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Research Article

Challenging Apprenticeship of Observation through Enacting Critical Pedagogy in an EFL Teacher Education Course in Indonesia

Usep Syaripudin *
Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati

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This article discusses a case study that examines how critical pedagogy is incorporated into an English as a Foreign Language teacher training course to help pre-service teachers reconsider their previous ideas about teaching and learning. The research utilized an instrumental case study, involving data collection through activities like essay writing and reflective discussions that are essential to course design. Two distinct analysis strategies were employed to analyze the datasets. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the essays, while sociocultural discourse analysis was used to examine reflective conversations. The research discovered that pedagogical strategies have encouraged the aspiring teachers to reassess their existing beliefs about teaching and learning based on their personal experiences and relate these beliefs to the theoretical principles of student-centered teaching discussed in the class. Due to this, even though a few opinions persist, future teachers start to accept a fresh perspective on teaching and learning that aligns with student-centered teaching principles. It is vital to offer opportunities for future teachers to reconsider their underlying beliefs about teaching and learning, which they acquired through observing others, to promote a shift towards student-centered approaches. This research addresses the gap in teacher education literature by demonstrating how preservice teachers' apprenticeship of observation can be challenged through the incorporation of critical pedagogy.

Keywords: critical pedagogy; EFL teacher education; Indonesia; metaphoric reflection; reflective conversation

1. INTRODUCTION

This article presents a case study examining a pedagogical intervention in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education course within an Indonesian EFL teacher education context. Grounded in critical pedagogy, which emphasizes dialogue and reflection (Freire, 1986), the intervention aimed to encourage preservice teachers to critically reflect on their assumptions and deeply held beliefs about teaching and learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Additionally, it sought to engage them in designing student-centered EFL instructional activities that would transform the learning experiences of their future students. The pedagogical interventions were also informed by previous studies, including those by Bryan (2003), Bullough and Gitlin (2013), and Fosnot (1996), which highlighted the importance of challenging preservice teachers'

* Usep Syaripudin, Department of English Teacher Education, Faculty of Education and Sciences, Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Jalan Pemuda 32, Cirebon, West Java, 45132, Indonesia, usep.syaripudin@live.com

apprenticeship of observation to help them adopt alternative perspectives on teaching and the works of teachers.

Feiman-Nemser (2008) conceptualized the process of learning to teach through four themes: thinking, knowing, feeling, and acting like a teacher. This article focuses on the first theme—learning to think like teachers. While the four themes are interconnected, highlighting the content, process, and context of learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2008), I chose to emphasize the first theme because it aligns with the course's primary objective: to encourage preservice teachers to critically examine their existing knowledge and beliefs about teaching and the role of teachers. Supporting preservice teachers in this critical examination is essential, as their current knowledge and beliefs shape what they learn and do not learn from professional education (Mufidah, 2019; Wang et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2023). Through engagement in course activities, preservice teachers have the opportunity to reflect critically on their existing knowledge and beliefs and begin to reconceptualize teaching and the work of teachers in light of new possibilities and understandings. As Feiman-Nemser (2008) argues, fostering preservice teachers' ability to think like teachers involves "developing the capacity to think on one's feet, reflect on, and adjust one's practice" (p. 698).

Preservice teachers enter teacher colleges with significant prior learning experiences from their own schooling, which shape their initial views on teaching, learning, and the teacher's role. This phenomenon, known as the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975), establishes the foundation for their teaching beliefs. However, these preconceptions often go unexamined, leading to misconceptions about teaching (Bryan, 2003; Bullough & Gitlin, 2013; Fosnot, 1996). While these preconceptions provide a starting point for change, they have been shown to negatively impact preservice teachers' commitment to teacher education programs (Jungert et al., 2014), their emphasis on language course over teacher education courses (Kuswandono, 2014b), and their decision-making in teaching practice (Baier-Mosch & Kunter, 2024; Pham & Hamid, 2013). Research indicates that these beliefs are persistent and difficult to change (Bryan, 2003; Leavy et al., 2007; Qoyyimah et al., 2020), highlighting the need for teacher education programs to challenge and reshape them to promote conceptual and behavioral growth (Conner & Vary, 2017; Grossman, 1991; Hammerness et al., 2005).

I integrated critical pedagogy into the ELT course design to challenge preconceptions and facilitate preservice teachers in critically examining their existing beliefs about teaching, transforming them into more defensible views (Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Course activities and assignments were structured to encourage preservice teachers to contrast their preconceptions—rooted in the apprenticeship of observation and influenced by Indonesian sociocultural views of teachers—with scientific concepts of teaching that align with student-centered learning principles. After completing the course, preservice teachers were expected to adopt alternative conceptions of teaching and the role of teachers that more effectively align with the principles of communicative, student-centered instruction in ELT within the Indonesian context. These new

understandings should be reflected in the instructional designs they develop. In this article, I will address the following research question: How does engagement in these course activities support preservice teachers in reexamining their preconceptions of teaching and the role of teachers while also embracing new conceptions of both?

2. CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Critical pedagogy, developed by Paulo Freire, is a student-centered, problem-solving approach that encourages critical dialogue and challenges traditional, teacher-centered education models. It emphasizes empowering students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and critiquing and addressing structural oppression through conversation rather than one-way knowledge transmission (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007; Hayati, 2015). In 1985, Paulo Freire coined the term “banking model of education” to illustrate educational practices where teachers merely transfer knowledge to students. Through dialogues on real-life issues relevant to students, critical pedagogy seeks to critique the “banking model of education” and transform it into an approach that places students at the center of instructional activities.

Several studies have integrated elements of critical pedagogy—such as problem-posing, critical reflection, dialogic learning, and participatory approaches—into language teacher education. Khatib and Miri (2016) explored problem-posing and critical dialogue in Iranian teacher education, where transmission-based models traditionally dominate. Their study found that dialogue and reflection helped teachers reassess their practices and prioritize student voices. Similarly, Crookes and Lehner (1998) applied Woodward’s (1991) double-loop approach in teacher education, fostering shared decision-making and critical dialogue between preservice teachers and educators. Shin (2004) employed problem-posing activities to empower Korean English teachers, finding that critical pedagogy helped them develop an awareness of English's global power dynamics and address teaching challenges in their contexts.

There have been increasing calls to integrate critical pedagogy into teacher education programs in Indonesia. Hayati (2015) advocates for its application in EFL teacher education to help preservice teachers recognize their strengths as bilingual or multilingual educators, countering the native speaker fallacy and feelings of inferiority. Citing Phan Le Ha (2008) and Kirkpatrick (2006), Hayati (2015) asserts that critical pedagogy equips preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach English while maintaining their identities and developing contextually relevant methodologies. This approach emphasizes the importance of addressing the political and sociocultural contexts of English language teaching (p. 84). Furthermore, Mambu (2022a; 2022b) promotes critical pedagogy as a means to confront societal contradictions and envision transformation in English education.

However, integrating critical pedagogy into Indonesian teacher education poses challenges due to its misalignment with local sociocultural contexts, which tend to position teachers and professors at the center of teaching and learning. Despite longstanding calls for the integration of critical pedagogy, relatively few studies have addressed these demands. Junaidi's (2020) study on critical English teaching through community problem-posing in an English for Young Learners course highlights these challenges, yet it successfully increased preservice teachers' awareness of educational inequality in Indonesia. Therefore, as reported in this article, integrating critical pedagogy into EFL teacher education is a necessary response to these calls. The elements of critical pedagogy incorporated into the teacher education course included dialogue and reflection, intended to facilitate preservice teachers in reexamining their preconceptions of teaching and learning, which have been heavily influenced by the traditional teacher-centered model of education prevalent in Indonesia.

3. EFL TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT

In Indonesian, the term "guru," meaning teacher, originates from Sanskrit and signifies more than just an educator. A "guru" embodies multiple roles, including mentor, counselor, and facilitator of self-realization, serving as a source of knowledge, inspiration, and guidance in spiritual development (Mlecko, 1982). The Indonesian term combines "gu" (from "digugu," meaning to be obeyed) and "ru" (from "ditiru," meaning to be imitated), emphasizing the teacher as a figure of trust and imitation, embodying values such as patience and humility. In Indonesian culture, teachers command respect second only to parents, a status reinforced by religious beliefs that equate disobedience to teachers with sin.

The sociocultural view of teachers as gurus shapes the beliefs of both Indonesian teachers and students regarding their roles in education. Reflecting on my professional experience and referencing Dardjowidjojo (2006) and Wachidah (2001), Indonesian teachers see themselves as central figures in instruction and primary sources of knowledge, perceiving students as passive recipients. This belief influences teaching strategies, material selection, and classroom interactions (Bjork, 2013). Viewing teachers as authoritative bearers of knowledge, students tend to be dependent learners, often hesitant to engage actively in class (Newman & Gentile, 2020; Suyatno et al., 2022; Mufidah, 2019; Wachidah, 2001). Dardjowidjojo (2006) argues that these cultural norms limit the adoption of student-centered practices that foster learner autonomy.

