage of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy; it entails getting meaningful knowledge or information from long-term memory. Remembering is critical for meaningful learning and problem solving since knowledge in the remembering process is used in more complicated activities (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001). Define, describe, identify, know, label, list, match, name, outline, recall, recognize, reproduce, choose, and state are keywords related to remembering processes (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020). The remembering process is mentioned in some of the lesson plans that were studied, as shown in the following tasks:

What are the ingredients we need to make french fries?

When does the party begin?

Why are people with diabetes not recommended to use the medicine?

The first task requires students to make a list of the information they learned through the text. The information needed to answer the questions above is easily accessible to the students. Such a question that requires students to mention parts of the task such as; ingredients, materials, or steps of doing something frequently arises in procedure text because it attempts to provide knowledge on how to do or create something. The question ensures the students get the correct information from the task. The second question can be completed by identifying information stated in the text. It is about an invitational card. The invitation should include all relevant details about the event, including the date and time. Thus, students can answer the above questions quickly. The last task above required students to identify some crucial information provided in the text. The students have to find a reason for something. The information required to answer the question above is stated in the text so that students may read and identify it.

Blooms' revised taxonomy by Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) is also associated with several particular activities. The remembering activities are linked to bookmarking, using flashcards, rote learning based on repetition and reading (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020). Almost all the lesson plans include reading activities. Besides that, EFL pre-service teachers also used rote learning based on repetition. The lesson plan used some pictures consisting of dialogues with particular expressions. Students must learn the expressions before practising them in front of the class.

Understanding

Understanding is creating the meaning of instructional messages, which include oral, written, or graphic communication. It is the second cognitive process that linked to some keywords; comprehend, convert, defend, distinguish, estimate, explain, extend, generalize, give an example, infer, interpret, paraphrase, predict, rewrite, summarize, and translate (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020). The example of understanding cognitive process can be seen in the following tasks:

What does the song tell you about?

What does the text tell us about?

What can we infer from the text?

All the tasks above promote the teaching of critical thinking skills. The first task uses song lyrics to teach about teens' life. Using the song is aimed to assist students in obtaining the message quickly. Moreover, when students are familiar with the lyrics. These types of tasks above require students to comprehend the whole text completely to interpret the content correctly. Students understand when they connect the new knowledge with their existing knowledge (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001). Thus, they are supposed to answer these questions associated with the previous knowledge obtained from the text. Some activities that connect to the understanding process involve creating an analogy, participating in cooperative learning, taking notes, storytelling, and exploring the internet. Those can be found in the lesson plans studied. It gives us an idea that EFL pre-service teachers are trying hard enough to assist students to understand the discussed topics. Taking notes, participating in cooperative learning, and searching for information from the internet are the most activities employed.

Applying

Students should apply the information or knowledge they learned after understanding the topic. It is called applying activities. Applying is carrying out a technique in a given situation. The apply category consists of two cognitive processes: executing and implementing. Executing is when the task is familiar, while implementing is when the task is unfamiliar (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001). Several essential terms in the applying process include apply, change, compute, construct, demonstrate, discover, manipulate, modify, operate, predict, prepare, produce, relate, show, solve, and use (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020). The following is an example of the applying task.

Change this sentence into a negative sentence!

The task above requires students to use the knowledge they have gotten. The students must change the form of a sentence; it is a positive sentence that tells about a past activity. To change the sentence forms, the students must follow a particular formula or technique. This activity develops students' critical thinking since students learn how to apply the information in a situation provided. Some learning activities related to the application process include collaborative learning, creating activities, blogging, and practising. Except for blogging, the EFL pre-service teachers used those activities in their teaching and learning activities.

Analyzing

Analyzing is figuring out how the pieces fit together and fit into a more prominent structure or objective. Objectives classified as analysis include learning to differentiate the relevant or crucial bits

of a communication (differentiating), how the elements of a message are grouped (organizing), and the underlying purpose of the message (understanding) (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001). Some potential terms; analyze, break down, compare, contrast, diagram, deconstruct, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, identify, illustrate, infer, outline, relate, select, and separate (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020). There were only a few activities that led to the analyzing activities as the following example:

Which statements are TRUE according to the second paragraph?

