

## Constructing Meaning: A Critical Reflection on Phonetics and Phonology Teaching and Learning in EFL Higher Education Context

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**Abstract.** Language knowledge and presentation skills are part of the essential characteristics that an English tutor must possess. However, in reality, a tutor who identifies as a non-native English speaker is not really able to be an adequate model for English language learning coupled with many traditional methods that fail to meet the diverse needs of students, for example not utilizing modern technological tools effectively, and sometimes tutors do not have sufficient awareness of pedagogical knowledge and linguistic knowledge to be a role model of English in the EFL context. Through critical reflection using the 3 Whats model, this research explores how the learning process inspires and motivates students to become English education students, who are designed to become future teachers. 136 English education students were involved in writing a critical reflection after the lecture of Phonetics and Phonology Subject lecture for one semester ended. The findings show that the tutor has the capacity assessed in nine criteria of ideal language teachers, namely having competence, liking English when teaching, motivating, consistently giving feedback, facilitating students to show their abilities, innovating to overcome students' difficulties, appreciating students' work, and being professional in whatever they do. Therefore, further investigation is needed to explore how technology impacts in building of students' critical language awareness.

**Keywords:** *Phonetics; Phonology; Critical Reflection; EFL Education*

## Introduction

To become a future English teacher or lecturer, a student needs to prepare themselves by building the ability in phonology and phonetics in the context of learning English (Kemaloglu-Er, 2017; Llurda, 2014; Mahboob, 2004; Nguyen & Dao, 2019; Richards, 2010). This ability plays an important role in helping someone improve their linguistic abilities (Allen et al., 2022; Shin, 2008). By having an good understanding of phonetic and phonological concepts, it could be helpful to increase the ability to better perceive the language, and have a strong foundation for producing clear pronunciation (Andriani, A., Abdullah, F., & Saputra, 2017; Andriani et al., 2023). In addition, mastering English phonetics and phonology helps students become more aware in case of linguistics and understand the meaning in everyday conversation and academic settings, which can motivate them to be more confident in their abilities (Calafato, 2019; García & Kleifgen, 2020).

However, with the status of English as a foreign language that puts learners with non-native English identity (Huang, 2018; Kemaloglu-Er, 2017; Maum, 2002; Moussu & Llurda, 2008), this becomes a problem that causes the teacher or tutor in the classroom to occasionally overlook how they could help the learning of the foreign language. In order to complete learning stages step-by-step, he just concentrates on the content or even the order of teaching techniques (Seidlhofer, 1996). This shows that the teacher is not a consistent language model who should serve as an example for his students, but rather is only interested in finishing the process. The use of audio-visual materials, such as videos, by the tutor or

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teacher, for example, will not take the place of their function as agents of change in terms of transferring information and skills as well as serving as examples for the way English is taught (Yuan & Burns, 2017).

As a result, prospective English language teachers must examine the content of higher education in detail to teach and study English. This analysis is done through an exploration of the students' own critical reflections on their experiences during the Phonetics and Phonology course. This reflection can serve as a discernment for them to recognize and describe what happened in the classroom, what they have learned, what they have understood, done, practiced, and, how their tutor's role in learning, so that it has an impact on the sustainability of their knowledge and skills in the future, as well as the challenges and solutions they decide in the process. This analysis is based on critical reflection (Christodoulou, 2013; East, 2022; Lavín & Goodman, 2023; Li, 2023) important not only to stimulate English language education students who in the future will become prospective teachers, but can also be a portrait of how the Phonetics and Phonology learning process is a means to equip these students' competence in the language subject they are studying. Their ability to comprehend English better will be based on their knowledge and comprehension of language concepts, which start with an awareness of language sounds (Copland et al., 2014; Janks, 1997; Teng, 2020). They will not only speak English fluently, but also skillfully model it to their students later when they become English teachers.

As an approach integrated with reflective practice (Wilkin, 2022) an introspective process of critical reflection involves assessing and examining a situation, activity, or experience to gain a better knowledge (Rolfe, 2014). Critical reflection in the educational setting can assist teachers or lecturers and students in engaging with their experiences that may influence the learning process and boost their involvement (Afrilyasanti et al., 2025; Gonzalez-Vidal & Moore, 2024; Govender, 2019; Lavín & Goodman, 2023; Ng et al., 2020). To create effective and improved teaching and learning procedures in the next stage, this strategy might encourage people to actively reveal their assumptions, values, and beliefs (Govender, 2019). Based on this, critical reflection acts as a tool to raise awareness and deepen understanding in the learning process (Germain-Rutherford & Karamifar, 2022; Mahalingappa, 2023).

Through critical reflection, students can identify lessons learned from their experiences during the learning process, whether it is from the positive or negative side, to take lessons so that it is useful for improving the process in the future. The process taken in writing a critical reflection is that students must be able to involve the social and cultural experiences they go through by observing what happens, why, and how, then respond to the impact that occurs and what the solution is. Because the teaching and learning he creates is a high-quality process, a student will be prepared to become a professional English teacher in the future (Andriani et al., 2024; Macías Villegas et al., 2020; L. T. Nguyen & Hung, 2021; Sipe & Segumpan, 2024).

