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Reconstructing Reflection as a Catalyst for Critical Thinking and Language Skill Development: Insights from Indonesian EFL Students

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Abstract: This study explores the role of reconstructing reflection in fostering critical thinking and enhancing English language skills among English as a foreign language (EFL) pre-service teachers in Indonesia. It investigates students' self-perceptions, strategies for language development, and real-world applications of English learning. A descriptive qualitative approach, supported by quantitative data, involved 55 pre-service elementary school teachers from a private Indonesian university. Data were collected through weekly open-closed questionnaires via Google Forms over one semester, encouraging reflections on learning processes, challenges, and improvement strategies. Quantitative findings revealed that 87.3% of students felt confident applying English writing and speaking skills. A Pearson correlation ($r = .52, p < .05$) showed a moderate relationship between self-confidence and post-test scores, highlighting the value of aligning perceived and actual proficiency. However, 23.5% of "Capable" students scored below the mean of 77.13, indicating a need for targeted feedback and formative assessments. Reflective practices played a key role in developing critical thinking, helping students address challenges, refine strategies, and relate learning to real-life situations. Themes such as technology use, collaborative learning, and media exposure emerged as effective tools. Despite positive outcomes, students faced limited confidence and restricted opportunities for practice. This study emphasizes reconstructing reflection as a structured, transformative process for improving learning outcomes. Aligned with the 4R reflection model, it addresses gaps in current practices—often marked by superficial reflection—and offers actionable strategies for promoting critical thinking in EFL settings. The findings support integrating reflection, feedback, and immersive learning to enhance teaching and education.

Keywords: *Critical thinking, Indonesia, language skill development, pre-service teachers, reconstructing reflection.*

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Introduction

Reflection is a cornerstone in education, promoting critical thinking and enabling learners to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for growth (Boud et al., 1985). By engaging in reflective practices, learners can deepen their understanding and apply knowledge in real-world situations, a vital competency in today's dynamic environment (Schön, 1987). However, in Indonesian English as a foreign language (EFL) context, reflective practices are often limited to basic evaluations, such as assessing lesson enjoyment or reviewing material, lacking transformative approaches that promote critical engagement (Derinalp, 2022; Lie, 2007). This issue is compounded by a focus on rote learning and surface-level assessments, which hinders meaningful reflection (Adnan et al., 2019; Lie, 2007). Transformative reflection connects learners' experiences with practical applications, fostering not only critical thinking but also the ability to navigate complex challenges in diverse contexts (Colomer et al., 2020).

The 4R Reflection Model—comprising Reporting, Relating, Reasoning, and Reconstructing—has shown promise in promoting critical thinking by guiding learners from descriptive observation to a deeper understanding of their experiences (Bain et al., 1999; Muhayyang et al., 2024). However, it remains underutilized in Indonesian EFL classrooms, partly due to limited training and resources for educators (Lie, 2007). The reconstructing phase, in particular, which encourages learners to reframe their understanding and apply it in new contexts, is often overlooked (Bain et al., 1999).

The lack of structured reflection frameworks in EFL settings affects students' language proficiency and critical thinking. Indonesian EFL students frequently struggle to apply English skills in practical settings, impacting their confidence and

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willingness to communicate (Amalia et al., 2024; Lie, 2007). The absence of structured reflective practices in teacher education further exacerbates this issue, leaving educators ill-equipped to foster reflective habits among their students (Bharuthram, 2018). Reflective practices can address these challenges by fostering learner agency, but their potential remains untapped without structured implementation (Derinalp, 2022).

Teachers' proficiency and instructional creativity also influence the effectiveness of reflective practices. Many Indonesian EFL teachers face challenges in facilitating reflective activities due to moderate proficiency levels and limited professional development opportunities (Lie, 2007; Rozimela et al., 2024). Differentiated instruction, which could support diverse learning needs, requires training those teachers often lack (Hidayat et al., 2024).

These challenges highlight a gap in Indonesian EFL reflective practices, where existing methods fail to foster critical thinking, language proficiency, and lifelong learning skills. This study aims to address this gap by exploring how reconstructing reflective practices can enhance critical thinking and language skills in Indonesian EFL contexts. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Explore how reflection can enhance critical thinking and deepen students' engagement with learning materials.
2. Assess students' self-confidence in understanding, applying, and correcting errors in English writing and speaking.
3. Identify effective strategies for developing language skills through reflective practices, collaboration, and the integration of technology.
4. Investigate the ways in which students connect English learning with their daily lives and professional aspirations.
5. Analyze the challenges students face in recognizing and correcting errors, proposing actionable strategies to support their proficiency improvement.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating descriptive qualitative research with quantitative analysis to explore the role of reconstructing reflection in fostering critical thinking and enhancing English language skills among EFL students. This design is particularly suitable for understanding complex educational phenomena, as it combines qualitative insights with quantitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The research aimed to evaluate students' self-perceptions, identify effective learning strategies, examine real-world applications of English learning, and assess the alignment between self-perception and actual performance, as measured by post-test results. The selection of Likert-scale surveys, reflective journals, and post-test assessments was guided by established methodologies on reflective practices in EFL learning (Schön, 1987). These instruments are particularly suited for examining self-reflection, metacognition, and the impact of reflection on performance. The use of structured, iterative reflection is crucial for developing critical thinking and self-awareness in pre-service teachers.

