

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN CRITICAL  
THINKING PEDAGOGY: ENGLISH TEACHERS' REFLECTIVE  
INQUIRY**

E-ISSN : 3089-4980  
P-ISSN : 3089-2228  
Submitted : March 4, 2026  
Accepted : August 22, 2026  
Published : August 22, 2026  
Page : 27-37  
Citation (in APA) : Sueb, & Luik, I. (2026). Professional development program in critical thinking pedagogy: English teachers' reflective inquiry. *International Journal of Community Service in Language, Literature, Culture, and Their Teaching*, 3(1), 27–37.  
<https://doi.org/10.36841/seva.v2i2.8041>  
Corresponding Author : sueb@unesa.ac.id

**Sueb<sup>1\*</sup>**  
sueb@unesa.ac.id  
Universitas Negeri  
Surabaya, Indonesia

**Ira Luik<sup>2</sup>**  
iraluik@bu.edu  
Boston University, United  
States of America

**Abstract**

This qualitative report examines how a community service professional development program cantered on critical literacy and argumentative writing fostered reflective practice and strengthened critical thinking pedagogy among English teachers in Surabaya. The initiative was introduced following a needs analysis indicating that local literacy education prioritized basic reading habits while lacking critical engagement with texts. Thirty-two senior high school English teachers from seven purposively selected schools participated in a three-session workshop covering critical thinking, critical literacy, and argumentative writing. Participant reflections were evaluated using thematic coding, revealing four major outcomes: (1) development of reflective awareness, (2) strengthened understanding of critical thinking pedagogy, (3) renewed engagement with academic writing practices, and (4) increased professional confidence for classroom implementation. The program highlights reflective practice as a pivotal mechanism linking teacher professional learning with instructional empowerment. Although grounded in self-reported reflections, the outcomes demonstrate that integrating reflective inquiry into community outreach initiatives can initiate meaningful pedagogical transformation in literacy education.

**Keywords:** critical literacy, critical thinking, English teachers, professional development, reflective practice

**INTRODUCTION**

Contemporary secondary English Language Teaching (ELT) extends beyond basic reading comprehension, increasingly emphasizing critical text interpretation, argument evaluation, bias detection, and the synthesis of well-reasoned responses. These skills are essential for critical thinking, especially as students face more digital information and persuasive media. English teachers play a key role in helping students analyze texts. However, teaching critical literacy and argumentative writing requires more than just focusing on comprehension (Suarcaya & Prasasti, 2017). To understand how teachers use new teaching methods, it is important to look at their reflections. Therefore, by focusing on teacher reflection in professional development, we can see how teaching beliefs and

classroom practices change. Accordingly, this study positions teacher reflection as a primary lens for evaluating professional learning outcomes, illustrating how reflective inquiry captures shifts in pedagogical beliefs and classroom practice.

Critical thinking pedagogy combines critical reading, analytical reasoning, and academic writing. Argumentative writing is central to literacy education (Mambu, 2018; Qasserras, 2023). Critical reading helps students question textual assumptions and perspectives. Before professional development, many teachers assumed texts were neutral and unexamined (Newell et al., 2011; Turuk Kuek, 2010). The program challenged this by encouraging teachers to see texts as carrying embedded biases and intentions. Critical thinking involves evaluating claims and evidence. It prompts educators to help students uncover underlying arguments. Argumentative writing lets students present structured, defensible positions. For effective use, teachers need both theory and practical classroom strategies. Professional development programs build teachers' critical pedagogy skills.

Many schools in Surabaya have implemented literacy programs. These initiatives typically emphasize developing reading habits, not fostering critical engagement with texts. Discussions with school leaders and literacy advocates showed a need for support in integrating critical thinking into reading and writing instruction. A professional development program was created to enhance English teachers' understanding of critical literacy and argumentative writing (Wilkinson et al., 2017). The program offered conceptual frameworks and practical tools to link conventional literacy initiatives with critical pedagogy. It focused on producing tangible classroom outcomes and improving student performance.

Teachers' reflections have not been used as much as other methods for evaluating professional learning. However, these reflections give important insight into how teachers understand and use what they learn. Reflective inquiry helps teachers describe their growth, spot challenges, and judge how useful the training is for their own work. It also helps them think more deeply about their teaching beliefs, which supports ongoing professional learning (Tugui, 2011).

