

Optimizing Students' Speaking and Critical Thinking through Students' Reflective Practice in Socratic Circle Speaking

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Abstract: We investigated students' reflective practice after Socratic circle speaking which is purposed to optimize students' speaking and critical thinking skill. Critical thinking cannot be separated from speaking skill. Students' reflective practice can help the teacher in revising teaching method, materials, classroom management, etc. This research used descriptive qualitative design which collected documents, observation, and interview as the data. This research was done in Speaking class at Third semester students of Borneo University Tarakan. The data was analysed qualitatively. The result shows that students' reflexive practice could optimize students' speaking and critical thinking. Speaking result shows that 23% in Excellent category, 26% in Good category, 38% in Fair category, 13% in Weak category, and 0% in Poor category. Critical thinking result shows that 13% in Critical Thinking level 4, 36% in Critical Thinking level 3, 38% in Critical Thinking level 2, 13% in Critical Thinking level 1, and 0% in Critical Thinking level 6 and 5. In interview, the researcher found that teaching quality and students' learning improved and they could prepare themselves related to their speaking skill and critical thinking. There were some obstacles faced such as; time consuming in analysing students' reflection, redesigning the lesson plan and material selection.

1 INTRODUCTION

EFL speaking skill is the most difficult and gives challenges to the students because of its fundamental aspects in communicating and learning the language (Alaraj, 2017). (Luoma, 2004) explains the hearth of foreign language learning is students able to speak and use it. The students can personalize, make self-image, know the world's knowledge, give reasons and show their thoughts. The students can give their performance orally about their ability in foreign language. Developing students' speaking skill is not easy and it takes time to work with the speaking competence. There are many things that the students need to know such as; English phonology, the use of vocabularies appropriately, and fluently translate the words in English from their first language.

Thornbury (2005) adds in speaking the students must be interactive and they have to co-operate with

their speaking partner by using speaking turn management. Speaking is done in real situation and time where we have limited time to work with the detail. In this case, to make the students fluent in speaking, they need to memorize the lexical. It cannot be denied that the students face obstacles in learning speaking skill. Speaking skill is a complex skill and this skill needs other skills and other supported knowledge. Finally (Akbari, 2015) identifies the problems in teaching and learning EFL speaking skill. There are seven problems with five crucial parts in education system such as; the teacher, the students, the material, teaching method, and assessment. Curriculum and policy also influence and become the sub-component of the problems.

Empirical studies in speaking also found that the students face speaking obstacles such as; lack of vocabulary, grammar mistake or error, not fluent in speaking, incorrect pronunciation, listening problem,

shy to speak in front of public, afraid to express their opinion, low self-confidence, make hesitation, have problem in other skills, afraid in making mistake, less effort, and less practice (Ansari, 2015), unacceptable thought or desire, limited background knowledge of certain topics, passive in participating, and mother tongue influence their speaking (Tuan & Mai, 2015), and it can be classified into two factors (internal and external). Internal factors are some things which come from the inner side of the students when they learn English such as; how old, attitude and behaviour, willingness, knowledge, perception, and mother tongue. External factors are some things which come from the outer side of the students such as; syllabus, civilization or society, state, and enthusiasm (Rico, 2014).

Chaney & Burk (1998) explain that in speaking we develop meaning by using symbols verbally or not with many kinds of situations and share its meaning to others. In second language teaching and learning, speaking skill becomes very important since long time ago speaking has been underestimated by English teachers by giving the students drills such as; repeating the teacher and dialogue making. It is totally different nowadays that the purpose of speaking is the ability to communicate where the students can express their ideas based on situation in which social and cultures influence their perspectives. We need to provide appropriate activities which can be implemented in ESL and EFL classroom where the students can improve their speaking skill based on teacher's experience and background in teaching speaking.

The importance of language learning success is teaching speaking which can give the students ability to communicate effectively in school or out of school, their real life in society. Teaching speaking covers the linguistic aspects such as; phonology, morphology, syntax, semantic, etc. The students can use those skills in speaking by seeing social context, listeners, condition, and the issue, arrange the idea based on logic meaning steps, function the language to show value and judgement, and they can speak fluently and confidently.

Interaction is the key in speaking which linguists and ESL/EFL teachers concern on. The purpose is to teach the language communicatively and collaboratively by seeing speaking as real life communication. The use of this method to ESL/EFL learners will give chance to the students to communicate the target language. Classroom environment needs to be adjusted to give the students real life situation to communicate and stimulate speaking through authentic activities and also

meaningful task that can be done collaboratively in groups.