Sample and Data Collection

The study involved 55 pre-service elementary school teachers enrolled in an English language course at a private university in West Java, Indonesia. This sample represents prospective educators who are learning EFL and aligns with research emphasizing the role of reflection in teacher preparation programs (Schön, 1987). Participants were selected from a single class of a semester-long teacher preparation program, which is a representative sample of prospective educators learning EFL. The choice of this specific cohort was based on their direct involvement in English language learning and their future role in teaching. Selection was based on convenience sampling, as all students enrolled in the course were invited to participate. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to encourage honest reflections, in accordance with the British Educational Research Association (2018) guidelines.

Over one semester, reflective practices were integrated into each English language session, focusing on enhancing metacognitive skills and promoting deeper learning. Self-assessment surveys using a 5-point Likert scale measured self-perceptions of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, writing, and speaking skills. Open-ended questions in the surveys encouraged detailed reflections on learning challenges and strategies. Reflective journals provided weekly opportunities for students to analyze their learning processes, explore real-world applications, and identify areas for improvement. The post-test assessment, conducted at the semester's end, evaluated actual proficiency in English language skills. The test was designed to measure students' abilities in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, writing, and speaking, enabling a direct comparison between self-perception and actual performance.

Weekly Questionnaire Design

Each week, students completed a structured questionnaire via Google Forms. The questionnaire combined Likert-scale items for quantitative analysis and open-ended questions for qualitative responses. For example, some of the Likert-scale questions included:

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel about applying English grammar in your speaking?
2. To what extent do you feel that the teaching methods used in the class help improve your vocabulary? (1 = Not helpful, 5 = Very helpful)
3. How would you rate your ability to identify and correct your language errors during speaking activities?

Sample open-ended questions included:

1. What strategies did you use this week to improve your English writing skills?
2. What challenges did you face in applying grammar rules during class activities?
3. Reflect on how well you connected the lesson content to real-life situations. What areas would you like to improve?

These questions were designed to capture students' reflections on their learning experiences, challenges, and strategies, enabling both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected simultaneously. By addressing students' self-perception, challenges, and strategies for improvement, the questionnaires aimed to engage students in deep reflection on their learning processes.

The research procedure consisted of:

1. Pre-Implementation Phase: The lecturer introduced reflection and its importance in professional growth. Students were encouraged to engage critically with their own learning.
2. Weekly Reflections: After each session, students completed a structured questionnaire reflecting on their understanding, challenges, and strategies for improvement. This included feedback on teaching methods, media, and instructional strategies.
3. Analysis and Feedback Loop: Reflections were analyzed at two levels. First, students identified personal strengths and weaknesses, setting goals for improvement. Second, the lecturer reviewed reflections to tailor future lessons.
4. Post-Test Evaluation: A standardized post-test was conducted to evaluate language proficiency and compare perceived versus actual performance.

Analyzing of Data

The quantitative analysis utilized descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean, median, and standard deviation to summarize post-test scores. The paired t-test compared performance differences between lower- and higher-scoring students. Prior to conducting the Pearson correlation analysis, the assumptions of normality and linearity were examined. The Shapiro-Wilk test and Q-Q plots confirmed that the data were approximately normally distributed, while a scatterplot showed a linear relationship between self-perceived ability and post-test scores. No significant outliers were detected. Pearson correlation analysis was then performed to assess the relationship between self-perceived ability and post-test scores, revealing a moderate positive correlation ($r = .52, p < .05$), indicating that higher self-perception was associated with better performance. However, 23.5% of "Capable" students scored below the mean of 77.13, highlighting the importance of formative assessments.

A chi-square test was conducted to examine the association between perceived strengths (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) and actual performance. Results showed significant relationships for grammar and vocabulary ($p < .05$), but no significant correlation was found between self-perceived pronunciation skills and test performance. This suggests a potential gap in self-assessment accuracy for spoken language skills.

To ensure reliability and validity, the self-assessment survey underwent a pilot test to refine items based on clarity and consistency. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to measure internal consistency, yielding a value of .83, indicating good reliability. Expert validation was sought from EFL lecturers to ensure content validity by aligning survey items with established frameworks for reflective practices.