In the context of EFL teaching and learning, previous studies have found that the teacher-centered banking model of education (Freire, 1986) still dominates English language teaching and learning in Indonesian classrooms (Armin & Siregar, 2021; Dardjowidjojo, 2006; Hayati, 2015; Syahril, 2019). These studies further claim that

teacher-centered instructional activities contribute significantly to the low English proficiency among Indonesian students. Therefore, to improve the outcomes of English language teaching in Indonesia, researchers have called for initiatives to shift instructional activities from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one (Armin & Siregar, 2021; Dardjowidjojo, 2006; Hayati, 2015; Syahril, 2019).

Responding to this call, the Indonesian government introduced a new curriculum named *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Freedom Curriculum). Grounded in Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy, which emphasizes placing students at the center of instructional activities, the new curriculum promotes student-centered learning and allows teachers to develop differentiated instruction tailored to their students' unique learning contexts. However, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is not the first curriculum to mandate the implementation of student-centered instruction in Indonesian schools.

Previous curricula introduced in 2006 and 2013 also aimed to transform instructional activities from teacher-centered to student-centered. Nevertheless, studies in English teaching have shown that teacher-centered practices remain dominant, with factors such as large class sizes, limited resources, and teachers' competencies cited as primary obstacles to the successful implementation of this learning approach (Dardjowidjojo, 2006; Hayati, 2015). Additionally, the failure to fully implement student-centered learning extends beyond teacher competence; sociocultural factors also play a significant role. Though teachers are expected to act as facilitators of learning (Richards, 2006), cultural norms in Indonesia position them as authoritative figures, complicating their transition from being knowledge transmitters to learning facilitators.

Researchers have found that sociocultural values have been becoming the barriers to adopting this approach in English teaching in Indonesia (Bjork, 2013; Masduqi et al., 2024). These studies emphasize that improving English teachers' competence as facilitators is insufficient; their perceptions of teaching and their roles must also evolve. The traditional view of teachers as gurus in Indonesia, which conflicts with student-centered principles, necessitates that teacher education programs help preservice teachers develop new conceptions of teaching aligned with this approach.

Since teachers are central to the education system, Indonesia must focus on preparing new educators who can effectively implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and embrace student-centered methods. However, this transformation is challenging due to preservice teachers' prior experiences, which are shaped by the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) and sociocultural values (Richardson & Watt, 2014; Suryani et al., 2016). Many have been exposed to predominantly teacher-centered instruction, leading to preconceptions that may not align with the student-centered approach mandated by the curriculum.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Context

This study was conducted within the context of the Instructional Design for the ELT course, a two-credit compulsory course in the English teacher education program at a private teachers' college in Indonesia. Final-year students are required to complete this course and achieve a minimum grade of B to participate in the school teaching practice in the following semester, a total of twenty-three students enrolled in the course. The course content was designed to equip preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for effectively implementing student-centered communicative language instruction.

4.2 Design

A qualitative case study was employed to provide an in-depth description and analysis of a specific bounded system, focusing on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The primary aim of this study was to investigate the implementation of teacher education courses informed by critical pedagogy, designed to challenge preservice teachers' apprenticeship of observation within a defined context—a group of students in an EFL teacher education program. The study specifically examined preservice teachers' participation, responses, and evolving engagement within a structured learning environment grounded in the principles of critical pedagogy. Although this case study is focused on EFL preservice teachers in Indonesia, it is hoped that its findings will resonate with English language teacher educators worldwide who are interested in integrating critical pedagogy into their teacher education practices.

4.3 Data Collection

This study was conducted in an EFL teacher education program in Indonesia, involving a class of 23 preservice teachers in their final year of study. I was assigned to teach the Instructional Design in ELT course during that semester. According to the university's research regulations, studies involving minimal risk, including classroom research, are exempt from institutional review. However, on the first day of the course, I informed the preservice teachers that I would incorporate certain course activities into a research project examining the role of critical pedagogy in teacher education. To mitigate potential grading bias, I designed grading rubrics that excluded criteria related to critical pedagogy. This approach ensured that the preservice teachers completed assignments and engaged in course activities not merely to align with my expectations, but to participate authentically in the learning process.

This study utilized three data collection strategies integral to the course activities throughout the semester. First, essay writing examined the initial beliefs. Preservice teachers were asked to articulate their initial beliefs or preconceptions about teaching, learning, and the role of teachers. They wrote one- to two-page descriptive essays outlining their EFL classroom experiences and reflecting on their perceptions of teaching, which Lortie (1975) refers to as the "apprenticeship of observation." Second, preservice teachers participated in seven reflective conversations throughout the semester, each focusing on different theoretical concepts of communicative, student-centered language instruction discussed in the course. Working in groups, they discussed how to implement these theoretical concepts within the Indonesian language learning context, continually connecting their discussions to their school experiences. These conversations provided a collaborative platform for the preservice teachers to reexamine their current conceptions of teaching, which are heavily influenced by the sociocultural values of the teacher as a guru in Indonesia. They contrasted these conceptions with the theoretical models discussed in the course.