This article examines the effectiveness of a professional development program in critical thinking pedagogy by analyzing English teachers' reflective inquiry. It explores teachers' perceptions of the workshop's impact on their understanding of critical literacy and argumentative writing. The study uses reflective responses collected after the program as an evaluative lens for assessing professional development. While the research does not directly measure teacher transformation, it documents how teachers interpret and evaluate their professional learning experiences. Through qualitative thematic analysis of reflective inquiry data, the study shows how professional development enhances critical-thinking pedagogy in secondary English education. It also contributes to discussions on

literacy reform, teacher professional development, and reflective evaluation within ELT contexts.

## **PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**

Despite widespread literacy initiatives in Surabaya, secondary classroom practices have historically favored reading habits and text exposure over analytical engagement. Many literacy campaigns promote frequent reading but offer minimal guidance on dissecting arguments, evaluating contrasting viewpoints, or constructing evidence-based responses. Consequently, literacy instruction frequently remains at a basic comprehension level.

Transforming reading instruction requires a gradual shift toward critical literacy strategies, moving away from an exclusive focus on basic comprehension toward deeper analytical engagement (Arvianti et al., 2025). Secondary English teachers encounter notable challenges when integrating critical thinking into reading and writing tasks, particularly given that teaching argumentative writing demands pedagogical clarity regarding text structure, evidence evaluation, and analytical reasoning. Furthermore, teachers themselves may lack regular practice with these academic skills in formal professional contexts.

To address these challenges, a community-based professional development program in critical thinking pedagogy was co-designed with local literacy stakeholders. The intervention sought to bridge the gap between general literacy promotion and critical pedagogy by delivering structured training in critical reading, analytical questioning, and argumentative writing. Critical reading workshops developed teachers' ability to guide students in analyzing texts. Specifically, modules on analytical questioning equipped teachers with techniques to foster evaluative thinking, while argumentative writing sessions scaffolded their competence in modelling and assessing structured academic prose. Reflective practice exercises fostered awareness of instructional beliefs and readiness to adapt pedagogy.

Through interactive workshops and writing mentorship, teachers engaged with both theoretical concepts and practical strategies. These strategies are directly aligned with the program's objectives. Teacher reflection was central, letting participants describe how the training influenced their pedagogy. By integrating critical literacy theory with experiential writing practice, the program aimed to strengthen teachers' capacity to implement analytical literacy instruction more effectively and reflectively.

## **METHOD**

This community outreach program was designed as a workshop-based professional development initiative focused on critical pedagogy. Reflective inquiry

served as the primary evaluative tool of the program to examine how participating English teachers perceived, processed, and applied the training concepts, as part of their professional development process. Rather than measuring immediate student performance outcomes through standardized metrics, the project evaluated teachers' perceived reflective accounts to understand how the workshops enhanced their pedagogical awareness and instructional readiness.

### **Context and Participants**

The initiative originated from a needs analysis in Surabaya. Although local reading campaigns were widespread, consultations with school leaders revealed that classroom practices prioritized reading frequency over critical text analysis. Participating teachers expressed a clear desire for practical guidance in facilitating critical reading and argumentative writing.

The program was developed with a local NGO and a literacy-focused educational platform. The Surabaya educational authority selected public and private schools based on readiness and current literacy programs. Headmasters led teacher recruitment using a needs-based SWOT analysis. Teachers needed at least three years of full-time experience and active roles in English literacy. Thirty-two English teachers from seven high schools in Surabaya and Sidoarjo participated, ranging in age from 22 to 50.

### **Program Implementation**

The program was held in three monthly sessions during the weekends: November 2025, December 2025, and January 2026. Each session addressed interconnected components of critical pedagogy, with each monthly focus intentionally building upon the previous one to create a coherent progression of learning. The first session established a foundational understanding of critical thinking concepts, which were then expanded in the second session by applying them to critical literacy in reading practices. The third session subsequently deepened teacher expertise by translating critical reading into practice through argumentative writing, allowing participants to integrate and synthesize the skills and strategies developed throughout the program. Each workshop built sequentially upon the previous one as listed as follows:

1. Session 1: Critical Thinking Foundations: Establishing basic conceptual frameworks and exploring critical pedagogy concepts.
2. Session 2: Critical Literacy in Reading Practices: Applying critical frameworks to text interpretation and deconstruction.
3. Session 3: Critical Writing through Argumentative Texts: Translating analytical reading skills into structured argumentative writing

The program was delivered through blended mechanisms combining face-to-face workshops and asynchronous mentoring. During face-to-face sessions, participants engaged in collaborative discussion, text analysis, modeling of argumentative structures, and guided practice activities. The workshops emphasized interactive learning rather than lecture-based instruction.