The development of classroom interaction is very important in teaching speaking skill at language courses. Speaking studies are similar to the other studies which use language in the field of interdisciplinary. The study is related to the understanding of psycholinguistic and internal factors which influence the production of speech, the structure, interpretation, and the involvement of process and the way to develop these aspects. A description of the characteristics of speaking in a foreign language can be approached from different angles, but typically it is conceptualized in terms of two interrelated facts, that is various types of knowledge that learners possess and their expertise in adeptly using the knowledge in real communication (Pawlak, 2011). Richard (2008) explains that the priority in ESL and EFL learning is the students can master the speaking skill. As the consequence, the students tries to assess their process in learning language effectively based on quantity and quality of their speaking to see the improvement of their speaking.

There are three aspects of primer sources problem-makers. The first is communicators focus on speaker and listener. The second is message. The last is the context or situation and condition (Jamshidnejad, 2011). Communicative language teaching is said to be one of the latest pedagogic approach which is based on the principles of motivation enforced learning. Khan (2013) says that communicative language teaching incorporates the idea of interaction considering it as essential element of the whole process and output. The total interaction in meaning which the students depend on and participate will influence the success of acquisition in target language. Of course, the contribution in developing students' system comes from language input which is integrated to language output. Kanuka, Rourke, & Laflamme (2007) add that arguments, discussions, and debates are some communicative activities which can be used by the students to achieve their higher order thinking. The students are introduced to conceptual issue and problems which lead them to share their opinion to others, assess the information to solve the problems, make self-reflection and investigate their understanding which cover their needs and make them get new interpretation toward real life issues. Marie & Rohan (2011) underline that interactional competence is what students must have. The students have to co-construct conversation with the other students' interaction in various events and show their

understanding in pragmatics by using syntax talk which involves paralinguistic, gesture, body language, proxemics, kinesics, and gaze where the purpose is social or institutional purpose which focus on joint management with co-participants in the system of turn taking and the roles are adopted from appropriate interaction. The comprehension and practice in designing and responding turns coherently and in manner sequent, displaying comprehension and commonly fixing the communication which is treat or breakdown. Presenting relevant empathy and engagement as well as completing the action socially where the goals are interaction condition and social or institutional.

The other thing which also important to be considered besides speaking is critical thinking. As teachers and communicators, it becomes their responsibility to create proper atmosphere which can improve students' critical thinking. The students must be motivated in asking questions to go beyond facts rather than memorization of knowledge. Teachers must remain open to have ideas, opinions, and beliefs questioned critically by the students. The students must be prepared to accept corrective critique of their efforts.

Everyone knows the importance of critical thinking. It cannot be separated from many aspects of people's life. Paul (1993) says that critical thinking is valuable not only in school but also in the world beyond school as well. Nowadays we see many people in modern society face obstacles in thinking critically to solve their daily problems. We need to learn how to think critically because we face different character of people and trapped in the condition which force us to make tough decisions or choices. Critical thinking skill gives everyone a chance to make wise decision and choices toward the problems.

Although thinking in the language dictionary means the process of thinking about something, ideas or opinions about something, intelligent and able to think seriously about things, but the interpretation about thinking by psychologists were different. The interpretation about thinking changed from time to time. Reinard (1991) explains critical thinking requires deliberate and careful efforts relate to proposition before making a decision. What a person has in mind is from information which already evaluated thoughtfully such as the width of issue in our proposition before decision is made. Many option to react on the issue such as; acceptance, rejection, or suspend judgement based on proposition in people's mind. Scientific attitude is needed in thinking critically and push the existing issue to go to decision making. At last, arguments lead to the judgement

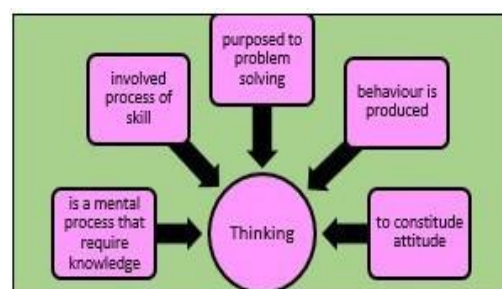


Figure 1: Concept of thinking (Phillip, 1997)

Thinking is a mental process in people's brain, processes the information collected then gives interpretation about it and functions to solve problems and makes decisions also produces behaviour and constitutes attitude (Phillip, 1997).

