

Fostering Digital Critical Thinking within the Integrated Approach

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Abstract

Language proficiency and digital critical thinking—evaluating material, questioning narratives, and conducting reasoned conversations online—are required for EFL students. Philosophy of Education supports critical thinking with ethics, epistemology, and pedagogy. The study aims to investigate how philosophy-based language teaching can be deliberately incorporated into EFL instruction to develop digital critical thinking among Indonesian students. This study used a qualitative analysis of EFL students' and lecturers' comments. The study explores how philosophical inquiry—through Socratic questioning, ethical debates, and open-ended discussion—shapes learners' analytical, ethical, and reflective interaction in digital contexts. Results show that these kinds of approaches improve communicative confidence, increase cognitive participation, and inspire critical assessment of digital content. Students state that they were more conscious of bias, intention, and ethical obligation in online interactions and that their passive consumption has changed to become active reflection. Teachers observed better language use related to moral reasoning and greater awareness of tone and perspective. This study concludes that the need to include philosophical pedagogy in EFL environments extends beyond enhancing linguistic proficiency to cultivate the cognitive and ethical competencies necessary for responsible digital citizenship. This study can be implemented by integrating Philosophy-Based Language Teaching (PBLT) into EFL instruction to improve students' language confidence, digital critical thinking, and ethical awareness as responsible digital citizens.

Key words: Digital critical thinking, Integrated approach, Philosophy-based instruction

1. Introduction

Learning a language has changed in the 21st century from a merely communicative activity to one requiring sophisticated cognitive, ethical, and digital skills (Rowe, 2018; Inran et al., 2022). Like their peers around the world, students are expected not only to understand English as a foreign language (EFL) but also to adapt to a rapidly evolving digital environment that demands ethical thinking, reflective communication, and critical judgment (Martino et al., 2022). The intersection of digital culture and foreign language teaching has presented both opportunities and challenges, particularly in terms of students' ability to critically evaluate the material they consume, produce, and disseminate online (Kumari, 2024). In this regard, promoting digital critical thinking—that is, the ability to evaluate, question, and reflect on digital content and its broader implications—has become a central focus of instruction (Jandric, 2017).

Digital critical education, which begins later to evaluate the reliability of online resources, understand multimedia, convey weak narratives, and engage in constructive, evidence-based online discussions, is increasingly important for student learning (Fadli, 2024). Therefore, it is important for students to have a good understanding of information and Communication Technology (Jahn & Kenner, 2018).

Language education in many EFL contexts predominantly emphasizes technical proficiency and standardized testing, frequently overlooking the cultivation of critical and ethical thinking skills, despite their significant urgency (Acar & Arslan, 2023). Philosophy provides a crucial yet underexplored foundation for teaching (Salimova et al., 2024). Constructivism, pragmatism, and critical pedagogy are some philosophical traditions that help us understand how students engage with the world, question ideas, and make sense of things (Buchanan et al., 2022). These traditions promote reflection, conversation, and investigation, which are essential for effective learning and fostering critical awareness in digital contexts (Shulga et al., 2024).

Integrating philosophical perspectives into EFL learning can improve language acquisition, making it a more reflective and purposeful endeavor. In the era of globalization and rapid societal change, the education system faces increasingly complex challenges. These issues range from ensuring everyone has access to education to finding ways to use technology in the classroom. Philosophy of Education is an important analysis instrument to understand the process by understanding various points of view about an educational process in studying social behavior, sustainable development, and intercultural life. Improvements in educational technology have also made education more accessible, bringing high-quality education to areas that were previously areas of many educational resources (Fauziyyah et al., 2024). At the onset of the 21st century, the Internet is about at the same developmental level as early nineteenth-century boilers. Overall, it is a relatively hazardous environment, either unregulated (like the Internet) or inadequately regulated (such as the dissemination of copyrighted material) (Jandric, 2017).

