Mindset :
Jurnal Pemikiran Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran
2026, 6(2), 110-121
https://doi.org/10.56393/mindset.v6i2.4665

Implementation of Student-Centered Learning Strategies to Improve Grade XI Students' Willingness to Express Opinions and Critical Thinking

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Article History
Received: 12 June 2026;
Revised : 15 November 2026;
Accepted: 17 November 2026.

Keywords
Student-centered Learning;
Willingness to Express Opinions;
Critical Thinking;
Classroom Action Research.

Abstract
The low level of students' willingness to express opinions and their critical thinking ability constitutes a problem in learning that demands active involvement, analytical capacity, and the logical presentation of ideas. This study aims to improve students' willingness to express opinions and their critical thinking ability through the implementation of student-centered learning strategies. This study employs Classroom Action Research (CAR) with the Kemmis and McTaggart model, comprising the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection across two cycles. The research subjects were 33 Grade XI-5 students of Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 6 Malang in the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Data were collected through analytical ability tests, observation, motivation and student reflection questionnaires, reflective journals, and documentation, using essay test instruments, observation sheets, Likert-scale questionnaires, and reflective journals. Data were analyzed descriptively, both quantitatively and qualitatively, by comparing results at the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II stages. The results indicate that the average analytical ability increased from 58.3 in the pre-cycle to 83.7 in Cycle II, while classical mastery increased from 33.3% to 84.8%. Accordingly, student-centered learning strategies are effective in improving Grade XI students' willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability in the context of Pancasila and Civic Education learning.

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How to Cite : Diaz, D. V., Wadu, L. B. ., & Dewi, N. A. (2026). Implementation of Student-Centered Learning Strategies to Improve Grade XI Students' Willingness to Express Opinions and Critical Thinking. *Mindset : Jurnal Pemikiran Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, *6*(2), 110–121. https://doi.org/10.56393/mindset.v6i2.4665

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Introduction

Pancasila and Civic Education plays an important role in shaping learners who are capable of thinking critically, expressing opinions responsibly, and analyzing various issues pertaining to national and state life. These competencies are essential for students to master because Pancasila and Civic Education learning is not solely oriented toward knowledge acquisition but also toward the development of thinking skills, argumentative capacity, and active participation as citizens (Hidayah & Sujastika, 2024). Critical thinking ability encompasses the processes of analyzing information, evaluating arguments, comparing multiple perspectives, and drawing conclusions based on logical reasoning (Sutanto & Murdiono, 2025). Therefore, Pancasila and Civic Education learning should ideally provide students with opportunities to engage actively in thinking processes and in expressing opinions through meaningful learning activities. Pancasila education learning must also be designed by taking into account differentiated learning practices so as to accommodate the diversity of abilities and needs of students at the senior secondary level (Manobi et al., 2024).

Regarding the condition at Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 6 Malang, the pre-cycle measurement results indicate that students' willingness to express opinions, logical or critical thinking, and comparative analysis remained at a suboptimal level. The average analytical ability of students reached only 58.3, with classical mastery of 33.3%, meaning that the majority of students had not attained the minimum score of 75. On the aspect of willingness to express opinions, the average student ability was 62, while the aspects of logical or critical thinking and comparative analysis obtained averages of 55 and 58, respectively. This condition indicates a gap between the demands of learning that promotes critical thinking ability and the actual condition of students' capacity to express opinions and analyze problems.

The problem of low willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability is presumably related to the suboptimal involvement of students in the learning process. Learning that still positions the teacher as the primary source of information may restrict students' opportunities to develop ideas, test opinions, and construct arguments independently (Adi et al., 2024). In addition, students who are not accustomed to discussion, analysis, and argumentation activities tend to experience difficulties in structuring their thoughts logically and in comparing concepts critically. Low self-confidence and a lack of stimulation in the form of prompting questions may also cause some students to be passive in expressing opinions (Rianto & Arianti, 2018). Furthermore, adequate social support contributes to enhancing students' achievement motivation, including their willingness to participate actively in learning (Nurrahman & Kharunisa, 2024).

If these problems are not addressed promptly, students may potentially experience difficulties in developing the higher-order thinking skills required in learning and in daily life. Students who are insufficiently accustomed to expressing opinions and providing logical reasons may become passive in the learning process and less capable of participating in academic and social discussions (Nurhidayah & Murdiono, 2026). In the long term, such a condition may hinder students' ability to evaluate information, confront complex problems, and make rational decisions (Pitri & Anderson, 2023). Therefore, instructional actions capable of developing cognitive abilities while simultaneously enhancing students' courage to participate actively are required.

