

ASSESSING THE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING

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Abstract: Assessment in critical thinking (CT) is essential to be implemented particularly in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms; it can help teachers recognize their students' English proficiency as well as CT skill level since both of them are interconnected. However, this assessment of CT is not well achieved in most language schools in Indonesia including at the university level since CT is not an independent subject, it is only linked to the main subjects existing in Indonesian curriculum. Therefore, this current study tries to investigate (1) teachers' perspective on assessing their students' CT (2) strategies that the teachers use to assess their students' CT, and how those strategies are implemented. In depth interviews were conducted with two lectures of the English education Department. The findings show that (RQ1) the teachers realize that it is very important to assess students' CT during teaching-learning process mainly in ELT context even though CT is not aimed as the main objectives of the course, (RQ 2) teachers use **questions and answers, instructions and directions, group discussion and pair assessment** strategies to assess their students' CT through giving questions and instructions to gain their students' ideas which are implemented in the beginning, main, and closing activities relating to the topic discussed. In addition, they also conduct group discussion to help students actively involved in sharing their ideas, peer assessment is also utilised. In this case, teachers use their own creativity to assess their students' CT. They relate the assessments given to assess students' CT based on the goal and objectives of the course, and what should be achieved in that course. From this study, language teachers are suggested to encourage university students by creating classroom activities that lead to developing students' critical thinking based on the goal or objectives of the course, and what should be achieved in that course. In addition, further research is expected to expand this scope by involving more participants in a variety of contexts and fields to achieve more insightful knowledge and experience.

Keywords—*Critical Thinking, Assessment, Assessment of Critical Thinking*

Abstrak: Penilaian berpikir kritis sangat penting untuk diterapkan khususnya di kelas pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, hal tersebut diklaim dapat membantu guru mengenali kemampuan Bahasa Inggris siswa dan keterampilan berfikir kritis karena keduanya saling berhubungan. Namun, penilaian berfikir kritis ini tidak tercapai dengan baik di sebagian besar sekolah bahasa di Indonesia termasuk di tingkat universitas karena keterampilan berfikir kritis bukanlah mata kuliah yang berdiri sendiri, melainkan terkait dengan mata kuliah utama yang ada dalam kurikulum di Indonesia. Penelitian ini mencoba untuk menyelidiki (1) perspektif dosen dalam menilai kemampuan berfikir kritis mahasiswanya (2) strategi yang digunakan dosen untuk menilai kemampuan berfikir kritis mahasiswa, dan bagaimana strategi tersebut diterapkan. Wawancara secara mendalam dilakukan dengan dua orang dosen dari jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa (RQ1) para dosen menyadari betapa pentingnya untuk menilai kemampuan berfikir kritis mahasiswa selama proses belajar-mengajar terutama dalam konteks pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, (RQ 2) dosen menggunakan strategi pertanyaan dan jawaban, instruksi dan arahan, diskusi kelompok dan penilaian berpasangan untuk menilai kemampuan berfikir kritis mahasiswa mereka. Melalui pemberian pertanyaan dan instruksi untuk mendapatkan gagasan mahasiswa yang diimplementasikan dalam kegiatan awal, utama, dan penutup berkaitan dengan topik yang dibahas. Selain itu, dosen juga menerapkan diskusi kelompok untuk membantu mahasiswa terlibat aktif dalam berbagi ide atau gagasan, dan penilaian rekan juga digunakan. Dalam hal ini, dosen menciptakan ide kreatif mereka sendiri untuk menilai kemampuan berfikir kritis mahasiswanya. Mereka menghubungkan penilaian yang diberikan untuk menilai kemampuan berfikir kritis mahasiswa berdasarkan tujuan pembelajaran, dan apa yang harus dicapai dalam mata kuliah tersebut. Dari penelitian ini, para pengajar Bahasa Inggris disarankan untuk menciptakan kegiatan kelas yang mengarah pada pengembangan kemampuan berfikir kritis mahasiswa berdasarkan pada

tujuan pembelajaran, dan apa yang harus dicapai pada mata kuliah tersebut. Selain itu, para peneliti dimasa mendatang diharapkan dapat memperluas cakupan ini dengan melibatkan lebih banyak peserta dalam berbagai konteks dan bidang untuk mencapai pengetahuan dan pengalaman yang lebih mendalam.