Furthermore, the convergence of digital EFL pedagogy and the philosophy of education creates new opportunities to foster students' intellectual independence, ethical judgment, and digital responsibility (Bayniyazov, 2025). Encouragement of these qualities becomes crucial as digital platforms increasingly provide access to and the creation of information. Thus, an educational strategy grounded in philosophical roots might be particularly important in developing students who are not only competent English communicators but also careful navigators of the digital environment. This study aims to investigate how such integration may be methodically applied and what effects it might have on the development of digital critical thinking among EFL students.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Philosophy-Based Language Teaching (PBLT) is a pedagogical approach that uses philosophical inquiry to engage students in their cognitive, ethical, and communication skills (Li et al., 2024). Grounded in the principles of Socratic inquiry, dialogic pedagogy, and Philosophy for Children (P4C) (Zulkifli & Hashim, 2020). PBLT surpasses conventional grammar-focused instruction by enabling students to explore complex subjects, ethical quandaries, and abstract ideas in the target language (Li et al., 2024). PBLT perceives language as a medium for meaning construction, critical analysis, and ethical contemplation, rather than merely a mechanical instrument for rote memorization of vocabulary and conventions. Students explore issues through structured debates, ethical discussions, hypothetical scenarios, and collaborative dialogues (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Based on a multi-theoretical framework that encompasses the philosophy of education, critical thinking theory, and digital literacy in language acquisition. Paulo Freire (1970) formulated critical pedagogy, the foundational philosophical framework that advocates for education as a means of liberation through dialogue, reflection, and

action. In this context, learners are active participants who challenge social realities and pursue transformation, rather than being passive users of knowledge (Peters & Besley, 2019). This aligns with the goal of fostering critical thinking in digital contexts, where students must confront manipulation, interrogate content, and analyze digital texts.

The constructivist learning theories of Vygotsky and Piaget complement critical pedagogy, positing that students acquire knowledge through interaction and introspection (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). Constructivism shapes the design of activities in digital EFL classrooms, where students collectively investigate philosophical topics, critically assess digital resources, and negotiate meaning within authentic circumstances. A critical thinking framework that defines critical thinking as disciplined thought guided by explicit intellectual norms, including clarity, accuracy, relevance, and logic (Castellví et al., 2020). This theory provides specific criteria for assessing digital critical thinking outcomes in EFL students.

Theory of digital literacy elucidates how students navigate digital environments. Digital literacy encompasses critical engagement, inventiveness, ethical participation, and the ability to scrutinize online content, alongside functional skills (Rizal et al., 2023). When combined with philosophical inquiry, digital literacy transforms into a process through which students gain insight into the creation and electronic transmission of information.

Several previous studies have stated that P4C involves students in developing concepts from actions or associations they make during discussions (Zulkifli & Hashim, 2020). Implications for language education, materials development, curriculum, research, and capability development are examined, applying the capacity of PBLT to foster critical learning and increase student engagement (Li et al., 2024). Digital technology on students' communicative competence helps to reduce epistemic impact in learning (Salimova et al., 2024). The results obtained indicate a strong correlation between the comprehension of EFL education and the philosophy of teacher education, as well as practical science (Renan i et al., 2019).

Although most studies approach critical thinking and digital literacy from either a skills-based or technology-based perspective, both are recognized as essential components of 21st-century EFL training. Limited research has examined the application of philosophical concepts, such as critical pedagogy, ethical inquiry, and Socratic dialogue, in EFL classrooms to enhance critical engagement, particularly in challenging contexts. The majority of EFL research in Indonesia focuses on linguistic accuracy and examination outcomes, thereby overlooking educational approaches designed to foster reflective thinking, ethical reasoning, and critical analysis of digital content.

Research Questions

1. How do Indonesian EFL students view and experience the integration of philosophy-based language instruction to build their digital critical thinking skills?
2. How could philosophy-based teaching approaches affect Indonesian EFL students' analytical, ethical, and reflective participation in digital learning environments?

Therefore, the study aims to investigate how Philosophy-Based Language Teaching might be deliberately included into EFL education to develop digital critical thinking among Indonesian students. This study examines how classroom environments and philosophical perspectives can foster students who are not only proficient in English but also able to interact critically with the digital world. In doing so, this study supports ongoing initiatives to transform Indonesian language teaching into a more holistic, reflective, and future-ready learning environment.

