

Advancing Minds: Critical Thinking Pedagogies in Indonesian EFL High School Speaking Lessons

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Abstract

Critical thinking is increasingly recognized as an essential component of English language teaching, yet its integration into speaking instruction in high school settings remains limited. This study aims to examine the pedagogical strategies Indonesian high school EFL teachers use to foster critical thinking during speaking activities. The research was conducted in eight Indonesian cities with nineteen English teachers from public and private high schools. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and document analysis of lesson plans. Using a qualitative methodological design, athematic analysis approach was used to interpret the data. The findings showed that teachers promoted critical thinking through three main strategies: designing thought-provoking speaking tasks connected to real issues, scaffolding reasoning through purposeful and open-ended questions, and encouraging dialogic interaction that supported reflective peer exchange. These strategies helped students examine ideas, justify positions, and respond with greater clarity. The study concludes that speaking lessons can serve as a meaningful space for developing critical thinking when teachers intentionally design tasks and interactional structures that support deeper reasoning. The implications highlight the need for teacher education programs to emphasize practical models of questioning and collaborative speaking tasks and encourage schools to provide supportive environments for critical thinking-oriented pedagogy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking has become a central expectation in contemporary education as schools prepare learners to participate in complex social and academic

environments (Bara et al., 2025). In language learning, these abilities are crucial because speaking tasks require learners to express ideas, evaluate information, and justify opinions in real time. In Indonesia, the development of such skills has gained increased attention through national curriculum reforms that encourage higher-order thinking (Anugrah et al., 2025; Musyaffa & Atno, 2025). English teachers at the secondary level are therefore expected to design lessons that not only build fluency but also strengthen students' ability to reason through spoken interaction. Despite these policy ambitions, however, many classrooms still struggle to achieve meaningful integration of critical thinking in everyday speaking activities. This difficulty is often linked to assessment pressure that prioritizes test preparation, limited access to sustained training on teaching reasoning through talk, and established classroom routines that rely on textbook dialogues, memorization, and accuracy-focused recitation rather than extended discussion.

Existing research in English education has provided valuable insights into how critical thinking can support effective learning; however, most studies concentrate on higher education or focus on written tasks rather than oral communication (e.g., Ilyas & Arifin, 2025). Investigations in the Indonesian context have tended to examine general classroom practices or curriculum alignment, leaving the specific teaching of speaking skills at the high school level less explored. As a result, there is limited understanding of how teachers interpret policy expectations, how they design speaking tasks that engage students in deeper thought, and what strategies they rely on during lessons. This gap in the literature indicates a need for empirical work that captures teacher perspectives and provides a clearer picture of classroom practices.

This study, therefore, addresses that need by asking the following research question: *What pedagogical strategies do Indonesian high school EFL teachers use to foster critical thinking during speaking activities?* The aim is to describe the ways teachers plan and conduct speaking lessons that encourage students to think more carefully and express ideas with greater clarity and purpose. This research is significant because it provides practical accounts of teaching approaches that remain under-documented in Indonesian contexts. Its novelty lies in its exclusive focus on speaking instruction in the high school setting, an area that receives far less attention than reading and writing. By presenting teachers' lived experiences, the study contributes evidence that may inform teacher development programs, curriculum refinement, and future classroom-based innovation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualizing Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is widely regarded as an essential aim of modern education because it helps learners examine information, question ideas, and form reasoned judgments. Scholars define this concept in various ways. Bloom's Taxonomy presents critical thought as part of higher-order cognitive processes that involve analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Facione (2013) describes it as a collection of cognitive skills, such as interpretation, inference, and analysis, that support clear and purposeful reasoning. Paul and Elder (2014) add to this understanding by proposing intellectual standards, including clarity, accuracy, and relevance, which guide the evaluation of ideas. Taken together, these perspectives portray critical thinking as an intentional effort to make sense of information and respond with well-considered judgments.

In English language education, critical thinking is closely connected to how learners engage with content and convey meaning through communication (Dessie & Guadu, 2025; Yang et al., 2025). It develops when students are encouraged to question viewpoints, connect ideas, and provide thoughtful responses to classroom tasks (Alzate, 2025; Chao & Wright, 2025). Speaking lessons, in particular, provide meaningful opportunities for learners to apply these skills, as oral communication requires quick thinking, careful word choice, and the ability to support claims with explanations. Research in language pedagogy suggests that classroom interactions that invite students to justify their opinions, challenge assumptions, or expand upon peers' contributions strengthen both linguistic and cognitive growth (Li & Hu, 2025; Miyamoto, 2025). For this reason, speaking instruction offers a productive context for the development of critical thinking.

