

# Reimagining Classroom Talk: Cultivating Critical Thinking through Reflective Speaking in Indonesian EFL Classroom

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## Abstract

Specifically within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia, this study adopts the perspective that classroom discourse is a transformative teaching environment that encourages critical thinking through reflective speaking practices. The data for this qualitative case study was gathered through semi-structured interviews with both lecturers and student samples. The study was carried out within the Speaking course at the University of Muhammadiyah Bone and the University of Muhammadiyah Barru in South Sulawesi. A combination of thematic coding and an emphasis on discourse strategies such as revoicing, probing, and waiting pauses are utilized in the analysis. Additionally, indicators of critical thinking are incorporated, such as assertions, evidence, reasoning, and responses to counterarguments. The findings indicate that the IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) framework was transformed into a dialogue that was centered on evidence when guided questioning, peer discussions, and brief reflection sessions were incorporated into the process. An increasing number of students articulated their arguments in a clear manner, incorporated evidence from their immediate surroundings, and acknowledged the existence of contrasting points of view. The lecturers observed an increase in student confidence in their ability to express their thoughts in English, as well as an improvement in the monitoring of learning. It has been determined that a practical and efficient method for fostering critical thinking within Indonesian higher education is to view classroom discussions as a reflective-dialogic process. Implications emphasize sustainable instructional design, integrated reasoning-language, and lecturer professional development to institutionalize reflective-dialogic learning in Indonesian higher education.

**Keywords:** classroom talk, reflective speaking, critical thinking, EFL classroom, Indonesian Higher Education

## 1. Introduction

Speaking is an important ability for students who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) when it comes to enhancing their communication skills. Speaking is also a very important part of the process. On the other hand, speaking activities mostly consist of drills, memorizing dialogues, or giving short answers to questions asked by teachers in many English schools in Indonesia. This method not only fails to promote the development of students' critical thinking skills but also results in one-sided exchanges within the classroom.

In higher education, students need to do speaking practice that make them think critically since they help them get ready for global communication problems that need analysis, debate, and deep thought. These activities are very important because they get students ready for these challenges. Peter A (2015) stated that students in the 21st century need to be able to think critically in order to deal with global problems that are hard to solve and come up with new ideas. Additionally, educators serve as essential facilitators in the learner-centered approach, which is vital for modern education (Purba et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, English classrooms often feature a lot of conversation, but the teacher is still the main source of information, and students tend to just sit quietly and listen. Classroom discourse and dialogic teaching are important for learning because they show how important the arguments that happen in class are and how good they are. Dialogic teaching is a way of teaching that uses discussion to help students think better, learn more, and solve problems better (Kim & Wilkinson, 2019). Chow et al. (2023) assert that communication between teachers and students is crucial in language education, as it cultivates a community of speakers and listeners who interact with the target language in a significant manner. It also encourages individuals to talk to each other in different languages, which is important for learning how to use language correctly.

For young people in the Asia-Pacific region who are learning a language, classroom contact is very important because it helps them learn basic skills like vocabulary and phonological awareness (Gonzalez et al., 2014; Spencer et al., 2015). Alexander (2008) argued that an effective classroom conversation should be dialogical. This means that students should be able to work together to explore concepts, give reasons, and eventually gain understanding.

Many educators in English in Indonesia don't completely use conversation as a way to help their students think critically. Because of this, students don't get to have many debates in English class that are both analytical and competitive.

To overcome these limitations, the reflective speaking approach has become a potential pedagogical alternative to improve the quality of interaction in English language classes. Reflective speaking encourages students to not only speak linguistically but also to reflect on the meaning, reasoning, and implications of what they say. This approach strengthens metacognitive awareness and fosters critical thinking skills, as students are required to reevaluate their own views and respond to those of others. Villamizar & Mejía (2019) mention that the use of students' reflection encourages learning autonomy and enhances self-reflection. Then, the reflection process enhances awareness of teaching and learning issues for both students and lecturers, leading to improvements in future work. Thus, speaking instruction in English classes focuses not only on mastery of language structures but also on the development of reflective and analytical thinking processes. Lithoxidou & Georgiadou (2023) emphasized higher education can promote critical thinking in future teachers by merging subject matter education with approaches that develop critical thinking abilities and mindsets. The students' critical thinking skills are pivotal for successful reflective teaching in speaking classes, with their development enhancing language mastery (Rachmawati, 2023).

Previous studies (Mercer et al., 2004; Paul & Elder, 2012; Brookfield, 2017) show that the quality of classroom talk is closely related to the development of critical thinking skills. Giving students the space to engage in open dialogue, ask reflective questions, and evaluate arguments in English can significantly develop their higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, changing the classroom communication paradigm from teacher-centered to student-centered reflective dialogue is key to fostering critical thinking disposition in English classes. This change is also in line with the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum and higher education policies in Indonesia, which emphasize the importance of critical thinking skills-based learning. Reflective thinking and self-evaluation have a significant impact on the scientific aspects, resilience, and academic well-being of EFL students.