Through these reflective discussions, the preservice teachers were expected to adopt new conceptions of teaching and learning that aligned with the principles of student-centered language instruction. Third, through essay writing and outlining preservice teachers' emerging conceptions, the preservice teachers were asked to describe their revised conceptions of teaching and teachers using metaphors at the end of the semester. Previous studies suggest that metaphors serve as powerful tools for helping preservice teachers reflect on their beliefs and can lead to a deeper understanding of any conflicts in their perceptions of teaching (Bullough, 1991; Bullough & Gitlin, 2013; Casebeer, 2015; Özmantar & Arslan, 2018). This reflective exercise was crucial for understanding the nuances of their beliefs about teaching.

4.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis process was conducted concurrently with data collection, employing two distinct strategies. First, I used Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis to examine the essay datasets. I began by familiarizing myself with the datasets, generating initial codes, searching for themes, and naming the final findings. For Essay 1, which focused on preservice teachers' initial beliefs about teaching and learning, I specifically looked for statements indicating their preconceptions and the sociocultural factors and apprenticeship of observation influencing these beliefs. In Essay 2, which addressed the preservice teachers' emerging understanding of teaching and learning, I sought statements indicating a shift toward a new understanding and explored the factors contributing to this change.

Meanwhile, I utilized Sociocultural Discourse Analysis (SCDA) developed by Mercer (2004) to analyze the reflective conversation datasets. I chose SCDA as it emphasizes the content and function of conversations in collaborative intellectual activities (Mercer,

2004), rather than merely focusing on linguistic structure. Using SCDA as an analytical tool, I looked for conversations in which the preservice teachers made connections between their lived experiences and the theoretical concepts discussed in the course, thereby reexamining their preconceptions of teaching and learning. I analyzed the preservice teachers' remarks, questions, and reflections during these conversations and sought evidence of their development of a shared understanding of the topics discussed. Additionally, I assessed whether the preservice teachers engaged in joint intellectual activities, constructively and critically acknowledging each other's ideas (Mercer, 2004), which led to a new understanding of teaching and learning. In the findings section, I detailed the analysis process using SCDA and described the reflective conversations.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are organized into three sections. First, I will discuss the analysis of preservice teachers' initial essays, focusing on their early beliefs about teaching and the role of teachers. Next, I will examine how reflective dialogues helped them reexamine these beliefs and adopt alternative views on teaching. Finally, I will explore the metaphoric essays that reflect their emerging conceptions of teaching and learning.

While 23 preservice teachers participated in the course and this study, I have chosen to include only three of them to support the findings. These participants were selected because their interactions and engagement in the course most effectively illustrate the study's key findings. The conversations within their group exemplified how the preservice teachers critically examined their existing knowledge and beliefs about teaching, gradually moving toward new understandings. Additionally, I incorporated excerpts from essays written by these three preservice teachers to highlight the connection between their dialogic process—where they questioned and reflected on their prior knowledge and beliefs—and the development of their new understandings as expressed in their written work. Due to the substantial amount of data generated by the study, it is impractical to include all of it within this manuscript. All preservice teachers' names in this article are pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality.

5.1 Preservice Teachers' Initial Beliefs

My analysis of the first essays revealed that Freire's "banking" concept of education dominated the preservice teachers' initial conceptions of teaching and the role of teachers. These preconceptions can be categorized into two broad themes: (1) teaching is perceived as the process of transferring knowledge from teachers to students, and (2) being a teacher is regarded as morally and socially demanding work. The following excerpts from Firdaus and Vitiya's essays exemplify these initial views on teaching and the role of teachers.

> Teachers play a central role in teaching and learning. A teacher's primary responsibility is to educate students and help them acquire knowledge. Their presence is crucial in education, where they serve as guides, leaders, organizers, planners, and even parental figures. Teachers are tasked with fostering students' skills and knowledge while creating engaging learning experiences that inspire enthusiasm in the classroom. They also play a crucial role in shaping students' character and moral values. Teaching is the act of transmitting knowledge from teacher to student, transforming ignorance into understanding. One of my best learning experiences occurred in senior high school, where the teacher's instruction was easily absorbed and quickly understood. (Vitiya in her initial essay).

> Teachers are like parents at school. They are responsible for improving students' knowledge, skills, and behavior. At school, I always expected teachers to show examples of the knowledge they teach us and the noble character they want us to embrace. Teachers' primary responsibility is to ensure their students understand the materials they deliver in their instructional activities. Looking back to my school experience, I always needed help understanding the materials if the teachers needed help explaining them in a way that was easy to understand. (Firdaus in his initial essay)

The traditional teacher-centered viewpoint, which positions the instructor as the supreme authority and regards students as passive consumers of information, is reflected in both pieces. This perspective contrasts with the ideas of Richard (2006) and Freire (1985), who advocate for communicative, student-centered instruction and critical pedagogy. They promote a dialogic and participatory form of education that empowers students to become critical thinkers and active learners. Both writings fail to articulate the fundamental principles of student-centered learning, such as student autonomy, collaboration, and critical thinking. Instead, they focus on the teacher's responsibility to impart knowledge and ensure student comprehension, reflecting a more directive style of instruction.

