


Lecturers' Perceptions of Constructive Critical Thinking Learning in Academic Writing Courses (A Case Study at Makassar State University)

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini menyelidiki persepsi dosen dan penerapan model Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL) dalam mata kuliah penulisan akademis di Universitas Negeri Makassar. Pendahuluan penelitian ini menyoroti semakin pentingnya pemikiran kritis dalam pendidikan tinggi Indonesia dan tantangan yang dihadapi mahasiswa EFL dalam mengembangkan keterampilan menulis akademis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi sikap dosen terhadap CCTL, mengidentifikasi manfaat dan kekurangan yang dirasakan, dan menawarkan rekomendasi untuk peningkatan penerapan. Dengan menggunakan desain metode campuran sekuensial eksploratif, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data kualitatif melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan dosen dan mahasiswa, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan persepsi dosen yang umumnya positif terhadap efektivitas CCTL dalam menumbuhkan pemikiran kritis, tetapi juga menyoroti tantangan seperti keterbatasan waktu dan perlunya lebih banyak pelatihan dan dukungan kelembagaan. Variasi dalam penerapan CCTL diamati, dengan beberapa dosen secara efektif mengintegrasikan strategi CCTL sementara yang lain mengandalkan metode yang lebih tradisional. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun CCTL menunjukkan harapan, penerapannya yang berhasil memerlukan penanganan keterbatasan praktis melalui pengembangan profesional dan dukungan kelembagaan.

This study investigated lecturers' perceptions and implementation of the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL) model in academic writing courses at Makassar State University. The study's introduction highlighted the growing emphasis on critical thinking in Indonesian higher education and the challenges EFL students face in developing academic writing skills. The research aimed to explore lecturers' attitudes towards CCTL, identify perceived benefits and drawbacks, and offer recommendations for improved implementation. Employing an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, the study collected qualitative data through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students, and document analysis. Results revealed generally positive lecturer perceptions of CCTL's effectiveness in fostering critical thinking, but also highlighted challenges such as time constraints and the need for more training and institutional support. Variations in CCTL implementation were observed, with some lecturers effectively integrating CCTL strategies while others relied on more traditional methods. The study concludes that while CCTL shows promise, its successful implementation requires addressing practical limitations through professional development and institutional support.



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INTRODUCTION

The higher education curriculum in Indonesia, in alignment with global demands, increasingly emphasizes the development of students' critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is not merely about memorizing information but entails complex cognitive processes such as analyzing data, evaluating arguments, making logical inferences, and solving problems (Halpern, 1998). These skills are crucial in various aspects of life, especially within the academic context. Students who possess strong critical thinking abilities are generally more capable of understanding complex course materials, developing original ideas, analyzing information from multiple sources, and constructing strong, coherent arguments in their academic writing (Facione, 2000).

Academic writing, in turn, serves as a clear manifestation of critical thinking ability. It demands students to not only convey information but also to process it critically—synthesizing sources, constructing logical arguments, and presenting ideas in a structured and coherent manner that adheres to the conventions of academic discourse (Hyland, 2016). Mastery of academic writing, therefore, can be seen as both an outcome and an indicator of a student's critical thinking proficiency.

However, the reality in the field shows that many students—especially those learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL)—struggle to develop both their critical thinking and academic writing skills (Reid, 1993). These difficulties are often rooted in several factors, including (1) a lack of understanding of the academic writing process, (2) insufficient writing practice, (3) limited constructive feedback from instructors, and (4) a lack of authentic writing opportunities (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). EFL students also face additional challenges such as grammatical and lexical difficulties, limited familiarity with academic writing conventions in English, and problems with managing time and resources to complete writing tasks effectively.