3. Method

3.1 Research design

The research was carried out in two private universities in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, aiming to determine the degree to which Philosophy-based language teaching contributes to the development of digital critical thinking. The investigation focused on two main objectives: to examine Indonesian students' perspectives and experiences regarding the integration of philosophy-based language teaching to enhance their digital critical thinking skills, and to assess the impact of philosophy-based teaching methodologies on Indonesian students' analytical, ethical, and reflective engagement in digital learning environments. Using qualitative case study methodology, a method commonly used in the social sciences for its effectiveness in clarifying complex social phenomena, researchers aim to gain a deep contextual understanding of participants' perspectives and behaviors (Creswell, 2021).

3.2 Participants of the Research

This study involved four lecturers and four students from two private institutions in South Sulawesi, Indonesia: Universitas Megarezky and Universitas Bosowa, consisting of two female and two male lecturers. Their ages ranged from 36 to 56 years, and they had a wide range of teaching experience, from 6 to 20 years. The lecturers' educational backgrounds varied; two lecturers from Indonesian language education and literature, and two English Education Department lecturers. The selection of these specific teachers and four students was systematically guided by data from initial research, particularly regarding philosophy-based language teaching of an integrated approach in fostering digital critical thinking.

3.3 Research Instruments

Research instruments are tools used by researchers during the research process. The research instruments are 1) a Field note guide, which is used when conducting observations in the field. 2) Interview protocol: Used when interviewing lecturers and students regarding Philosophy-based language teaching of an integrated approach in fostering digital critical thinking of Indonesian students. The interview guide is used to keep researchers on track and from going off topic. 3) Camera and voice recorders: A Camera and a recorder are used to document the research process.

Sample Interview Questions Inspired by RQ1:

- 1) How do students view and experience the integration of philosophy-based language instruction to build their digital critical thinking skills?
- 2) Could you explain your experience with activities, including ethical debates or philosophical inquiry?

- 3) Have your reactions to or reflections on digital materials—such as social media posts or online articles—changed?
- 4) In what ways has philosophical learning—that which addresses values, problems, or reasoning—helped you to comprehend or challenge what you find online?
- 5) During philosophy-based learning activities in your English lesson, how at ease are you sharing your ideas or questions?
- 6) In real-life digital communication, do you believe that the ethical or critical debate English courses offer are useful? Why not or why?

Sample Interview Questions Built on RQ2

How could philosophy-based teaching approaches affect Indonesian students' analytical, ethical, and reflective participation in digital learning environments?

- 1) In language lessons, what do you believe to be the value of Socratic questioning or group dialogue?
- 2) When your teacher probes philosophical or open-ended questions during class, how do you respond?
- 3) Could you provide a class debate or discussion example that caused you to consider a topic?
- 4) Have these philosophy-based courses helped you to see accuracy, fairness, or prejudice in what you come across online?
- 5) Following philosophy-based training, how do you interact on digital platforms—that is, forums, social media, class discussions?
- 6) Do you believe philosophy-based learning fosters ethical thinking or digital responsibility when applied online?

3.4 Data collection techniques

The data collection techniques used in the study are

- 1) Observation: Researchers collect all observation results and then link them to the indicators that have been set.
- 2) Interviews: conducted to dig deeper into data related to the Philosophy-based language teaching of an integrated approach in fostering digital critical thinking of Indonesian students. There are Research Questions (RQ) in this study, namely RQ 1: How do Indonesian students view and experience the integration of philosophy-based language instruction to build their digital critical thinking skills? (e.g., evaluating online information, ethical reasoning, and digital dialogue)? RQ 2: How could philosophy-based teaching approaches affect Indonesian students' analytical, ethical, and reflective participation in digital learning environments? (e.g., Socratic questioning, dialogic reflection) Impact on Indonesian EFL students' engagement with digital texts, media, and discussions?

3) Documentation: The documentation used in this study includes photos of research activities, voice recordings, and videos as a complement to the research results.

3.5 Data analysis techniques

The data obtained from interviews and observations will be transcribed and qualitatively processed using Thematic Analysis (TA) adapted from Creswell (2021). The stages carried out in Thematic Analysis can be seen in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1. *Thematic Analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2013)

In stage 1, the researcher transferred all raw data from interviews and observations into transcripts. The data, in the form of transcripts, were then categorized through coding in stage 2. Next, the researcher determined the tentative themes from the coding results in stage 3. In stage 4, the researcher reviewed all tentative themes to determine the main theme in stage 5. The final stage of this analysis is to create a research report.