Being an English teacher ideally fulfills the nine criteria of an ideal English teacher, but in reality, teachers may be ignorant of it because of many causes, e.g. teacher exhausted from teaching routine, low motivation, and low innovation (Erling, 2015; Norton, 2013). Therefore, this research focuses on exploring how the process of a tutor becomes a language teacher based on indicators of the nine criteria and what she did so that learning can be carried out with modeling, innovation, technology, and inspiration. The nine criteria are based on Allen (D. H. Brown, 2000) which list these as the indicators for language teacher standard profile, including competent preparation leading to a degree in TESL, a love of the English language, critical thinking, the persistent urge to upgrade oneself, self-subordination, readiness to go the extra mile, cultural adaptability, professional citizenship, and a feeling of excitement about one's work. This is important to explore to provide an overview of how to create a meaningful and sustainable English language learning atmosphere.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Constructivism is a teaching and learning methodology based on the idea that “mental construction” is the basis for cognition (learning) (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). Constructivism is a psychology-based learning theory that suggests individuals construct new knowledge based on prior knowledge and experience, making it applicable to education as it explains how individuals acquire knowledge. This knowledge acquisition process is contrary to the conventional practice of simply taking information from others (Tsulaian, 2023). In the classroom, a constructivist view of learning can lead to several different teaching practices (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). In the most common terms, this usually means supporting students to use active techniques (experiments, real-world problem solving) to create more knowledge to reflect and talk about what they did and how their understanding changes. Constructivist learning includes the principles of experience-based learning and problem-solving. To do this, students must be fully engaged in the process of reconstructing their knowledge and abilities to continuously improve their understanding of the subject (Hermanto & Jayana, 2023). In the process of learning, teacher could be said as a facilitator, while the real responsibility for learning is still lies to the students. In this application, students also required to be actively involved in making the experience, critical thinking, forming thoughts, and try to uncover the meaning of each activity. In this case, the experience gained is truly comprehensive, not only limited to basic sensory functions. Teachers, through constructivist teaching, aim to develop cognitive imbalance by providing situations that encourage students to consider their existing beliefs and ask about the situation (Ahmedi, 2023).

As the facilitator, an English teacher should reach the personal branding or image as an ideal profile. Allen (in Brown, 2000) has the conceptual framework of an ideal language teacher, consisting of nine indicators: professional citizenship, critical thinking, cultural adaptability, love of the English language, competent preparation leading to a degree in TESL, self-subordination, the persistent urge to upgrade oneself, readiness to go the extra mile, and a feeling of excitement about one's work.

The nine indicators of the ideal language teacher begin with the characteristics of professional citizenship. Professional citizenship activities can be said to be a context for exploring and debating the overall aims and objectives of practice among teachers (Diamond & Bulfin, 2023). In its characteristics, professional Citizenship teachers have an important role in determining the future of their subject. As such, it is expected that all citizenship teachers should be able to be reflective and critical thinkers about their subject, and be able to continuously evaluate what they are trying to do and why (Brown & Fairbrass, 2009). Not only that, but critical thinking is also the next indicator of an ideal teacher. This critical thinking become a process of conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide for believe and actions. In addition, cultural adaptation also requires a deep understanding of the cultural background of students and being flexible in teaching methods. But in practice, students also need to develop cultural awareness and openness to understand the material taught in different cultural contexts (Saniati et al., 2024). In the next indicator, an ideal language teacher must have a love for English. Thus, for the love of English, in the implementation of learning activities, teachers can maximize the use of English in the classroom, be it by using gestures, acting, puppets, and others to convey meaning. Therefore, teachers must strive to use English that is simple, natural, and appropriate to the students' level (Sumarni & Firman, 2023). Not only when already a teacher, but to become an ideal language teacher, it is necessary to prepare oneself competently to get a degree, namely by having six main competencies, among others: must have knowledge of teaching theory, be skilled in teaching and communicating, be able to reason with common sense, be able to make decisions, know the profession, and have social, cultural, and professional knowledge (Richards, 2010). Not only that, “self-subordination” is one of the indicators of an ideal teacher because it can demonstrate independence or the ability to stand alone without

depending on others, a characteristic that can help teachers face challenges in teaching (Mohammaditabar et al., 2020). So to be considered effective, teachers must believe in their own ability to make a difference in the lives of their students, and must also demonstrate a willingness to inspire and motivate their students through example (Coombe, 2014). And the last indicator, feeling good about the job, also includes the concept of Teacher Enthusiasm (TE), which has been defined as the degree of enjoyment, excitement, and pleasure that teachers typically experience in their professional activities (Burić & Moè, 2020).

Finally, it can be concluded that being an ideal teacher is a form of constructivist learning that refers to how the teacher plays an important role in leading the learning activities in the classroom. This is also supported by the nine characteristics of an ideal teacher stated by Allen (in Brown, 2000) which explains that teachers play an important role in shaping the development of education. Some of these characteristics certainly need to be mastered by every teacher, especially a language teacher, to present teaching and learning activities that can achieve the objectives of education.

## Material and Method

This research uses a qualitative framework as its methodological foundation. This approach functioned to explore in depth the critical reflection of English education students who are students who are prepared to become prospective teachers in the future. In their critical reflection, the students can qualitatively reveal their subjective experiences in depth and become subjective narratives about their experiences during learning, and understand the socio-cultural context that influences their reflection process. By using this qualitative approach, the reflection written by the students serves to explore the meaning constructed by the students in understanding how they criticize, are inspired, motivated, and identify factors that can facilitate or hinder their self-development and professionalism for their future profession as English teachers.

The foundation in writing critical reflection as a research instrument is based on the three Whats principles (Rolfe, 2014). This idea, Rolfe's framework for reflective practice, was pioneered by Borton in 1970. This framework for reflective practice has the concepts of what, so what, and now what to model the basis of building students' awareness of their functioning as individuals, part of the curriculum. "What?" relates to how students are encouraged to feel the difference between responses, effects of actual things that happen with themselves in the environment faced "What?" to feel the difference between responses, actual effects, and expected effects. "So what" serves to dig out from the elements of the What, revealed in the previous phase, so that they can serve to be transformed into aligned meaningful pattern information. The last trigger is "Now What?". This is the part that decides how to act on the best alternative and reapply it in other situations of prospective EFL teachers and tutor documentation of the teaching and learning process (lesson plans and video documentation). The collected data provides a better understanding to the students' experiences and perceptions of learning phonetics and phonology. By focusing on their critical reflections, this study exposes on how the students construct the meaning from their learning experiences. This was documented on Google Classroom. 136 English education department first-semester students in one of the state universities in West Java were engaged to write critical reflections. These critical reflections were part of the final assessment process of the Phonetics Phonology course.