Qualitative analysis involved thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), identifying key themes from reflective journals and open-ended survey responses. This approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of students' reflective processes, revealing insights into strategies for language development, challenges in reflective thinking, and the impact of reflection on critical thinking skills. To ensure the reliability of the qualitative data analysis, the coding process was conducted independently by two researchers and followed a structured codebook developed during initial readings. Inter-coder reliability was established through comparison and discussion, with discrepancies resolved through consensus. An audit trail was maintained to document analytic decisions and enhance transparency. While the role of the lecturer in

influencing reflective practices was acknowledged, systematic analysis was limited. Future studies should investigate how teacher feedback shapes the reflective process and learning outcomes. This research underscores the need for structured reflection and formative assessment in teacher preparation programs, emphasizing the value of critical reflection for EFL learners.

Results

Post-Test Performance Analysis

The descriptive analysis of post-test scores revealed that students demonstrated varying levels of achievement in English proficiency. The mean score was 77.13, with a median of 82 and a standard deviation of 14.87, indicating a relatively wide spread of scores across participants. The descriptive analysis of post-test scores revealed the following:

Table 1. Post Test Performance

Statistics	Value
Mean Score	77.13
Median Score	82
Standard Deviation	14.87
Normality Test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)	$p > .05$ (Normal Distribution)

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the post-test performance between lower-scoring and higher-scoring students. Results indicated a statistically significant difference in scores between the two groups, $t(52) = -6.05$, $p < .001$, suggesting varied levels of English proficiency among participants. Descriptive statistics showed a mean score of 77.13, a median of 82, and a standard deviation of 14.87. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test confirmed the normality of data distribution ($p > .05$), validating the use of parametric tests. Students with higher self-perceived abilities generally achieved better scores, though some mismatches between perception and performance suggest that overconfidence or underestimation may influence learning outcomes.

Quantitative Results: Understanding Abilities

The analysis of the closed-question data provided insights into respondents' self-perceived abilities to understand their learning experiences in writing and speaking. Most participants reported a moderate to high level of understanding, indicating that they could grasp the key concepts and strategies introduced during the learning process. This suggests that students are generally aware of their strengths and areas for improvement, which plays a crucial role in fostering independent and reflective learning.

Table 1. Understanding Abilities

Self-Perceived Ability Level	Percentage (%)	Number of Students (n=55)
Capable	72.7	40
Very Capable	9.1	5
Less Capable	18.2	10
Not Capable	0	0

While most students (81.8%) felt confident in their learning abilities, 18.2% expressed difficulty, indicating a need for additional support. Cross-analysis with post-test scores shows that some students who rated themselves as "Capable" performed below average, suggesting a potential gap between self-perception and actual proficiency.

A deeper examination of self-assessment trends showed that overestimation was more common among lower-performing students, while underestimation occurred in some high-performing students. This aligns with the Dunning-Kruger effect (Kruger & Dunning, 1999), which suggests that individuals with lower ability tend to overestimate their competence, whereas highly skilled individuals may underestimate their proficiency. These findings highlight the need for metacognitive training to help students develop a more accurate self-assessment of their skills.

Qualitative Results: Understanding Learning Experiences

Responses to the open-ended question provided deeper insights into students' understanding of their learning experiences. The analysis revealed the following key themes:

- a) Reflection and Practice: Many respondents (81.8%) emphasized the importance of reflecting on past learning experiences and engaging in consistent practice. Commonly mentioned strategies included revising written tasks and rehearsing speaking exercises to enhance their skills. ("I reflect on every learning experience after doing writing tasks or speaking practice. I try different strategies in writing and speaking...").

- b) Use of Technology and AI Tools: Students frequently used technology and AI tools, such as Google Translate and language-learning applications, to improve grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. However, some expressed concerns about the reliability of AI-generated content, adopting a cautious approach to its use as stated below:

"In learning writing, I must be more careful with AI use because not all AI gives correct answers..."

- c) Collaborative Learning: Collaborative learning, including group discussions and peer feedback, emerged as an effective strategy for gaining new perspectives and refining skills. Students valued sharing ideas and learning from peers during these activities as stated by one of them that "Group discussions helped me broaden my knowledge and deepen my understanding of writing and speaking through idea exchange."
- d) Active Learning Methods: Active learning methods, such as presenting descriptive texts, simulating real-life presentations, and analyzing grammar rules, were highlighted as beneficial. These activities provided practical applications of skills and bridged theoretical knowledge with real-world use. One of respondents said that "I like learning English when asked to create a descriptive text and present it, it makes me brave enough to keep learning..."
- e) Media Exposure: Engaging with English media, such as songs, films, and social media influencers, was a popular strategy for improving understanding. For example, several students mentioned following K-Pop idols and Western media to learn English pronunciation and vocabulary ("I really enjoy watching K-Pop boy groups... from there I became interested in learning English more deeply...").
- f) Challenges Identified: Despite these strategies, respondents identified challenges such as grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and public speaking anxiety. These difficulties were particularly evident among students who rated themselves as less capable. He said "Just for your information, I'm one of those not confident speaking English... but I enjoy every assignment as a new experience..."
- g) Role of Lecturers: The role of lecturers was deemed critical in facilitating understanding. Respondents appreciated clear explanations, practical assignments, and engaging teaching methods, such as analyzing English songs or using gamified learning applications like Duolingo. These approaches enhanced interest and motivation. One of them said "When I first submitted my writing using AI, it turned out poorly, but then Miss Dwi explained how to use AI wisely..."