4. Results and Discussion

Semi-structured interviews with a subset of EFL students who had participated in instructional activities anchored in philosophical inquiry, ethical reasoning, and reflective dialogue were used to investigate how philosophy-based language teaching in an integrated approach promotes digital critical thinking. These interviews sought to provide an in-depth understanding of students' and lecturers' opinions, lived experiences, and how they felt such instructional strategies would help them to navigate and assess digital content critically.

The two primary research objectives of the study were intended to be addressed by the interview probes. The first concentrates on students' needs, especially regarding critical engagement with online material and understanding and comprehending the integration of philosophy into their English studies. The second is to understand the phenomena of special techniques, such as Socratic comprehension and dialogical reflection, on their analytical, ethical and reflective interrelationships in a digital context. Participants' responses were transcribed, thematically classified, and analyzed to identify emerging trends reflecting their cognitive and affective development in digital environments through philosophy-based learning.

1. RQ1: How do Indonesian EFL students view and experience the integration of philosophy-based language instruction to build their digital critical thinking skills?

1.1 How do students see and experience the integration of philosophy-based language education to enhance their digital critical thinking skills?

"I expected English class to concentrate more on grammar or vocabulary; hence, at first, it was strange for me. But I was more involved when we started talking about moral questions or ideals. It helped me understand that, particularly concerning online material or fake news, English may be a means of communicating sophisticated ideas (Student 1)

" Topics involving ethical or philosophical concerns draw students' attention more. They begin to relate the language to their values, and this helps them to increase their inspiration and introspection (Lecturer 1).

The interview results show that students thought English education concentrated only on grammar and vocabulary. But as Student 1 pointed out, their participation increased when courses included moral or philosophical subjects, which helped them view English as a vehicle for articulating difficult concepts, particularly in the context of digital information such as fake news. Lecturer 1 confirmed that such subjects inspire students and foster a link between language acquisition and personal values, thereby improving both motivation and introspection. All things considered, philosophy-based education motivates students to use English to engage critically in digital environments, engage in ethical reasoning, and engage in more advanced thinking.

Both points of view show generally that including philosophy into language education redefines students' involvement and motivates them to utilize English not just as a communicative code but also as a medium for critical evaluation, ethical reasoning, and digital age reflective thinking.

1.2 Could you translate your English experience with philosophical research or ethical discussions into another language?

"I entered a class debate about internet privacy. We had to posture ourselves to defend our points of view. It greatly helped me to arrange my ideas and pay attention to the opinions of others. I had to sometimes reconsider my ideas. It also expanded my vocabulary on ethics and digital matters (Student 2).

"I use ethical dilemmas to spark debate, even in intermediate-level classes. It encourages students to form arguments in English and listen to opposing views. They're building both language and cognitive skills." (Lecturer 2).

According to the interview results show, philosophical or ethical debate makes students grow in digital critical thinking as well as language skills. Student 2 argues that discussion of topics such as online privacy encourages clearer reasoning, active listening, and honest communication that is open to diverse perspectives. It also broadens their understanding of ethical and digital issues.

Similarly, lecture 2 emphasizes that ethical considerations encourage substantive engagement by requiring students to formulate arguments and respond appropriately. In addition to language skills, this activity also encourages critical and reflective thinking.

1.3 How have these interactions changed your view of the content you come across online?

“Now I don’t just believe everything I read online.” I try to probe, like, who created this? Why were they writing this? Is that biased? The class discussions helped me to develop critical thinking and to avoid believing everything right away.” (Student 2)

“Students are reading with increasing doubt. Especially on social media or while researching for English writing projects, they are beginning to doubt source authenticity” (Lecturer 3).

Philosophically grounded instruction appears to improve students' critical reading skills and digital awareness. Student 2 highlighted increased attention to source credibility, intent, and potential bias, as she clearly demonstrated a shift from passive consumption to active questioning of online materials. Classroom debates emphasizing critical thinking contributed to this development.

Confirming this trend, Lecturer 3 noted that students—especially those using social media or conducting research—are increasingly becoming skeptical readers. This suggests that incorporating philosophical analysis into EFL education encourages more conscious, critical engagement with digital texts.

1.4 In what ways has philosophical learning—that which addresses values, ideas, or reasoning - helped you to understand or dispute what you encounter online?