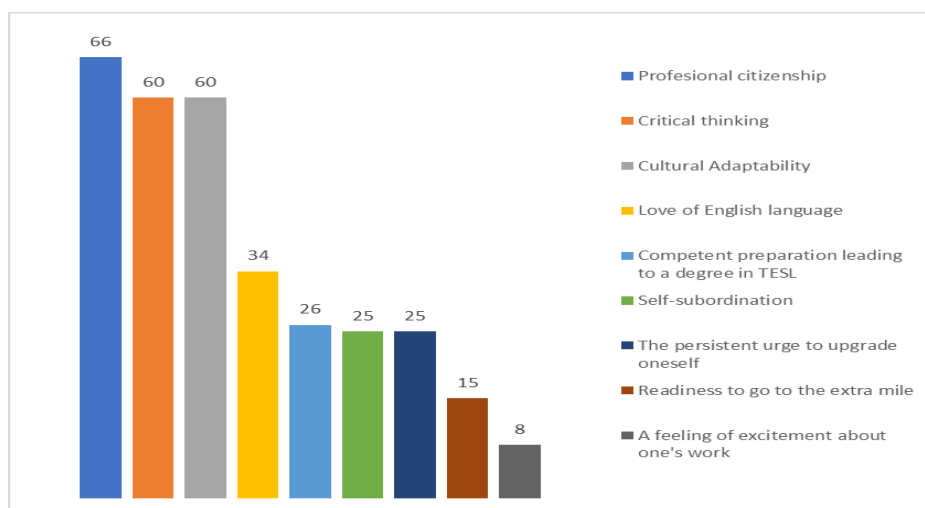
Writing Critical Reflection with the indicator of three Whats principles (What? So What? Now What?) as an activity to collect data was conducted after the semester lectures ended. Students were asked to write down their experiences with the critical reflection framework provided by the lecturer of the Phonetics and Phonology course. Critical reflection written by students is presented in about 500 words written in English to reveal what happened, what challenges they faced, what kind of solution, and also the follow-up plan that they will design for their respective career development in the future. An exploration of the causes and other

external factors that impacted their learning process, such as the new curriculum, the college atmosphere that is different from high school, peers, interactions with lecturers, and others, was also triggered to be linked to their critical reflection. Furthermore, the critical reflection data were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Chi, 2021; Grinshtain, 2022; Högberg et al., 2020). With thematic analysis, the researcher conducted several stages to analyze which began with the introduction of data from the critical reflection results, examining the data to bring up potential themes, determining potential themes, grouping data, interpreting data, then describing data to answer the research question of how the construction of meaning presented in critical reflection to describe the learning process of Phonetics and Phonology in EFL classes at tertiary institutions.

## Results and Discussion

To reveal how the construction of meaning presented in critical reflection describes the learning process of Phonetics and Phonology in EFL classes in higher education, the data were analyzed thematically based on the concept of an ideal language teacher according to Allen (in Brown, 2000). The data show that the content of critical reflection constructs the ideal language teacher or tutor in teacher Phonetics and Phonology have fulfilled the criteria to represent this, including professional citizenship, critical thinking, cultural adaptability, love of English language, competent preparation leading to a degree in TESL, self-subordination, the persistent urge to upgrade oneself, readiness to go the extra mile, and a feeling excitement about one's work.

Based on the critical reflection data submitted by the participants, several themes were revealed and categorized into ideal teacher criteria, namely 319 themes. These themes narrow down to the intended characteristics of the ideal teacher. This is as presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.**  
Frequency of Characteristics of a Good Language Teacher

In the figure, there are categories revealed based on the data to illustrate how tutors' professional citizenship, critical thinking, and cultural adaptability are dominant in the students' experience of learning Phonetics and Phonology.

### Professional citizenship



Professional citizenship is the first characteristic that an ideal teacher must have. As shown in the research findings, several students shared their views on their lecturer in class, which also reflected her professional citizenship in teaching activities.

*“The tasks are engaging, involving tools like Padlet for creating infographics and PRAAT software to develop practical skills”. – Excerpt 1*

*“My lecturer showed a phonemic table that could help us to find out what consonants are in this course and then told us to come forward to write the consonant letters in our names”. - Excerpt 2*

The data (excerpt 1) shows that coursework presented with Padlet and PRAAT media is considered innovative media and thus indicated to be a means for tutors to demonstrate their professional citizenship. Tutors were seen as committed to adapting to new technologies and using them in class, and also involving students in their use. So, this moment builds students' practical skills and also shows a commitment that tutors develop teaching methods that are relevant to the times.

By the displayed data, excerpt 2 shows how the lecturer engages the students in teaching and learning process actively by giving instructions to write the sounds of English consonant from their names. This action has realized that the tutor has tried to create an interactive atmosphere, supportive, and inclusive. She also gave the students the table of phonemic sounds to help students to understand English sounds better.

Professional citizenship refers to the attitudes and behaviors to represent a person's professional commitment to the institution or organization to which they belong, to their profession, and also to society as a whole (Fakhri & Talebzadeh, 2011; Fulton, 2019). Not only that, but this term also refers to the attitude to describe one's voluntary attitudes and actions to contribute to a positive, productive, and ethical work atmosphere or environment, for example, it can be seen in the behaviour of how a person helps colleagues, actively participates in certain interactions, complies with rules and policies and most importantly how he maintains the reputation of his profession. With an awareness of his reputation, a professional is expected to have responsibility and ethics, which are not only related to himself but to the place where he works (Palacios Martínez et al., 2021; Purwaningsih et al., 2020; Reinius et al., 2022). Such a person will thoughtfully act and behave to support sustainable initiatives, advocate for fair and responsible policies.

### Critical thinking

Another characteristic that an ideal teacher should have is critical thinking ability. Not only does this relate to the abilities that the lecturer shows in class, but in this finding, the students also explained how they learned to think critically about the courses, which helped them understand the learning material better.

*“This course taught me more than just the mechanics of speech sounds; it provided insights into the broader importance of phonetics and phonology in communication and language learning”. – Excerpt 3*

*“The phonetics and phonology material provides a deeper understanding of how each sound is produced, how air flows through the vocal tract, and how to articulate consonants and vowels. This really helps my speech to be better so that it is easy to understand”. – Excerpt 4*

From both excerpts, they show how the phonetics and phonology course has emphasize the students critical thinking, it because this course not only teaches the mechanism of sounds, but also gives the understanding of the phonetics and phonology importance in communication and language learning. These findings also said that students are starting to think more deeply about the knowledge of sound that is applicable in a broader context, instead of just memorizing the rules. They begin to understand the practical implications of the learned theories

Excerpt 4 shows how a deep understanding of sounds production, airflow, and articulation of consonants and vowels could help in improving their speaking skills. This excerpt also shows the students participation in analyzing and improving their linguistics ability. They state how their knowledge of phonetics and phonology can be applied to improve the clarity and understanding the oral communication. These two excerpts also show how this course encourages the students to have a critical thinking about the relationship between the language theory and practice, and how the language can be used to improve themselves.