In analyzing their initial belief essays, I found that preservice teachers' perspectives on teaching and learning are grounded in the belief that the teacher's primary function is to transmit knowledge to students. This belief is heavily influenced by the preservice teachers' apprenticeship of observation and the sociocultural values that regard teachers as gurus, deeply rooted in Indonesian society. In all the essays, phrases such as "teacher teaches," "teacher is a parent," "teacher explains," and "knowledge transfer" are prevalent. Preservice teachers view teachers as the central figures and sole authorities on knowledge in the classroom, leading them to believe that educators are responsible for transferring knowledge to students through teaching activities.

Furthermore, preservice teachers perceive teaching as a morally and socially demanding profession. They believe teachers must act like parents, serving as role models and providing a moral compass for students. The excerpts above illustrate the sociocultural definition of teachers as gurus in Indonesian society. These preservice teachers have developed traditional conceptions of teaching and the role of teachers during their time in school classrooms through the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). However, these conceptions are incompatible with the principles of student-centered instruction. Consequently, they need to be challenged, as they may hinder the implementation of

student-centered EFL instruction in Indonesian classrooms, as mandated by the new curriculum currently being introduced in Indonesian schools.

5.2 Reflective Conversations

This section discusses how participation in reflective conversations during the course supported preservice teachers in reexamining their initial beliefs and adopting new perspectives on teaching and the role of teachers. These conversations facilitated critical dialogue by challenging traditional, teacher-centered models of education while providing a collaborative space for preservice teachers to reflect on their beliefs—shaped by their apprenticeship of observation and the sociocultural view of teachers as 'guru' in Indonesia—and to compare them with the scientific concepts introduced in the course. Throughout the semester, they engaged in seven online conversations, each centered on a different topic related to student-centered communicative language instruction. Due to the numerous conversation threads, I will focus on an excerpt that best represents how the preservice teachers engaged in the discussion to reexamine their preconceptions of teaching and learning.

Using Mercer's (2004) sociocultural discourse analysis as the analytical tool, my analysis revealed that the collaborative, reflective conversation provided the preservice teachers with a space to engage in interthinking, which is a joint intellectual activity aimed at making sense of experiences and solving problems collaboratively (Mercer, 2004). Through this interthinking process, the preservice teachers participated in collaborative exploratory talks, examining and reexamining their preconceptions of teaching and learning. The excerpts below are from one of the conversation threads created by a group in week eleven regarding the design of instructional activities in student-centered communicative language teaching, which was initiated by a reflection from Fadhilah:

> This week's topic helped me understand key aspects of lesson planning. Most importantly, one thing I learned from this topic is that to implement communicative, student-centered instruction, teachers first need to know their students well. To my understanding, student-centered means placing students at the foundation of the instructional activities. It means that every activity, material, and medium of instruction should be designed with reference to students' unique characteristics. Therefore, before formulating instructional objectives and developing instructional activities and materials, teachers must conduct a needs analysis to identify student's current knowledge and learning preferences. I always thought that when developing an instructional plan, teachers were guided by the question of how to teach. But now, I learn that before asking how to teach, teachers need to find answers to questions like: How do their students learn? What is their current knowledge of the topic? What difficulties might students encounter when learning this topic? The answers to these questions are critical for guiding teachers in effectively teaching the topic. Looking back at my EFL learning experiences, I felt my teachers decided everything—the materials and activities—without acknowledging students' unique learning contexts. I remain uncertain about how to implement student-centered activities in a large classroom,

> such as those with forty students, which is common in Indonesia. How can I know them, their learning needs, and other characteristics? How can the learning activities I design cater to each student's unique learning context? (Fadhilah)

Fadhilah begins her reflection by revisiting her prior misconception that teaching was primarily about delivering lessons. This belief originated from her apprenticeship of observation. She then reexamines this notion and articulates her new understanding that "student-centered means placing students at the foundation of the instructional activities." This realization emerged from her reflective conversations with her classmates and me as her lecturer throughout the course. These discussions prompted her to question her previous misconceptions. I provided the following feedback on her reflection:

> I am excited that you realize that teaching is more than just designing and delivering instructional activities in the classroom. There are other things teachers need to know and prepare before going to the classroom. Knowing students well is the prerequisite for implementing student-centered instructions. Your questions are the same questions every teacher in Indonesia has in their mind. I am waiting until your group mates join this conversation to see if they think about these issues.