Kata Kunci—Berpikir Kritis, Penilaian, Penilaian Berpikir Kritis

INTRODUCTION

The growth of critical thinking (CT) skills that are commonly discussed as higher order thinking (HOT) skills is regarded as a crucial part of successful and meaningful goals of higher education. Higher education students and graduates are required to make decisions based on critical and logical consideration of information they get and they share (Verburgh et al., 2013). It has received heightened attention from educators and policy makers in higher education and has been included as one of the core learning outcomes of college students by many institutions including in Indonesia. It is believed that CT plays a central role in logical thinking, decision making, and problem solving (Butler, 2012). Thus, it is found that students with high CT can effectively gain their academic lives. Masduqi (2006) pointed out that all university students who have high CT can easily use and improve their logical skills to analyse, evaluate and reinforce their intellectuals. It is also believed that to win the battle for this global development, we need to own critical thinking ability. Thus, CT skill provides the potential for an effective learning that allows students to become active learners rather than passive receivers to help them to be more confident and competitive in academic, workplace and social contexts.

Regarding the importance of being afforded to CT particularly in higher education level is recently responded by worldwide institutions. Based on global education reports, some countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Hongkong and Japan have listed CT as a fundamental field that should be cultivated and assessed in higher education context (Ku, 2009). However, it is argued that the learning process in Indonesia is commonly conducted through cognitive abilities; students are more required to practice and drill memorization relating to the materials given rather than comprehend the materials and apply them properly in the contextual use (Sanjaya cited in Chusni et al., 2020). This practice has not encouraged CT activities both in the process of teaching-learning and assessment. Rezai et al. (2011) propose teachers to develop students' CT through self-assessment assignment and peer assessment assignment activities. In addition, Fahim et al (2014) declare that the most effective way in developing students' CT skills is through conducting collaborative assessments particularly among students.

Assessing CT is essential for the English language teaching (ELT) in higher education classrooms. It can help teachers to know their students' English proficiency and CT skill level as both are interconnected. Teachers should provide a test to assess both students' English competence and CT at the same time (Silalahi, 2017). In any way, the English test is not only required to be like a pure logical test involving a profound understanding of calculations and mathematical formulas, but also the test must be based on their English competence that assesses the students' CT. It is due to the core of students is to enact creatively and critically in positive ways. Nevertheless, this purpose is not achieved well in most language schools in Indonesia including at the university level (Silalahi, 2017). Therefore, this study attempts to investigate (1) the EFL teachers' perspective on assessing their critical thinking (CT) at university level, (2) what strategies that the teachers use to assess their students' CT, and how those strategies are implemented.

CT is defined as the way of thinking that can be divided into knowledge, skills and attitude (it can be values/ethics). Knowledge can be classified into: (a) Effective reasoning, the use of systematic thinking, and evaluation of evidence; (b) Problem solving; (c) clear expression. While, skills cover: (a) effective reasoning (b) the use of thinking systems. Lastly, attitudes (or values/ethics) include: (a) making reasonable decisions and judgments (b) solving problems (c) attitude tendencies (Binkley et al., 2012). In addition, Khatib and Mehrgan (2012) define CT as a logical, reasonable, analytical, reflective, scientific, higher-order, and reasoning thinking skill. At

the same time, Hassani et al (2013) argue that CT is the ability which analyses facts, generates and organizes ideas, defends opinions, draws inferences, evaluates arguments, and solves problems. Meanwhile, Fahim et al (2012) clearly affirm that CT involves logical reasoning; separates facts from opinions, checks things before accepting, and asks many questions. On top of that, Paul (cited in Rezaei et al., 2011) states that CT is learning about asking and answering analysis, synthesis and evaluation questions. Based on all various definitions mentioned, a definition declared by Paul is one point of view about CT which is closest to Bloom's taxonomy.