From those findings, it can be said that critical thinking includes the analysis, evaluation, interpreting, and synthesizing information process that also connects to the cognitive process. Not only that, this critical thinking ability is also related to the way of understanding implications, identifying assumptions, and evaluating to arrive at an understandable conclusion. This ability also includes how a person questions the information, looks for multiple perspectives, and makes decisions based on the available evidence.

Related to the explanation, critical thinking also becomes an important skill, it can be for everyday life or maybe professional life. This can also give problem-solving ability, decision-making, and adaptability to change. Critical thinking also become an important part in allowing individuals to evaluate their political and social information that leads them to participate in public debates. Not only that, the ability to think critically also important for lifelong learning, career success, and active in social participation.

### **Cultural Adaptability**

As individuals, we need to have the ability to fit in and function effectively in a cultural environment that is different from our old culture, which is called cultural adaptability.

*"The lecturer is always open to discussion and willing to provide additional explanations whenever something is unclear". – Excerpt 5*

*"The lecturer was very respectful and taught patiently so that I personally felt fun and enjoyed every process, and I was very enthusiastic about learning each material". –Excerpt 6*

The excerpts 5 and 6 highlight an important aspect of cultural adaptability demonstrated by a lecturer. The lecturer's ability and willingness to give the open discussion and provide more explanations (excerpt 5) shows her awareness about the differences in learning styles and understanding among the students. This is the prove of cultural adaptability as lecturer who does not force one learning approach that may not suit everyone, but it adapts to the individual needs.

Furthermore, excerpt 6 shows a description of a respectful and patient lecturer who makes the enjoyable and enthusiastic learning environment which also emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity. The lecturer understands that different cultural background can influence how students respond to a specific teaching method. By showing respect and patience, the teacher creates an inclusive environment where all students feel comfortable to learn and participating, without feeling intimidated by cultural differences. This is a good example of how cultural adaptability can enhance the learning experience for students from different backgrounds.

Based on the findings, the cultural adaptability involves the way to understand, appreciate, and respect the values, norms, and behaviors of the other cultures. However, cultural adaptability is about developing the flexibility and sensitivity to interact with people from different cultural background.

Cultural adaptability also includes many skills and characteristics, including the ability to communicate effectively across cultures, tolerance for ambiguity, empathy, curiosity, and being open to new experiences. In the process of cultural adaptability, it could make the individual have a high ability that can be more successful in cross-cultural situations, such as working in international teams, negotiating with foreign business partners, or living and

working in another country. This ability is becoming increasingly important in this era of globalization, where cross-cultural interactions are increasingly common in various aspects of life.

### Love of the English language

The appreciation and enthusiasm shown by teachers is a manifestation of their love for the English language they teach. In addition, there is also enthusiasm for elements of English, which includes vocabulary enriched with flexible grammatical structures and the ability to convey ideas and emotions with complex nuances. Love of the English language is an appreciation of English aspects, such as rich vocabulary, a flexible grammatical structure, and the ability to convey the ideas

*"My lecturer uses almost 85% English and his English language skills are also very impressive". – Excerpt 7*

*"The lecturer also used supporting YouTube videos, and tried to demonstrate the correct pronunciation to students with patience and clear explanations". – Excerpt 8*

The excerpts from M. Daffa and Zeta highlight two important aspects that contribute to a love of the English language, especially in a learning context. M. Daffa's statement about lecturers' use of English reaching 85% and their impressive English skills represents the abilities of teachers who have been exposed to high-quality skills, thereby inspiring students to appreciate and love the language. When students see a lecturer who is fluent and confident in using English, it can motivate them to improve their own skills and develop a deeper appreciation for the language. The support in terms of a lecturer's good command of English can be an inspiring role model and demonstrate the potential that can be achieved with dedication and practice. In addition, the use of YouTube videos as learning support and demonstrations of correct pronunciation with patience and clear explanations by the lecturer (as Zeta expressed) shows a commitment to making English learning interesting and accessible. From this side, it is indicated that the lecturer not only zooms on the theoretical aspects of the language, but also on its practical application and real-world relevance. By using visual resources and providing clear guidance, the lecturer helps students to give the solution of handling challenges in learning English and develop confidence in their abilities. This can lead to a greater love of English because students feel supported and motivated to continue learning and improving.

A love of the English language is not only about the ability to speak or write in English, but also has an interest in the history and role in culture and society. Individuals who love English may enjoy reading English literature, and could also help in making the different writing styles. It often fosters someone to continue and improve their language skills in a variety of ways, such as reading books, watching movies, writing poetry or short stories, or participating in online discussions about the English language without any help. This passion can inspire a person to share their knowledge and enthusiasm, whether it is from teaching English, blogging about language, or volunteering at an organization that promotes literacy. At the end, a love of the English language can become a deep appreciation of the power and beauty of language as a tool of communication and expression.

### Competent preparation leading to a degree in TESL

As an ideal teacher, it is necessary to have competent preparation before deciding to start teaching students. This will certainly have an impact on how they deliver effective learning activities for their students in the future.

*"I want to learn the correct pronunciation because I want to be an English teacher; of course, I have to be correct and fluent when speaking". – Excerpt 9*



*"I will consistently give constructive feedback on students' pronunciation, identify areas for improvement, and suggest appropriate strategies to help them enhance their pronunciation skills". – Excerpt 10*

The excerpts from Firgania and Halesha highlight the importance of correct pronunciation in the context of competent preparation to become an English language (TESL) teacher. Firgania's statement about her desire to learn correct pronunciation because she wants to become an English teacher emphasizes that accurate and fluent pronunciation is an important skill for an English teacher. As a model for students, English teachers need to have clear and accurate pronunciation so that students can imitate and learn correctly. Firgania's confidence in pursuing correct pronunciation demonstrates her commitment to competently preparing herself for her future role.

