

# Indonesian EFL Students' Perception of Educational Philosophy

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**Abstract.** Each student possesses a personal philosophy that influences their educational journey. Adopting and implementing specific educational philosophies serve as a guiding framework for students to attain optimal future outcomes. Hence, it is crucial to explore the educational philosophy and its consequences. This article investigates English Education Students' philosophy of education. The data were collected from 29 students using questionnaires with 40 questions in which participants were to rate statements related to their educational philosophy. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure participants' attitudes towards and perceptions of the educational philosophies. The results indicated that most participants adhered to the humanism educational philosophy, while a few had a diverse and inclusive perspective. The findings enhance comprehension of the approaches Indonesian EFL students choose in their studies and provide guidance for educators to customize their teaching techniques to correspond with these perceptions. The findings show that the majority of the EFL preservice teachers are inclined toward a humanistic educational philosophy. The educational implication is that they would assume the role of a teacher who focuses on the development of the whole person, focusing on students' emotional, intellectual, and social growth in their later teaching career.

**Keywords:** curriculum, educational philosophy, EFL students, teacher candidates

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## INTRODUCTION

Since early human expansion, homo sapiens spread outside of Africa; human intelligence, through cognition adaptability, has emerged, innovated, and developed, helping our species to survive in harsh environments. Our cognitive ability aids us in inventing ancient artifact tools, such as the Achuelan hand ax stone in hunter-gatherer society, to the computing language programming in modern society (Hewlett & Boyette, 2012). Not only does humankind develop cognition, but we can also advance behavioristic aptitude, as shown by our ability to live in the colony, care for our society and family, and develop a cultural artifact. These have proved that our cognition and behavioral competence are inherited through learning and teaching, which in more formal, abstract, prioritarianism terms is known as education. The term education itself has been packed into certain boundaries that consist only of classroom, school, teacher, student, tests, and evaluation. This term also limits itself to a complex and alternative definition of education, for example, from natural pedagogic (Gray, 2014) that assumes learning and teaching are happening everywhere in abundant interaction between parents who teach children to talk, walk, or count numbers using apples, apprenticeship between the novice scholars with the professor in the non-official coffee shop, or in corrective feedback during a small talk between English language learners and English native speaker.

In searching the definition of education and its relation to philosophy, it is essential to unpack the boundaries that frame specific characteristics relating to teaching and learning. Philosophy itself keeps searching and questioning the nature of learning and education as it is supposed to be grounded in the philosophical approach, the ontologic argument, humankind is continuously contemplating why we learn and what kind of approach we should teach the students to learn. Therefore, taking some perspectives historically from the philosophy in education, education itself is vast and adaptive; this is due to the essence of education that is changing in the spectrum of time, space, and scale represented in the evolution of specific philosophical education with its attributes such as an education philosophy documented from ancient Greece with Aristotelians rationalism pedagogic to the enlightenment Cartesian dualism, to the libertarian education philosophy by Paulo Freire in the post-modern era. Nevertheless, education and philosophy or the philosophy of education are not separate entities; they are integral, as they force and torture us to keep asking, searching, and doubting the nature of our existence, including our teaching and learning intuition.

It is argued that Western philosophy, with its critical enterprise, has brought dramatic change into the periphery world's philosophy schemata, including rationality and logical thinking. This influence is carried by how something is influenced and formed into causality through a chronological and systematic order of thinking. Accordingly, education philosophy globally is founded on some philosophical attributes; first, essentialism is the landscape of philosophy that underlies the value of an entity, including active and reactive subjectivity in the law of nature power and inmate power (Ellis, 2014). Individuals as small entities are inevitably exerted by exogenous natural law order along with their endogenic

capability and ability power. Therefore, they need to be invested, inactivated, and indoctrinated through the education system, which, in turn, they will react and perform specific abilities to adapt and survive in a particular environment. This basic thought then grounded the following philosophy, *perennialism*, that underlies the universality of knowledge, which is essential to be equipped as it accompanies the learners in a life span. Education is a crucial phase. Therefore, critical, rational, logical, and analytical thought is inserted as necessary survival skills for students to thrive and endure. Then critical philosophies such as *progressivism*, *social reconstructionism*, and *critical pedagogy* emerge as contrastive thoughts not to challenge the perennialism and essentialism meanwhile to illuminate through skepticism and relativism of thought the truth of education. While progressivism focuses specifically on an attempt to solve the real-world problem and the solution to that problem, social reconstruction and critical pedagogy offer awakening and liberation philosophy that challenges the formality, conventional, and customary education notion.