While assessment can be defined as anything which has a purpose to diagnose the students' learning process and observe their level of understanding about the materials given by examining their knowledge, strengths and weaknesses as well as evaluating their teachers' teaching effectiveness (Thomas and Vincent, 2001). According to the purpose, assessment can be divided into two types; formative assessment and summative assessment. Glencoe and McGraw (2000) state that formative assessment aims to give information and guidance to the adjustment on continuous orientation". While, "The Summative assessment aims to monitor the progress and to assess all students' success and teaching plan for a long time. Simply, it can be concluded that formative assessment is an assessment of on-going process, while summative assessment is an evaluation of overall process. In this case, formative assessment not only assesses the abilities of students, but also monitors students' learning process through feedback to get better progress. In contrast, summative assessment concerns more about the concept of overall evaluation at the end of the teaching-learning process in a period of time. This form of evaluation is aimed at evaluating and judging the abilities of students. In addition, summative assessment can also be used to assess the effectiveness of the teaching plans and facilities including materials used during the classroom process. (Glenco and McGraw, 2000).

Viewed from the person who evaluates, McGraw (2000) divides assessment into three categories; self-assessment, peer- assessment, and teacher- assessment. Self-assessment refers to the judgment and assessment of students' learning conducted by themselves. Peer-assessment refers to the activity where the students participate in assessing their own work with each other (Falchikov, 1995). In this assessment, students are offered the opportunity to develop their responsibility and judgment by exchanging feedback to one another. The last is teacher-assessment. Teacher, in this context, is the person who assesses the student's learning through a variety of assessments provided in the teaching-learning process (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Assessment of critical thinking (CT) is very significant in language learning including in ELT context because it covers some objectives of students' CT. First, it diagnoses the student's CT level and personality and then helps the teachers to be able to decide what to teach. Second, it plays a role as a feedback to students dealing with their CT, so the teachers can decide how to deal with it. Third, it provides motivation for students to enhance their CT. Fourth, it gives information for teachers and students about how to practice CT successfully. Fifth, it offers students information about their abilities and attitudes. Sixth, it becomes the information for all stakeholders involved at school or university about their students' CT which can be accounted for academically (Chusni & Sapotro 2020).

Basically, assessments for measuring CT can be accessed in many sources. Teachers only need to match the assessment characteristics with the data requirements. Bers (2005) states that there are some various assessments that can be used to assess students' CT, such as Academic Profile, California CTS Disposition Inventory (CCTDI) which comes from the California Academic Press measuring internal motivation of students to solve the problems and make the decisions, California CTS Test (CCTST) which assesses the ability of individuals and groups to think critically, Background Study, Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), Collegiate Learning Assessment Project (CLA), Task, Daily Reasoning Test, Watson-Glaser CTS appraisal, Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and Holistic CTS Scoring Rubric.

In addition, Ennis (2001) also shares several tests concerning CT. The tests are categorized based on the purpose of assessing one aspect or more than one aspect of students' CT. The tests

revealing one aspect of CT include (1) Cornell Class Reasoning Test developed by R.H. Ennis, R. Morrow, W.L. Gardiner, L. Ringel and D. Paul, (2) Logical Reasoning developed by J.P. Guilford and A. Hertzka (3) Test on Appraising Observations developed by S.P. Norris and R. King and (4) Cornell Conditional Reasoning Test (Bers, 2005). However, Ennis categorizes the tests that can reveal more than one aspect of CT as (1) The California CTS Test (2) Cornell CTS Test Level Z (3) Cornell CTS Test Level X (4) The Ennis-Weir CTS Essay Test (5) Judgment which are Deductive Logic and Assumption Recognition (6) New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills (7) Ross Test of Higher Cognitive Processes (8) Test of Inquiry Skills (9) Test of Inference Ability in Reading Comprehension, and (11) Watson-Glaser CTS Appraisal (Bers, 2005; Ennis, 2001).

Furthermore, there is a test sheet called Cornell CTS Tests developed by Ennis focusing on credibility, induction, fallacy, prediction, definition, deduction, and assumptions of identification. In addition, Ennis developed the Ennis-Weir CTS analysis test in cooperation with Weir. The test focuses on the giving truth and hypotheses, evaluating statements, giving sufficient reasons, looking for alternative reasons, avoiding rejection, irrelevance, circularity, overgeneralization, and non-directional language (R. Paul et al., 1997).