Learning strategies oriented toward strengthening critical thinking ability may be designed through approaches that encourage dialogue and the exploration of ideas, for instance through Socratic-based classroom experimentation that positions students as active subjects in constructing their understanding (Gultom, 2025). Such an approach is consistent with efforts to render Pancasila Education a living philosophy within the classroom, so that students do not merely memorize values but also practice reasoning and arguing critically.

Based on the aforementioned problems, the research question in this study is how the implementation of student-centered learning can improve the willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability of Grade XI-5 students of Sekolah Menengah Atas 6 Malang. This study aims to analyze the improvement of students' willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability through instructional actions implemented across two cycles. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of studies on Pancasila and Civic Education learning, particularly regarding the implementation of student-centered learning to develop critical thinking ability and student participation. Practically, this study is expected to benefit teachers as an alternative in designing learning that promotes students' willingness to express opinions and analytical ability. For students, these instructional actions are expected to enhance self-confidence, logical and critical thinking ability, as well as skills in analyzing and evaluating various civic issues.

Method

This study employs the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method with the Kemmis and McTaggart design, comprising the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted at Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 6 Malang in the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year with 33 Grade XI-5 students as research subjects. The object of this study is the improvement of students' willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability, encompassing the ability to distinguish types of state forms and systems of government, analyze the reasons Indonesia adopted the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of various systems of government critically. The research was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of four meetings and proceeding through the four stages of classroom action research. Research data were collected through analytical ability tests, observation of learning implementation and student activities, motivation and student reflection questionnaires, student reflective journals, and documentation. The research instruments included essay test items, observation sheets, Likert-scale questionnaires, and reflective journals. The test instrument underwent content validation by lecturers of Pancasila and Civic Education and senior Pancasila and Civic Education teachers, as well as empirical validity testing using the Pearson Product Moment correlation, while instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with a result of 0.82. Data were analyzed descriptively, both quantitatively and qualitatively, by comparing the development of research results at the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II stages. The success of the action was determined by the attainment of an average analytical ability score above 75 and classical mastery of at least 80%. The research was discontinued in Cycle II after obtaining an average analytical ability of 83.7 with classical mastery of 84.8%, or 28 out of 33 students having attained the minimum score of 75.

Results and Discussion

Results

The pre-cycle analysis can be seen in Table 1. Prior to the implementation of the action, the researcher conducted an initial measurement to determine the condition of Grade XI-5 students' willingness to express opinions and critical thinking at Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 6 Malang. The initial measurement was conducted through an analytical ability test encompassing three aspects, namely willingness to express opinions, logical or critical thinking ability, and comparative analysis ability.

The pre-cycle results indicate that students' abilities were generally at a low category. On the aspect of willingness to express opinions, the average student score was 62 with mastery of 38%. Meanwhile, the aspect of logical or critical thinking obtained an average score of 55 with mastery of 28%. On the aspect of comparative analysis, the average score obtained by students was 58 with mastery of 30%. Overall, the average analytical ability of students reached only 58.3 with classical mastery of 33.3%, that is, 11 out of 33 students attaining the minimum score of 75.

This condition indicates that the majority of students had not attained the predetermined success indicators. Students still experienced difficulties in expressing opinions courageously, structuring thoughts logically and critically, and comparing concepts analytically. Therefore, instructional actions capable of enhancing students' active involvement while simultaneously developing critical thinking ability and courage in expressing opinions are required.

Table 1. Pre-Cycle Learning Outcomes

Analytical Aspect	Mean	Mastery (≥75)
Willingness to express opinions	62	38%
Logical/critical thinking	55	28%
Comparative analysis	58	30%
Overall mean	58.3	33.3% (11 of 33 students)

In Cycle I, the instructional action was implemented across four meetings by applying student-centered learning. The implementation of the action proceeded through the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Learning was designed to provide students with broader opportunities to express opinions, develop logical reasoning, and conduct analyses of various conceptual comparisons being studied. In its implementation, the teacher also applied differentiated learning so that students with diverse initial abilities received appropriate support (Manobi et al., 2024).

The analysis of Cycle I results can be seen in Table 2. After the action in Cycle I was completed, students' abilities were measured through an analytical ability test. The test results indicate an increase compared with the pre-cycle condition. The aspect of willingness to express opinions increased with an average score of 74 and mastery of 67%. The aspect of logical or critical thinking obtained an average score of 70 with mastery of 58%. Meanwhile, the aspect of comparative analysis obtained an average score of 69 with mastery of 55%.