During the process of finding its philosophical notion, the context of education in English as a second/foreign language learning and teaching has reached its culminating phase where those philosophies of education, essentialism, perennialism, social constructionism, and progressivism are amalgamated into a solitary attribution that is labeled as neo-pedagogic reformation as represented and documented intensely in North America context. This includes the rise of critical theories that underlie the current debate about race in language learning and teaching, decolonizing language learning and teaching (Kubota, 2006:2019), nativeness vs near nativeness vs non-native English teacher (Matsuda, 2003; Cook, 1999) identity in English language learning and teaching (Norton, 2011, Yim & Norton, 2011; Barkhuizen, 2008), World Englishes (Matsuda, 2002: 2011) and Decolonization Pedagogic (Canagaraja, 1999: 2013). This is the melting point of philosophy in English language learning and teaching, beginning with the essentialism and perennialism conception that assumes English is powerful and hegemonic as it is the language of transactional praxis in a super-changing and super-diverse society due to global capitalism and mass mobility of information and technology. It then drives people forward to equip students in the education system with the rhetoric of the importance of competence in English. Conversely, this endeavor has left a gap in the third-world educational system, which Canagarajah (1999) describes as the politics of knowledge production, where the students in the periphery world are enforced to be similar to the Western systemic standard in producing knowledge while leaving its ingenious aptitude and capacity to deliver the knowledge. In second/foreign language learning and teaching in the periphery world, Anglo-white teachers are assumed to be more competent than local ESL/EFL teachers who have trained intensely to be English teachers, for instance. Accordingly, critical pedagogic, social constructivism, and progressivism emerge as the paradox thought challenging the status quo of English in the non-western world that has been disrupted culturally and ideologically as depicted in these rhetorical questions: why do we have to be like American or British English, are the Indian-English, Singapore-English, Nigerian-English also standardize English? The

philosophy of education has led us to see education, especially in English language learning and teaching, as a consequential yet oxymoronic referring to the capacity of essentialism and perennialism in education philosophy that pave the foundation of learning English in the globalized world while producing a critical review through critical pedagogic, social constructivism and progressivism to counter the status quo of that thought.

Arguably, education is a form of cultural adaptivity, and each culture possesses its own ontological and philosophical view of education that suits personal and communal meso systems. Obtaining views and perspectives toward the diverse argumentation of educational philosophy is necessary for building reflective and dialectic comprehension to understand the complexity of the educational philosophy, especially in multiple-ideological situations like higher education in Indonesia. Considering that academia is the locus that mirrors social reality while also the place where scholars such as students shape their philosophical identities, this study contributes to further pedagogic approaches to enrich future English teachers with educational philosophies that would nurture education reformation and innovation in the long term. Two research questions were proposed in this study (1) what is the most preferred educational philosophy among Indonesian EFL Students? (2) What are the possible consequences of their educational philosophies toward their teaching approaches?

The benefits or contributions of this study are to provide tools to map preservice teachers' educational philosophy. Understanding preservice and or in-service teachers' educational philosophy is deemed important. It will affect the whole process of teaching from curriculum, material development, learning activities, feedback, to assessment.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research aims to investigate how Indonesian EFL students perceive educational philosophy. Hence, the data collection process in this study employed a survey methodology, specifically utilizing a questionnaire. [Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen \(2010\)](#) explained that a survey is an instrument that enables the researcher to collect data from a substantial sample size of individuals promptly and cost-effectively. In addition, the survey provides more diverse data and can be quantified and analyzed statistically. Distinct from the census, which covers the data from the whole population, the survey's drawbacks are sampling and error bias, including the measurement bias due to the wording process and offering choices. Therefore, the questions should be precise and unbiased to represent the genuine situation accurately ([Roopa & Rani, 2012](#)).

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were students in the English Education Study Program. The 29 students from batches 2021 and 2022 were taking the curriculum class and were predominated females.

### Research Instrument

In the realm of education, surveys play a significant role. [Maksimova \(2020\)](#) emphasized that surveys facilitate students' self-analysis, improve education levels, and examine social phenomena. In this stage, it is necessary to investigate the perception of education philosophy as a component of social phenomena. The main instrument of this study was questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from the educational philosophy of self-assessment (Leonora M, 1999, as cited in George et al., 2023). Eight philosophical topics were distributed in 40 close-ended questions. The questions were also in the form of a Likert Scale. In addition, the questionnaire also included questions on demographic characteristics to obtain insights into the participants' backgrounds.

### Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed on 12 March 2024 after getting permission from the lecturer. It took 30 minutes for the participants to fill out the questionnaire in Google Forms.

### Data Analysis

When analyzing the data, the researcher used a method to compute the score for each philosophy based on the information provided on the website. Five statements correspond to each philosophy, and the scores for these statements will be totaled. Therefore, each philosophy's maximum and minimum scores will be 25 and 5, respectively. The researcher also computed the average score and standard deviation for every philosophy using the IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) program. Furthermore, to interpret the mean range, the researchers used the mean category from [Mbato and Triprihatmini \(2022\)](#)

**Table 1. Mean Range for EL Perception of Philosophy in Education**

Mean Scores	Category
3.68-5.00	High
2.34-3.67	Moderate
1.00-2.53	Low

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, this study attempts to discover the education philosophy of Indonesian EFL students. The table below shows the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire data.

**Table 2. Indonesian EFL Perception of Philosophy in Education**

No	Philosophy	N	Mean Score	SD
1.	Perennialism	29	3,34	2,97
2.	Essentialism	29	2,98	2,98
3.	Progressivism	29	3,85	1,97
4.	Reconstructionism	29	3,82	2,28
5.	Information Processing	29	3,89	1,93
6.	Cognitivism	29	3,78	2,4
7.	Humanism	29	4,15	1,66
8.	Behaviorism	29	3,75	2,36

The descriptive analysis results of [Table 2](#) above indicated that more undergraduate students espoused some contemporary philosophies than conservative philosophies. The highest mean score was humanism, with a mean score of 4.15 (SD=1.66), meaning that the students also had high beliefs toward this philosophy. Information processing was the second-highest philosophy, with a mean of 3.89 (SD=1.93). Furthermore, four philosophies also had high perceived yet at the same average mean score: progressivism, 3.85 (SD=1.97); reconstructionism, 3.82 (SD=2.28); and cognitivism, 3.78 (M=2.4); behaviorism, 3.75 (SD=2.36). Additionally, two conservative philosophies were in the moderate category means score, namely perennialism, with 3.34 (SD=2.97 and the last essentialism, with a mean score of 2.98 (SD=2.98).

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**Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of EFL Students' Philosophy in Education Philosophy**

No	Types of Philosophy	N	%
1.	Perennialism	29	1
2.	Essentialism	29	0

3.	Progressivism	29	2
4.	Reconstructionism	29	2
5.	Information Process	29	2
6.	Cognitivism	29	1
7.	Humanism	29	14
8.	Behaviorism	29	1

Interestingly, six participants from this survey seemed to lean toward more than one philosophy, even two or three. [Table 3](#) thus displays the frequency and percentage of philosophy of education selected by the EFL students depending on the reduction of the missing participants. Notwithstanding, the calculation results were still the same with the most chosen philosophies. A total of 14 % of the EFL students voted for humanism as the most, followed by progressivism, reconstructionism, and information processing at 2 percent each and followed by perennialism, cognitivism, and behaviorism at 1 percent. Lastly, for essentialism, 0 percent. These results were consistent with past ones, in which the ELF students apprehended humanism at the highest.

### Indonesian EFL Students' Philosophy Tendencies

The first aim of this study was to comprehend Indonesian EFL Students' perception of the philosophy of education. The data analysis revealed two prominent tendencies. Initially, Indonesian EFL students commonly embraced humanism as their philosophy approach during their undergraduate studies, meaning a preference for more contemporary philosophies. Furthermore, the students displayed a lack of interest in the essentialism philosophy. This implies that the students relinquished the conservative philosophy throughout their educational journey.

This study's findings differed from those of a related study carried out by other researchers. Most experts have concluded that participants prefer diverse philosophies, namely progressivism ([Eğmir & Çelik, 2019](#); [Alemdar & Aytac, 2022](#); [Amac & Oral, 2023](#)), progressivism, and perennialism. Furthermore, the humanism that emerged as prominent from this study was not discussed in any other research. However, studies related to humanism ([Aung, 2020](#); [Maryati, 2024](#)) revealed that as a philosophy, humanism and its approach to education should be applied right at the elementary level of education, i.e., elementary school, since the ultimate goal of humanism is to humanize humankind which was the focus of education and a core of humans. At this point, the findings from the relevant studies showed that humanism and progressivism were preferred by the participants, compared to perennialism and essentialism, even though both philosophies were slightly different in methods and ultimate objectives ([Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018](#)).