There are some difficulties in involving CT assessment in the educational field, particularly in Indonesia. One of them is the lack of appropriate assessment that measures students' CT strength and weaknesses effectively and objectively since CT is not an independent course in Indonesia (Ennis, 2003; Halpern, 2003; Norris, 2003). Teachers will find it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to improve CT skill without using proper assessment to demonstrate that development. Traditional school exams are generally believed to not support CT development since they usually focus on examining content knowledge. Students are usually supposed to learn through memory rather than critical inquiry to be able to obtain the knowledge.

In this context, it is recommended to change the assessment practice to be able to promote students to be more critical. The recent education reform report in Hong Kong emphasized the need to "pay more attention to assessing students' CT ability to implement what they have learned to solve the problems (Education Office, 2003, p. 31). Yet, the complexity of CT assessment makes teachers difficult to develop appropriate metrics to assess students CT (Ennis, 2003).

METHOD

A qualitative method based on in-depth interviews is used in this present study to obtain a valid result. It emphasises the opinions and experiences of the participants. Kvale (2007) states that interviews conducted in qualitative research help researchers to gain in-depth and detailed information of personal views, positions, and life experiences. The data of this current study was taken during the covid-19 pandemic in which the physical interaction is limited. Therefore, the interviews were organized via Zoom Meeting platform. The Zoom Meeting may represent the face-to-face meeting virtually (online) since it provides video and audio for the participants of that meeting to directly see and interact between the interviewer and interviewee. Before conducting the interviews, the participants had correspondingly retained the participations' agreement of the interview session and the data source of this study. Through those interviews, this study is expected to find the appropriate answers to the research questions designed (1) What is the teachers' perspective on assessing students' critical thinking (CT) at university level? (2) What strategies do the teachers use to assess students' CT, and how are those strategies implemented by the teachers?

Participants

Two lecturers of the English Education Department at one of universities in Surabaya-Indonesia were taking roles as participants of this study. They are female lecturers aged 29 to 33, named Aisyah and Fara (pseudonyms). They have been experienced as lecturers in the English field for about four years. When the study was conducted, Aisyah was a teacher of *Methods in English* course while Fara was a lecturer of *Spoken English* course. The participant selection

process was carried out through purposive sampling. It is stated that when researchers are trying to find participants who are expected to provide in-depth information to solve the research problems, purposeful sampling is valuable for that case (Cohen et al., 2018). All personal information gained was not presented as part of the data presentation in order to maintain the privacy and protection of the participants. The data can only be accessed by the researcher.

Data Collection strategies

The interviews were taken in May to June 2021 through *Zoom Meeting* since face-to-face meeting is limited due to COVID-19 pandemic situation. The interview session for each participant was approximately 30 minutes. It was done within semi-structured interviews. It is believed that even if the research focuses on certain thematic questions, semi-structured interviews can be better adapted to the responses and situations of the participants (Berg, 2007). During the interviews, the English language was used to build communication with the participants, but the Indonesian language was also implemented to obtain and provide clearer and more detailed information, and to create a more pleasant and relaxing environment. The researcher discussed from general problems to specific problems relating to the topics provided in main research questions of this study.

Data Analysis strategies

This study implemented thematic analysis (TA) to analyze data from the interviews. It is mostly applied in qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2012) pointed out that by categorizing the theme patterns found in the data set, researchers become easier to evaluate the data. In this analysis, some steps were organized through; (1) Transcribed the data verbatim from the interviews (2) Read the transcripts couple of times to fully understand the information shared by the participants, to wisely avoid losing some important information, and coded the subject according to the questions based on determined classification (3) Coded or grouped the themes that appear in the data set (4) Then, accorded and compared the coded or grouped themes to some theories or previous research findings (5) Lastly, conducted triangulation strategies to make sure and strengthen the validity of the results by asking and confirming the participants whether the data or information provided was accurately presented. Additionally, some experts also commented on or corrected the research results by linking the results to the theories they know.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