Furthermore, Halesha's statements about providing consistent constructive feedback to students about their pronunciation, identifying any areas that need improvement, and suggesting appropriate strategies to help them improve their pronunciation skills demonstrate an understanding of the teacher's role in helping students develop correct pronunciation. Halesha's approach shows that teaching pronunciation is not just about correction, but also about providing constructive support and guidance. By providing personalized feedback and relevant strategies, Halesha demonstrates her commitment to helping students reach their full potential in English pronunciation. This is an important aspect of competent preparation in TESL, as good pronunciation is essential for effective communication and confidence in using English.

Competent preparation for a TESL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) degree is like a journey, an academic journey on teaching. This is to serve an individual with the knowledge, skills, and pedagogical understanding that are required to teach English to other language speakers in an effective way. This kind of preparation or readiness includes an in-depth understanding of language acquisition theories, teaching methodologies, assessment techniques, and cross-cultural communication to have more fluency in the English language. This also customizes a core and deep understanding of linguistics, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, and how these aspects affect language learning.

A competent TESL program pushes individuals' critical thinking, analytical skills, and adaptability in its graduates. Not only that, this program also gives some practical experience, allowing them to apply their knowledge in a real-world classroom setting, and could help to get along with their commitment to life-long learning and professional development. At the end, a competent preparation for a TESL degree fosters graduates to become effective and culturally sensitive educators to make a significant impact on the lives of their students.

### **Self-subordination**

Based on the findings, several students explained their specific desire to learn and use existing media to learn more, which in fact can be considered a form of self-subordination.

*"If possible and there's time, I also want to take part in a seminar or workshop that discusses how to teach English pronunciation". – Excerpt 11*

*"I will use every platform that is beneficial to improve my pronunciation skills. Such as practice using an application named "English Pronunciation by O' Coder". – Excerpt 12*

The excerpts from Rany and Sabathian focuses on how two different accelerated and proactive approaches to escalate pronunciation, which are highly relevant to the concept of self-subordination in the context of preparing to be an English teacher. Rany's statement about her desire to participate in seminars or workshops on how to teach English pronunciation indicates a willingness to invest time and effort in improving her teaching skills for the benefit of her future students. By seeking out opportunities to learn from experts and peers, Rany

shows a commitment to putting the needs of her students ahead of her own convenience or personal interests. This is an example of self-subordination in the sense that she is willing to sacrifice her free time to improve her skills as a teacher.

In contrast, Sabathian's statements about using useful platforms to improve her pronunciation skills, such as the "English Pronunciation by O' Coder" app, indicate a more self-oriented approach to improvement. While improving personal pronunciation skills is also beneficial for his future students, Sabathian's main focus is on his own development. However, this does not mean that Sabathian does not exhibit self-subordination. By actively seeking out resources and tools to improve his pronunciation, Sabathian shows a commitment to providing high-quality English teaching to his future students. This is an example of self-subordination in the sense that he is willing to invest time and effort in improving his abilities for the benefit of his future students, despite his more individualistic approach.

Based on the research result, self-subordination can be explained as the conscious or unconscious act that includes personal needs, wants, or interests below another person or group. It can be realized from everyday acts of politeness and compromise to more significant sacrifices. While often viewed as a sign of empathy, self-subordination can lead to individual dissatisfaction, burnout, or even exploitation. Thus, self-subordination also includes personal needs to benefit others or a greater goal.

In self-subordination, the motivations could be complex and varied because they have a desire to help others, a sense of duty or obligation, a fear of conflict or rejection, or a deeply embedded belief that is less important to others. Self-subordination has a high value while in others it may be seen as a sign of weakness. Understanding this self-subordination is also important to maintain a healthy relationship, set appropriate boundaries, and ensure personal well-being.

### The persistent urge to upgrade oneself

As an ideal teacher, it is important to have the persistent urge to upgrade oneself. As mentioned by several students, they have plans to improve their English skills.

*"I plan to enhance my fluency by diving deeper into producing accurate sounds, including the correct pronunciation of letters and words in English". – Excerpt 13*

*"I will practice pronunciation regularly and continuously, by paying attention to the articulation movements of my lips and tongue when talking to myself in front of the mirror". – Excerpt 14*

The excerpts from Reynata and Anita illustrate two different but complementary approaches to improving English pronunciation, both related to the constant urge to improve oneself. Reynata focuses on a deeper understanding of accurate sound production, including the correct pronunciation of letters and words. This shows a desire to build a strong foundation in English pronunciation, which will allow her to communicate more effectively and confidently. Reynata's approach shows a drive to improve oneself by mastering the basic aspects of English pronunciation.

Anita, on the other hand, focuses on regular and continuous practice, paying attention to the articulation movements of her lips and tongue. This approach emphasizes the importance of practice and feedback to improve pronunciation. By practicing in front of a mirror, Anita can observe and correct her articulation movements, which will help her to develop more accurate and natural pronunciation. Anita's approach shows a desire to improve herself by constantly practicing and improving her pronunciation skills. These two approaches, which focus on basic understanding and continuous practice, demonstrate a commitment to self-improvement when it comes to English pronunciation.

The persistent urge to upgrade oneself refers to someone's desire to improve skills, knowledge, abilities, and overall personal qualities. This urge includes seeking out new learning opportunities, pursuing professional development, adopting healthier habits, fostering

stronger relationships, or striving for greater personal fulfillment. Not only that, to keep up with a rapidly changing world, this urge could combine many factors, including ambition, a desire for self-improvement, fear of stagnation, and pressure. At the end, it can be said that this urge can become a better and a complete version of someone.

This urge to upgrade oneself, although it is often positive, can also become a cause of anxiety and stress. Continuously pursuing better things can lead someone to have feelings of inadequacy, self-criticism, and feelings of never being “good enough”. It is a balance to someone’s self-improvement, appreciation of current strengths and achievements. Lastly, this urge to upgrade oneself could also be a source of motivation and empowerment, not a source of pressure and self-doubt.