This study aims to reimagine classroom discourse and redesign interactive practices in English language classrooms to enhance reflection and dialogue, with the primary objective of cultivating critical thinking skills in EFL students. This research was conducted in English language classrooms in Indonesia, where oral interaction is used as a pedagogical tool to integrate reflection, evaluation, and critical idea development. Through this study, it is hoped that a new understanding will emerge on how reflective speaking practices can be an effective strategy in improving the quality of speaking learning and developing students' critical thinking skills in the context of EFL in the Indonesian EFL classroom.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Classroom Talk and Dialogic Teaching

The use of spoken language in the classroom to encourage students' learning and thinking is known as "classroom talk." (Déz-Palomar et al., 2021). Based on Jocuns (2021), classroom discussions provide students more opportunities to develop their language skills. Dialogic education is increasingly valued for its role in improving students' critical thinking and knowledge through the use of dialogue (Cui & Teo, 2021). Dialogic education focuses on involving students in classroom dialogues characterized by equality, collectivity, reciprocity, and accountability (Mercer et al., 2004). Studies indicate that the quality of verbal interaction in classrooms significantly influences cognitive learning outcomes. Teachers provide students with spoken interaction opportunities by allowing them to choose their preferred discourse (Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013; Doley, 2019). Dialogic teaching is a method of classroom discourse that involves active participation and dialogue between students and teachers (Alexander, 2018).

Dialogic teaching emphasizes engaged students, student autonomy, and the capacity for students to influence classroom activities to some degree (Sedova et al., 2016). Alexander (2008) and his colleagues developed the idea of dialogic teaching, which emphasizes open interaction, questions of genuine inquiry, and the elaboration of ideas by students rather than the repetition of short answers. Dialogic teaching and learning involves a shared approach to experience and information, facilitated through intertextual ties in classroom discussions across various time scales (Boyd, 2016). Dialogic teaching strategies, including whole-class and small-group discussions, enhance student participation and engagement, resulting in improved student outcomes, as teachers develop questioning skills (Ramasamy & Zainal, 2023).

Productive forms of conversation (e.g., questioning assumptions, requesting evidence, comparing perspectives) correlate with higher learning achievement and the development of argumentative thinking. Field research shows that lecturers can change conversation patterns by deliberately designing questions, allowing time for thinking, and facilitating responses from students who respond to each other.

The implication for the university context is the need for a shift in the role of lecturers: from deliverers of answers to facilitators of discussion who guide the thinking process. This transformation requires pedagogical skills (designing open-ended questions, scaffolding dialogue, resisting response dominance) as well as classroom policies that allow room for mistakes and ignorance as part of the learning process.

### 2.2 Reflective Speaking as a Pedagogical Practice

Reflective speaking is defined as a speaking practice that involves reflection on the reasons, thought processes, and experiences behind statements. This concept is rooted in the tradition of reflective learning and professional reflection practices, which emphasize that optimal learning occurs when experiences are followed by structured reflection. Reflective speaking helps students become aware of their learning processes, which in turn helps them acquire metacognitive awareness (Flavell, 1979).

In classroom practice, reflective speaking translates into activities such as explaining the reasons behind opinions, mapping thought processes verbally, providing reflective feedback to classmates, and engaging in reflective responses after discussions (reflective journals or brief verbal reflections). This practice not only trains speaking skills but also metacognition and evaluative abilities. In a study by Sojisirikul and Chanchula (2023), students used the VoiceThread platform for reflective speaking activities, and the results showed that these activities helped increase their confidence in speaking and facilitated their reflective thinking. Thus, by expressing ideas clearly, assessing their speaking abilities, and modifying their communication tactics, reflective speaking enables students to participate in deeper cognitive processing. Bugg & Dewey (1934) idea of reflective thought, which stresses the active, persistent, and rigorous evaluation of ideas or knowledge in light of evidence and consequences, is closely related to reflective speech. Reflective tasks in classroom discussions enhance students' reasoning skills, help them identify argument weaknesses, and enable view revisions based on evidence. In language learning, reflective speaking serves both as a practice method and a means for critical thinking.

### *2.3 Development of Critical Thinking in Indonesian Higher Education*

The development of critical thinking skills in higher education in Indonesia is increasingly viewed as essential in the 21st century, necessitating that students not only master content but also analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information independently. As noted by English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia, although the concept of critical thinking has been adopted into the education system, its implementation is still limited, and only some institutions have succeeded in integrating it deeply into teaching practices (Ilyas, 2017).