The combined quantitative and qualitative findings highlighted several key themes. Most students demonstrated a positive attitude toward learning, driven by personal goals such as enhancing communication skills and achieving career aspirations, which fuelled their confidence and motivation. However, speaking anxiety emerged as a recurring challenge, emphasizing the need for strategies to build confidence in oral communication. The importance of feedback was a significant theme, with both peer and teacher input playing a crucial role in improving students' writing and speaking skills. Additionally, students exhibited a strong preference for multimodal learning approaches, favouring diverse methods such as visual aids, group discussions, and digital tools to foster engagement and enhance their comprehension. These themes underscore the diverse and interconnected factors influencing English language learning among EFL students.

Relating Learning Experiences to Everyday Life

Closed-Question Analysis

When asked, "Can you relate your learning experiences to everyday life in English learning?" the responses ($n=55$) were distributed as follows. A majority of the participants indicated a strong ability to make meaningful connections between classroom learning and real-life situations. This suggests that many students recognize the relevance of English learning in their daily lives, which can enhance motivation and encourage continued language use beyond the classroom.

Table 2. Relating Learning Experiences to Everyday Life

Ability to Relate Learning to Real Life	Percentage (%)	Number of Students (n=55)
Very Good	16.4	9
Good	56.4	31
Fair	16.4	9
Poor	10.9	6

A majority (72.8%) reported successfully applying their learning in real-life scenarios, highlighting effective integration of concepts. However, students who struggled with pronunciation and fluency reported difficulty using English in social and academic settings. This finding aligns with post-test results, where speaking-related questions had lower accuracy rates.

Open-Question Analysis

Participants elaborated on how they related their learning to daily life, revealing several key themes:

- 1) Integration into Daily Activities:
Many students reported incorporating English into their routines. Examples included casual conversations with friends, writing emails or social media posts in English, and assisting family members with English homework or job applications.
- 2) Media Consumption:
Engaging with English-language media was a popular strategy. Students mentioned watching Western movies or TV shows with subtitles, listening to English songs, and reading English books, articles, or product labels to improve their skills.
- 3) Use of Technology:
Technology played a key role in real-world application. Participants used apps like Duolingo for daily practice, changed phone settings to English, and accessed resources such as podcasts and YouTube videos to enhance immersion.
- 4) Practical Applications:
Students used English in various practical scenarios, including role-playing activities (e.g., creating videos or teaching children), as well as using English phrases for shopping, ordering food, or during travel.
- 5) Challenges and Limited Opportunities:
A smaller group (10.9%) identified challenges such as a lack of confidence and limited chances to use English outside the classroom.

These findings highlight the diverse strategies students employed to connect their learning to everyday life, while also pointing to areas where additional support could help overcome barriers.

Future Application of Concepts

Closed-Question Analysis

In response to the question, “Can you apply the concepts in the future to improve your English writing and speaking skills?” participants responded as follows: Most participants agreed that the concepts learned would be useful in enhancing their future communication abilities. Many specifically mentioned that techniques such as outlining ideas before writing and actively using new vocabulary would help them express themselves more clearly and confidently.

Table 3. Future Application of Concepts

Perception of Future Application	Percentage (%)	Number of Students (n=55)
Very Able	36.4	20
Able	50.9	28
Somewhat Able	12.7	7
Unable	0	0

While 87.3% of students expressed confidence in applying their English skills in the future, qualitative responses revealed concerns regarding pronunciation, formal writing structures, and spontaneous speaking ability in professional settings. This underscores the importance of continued support in these areas.

Correlation Between Self-Perception and Post-Test Scores

A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r = .52, p < .05$) between self-perceived ability and post-test performance. However, 23.5% of students who rated themselves as "Capable" scored below the mean, indicating inconsistencies between self-confidence and actual proficiency.

Further analysis showed:

- 1. Higher-scoring students exhibited more accurate self-assessments.
- 2. Lower-scoring students tended to overestimate their abilities.
- 3. A smaller subset of high performers underestimated their skills, possibly due to high self-expectations.

*Application of Learning Concepts: Open-Question Analysis**Qualitative Analysis*

The analysis of 55 responses revealed diverse strategies for applying English learning concepts in real-life contexts. Key themes included integrating newly learned vocabulary into daily conversations, practicing writing through journaling, and engaging with English media to reinforce comprehension skills. Several participants also highlighted the importance of peer interaction and feedback in refining their speaking and writing abilities over time. Key themes included:

1) **Personal Practice and Continuous Learning:**

Participants stressed the value of consistent practice and integrating English into daily routines. Activities included watching movies, listening to music, reading books, practicing writing tasks (from vocabulary exercises to full texts), and recording and evaluating their own speech for improvement. One participant said:

"Continuously watching movies, listening to music, and reading books in English to understand language use in broader contexts and adapt to various styles of language."