### **Readiness to go the extra mile**

In learning activities, an ideal teacher must be able and willing to go to the extra mile. Students explained their readiness to study the material from Phonetics and Phonology in greater depth to improve their skills.

*“After studying phonetics and phonology, I want to continue exploring and improving my understanding of how sounds work in language”. – Excerpt 15*

*“I will find ways to practice English outside of class, like joining study groups, talking with classmates, watching English movies and shows to improve my listening and speaking skills”. – Excerpt 16*

Syifa showed a commitment to deepen her understanding of phonetics and phonology after completing her formal studies. This shows a willingness to go beyond the curriculum requirements and continue to explore the intricacies of sound in language. By continuing to learn how sounds work, Syifa demonstrates a readiness to do her best in understanding the foundations of the English language, which will, in turn, improve her overall language skills. Her approach focuses on deep theoretical understanding.

Reyna, on the other hand, focuses on the practical application and integration of English into her daily life outside the classroom. By joining study groups, talking to classmates, and watching English movies and shows, Reyna demonstrates a willingness to actively seek out opportunities to practice and improve her listening and speaking skills. Her approach involves doing her best to create an engaging environment that supports language learning. By integrating English into her daily life, Reyna demonstrates a commitment to improving her language skills through continuous practice and exposure.

Readiness to go the extra mile shows a willingness to go beyond minimum requirements or expectations to achieve a desired result or contribute to a greater purpose. It realizes a dedicated attitude by a willingness to invest additional time, effort, and resources. It also includes taking the initiative, anticipating potential challenges, and proactively seeking solutions, which demonstrates a commitment to fulfilling assigned tasks.

This willingness is often triggered by a strong sense of responsibility and a commitment to excellence. This can be realized in many ways, including working overtime to complete projects, volunteering for additional tasks, seeking opportunities to improve the process, or going the extra mile to have excellent service. Someone who is prepared to do their best often has a high value in personal and professional settings, as they have a willingness to contribute to the success of others.

### **A feeling of excitement about one's work**

Through the research findings, the students shared their views on how they perceive their lecturer in class who can deliver an enjoyable teaching style, thereby providing them with good inspiration to become ideal teachers.

*"My lecturer showed me how to balance professionalism with a friendly teaching style, and I hope to do the same when I become a teacher in the future". – Excerpt 17*

*"My lecturer's approach inspired me to not just focus on pronunciation but also on how to teach in a way that's interesting and effective". – Excerpt 18*

Rajwa's excerpts highlight the deep impact that her lecturer had on shaping her future teaching aspirations. She has not only learned the importance of balancing professionalism with a friendly teaching style, but has also been inspired to prioritize engaging and effective teaching methods, rather than just focusing on pronunciation. It shows a desire to imitate her lecturer's approach, integrating both the interpersonal aspects of teaching and pedagogical strategies that make learning more accessible and enjoyable for students. Rajwa's reflections demonstrate a commitment to creating a positive and impactful learning environment, inspired by the example set by her own lecturer.

Based on the data analysis with indicators of nine characteristics of ideal language teachers, there are a number of important points that can be revealed, including an interactive learning environment, technology integration, creativity-based learning, and the role of the teacher.

A feeling of excitement about one's work is a positive emotional state that can be seen from the enthusiasm, passion, and a sense of anticipation towards the tasks and responsibilities of the job. It goes further than satisfaction, but also includes a sense of joy and engagement in the activities. This excitement often comes from a sense of purpose; it could be from the belief in the value of the work performed, or maybe from a sense of connection to the larger goals and objectives of the organization. It gives motivation, creativity, and a willingness to take a look to the extra effort and energy to succeed.

This feeling of excitement about one's work can have a big impact on someone's performance, productivity, and overall well-being. When they are passionate about their work, they are more likely to participate, focus, and be committed to achieving a good result. They are also likely to feel a sense of satisfaction from their achievements, direct to increased job satisfaction and reduced stress levels. In addition, this feeling of excitement can be transmitted, inspiring, and creating a more positive and productive work environment. Making a culture that supports these feelings of excitement is important for keeping great talent and boosting organizational success.

### Interactive learning environment

As teachers, we must be able to create an interactive learning environment to help students understand the learning material well. As stated by the students in the research findings, they explained how their lecturer played a role in creating an interactive learning environment in the classroom.

*"By discussing a lot with friends and asking the lecturer for accuracy, it is very helpful". – Excerpt 19*

*"The lecturer is always open to discussion and willing to provide additional explanations whenever something is unclear". – Excerpt 20*

*"The lecturer gives group assignments to explore more about what is being taught". – Davina*

*"In class, we also often discuss between groups". – Excerpt 21*

*"I had many discussions with my group". – Excerpt 22*

*"With the help of my friends and lecturers, I felt helped and had confidence, followed by a sense of comfort when practicing". – Excerpt 23*

*"The group assignment on the speech mechanism helped me explore how the human body produces sound". – Excerpt 24*

*"We often had group assignments, which not only helped me understand the importance of teamwork but also improved my communication and collaboration skills". – Wanita*

*"After each lesson, the lecturer gave me group assignments that allowed me to practice the material with my friends". – Excerpt 25*

In the application of the interactive learning environment, students express their learning experiences through group discussions. This activity is part of the constructivist learning theory, which makes students actively construct knowledge through experience and interaction with their environment. The interaction of students with their environment, which includes the lecturer and friends, makes learning activities and materials easier to learn. As expressed by several students, this method helps them gain confidence in interacting and contributing with others. The lecturer not only allows students to work in groups with their friends, but also allows them to ask questions and discuss the material together, making it easier for them to understand something they have not understood.

As a teacher, it is important to implement interactive learning environments (ILEs) in the process of learning activities in the classroom. ILEs should be created to accommodate a range of teaching and learning styles, control the point of control between the student and the system, and support feedback-rich task-based methods, illustrative mechanisms that help in conceptual understanding, and also learner-controlled investigations and problem solving. In implementing ILEs in the learning activity, teachers can create an interactive learning environment that can be carried out both individually and in groups. Furthermore, in collaborative learning environments, help-seeking tends to be influenced by social factors that are much less influential than when learning activities are conducted individually.