Following the session, asynchronous mentoring supported teachers in drafting and refining argumentative writing tasks. This mechanism allowed participants to experience the writing process directly while receiving feedback. Continuous communication was facilitated through a WhatsApp group to sustain discussion and peer exchange beyond formal sessions.

### **Evaluation and Analysis**

Evaluation was conducted through reflective inquiry at the conclusion of the program. Teachers were asked to complete structured prompts such as “*This workshop supports my professional development as a teacher because...*” The prompts were designed to align with the study’s core themes, focusing on reflective practice, critical thinking pedagogy, academic writing engagement, and professional confidence. Criteria for constructing the prompts included eliciting specific examples of shifts in beliefs, pedagogical strategies, and classroom intentions, as well as encouraging teachers to critically assess the relevance of their learning experiences. This approach aimed to support deeper reflection and ensure responses addressed the constructs under investigation. Responses were compiled as the primary dataset. The WhatsApp discussion also served as informal reinforcement, but was not treated as primary data.

Data were analyzed thematically using iterative coding procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial open coding identified recurring concepts related to reflective awareness, critical thinking pedagogy, academic writing engagement, and professional confidence. Codes were then grouped into broader themes through axial categorization. To enhance analytical rigor, themes were revisited repeatedly to ensure consistency and alignment with the research focus. The analysis aimed to interpret how teachers evaluated the professional development experience through reflective articulation. Reflection was therefore positioned as an evaluative lens for examining the perceived impact of the program on critical thinking pedagogy.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

Qualitative analysis of participant feedback revealed four prominent themes demonstrating positive shifts in pedagogical awareness, confidence, and instructional planning. Table 1 summarizes these core outcomes. From teachers’ responses, recurring patterns emerged that indicate shifts in pedagogical awareness,

confidence, and instructional intention. Although the reflections varied in length and depth, most responses expressed perceived growth in understanding critical literacy and argumentative writing, renewed professional motivation, and stronger awareness of student-centered learning. The findings are organized into four major themes presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic findings from teachers' reflective inquiry responses

| Theme                                             | Description                                                                                                           | Inquiry                                                                                                                                                                                      | Analysis                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reflective Practice and Self-Relocation           | Teachers demonstrated awareness of reflection as part of professional growth and repositioned themselves as learners. | "The workshop helped me value reflection as a meaningful process, not merely an academic task."; "By positioning as a learner in this program... It makes me think more on students center." | Reflection functioned as a metacognitive process.                                                                                          |
| Strengthening Critical Thinking Pedagogy          | Teachers reported improved understanding of how to teach critical thinking, reading, and argumentative writing.       | "It helps me understand how to teach critical thinking better." ; <i>"Mengajarkan pola berpikir kritis dan penerapannya."</i>                                                                | Teachers connected theoretical concepts with classroom strategies, indicating pedagogical internalization of critical literacy principles. |
| Rebuilding Academic Writing and Analytical Habits | Teachers experienced renewed engagement with reading and writing as intellectual practices.                           | "Developed the habit of reading, pushed myself to write again." ; "It forces us to write."                                                                                                   | Experiencing writing strengthens professional competence in argumentative instruction.                                                     |
| Professional Confidence and Classroom Application | Teachers expressed increased confidence and readiness to apply strategies in classrooms.                              | "It helps me build confidence in writing and using English..." ; "I will try to modify the techniques of critical reading and writing..."                                                    | Empowerment manifested as intention to implement student-centered, critical pedagogy practices.                                            |



The first theme highlights the centrality of reflective practice in teachers' professional development. Several participants explicitly described reflection as transformative, moving beyond obligation toward meaningful professional growth. Teachers acknowledged repositioning themselves as learners, a significant move in professional empowerment discourse. Reflective practice in this context served as a metacognitive mechanism through which teachers examined their instructional beliefs and pedagogical purposes (Hsieh & Cridland-Hughes, 2021; Iverson et al., 2004; Minott, 2011). Rather than merely acquiring techniques, participants reported renewed awareness of why and how they teach. This suggests that the workshop created a reflective space necessary for professional self-evaluation, aligning with the concept of teachers as reflective practitioners.

The second theme demonstrates that teachers internalized core principles of critical literacy and critical thinking instruction. Participants reported a clearer understanding of argumentative structures and strategies for teaching critical reading. The emphasis on teaching students "*pola berpikir kritis*" (patterns of critical thinking) reflects a shift from content delivery toward analytical skill development. Teachers also connected critical thinking to contemporary challenges, including the use of digital information and technology. This indicates awareness that literacy education must extend beyond textual comprehension to include evaluative reasoning (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016). The findings suggest that professional development facilitated not only conceptual understanding but also practical pedagogical orientation toward critical literacy.