I appreciate Fadhilah's realization that teaching is not merely delivering lesson materials in the classroom. I confirm that teachers must prepare many other things before, during, and after teaching activities. Moreover, I also encouraged that the questions she had represented the common issues in English language teaching and learning in Indonesia. In so doing, I acknowledged her concerns and, at the same time, invited other students to give their comments. Firdaus joined the conversation and said,

> I have the same questions, too! Additionally, reflecting on my English learning experiences at school and building on your questions, Fadilah, I wonder what process teachers undergo when designing instructional activities. Teachers can get to know their students well in many ways, especially at the beginning of the semester or before creating instructional activities. I am curious about when and how they do this. This has led me to think that what we know about teaching so far is what happens in the classroom during the delivery of instructional activities. However, we have yet to consider what occurs beforehand in the background. The topic this week provided an overview of what takes place prior to teaching in the classroom. Another insight I gained from the class, which was lacking during my own schooling, is the importance of providing meaningful feedback. Meaningful feedback enhances the learning process and can motivate students by making them feel appreciated. However, giving meaningful feedback to students in a large class would take much work. (Firdaus)

Firdaus's comment exemplifies a characteristic of interthinking, as outlined by Mercer (2004), known as exploratory talk, where "partners engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas" (Mercer, 2004, p. 146). He acknowledges a significant aspect of shared concern when he says, "I have the same questions, too! Additionally, reflecting on my English learning experiences at school and building on your questions, Fadilah, I wonder what process teachers undergo when designing instructional activities?" This response indicates a common ground of concern shared between him and Fadilah. The exploratory talk continues as Firdaus questions the actual practices of his school's

English teachers. His comment, “I am curious about when and how they do this,” reflects his inquiry into past learning experiences, allowing him to critically assess teachers’ roles beyond merely delivering instructions. He further discusses the importance of feedback in learning, indicating that he is developing a deeper understanding of student-centered instruction, where feedback is integral to the learning process. I responded to Firdaus’s comment as follows:

> Thank you, Firdaus, for joining the conversation. If teaching were a play or a drama performance, what you saw in the classroom was just the front of the stage. Meanwhile, what happened backstage, you have only seen if, maybe, your parents are teachers.

With this comment, I tried to strengthen Firdaus’s reflection when he says, “What we have known so far about teaching was just what happened in the classroom when teachers delivered the instructional activities. However, we have never seen what happened before that, what happened in the back,” using a metaphor of teaching as a performance. Mercer (2004) has often emphasized shared metaphors as part of interthinking. In the comment, I used metaphor as a cognitive tool to help preservice teachers conceptualize teaching as a complex, multifaceted profession. The conversation continued with the additional issue of teaching as a professional career.

> In the class, when talking about designing communicative student-centered instructional activities, we talked about differentiated instruction. Teachers should do this. But again, with more than 30 students in class and teaching more than two classes, how much differentiation should teachers make to ensure the instructional activities are student-centered? I am not sure I am up for a teaching career… :D … Another thing that I learned from the class was about creating a supportive learning environment. Teachers need to adjust their instructional activities to the learning environment at the school. Looking back at my learning experience at school, the teacher used the textbook so much that the learning activities were only working on the tasks in the textbook. (Vitiya)

> I feel that way too, Vitiya. Although teaching is not my primary career plan, it is one of the options I could pursue. However, the more I learn about the actual demands of the job, the less interested I become in a teaching career. It is unfortunate, but it’s true. Teaching is morally and socially demanding, with heavy workloads. It’s more than just telling or explaining things in class. (Firdaus)

Vitiya’s reflection broadens the conversation to encompass teaching as both an activity and a professional career. She invites everyone involved to reexamine their professional identities and career aspirations. Vitiya shares her emotional and practical challenges in teaching, expressing uncertainty about whether she is “up for a teaching career.” The conversations in the course have exposed her to theoretical concepts of teaching and learning, which she connects to her lived experiences. This connection results in a more nuanced view of teaching and a shift in her professional aspirations. Fadhilah undergoes a similar learning process. Her deepened understanding of teaching as “morally and socially demanding with heavy workloads” prompts her to reevaluate her career plans. This shift aligns with the sociocultural context of teaching, which preservice teachers recognize as profoundly challenging yet essential work.