The term "critical" is taken from two Greek words etymologically from "kriticos" is the skill in considering the decision from the conclusion which is sensible and "kriterion" is the quality or criteria which can be used to measure the ideas. It can be said that etymologically the development of discerning judgement is based on standards. It is relevant to Webster's dictionary "characterized by careful analysis and judgement" and the gloss follow it, "critical – in its strictest sense – implies an attempt at objective judgement so as to determine both merits and faults". The implementation of thinking, the concept of critical thinking is clearly thinking which focus on the decision or the conclusion after assessing the criteria appropriately in the purpose of determining the truth which worth, value or merit the issue. Elder (2007) in Paul & Elder (2008) define critical thinking as the ability to reason which is guided oneself in thinking with discipline that reach the quality of thinking in the highest position fair-mindedly. It will allow people critically and consistently think in a rational way, able to give reason and empathy. Intellectual equipment is used to help people think critically in assessing and analysing the concepts and principles where people's thinking skill is improved. From the explanation above, it can be seen that critical thinking uses standard of thinking and process in higher order thinking not only to solve problems and make decision but also give interpretation to the given information.

In education field critical thinking is very important to be taught and implemented. Critical thinking skill is developed from knowledge and guidance to understand written information. It builds and fluids based on their knowledge. It is not just memorize knowledge and comprehend the lesson without asking the questions. Critical thinking gives opportunity to the students to think critically by

making hypotheses questions, finding alternative hypotheses, and assessing the hypotheses based on the facts found. We do not say that memorizing fact is not good. Memorization can help students to solve their problems, use their logic, give argument and clear the confusion.

There are many ways to optimize students' speaking and critical thinking. This paper tries to present the research result in optimizing students' speaking and critical thinking through students' reflective practice in Socratic circle speaking. Reflective practice is a process where learners consider the incidents critically in their learning based on their background and continuously process as self-reflection. This concept is proposed by Schon (1987) who says that reflective practice consider students' own background in implementing what they know into practice thoughtfully and the professionals in the discipline will coach this. His argument shows that the goal of learning is to prepare the students facing the world where practice should be appropriate to the fast changing world by filling the knowledge through professional training model. Reflection will give the students and the novice opportunity to develop and improve themselves by practicing the reflection itself.

There are so many concepts of word "reflection" based on its context. Meditation of thought is commonly used to define it. In education especially learning context, Rowntree (1988) explains reflection as serious self-conversation or critically think about the subjects, the methods, and learning tasks after the class over. The steps are preparation, learning process, and the reflection. Fade (2005) explains that in reflection we need to describe, assess our ideas, opinions, point of views or perspectives, the theories which support, and the process of learning. It is divided into three categories. The first is prospective reflection which focus on seeing forward. The second is spectative reflection which focus on seeing what we are doing now. The third is retrospective reflection which focus on seeing back after learning. Reflection task will help the students to evaluate their activities during learning process such as the material which related to reality context. The reflection is done personally and the evaluation comes from one's individual. Every student has different evaluation on what they noticed, concerned, focused, and did in the class. The reflection gives the students chance to assess what they got in learning process.

Socratic circle speaking means that in optimizing students' speaking and critical thinking, the teacher used Socratic Method in the form of Socratic circle speaking. The concept of Socratic Method is familiar among professional educators

especially teaching methodologies in legal studies. Socrates focused on continuous questions to find the truth or what we call as a dialectic method of inquiry (Pang, 2008). Schiller (2008) says that the students' learning can be encouraged by using a method which has guided question pedagogy, using dialogue and refutation to make the students assess their understanding critically about certain issues. Fahim (2012) understands that organized series and systematic questions are what Socrates proposed to make students assess their thinking and avoid the students to make wrong concepts and conclusion. Socratic questioning method is far from memorizing information from textbook in teaching. Philosophically this method aims to optimizing students' thinking where the students are asked with no definitive answer so the students keep thinking to evaluate the given issue. Socrates thought that teaching the students were not effective by lecturing method. Socratic seminars are proposed to evaluate students' knowledge and comprehension related to the given issue about people or others which lead to students' understanding the thoughts by continuously asking question. The students' reasoning can be stimulated to be more rational and logic (Byrne, 2011).