The third theme reveals an important dimension of professional development: experiential learning through writing. Several teachers mentioned being "forced" to write or developing the habit of reading again. While the phrasing appears informal, it reflects a meaningful professional realization: effective instruction in argumentative writing requires teachers themselves to engage in the writing process. This experiential component strengthened teachers' confidence and likely enhanced empathy toward students' writing challenges. Writing, therefore, functioned as both a cognitive and reflective exercise, reinforcing the interconnectedness of critical thinking and academic expression.

The fourth theme underscores empowerment manifested as practical confidence and instructional readiness. Participants voiced clear commitments to adapt their classroom techniques and embrace student-centered models. Increased confidence in using English and delivering critical literacy tasks signals heightened self-efficacy. Crucially, empowerment in this initiative emerged as an internal strengthening of professional identity rather than an institutional reform. Teachers articulated an ongoing motivation to learn, pointing toward sustainable professional development.

To highlight the practical impact of the intervention, participant reflections were categorized into a comparative framework contrasting baseline pedagogical assumptions with post-workshop instructional mindsets. Prior to participating in the program, teachers predominantly viewed literacy as an isolated skill set focused on decoding, vocabulary expansion, and basic comprehension, with classroom reading tasks treating texts as neutral, authoritative sources of information. Furthermore, writing instruction was largely restricted to surface-level mechanics and generic structural templates, leaving educators positioned primarily as curriculum deliverers rather than facilitators of critical inquiry.

Following the community outreach initiative, participant reflections revealed substantial qualitative shifts across multiple instructional dimensions. Teachers re-conceptualized literacy as an active process of critical text engagement, argument evaluation, and position-taking, acknowledging that texts carry implicit biases and embedded perspectives. Engaging in authentic argumentative writing during the mentorship sessions encouraged participants to reframe writing instruction as a structured, reasoning-centered process while adopting the role of reflective practitioners. As summarized in Table 2, these baseline-to-outcome transformations illustrate how combining conceptual grounding with reflective inquiry served as an effective catalyst for pedagogical reorientation.

Table 2. Comparison before and after pedagogical shifts

| <b>Dimension</b>           | <b>Baseline State (Before Intervention)</b>                                                  | <b>Transformed State (After Intervention)</b>                                                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Concept of Literacy</b> | Viewed literacy primarily as decoding, vocabulary building, and basic reading comprehension. | Re-conceptualized literacy as critical engagement, argument evaluation, and position-taking.                   |
| <b>Perception of Texts</b> | Assumed classroom texts were neutral, objective, and unquestionable sources of authority.    | Recognized texts as value-laden constructs carrying embedded perspectives and implicit biases.                 |
| <b>Teacher Identity</b>    | Functioned mainly as information transmitters focusing on textbook completion.               | Re-positioned themselves as reflective practitioners and facilitators of inquiry.                              |
| <b>Writing Instruction</b> | Taught writing through rigid surface-level mechanics and generic essay formats.              | Scaffolded argumentative writing as a structured, intellectual process of reasoning and evidence construction. |



## **Discussion**

The prominent emergence of reflective practice during workshops aligns with Schön's (1983) model of the reflective practitioner, where professional growth occurs through systematic reflection on experiential practice. By re-engaging with argumentative writing first-hand during mentorship sessions, participants re-examined their instructional identity and aligned their practices with critical pedagogy principles (Freire, 1970; Sardabi et al., 2018).

However, while participants expressed strong commitments to classroom change, self-reported reflective data do not independently confirm sustained, long-term instructional transformation. It is also important to recognize that gains in teacher confidence and awareness may have been influenced by external contextual factors, such as concurrent district initiatives, updated national curricular mandates, or concurrent professional workshops. Acknowledging these potential co-factors contextualizes the findings and highlights the necessity for ongoing mentoring in community outreach efforts.