Such questions allow the students to break down all the information from the text to find the correct answer. It is a differentiating activity in which students must determine which is true and which is false. Students will face challenges if the option alternatives are nearly identical, and they will need to analyze more thoroughly. This activity develops students' critical thinking skills by selecting the most suitable answer. Debating, questioning what happened, running, and utilizing a fishbowl are activities that teach the analyzing process. Questioning what happened are the most frequent activities found in the EFL pre-service teachers' lesson plans.

Evaluating

Using criteria or standards to conclude is called evaluating. Quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency are the most commonly utilized criteria (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001). Some key terms linked to the evaluating process include: appraise, compare, conclude, contrast, criticize, critique, defend, describe, discriminate, evaluate, explain, interpret, justify, relate, summarize, and support (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020). The following are some examples of evaluating processes found in the lesson plans studied:

Describe the pictures below by using your own words based on the guideline given!

From the text above, it can be concluded that?

These tasks require students to based on quality criteria. The first task asks students to characterize a picture that the teacher had provided with some guidelines. In this task, the students have to evaluate the picture and the keywords given to portray the picture. The description must meet the criteria specified in the visuals and words when answering the questions above. The pre-service teacher used this type of task to allow students to exercise higher critical thinking abilities. They must carefully study the text to draw the correct conclusion to construct a new picture description. The second task supports students to think critically about the text. The students are demanded to conclude the information or knowledge they have learned from the text.

The activities related to the process of evaluating are surveying and blogging. All lesson plans studied did not include those activities. Since lesson plans are essential as a guideline in teaching and learning, the pre-service teachers are also expected to design different activities, especially the activities that promote the evaluating process. Providing numerous activities will also enhance students' motivation to engage in learning activities. Thus, students will be able to improve their competency by exploring their skills through various learning activities.

Creating

Creating is combining elements to form a new product. Creating processes are usually connected with students' past learning experiences (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001). Particulars keywords are associated with creating process, including categorize, combine, compile, compose, create, devise, design, explain, generate, modify, organize, plan, rearrange, reconstruct, relate, reorganize, revise, rewrite, summarize, tell, and write (Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh, 2020). The creating task can be examined in the following instructions:

Make a simple dialogue about introduction based on the situation of the sentence below !

Create a dialog using the expressions you have learned in this chapter then perform it!

Write about new technology that you've started using recently. How has that made your life different?

These tasks instruct students to explore their skills to create a new text. The first and second tasks need students to write dialogues with particular guidelines. The guidelines are pieces that must be put together to make a new one. The creating activity is the highest cognitive process; it demands students to use all the knowledge from remembering to evaluating. The creating product is the outcome of learning objectives. Ghanizadeh, Al-Hoorie, & Jahedizadeh (2020) mentioned some learning activities belonging to the creating process, such as creating a new model, writing an essay, and networking with others. EFL pre-service teachers employed those activities in their lesson plans to enhance students' critical thinking.

Conclusion and Suggestion.

The present findings confirm that EFL pre-service teachers included the components of critical thinking in their lesson plans. However, higher-order thinking skills such as: analyzing, evaluating, and creating should be improved. Instead, lower-order skills such as remembering and understanding are emphasized prominently. The findings suggest EFL pre-service teachers involve more tasks and activities that promote critical thinking skills. They are supposed to include all cognitive processes to support EFL students improve their critical thinking skills. EFL pre-service teachers can use tasks, activities, and questions that enable students to associate their daily experiences with their learning

process. In the EFL classroom, collaborative learning, role-plays, diary writing, and student portfolios are some of the activities that can be used. Finally, future studies evaluating EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of critical thinking skills need to be investigated to scrutinize how EFL pre-service teachers integrate critical thinking skills into the EFL classrooms. Some possible contributions including it assist EFL pre-service teachers in identifying critical thinking skills that can be incorporated into their lesson plans and used in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, the findings also provide insight for educational policymakers to consider critical thinking skills seriously.

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