Additionally, the participants showed a tendency to select more than one educational philosophy during their undergraduate studies. Even though it is not perpetually fixed, this decision is typically dynamic and evolves. Various factors, such as the learning processes they encounter in the classroom, interactions with lecturers and fellow students in the college, and their practical experience in teaching, frequently influence the changes in the educational philosophy they adhere to (Husaini & Prasetyowati, 2023). Furthermore, the teaching and learning process in higher education provides new insight and understanding that allows EFL students to evaluate and renew their views about education. Consequently, they can integrate various perspectives into their knowledge, creating a more holistic and adaptive approach to education. This adaptability not only reflects students' ability to adapt to different situations but also enriches their academic journey with diverse experiences, making them more reflective and responsive educators to evolving educational needs (Entwistle, 2017, Andriyanti, Effendi & Nadjib, 2020).

### **Indonesian EFL Student's Possible Consequences During Academic Journey**

The second aim of this study was to ascertain the possible consequences of an educational philosophy adopted by EFL students. Acknowledging someone's educational philosophy is an essential aspect for EFL students. Therefore, in this regard, the researchers examined the extent to which humanism enhances EFL students during the study period as future teachers.

First, humanism influences how EFL students perceive their role, ethics, and moral responsibilities as teachers. Prospective teachers who believe in humanism will responsibly carry out their teacher duties. This is influenced by the philosophy of humanism, which emphasizes fundamental human values such as empathy, compassion, justice, and respect for others. This is in line with a study conducted by Idris and Za (2017), which argued that humanism encourages the development of a person's morality through a rational educational process. In addition, there are two crucial components in integrating humanist values into moral appreciation, namely habituation and modeling, which can assist teachers and students. Accordingly, teachers may establish a solid moral compass by instilling a feeling of responsibility in their students and encouraging them to apply ethical principles in their everyday lives (Abolade, 2024).

Furthermore, students who believe in humanism will take a student-centered teaching approach when they become teachers, where students' individual needs, interests, and potential are the focus. By prioritizing the needs and interests of the students, the selected teaching approaches are more likely to be creative and innovative, fostering active participation and enhanced comprehension. A humanist teacher serves as a facilitator rather than a disseminator of knowledge. This is influenced by the humanist approach, which emphasizes the importance of learning from individuals with unique and different needs, interests, and abilities. In addition, by implementing student-centered learning, teachers can encourage students to collaborate, think critically, solve problems, and self-reflect (Graham & Weiner, 1996, Gutek, 2014, Walker & Soltis, 2019).



Finally, providing ample space for students to explore their knowledge and abilities allows them to achieve optimal development. According to Edwards (cited in Aung, 2020), the humanist philosophical approach also offers ample space for students to have a good sense of themselves (self-esteem) and will be able to identify and achieve their goals (self-efficacy) This empowers students to take responsibility for their education and feel a sense of ownership over the learning process. Moreover, the humanist philosophy is in line with the independent curriculum implemented in Indonesia, where the educational emphasis is on the character of education with principles such as student empowerment, comprehensive personal development, social involvement, and differentiated and independent learning (Susilawati, 2021, Anggraini & Wiryanto, 2022, Cahya et al., 2023)

## CONCLUSION

In sum, this study explored EFL students' preferences toward several educational philosophies. Based on the findings from quantitative data, humanism was the highest philosophy perceived by the EFL students, followed by three other philosophies: information process, progressivism, and reconstructionism. Meanwhile, the two lowest philosophies were essentialism and perennialism. These findings meant that students preferred contemporary rather than conservative philosophies, even though several students believed in more than one philosophy, which was a dynamic fact during the study period. Other than that, these findings also had consequences for ESL. First, students. EFL students who believe in humanism will be more ethically and morally responsible for their teaching duties. Second, EFL students will apply a student-centered learning approach in their practical teaching. Lastly, with the pre-service students, humanism future teachers will focus more on empowering self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Finally, this study has limitations. First, the results cannot be applied generally since it was limited to one university and all participants came from one study program. Second, the researchers only focus on one variable, namely perception toward eight philosophies. Therefore, a study with more prominent participants using a mixed method is highly recommended. In addition, correlational research is also suggested for future researchers. Despite its limitations, researchers believe this study provides insight for every education stakeholder.

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