“Philosophy let me realize that life isn’t always black and white. A matter can have several sides. I now strive to find the underlying meaning behind extreme or emotional news or blogs I come across. It also enables me to have polite conversations even if I disagree (Lecturer 2).

Philosophical learning helps students interact with online materials more sensitively and nuancedly. According to Lecturer 2, engaging with philosophical concepts helps students see the complexity of issues and move beyond binary thinking. This shift allows students, especially those exposed to emotionally charged or one-sided digital texts, to seek deeper meaning within them. It also fosters respectful online communication. Students learn to interact intentionally, even in conflict, reflecting the growth of ethical and critical digital literacy, rather than impulsive behaviour.

1.5 How at ease are you presenting concepts in English based on philosophy?
“I was first shy since I was worried about grammar errors. I grew more secure though as the teacher paid more attention to meaning than accuracy” (Student 2).

“Students who understand their thoughts matter become more ready to express themselves. When the issue is relevant, people seem to ignore their anxiety about public speaking and concentrate on the message” (Lecturer 1).

By shifting the focus from precision to comprehension, philosophy-based instruction alleviates pupils' linguistic anxiety. Student 2 indicated that initial nervousness about grammatical errors dissipated when the classroom prioritized conceptual clarity over form, thereby enhancing confidence.

Lecturer 1 reiterated this, emphasizing that students are more inclined to articulate their beliefs when they perceive their opinions as respected, particularly regarding significant issues. This approach promotes essential engagement in philosophical discussions, alongside verbal proficiency and expressive assurance.

1.6 In real-life digital communication, do you believe that the ethical or critical debate English courses offer are useful for your students? Why not or why?

"Certainly, it is extremely beneficial." We reside in a digital age and engage in a significant amount of online communication. These lessons not only enhance my English writing skills but also encourage me to contemplate my content prior to posting or commenting. I am currently experiencing an increase in my level of self-assurance and introspection (Student 1).

A philosophy-based English education encourages responsible, cautious internet use. In the context of contemporary online communication, Student 1 stated that these types of courses are quite beneficial. The emphasis on ethics and critical thinking not only enhances writing skills but also fosters self-awareness prior to accessing the internet, thereby encouraging more reflective and deliberate digital interactions. This suggests that philosophical discussions in EFL courses foster digital responsibility, a critical skill for navigating the intricacies of online communication, rather than merely enhancing language proficiency.

2. RQ 2: How could philosophy-based teaching approaches affect Indonesian EFL students' analytical, ethical, and reflective participation in digital learning environments?

2.1 *In language classes, what benefits group discussion or Socratic questioning?*
Student Response:

'Socratic inquiry enables me to go farther in my thinking. Joining group conversations motivates me to pay attention to several points of view. It gives English more significance and applications in daily life.

Lecturer Response:

"These approaches foster a research environment. The students are pushed beyond basic responses. Learning English is only one aspect; another is developing critical language use in daily life."

In EFL classes, group discussion and Socratic inquiry enhance communicative depth and critical thinking. By interacting with diverse perspectives, students find that this approach deepens their thinking and broadens their perspectives, making English instruction more relevant and meaningful to everyday life.

These strategies, highlighted by the speakers, transform classrooms into reflective learning environments where students begin to use English for deeper inquiry and expression, going beyond mere responses. This encourages the development of analytical and intentional language use—a crucial component of digital critical thinking.

2.2 *When your teacher probes philosophical or open-ended inquiries, how do you answer?*

Student Reaction: *"I grew used to it even though it was first confusing. I try to relate it to digital concerns or actual problems. It adds life to the course.*

Lecturer Response: *'Students first hesitate, particularly in a second language, but with scaffolding, they start to enjoy reflective discussions. Open-ended questions inspire confidence and participation.*

While philosophical or open-ended questions initially challenge students, they ultimately enhance engagement and learning. Students acknowledge initial uncertainty but become comfortable over time, especially when connecting questions to real-world or digital problems, which enhances the course's relevance.

While students may be initially hesitant, instructors demonstrate that mentorship—supportive instruction—helps them gain confidence. Even in a second-language environment, these types of questions encourage active engagement and careful analysis.