Critical thinking is also shaped by the cultural and educational settings in which learning takes place (Liang et al., 2025). In Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language, students bring diverse experiences and expectations that influence how they respond to open-ended discussions and analytical tasks. Teachers, therefore, play a central role in creating learning conditions that encourage thoughtful expression and reflective engagement (Afriantoni et al., 2025; Ilyas et al., 2025). When speaking activities are designed to prompt reasoning, inquiry, and purposeful communication, learners develop not only stronger English skills but also a greater ability to think with depth. This conceptual foundation guides the present

study, which examines how Indonesian high school teachers integrate critical thinking into their speaking lessons.

2.2 Recent Studies on Critical Thinking in EFL High School Contexts

Research on critical thinking in EFL high school settings has expanded across various regions, reflecting global interest in equipping learners with higher-order analytical skills. Much of this work explores instructional models, pedagogical interventions, and teacher beliefs that shape the development of critical thinking. Studies have examined technology-mediated learning (Liu et al., 2025), systematic reviews of teaching strategies (Oxman et al., 2025), PBL-based instruction (Ellah, 2025), inquiry and problem-solving approaches (Irwanto et al., 2024), moral and civics-based instruction (Lan, 2024), philosophy-enriched pedagogy (Li et al., 2024), and textbook-based discursive features (Nasution et al., 2025). Several investigations highlight teacher challenges (Eddimani & Brigui, 2024; Essia & Khallaf, 2025) while others focus on student dispositions, motivation, and digital learning practices (Feng & Yang, 2025). Collectively, these studies provide valuable foundations for understanding critical thinking in EFL education, yet their focus varies widely in scope, context, and methodological strength.

Across the studies, a recurring strength is the diversity of instructional strategies tested in secondary EFL settings. Pedagogical interventions such as continuation tasks for writing (Xu et al., 2025), project-based learning (Ellah, 2025), philosophy-based discussions (Li et al., 2024), and inquiry or problem-solving strategies (Irwanto et al., 2024) demonstrate consistent positive effects on students' reasoning abilities. These studies offer rich insights into classroom practice and show that structured tasks can meaningfully strengthen analysis, interpretation, and explanation. Systematic reviews, including those by Oxman et al. (2025) and Liu and Puteh (2025), provide broader assessments of teaching models and highlight the promise of constructivist and technology-supported frameworks. However, several of these studies concentrate on reading or writing skills, focus on general critical thinking outcomes, or work with university learners rather than high school students. Moreover, many draw on experimental designs or large-scale surveys that do not fully describe how teachers enact critical thinking instruction in everyday classroom interaction.

A number of studies spotlight the barriers teachers face when integrating critical thinking. Research from Oman and Morocco shows that teachers acknowledge the value of critical thinking yet lack sufficient training, feel constrained

by rigid curricula, and struggle to find or design materials that promote deeper reasoning (Eddimani & Brigui, 2024; Essia & Khallaf, 2025). Similar concerns appear in Indonesian contexts, where teachers report limited understanding of critical thinking and inconsistent opportunities to embed it within the EFL curriculum (Dhari & Maisarah, 2025). These findings underscore systemic obstacles and highlight the need for pedagogical models grounded in local practice. Yet while these studies reveal the challenges teachers face, they rarely explore how teachers who actively engage in promoting critical thinking design and implement speaking tasks. They also tend to overlook the ways teachers mediate classroom discussion, provide questioning prompts, and use interaction to foster reasoning during oral tasks.

Comparing the studies further reveals that most empirical investigations prioritize reading, writing, or general language skills, with limited attention to speaking instruction. Research on critical literacy (Hidayat et al., 2025), textbook discourse (Nasution et al., 2025), and writing task design (Xu et al., 2025) offers insights into analytical text engagement but does not extend these findings to spoken interaction. Lu and Zheng (2025) provide valuable evidence on teacher questioning in Chinese high school EFL classrooms, yet their focus is on question frequency and feedback patterns rather than broader pedagogical strategies for fostering critical thinking through spoken tasks. Studies from Benin and Morocco highlight the benefits of collaborative, inquiry-based, and problem-solving activities (El Asri & El Karfa, 2024; Omolegbe et al., 2024), but these are often examined in general classroom contexts rather than specifically within speaking lessons. As a result, the literature does not yet present a detailed understanding of how high school EFL teachers structure oral activities to support students' critical thinking.