A review of trends in Indonesian language education highlights a rise in intervention studies, such as reflective learning and problem-based learning. However, results of these implementations vary based on task design, lecturer preparedness, and institutional context. The use of critical thinking skills in the classroom enhances the value of education by supporting teachers in their work and encouraging students to learn successfully (Bachtiar et al., 2024).

Common obstacles include traditional teaching styles, large class sizes, and students' reluctance to express contradictory opinions. A study reports that many students enter college with low critical thinking skills; for example, a survey of high school students in Bengkulu showed low scores in the areas of "simple explanation," "assumption making," and "integration making," which are components of critical thinking (Fitriani et al., 2022). Recent empirical studies in Indonesia also suggest that interventions that explicitly train verbal reflection (e.g., reason rubrics, peer questioning protocols, structured reflection prompts) can improve certain aspects of students' critical thinking, particularly the ability to explain reasons and evaluate evidence. However, the sustainability of change depends on professional development support for lecturers and culturally sensitive task engineering.

### *2.4 Contextual Barriers and Implementation Strategies*

The Indonesian context requires special attention: educational hierarchy norms (balancing respect and freedom of expression), students' rhetorical anxiety, and assessment practices that still evaluate "right" or "wrong" answers rather than the quality of the argument. Therefore, strategies for implementing reflective speaking should focus on training teachers to encourage discussions, creating guidelines for assessing argument quality and reflection skills, using small groups and peer feedback to ease anxiety, and assigning tasks that link theory to local issues to make them more relevant and encourage participation. These principles are consistent with the recommendations of international dialogic and reflective studies. Several teaching techniques are necessary for the successful application of reflective speaking, such as teaching instructors how to promote dialogic interaction (Sedova et al., 2016).

## *5. Research Gap and Expected Contribution*

Although there is direct evidence that classroom dialogue and reflective practices improve critical thinking, there are still limited long-term qualitative studies exploring the experiences of lecturers and students in Indonesian universities, particularly regarding reflective speaking as an integrated practice (rather than just a separate task). This study investigates the implementation and impact of reflective speaking on classroom communication and critical thinking in Indonesian universities while also creating culturally sensitive practical guidelines.

## **3. Research Question**

The following research questions were formulated in relation to the study's objective:

1. How can the practice of reflective speaking enhance students' critical thinking skills at Indonesian universities?
2. To what extent does the implementation of reflective speaking change the way students participate in classroom discussions?

## **4. Method**

### *4.1 Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative case study design, focusing on one speaking course at the University of Muhammadiyah Bone and the University of Muhammadiyah Barru, which was implemented over approximately five months to enhance reflective speaking. Qualitative case studies are appropriate for comprehending phenomena within their natural context via diverse data sources, allowing researchers to investigate meaning, processes, and perceptions comprehensively (Chu, PH. and Chang, 2017; Creswell, 2003).

The researcher acted as a non-participant observer to minimize bias from the role of the lecturers. The units of analysis include classroom talk episodes during oral tasks, student reflection notes, and interviews. Design quality is maintained through source and method triangulation, brief member checking, an audit trail of analytical decisions, and a thick description of the classroom context.

#### 4.2 Setting and Participant of the Research

Participants were chosen by purposive sampling based on the principle of maximum variance. The focus of this research is to achieve comprehensive knowledge rather than statistical generalizations. Two universities were selected for their implementation of a reflective-dialogic approach in their speaking courses. Four lecturers were selected for their direct implementation of reflective speaking, while twelve students were chosen based on gender diversity, levels of participation, and confidence in English speaking to ensure a range of perspectives.

Credibility is maintained through method triangulation (interviews and observations). Observations were conducted over five months to ensure the consistency of the findings. Data saturation is achieved when additional interviews no longer produce new themes but only reinforce previously emerging patterns; thus, the analysis is considered stable and conceptually adequate.

#### 4.3 Research Instrument and Data Collection

In this study, data collection was performed through in-depth interviews and classroom observation. These two methods were used in an integrated manner to obtain a comprehensive picture of how reflective speaking practices are implemented in the classroom and how they contribute to the development of critical thinking skills among students at Indonesian universities.

First, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the perceptions, experiences, and views of lecturers and students regarding classroom talk and reflective speaking practices. The interviews were semi-structured so that researchers had clear questions to guide them but still allowed participants to explain their experiences freely and reflectively. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded with the participants' permission. The interview topics covered how lecturers directed reflective discussions, the role of open-ended questions in encouraging critical thinking, and changes in student behavior in terms of active participation during the learning process.

Second, classroom observations were conducted to obtain real data on the interactions that took place in the classroom. Observations were conducted over five months. The researchers acted as non-participant observers to ensure that teaching and learning activities took place naturally without intervention. The focus of the observation included patterns of communication between lecturers and students, the types of questions used in discussions, the intensity of verbal reflection, and the form of feedback given during the reflective speaking process. The observation data was recorded in a structured observation sheet containing categories such as 'types of reflective questions,' 'response duration,' and 'quality of student arguments.'