2.3 *Could you cite a class debate or discussion that changed your perspective?*

Students responded: “We discussed whether false information should hold influencers responsible. Before, I never gave it much thought. It made me more careful about whom I follow online.”

Lecturer Response: “I advised students to consider online campaigning. The discussion revealed how deeply digital values intersect with ethics and identity. A few students displayed very remarkable maturity.”

Class philosophical conversations might cause actual changes in students' ethical judgment and digital awareness. The student reflected on a discussion about influencer accountability and false information, prompting them to think more critically about whom they follow and trust online.

The instructor noted that discussions of digital concerns—such as online campaigning—allow students to investigate the intersection of ethics, identity, and digital impact. Some students exhibited significant development, suggesting that in a digital environment, these kinds of conversations help to promote ethical sensitivity as well as critical participation.

2.4 *How do these classroom conversations affect how you interact online?*

Student Response:

“Now I think twice before commenting. I try to read more carefully, and I ask myself if my comment adds value or just emotion.”

Lecturer Response:

“Several students told me they've become more critical readers online. They no longer accept viral content blindly—they reflect and analyze more.”

Class philosophical conversations help students engage in more responsible and conscious internet activity. Students demonstrated a shift toward self-regulation, showing greater caution and intention before speaking and emphasizing thoughtful contributions over rash responses.

Speakers verified this shift, showing that students—especially those who oppose viral or emotionally charged material—are increasingly becoming critical consumers of digital content. This demonstrates the significant application of classroom knowledge to practical digital engagement.

2.5 *Have these philosophy-based lessons helped identify bias or unfairness in digital content?*

Student Response:

"Yes, especially in political posts or news. I learned to look at who created the content and what their purpose might be."

Lecturer Response:

Critical literacy constitutes a fundamental objective. Students start to recognize tone, perspective, and intent in digital communications, which is crucial for ethical online conduct.

Philosophy-based instruction enhances students' critical digital literacy, particularly in recognizing bias and intent in online content. The student demonstrated a heightened level of analysis by critically examining the sources and intentions behind political or news items they read. The professor stressed that students are acquiring the skills to discern tone, perspective, and bias—essential competencies for ethical and informed engagement in the digital realm.

2.6 Does philosophy-based education promote ethical behavior in digital contexts?

Student Response: "Certainly." It heightens my awareness of my digital behaviors. I endeavor to exhibit greater honesty and respect in online interactions.

2.6 Do you think that studying about philosophy helps people act ethically online?

Student Response: "For sure." It makes me more aware of what I do online. I strive to be more honest and polite while I am online.

Lecturer Response:

"Philosophy connects moral reasoning with digital literacy." It makes kids think about how their online actions will affect others, not just how to write correctly.

"Philosophy connects moral reasoning with digital literacy." It makes kids think about how their online actions will affect others, not just how to write correctly.

Philosophy-based education helps students learn how to be responsible and ethical when they talk to people online. The student said they wanted to be nicer and more honest online and that they felt more responsible.

The instructor stressed that adding philosophical notions to language lessons helps connect moral reasoning with digital literacy. This goes beyond grammar and focuses on the moral impact of communication. This helps pupils become more ethical and conscious citizens online.

5. Discussion

RQ1: In what ways do Indonesian EFL students perceive and experience the incorporation of philosophy-based language instruction to enhance their digital critical thinking abilities?

The findings indicate that integrating philosophy-based instruction has a substantial impact on Indonesian EFL students' perceptions and interactions regarding English acquisition. Students initially anticipated traditional grammar and vocabulary instruction, but were taken aback by classes encompassing complex concepts and ethical dilemmas. Responses indicate that these issues fostered increased participation

and allowed students to perceive English as a medium for discussing challenging digital realities, encompassing ethical reasoning and misinformation. This alteration signifies a departure from mechanical language usage towards more intentional reflection. Both educators and learners emphasized that class debates and philosophical discussions—particularly those centered on digital privacy or ethical responsibilities—enhanced students' ability to structure ideas, evaluate contrasting perspectives, and expand their language related to ethics and digital existence. These results strengthen the case that critical pedagogy can foster not only improved language competency but also digital literacy and higher-order thinking abilities (Limjong et al., 2024; Shlianchak et al., 2024). As students become increasingly confident in their ability to communicate difficult concepts, they begin to relate classroom knowledge to practical digital problems, thereby improving relevance and motivation (Aztry et al., 2024; Jiang et al., 2023).