Taken together, the reviewed studies demonstrate significant progress in understanding critical thinking in EFL education, yet they reveal clear research gaps. In the set of eighteen studies reviewed, few offer an in-depth examination of how high school EFL teachers design, scaffold, and facilitate speaking lessons to promote critical thinking. Existing research seldom investigates teachers' lived experiences in orchestrating discussion, shaping reasoning through questioning, or structuring dialogic interaction in speaking tasks. Moreover, little is known about how teachers in Indonesian high schools specifically conceptualize and implement critical thinking within oral communication. This present study addresses these gaps by offering a phenomenological account of the pedagogical strategies Indonesian EFL high school

teachers use to foster critical thinking during speaking activities. By centering teachers' perspectives, classroom decisions, and lesson planning practices, this study contributes evidence that is largely missing from the current literature and expands the understanding of critical thinking pedagogy in EFL speaking instruction. = review looks at what is already known about a topic, including key findings, theories, and methods. It reviews books, journal articles, and other sources related to the research area or issue. The goal is to give a clear overview, summary, and critical evaluation of existing work in connection with the research problem.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to gain a deep understanding of how Indonesian high school English teachers experience and interpret the integration of critical thinking in their speaking lessons. Specifically, it adopted an interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenological orientation, which foregrounds participants' experiences while examining how they make meaning of their instructional choices within their classroom and institutional contexts. Phenomenology was selected because it allows the researcher to focus on teachers' lived experiences, their personal meanings, and the intentions that guide their instructional decisions (Oluka, 2025). Given the researchers' professional familiarity with EFL teaching, a reflexive stance was adopted to limit the influence of prior assumptions about effective critical thinking instruction. During data collection and analysis, reflective memos were maintained, emerging interpretations were reviewed through peer debriefing, and participants were treated as the primary interpreters of their own practice so that the themes remained grounded in the interview and document evidence. Rather than measuring outcomes or testing predetermined variables, this approach enables the exploration of how teachers perceive their roles, how they design classroom activities, and how they respond to the challenges that arise when encouraging students to think more critically during speaking tasks. By focusing on teachers' own accounts and reflections, the study offers a rich portrayal of the pedagogical actions, reasoning, and classroom realities that shape the practice of fostering critical thinking through spoken interaction.

3.2 Setting and Participants

The participants in this study were nineteen English teachers from private and public senior high schools located in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang Kota, Tangerang Selatan, Bekasi, Serang, and Cilegon. They were selected through purposive sampling because they had direct experience teaching speaking and met the criteria needed to address the focus of the study. The group consisted of eleven females and eight males, with ages ranging from twenty-seven to forty-eight years old. Each teacher had at least four years of experience teaching English, which ensured that they were familiar with classroom demands and curriculum expectations at the secondary level.

In terms of educational background, most participants held a Bachelor's degree in English education, while the remainder had completed a Master's degree in English education or in education administration and management. This range of qualifications provided a varied perspective on how teachers plan and conduct speaking lessons that encourage critical thinking. The diversity of schools across different cities also offered a wider view of classroom practices within the Indonesian context, which strengthened the credibility and transferability of the findings.

Ethical procedures were followed throughout the research process. All participants received a clear explanation of the study's purpose and procedures before the data collection began. Only after they fully understood the information did they provide consent to participate. To protect their identity, the teachers' names and the names of their schools were kept confidential. Each participant was assigned a code, T1 through T19, for use in interview transcripts and reporting. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences. This ensured that the research respected their rights, safeguarded their privacy, and maintained ethical integrity.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data for this study were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The interviews served as the primary source of information because they allowed teachers to describe their experiences, reflect on their instructional decisions, and explain how they encouraged critical thinking in speaking lessons. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through Zoom when meeting in person was not possible. Each session lasted between thirty and forty minutes, which provided enough time for participants to discuss their approaches

while still keeping the conversation focused. The flexible interview format enabled the researcher to explore ideas that emerged during the conversation while ensuring that all core topics were covered.

To support and enrich the interview data, the study also examined lesson plans used by the participants in their speaking classes. The teachers shared digital copies of their lesson plans by sending them to the researcher's email. These documents offered concrete evidence of task design, instructional stages, prompts, and assessment criteria related to speaking activities. Reviewing the lesson plans made it possible to compare teachers' stated practices with the materials they prepared for classroom use, which strengthened the credibility of the findings and provided a clearer view of how critical thinking was encouraged through planned instruction.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). This approach was appropriate for a phenomenological study because it allowed the researcher to focus on the meanings teachers attached to their experiences while identifying common patterns across the data. The process began with repeated reading of interview transcripts and lesson plan documents to develop a close understanding of the content. This stage helped the researcher become fully familiar with what teachers expressed and how their lesson plans reflected their instructional intentions.