This article employs sociocultural discourse analysis (Mercer, 2004) to present a collaborative process in which conversations foster interthinking among preservice teachers. This collaborative effort allows them to reexamine their preconceptions of teaching and learning, which are often heavily influenced by their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). Through exploratory discussions, preservice teachers critically engage with theoretical concepts learned in class and connect them to the preconceptions about teaching and learning derived from their lived experiences. This connecting process enacts critical pedagogy (Freire, 1985) within the teacher education course, enabling preservice teachers to critically examine the concepts of teaching and learning shaped by their apprenticeship of observation. The reflective critical conversations throughout the course allow preservice teachers to compare their pre-existing knowledge and beliefs about teaching with alternative conceptions introduced through course readings and lectures. These discussions create a safe space for preservice teachers to critically examine and challenge the traditional teacher-centered models of English instruction they have experienced, fostering a sense of inclusion in the process of educational change.

5.3 Preservice Teachers' Metaphors of their Emerging Conceptions

At the end of the semester, I asked the students to rearticulate their conceptions of teaching and teachers through metaphoric descriptions. This approach was informed by previous studies indicating that metaphors are powerful tools for helping preservice teachers reflect on their beliefs and can lead to a more nuanced understanding of any conflicts in their perceptions of what it means to teach (Bullough, 1991; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Casebeer, 2015; Özmantar & Arslan, 2018). The preservice teachers described their own concepts of teaching and the work of teachers through various metaphors. I found that these metaphors were still profoundly influenced by the sociocultural perception of teachers as 'gurus' and shaped by their apprenticeship of observation. However, I also observed that, to some extent, they began to consider alternative conceptions of teaching and the role of teachers that aligned with certain principles of student-centered learning.

As illustrated in the following excerpts, although the metaphors they used still reflected the conception of teachers as 'gurus,' they included additional details that aligned with the principles of student-centered instruction. For instance, Firdaus, an avid soccer fan, used soccer teams as a metaphor for school classrooms.

> A classroom is like a soccer team; the coach is the teacher, and the players are the students. In a soccer game, there are rules that must be followed by everyone involved. Each player has a specific role to play to achieve the ultimate goal: winning the game. The coach can decide which players participate, what roles they will assume, and how to design strategies for success. Therefore, the coach must understand each player's strengths and weaknesses to develop an effective game plan tailored to their

> characteristics. Similarly, teaching and learning occur in a classroom, just as in a soccer game. As the head coach, a teacher can establish classroom rules. For instance, just as players must agree on the objective in soccer, teachers and students need to collaborate on the goals of their instructional activities. The teacher also has the authority to determine the instructional strategies she wants to employ to achieve these goals. Thus, like a soccer coach, a teacher must know her students well to create diverse strategies that align with their needs. Therefore, teachers need to engage in conversations with their students. (Firdaus in his metaphoric essay).

Firdaus's metaphor suggests that he still perceives the teacher as an authoritative figure in the instructional process, someone to be followed and imitated. For instance, in a soccer team, the head coach trains players in essential technical skills such as shooting, passing, striking, and defense. Similarly, teachers assume the responsibility of imparting skills and knowledge to their students. However, his metaphor also reflects his evolving understanding of teaching and learning, as he likens the classroom to a soccer team. In this analogy, the teacher acts as the coach, while the students are the players. Notably, Firdaus's metaphor indicates that he is beginning to embrace a new perspective on teaching and learning by highlighting the importance of the teacher's role in understanding their students and developing instructional activities tailored to their needs. By likening teachers to soccer coaches, he suggests that teaching involves more than merely delivering content or issuing instructions. Like a coach who guides, supports, and strategizes for their players, the teacher is viewed as a facilitator of learning who must thoughtfully understand and plan for the success of their students.

Moreover, his metaphor of teaching and learning illustrates his embrace of several critical aspects of student-centered instruction. He recognizes the teacher's role as a facilitator rather than a dictator, emphasizes the importance of collaboration and communication, and understands the need for differentiation based on students' unique needs. This perspective aligns with Richards (2006), who argues that "teachers need to talk with their students," suggesting that Firdaus is beginning to recognize the importance of listening to students' voices when planning instructional activities. He views teaching as a dynamic process that requires continuous reflection and adjustment. This evolving understanding is consistent with constructivist approaches to teaching, where learning is co-constructed through social interactions, and the teacher adapts to the needs of the learners.

Meanwhile, Vitiya used her favorite show, Masha and the Bear, as a metaphor for teaching and the work of teachers. She wrote her metaphor essays in Indonesian. The following excerpt is my translation of the essay.

> The relationship between a teacher and a student is like the relationship between Masha and the Bear, in which Masha represents the student, and the Bear represents the teacher. Masha is a hyperactive little girl curious about everything, while the Bear is a caring friend who enjoys teaching Masha everything, she is curious about. The bond between teachers and students should be similar to that of Masha and the Bear. Like the Bear, teachers should be patient and use creative methods when teaching students. However, if I were the Bear (the teacher), I wouldn't just tell Masha (my students) what

> to do. Instead, I would ask them what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. Then, I would prepare teaching materials and activities appropriate to the student's needs. (Vitiya in her metaphoric essay).