Overall, the average analytical ability of students increased to 71.0. The number of students attaining the minimum score of 75 also increased to 20 students, or 60.6%. Although an increase had occurred, these results had not yet attained the research success indicators, namely an average score above 75 and classical mastery of at least 80%.

Table 2. Student Learning Outcomes in Cycle I

Analytical Aspect	Mean	Mastery (≥75)
Willingness to express opinions	74	67%
Logical/critical thinking	70	58%
Comparative analysis	69	55%
Overall mean	71.0	60.6% (20 of 33 students)

Based on the test results and observations during the learning process, it was evident that students began to demonstrate better involvement in learning. Some students began to express opinions courageously and to respond to the problems discussed. Nevertheless, some students remained passive and lacked confidence in expressing opinions. In addition, students' ability to construct logical reasoning and conduct comparative analysis still required improvement. The results of reflection with collaborators indicated that the action in Cycle I had exerted a positive impact on the development of students' abilities but had not yet attained the predetermined success criteria. Therefore, improvements to the action in Cycle II were required by providing students with broader opportunities to participate actively, strengthening discussion and analysis processes, and providing stimulation that encouraged students to express opinions based on logical reasoning.

Based on the reflection results of Cycle I, the action in Cycle II was refined by enhancing students' active involvement in the learning process. Learning was directed toward providing more opportunities for students to express opinions, provide logical reasoning, and conduct comparative analysis in greater depth. The researcher also provided reinforcement through prompting questions and learning activities that encouraged students to think critically and to connect the material with relevant problems. The implementation of the action in Cycle II was conducted across four meetings while adhering to the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. After all actions were completed, an analytical ability test was conducted to determine the development of students' abilities.

The analysis of Cycle II results can be seen in Table 3. The test results indicate a significant increase compared with Cycle I. On the aspect of willingness to express opinions, the average student score increased to 86 with mastery of 87.9%. The aspect of logical or critical thinking obtained an average score of 83 with mastery of 81.8%. Meanwhile, the aspect of comparative analysis obtained an average score of 82 with mastery of 78.8%. Overall, the average analytical ability of students increased to 83.7. The number of students attaining the minimum score of 75 also increased to 28 students, or 84.8%. Accordingly, the research results in Cycle II exceeded the predetermined success indicators, namely an average score above 75 and classical mastery of at least 80%.

Table 3. Student Learning Outcomes in Cycle II

Analytical Aspect	Mean	Mastery (≥75)
Willingness to express opinions	86	87.9%
Logical/critical thinking	83	81.8%
Comparative analysis	82	78.8%
Overall mean	83.7	84.8% (28 of 33 students)

The improvement in research results in Cycle II indicates that the instructional actions provided were capable of enhancing students' abilities comprehensively. Students became more courageous in expressing opinions, more capable of structuring their thoughts logically and critically, and demonstrated better ability in conducting comparative analysis. Based on these results, the researcher and collaborators decided to discontinue the action in Cycle II. This decision was based on the

attainment of the research success indicators, namely that the average analytical ability of students had reached 83.7 and classical mastery had reached 84.8%, exceeding the minimum threshold of 80%.

The comparative analysis between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 can be seen in Table 4. To provide a comprehensive overview of the development of students' abilities throughout the research, a recapitulation of results from the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II stages was conducted. This recapitulation indicates a gradual increase in the average analytical ability and in the number of students attaining mastery. At the pre-cycle stage, the average analytical ability of students was 58.3 with 11 students attaining mastery. After the action was implemented in Cycle I, the average increased to 71.0 with 20 students attaining mastery. Subsequently, in Cycle II, the average analytical ability increased to 83.7 with 28 students attaining mastery.

Accordingly, there was an increase in the average analytical ability of 25.4 points from the pre-cycle to Cycle II. The number of students attaining mastery also increased by 17 students. This improvement indicates that the instructional actions implemented exerted a positive impact on students' willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability.

Table 4. Recapitulation of Research Results Across Cycles

Stage	Analytical Mean	Classical Mastery	Number of Students Attaining Mastery
Pre-Cycle	58.3	33.3%	11 students
Cycle I	71.0	60.6%	20 students
Cycle II	83.7	84.8%	28 students
Total Improvement	+25.4 points	+51.5 percentage points	+17 students

Based on Table 4, it can be observed that there was a consistent improvement in students' abilities at each stage of the research. The average analytical ability increased from 58.3 in the pre-cycle to 71.0 in Cycle I and 83.7 in Cycle II. In line with this improvement, classical mastery increased from 33.3% in the pre-cycle to 60.6% in Cycle I and 84.8% in Cycle II.