After gaining familiarity with the data, the researcher generated initial codes that captured important features related to the integration of critical thinking in speaking lessons. These codes were applied to all interview transcripts and lesson plan excerpts, and the researcher continuously compared codes across participants to identify similarities and differences. Through this constant comparison, groups of related codes began to form early clusters that represented potential themes. Attention was given to statements that described pedagogical decisions, reflections on teaching, and the specific actions teachers used to encourage thoughtful student responses during speaking tasks.

The next stage involved developing, refining, and naming the themes that best represented the teachers' shared experiences. Themes were reviewed to ensure that they were supported by the data and that they offered a clear understanding of how critical thinking was encouraged in speaking lessons. The researcher then organized these themes into a coherent structure that addressed the research question and

reflected the essence of the participants' experiences. The final step was producing a detailed account of each theme, supported by direct evidence from interviews and lesson plans, to present a precise and trustworthy interpretation of the findings.

4. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify the pedagogical strategies Indonesian high school English teachers used to foster critical thinking during speaking activities. The analysis of interview data and lesson plans revealed three major themes: (1) designing thought-provoking speaking tasks, (2) scaffolding reasoning through guiding questions, and (3) encouraging dialogic interaction and collaborative thinking. These themes reflect how teachers planned and carried out speaking lessons that required students to examine ideas, justify opinions, and respond with thoughtful reasoning.

4.1 Designing Thought-Provoking Speaking Tasks

Many teachers structured speaking activities that encouraged students to examine information and form reasoned responses. Debate tasks, problem-centered discussions, and real-world issue-based prompts were common across the participants. Several teachers explained that these tasks created space for students to think more carefully before expressing their ideas. T7 stated, *"I want my students to speak with reasons, so I give them topics that make them think deeper, such as environmental problems or social issues in their area."* T12 described a similar approach: *"When I ask them to debate, they cannot rely on memorized sentences. They must understand the argument and defend it with logic."*

Lesson plans supported these accounts. For example, a lesson plan from T4 required students to analyze a case about increasing plastic waste and to present possible solutions, followed by a short justification for each idea. Another lesson plan from T15 instructed students to choose a controversial issue from recent news and prepare a three-minute argument. These documents demonstrated that teachers intentionally designed activities that encouraged students to examine information, choose a position, and articulate their reasoning through spoken tasks.

Teachers also linked the content of tasks to students' daily experiences to help them form more meaningful responses. T9 explained, *"If the topic is connected with their life, they can speak more naturally and think more critically because they have*

something real to say." Overall, the design of speaking tasks reflected a deliberate effort to spark careful thinking and promote thoughtful expression.

4.2 Scaffolding Reasoning through Guiding Questions

A second strategy involved the use of guiding questions that supported students' reasoning and encouraged deeper thinking. Teachers relied on open-ended questions to prompt students to explore ideas rather than provide short answers. T3 shared, *"I always ask follow-up questions like 'Why do you think so?' or 'What makes your answer strong?' This pushes them to think again before speaking."* Similarly, T11 noted, *"Students sometimes stop at the surface. With more questions, they begin to explain the reasons behind their ideas."*

Teachers also used structured prompts to help students organize their arguments. For example, T2's lesson plan included a prompt that required students to present a claim, provide two supporting points, and end with a short reflection on possible weaknesses in their argument. Another lesson plan from T6 listed question stems such as "What evidence supports your idea?" and "What other perspective should be considered?" These prompts guided students toward more analytical responses during speaking activities.

Many teachers used questioning not only during the task but throughout the lesson to maintain a thoughtful classroom atmosphere. As T18 expressed, *"Questions help them explore possibilities. When I ask them to compare or evaluate, they start thinking more systematically."* This strategy showed teachers' commitment to helping students construct clear and well-supported spoken responses.