Another added:

"I will practice writing and speaking in English, and continue reading and listening to English materials to expand my vocabulary and comprehension."

2) **Leveraging Technology and Resources:**

Frequent use of digital tools and platforms was noted. Students engaged with English media content and relied on language-learning applications for regular practice. For instance:

"To improve writing and speaking skills in English in the future, I will follow English courses and make use of language-learning applications to enhance my English proficiency."

Another student mentioned:

"For sustainable practice, we need to maximize our ability to understand writing and speaking in English for the long term."

3) **Professional Development and Teaching Aspirations:**

Several participants envisioned applying their skills in teaching careers. Examples included designing engaging activities like singing for young learners and supporting students with effective English teaching methods. As one participant said:

"Maybe in the future, I can apply this when I become an elementary school teacher."

Another shared:

"Actually, this really improves (our skills), because I really want to interact with boy groups or even study abroad – English is very important."

Additionally, one stated:

"Maybe with the concepts given by the lecturer, I can follow them and teach them to my future elementary school students."

4) **Building Confidence and Social Communication:**

Overcoming barriers such as public speaking anxiety was a priority for many. Strategies included practicing with peers, participating in cultural exchanges, and engaging in real-life communication to build fluency and confidence. One participant reflected:

"Become more courageous in public speaking, don't be shy, be able to communicate with outsiders when we are hanging out."

Another shared:

"Like practicing directly with friends or other people to improve our ability to learn English writing and speaking."

5) **Developing Long-Term Strategies:**

A strong commitment to skill enhancement was evident. Respondents highlighted joining advanced courses, participating in English-speaking communities, keeping daily journals, and interacting with native speakers as key strategies.

One participant said:

"I plan to continue applying and expanding effective methods by seeking more opportunities to practice English, such as taking advanced courses, joining language communities, and participating in cultural exchange programs."

Another mentioned:

"1. Keep an English journal. 2. Interact with others in English. 3. Participate in English-speaking events. 4. Create English content."

6) Acknowledging Challenges and Growth Areas:

While some participants noted limitations in their understanding, they expressed determination to improve. One participant shared, "I still lack understanding but will continue to study vocabulary and basic English."

Another shared:

"I will start with myself, sharpen my skills, and study harder. I also need a partner to see how far I've progressed—maybe that's one of the parameters of my success."

A student also mentioned:

"I don't know yet, because my knowledge is still limited."

The findings highlight the following critical points:

- a. **High Confidence in Future Application:** Most participants expressed confidence in applying their learning, suggesting the success of current teaching methods.
- b. **Diverse Learning Approaches:** The use of technology, collaboration, and reflective practices underscores adaptive learning strategies.
- c. **Professional and Practical Use:** Many students aim to leverage their skills in teaching and other professional settings.
- d. **Reflective Practices:** Activities like journaling, recording speech, and seeking feedback emerged as effective tools for self-improvement.

Recognition and Correction of Errors in Writing and Speaking

Closed-Ended Question

A total of 55 respondents shared their perceptions of their ability to recognize and correct errors in writing and speaking. The responses were categorized as follows: The majority indicated an increased awareness of common grammatical and structural errors. Additionally, many participants expressed greater confidence in self-editing their work and using feedback to improve accuracy and clarity in communication.

Table 4. Recognition and Correction of Errors in Writing and Speaking

Ability to Recognize and Correct Errors	Percentage (%)	Number of Students (n=55)
Very Good	18.2	10
Good	69.1	38
Fair	12.7	7
Poor	0	0

Although 87.3% of students felt confident in error recognition, test results indicated continued challenges in advanced grammar. This suggests that while students are aware of their mistakes, they may lack effective strategies for correction.

Open-Ended Question

The open-ended responses revealed diverse methods employed by participants to identify and correct errors. Several key themes emerged:

1) Self-Reflection and Analysis

Many participants highlighted the value of critically evaluating their work through re-reading or replaying recordings of their speech.

Example: "I recognize and correct errors by analyzing them. For example, I continuously check my English pronunciation until it is correct and appropriate."

2) Feedback from Others

Seeking peer and instructor feedback was another prominent strategy.

Example: "I actively ask for feedback from friends or teachers to identify and correct mistakes, such as improving unclear speaking or grammar errors."

3) Use of Technology and Tools

Participants frequently mentioned leveraging grammar-checking tools, online translators, and AI applications like Grammarly and Google Translate to enhance accuracy.

Example: "I use AI tools like grammar checkers and voice translation to improve my grammar and pronunciation."

4) Practice and Continuous Learning

Many respondents stressed the importance of regular practice and learning to refine their skills.

Example: "I improve by practicing repeatedly and asking others for feedback on my writing and speaking tasks."