Over the last few decades, there has been a significant paradigm shift in higher education from teacher-centered to student-centered learning approaches (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The student-centered approach emphasizes the active role of students in the learning process, providing them with opportunities to explore knowledge, collaborate with peers, and construct their own understanding. One instructional model that aligns well with this philosophy is the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning Model (CCTL). CCTL encourages students to actively and collaboratively construct knowledge while engaging in higher-order thinking tasks (Paul & Elder, 2008).

CCTL does not treat students as passive recipients of information; instead, it situates them as active participants in knowledge creation. Through analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, students engage in meaningful learning that promotes deep understanding and critical inquiry. As such, CCTL represents a transformative approach that bridges cognitive skill development with the demands of academic communication, particularly writing.

The CCTL model incorporates a variety of strategies that can enhance students' critical thinking and academic writing abilities. These strategies include (1) the provision of challenging writing assignments, (2) group discussions, (3) constructive feedback from instructors, (4) the use of diverse learning resources, and (5) student collaboration (Facione, 2011). Challenging writing assignments push students to think deeply and creatively, analyzing multiple perspectives and constructing strong arguments. Group discussions create spaces for students to exchange ideas and develop collective understanding. Constructive feedback helps students identify areas for improvement, refine their arguments, and enhance the overall quality of their writing. The use of varied learning resources broadens students' knowledge and exposure to academic texts, while collaboration fosters teamwork, communication skills, and peer-to-peer learning.

Although CCTL presents numerous potential benefits for developing students' critical thinking and academic writing, its implementation in writing classes—particularly in EFL contexts—still requires further examination, especially from the student perspective. Previous studies have indicated several barriers to effective implementation, such as a lack of instructors' understanding of CCTL principles, inadequate training for faculty members, and insufficient institutional support (Lee, 2016). Additionally, instructors may struggle with aligning assessment methods with the goals of critical thinking instruction, while students might resist the shift from passive learning to active engagement.

This study, therefore, aims to explore university students' perceptions of CCTL implementation in academic writing courses. By focusing on the learners' viewpoints, the study seeks to uncover insights into the effectiveness of CCTL, the challenges students face, and how the model could be

better adapted to meet learners' needs. Understanding students' experiences with CCTL is crucial, as they are the primary agents of learning and their engagement directly affects learning outcomes. Their feedback can guide educators and curriculum designers in refining instructional strategies and materials, ensuring that teaching practices are both pedagogically sound and contextually relevant.

Moreover, in the current era marked by rapid globalization and technological advancement, academic writing has become an essential skill for students who aspire to contribute to international scholarly discourse. The ability to produce well-argued, evidence-based, and stylistically appropriate academic texts is a critical component of academic success and professional development. For Indonesian EFL students, academic writing also serves as a gateway to participate in global knowledge exchange. Therefore, fostering these competencies through models like CCTL can significantly impact students' academic trajectories and career opportunities.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective pedagogy in higher education, especially in relation to EFL writing instruction. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) identify students' attitudes towards CCTL -based academic writing instruction, (2) document perceived benefits and drawbacks of the model, and (3) offer practical recommendations for enhancing the implementation of CCTL in higher education institutions across Indonesia. These insights will not only help lecturers refine their teaching strategies but also provide valuable input for institutional policy-making and curriculum reform.

Furthermore, integrating CCTL in academic writing instruction aligns with the broader goals of 21st-century education, which emphasize critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—the so-called “4Cs” (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). As the world becomes more interconnected, students must be equipped not only with disciplinary knowledge but also with the intellectual tools to engage with complex, real-world problems. Academic writing, as both a process and a product of critical thought, plays a pivotal role in this educational vision.

In conclusion, this study recognizes the growing importance of critical thinking and academic writing in the globalized academic landscape. It advocates for innovative and student-centered teaching models like CCTL to address the challenges faced by EFL students and improve the quality of learning in higher education. Through an in-depth exploration of students' experiences, the study aims to generate actionable insights that can inform future teaching practices, curriculum development, and educational policy.