4.3 Encouraging Dialogic Interaction and Collaborative Thinking

Teachers also fostered critical thinking by encouraging students to interact with peers in meaningful and collaborative ways. Group discussions and pair work were frequently used to help students examine ideas from different viewpoints. T14 explained, *"Students learn to think better when they listen to their friends. They get new ideas, and they must evaluate which ideas make sense."* T5 shared a similar observation: *"When they disagree politely in a group, they learn to defend their opinion with reasons, not emotion."*

Lesson plan excerpts supported this emphasis on dialogic engagement. A lesson plan from T8 included a structured group discussion where students rotated roles as speaker, challenger, and summarizer, encouraging them to respond thoughtfully to each other's contributions. Another lesson plan from T16 directed

students to work in pairs to create a solution to a community problem, followed by a peer critique session.

Teachers positioned themselves as facilitators rather than dominant speakers, allowing students to take ownership of the discussion. As T1 noted, *"If I talk too much, they cannot develop their thinking. My role is to guide, not to control."* This approach created a learning environment where students could weigh ideas, question assumptions, and refine their reasoning through open interaction.

Several teachers also emphasized the importance of creating discussion structures that encouraged all students to participate, including those who were usually quiet. T10 stated, *"Some students hesitate to speak, so I give them small tasks in the group, such as asking a question or summarizing a point. This gives them confidence and helps them think more carefully."* A similar strategy appeared in T13's lesson plan, which included a "think share" stage where students first reflected individually before sharing with a partner and then contributing to the group. By giving students time to prepare ideas before speaking, teachers helped them express their thoughts more clearly and respond with greater consideration. This attention to equitable participation strengthened the collaborative atmosphere in speaking classes and allowed critical thinking to emerge more consistently across all learners.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study examined how Indonesian high school English teachers foster critical thinking during speaking activities. Three interconnected strategies emerged: designing thought-provoking speaking tasks, scaffolding reasoning through guiding questions, and promoting dialogic interaction and collaborative thinking. These strategies directly address the research question by demonstrating that critical thinking in speaking lessons develops when students are required to analyze ideas, justify positions, and engage thoughtfully with peers. Across interviews and lesson plan evidence, teachers consistently structured speaking tasks that created opportunities for deeper reasoning rather than surface-level responses.

The findings correspond with an expanding body of research on critical thinking instruction in EFL contexts. Studies on project-based learning (Ellah, 2025), continuation tasks for writing (Xu et al., 2025), inquiry and problem solving (Irwanto et al., 2024), and philosophy-based instruction (Li et al., 2024) all report improvements in learners' analytical abilities when tasks demand reasoning and structured explanation. The

present study confirms this pattern by showing that carefully designed speaking tasks can elicit similar gains in high school classrooms. Teachers' use of guiding questions also supports earlier work identifying questioning as a catalyst for deeper analysis (Lu & Zheng, 2024; Paudel, 2025). Furthermore, the emphasis on interactive and collaborative learning mirrors findings from Morocco and Benin, where dialogic engagement played a central role in strengthening students' reasoning (El Asri & El Karfa, 2024; Omolegbé et al., 2024).

This study, however, also presents evidence that contrasts with research identifying limited teacher readiness and curriculum constraints. Studies from Oman and Morocco show that many teachers struggle with conceptual understanding of critical thinking, lack access to professional development, and face exam-driven instructional pressure (Eddimani & Brigui, 2024; Essia & Khallaf, 2025). Indonesian teachers in Bengkulu likewise reported difficulties integrating critical thinking into lessons due to insufficient preparation (Dhari & Maisarah, 2025). In contrast, the teachers in this study demonstrated greater confidence in designing and facilitating activities that support reasoning. Although they encountered challenges, they still managed to embed critical thinking principles into speaking tasks, suggesting that teacher agency and professional experience may influence implementation more strongly than institutional constraints alone.

The findings extend prior research by focusing specifically on speaking instruction, an area seldom examined in critical thinking studies. Much existing work targets reading (Eddimani & Brigui, 2024; Liu & Puteh, 2025), writing (Xu et al., 2025), digital learning (Feng & Yang, 2025), civic integration (Lan, 2024), or textbook analysis (Nasution et al., 2025). Even studies that explore classroom questioning (Lu & Zheng, 2024) do not examine how such questioning interacts with broader speaking task design. The present study, therefore, provides a missing perspective by showing how teachers integrate critical thinking principles into oral communication, revealing how task construction, questioning, and peer interaction combine to support deeper thinking. This contribution is particularly relevant in contexts where speaking is often taught through memorization or accuracy-focused drills.

