

## **Historical Perspective: The Development of Critical Thinking in Indonesian ELT**

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DOI: 10.22236/JER\_Vol2Issue2pp89-102

Even though critical thinking has been included in education system in Indonesia, it is unlikely to be widely implemented in teaching-learning processes in all levels of education in this country. Indonesian ELT (English Language Teaching) can actually play a role in promoting critical thinking in education. However, the development of ELT in this country since colonial to present era does not seem to facilitate students' critical thinking skill. This article presents historical perspective with regard to ELT and critical thinking. The first part reviews the history of Indonesian education which did not promote critical thinking, followed by the historical development of Indonesian ELT. The third part discusses socio-political condition which could be partly solved by promoting critical thinking in education and society. The final part suggests incorporation of critical thinking into English textbooks as ELT can also be used as a vehicle for teaching critical thinking.

*Keywords:* historical perspective, critical thinking, Indonesian education, ELT textbooks

*Meskipun berpikir kritis telah dimasukkan ke dalam tujuan pendidikan di Indonesia, berpikir kritis sepertinya belum diterapkan secara luas dalam proses pembelajaran di seluruh tingkat pendidikan di negeri ini. Pendidikan bahasa Inggris (ELT) sebenarnya dapat memainkan peran penting dalam mempromosikan berpikir kritis. Namun perkembangan ELT di negeri ini sejak zaman penjajahan hingga saat ini belum mendorong siswa untuk berpikir kritis. Artikel ini menyajikan perspektif sejarah tentang ELT dan berpikir kritis. Bagian pertama membahas sejarah pendidikan di Indonesia yang tidak mempromosikan berpikir kritis, diikuti oleh sejarah perkembangan ELT di Indonesia. Bagian ketiga membahas kondisi sosial-politik yang kemungkinan dapat diselesaikan dengan mempromosikan berpikir kritis di pendidikan. Bagian*

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*terakhir mengusulkan memasukan berpikir kritis ke dalam ELT yang digunakan sebagai kendaraan untuk pengajaran berpikir kritis.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Emerging during Socrates era and influencing Western education system, critical thinking has now been adopted in education in many non-Western countries, given that there are some doubts that it is almost impossible to teach critical thinking to non-Western students due to cultural differences. Non-Western countries, however, have their own agenda with regard to integrating critical thinking into their education. Malaysia, for example, adopts critical thinking to “fulfil the needs of the developed nation in 2020” (Md Zabit, 2010, p. 26), while Singapore adopts it to, one of the aims, respond to complex changes in globalisation era (Baildon & Sim, 2009).

Even though critical thinking has been included in Indonesian education, its implementation is likely to be unheard. It may be the elusive concept of critical thinking itself, or it might be us, who cannot move away from ‘traditionally monological’ thinking. This article presents the historical perspective of Indonesian education and critical thinking, leading to the development of critical thinking in ELT, discusses socio-political condition in this country which, in part, may be able to be solved by teaching critical thinking, and argues the importance of integrating critical thinking into Indonesian English textbooks since Indonesian English teachers still heavily rely on textbooks. In fact, there are at least two advantages of incorporating critical thinking into English language teaching. Firstly, it can improve students’ language skills, and secondly, it can facilitate students’ critical thinking skills.

## **CRITICAL THINKING, ELT, SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITION AND TEXTBOOKS**

### **Critical Thinking in Indonesian Education**

The quality of education in Indonesia is still considered unsatisfactory. In 2001, the PERC (Political and Economic Risk Consultancy) reported that Indonesia had the worst education system of 12 Asian countries considered, and Nilan (2003) found that Indonesian pupils “are encouraged to learn by rote and produce lists of facts in compulsory examinations, an approach which neither stimulates creativity nor provides better foundations in English, mathematics and computer skills, all of which are needed to develop a globally competitive economy” (p. 566). On the other hand, critical thinking, along with creativity, innovation, independence and tolerance is one of educational objectives that has been officially written into the Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 17 Year 2010 Regarding Educational Management and Administration.