METHOD

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) to investigate the implementation of the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL) model in academic writing instruction. The qualitative phase, which preceded the quantitative phase, adopted a case study approach involving data collection through participant observation in academic writing classes, semi-structured interviews with three lecturers and seven students, and document analysis (including course syllabi, teaching materials, and students' written assignments).

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), yielding findings related to lecturers' perceptions of CCTL, the implementation of the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning model in the classroom, the impact of CCTL on students' academic writing skills, and student engagement during the learning process. To ensure the validity of the findings, data triangulation and member checking were employed. The study was conducted in the English Education Department at Universitas Negeri Makassar, and participants were selected through purposive sampling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Importance of Teaching the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL) Model to Enhance Critical Thinking Understanding

Qualitative data were obtained from interviews with three EFL lecturers and classroom observations. Thematic analysis revealed several key themes related to lecturers' perceptions.

In general, the lecturers had positive perceptions of the CCTL model and acknowledged the importance of critical thinking in academic writing. They viewed CCTL as a relevant and effective approach to enhance students' critical thinking skills. One lecturer stated:

Saya percaya PBKK sangat penting untuk melatih mahasiswa berpikir kritis, karena menulis akademik bukan hanya tentang tata bahasa, tetapi juga tentang kemampuan menganalisis, mengevaluasi, dan menyusun argumen. (D1).

Lecturer D1 stated the benefits of teaching the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL) model in enhancing students' thinking abilities, particularly in constructing arguments. Meanwhile, Lecturer D2 expressed a similar view regarding the role of CCTL in the process of learning academic writing.

Saya sering menayakan hal-hal yang berhubungan dengan materi yang berhubungan dengan masalah sosial agar mahasiswa saya dapat berpikir kritis dan memberikan solusi atas masalah yang mereka hadapi. (D2)

Lecturer D2 applied a questioning model to motivate students to think critically and provide solutions to the problems given to them. By getting students used to analyzing problems and offering solutions, they become trained to always seek problem-solving strategies. In other words, the implementation of the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL) model is one way to enhance students' critical thinking skills.

The implementation of CCTL in teaching academic writing requires lecturers to have experience in teaching academic writing because teaching critical thinking involves an understanding of the elements of critical thinking, such as evaluation, synthesis, and drawing conclusions.

Saya kira megajarkan akademik writing merupakan hal yang sangat kompleks apalagi menegaskannya dengan berpikir kritis. Diperlukan model dan struktur menulis akademik agar siswa dapat meniru model dan menerapkannya dalam menulis esai misalnya bagaimana menyusun argumen, memberikan contoh sesuai dengan fakta dan data maupun menyimpulkan argumen menjadi kalimat yang masuk akal dan logis (D3)

From the information above, it can be concluded that teaching students to think critically in composing essays is not an easy task for educators. The selection of appropriate models and essay examples greatly helps students in organizing critical thinking logic. By providing essay examples that demonstrate how to write using reasoning and critical thinking, students' understanding of essay writing can be significantly improved.

Although the lecturers accepted the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL) model positively, they also expressed several challenges in its implementation. Time constraints were the main obstacle, as CCTL requires more time compared to conventional teaching methods. One lecturer complained,

Sulit untuk mengimplementasikan PBKK secara penuh karena keterbatasan waktu dalam satu semester. Banyak materi yang harus disampaikan, dan waktu untuk kegiatan diskusi dan analisis kritis seringkali kurang. (D4)

Lecturers expressed the need for more intensive training and professional development related to the implementation of Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL). They recognized the importance of such training to enhance their understanding and skills in designing and implementing CCTL-based learning activities. One lecturer stated,

Kami membutuhkan pelatihan khusus tentang bagaimana mengimplementasikan PBKK secara efektif di kelas. Kami perlu belajar strategi dan teknik yang tepat untuk membimbing mahasiswa berpikir kritis. (D5)

Support from higher education institutions is also considered essential for the successful implementation of Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL). The lecturers hoped that institutions would provide adequate resources and facilities to support CCTL-based learning activities, such as training, teaching materials, and learning technologies. Lecturers also recognized the importance of constructive and specific feedback to help students improve the quality of their writing. They strived to provide detailed and targeted feedback, but acknowledged that it requires considerable time and energy.