### Technology Integration

In addition to relying on conventional learning activities, teachers in the present era need to integrate technology into their teaching practices to provide students with more diverse experiences and innovative instruction. According to the findings of this study, the lecturer has integrated technology through various platforms.

*"Recently, I've learned to use PRAAT, a software that can visualize speech". – Excerpt 26*

*"My lecturer also gave us the PRAAT website to see the appearance of the sound we produce, and in it, such as the graphic size of the sound we make". – Excerpt 27*

*"The lecturer introduced me to the PRAAT. In PRAAT, I can record my own voices again and again so I can practice regularly". – Excerpt 28*

*"My lecturer has already given a few examples of producing consonants, vowels, and diphthongs from English with Emma's YouTube channel". – Excerpt 29*

*"We also learned to use various learning media, such as PRAAT to analyze sounds, quizzes for comprehension assessment, videos like Emma's YouTube channel for pronunciation practice, and padlets". – Excerpt 30*

*"Not only that, the lecturer also introduced me to an application called PADLET as a means of collecting assignments, where in the application we can add various content such as comments, images, links, videos, and documents, which I personally think are very interesting". – Excerpt 31*

*"I also realize that understanding IPA transcription and using PRAAT software can develop my skills because I know where the mistakes or shortcomings are in the pronunciation I am learning". – Excerpt 32*

*"By studying PRAAT, I personally feel more confident and really enjoy how the presentation takes place. This can also improve our soft skills because it is related to how technology can develop very rapidly". – Excerpt 33*



During the learning activities, the students shared their experiences in integrating the technology provided by the teacher in the classroom. They said that the lecturer integrates several technologies that help and support in providing different learning materials. In learning the introduction of sound patterns, the lecturer integrates technology through YouTube shows from one of the channels. Not only that, they also said that PRAAT technology is used in learning activities to analyze sounds, which can also be presented with graphic sizes of pronounced sounds. After that, if the lecturer gives assignments to them, she also integrates PADLET technology to collect students' assignments and make it easier to include various types of content in an organized form.

Technology is an important part of our daily lives. In fact, students in our country's schools are considered the digital generation and have become used to always being connected to their devices and the Internet. As something that cannot be separated, now in classroom learning activities, teachers must always be able to integrate technology to help and provide more learning models to students. It is because teachers and technology are widely regarded as two of the most influential educational resources in schools nowadays.

### **Creativity-Based Learning**

In classroom learning activities, teachers must be able to provide learning activities based on creativity to improve their students' abilities. This is also shown by research results that reveal the implementation of creative-based learning in learning activities.

*"I am with my group analyzing the consonant from the song "Beautiful" by Christina Aguilera". – Excerpt 34*

*"I think the most memorable time when learning analysis of consonant sound through a song with the title "Beautiful" by Christina Aguilera, when our group had to look for consonant letters in the lyrics of the song". – Excerpt 33*

*"The most challenging is when analyzing the song "Beautiful by Christina Aguilera, based on the consonant sound". – Excerpt 34*

*"I liked was when we were required to make a video of how to pronounce a word using our respective regional accents". – Excerpt 35*

*"I was also given an assignment where I had to say several words in our own language, and I realized that even though we were from the same country, the pronunciation was very different and varied, just like the British and American accents". – Excerpt 36*

*"The activity that I still remember was when my groupmates analyzed the consonant sounds from Michael Jackson's song "Heal the World". – Excerpt 37*

Creative-based learning is certainly implemented with the role of the lecturer to provide enjoyable learning activities for students. The lecturer implemented creative-based learning through activities that asked students to be directly involved in phonetic analysis by analyzing consonant sounds through songs and making video demonstrations of word sounds based on their respective accents. The implementation of creative-based learning certainly allows teachers to adjust the challenges faced by students that can be overcome by conducting enjoyable learning activities. It is because creative-based learning allows students to think, find answers, select suitable data for problem solving, and practice their presentations so that they can apply their knowledge and experience in real life in a creative way (Phuangphae, 2017).

In order to engage students with learning activities in the classroom, it is now important for teachers to implement learning activities that are based on students' creativity. Therefore, teachers can start to apply creative-based learning (CBL) for learning activities in the classroom. The creativity-based learning model is a development of problem-based learning (PBL), which is a student-centered learning (Phuangphae, 2017). It is said that creativity-based learning is an active way of learning where lessons are planned to make students

engage in research rather than waiting for a traditional lecture. Thus, most of the teachers nowadays are asked to support creative thinking in their classrooms, and many of the educators are exploring new learning models that foster creative thinking skills (Ruechaipanit, 2013). It is also said that creative thinking itself cannot be taught, but it can be enabled through learning and teaching in any subject as the teacher uses new learning approaches to make learning more interesting, engaging, exciting, and effective.

In a broader context, Bada and Olusegun (2015) underlines that constructivism is not just a learning theory, but also a teaching paradigm that changes the role of the teacher into a facilitator. He emphasizes that students must build their knowledge through contextualized, reflective, and collaborative activities and through experiences that are connected with real life. This active and student-centered learning encourages them to think deeply, reassess initial understanding, and form new meaning based on reflection on direct experience.

Empirical support for the effectiveness of this approach is shown in Cetin-Dindar (2016) research, which examined the relationship between constructivist learning environments and science learning motivation. The results showed that when students were allowed to participate in learning decisions, negotiate ideas, and relate the material to everyday life, their motivation increased significantly. This suggests that relevant, contextualized, and interactive learning experiences not only build knowledge but also strengthen students' emotional engagement with the learning process. Thus, this finding reinforces the key principle of constructivism that experience and interaction are the main foundations in forming meaningful understanding. The teaching and learning of phonetics and phonology in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts are critical for developing students' pronunciation and overall communicative competence. This theoretical framework explores the construction of meaning in phonetics and phonology education, emphasizing the importance of integrating traditional and contemporary teaching methods, including technology.

Two important things that emerged from the data were the role of the teacher and the construction of meaning that was realized in critical reflection. The role of the teacher is as an agent of change, and the meaning of construction is how students have critical language awareness and apply the concepts of Phonetics and Phonology in real practice.

### The Role of the Teacher

Teachers play an important role in teaching and learning activities. In the research findings, students explained the role of lecturers in English language learning activities, especially in pronunciation skills in class.