5) Challenges and Motivation

While most respondents demonstrated confidence, a few acknowledged struggles due to limited English proficiency. However, encouragement from peers and instructors often motivated improvement.

Example: "I still find it difficult to recognize and correct errors, especially in speaking."

These findings underscore the effectiveness of reflective practices and collaborative feedback in fostering error correction. The prevalent use of technology highlights its role as a supportive tool for language learning. However, the challenges faced by a small subset of learners indicate the need for targeted interventions to address proficiency gaps.

Importance of Reconstructing Reflection in Fostering Critical Thinking

Closed-Ended Question

Participants evaluated the importance of reconstructing reflection in enhancing critical thinking during English learning: Most respondents acknowledged that reflective practices played a significant role in deepening their understanding of language use. They also noted that reconstructing their reflections helped them analyze their learning processes more critically and identify areas for improvement more effectively.

Table 5. Importance of Reconstructing Reflection in Fostering Critical Thinking

Perceived Importance of Reflection	Percentage (%)	Number of Students (n=55)
Very Important	58.2	32
Important	41.8	23
Less Important	0	7
Not Important	0	0

The unanimous agreement on the significance of reconstructing reflection highlights its perceived value in promoting deeper learning and critical analysis. Over half of the respondents (58.2%) rated it as "Very Important," further emphasizing its pivotal role.

Open-Ended Question

Participants elaborated on how reconstructing reflection benefits their learning. The following themes emerged:

1) Facilitating Critical Thinking

Respondents emphasized that deep reflection aids in analyzing learning processes, identifying weaknesses, and formulating strategies for improvement.

Example: "Deep reflection involves critical analysis of learning and can be used as an effective strategy for future improvement."

2) Comprehensive Understanding

Participants noted that reconstructing reflection provides a detailed understanding of strengths and areas for improvement.

Example: "It helps to understand weaknesses and identify effective strategies for future learning."

3) Engagement and Retention

Reflective practices were seen as enhancing active engagement and long-term retention of material.

Example: "It pushes me to think deeply and remember what I have learned throughout the semester."

4) Broader Contextual Application

Respondents highlighted how deep reflection connects learning to personal experiences and broader contexts.

Example: "It helps me think critically about challenges and solutions, enhancing personal growth."

The results demonstrate strong learner support for reconstructing reflection as a tool for critical thinking development. Unlike simpler reflective practices, reconstructing reflection fosters a deeper understanding and encourages learners to engage meaningfully with their studies. These findings align with existing literature, suggesting that structured reflection enhances self-awareness and supports knowledge application in diverse contexts.

Strategies for Improving English Writing Practice

Participants shared various strategies to improve their English writing skills, emphasizing reflective practices and self-awareness. The responses revealed several themes:

Table 6. Strategies for Improving English Writing Practice

Strategy	Description
Vocabulary and Grammar	Expanding vocabulary and using grammar tools like Grammarly.
Regular Writing Practice	Journaling, essay writing, and revising drafts.
Reading English Texts	Observing sentence structures and vocabulary usage.
Feedback and Collaboration	Leveraging peer and instructor feedback to refine skills.
Personalized Techniques	Translating ideas and summarizing movies to practice expression.

The findings highlight the importance of reflective practices and collaborative strategies in developing English writing skills. Educators should encourage diverse approaches, such as integrating technology, fostering peer collaboration, and promoting consistent practice.

Correlation Between Post-Test Results and Self-Perception

To explore the connection between self-perception and actual performance, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The results indicated a moderate positive correlation ($r = .52, p < .05$) between self-perceived ability and post-test scores. However, 23.5% of students who rated themselves as "Capable" scored below the mean, revealing inconsistencies between confidence levels and performance. This suggests that while self-belief can enhance learning motivation, it does not always translate into proficiency.

Further examination revealed that students with higher post-test scores exhibited a more accurate self-assessment, while lower-scoring students tended to overestimate or underestimate their abilities. This finding highlights the need for self-reflection and formative assessments to enhance learning accuracy.

Relationship Between Post-Test Scores and Perceived Skill Areas

A chi-square test was conducted to determine whether students' self-perceived pronunciation skills aligned with their actual performance. The results showed no significant correlation ($p > .05$), indicating that students who rated their pronunciation ability as strong did not necessarily perform better on pronunciation-related test items. This discrepancy suggests that students may lack awareness of their actual pronunciation challenges.

Pedagogical Implications:

To address this gap, educators can implement strategies such as:

- 1. Incorporating phonetic training to enhance pronunciation accuracy.
- 2. Providing structured pronunciation assessments with individualized feedback.
- 3. Encouraging self-recording and peer evaluations to improve pronunciation awareness.