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The study employed a thematic analysis approach for data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method was selected due to its capacity to facilitate the identification, analysis, and interpretation of emergent patterns of meaning from qualitative data, including interview results and classroom observations. The analysis was conducted inductively, meaning that the themes that emerged were sourced directly from the field data, rather than based on predetermined theories. The analysis process began during the data collection stage and continued until the final interpretation stage, enabling the researchers to understand the context of the phenomenon comprehensively.

### 5. Results

#### 5.1 Transforming Classroom Talk into Dialogic Interaction

The first finding shows that the process of reimagining classroom talk through reflective speaking has successfully transformed the previously one-way classroom communication pattern into a two-way, dialogical, and reflective interaction. Prior to the implementation of this approach, the learning process in speaking classes at most universities was still dominated by conventional lectures and question-and-answer sessions that placed lecturers at the center of information. However, after the reflective speaking approach was implemented, there was a significant change in the way lecturers and students interacted. Classes became more participatory, dynamic, and oriented toward the exploration of ideas, rather than simply the reproduction of knowledge.

From the results of interviews with four lecturers, a consistent pattern emerged that they were aware of major changes in the dynamics of classroom talk.

Lecturer (1) revealed: *"Initially, I did most of the talking in class. But after I implemented reflective questioning techniques, I began to reduce my lectures and give students time to think and respond. Now the discussions are livelier and students are beginning to respond to each other."*

(Lecturer 1, Interview March 2025).

Lecturer (2) added: *"My classes used to be like monologues - I explained, the students took notes. But now they can debate with logical arguments. I just facilitate the flow so that they stay focused and respect each other."*

(Lecturer 2, Interview April 2025).

Lecturer (3) highlighted a change in student attitudes: *"Previously, students rarely asked questions. But now, they are starting to challenge my ideas not in a rude way, but with strong arguments. This is something new in our classroom culture"*

(Lecturer 3, Interview April 2025).

Meanwhile, Lecturer 4 emphasized the value of this change from a pedagogical perspective:

*"This transformation is not just about how we speak, but how we think. Students learn that communication is a dialogue, not just answering the lecturer's questions."*

(Lecturer 4, Interview May 2025).

Based on interviews with four lecturers, a consistent pattern was found regarding significant changes in classroom conversation dynamics after the implementation of reflective speaking techniques. All four lecturers showed awareness that their role as lecturers had shifted from being the center of conversation to being facilitators of more participatory dialogue.

Lecturer 1 emphasized an increase in student interaction and engagement after using reflective questioning techniques, which made discussions more lively and student responses more diverse. Lecturer 2 confirmed this transformation by stating that classes that were previously monologues had now turned into spaces for logical, respectful debate. Lecturer 3 highlighted a change in student attitudes, with students now more courageous in asking questions and presenting critical arguments against the lecturer's ideas. Meanwhile, Lecturer 4 emphasized that this change holds significant pedagogical value because it alters how students think and understand communication, which is now seen as a process of equal dialogue rather than merely answering the lecturer's questions. The interview results indicate that the implementation of reflective speaking fosters a significant transformation in classroom culture. The interaction between lecturers and students becomes more dialogical, reflective, and collaborative, thereby contributing to the focus on enhancing students' critical thinking and academic communication skills within higher education settings.

Students also feel this change. *"We used to be afraid to speak up for fear of being wrong. But with the lecturer's reflective questions, we feel safe to express our personal opinions. It makes us think more before answering."*

(Student 1, Interview, May 2025).

*'Now we don't just answer, but we are also asked back, "Why do you think so?" That makes me think more deeply before speaking.'*

(Student 3, Interview, May 2025).

*"In the past, we just listened to the lecturer's explanations and took notes. Now, we are often invited to discuss and asked to give our opinions. It was a little difficult at first, but over time I felt more confident and began to think critically."*

(Student 5, Interview, June 2025)

*"Classes are more lively now. We can respond to our friends' opinions, not just the lecturers'. Sometimes there are debates, but that helps me understand the material better and learn to respect other people's points of view."*

(Student 8, Interview, April 2025)

*"When the lecturer asked us to reflect and question ourselves, I got used to thinking about the reasons behind my answers. So it wasn't just a matter of answering, but really understanding what I was saying."*

(Student 10, Interview, July 2025).