From the historical perspective, education during the colonial era was not intended to promote critical thinking. The Netherlands, which colonized Indonesia for longer than Portugal, Spain, England, or Japan, built schools all over the Indonesian archipelago; nevertheless, the schools were set up for the betterment of the colonial government. For example, the schools were divided into two categories: one for locals and the other for foreigners. Local people could only study until the elementary level, as it was almost impossible for them to continue their education at higher levels. This was intended to produce

low-level administrative employees of the locals, in favour of Dutch enterprises, while controlling Indonesian viewpoints (Handayani, 2008).

During the Dutch colonial era, Protestant priests from *Utrechtse Zending Genootschap* came to Indonesia and also built schools, though their purpose was not to promote independence, critical thinking or intellectual awareness. They came to Indonesia with a mission to spread religion. For example, in Bali, they built HIS (Hollands Inlandse School) to attract locals to attend so they could teach them Christianity (Agung, 1993). The Protestant missionaries showed their serious intent in spreading Christianity by building a school for Bible teachers named *Hulpzendingelingen* in South Sulawesi province in 1868 (Hermawan, 2007).

The Dutch mission to restrain the intellectual level of Indonesians was not fully successful. A result of this formal education, including that provided by missionaries, was the kindling of awareness of a desire for independence. The intellectual awakening of native Indonesians gradually grew, and many of these individuals built schools, including Islamic schools, that were not affiliated with the colonial government. This showed a good foundation of the development of critical thinking in Indonesia, though critical thinking was still not promoted in education under the colonial government. Conversely, the government attempted to curb nationalist movements and arrested those involved in the movement, including Indonesians studying in the Netherlands. The Dutch arrested Indonesian students Bung Hatta, Abdul Madjid and Ali Sastroamidjojo and prosecuted them in Den Haag court (Alam, 2003). They were accused of promoting the liberation of Indonesia abroad, which could threaten the existence of the colonial government.

After independence in 1945, the educational system in Indonesia still did not promote critical thinking. The new government was busy building schools across the country and producing schoolteachers, which may mean it did not have time to alter the curriculum. It was not difficult to become a teacher at that time. For example, to be an elementary school teacher, one had to complete teacher's high school for three years after completing junior secondary school. Teacher's high school was similar to senior secondary school. Though the government built some 60,000 primary schools around the country (Suryadarma, Suryahadi, Sumarto, & Rogers, 2006) and the number of higher learning institutions during the period also increased (Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006), the quality of teachers and education was unlikely to be a priority.

Another factor why critical thinking was not popular during this period was that rote learning was widely adopted. Teachers asked students to memorize their lessons. This was a favourite teaching approach as school examinations stressed memorization through the material they tested (Muktiono, 2003). This happened in teaching not only social sciences but also natural sciences such as physics and mathematics (Suryadi, 2007). This condition was fostered through televised national competitions between students from all levels of education. For example, in the 1980s TVRI (a National TV Channel), the only TV station at that time, broadcast a national competition among elementary, junior and senior secondary students. The competition tested students' memorization on all subjects learned at school, and it was very prestigious. The winners were usually regarded as intelligent students. The schools where the students studied became famous and were considered successful in conducting teaching-learning processes. The competition lasted for several years. Up until 2005, an observation by

Bjork (as cited in Zulfikar, 2009) was that rote learning was still a favourite teaching approach in the country.

A similar situation happened in Islamic education, which also did not promote critical thinking. In the early period of independence, traditional *pesantren* (Islamic Boarding Schools) which were led by a *kyai* (religious teacher) adopted a completely teacher-centred approach. The *kyai* became the central figure (Zahro, 2004), and pupils were expected to not criticize him. Memorization was a very common practice of the teaching of Quran and religious principles, without discussing religious thoughts that were developing in the world at that time.