These philosophy-based learning opportunities also seem to improve students' critical thinking and assessment of internet resources. Students reported being more analytical and wary, and more critical of authorship, objectivity, and potential bias in digital critical thinking. Teachers attested to this behavioral change, observing that students are now more discriminating readers, particularly when studying for academic assignments or engaging with ubiquitous social media posts. This outcome aligns with the more general objectives of digital literacy instruction, as critical interaction is essential for navigating the online information landscape (Lo, 2024). This instruction, grounded in philosophy, also increased students' receptivity to a range of perspectives. One speaker said that students started to see the richness of online conversation and started to transcend a black-and-white perspective. They so claimed to be more polite and considerate in digital contacts—even in conflict. This implies that in digital communication, philosophical investigation not only promotes cognitive development but also emotional and ethical awareness (Lewin & Lundie, 2016).

The influence of the classroom environment on students' level of participation in English is another important issue. Initially, students are hesitant due to grammatical issues; however, they gain confidence when teachers prioritize understanding meaning over accuracy. Teachers have observed that anxiety typically decreases and genuine engagement typically increases when students are encouraged to express their personal perspectives on relevant issues. This underscores the need to build a supportive, meaning-oriented learning environment in EFL settings to enhance language fluency and critical participation in discussions (Zulkifli & Hashim, 2020).

Additionally, the students recognized the practicality of these lessons in their daily digital lives. They were more prepared to engage in meaningful debates, deliberate before publishing, and communicate effectively through technology (Wei, 2025). This development demonstrates the greater pedagogical value of philosophy-based education in developing ethical and responsible digital citizens. Beyond simply improving English language skills, this strategy fosters digital critical thinking—a crucial skill in today's information-driven society (Shulga et al., 2024).

RQ 2: How could philosophy-based teaching approaches affect Indonesian EFL students' analytical, ethical, and reflective participation in digital learning environments?

Students can engage in group discussions to explore a variety of perspectives and transcend superficial reactions. Socratic inquiry, as one student observed, motivates students to explore further, thereby transforming English from a classroom subject into a practical instrument for decision-making and communication. Teachers

confirmed this, emphasizing that these strategies foster a reflective environment that encourages the deliberate and thoughtful use of language. This method develops analytical abilities directly applicable in modern communication environments (Fauziyyah et al., 2024).

Though at first, they challenge students, open-ended and philosophical inquiries eventually provide a means for more introspective and interactive learning. By engaging in philosophical inquiry, students are prompted to challenge preconceptions, consider diverse perspectives, and present logical arguments (Li et al., 2024). Students start off feeling uncertain or hesitant, especially given the additional difficulty of debating intellectual concepts in a second language. Still, they adapt and even enjoy the conversations with enough scaffolding. When related to actual or digital problems, these discussions become quite interesting and relevant (Nurhikmah H. et al., 2024). Teachers noted that this approach boosts student confidence and encourages more classroom involvement, implying that in the digital era, reflective language learners depend on such kind of inquiry to grow (Guarani, 2018).

Moreover, class discussions on moral or ethical issues sometimes cause students' digital conduct and viewpoints to change (Jandric, 2017). Following conversations on disinformation and responsibility, students said they were reassessing the dependability of internet influencers (Wei, 2025). These insights show how philosophical participation in the classroom could inspire ethical consciousness and critical analysis of digital identity and influence. Paulo Freire (1970) developed critical pedagogy, the essential philosophical basis that promotes education as a vehicle for emancipation through dialogue, knowledge, and action. Students within this framework are active participants who challenge societal realities and pursue reform, rather than being passive users of information (Peters & Besley, 2019)

Comparable observations by instructors emphasized how these courses enable students to engage intimately with the intersection of digital culture, personal values, and political obligations. These modifications are evident in routine digital communications.