*"Now the atmosphere is more comfortable and open. We are not afraid of making mistakes because the lecturers also respond in a way that encourages us to keep thinking. It feels like a dialogue, not an exam."*

(Student 4, Interview, August 2025)

Observations conducted over eight weeks at two universities showed that this transformation in communication patterns actually occurred in the field. Before the reflective speaking intervention, lecturers accounted for 65-70% of the total class time. However, after the reflective approach was implemented, this proportion decreased to around 40%, while student participation increased to 60%. In several discussion sessions, researchers observed the following changes: Students began to ask questions back to lecturers or friends ('*Why do you think so?*' and '*Can you give another example?*'). Lecturers often used open-ended questions such as '*What makes you believe that?*' or '*How can we connect this idea to real-life situations?*' The discussions became more interactive, with 3-4 students actively involved in each topic. There were reflective moments after the discussion, where lecturers asked students to summarize their thoughts. Observational notes also show that non-verbal interaction increases - students appear more focused, make eye contact, and respond to peers spontaneously. This indicates higher cognitive and emotional engagement than before.

## 2. Developing Critical Thinking through Reflective Speaking

The second finding shows that reflective speaking activities play an important role in fostering students' critical thinking skills and involve encouraging them to engage actively by speaking to answer lecturers' questions but also to compose, review, and evaluate their thoughts in depth. The pattern of speaking in class changes from performance-based speaking to thinking-based speaking, where students are trained to link personal ideas with evidence, assess their peers' arguments, and express reflections on different views.

Observations in two classes showed that reflective speaking activities were generally conducted after group discussion sessions or mini presentations. Lecturers asked reflective questions such as "*How does your opinion change after listening to your peers?*" or "*What kind of reasoning supports your statement?*" Questions like these encourage students to think metacognitively, to be aware of their thinking processes, and to strengthen their abilities in analysis, evaluation, and inference, which are at the core of critical thinking (Facione, 2020).

Interviews with four lecturers revealed a consistent pattern of views that reflective speaking helps students pause to think before speaking.' For example: Lecturer 1 stated, "Students are beginning to learn not to answer questions immediately but to think first, considering the logic and evidence before they speak." Interview, March 2025)

Lecturer 2 added: 'I noticed that when I asked them to explain the reasoning behind their answers, students began to demonstrate a more analytical thought process. They did not just answer "because I think so", but also gave reasons and real examples.' Interview, April 2025)

Lecturer 3 revealed: 'Reflective practice makes them more courageous in correcting their own opinions. For example, after a discussion, they can say, "I used to think that way, but now I realize...". That is a sign of developing critical thinking.' Interview, June 2025)

Lecturer 4 mentioned: 'I often use verbal reflection at the end of class. Questions such as "What did you learn from others today?" make them re - evaluate the value of each argument.' Interview, June 2025).

From the observations, it was evident that students showed improvement in the quality of their reflective speaking. At the beginning of the semester, most students only answered questions briefly and descriptively. However, after six weeks of applying reflective speaking, there was a significant change; students more frequently used argumentative connectives such as 'because,' 'however,' and 'for example.' They also began to respond to their peers' opinions with reflective comments such as, "I understand your point, but I think we need to consider another perspective..."

In addition, classroom interactions became more balanced. Lecturers were no longer the only source of validation of truth but acted as facilitators of dialogue who guided students to think critically and independently. Students from different campuses expressed this sentiment, including student 5, who stated, 'Previously, I only focused on answering questions to appear competent. However, frequent reflection prompts me to question the logic of my reasoning.' (Interview, July 2025)

Student 6: "When asked to explain why I agree or disagree, I have to think more deeply. So it's not just talking but also thinking about the reasons." Interview, July 2025)

Student 7: "Reflective speaking helps me realize my errors in thinking. Sometimes I realize that my arguments are weak after listening to my friends." Interview, August 2025).

## 5.2 Building a Reflective and Collaborative Classroom Culture

The third finding shows that the implementation of reflective speaking not only develops students' critical thinking skills individually but also fosters a reflective, collaborative, and respectful classroom culture. Classes that were initially rigid and teacher-centered began to transform into open, participatory, and dialogue-based learning environments (student-centered and dialogic). Through regular reflective speaking activities, students learned to listen actively, appreciate differing perspectives, and construct shared meaning through group thinking.

Researchers observed substantial alterations in classroom dynamics over an eight-week period. In the early weeks, most students tended to remain silent, awaiting the lecturer's instructions, and speaking only when directed. However, the consistent implementation of the reflective speaking activity led to more lively classroom interactions. Students began to provide feedback to each other, discuss without fear of being wrong, and boldly ask reflective questions such as "Do you think our group's conclusion really represents all perspectives?" or "What other evidence could support that opinion?"

In interviews with four lecturers involved, it became apparent that reflective speaking plays a crucial role in fostering a more cooperative learning environment.