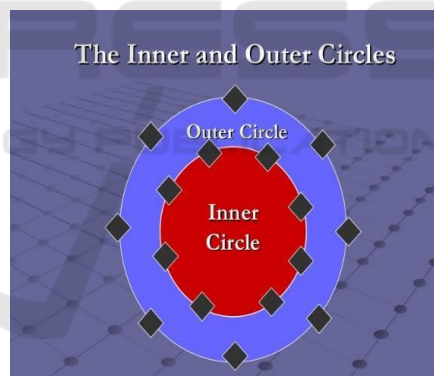


Figure 2. Socratic circle concept

Socratic questioning method is also can be said as transformative learning, the process where creative composition is brought to the opposites. The individual is created socially during it is generated. The teaching and learning process includes person from group community. The main focus in this process is a deep understanding from the students individually or collectively (Formenti & Dirks, 2014). The implementation of Socratic questioning method can be done in good environment classroom which accompany the students to get knowledge and make them critically think about the material given and they can create positive and constructive manner engagement with other students (Bodinet, 2016).

Socratic method is relevant to EFL classroom because question-asking is one of the most common techniques used by language teachers (Al-darwish, 2012). Socratic questioning first proposed by Socrates, one of the great philosophers in Greek who engaged the questions with his students in seeking the truth by asking continuously his students and colleagues' perspectives which exposed contradiction where fallacies and assumptions were proved. In this strategy, the method of learning is helping teacher in relating material with real condition of the students and supporting them to make relation between their own knowledge with the implementation in daily activities. With this strategy, the students are expected to understand the importance of the study, the advantages, and how they reach it. Socratic questioning method is a method where questions take place in teaching and learning. It will make the students understand the content or issue to increase their thinking level through their deep thinking on the concept and value from written text. Socratic Method pushes the students to think by continuously asking questions and selecting the questions' types to develop discussion where discipline and responsible manner intellectually are required. In learning process, questioning is considered as teacher's activity to support, guide, and evaluate students to dig information, analyse, and explore the ideas (Copeland, 2005; Paul, 2006).

2 METHOD

Descriptive qualitative is the design of this research. The purpose of this design is investigating the implementation of students' reflective practice in optimizing students' speaking skill and critical thinking skill in Socratic circle speaking. The implementation was done at English department of Borneo University Tarakan in academic year 2017/2018..

Subject of the research was third semester students. The researcher used closed observation. In the observation activities, the researcher acted as non-participant observer it means that the researcher did not participate and interfere the process of teaching and learning. Some aspects observed were the implementation of students' reflective practice in optimizing students' speaking skill and critical thinking skill in Socratic circle speaking. In this research, the researcher observed the running process of Socratic circle speaking, analysed students' reflection, saw the progress of students' speaking and critical thinking after reflection practice. The

researcher recorded the activities in the classroom. In interview session, the researcher asked questions which related to the implementation of students' reflective practice.

Qualitative data analysis was used in this research. The data was coded (open, selective, axial) by looking for themes related to the research focus. In analysing the data, the researcher used Miles & Huberman (1984) interactive model for component data analysis.

3 RESULTS

Students' Speaking Results

The result shows that students' reflexive practice could optimize students' speaking and critical thinking. Speaking result shows that 23% in Excellent category, 26% in Good category, 38% in Fair category, 13% in Weak category, and 0% in Poor category.

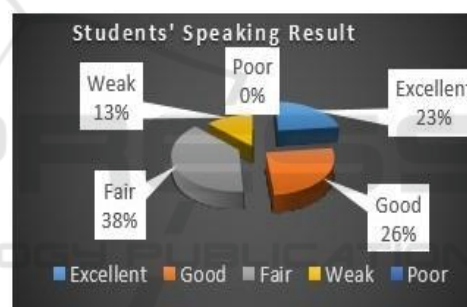


Chart 1. Students' Speaking Result

Excellent category covers the criteria such as; in fluency students are very fluent in speaking, almost no doubt, rich in vocabularies, and perfect in voice tone in pronouncing the words, and accent students are in excellent and good effort at accent, in vocabulary students are excellent in controlling the language features and have a wide range of well-chosen vocabulary, in grammar students do accuracy and variety of grammatical structures, and in details students are excellent in describing and give additional details beyond the required.

Good category covers the criteria such as; in fluency students are very fluent in speaking, some doubt, looking for few words, and some words are unheard in pronouncing the words and accent students are in good effort at accent, in vocabulary students are in good power in directing the language, well space, well selected vocabularies, for grammar students did grammatical errors in structure because of various grammar function, and details students are

giving clear description including the information which is required.