In part, the lack of critical thinking during this period, the period called ‘New Order’ regime under the leadership of former President Soeharto who controlled the country for more than 30 years, might also have been caused by the political conditions. Campuses where students often demonstrated were controlled, and a subversion law was enacted. Political activities on Indonesian campuses were prohibited and voices, including those printed in newspapers, against government policies were stifled. Anyone acting against the government policies was put in jail under violation of the subversion law. This happened to some university students in big cities in Indonesia from 1993 to 1997 (Widjojo & Noorsalim, 2004). There was no freedom of speech. Reid (2012) states that “new order authoritarianism suppressed critical thinking and shut down virtually all public spaces for contestation that challenged government policies” (p. 147). As a result, it was difficult for critical thinking to prosper.

A new political condition in Indonesia forced President Soeharto to step down. The era referred to as the ‘reformation’ emerged, followed by changes in educational policies. The environment became more democratic and the seeds of critical thinking began to appear. For example, in the Islamic education system, many *pesantren* adopted the national curriculum and promoted the English language, along with Indonesian or Arabic, as the medium of teaching and learning. They “demonstrate a synthesis in curricula and pedagogy between two meta-discourses of schooling: the maintenance of normalized traditional moral values; and the production of skilled modern citizen for the *ummah* (people) and for the rapidly modernizing state” (Nilan, 2009, p. 221).

Another change that seemed to promote the seeds of a critical society was the role of Islamic higher institutions in making people more tolerant and open-minded, as Islamic schools were finally recognized as a great national asset (Zuhdi, 2006). The existence of Islamic higher institutions has contributed significantly to the advancement of Indonesia as a pluralistic nation, especially in promoting moderate Islam, as Kraince (2007) describes:

Another value emphasized by the Islamic higher education sector is tolerance of other faith traditions as well as of other interpretations of Islam. Educators at the nation’s leading Islamic universities have promoted an inclusive approach to the analysis of religious issues. For this reason, Islamic colleges and universities have frequently emphasized the importance of dialogue among religious groups and encouraged both students and staff to take on leadership roles in facilitating dialogue between groups in conflict over religious matters. (p. 351-352)

This was good for the foundation of critical thinking development in Indonesia. However, critical thinking was not yet included as a fundamental goal in the educational

system. Critical thinking started to gain attention in education in Indonesia due to several factors. First, to speed the development of the nation and to be on a par with its neighbouring countries, the government, through the Ministry of National Education, started to send lecturers abroad in 2008 through state budget funding. In 2009 there were some 590 Indonesian lecturers studying in 24 countries outside of Indonesia, for example, in the USA, England, Canada, Australia, Germany, and Japan, for Master and Doctoral degree (<http://www.dikti.go.id/>). Second, interaction between Indonesian and foreign academics also increased. Some of the lecturers studying abroad undertook educational studies. Some academic interaction involved discussions of recent developments in educational approaches. Those involved in educational studies may have grown acquainted with alternative approaches, such as critical thinking, that could promote a deeper learning when compared to the existing approaches in Indonesian education. This helped the concept of critical thinking permeate into the minds of Indonesian academics. Some of these academics voiced their concerns about the educational conditions in Indonesia. One such academic is Sadli (2002) who commented that the “Indonesian educational system does not actively stimulate students to develop critical thinking or teach them that while differences of opinion should be respected, a point of view can be rejected on the basis of clear argument” (p. 80).

Though critical thinking has been included as an educational objective, it has not been widely applied in education in Indonesia until the present. This can be seen in a recent concern put forward by a university lecturer, Suparno, in response to the government’s plan to change the elementary school curriculum. Suparno (2012) writes that “the new curriculum should meet several criteria such as helping students develop critical thinking and decision making skills and allow students the freedom to think” (p 6).