The results also align well with theoretical frameworks of critical thinking. Teachers' speaking tasks reflected Bloom's higher levels of cognition, particularly analysis, evaluation, and creation. Their guiding questions encouraged interpretation, inference, and explanation, which are central to Facione's (2013) conceptualization

of critical thinking. The consistent attention to clarity, relevance, and logical justification mirrors Paul and Elder's (2014) intellectual standards. These alignments suggest that effective speaking instruction inherently draws on the main principles articulated in critical thinking theory. At the same time, the findings highlight the social dimension of critical thinking by showing how collaborative discussion and peer interaction support reasoning. This interactional dimension is less explicit in cognitive models of critical thinking and therefore extends the theoretical conversation by showing how shared dialogue assists the development of analytical abilities.

The study contributes to EFL pedagogy by demonstrating how speaking lessons can become a productive site for critical thinking development. It offers empirical evidence from classroom practice on how teachers translate theoretical principles into pedagogical action. The findings also underscore the importance of combining task design, questioning, and collaborative dialogue to support reasoning in oral communication. The insights from teacher experiences offer practical guidance for designing professional development programs that focus on speaking instruction, rather than limiting critical thinking training to reading or writing lessons. Additionally, the study expands the limited body of research on critical thinking in Indonesian high school speaking classes, providing a clearer picture of pedagogical strategies that work in this context.

Overall, this study advances the literature by offering a detailed account of how critical thinking can be embedded into speaking lessons, an area largely unexplored in previous research. It shows that teachers who employ purposeful task design, sustained questioning, and structured interactional activities can create conditions where students think more carefully, respond with greater clarity, and participate more actively in classroom dialogue. These findings provide a foundation for continued research on the intersection of speaking pedagogy and critical thinking in EFL contexts.

5.1 Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study offer several important implications for EFL teachers, schools, and policymakers. First, teachers should design speaking tasks that require students to analyze ideas, take positions, and defend their views using clear reasons. Second, purposeful questioning should be a regular feature of classroom interaction, as it helps students clarify their thinking and deepen their responses. Third, collaborative structures such as small group discussions and peer critique sessions

should be encouraged to help students consider alternative perspectives. Fourth, teacher education programs should incorporate concrete models of speaking lesson design that integrate critical thinking principles. Fifth, schools should provide professional development that focuses on practical classroom strategies rather than abstract theories. Sixth, curriculum designers should ensure that speaking activities in textbooks and modules include prompts that support inquiry and reasoning. Seventh, assessment frameworks should recognize students' ability to explain, justify, and evaluate ideas during spoken interaction. Eighth, policymakers should strengthen the policy conditions that make critical thinking feasible in speaking lessons by allowing greater curriculum flexibility for discussion-based tasks, reducing excessive exam-driven teaching pressures, and assigning clearer weight to speaking and reasoning in school-based assessments. Ninth, teachers should allocate time for reflective speaking tasks that help students connect classroom content with real-world issues. Finally, future research should investigate how students experience these strategies to provide a fuller picture of critical thinking development in EFL speaking classrooms.

6. CONCLUSION

This study identified how Indonesian high school English teachers foster critical thinking during speaking lessons by designing thought-provoking tasks, guiding students' reasoning through purposeful questions, and encouraging collaborative interaction that supports deeper reflection. These findings contribute to theory by showing how Bloom's cognitive processes, Facione's core skills, and Paul and Elder's intellectual standards can operate together within spoken classroom exchanges, extending these frameworks into a more interaction-focused understanding of critical thinking. Empirically, the study offers rare insight into a population and context that has received little attention in the literature, showing how teachers in Indonesian high schools integrate critical thinking into oral communication rather than limiting it to reading or writing. Practically, the results highlight the importance of task design, thoughtful questioning, and structured peer discussion as concrete strategies that teachers can use to strengthen critical thinking in everyday lessons. Although the study provides meaningful findings, it is limited by its focus on a single group of teachers, the absence of direct student perspectives, and the challenge of observing all classroom conditions across different schools. Future research should examine how students experience these strategies, compare practices across varied regions, and explore

how digital or multimodal tools can support reasoning in speaking tasks. Ultimately, this study affirms that speaking lessons can be a powerful space for young learners to think with greater confidence, and it calls for continued commitment to teaching practices that help students engage with ideas in ways that matter both inside and beyond the classroom.

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DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In preparing this manuscript, the authors utilized Quillbot and DeepL as AI-assisted tools for grammar refinement, vocabulary enhancement, and improving the academic style of writing. These tools were employed solely to support language clarity and did not generate, alter, or fabricate any data, analyses, findings, figures, or references. The authors thoroughly reviewed and edited all AI-assisted outputs and take full responsibility for the content and interpretation presented in this article.

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