Fair category covers the criteria such as; in fluency students are fluent enough in speaking, doubt sometimes, paraphrase make students unbalanced by looking for some words and hesitating voice tone in pronouncing, a non-native accent sometimes some efforts, in the aspect of vocabulary students gave adequate language control and vocabulary range is lacking, in grammar students did errors more often but not influence the idea and limited styles in grammar, and in detail students give enough explanation and add some detail information.

Weak category covers the criteria such as; speaking is often doubt with uncomplete sentences left, very low voice tone in pronouncing, limited and difficult to comprehend and for native accent no attempt, in the aspect of vocabulary students are weak, directing the language and use task which is not equal to the vocabulary used, error in grammar more often although in simple grammar which influence understanding, and limited details critically which is hard for the listener to catch the point.

Poor category covers the criteria such as; in fluency students' speaking is not fluent, doubt and only in short phrase memorization, hard to think how to speak continuously, cannot be heard, in pronouncing the words, it is limited and difficult to know and for native accent there is no attempt, in the aspect of vocabulary students are weak in directing the language and the task is not fit to the vocabulary used in speaking, in grammar students did errors more often and influence the meaning and also limited information which the listener cannot get the point.

Students' Critical Thinking Result

Critical thinking result shows that 13% in Critical Thinking level 4, 36% in Critical Thinking level 3, 38% in Critical Thinking level 2 and 13% in the first level of critical thinking.

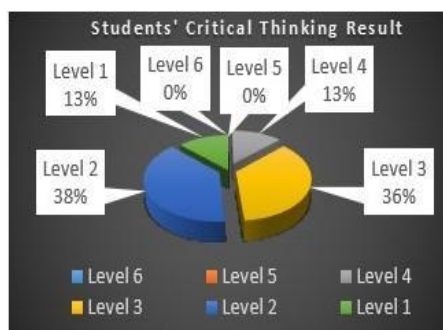


Chart 2: Students' Critical Thinking Result

Critical thinking level 6 or the highest level covers the criteria such as; facts, arguments, charts, questions are interpreted accurately, students recognize claim and reason in salient arguments, agree or disagree are analysed and evaluated to give point of view which can give explanation as alternative of phenomena or event where the students describe opinion and the cause fair-mindedly based on facts that the reason in ethical judgment making.

Critical thinking level 5 covers the criteria such as; facts, arguments, charts and questions are interpreted accurately, identification of relevant argument based on reason and claim in thinking the issue in positive or negative side, assess and analyse various points as alternative ideas to describe the event or phenomena, describe the arguments, facts and reasons are thought fair-mindedly.

Critical thinking level 4 covers the criteria such as; events, people and places are described by adding the source details, make relation to not only the sources but also personal analytic which show students' basic skill in analysing, interpreting, formulating inferences or statement which involves multi-perspectives in literature discussion, background knowledge and others' perspectives are challenged through questions and saying understanding and guessing by giving limited facts to think twice on others' belief.

Critical thinking level 3 covers the criteria such as; answer by showing events and evidence grammatically that makes individual connect with the limited sources, start to give effective fact to support opinion in literature discussion, background knowledge, factually or literally relay to the sources which involves limited or no fact to respond the dualistic thoughts and demonstrate unwell organization and uneven thinking.

Critical thinking level 2 covers the criteria such as; misconception in facts, arguments, charts and questions, cannot identify the argument which is strong and relevant to the issue and fall in giving conversation, limited justification in procedure and result, reasons are explained rarely and also to the facts and arguments, self-interest and preconception are maintained by perspectives.

Critical thinking level 1 or the lowest level covers the criteria such as; facts, arguments, charts and questions are interpreted with bias in information on others' perspectives, cannot identify the counter argument which is strong and relevant to the issue and missed in assessing the alternative perspective and give arguments based on wrong facts and reasons and the claim cannot be justified in not only the procedure or result but also closed-mindedly reasons.

Students' Reflection in Socratic Circle Speaking

Students' speaking and critical thinking result above are optimized by using students' reflection in Socratic circle speaking where the student in speaking class used Socratic method and after class students were asked to make self-reflection on students' performance and content. The following pictures are the examples of student's self-reflection.