Discussion

Confidence in Understanding Abilities

The findings indicate that a majority of students (72.7% "Capable", 9.1% "Very Capable") perceive themselves as confident in understanding their learning experiences. This is supported by a moderate Pearson correlation ($r = .52, p < .05$) between self-perceived confidence and actual performance, suggesting a partial alignment between students'

confidence and their outcomes. However, the 18.2% who identified as "Less Capable" and the 23.5% of "Capable" students who scored below the mean point to a gap between perception and reality. These discrepancies highlight that while self-confidence is generally a positive predictor, it does not uniformly translate to performance. This supports Tashiro et al. (2021), who emphasize the risk of overestimation or underestimation of abilities and advocate for formative assessments to support accurate self-reflection.

The qualitative data revealed self-management strategies such as reflection, practice, and collaborative learning, which align with the theories of self-regulated learning (Reymond et al., 2023). These practices enhance metacognition and active engagement. Still, variation in confidence levels may reflect challenges such as unequal access to learning resources or anxiety related to speaking and writing. Tashiro et al. (2021) also note that students' confidence is influenced by peer comparison, affecting motivation. Therefore, structured reflection tools like guided journaling and scaffolded assignments can serve as practical solutions. These tools not only promote realistic self-appraisal but also help reduce anxiety and encourage a growth mindset. Collaborative learning, as supported by Nelson-Jones et al. (1979), can also increase self-efficacy by facilitating peer support and interaction.

Everyday Applications of Learning

A significant 72.8% of students rated the relevance of English learning to everyday contexts as "Good" or "Very Good," suggesting a meaningful connection between academic content and real-life utility. This finding is reinforced by Bondarchuk et al. (2025), who highlight the role of English in real-world domains such as professional communication, travel, and social interaction. Furthermore, students who expressed confidence in grammar and vocabulary showed significantly higher post-test performance ($p < .05$), indicating that targeted language proficiency supports everyday application.

Nonetheless, the 27.2% who rated their learning application ability as "Fair" or "Poor" draw attention to gaps in practice and engagement beyond the classroom. Qualitative responses underscored barriers like limited English usage opportunities and lack of confidence, a concern echoed by Bondarchuk et al. (2025). Additionally, teachers encounter difficulties in contextualizing lessons, limiting their ability to link classroom content to students' lives (Silseth, 2018).

To address these issues, immersive strategies like role-play, simulations, and community-based projects can be incorporated. These not only simulate real-world use but also reduce psychological barriers. Integrating mobile apps and digital tools (Chan & Ang, 2017; Lewin et al., 2018) can further bridge the gap between formal instruction and informal learning, allowing students to practice in varied and personalized ways.

Future Application of Concepts

While 87.3% of students expressed confidence in applying what they learned to future writing and speaking tasks, the post-test results showed variability, indicating that confidence does not always equate to competence. As Jacobs et al. (2023) suggest, accurate self-assessment plays a critical role in translating confidence into actionable performance.

Students with more accurate self-evaluations scored better, emphasizing the need for scaffolding and structured feedback, especially for the 12.7% who identified as only "Somewhat Able." Structured modeling of learning transfer and clear examples of application in professional contexts can close this confidence-performance gap. As Collins-Nelsen et al. (2022) argue, when students envision practical applications of their skills—such as teaching—they engage more deeply in preparing for future roles.

Promoting a growth mindset (Williams et al., 2013) through gradual feedback-based improvement examples may also foster resilience and persistence, particularly for those struggling with the application of abstract concepts into concrete tasks.

Recognition and Correction of Errors in Writing and Speaking

Most students (87.3%) rated their ability to recognize and correct errors as "Good" or "Very Good." Performance data supported this perception in grammar and vocabulary ($p < .05$) but not in pronunciation, revealing a disconnect between self-perception and actual accuracy in speaking. As noted by Collins-Nelsen et al. (2022), self-perceived proficiency can mask gaps in skills, particularly in areas requiring nuanced auditory feedback like pronunciation.

Tools like Grammarly and peer feedback align with constructivist principles that value active student engagement in identifying errors (Jacobs et al., 2023). However, challenges arise when learners rely too heavily on automated corrections. Without a deep understanding of the language rules, students may not internalize the necessary structures for long-term improvement.

To mitigate this, educators should promote error analysis discussions where students reflect on their mistakes and reasoning. This fosters critical thinking and deeper linguistic awareness. Reinforcing a growth mindset (Williams et al., 2013) can also help students embrace error correction as a learning opportunity rather than a failure.

Importance of Reconstructing Reflection in Fostering Critical Thinking

The unanimous valuation of reflection (100% rated “Important” or “Very Important”) underscores its centrality in fostering deeper learning. More than surface-level reflection, reconstructing reflection allows learners to analyze their experiences in a structured and critical manner. This aligns with Indriani et al. (2023) and Yeh et al. (2023), who found that reflective writing and portfolios significantly enhance critical thinking.