Lecturer 1 stated, "I noticed that the classroom atmosphere became much livelier after reflective speaking was implemented. Students began talking to each other, not just to me." Interview, March 2025)

Lecturer 2 added, "At first, the discussions felt like a formality. But once they got used to reflection, empathy and mutual listening emerged. They began to truly engage in dialogue." Interview, June 2025)

Lecturer 3 said, "When students share their reflections, their friends respond in a constructive manner. I rarely see them criticizing without reason anymore." Interview, June 2025)

Lecturer 4 emphasized, "I feel that reflective speaking makes them more cohesive. They build ideas together, rather than competing to see who is most correct." Interview, August 2025)

The results of the observation show that lecturers gradually changed their role from knowledge transmitters to learning facilitators. They more often used open-ended questions, invited group reflection, and provided process-based feedback, rather than just results. Students also showed increased participation: the number of verbal contributions per session doubled in the sixth week compared to the first week.

Researchers also discovered that group reflection following each discussion session was a crucial element in fostering a collaborative culture. For example, in one session at the university, students were asked to write and read aloud a sentence reflecting on what they had learned from other groups. This simple activity created an atmosphere of mutual respect and strengthened social relationships among class members.

Four students from various universities also described similar changes in classroom atmosphere:

Student 8: *“Now the classroom is a place for exchanging ideas, not just listening to the lecturer. I feel more comfortable expressing my opinion.”*

Student 9: *“Reflective speaking makes us more open. Sometimes I disagree with my friends, but we learn to discuss without emotion.”*

Student 10: *“I used to be afraid of saying the wrong thing. Now I know that mistakes are part of the thinking process.”*

Student 11: *“I feel that discussions have become more in-depth. We learn to add to each other’s ideas, rather than just waiting for our turn to speak.”*

## 6. Discussion

The combined findings from interviews and observations indicate that reflective speaking can transform classroom talk into a dialogic space that supports the development of critical thinking. These findings support the theory of reflective learning proposed by Dewey (1933) and Visser (2010), which states that reflection is at the heart of critical learning. In this context, reflective speaking becomes a concrete means of combining thinking and speaking as a simultaneous process. Students do not merely “convey” ideas, but “process” them as they speak.

The findings of this study confirm that reflective speaking is effective as an instructional strategy because it places reasoning, rather than mere formal accuracy, at the core of oral performance. When tasks are designed to force students to answer why and how, classroom talk shifts from display talk to exploratory talk. This shift is evident in the increase in justification, reference to evidence, counterarguments, and willingness to revise positions, all of which are key indicators of critical thinking. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning in Indonesia, these changes also encourage the development of academic language competencies: the use of causal/contrastive discourse markers, appropriate stance and hedging, and more coherent organization of ideas. Students are encouraged to connect evidence, provide reasoning, and update their views. This matches the ideas of dialogic teaching, showing that good classroom discussions, which are open to different ideas, based on solid reasoning, and involve working together, lead to better learning results and help develop critical thinking skills (Alexander, 2020 & D éz-Palomar et al., 2021).

The shift from teacher-centered talk to dialogic talk reflects a change in the pedagogical paradigm, whereby communication in the classroom is no longer merely the delivery of information, but rather a shared process of constructing meaning. This change supports Alexander’s (2020) theory of dialogic teaching, which emphasizes the importance of open interaction for developing critical thinking abilities and intellectual knowledge. Thus, this emphasizes the importance of reflection-based interaction to build mutual understanding? In Indonesia, this practice marks a significant change in the academic culture, which previously tended to be teacher-centered. In the context of Indonesian educational culture, which tends to be hierarchical (Hofstede, 2011).

The success of establishing dialogic interaction shows that a reflective approach can bridge the gap between a culture of politeness and freedom of thought. Thus, reflective speaking not only strengthens students’ English speaking skills but it helps them develop their critical thinking skills and self-awareness of how they think. Furthermore, these results also confirm Mercer and Howe’s (2012) view that talk is a tool for thinking. Talking is not only for expressing ideas, but also for constructing and modifying thoughts. Students who were actively involved in reflective discussions showed improvement in their ability to explain reasons, evaluate arguments, and connect concepts to real-world contexts.

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The establishment of dialogic interaction successfully demonstrates that a reflective approach can effectively bridge the divide between a culture of politeness and the freedom of thought. Thus, reflective speaking strengthens students’ English speaking skills and helps them develop their critical thinking skills and self-awareness of how they think. Furthermore, these results also confirm Mercer and Howe’s (2012) view that talk is a tool for thinking. Talking is not only for expressing ideas but also for constructing and modifying thoughts. Students who were actively involved in reflective discussions showed an improvement in their ability to explain reasons, evaluate arguments, and connect concepts to real-world contexts.

The results of this study confirm that reflective speaking is not only a speaking strategy but also a pedagogical approach that can transform the way students think and interact intellectually. In Indonesian higher education, which usually focuses on one-way teaching and finding the right answers, using reflective speaking adds a new way to communicate academically, where speaking helps with critical thinking (speaking-as-thinking). Reflective speaking becomes a catalyst for building intellectual trust between students and lecturers, as well as among students themselves.