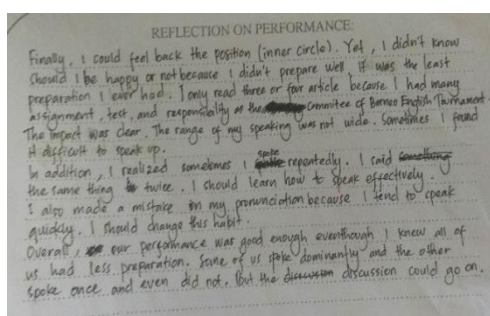


Figure 3. Student's Reflection on Performance

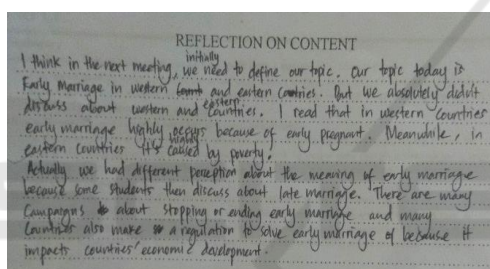


Figure 4. Student's Reflection on Content

Reflective assignments make students think about the reality context based on their practice on how the content implemented in their learning. Reflection is very individual and personal where the opinion comes individually. Every student will do different reflection in noticing, observing or doing things in teaching and learning process. The reflection gives the students chance to evaluate what they have got in the class. Experience is learning will give benefit to the students by reflecting the lesson, for example in the science class. Continuous reflection can improve students' performance in speaking by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses they had, recognize their problems and how to solve those problems for future improvement. Their task can be done by choosing appropriate strategy or approach based on their learning experience especially which gives positive result to them.

Research result conducted by Lerch, Bilics, & Colley (2006) is similar to this research where effective learners are influenced by their ability to think critically, self-evaluation on their learning, and metacognitive thinking in their reflective practice.

Students can analyse their problems, challenges, and obstacles in learning to find alternative solutions where they can optimize their skill.

Reflective practice is a process of deep evaluation on teaching and learning which already done (Herod, 2002). It is totally different with non-reflective learning which focuses on memorization of material without stimulating students' critical thinking. The purpose of reflective learning is the engagement among the teacher, the students, the material, teaching method, learning assessment, and classroom management to achieve the language target guiding the students' knowledge and experience meet the real situation. The learning concept is connected to their schoolwork through reflection. Students' experience replace where the task is just material memorization.

There are many aspects of teaching and learning which can be connected to make both the teacher and the students realize their strengths and weaknesses in order to achieve the effectiveness in teaching and learning. In education field, experience teaches us. We grow the personal reflection based on experience which develop our skill more cognizant. Continuous reflection will make the teacher realize and recognize the strengths and weaknesses of his/her teaching. It also makes the teacher evaluate teaching to find alternative solution and final decision for the future. Situational analysis will help teacher develop his/her teaching skill. Decision making is the end of this reflection and it requires critical thinking skill

Meaningful teaching and learning process can be done by designing reflective practice which covers clear and realistic purpose to give reflection a chance to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The structured reflection has opportunity to transform reality learning from learning task (Amulya, 2003). Continuous reflection can be done daily, weekly, to biweekly or after finishing each lesson unit where the focus is evaluate teaching and learning activities regularly.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Students' reflective practice can optimize students' speaking and critical thinking in Socratic circle speaking. The key point of reflection is willingness from both teacher and the students to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and also the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning process.

Problems in teaching and learning process can be solved by the teacher through continuous reflection. The quality of teaching and learning can be evaluated by recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of preparation, process, assessment, material selection, teaching method, etc. the teacher can avoid and anticipate what will happen to the next teaching. Reflection can help teacher not only to solve problems in teaching but also improve the quality of his/her teaching. Reflection also helps students to optimize their learning. Reflective practice makes the students evaluate critically what they learned which can improve their skill in speaking and critical thinking. Reflective practice will motivate the teacher and the students to do self-correction in teaching and learning.

EFL speaking skill should focus on bringing real life context in teaching and learning process. It can be done by designing appropriate curriculum or syllabus which can explore functional speaking and express ideas toward global issues. The students can talk their opinions, arguments, data or evidence, clarification, viewpoints or perspectives implications and consequences until questioning the given issues. The students are guided to improve fluency, aware on pronunciation, enrich vocabulary, well-arranged structure or grammar, and provide detail information relate to issue being discuss in the class.

Philosophically, critical thinking is defined as cognitive skill which is very complex and focus on problem solving where innovation and intellectual consideration are required. In critical thinking people evaluate the information they got quantitatively and qualitatively to the end of new perspectives and belief to be used to problem solving and decision making.

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