Students with accurate self-assessments performed better, highlighting the value of reflective activities in promoting metacognitive awareness (Iordanou, 2022). Dewey’s theory of reflective thought, echoed throughout these findings, supports the idea that learning is most effective when students critically examine past experiences to inform future decisions. Structured reflections help bridge theoretical knowledge and practice, enhancing retention (Wheelely et al., 2022) and adaptability (Mızrak & Çaylan, 2024).

To support this, educators should implement scaffolded reflective tasks like journals or self-assessment rubrics. These approaches, as Ranbir (2024) and Iordanou (2022) suggest, allow learners to articulate reasoning processes and develop transferable thinking skills vital in both academic and professional settings.

Strategies for Improving English Writing Practice

Students identified vocabulary development, grammar tools, feedback, and regular writing as key strategies. Performance data corroborated this, showing higher grammar and vocabulary scores among confident students ($p < .05$), consistent with Kanlibayeva (2022). Grammar correction tools, while helpful (Ahlan, 2021; Zhang & Huang, 2024), should complement rather than replace direct instruction and peer engagement.

Peer and instructor feedback emerged as pivotal in supporting writing development, fostering reflection and collaboration (Batubara et al., 2023; Wondim et al., 2023). However, Hossain et al. (2024) emphasize the need to ensure feedback is constructive and tailored, as ineffective feedback may confuse or demotivate learners.

Practical implications include providing workshops on feedback strategies and self-assessment, which help students evaluate their writing critically (Alkhateeb & Daweli, 2024). Encouraging students to experiment with techniques such as media summarization or bilingual drafting further personalizes the writing process, enhancing engagement and language ownership (Hossain et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study highlights the transformative potential of reconstructing reflective practices in fostering critical thinking and enhancing language skills among Indonesian EFL learners. The research addressed key objectives, including exploring the role of reflection, assessing self-confidence in understanding and applying language skills, identifying strategies for language development, examining real-life applications of English learning, and analyzing challenges in error recognition and correction.

The findings reveal that most students exhibit high confidence in understanding their learning experiences, yet discrepancies exist between self-perception and actual performance. The Pearson correlation analysis ($r = .52, p < .05$) indicates a moderate relationship between self-confidence and post-test scores, with 23.5% of “Capable” students scoring below the mean of 77.13. This underscores the need for formative assessments and structured feedback to improve self-awareness and learning accuracy.

Furthermore, the post-test results reinforce the importance of connecting self-perceived strengths to actual proficiency. Students confident in grammar and vocabulary performed significantly better in these areas ($p < .05$), highlighting the value of targeted language instruction. However, the absence of a significant correlation between self-perceived pronunciation skills and test performance, suggesting a gap in spoken language accuracy.

The study also underscores the significance of reconstructing reflection in enhancing critical thinking. Students with accurate self-assessment tended to perform better, supporting the role of structured reflective practices in improving metacognitive skills.

Recommendations

Practical recommendations emerging from this study include the integration of reflective practices into curriculum development and teacher training programs. Educators are encouraged to implement structured reflective exercises, promote peer feedback, and incorporate ongoing formative assessments. Additionally, teacher education programs should emphasize the development of self-reflection and metacognitive skills as core components to support language learning. These strategies can help foster deeper learner engagement and improve overall proficiency among EFL students.

Future research should explore intervention-based designs to evaluate the effectiveness of specific reflective practices in real classroom contexts. Longitudinal studies may also provide valuable insights into how reflection influences language development over time.

Limitations

This study was conducted within a single university setting with a relatively small sample of pre-service teachers, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Broader studies involving multiple institutions and more diverse student populations are recommended to validate the results.

Self-assessment and reflection, while valuable, are inherently subjective and may be influenced by biases such as overconfidence or underestimation. As highlighted in the findings, 23.5% of students who rated themselves as "Capable" scored below the mean post-test score. Future research should consider triangulating data using peer reviews and teacher assessments to mitigate such biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Furthermore, this study did not control for external variables such as test anxiety, previous exposure to English, or access to learning resources, which could have influenced the results. The observed lack of correlation between self-perceived pronunciation skills and actual performance also points to limitations in the accuracy of self-assessment. Subsequent studies may benefit from incorporating speech analysis tools or expert evaluations for a more objective measure of speaking proficiency.

Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were maintained throughout the research process. The study received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of Research Institute of Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, reference number 63/SKTR/LEMLIT/VI/2024.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Generative AI Statement

As the authors of this work, we used the AI tool ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com>) to check the coherence of this manuscript. The prompts used include: "Check the coherence of the following paragraph" and "Are the ideas in this section well-connected?" The output from these prompts was used to provide suggestions regarding the flow and logical connection of ideas. After using this AI tool, we reviewed and verified the final version of our work. We, as the authors, take full responsibility for the content of our published work.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Dwiniasih: Conceptualization and designing, data analysis and interpretation, drafting manuscript, critical revision of manuscript. Aisyah: Design, analysis, drafting manuscript, critical revision of manuscript. Arfiyanti: Data analysis and interpretation, critical revision of manuscript.

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