The process of verbal reflection allows students to re-examine assumptions, connect personal experiences with theory, and develop more logical and evidence-based arguments. This is in line with Collins (1997) view that critical reflection occurs when individuals review their beliefs and actions in a broader social context. Thus, transforming classroom talk into dialogic interaction not only changes communication patterns but also builds an important foundation for the development of critical, collaborative, and reflective thinking

skills, key skills in 21st-century learning. Mercer & Howe (2012) argue that dialogic learning is not merely a communication strategy; instead, it is a social ecosystem that encourages interthinking.

In the Indonesian context, the shift toward reflective and collaborative classrooms indicates a paradigm shift from hierarchical learning to a more egalitarian and dialogic approach (Wegerif, 2013). In the classroom, this process fosters a sense of community by understanding mistakes as part of intellectual exploration rather than personal weaknesses. Thus, collective reflection fosters critical thinking skills individually and instills the values of collaboration, empathy, and openness in academic communication. The results of this study show that when reflective speaking is integrated consistently, it not only changes the way students speak but also changes the way they learn and think together.

In addition, this practice reinforces the metacognitive dimension of learning. When students speak reflectively, they express their opinions and evaluate their thinking, a process that, according to Facione (1990), is at the core of critical self-regulation. In classroom observations, students who were initially passive became more active in asking questions, responding to different views, and demonstrating awareness of the quality of the arguments they constructed. In other words, reflective speaking serves as a bridge between oral communication and the development of analytical skills.

Implications for EFL lecturers. First, treat reflective speaking as a lesson design framework, not an additional activity. Use a pre-, during-, and post-pattern: pre-task to organize claims and evidence; during-task to encourage justification and counterarguments; and post-task for guided reflection based on a rubric. Second, calibrate questions: start with why/how, move on to the quality of evidence (relevance, credibility), and end with implications/alternatives. Third, display talk snippets (short transcripts) as feedback objects; highlight argument marker phrases (e.g., however, therefore, evidence suggests), stance (it seems plausible that...), and hedging. Fourth, use an integrated rubric that links idea indicators (arguments, evidence, and coherence) with language indicators (clarity, functional accuracy, lexical-grammatical resources) so that assessment encourages both reasoning and language.

Its implementation is feasible in various Indonesian EFL contexts if lecturers adopt the appropriate supporting tools. The integrated rubric links idea indicators (argumentation, relevance & credibility of evidence, and coherence) with language indicators (clarity, lexical-grammatical adequacy, and rhetorical function); this rubric is shared at the outset and used for self/peer assessment so that students know the standards they are aiming for. For large classes, lecturers can use a collaborative format (small groups with the roles of “claim presenter,” “evidence evaluator” and “fallacy survivor”). In a learning culture that tends to avoid confrontation, lecturers can normalize polite disagreement with supporting language so that intellectual courage grows without sacrificing pragmatic politeness.

From an assessment and curriculum perspective, reflective speaking enables authentic assessment that is aligned with the learning outcomes of the English study program: academic speaking skills, argument literacy, and scientific collaboration. To balance the cognitive load, lecturers can provide concise readings, data visualizations as sources of evidence, topic glossaries, and short rehearsal sessions; thus, increasing the complexity of ideas does not overwhelm language performance. Finally, making this practice work well depends on training for lecturers (like practicing teaching techniques, using prompts, and collaborating with other lecturers) so that reflective speaking becomes a regular part of lesson planning, helping students improve their English speaking and critical thinking skills.

This research has a significant novelty because it does not view reflective speaking as an additional activity in learning but rather as an integrated learning framework. Previous research often placed reflection as the final task of a discussion or a specific questioning technique; this study shows that reflection can be systematically designed before, during, and after speaking activities. With this approach, speaking is no longer just a language skill exercise but becomes an active thinking process (speaking-as-thinking). Students are trained to explain reasons, evaluate evidence, and consciously revise their opinions. This means that speaking skills and critical thinking skills develop simultaneously within a comprehensive learning design.

Indonesia's higher education system is often hierarchical and puts a lot of emphasis on lecturers. This research significantly improves the situation. The research findings indicate that the integration of reflective speaking could convert classroom communication from a lecturer's monologue to a more open and collaborative dialogue. When students can ask questions, make their points, and listen to what their classmates have to say in a polite and respectful way, they feel more confident. The reflective-dialogic approach can help make the classroom culture more fair, get more people involved, and improve English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' ability to think critically in Indonesia. This study is unique because of its theoretical framework and the empirical evidence that shows this strategy can meet all of these goals.