There may be several reasons as to why critical thinking still does not move from the Government document to classroom activities. First, as this is a new concept in Indonesian education, most schoolteachers across Indonesia may not understand yet how to be critical and how to promote critical thinking skills in their teaching activities. Second, the government might not be serious in promoting critical thinking. This is demonstrated in the fact that there is no critical thinking training provided to teachers, unlike Brunei Darussalam for example, no critical thinking curriculum in the teacher training faculties at Indonesian universities and no critical thinking criteria included in textbook evaluations. This may be due to the difficulty in finding proper instructors, an inadequate budget to train millions of teachers all over the country, the lack of an agreed concept of critical thinking, especially the one needed in the Indonesian context, or, possibly, political interest. Consequently, as has been mentioned, most teachers in Indonesia still adopt rote learning and rely heavily on textbooks in their classrooms. There seems to be a gap between the educational objective and the educational practice.

### **ELT in Indonesia**

The Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 22 Year 2006 Regarding the Standard of Content for Class-Based Curriculum of English (p. 307) states that:

Language has a central role in intellectual, social and emotional development of pupils and has a supporting role for the success in learning all subjects. Learning a

language is expected to help pupils know themselves, their culture and other cultures. Besides this, learning it can also help pupils express ideas and feeling, participate in society and find and use analytical and imaginative skills.

Apart from knowing themselves, Indonesian cultures and other cultures, which may promote independence and tolerance, the regulation clearly mentions that ELT in Indonesia is expected to help students develop analytical skills: these skills would be difficult to obtain if ELT approaches are not congruent with the goals. One possible alternative for developing students with analytical skills, along with independence and tolerance, may be including critical thinking in ELT. Importing critical thinking into the ELT classroom as a supplement to existing teaching approaches may also support other qualities mentioned in educational objectives such as creativity and innovation, for example. Critical thinking has been a national objective in education in Indonesia though ELT still seems to ignore it.

To obtain a more thorough picture of ELT in Indonesia, the development of ELT in the country, from the colonial era to the present day, needs to be explored. From the historical perspective, ELT during the Dutch colonial era could have promoted critical thinking and creativity even though the real objective of teaching English during the era, according to the Dutch historian Vlekke (2008), was to help Indonesians who had converted to Christianity to be able to read the Bible. This could be seen from the way English was taught in the classroom. For example, the teaching of English at MULO (Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs), which is similar to junior secondary school at present, required students to read literary works and to respond to them (Agung, 1993).

Exposure to world literature was also experienced by Lien, the wife of a former Indonesian vice president, who attended Dutch education at VHO (Voorbereidend Hoger Onderwijs). This was a two-year school after junior secondary school. Through her biography, written by Janarto (2000), it is reported that students were asked to read the works of Shakespeare and other great writers, make a summary of what they had read, discuss the works and retell them in front of the class.

Introducing literature, including the teaching of grammar translation, in foreign language teaching can lead to critical thinking and creativity. Stories may act as a stimulus for discussion, investigation and problem solving (Fisher, 1998) and may foster cultural exposure. The inclusion of literature in ELT, which has laid the foundation for critical thinking and creativity, unfortunately, stopped and underwent a decline during the Japanese colonial era. The arrival of the Japanese in Indonesia in 1942 (Simanjuntak, 2006), after defeating the Dutch, changed the educational policies, including ELT. One of many policies adopted by Japan was the closing of Dutch schools and banning of teaching and learning materials in Dutch and English (Mistar, 2008). In relation to this, Lamb and Coleman (2008) also comment:

The Japanese authorities decreed that no European languages were to be used in the occupied territories but, pragmatically, they also recognised that in the short term it would be impossible to introduce Japanese as the language of public administration. It was therefore decided that Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian) should be used for all public purposes. (p. 190)

However, Groneboer (as cited in Mistar, 2008) writes that some schools still taught English and Dutch in secret. There were two consequences of the Japanese' coming to Indonesia. On the one hand, Indonesian, as a replacement of Dutch, was introduced extensively at schools (Wangsadinata, 2008) and then became an official language, but, on the other hand, the seeds for critical thinking and creativity seem to have left, as the Dutch teachers were also gone.