RQ 1. The teachers' perspectives on assessing students' critical thinking (CT) at the university level

All the teachers participating in this study realize that assessing students' CT is very important to be conducted during the teaching-learning process mainly in ELT context. It can help teachers understand their students' CT level. Assessment can help teachers measure and diagnose their students' learning progress by examining their knowledge, strengths and weaknesses as well as evaluating their teachers' teaching effectiveness (Thomas and Vincent, 2001). Moreover, their students are studying at the English Education department where they might be teachers in the future who will be involved in teaching and evaluating students' English proficiency.

In this case, they believe that CT skill cannot be separated from the main courses provided in the university, certainly in Indonesian ELT classrooms. It is because of the significant correlation between students' CT and their language skill. For example, it is found that the higher CT that students have, the more successful they can achieve their speaking outcome. Ramezani et al (2016) clearly state that EFL students who are recognized as critical thinkers can strictly perform better in their speaking classroom than students who are not considered as critical thinkers. In line with this finding, Rasyid and Hasyim (2008) also examine the CT ability of

Malaysian undergraduates and its relationship to language proficiency using the Cornell Critical Thinking Test (CCTT) Level X. The result shows significant correlations between students' CT ability and their English language proficiency.

One of participant stated that:

.....assessing their CT is also needed to know their progress in constructing their logical ideas. Yah.. one of the objectives of my course is, students are required to be able to express their ideas critically and logically when they are speaking.

Another participant shared as below:

I teach methods in ELT where it is very crucial in my department. CT is very important for the students to help them understand the materials that I teach such as methods, approaches, and to know some strategies that are appropriate for their future teaching. Besides that, developing their CT and assessing or evaluating their CT development are also needed since they will be future teachers. When they are not used to thinking critically, it will be difficult to help their students to learn and to understand the students' character and condition.

The teachers' perspectives above are also in line with other previous studies that have been conducted. Rasyid and Hasyim (2008) find CT as one of the skills that significantly influences students' academic performance. Furthermore, it has also been argued that CT becomes a fundamental aspect in language acquisition skills, especially reading and writing which are believed as two language skills that can support students to gain their academic success (Elder & Paul cited in Rasyid and Hasyim, 2008). In addition, Malmir (2012) has done research about the critical thinking impact on the speaking skill of Iranian EFL learners. They clearly declare that students who are given critical thinking instructions strongly show better in their oral interview conducted as post-test. It means that initiating CT to students contributes positively to their speaking ability. They perform better in speaking performance after they have been treated to CT skill commands in their classroom.

RQ 2. The strategies that are used by the teachers to assess students' CT and how those strategies are implemented in their classroom

There are some strategies that can be used to assess students' CT in higher education level such as using summative or formative, test or non-test, formal or informal format, online, CBT or paper based, and spoken or written assessment. Based on the interviews conducted with the participants in depth, it is found that the assessments implemented in their classroom are varied. They use **questions and answers, instructions and directions, group discussion and pair assessment strategies**. None of them use formal assessment focusing on CT declared by some experts that have been presented previously. It is because CT, even though it is important to be owned by all students, is not a central focus of their courses, it is only embodied in their main course. The strategies that the teachers use and how they implement them will be explained below:

1. Questions and answers

Both participants prefer to give informal questions to assess their students' CT rather than to use a certain assessment of CT. It is because their courses are not "Critical Thinking" which focus on assessing students' CT only. They teach "methods in ELT" and "Spoken English". So, they only involve or insert CT aspects in their classroom assessment since they are aware that CT skill cannot be separated from their courses in ELT classroom. They provide those questions in different ways. One provides them orally, another one provides them through media such PPT, Microsoft word, and PDF.

One of participants stated that:

Well. Based on the theory it must be important to assess students' CT

based on the formal CT assessment formed by some experts. But, for me, because CT itself is not an independent course which is taught in university, but it is only embodied to the main courses, for example in my classroom embodied in “methods in ELT” learning, so assessing CT will rely on the teachers and the goal of the course, what should be achieved in that course. If the goal is to be able to evaluate, synthesize the ideas, I think it needs to be assessed formally, I mean presenting the form of the assessment.