*"The lecturer explained using very good and clear English for me, who did not understand and was used to using English, so it sounded clear and I could understand it a little bit."* – **Excerpt 38**

*"The lecturer's explanation was easy to understand, but when the material was difficult to understand, she taught me until I understood the material."* – **Excerpt 39**

*"The lecturer, who often motivated me to keep practicing. Now, my understanding has improved, and my confidence in speaking English has grown."* – **Excerpt 40**

In the learning activities, students explained their experiences in observing the lecturer in carrying out teaching activities. From their overall explanations, this explained the role of lecturers who were able to make them understand the material better because of the use of good English language, and were able to increase their confidence in speaking skills. Thus, these three excerpts really prove the importance of the role of lecturers or teachers in helping students learning.

Ikhsan and Rula, in their excerpts, explained that the lecturer's way of using clear English and explaining the learning material in class was very easy to understand. Not only

that, Siti also explained that lecturers also play an important role in motivating students in order to help them be more confident, so that in the end, both the ability to understand the material and the use of language have improved. Thus, this is in line with the explanation of the importance of a teacher's role in classroom learning activities.

The teacher's role as a facilitator is central to this framework. Teachers have an important and strategic role in education. In the learning process, the teacher has the role of bringing and changing the student to be an intelligent generation that can help the student achieve their goal (Larasati et al., 2019). This educational component influences increasing teacher quality and student character in schools. The teacher works directly with students to teach science, technology, and positive values by leading and setting excellent models (Dirsa et al., 2022). In this educational component, teachers must not only possess strong linguistic knowledge but also be skilled in pedagogical strategies that promote engagement and critical thinking.

With their important role in education, teachers should become change agents because they must suggest methods of understanding to promote school and student achievement with the goal of increasing the school's overall ability to grow (Beratha, 2015). Teachers serve as role models, demonstrating effective pronunciation and phonetic understanding, which can inspire students to achieve similar proficiency. Teachers play an important role in phonetic and phonological learning, because they must give a model of how phonemes are made and teach segmental elements, like as consonants, vowels, and stressed sentences in the classroom (Lee et al., 2020; Schaap et al., 2021; van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019). Their ability to give a model of correct pronunciation and provide constructive feedback is important for student success.

Not only become the agents of change, they teachers also should be adaptable, employing a blend of traditional and contemporary methods to address diverse learning needs and preferences. Teachers must be able to balance to students' different and provide needs by arranging their teaching speed, customizing activities for students, or looking for new materials to help explain or demonstrate important ideas (Collie & Martin, 2016). This flexibility allows teachers to use their approaches that suit to the unique challenges faced by their students.

### Constructing Meaning through Critical Reflection

Constructing meaning in phonetics and phonology learning can be improved through a critical reflection activity. This involves students' engagement with their learning experiences, analyzing their understanding of phonetic concepts, and applying that knowledge in daily life contexts.

*"Another important step is to ask for feedback from my classmates or the lecturer during practice." – Excerpt 41*

*"The lecturer encouraged me to try and then gave constructive feedback, making me gradually more confident." – Excerpt 42*

*"This study has provided a strong and detailed foundation for me to be able to understand how sound production works and the pronunciation of each word very well." – Excerpt 43*

*"Through this learning, I not only studied the theory behind sound production but also how it can be applied in the context of language teaching, particularly in improving pronunciation and articulation." – Excerpt 44*

Constructing meaning in class is something that can determine how deep students' understanding is in recognizing, understanding, and applying the content that has been learned. Furthermore, from this construction, they are expected to be able to develop and implement theories contextually in interactions carried out in everyday life progressively.

Critical reflection as a part of constructing meaning is the form of assessing, reviewing, and challenging someone's experiences within a larger framework of concerns and topic knowledge (Gonzalez-Vidal & Moore, 2024; Lavín & Goodman, 2023; Maloney, 2023). Critical reflection also fosters critical thinking abilities, which are an important college learning outcome. Therefore, reflection helps us resolve biases in our beliefs and mistakes in solving problems. Critical reflection gives a kind of questions that focus to gain our opinions (Mezirow, 1990). From the critical reflection, students can explained their learning processes, recognize their progress, and identify areas for further development. This self-awareness is crucial for mastering complex Phonetic and Phonological concepts.

To engage in critical reflection, it is important for us to understand about our social experiences and how to utilize the information to improve our practice in the future (Hickson, 2011). To encourage students to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, it can be through role-playing or peer teaching activities can strengthen their understanding of the phonetic principles. The framework for constructing meaning in phonetics and phonology in EFL education integrates constructivist learning theory, reflective practice, technology integration, sociocultural theory, and the role of the teacher. Together, these indicators provide an understanding of how to improve Phonetics and Phonology instruction in EFL contexts. By gathering these theories, teachers can foster an environment that gives a meaningful learning experience, equipping students with the skills to communicate effectively in English. This framework also informs some practical applications in teaching approaches, ultimately improving student outcomes in Phonetics and Phonology.

## Conclusion

In the transformative digital era, lecturers act as learning facilitators who not only transfer knowledge but also inculcate ethical values and morality. The ideal lecturer, with strong self-confidence, seeks to empower students through critical writing facilities, which encourage problem-solving skills and provide a way for knowledge creation - a crucial output of higher education. This approach is in line with Indonesia's national education vision to realize the golden generation and the nation's progress. Further research, through data extractions from interviews, observations, and analysis of teaching documents, as well as comparisons with other participants, is needed to strengthen the findings of this study. The teaching of phonetics and phonology in EFL higher education plays a very important role in forming competent English language learners. This study demonstrated how a combination of conventional techniques and contemporary technology-based approaches affects teaching and learning outcomes, highlighting how meaning is formed through critical reflection. By using innovative teaching techniques, educators may increase students' engagement and performance, preparing them to communicate more successfully in a world that is becoming more interconnected by the day. It is anticipated that the results would motivate teachers to modify their pedagogical approaches, resulting in a more dynamic and effective learning environment for next language learners. This suggestion emphasizes how crucial it is to include technology into the educational process in order to improve education's efficacy and relevance.

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