After independence, ELT in Indonesia revived; nevertheless, it did not promote critical thinking seriously. This can be seen from the unclear objectives of ELT in early curriculums (1947 curriculum, 1952 curriculum, and 1964 curriculum). This could be understood, as Indonesia was a newly independent nation, which still lacked human resources and an educational infrastructure. It was in 1967 when, finally, the Ministry of Education and Culture, in document Number 096, released their objective for ELT. However, the term 'critical thinking' did not appear in the document. Huda (as cited in Mistar, 2008) explains that the objective of teaching English to secondary school students at that time was to equip them with language skills for such purposes as reading textbook and reference materials, understanding and taking notes on lectures given by foreign lecturers, and being able to communicate with foreigners.

Critical thinking was still unlikely to be included in the next curriculum, the 1975 curriculum. This curriculum did not change the objectives of ELT but stressed habit formation in ELT, as it required that "English should be taught with the audio-lingual approach with an emphasis on teaching of linguistic pattern through habit-formation drills" (Ministry of Education and Culture's document as cited by Mistar, 2008, p. 75). It would seem unreasonable to imagine how the 1975 curriculum, adopting the audio-lingual approach, could help ELT learners develop reading skills since this approach emphasizes listening and speaking (Stern, 2003), and audio-lingualism is an oral-based approach (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Besides this, habit formation drills are unlikely to encourage critical thinking at all.

The 1984 curriculum was released when the New Order regime was in power, though ELT still did not promote or include critical thinking. This is seen in the document from the Ministry of Education and Culture (as cited by Zaim, 1997) which reported that the objective of teaching English in Indonesia was to make students "have ability to use and understand English for reading, speaking, listening, and writing with vocabularies of approximately 4,000 words" (p. 151). This curriculum introduced communicative language teaching (CLT) (Mistar, 2008) to substitute the audio-lingual approach. However, there were some problems in implementing CLT that may have been due to, among other things, insufficient training for schoolteachers on how to use this approach in their teaching activities and the final examination still focusing on grammar (Mistar, 2008). As a result, most teachers still focused on this aspect of language teaching.

In fact, the government was not silent about the concerns of Indonesian schoolteachers' apparent inability to adopt CLT, though critical thinking was still not included in training. For example, in 1985 there was a program named PKG (Pemantapan Kerja Guru or Strengthening of the work of teachers), which was funded by loans from the World Bank and UNDP. Brian Tomlinson, an EFL professional, was appointed as an advisor in the Ministry of Education and Culture. The programme had short and long term objectives. The short-term objectives, according to Tomlinson (1990), were, among other things, motivating students to learn English,

helping them gain confidence to communicate in English, and providing them with exposure to the English language and learning opportunities. The long-term objectives were enabling students to develop communicative competence in all four language skills and to develop a base of fluency and accuracy, and contribute positively to general educational development. This programme sounds good but seems to focus on creating an English environment, not promoting critical thinking. Unfortunately, the programme, which was only run in a few provinces, was stopped before it reached the whole country.

The next curriculum was the 2004 curriculum. Two years later, the curriculum was revised and completed with a competency standard and was named the 2006 curriculum. The competency standard became the guideline for teachers as lesson objectives. However, the standard did not mention critical thinking.