She then continued her explanation:

Because in my classroom there is no goal to involve CT skill, so CT skill becomes a soft skill that should be owned by the students. So, in my class I do not provide any format for assessing CT such as text, rubric or something like that. However, I always support my students to enhance their CT in each meeting. Before starting the class, I always ask them to answer a variety of questions that I express orally, for example “why is it important to study this. Also, before ending the classroom, I often ask them to evaluate the materials relating to the sources such as “what is the advantage of this and what is the disadvantage of this. So, the students will think to answer the questions seriously using their critical ideas. In this case, I can observe their CT skills.

Other participant also shared the same experience:

I mostly provide some questions as tasks, midterms of the final test in my speaking class to get students’ ideas. Then, I can use to assess their speaking skills, including their CT skill. I actually do not assess their CT separately; I insert this aspect together with the English speaking proficiency aspect.

She also presented some examples of questions that were used in her class. Here are those examples:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KQ_D8-Q99hl06fzVIAf43NYcTAJ1YmX0/view?usp=sharing

They implement those strategies since they realize that CT skill can be practiced and assessed through providing students with some questions that lead them to think carefully and critically. Hughes (2014) states that some indicators of CT are asking questions that guide people to avoid making assumptions, evaluating information, giving logical opinions, arguments, and ideas, and analysing the information given. By this way, when the teachers share some questions with their students, the students are required to use their thinking to find the answers. On the other hand, this activity also treats the students to be able to logically ask the questions and evaluate the answers to the classroom both to the teacher and to the other students.

These types of questions given by the teachers are regarded as an assessment of responsive tasks. They involve a brief interaction between interlocutors; in this context, teachers and students (Brown, 2004). Brown also adds that questions at this responsive level tend to be authentic referential questions in which the students are given more opportunity to produce their meaningful language in answering the questions. It is also outlined that in designing these questions, it is important to make sure that teachers know why they are asking about this and that.

2. Instructions and Directions

Teachers also prefer to provide instructions to assess their students’ CT. For example, the teacher imitates IELTS speaking interviewers by providing instructions to get students’ ideas. This strategy effectively helps teachers to assess their students’ CT during the classroom activity.

Both of the teachers participating in this study share the same experience. They expressed as follow:

I provide a variety of instructions to assess students' speaking in which CT is also included. Those instructions could effectively guide them to use their ideas during the classroom, as like in IELTS speaking, the interviewer provides challenging instructions to gain a comprehensive idea of the test takers, I do so in my classroom, Spoken English. In this case, I use this strategy to assess their speaking including their CT skill. I actually do not assess their CT separately; I insert the CT aspect together with the English speaking proficiency aspect.

I usually give students instructions to evaluate what they have learned during the classroom. For example, I say "Please, share your opinion about the material today relating to the advantages and disadvantages that you might get in implementing these methods in your future class". In this case, they will evaluate carefully before giving a response. I also give them direction on what they should do for the next meeting such as I give them direction to read some books or other sources about a method or about a phenomenon, after that list the different arguments of that issue, and explain how to apply that method in the ELT classroom.

They use those strategies since they realize that CT skill can be practiced and assessed through providing students some instructions that lead them to think carefully and critically. Giving instruction and direction are also categorized as an assessment of responsive tasks. In this assessment, the teachers provide a stimulus which offers an opportunity for the students to respond with very clear and specific ideas (Brown, 2004). In this strategy the teachers pose the problems, and the students are required to respond. After giving instructions and directions to students, teachers also give feedback to their students' response to gain better improvement.

The participant stated:

After they respond to the instructions or directions provided, I give feedback as follow up to their performance. It helps them to evaluate their weakness and to keep their strength.

The other participant shared as follow:

"I tried to give my students feedback to evaluate their ways of thinking to make their speaking skills better since they will be more creative in answering the questions when they have high critical thinking skills. I usually provide the feedback privately with each student and sometimes among the classrooms.