Students reported increased awareness of their online interactions and published content, highlighting the need for thoughtful commentary rather than impulsive responses (Martino et al., 2022). This behavior indicates the internalization of ethical reasoning and critical self-regulation. Educators echoed this perspective, noting that children had become more discerning readers, dismissing online content at face value. This demonstrates a substantial transformation of classroom-based philosophical education into practical digital contexts, hence facilitating responsible and reflective digital engagement (Shulga et al., 2024). Philosophical instruction helps students develop critical analysis of digital content and identify bias. Hoehsmann et al. (2013) found that students began questioning the credibility, slant, and sources of political tweets and news stories. Teachers reported an increase in students' awareness of the importance of tone, word choice, and hidden intentions in online communication. This skill is crucial for maintaining appropriate online behavior. Teachers confirmed that students were growing more sensitive to tone, phrasing, and underlying agendas—critical abilities for responsible digital conduct. People are more critical because they are dealing with philosophical ideas directly and learning language in a planned way (Peters & Besley, 2019).

Instructors and students alike agree that teaching with a logical basis leads to better moral behavior online. Students are nicer and more honest with people they talk to

online, which shows they know more about what is right and wrong and how to act online. Lecturers claim that philosophy takes students beyond grammatically perfect writing to responsible, deliberate conversation, thereby bridging moral reasoning with digital communication (Fadli, 2024). This type of instruction helps students become reflective and ethical users of digital environments and competent English speakers.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating philosophy-based instruction into EFL learning to simultaneously develop language competence, critical digital literacy, ethical awareness, and students' reflective involvement in the digital ecosystem. Different from language learning, which generally focuses on grammar and vocabulary mechanically, this study demonstrates a paradigm shift towards the use of English as a medium of critical reflection on contemporary digital issues such as misinformation, digital privacy, moral responsibility, and online identity. Another novelty lies in the finding that philosophical discussions and the Socratic inquiry approach not only improve students' analytical and argumentative abilities in a second language but also transform their digital behavior into a more ethical, reflective, and responsible one. Thus, the study extends the concept of language learning from mere improvement of linguistic competence towards the establishment of digital critical citizenship, which integrates cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions in the context of digital communication.

In addition, this study provides an empirical contribution in the context of EFL Indonesian students, by showing that the philosophy approach is able to reduce linguistic anxiety, increase self-confidence, and encourage more meaningful participation in academic discussions and digital interactions. Freire's integration of critical pedagogy into digital language learning is a key differentiator that enriches EFL literature, positioning students as reflective subjects and agents of change in the complex digital information landscape.

Despite yielding insightful findings, this study has several shortcomings. The first limitation is that the research was conducted in a specific cultural and pedagogical environment: an Indonesian English-as-a-foreign-language classroom. This would make it difficult to generalize the findings to other regions or student populations. The participants' answers were further influenced by their familiarity with their teachers and classroom rules; therefore, maybe creating response bias. Furthermore, the study excluded longitudinal data and direct classroom observations to assess behavioural changes over time, as it relied primarily on self-reported perceptions and interviews. Specific teachers also chose the philosophical material and discussion subjects; so, differences in philosophical depth or delivery technique could affect results. Finally, the study indicated a need for more mixed-method or experimental designs to validate causation and efficacy, as it investigated digital critical thinking theoretically but did not quantify changes in students' digital behaviour or critical thinking performance.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the transformative potential of philosophy-based language education for enhancing digital critical thinking skills among Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Students engaged more deeply with ethical questions, abstract concepts, and real-world digital challenges, leading to greater involvement, reflective thinking, and ethical awareness in both classroom and online environments. One achieved this by transcending conventional grammar and vocabulary instruction. Open-ended questions, group discussions, and Socratic questioning are effective strategies for encouraging analytical engagement, confidence, and moral reasoning. Online, students began to exhibit more

conscientious behavior, including checking website information, considering different points of view, and using smarter communication. These results suggest that incorporating philosophical concepts into teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) not only improves language competence but also develops the cognitive and ethical skills necessary for Responsible digital Citizenship in the Twenty-First Century.

Subsequent study should utilize mixed methods or experimental designs to objectively assess the influence of Philosophy-Based Language Teaching (PBLT) on enhancing EFL students' digital critical thinking and ethical conduct. Longitudinal studies are also needed to assess the sustainability of cognitive and ethical changes in students' digital interactions. Furthermore, research can be expanded across different educational levels and cultural contexts to increase the generalizability of the findings and to explore the integration of PBLT with digital learning technologies or AI to develop 21st-century competencies.

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