Her use of "Masha and the Bear" as metaphors for teaching and learning emphasizes the role of teachers as parental figures for students in schools. In the show, Masha is depicted as a brilliant, caring, yet mischievous little girl exploring the world around her, leading to a series of amusing and exciting scenarios. However, Masha's kind-hearted Bear patiently tries to keep her out of trouble, often becoming an inadvertent victim of her misbehavior. In Indonesian society, teachers are expected to fulfill a parental role, making personal qualities such as caring and patience essential characteristics of a good teacher. These values are reflected in Vitiya's metaphoric essay.

Moreover, Vitiya's essay illustrates her developing understanding of the teacher's influential, supportive, and student-centered role. It emphasizes critical aspects of relationship-building, student-centeredness, and creative pedagogy, showcasing her evolving perception of teaching as a collaborative and responsive process. Her metaphor underscores her new understanding of student-centered pedagogy, highlighting the importance of fostering caring, supportive relationships with students, encouraging curiosity-driven learning, and adopting creative, flexible teaching methods. Through her metaphor, Vitiya demonstrates an increasing awareness of the need for student autonomy in learning. She recognizes the significance of needs-based instruction and the roles of teachers as guides and supporters. Her metaphor reflects her shifting perceptions of teaching and learning toward a constructivist and student-centered approach, where learning is a collaborative, responsive process that prioritizes students' voices, needs, and curiosities.

The preservice teachers used metaphors that, on the one hand, reflect the sociocultural definition of teachers as gurus, which is heavily influenced by the apprenticeship of observation. On the other hand, they also mentioned teaching characteristics and aspects of teachers' work that align with a student-centered instructional approach. One common metaphor was that teaching is like "farming," where teachers are seen as responsible for preparing the fertile ground for students to grow. They emphasized the importance of creating a friendly learning environment where students feel free from judgment and can make mistakes and offering opportunities for collaborative learning. Some preservice teachers described teaching as "crafting," requiring creativity and patience. They used the metaphor of "swimming against and with the current" to illustrate classroom management challenges and other metaphors that reflect their developing understanding of teaching and learning.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Integrating critical pedagogy into teacher education creates opportunities for preservice teachers to engage in dialogue and reflection, connecting their lived experiences of

learning English with the teaching and learning concepts they learn in teacher education programs. This approach empowers preservice teachers to reexamine, question, and challenge their preconceptions of teaching, which are heavily influenced by their experiences and sociocultural norms.

As reported in this study, the critical pedagogy-informed course activities allowed preservice teachers to critically examine their existing knowledge and beliefs about teaching and the role of teachers, largely shaped by the apprenticeship of observation. Through critical discussions, they conducted an in-depth analysis of their prior understandings, which were predominantly influenced by a teacher-centered perspective, and contrasted these with the student-centered concepts introduced throughout the course. As a result, they began to develop a new understanding of teaching that aligns more closely with student-centered approaches. This emerging perspective is expected to support their implementation of Indonesia's new curriculum, which mandates a student-centered approach to English language teaching and learning. By fostering this shift in mindset, the course ensures that preservice teachers are better equipped to meet the curriculum's demands.

Moreover, this study highlights the crucial role of teacher educators in integrating critical pedagogy into teacher education courses. As the teacher educator in this study, I positioned myself as a critical friend to the preservice teachers. In this role, I utilized questioning and offered different perspectives as scaffolding tools, which I found essential for facilitating critical dialogues that examined the knowledge they gained from their life and educational experiences.

While this study provides valuable insights into how critical pedagogy challenges preservice teachers' existing beliefs about teaching and learning, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, as an instrumental case study, its findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to other EFL teacher education programs with different sociocultural and institutional contexts. Second, the study captures short-term shifts in beliefs during the course but does not assess whether these changes translate into long-term pedagogical practice. The lecturer's role in facilitating reflections raises concerns about power dynamics and the potential influence of the researcher on the participants' expressed views.

Furthermore, while the study reports attitudinal shifts, measuring deep, lasting changes in beliefs requires a more longitudinal approach. Finally, although grounded in critical pedagogy, incorporating sociocultural or transformative learning theories could provide a more nuanced understanding of how preservice teachers negotiate and internalize new conceptions of teaching and learning. Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs, classroom observations, and broader theoretical frameworks to explore critical pedagogy's role in teacher identity development.

THE AUTHOR

Usep Syaripudin is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English Teacher Education at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati. He teaches teacher education courses related to instructional design in ELT and curriculum of ELT in Indonesia. He has an interest in studying reflective practice and practitioner inquiry in teacher education.

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