Given that the standard competency did not mention critical thinking, the 2006 curriculum allowed schools and teachers to develop or design their own teaching materials (Kushartanti, 2007). This is why this curriculum was also named a school-based curriculum. The independence given to schools and teachers to produce their own teaching materials was an opportunity for them to include critical thinking skills. However, this opportunity was unlikely to be utilized optimally as the concept of critical thinking may have been new to schoolteachers, and they may not have clearly understood what it is or how to apply it in teaching activities. As a result, the teachers seldom changed their teaching style. This is shown in a survey conducted by Coleman et al. (as cited in Lamb & Coleman, 2008) which found Indonesian teachers still adopted a very traditional teaching methodology in all subject areas: teachers read aloud from books, dictate, or write on the blackboard while students listen and copy. What Lamb and Coleman meant by ‘very traditional’ may be defined as teaching approaches that do not involve students’ potential to think, ask, argue, comment or reflect. As a result, Indonesian junior secondary school students achieved especially poor outcomes in key areas such as problem solving as reported by a study by World Bank in 2007 (as cited in Lewis & Pattinsarany, 2011).

In 2010, as mentioned, critical thinking, along with tolerance and democracy, was included in the government document (Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia, Number 17 Year 2010 Regarding Educational Management and Administration) as an educational objective in all levels of education. Such qualities as criticality, tolerance and democracy are then addressed in the latest curriculum, the 2013 curriculum. In terms of improving the quality of human resources, the ‘2013 Curriculum Document’ released by the Ministry of National Education, states that Indonesian students are expected to be “qualified humans who are able to proactively answer the challenges of this ever-changing world” (p. 2). This may be responded to by the teaching of critical thinking skills. Regarding democracy, the document states that education should produce “democratic and responsible citizens” (p. 2). This seems to address conflict and violence, which sometimes occurs in the country.

The examination of the teacher’s book for grade XI from the 2013 curriculum shows that critical thinking is mentioned. The book mentions critical thinking in the ‘Active Conversation’ section:

Active Conversation: The activity of this section gives an opportunity for students to actively express their mind and opinion in English suitable to the learned concept



and situational context. The activity also gives them an opportunity to analyse and understand other people's mind and gives them a broad room to develop their critical thinking ability. (Teacher's Book, English for Secondary School, p. vi-vii)

Finally, critical thinking was mentioned in one of the textbooks used in Indonesia, and the information from the teacher's book above seems to refer to the role the teachers must play in implementing critical thinking activities. This would be difficult if schoolteachers themselves do not know what critical thinking is. The examination of the 'Active Conversation' section of the book on page 42 does not give much inspiration for critical thinking activities if teachers are not already creative themselves. The section only asks that students complete dialogues and role-play them.

### **Critical Thinking and Socio-Political Conditions in Indonesia**

The lack in critical thinking in Indonesia may be reflected by the lack of, among other things, tolerance, social sensitivity and democracy. Those three values, which are part of educational objectives together with critical thinking, may be able to address such issues as inequality, dogmatism, sectarianism, egocentricity and ethnocentricity. Those issues are seemingly still quite pervasive in the country.

Even though the Indonesian Constitution guarantees the freedom of speech and expression, a small number of people may still be unable to accept differences. This may be dangerous for a very pluralistic society, as found in Indonesia. In regard to intolerance of differences, for example, it was reported by The Jakarta Post in August 2012 that Islamic militants burned 50 houses in a Shia (Shiite) village on Madura Island, killing one person. In the same year, members of a hard-line Islamic group attacked and damaged a mosque belonging to Ahmadiyah followers and prevented them from performing religious rituals. The incident happened in Bandung, the capital city of West Java province. *Setara*, an Indonesian human rights watchdog institute, reported that there were 129 cases of religious violence during the first semester, January-June, in 2012 ([www. thejakartapost.com](http://www.thejakartapost.com)).

Another incident occurred in May 2012 when Muryanto (2012) reports that a group of Islamic hard-liners forcibly stopped a book discussion. Some participants attending the discussion were injured and the office where it took place was damaged. The discussion centred on the controversial book titled *Allah, Liberty and Love* written by the female Canadian author Irshad Manji. The writer herself was present, and she was accused of promoting a different interpretation of the holy book and homosexuality in Muslim societies. Anwar (2012) argues that the attack happened as some Muslim activists had read Manji's book without critical thinking abilities and became the victims of hard-liners' propaganda. This seems to be related to Brookfield's (2012) statement that 'passive viewers' could be an easy target for manipulation; thus inferring that active critical individuals could provide a greater contribution to civilised society by contesting ideas. Anwar (2012) goes on to say that Muslims should read Manji's book critically, discussing its strengths and weaknesses and challenging her arguments with an open mind.