Implementation of the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning Model (CCTL) in Academic Writing Instruction

Findings on the implementation of Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL) were obtained from classroom observations conducted by the researcher on three lecturers teaching academic writing courses. A thematic analysis of the observation notes revealed significant variation in how CCTL strategies were applied in the classroom. While some lecturers successfully integrated various CCTL approaches into their teaching, others continued to rely on more traditional methods.

Several lecturers effectively facilitated active class discussions that encouraged students to think critically and exchange ideas. These discussions typically centered on text analysis, identifying arguments, and evaluating different perspectives. This approach created a learning environment where students could deepen their critical thinking skills and develop a more thorough understanding of academic writing concepts.

In addition, text analysis assignments were a key component of CCTL implementation. Lecturers assigned students to analyze a range of texts—from journal articles to opinion pieces in the mass media—to practice identifying arguments, assessing evidence, and drawing logical conclusions. This kind of practice helped students become more reflective and critical when engaging with various sources of information.

Constructive and specific feedback was also an essential part of the CCTL process. Lecturers provided detailed comments on students' writing, focusing on argument development, organization of ideas, and language use. Feedback was delivered both orally and in writing, giving students opportunities to revise and improve their writing skills continuously.

However, some lecturers still relied on conventional teaching methods, such as lectures and writing assignments without in-depth discussion or critical analysis. In these classrooms, interaction between lecturers and students was limited, reducing opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking and academic writing abilities effectively.

The use of technology in teaching varied among the lecturers. Some utilized digital platforms to assign tasks, facilitate discussions, and provide feedback interactively. Others, however, preferred traditional face-to-face teaching methods. Effectively integrating educational technology—such as learning management systems (LMS) and collaborative writing platforms—can greatly enhance the implementation of CCTL, especially in large classes or hybrid learning settings.

Overall, the observations illustrate a broad spectrum of CCTL implementation within academic writing courses. While several lecturers have succeeded in fostering critical thinking, collaborative learning, and active student engagement, there remains a clear need for more intensive professional development. Training should focus on deepening lecturers' understanding of CCTL frameworks, designing classroom activities that go beyond task completion to include critical analysis and reflection, and integrating digital tools for collaborative feedback and peer review.

By addressing these areas, educational institutions can better support lecturers in transitioning from traditional teacher-centered methods to more dialogic, student-centered learning environments. This shift is crucial for nurturing students' critical academic writing skills and preparing them to meet future academic and professional challenges effectively.

Discussion of Research Results

This study explored EFL lecturers' perceptions of the Constructive Critical Thinking Learning (CCTL) model's effectiveness in enhancing critical thinking skills within the context of academic writing. The findings reveal a predominantly positive perception among the participating lecturers, aligning with established pedagogical theories emphasizing the importance of active and collaborative learning in fostering critical thinking abilities. The positive reception of the CCTL model by the lecturers suggests an intuitive understanding of its core principles, which resonate with prominent frameworks in the field of critical thinking instruction.

Paul and Elder's (2008) influential model of critical thinking, for example, underscores the necessity of active knowledge construction and collaborative engagement—both central tenets of the CCTL approach. The lecturers' favorable views suggest a tacit recognition of these core principles, indicating a potential alignment between their existing pedagogical beliefs and the CCTL model's philosophy. This alignment is further supported by the lecturers' statements, which directly reflect the CCTL model's capacity to transcend mere grammatical accuracy and cultivate higher-order thinking

skills such as analysis, evaluation, and argumentation. Lecturer D1's statement, emphasizing the importance of CCTL in training students to think critically beyond grammatical rules, exemplifies this perspective. The statement highlights the model's ability to foster the development of sophisticated analytical and argumentative skills, a crucial aspect of successful academic writing.