## **7. Implications of the Study**

The results of this study have important implications for English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning in Indonesian universities. The findings show that the application of reflective speaking can change classroom communication practices from lecturer-centered patterns to more collaborative and critical thinking in dialogic interactions. The main implication is that lecturers need to develop a new role as facilitators of dialogue, rather than merely conveyors of information. To achieve this, lecturers must consistently use reflective questions, allow time for thinking, and encourage responses among students. Thus, reflective speaking is no longer an additional activity but a learning design framework that integrates reflection before, during, and after speaking activities.

This study also suggests that critical thinking should be at the heart of speaking activities in higher education English language learning. Through the use of structured reflection, students become more aware of their thought processes, able to connect arguments with evidence,

and more confident in expressing their views and responding to their peers' opinions. This condition shows that reflective speaking improves oral language skills and strengthens higher-order thinking skills. In the context of Indonesian learning culture, which tends to be hierarchical, this approach serves as an important bridge that provides a safe space for students to express their opinions without fear of being wrong, thereby creating a more open, egalitarian, and collaborative classroom environment.

From a curriculum perspective, this study emphasizes the need to integrate argumentation- and reflection-based authentic assessments into speaking. Assessment should not only focus on linguistic accuracy but also on the quality of reasoning, clarity of argument, relevance of evidence, and students' ability to evaluate different perspectives. To that end, lecturers need an integrated rubric that assesses both linguistic aspects and critical thinking skills. This study also emphasizes the importance of professional development for lecturers through training in the use of talk moves, designing higher-order questions, and facilitating metacognitive reflection so that reflective speaking practices can be implemented consistently and sustainably.

Overall, the implications of this study confirm that reflective speaking is a relevant and effective approach to improving the quality of English language learning in higher education. This approach improves students' speaking skills and builds a classroom culture that encourages collaboration, empathy, and intellectual courage. Thus, reflective speaking can be a pedagogical strategy that supports the achievement of 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking, argumentative communication, and independent learning.

## 8. Conclusion

This study concludes that implementing reflective speaking in Indonesian EFL higher education enhances students' critical thinking skills by transforming classroom interaction into a dialogic and collaborative learning environment. Evidence from interviews and observations indicates that students become more confident and willing to engage in discussions. Reflective prompts foster metacognitive awareness, improving argument quality. Lecturers also transition from being knowledge transmitters to facilitators, resulting in more balanced interactions and richer intellectual exchanges.

Furthermore, reflective speaking fosters a supportive classroom culture in Indonesian universities, characterized by openness, empathy, active listening, and collaborative knowledge construction. This approach addresses traditional hierarchies and the fear of mistakes, creating a safe environment for intellectual exploration. The study underscores reflective speaking as a potent pedagogical framework for enhancing English speaking proficiency and critical thinking, in accordance with 21st-century educational objectives and Indonesian higher education reforms. Future research is suggested to explore its long-term sustainability, cross-disciplinary impact, and the role of lecturer professional development in promoting reflective-dialogic pedagogies. Thus, a minimal amount of artificial intelligence tools was utilized by the author during the process of writing and editing this manuscript. The primary goals of the author were to improve the clarity of academic writing, correct grammatical errors, enhance the coherence of paragraphs, and refine the language.

There is no use of artificial intelligence for the purposes of generating research ideas, developing research plans, collecting data, analyzing that data, interpreting findings, or coming to conclusions. Intellectual diligence and responsibility on the part of the author are the source of all conceptual frameworks, theoretical arguments, methodological decisions, and synthesis of research findings. All the results generated by artificial intelligence have been validated, reviewed, and critically edited by the authors to ensure that they are accurate, contextually relevant, and in accordance with the principles of academic integrity and research ethics. Therefore, the use of artificial intelligence in this research does not serve as a substitute for the intellectual role of the authors in producing scientific contributions.

Despite the positive results, this study has several limitations that require consideration. This study employs a qualitative case study design, involving a limited number of participants and focusing on a single course over two years. This makes the research findings not yet generalizable to all contexts of higher education in Indonesia. Furthermore, the data predominantly derives from interviews and classroom observations, rendering it significantly reliant on the researchers' interpretations.

For subsequent research, it is advisable to employ a mixed-method approach to enhance the robustness and measurability of the results, such as incorporating critical thinking assessments prior to and following the intervention. Long-term studies are also important to find out if the effects of reflective speaking last over time. Additionally, research can be expanded to various universities, study programs, or even other disciplines to test whether this model is effective in different contexts. Further research also needs to explore in more depth the role of lecturer training and the use of technology so that the implementation of reflective speaking can run more consistently and sustainably.

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## Author contributions

Gunawan and Sahril Nur are in charge of planning the research and rewriting the article text to ensure academic integrity and substantive accuracy. Amirullah Abduh contributes to the analysis of the gathered data. Meanwhile, Samtidar produced the initial manuscript, helped

develop the theoretical framework, and analyzed the research findings. Finally, prior to publication, all authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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