Sectarian violence occurred again in 2014. For example, the Social and Religious Studies Institute (ELSA) based in Indonesia reported that a group of Islamic extremists vandalised a Hindu temple in January in Sragen regency, Central Java province (Rohmah,

2014). The group was also reported to have forcibly dispersed a Quran recital meeting conducted by the Quran Interpretation Council. They accused the council of teaching Islamic principles that did not conform to those of mainstream Islam. In June, several Islamic hardliners attacked a Pentecostal church in Sleman regency, Yogyakarta province (Muryanto, 2014) because the church had no building permit from the local government. The editorial page of *The Jakarta Globe*, the Jakarta-based English newspaper, on July 31, 2014 states that “intolerance poses a grave threat to the entire nation, and if the issue is not handled carefully, we may face another equally dangerous possibility: disunity. Indonesians must not take religious tolerance for granted; we must work hard for it.” (<http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/opinion/editorial-pressing-forward-tolerance-unity/>)

Some Indonesian scholars and academics relate the problems of religious intolerance - even among people from the same faith - to a lack of critical thinking. One of them is Syofyan (2012), who proposes a dialogical approach in education to address the problems:

In response to increasing religious extremism, critical education must consider a dialogical approach, the end of cult personality and the strengthening of philosophy. The dialogical approach is a key to the creation of independent and free persons. Through dialogue, one learns to foster a greater balance between freedom and openness on one side as well as responsibility and control on the other. People’s awareness of dialogue will lead them to acceptance and the ability to listen to the views and needs of others.

The personal remark by Syofyan to bring the issues of democracy to the classroom is also expressed by Gutmann and Thompson (as cited in Englund, 2006) who state that “in any effort to make democracy more deliberative, the single most important institution outside government is the educational system” (p. 504). The term ‘dialogical approach’ in critical education proposed by Syofyan may refer to dialogical critical thinking (Benesch, 1999), which is a closely related concept of critical thinking.

Looking at the Indonesian socio-political context, what is needed is dialogical critical thinking in which students may learn to see their assumptions, practising exchanging opinions, comments or criticism. Concerning dialogical thinking in education, Benesch (1999) argues that “teaching critical thinking dialogically allows students to articulate their unstated assumptions and consider a variety of views. However, the goal is not just to exchange ideas but also to promote tolerance and social justice” (p. 576). This is supported by Daniel, Lafortune, Pallascio, Splitter, Slade, & de la Garza (2005) who state that “dialogical critical thinking does not aim for personal victory over others’ points of view, but rather improvement of the group’s, or of society’s perspective” (p. 350).

Dialogue, let alone critical dialogical thinking, does not seem popular in Indonesian education. Teacher-centred instruction seems prominent and very obvious in the traditional Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. As has been mentioned, the school is led by a central figure whom pupils are not expected to criticize. A similar condition seems to exist in general schools, both government-sponsored and private schools, where rote learning and memorization still dominate. This is shown by a study conducted by Nilan (2003) in Bali province as mentioned earlier.

Similar to the lack of tolerance and democracy, Indonesian students' critical thinking skills have also been reported to be poor. This is evidenced by Pikkert and Foster (1996) through a study to determine the critical thinking skills of third year students in the English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University (SWCU) in Indonesia when compared to the skills of secondary school and university students in the USA. Their critical thinking skills were tested using The Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level Z. The results of the study, according to Pikkert and Foster (1996), show that:

The level of critical thinking of SWCU third year English students is much lower than that of their American counterparts. Third year English students have a lower level of critical thinking skills than secondary school students in America. Of all the subscales on the test, students scored less than satisfactory on any sub-scale.  
(p. 62)

Even though the above studies were conducted more than ten years ago, the present condition has not changed much. For instance, the National Final Examination for secondary education still relies on memorization, and critical thinking has not been introduced in the syllabus for teacher training programmes in higher education.