The observed positive perceptions are further corroborated by research highlighting the effectiveness of student-centered approaches in enhancing critical thinking skills (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The CCTL model, by its very nature, is student-centered, empowering learners to actively engage in the learning process and take ownership of their learning journey. This active engagement fosters a deeper understanding of concepts and promotes the development of critical thinking abilities. The use of questioning techniques by Lecturer D2, designed to motivate students to critically analyze problems and formulate solutions, serves as a practical example of this student-centered approach. This method aligns with problem-based learning (PBL) methodologies, which have been widely demonstrated to be effective in fostering critical thinking skills through active problem-solving and collaborative inquiry.

However, the research also unearthed significant challenges in implementing the CCTL model effectively. Lecturer D3's insightful observation regarding the complexity of teaching academic writing and the need for structured models and examples underscores the demanding nature of integrating critical thinking into writing instruction. This observation highlights the need for explicit instruction and scaffolding to support students in developing the necessary skills for critical analysis and argument construction within the specific context of academic writing. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of providing explicit instruction and scaffolding in critical thinking skills within specific contexts (Hyland, 2016). The suggestion of providing clear models and examples, as proposed by D3, serves as a crucial scaffolding mechanism, guiding students through the intricate process of constructing well-reasoned arguments and navigating the complexities of academic discourse.

The most frequently cited challenge among the lecturers was the constraint of time (Lecturer D4). This finding resonates with extensive research on the implementation of innovative teaching methods, which consistently identifies time constraints as a major obstacle (Lee, 2016). The CCTL model, inherently demanding more time for in-depth discussions and critical analysis than traditional, lecture-based approaches, necessitates careful curriculum design and potentially adjustments to teaching loads to ensure its effective implementation. This underscores the need for institutional support to facilitate the successful integration of CCTL into the curriculum without compromising the quality of instruction or overwhelming lecturers with excessive workload demands.

The lecturers' expressed need for more intensive training (Lecturer D5) and institutional support further emphasizes the critical role of systematic professional development programs in fostering the successful adoption and implementation of CCTL. These programs should not only focus on the theoretical underpinnings of CCTL but also provide practical strategies and techniques for designing and implementing CCTL-based learning activities. Furthermore, institutional support is crucial in providing the necessary resources, including adequate time allocation for CCTL activities, appropriate teaching materials, and access to relevant learning technologies. The lecturers' acknowledgement of the importance of providing constructive feedback, while simultaneously acknowledging the considerable time commitment involved, highlights the need for institutional support in mitigating workload pressures and fostering collaborative feedback practices.

The importance of constructive and specific feedback is underscored by research on effective feedback strategies in writing instruction (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Providing detailed and targeted feedback is crucial for helping students improve the quality of their writing, but it demands significant time and effort from instructors. Institutional support can alleviate this burden by providing resources such as peer review systems, automated feedback tools, or dedicated time for feedback provision.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study reveals a positive perception of the CCTL model among EFL lecturers, yet its successful and widespread implementation necessitates addressing the challenges of time constraints, providing comprehensive professional development, and securing robust institutional support. Future research could focus on developing and rigorously evaluating effective professional

development programs specifically designed to equip lecturers with the skills and knowledge needed to implement CCTL effectively in academic writing contexts. Further research could explore innovative strategies for optimizing time management within CCTL-based instruction, potentially incorporating technology-enhanced learning tools or blended learning approaches. Investigating the impact of various levels of institutional support on the successful implementation and effectiveness of CCTL would also be beneficial, providing valuable insights into the factors that contribute to successful pedagogical innovation in higher education. Finally, longitudinal studies tracking student outcomes in CCTL-based academic writing courses could provide further evidence of the model's impact on critical thinking skills and academic writing proficiency.

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