The use of feedback in formative assessment significantly gives a positive impact on the process of the students' learning. Students get more active, enthusiastic, and motivated to learn. (Nahadi et al, 2015). Feedbacks given during the learning process are expected to evaluate or to give comments on students' performance to get better improvement for their future progress. It is stated that the use of formative feedback in college can positively promote the development of students' reflection and self-evaluation in learning which then gives a positive impact on their progress (Quinton & Smallbone cited in Helena, 2018). In line with this case, Butakor (2016) explores that feedback plays an important role in the teaching environment because it provides students with information designed to help them improve their learning, including CT.

3. Group Discussion and Peer Assessment

Teachers implement a group discussion as a strategy to assess students' CT during the classroom process. They assume that group discussion could build students' participation through social sharing activities. They usually give certain clues or topics to be discussed by students in that group discussion activity. Vogt and Short (cited in Shanthi et al., 2014) say that when students can fully participate and actively discuss ideas and information, learning will be more effective and can help them think more critically, rather than teachers just talking and students just listening. Informal discussion offers a level of authenticity and spontaneity that other assessment strategies may not provide (Brown, 2004). In this case, the learning environment should be constructed in a way that allows students to interact freely and can be done through discussion. One of participants conveyed her experience as follow:

On the other hand, I also often guide them to have group discussions to share ideas or opinions. Through this activity, they will listen to the other students' opinions, they learn to respect others and learn to express their ideas. It then helps students to conduct their "skripsi" successfully. My goal is not to assess their result of CT, but how they process to have high CT to enhance their logical ideas.

In conducting this group discussion, teachers also utilize peer assessment as one of the processes of the activity. Peer assessment is usually performed in a group work activity involving students to grade and to provide feedback on their peer's performance or work. Brown (2004) states that peer assessment demands to be conducted the most in cooperative learning activity. It is simply indicated as one arm of a plethora of tasks and procedures within the domain of learner centered and collaborative education. This activity is regarded as an effective assessment in students' learning since it can promote students' independent learning and enhance their responsibility to their work (Quality Improvement Agency, 2008). In addition, peer assessment effectively enhances students' ability to make decisions and to take responsibility for making the best choice among options. Peer assessment is outlined as a place where students evaluate each other to their friends' performance and products. Therefore, it encourages students to actively participate in group work and be responsible for their work (Peng, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, which is limited to English as a foreign language spoken classroom that one of the learning objectives is to know and build students' critical thinking, the participants realize that it is essential to assess students' CT during the teaching-learning process mainly in ELT context even though CT is not aimed as the main objectives of the course. The use of some CT assessments can help teachers understand their students' CT levels. In this case, assessment can help teachers measure and diagnose their students' learning progress by examining their knowledge, strengths, and weaknesses and evaluating their teaching effectiveness. Moreover, they teach at the education department where the students are studying English to prepare for their future careers as English teachers who will be involved in teaching and evaluating students' English proficiency. So, teachers believe that CT skills cannot be separated from the university's main courses especially in the Indonesian ELT classroom. It is because of the significant correlation between students' CT and their language skills. There are some strategies that are implemented by the teachers to assess their students' CT in higher education level. Based on the interviews conducted with the participants in depth, it is found that the assessments implemented in their classroom are questions and answers, instructions and directions, group discussion and pair assessment. None of them use formal assessment focusing on CT declared by some experts that have been presented previously. It is because of the fact that even though CT is important to be owned by all students, CT skill is not a central focus of their courses, it is only embodied in their main course.

From this study, language teachers are suggested to encourage university students by conducting classroom activities to develop and assess their critical thinking through the strategies that have been conducted by the researcher. Also, they are suggested to create and implement other strategies such as computer-based tests which are worldwide implemented by other researchers. Moreover, it is valuable for language teachers to consider the students' ability and achievement to use their own creativity in assessing their students' CT based on the learning condition and context. They can relate the assessments constructed or decided to use in their classroom to assess CT based on the goal or objectives of the course, and what should be achieved in that course. Furthermore, for the future research is expected to expand this scope by involving more participants in a variety of contexts and fields to achieve more insightful knowledge and experience.

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