In sum, critical thinking is required in Indonesia to address two issues: education and socio-political conditions. Concerning education, this is expected to produce people with such qualities as knowledgeability, skill, criticality, creativity, innovativeness, and independence, as written in the government's document to respond to an ever-changing world. With regard to the latter, critical thinking may address the issues of dogmatism, propaganda and extremism, so other qualities listed in educational objectives such as democracy, tolerance and responsibility can be achieved.

### **Critical Thinking and Its Integration into Indonesian ELT Textbooks**

As one of educational objectives in Indonesia is to produce people with, among other things, critical thinking, creativity and independence, Indonesian ELT textbooks are expected to be able to contribute to the attainment of the objectives. To this end, the ELT textbook must foster those qualities; nevertheless, the ELT textbooks used today do not seem to prioritise critical thinking skills.

That ELT textbooks do not prioritise critical thinking skills can be seen from the policy of the BNSP (*Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan* or National Education Standardization Body). The BNSP is responsible for evaluating textbooks and authorizing their use at schools. The purposes of evaluating textbooks for schools are as follows: providing textbooks which are adequate and proper to increase the quality of the national education, increasing the quality of human resources in the field of book publication, protecting learners from under-qualified textbooks, and increasing the interest of reading books (the governmental document at <http://puskurbuk.net/web/penilian-buku-teks-pelajaran.html>). The BNSP focuses on four aspects: content or material, presentation, language, and graphic (the governmental document at <http://puskurbuk.net/web/penilian-buku-teks-pelajaran.html>). However, given that critical thinking has been a part of educational objective, it is unfortunate that critical thinking is not included as one of BNSP's evaluation criteria.

Adding critical thinking skills to the textbook could help ELT teachers facilitate the development of their students' critical thinking skills and achieve the educational objectives. As has been mentioned, a class-based curriculum allows teachers to be independent. They could design and develop their own teaching materials as long as lesson objectives refer to the competency standard, and this would be a great opportunity for them to include critical thinking. However, it seems that most ELT teachers still find problems in developing their own teaching materials.

One problem may be that Indonesian teachers have heavy workloads. Another problem is that most teachers still find difficulty in developing their own teaching materials. Some difficulties, according to a study by Mirizo and Yunus (2008), are because teachers do not thoroughly understand the school-based curriculum concept and do not know how to apply it in their teaching-learning processes. Also, they do not know how to develop or write English teaching materials for classroom use that are suitable for their students' needs, interest, and abilities. Though teachers' inability to write teaching materials may not be directly related to their critical thinking, it could show their dependence on the textbook in their practice (Lamb & Coleman, 2008). As such, including critical thinking in the textbook could be one alternative used to promote students' critical thinking skills as textbooks have been considered to play important roles such as guiding teachers (Ur, 2009), scaffolding students' understanding (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007), and supporting teachers "who may not be able to generate accurate input on their own" (Richards & Renandya, 2008. p. 66).

## CONCLUSIONS

Critical thinking has not yet been seriously promoted in ELT in Indonesia. No English curriculum since the colonial era has mentioned it. The PKG programme focused more on creating an English environment. Not all academics coming to Indonesia promote critical thinking in ELT, even though most of them are concerned with the unsatisfactory quality of ELT in Indonesia. This is likely to be due to their educational experience whose focus is on a different field of ELT. Therefore, one of the feasible ways to increase the emphasis on developing critical thinking skills would be to include them in textbooks and to teach the teachers what critical thinking is and how to promote the skills. There may be a problem regarding this idea as teachers could find it difficult to work with innovative textbooks; however, the problem may be alleviated if the teachers are provided with sufficient guidelines.

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