The value of having teachers experience argumentative writing first-hand supports experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), confirming that authentic task engagement strengthens pedagogical understanding. Authentic, meaningful activities in teacher training significantly augment participants' ability to design effective learning environments (Harper-Hill et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2017). At the same time, relying solely on self-reported confidence risks overestimating practical impact. Future outreach evaluations should examine whether these reflective shifts translate into observable classroom changes over time. Overall, the outcomes indicate that service-learning programs grounded in reflection and critical literacy can successfully spark professional empowerment, even if such empowerment remains developmental in its early stages.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This report evaluated a community service initiative designed to strengthen secondary English teachers' capacity in critical thinking pedagogy. Evaluation of teacher reflections demonstrates that the workshop series successfully enhanced pedagogical awareness, clarified strategies for teaching argumentative writing, and boosted professional confidence. Rather than merely delivering theoretical concepts, the initiative engaged educators as reflective practitioners, fostering a deeper understanding of critical literacy.

The outcomes suggest that future teacher outreach programs should systematically pair conceptual input with hands-on writing experience and structured reflective inquiry. To sustain the positive momentum generated by short-term training interventions, community projects should be complemented by

ongoing classroom mentoring, peer observation networks, and collaborative action research.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The team acknowledges the support of Dinas Pendidikan Jawa Timur, the NGO Rotary Club Surabaya Persada, and the education platform Pintarbareng.com for their collaboration in this professional development initiative and for serving as the operator of Global Grant #2453777. Sincere appreciation is addressed to the partner schools, SMA Trimurti Surabaya, SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya, and SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surabaya, for providing venues and institutional support.

## REFERENCES

- Arvianti, I., Fitriati, S. W., Mujiyanto, J., & Widhiyanto. (2025). The dimensions of viewing the words and the world to improve critical literacy competence: a mixed-method approach. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 10(1), 53. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-025-00364-7>
- Bobkina, J., & Stefanova, S. (2016). Literature and critical literacy pedagogy in the EFL classroom: Towards a model of teaching critical thinking skills. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 6(4), 677–696. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=471490>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Harper-Hill, K., Beamish, W., Hay, S., Whelan, M., Kerr, J., Zelenko, O., & Villalba, C. (2022). Teacher engagement in professional learning: what makes the difference to teacher practice? *Studies in Continuing Education*, 44(1), 105–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2020.1781611>
- Hsieh, B., & Cridland-Hughes, S. (2021). Teachers enacting critical literacy: Critical literacy pedagogies in teacher education and K–12 practice. In *The handbook of critical literacies* (pp. 61–70). Routledge.
- Iverson, K., Luna, C., Botelho, M. J., Fontaine, D., French, K., Iverson, K., & Matos, N. (2004). Making the road by walking and talking: Critical literacy and/as professional development in a teacher inquiry group. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 31(1), 67–80. [tps://www.jstor.org/stable/23478416](https://www.jstor.org/stable/23478416)
- Luo, T., Murray, A., & Crompton, H. (2017). Designing authentic learning activities to train pre-service teachers about teaching online. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 18(7). <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v18i7.3037>
- Mambu, J. E. (2018). Critical pedagogy in the ELF era: An Indonesian-based English language teacher educator's reflection. In *Teacher education for English as a Lingua Franca* (pp. 41–57). Routledge.
- Minott, M. A. (2011). Reflective teaching, critical literacy and the teacher's tasks in the critical literacy classroom. A confirmatory investigation. *Reflective Practice*, 12(1), 73–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2011.541096>
- Newell, G. E., Beach, R., Smith, J., & VanDerHeide, J. (2011). Teaching and

- learning argumentative reading and writing: A review of research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 46(3), 273–304. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.46.3.4>
- Qasserras, L. (2023). Systematic review of communicative language teaching (CLT) in language education: A balanced perspective. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 4(6), 17–23. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2023.4.6.763>
- Sardabi, N., Biria, R., & Golestan, A. A. (2018). Reshaping teacher professional identity through critical pedagogy-informed teacher education. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(3), 617–634. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2018.11342a>
- Suarcaya, P., & Prasasti, W. D. (2017). Investigating Students' Critical Reading: Critical Literacy in EFL Setting. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 14(2). <https://e-flt.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/suarcaya.pdf>
- Tugui, C. (2011). Systematic reflective enquiry methods in teacher education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 533–538. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.11.272>
- Turuk Kuek, M. C. (2010). *Developing critical thinking skills through integrative teaching of reading and writing in the L2 writing classroom*. Newcastle University. <https://theses.ncl.ac.uk/jspui/handle/10443/1063>
- Wilkinson, I. A. G., Reznitskaya, A., Bourdage, K., Oyler, J., Glina, M., Drewry, R., Kim, M.-Y., & Nelson, K. (2017). Toward a more dialogic pedagogy: Changing teachers' beliefs and practices through professional development in language arts classrooms. *Language and Education*, 31(1), 65–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1230129>