These results indicate that the actions implemented successfully improved students' abilities in willingness to express opinions, logical or critical thinking, and comparative analysis. The attainment of classical mastery of 84.8% exceeded the success indicator of 80%, while the average analytical ability of 83.7 exceeded the stipulated average score threshold, namely above 75. Therefore, this classroom action research is declared successful and was discontinued in Cycle II.

At the pre-cycle stage, students' abilities in willingness to express opinions, logical or critical thinking, and comparative analysis remained suboptimal. This condition indicates that students were not yet fully accustomed to engaging actively in learning processes that require them to articulate ideas and justify their opinions through logical reasoning.

Cycle I indicated an improvement in students' abilities, but the results attained were not yet maximal. This can be understood because students were still in the adaptation phase to a learning pattern that was more student-centered. Some students remained passive, lacked confidence in expressing opinions, and were not accustomed to developing answers argumentatively. In addition, students' ability to conduct comparative analysis still required more directed guidance and stimulation. Accordingly, the improvement in Cycle I indicates that the action had exerted a positive impact, but the learning process still required refinement.

Improvements in Cycle II were implemented by strengthening student involvement in the learning process, providing more equitable opportunities to express opinions, employing prompting questions, and providing reinforcement of logical, critical, and analytical thinking abilities. These

strategic changes enabled students to structure ideas in a more directed manner and to express opinions with greater confidence. The improvement in Cycle II results indicates that the refinement of actions based on the reflection results of Cycle I constituted an important factor in enhancing learning effectiveness.

Discussion

The research results indicate that the implementation of student-centered learning is capable of improving the willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability of Grade XI-5 students of Sekolah Menengah Atas 6 Malang. This improvement is evident progressively from the initial condition, which indicated low analytical ability, subsequently developing in Cycle I, and attaining the success criteria in Cycle II. This change indicates that instructional actions providing students with greater space to participate, express opinions, develop reasoning, and conduct analyses of a given problem can support the development of students' higher-order thinking abilities (Yurinda & Hidayat, 2023; Pahdi et al., 2020).

The findings of this study are consistent with constructivist theory, which views knowledge as actively constructed by students through experience, interaction, and reflection processes. In the context of this study, students construct their understanding through activities of expressing opinions, discussing, comparing concepts, and analyzing problems (Hayu, 2023). The research results are also relevant to Vygotsky's view regarding the importance of social interaction in students' cognitive development. Learning processes that provide students with opportunities to exchange ideas and receive assistance through prompting questions can help students attain higher levels of thinking ability (Özsaraç & Korkmaz, 2025).

Furthermore, the improvement of critical thinking ability through analysis and evaluation activities is consistent with the concept of higher-order thinking, which positions the abilities to analyze, evaluate, and construct arguments as essential components of the learning process (Akib et al., 2025). Accordingly, the research results reinforce the theoretical view that active and student-centered learning can create conditions conducive to the development of critical thinking ability. This finding is further corroborated by research demonstrating that the application of collaborative cultural maps is capable of improving students' critical thinking skills, as such activities require students to compare, connect, and evaluate information collaboratively (Indawati et al., 2025).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that learning that provides students with opportunities to participate actively can improve critical thinking ability and courage in expressing opinions (Özsaraç & Korkmaz, 2025b). This similarity is evident in the use of learning activities that encourage students to analyze problems, express ideas, and provide reasons for the opinions expressed.

The results of this study also support research finding that the implementation of active learning strategies can enhance student engagement while simultaneously affecting learning outcomes (Elisa & Mahmuddin, 2025). Nevertheless, this study has distinct characteristics in that it specifically focuses its measurement on willingness to express opinions, logical or critical thinking ability, and comparative analysis ability in Pancasila and Civic Education learning. Differences in results or focus compared with previous studies may be attributable to differences in subject characteristics, material context, learning strategies, duration of action, and

instruments employed. Therefore, the findings of this study extend the evidence that student-centered learning can be applied in the context of Pancasila and Civic Education learning to develop students' critical thinking ability and willingness to express opinions (Indriani, 2022).

The success of the action was also supported by changes in student behavior and engagement during the learning process. Students demonstrated a tendency to be more active in participating in learning, more open in expressing ideas, and more involved in analysis and discussion processes. These changes indicate that the improvement in learning outcomes does not stand alone but is related to increased student engagement in the learning process (Muharleni, 2026).

Student motivation is also an important aspect supporting the success of the action. When students are given opportunities to express opinions and engage in the learning process, they have more active and meaningful learning experiences. Learning that provides autonomy and opportunities for participation can enhance students' intrinsic motivation and encourage higher engagement in learning (Kamila & Junaedi, 2026). This is consistent with the finding that social support, including support from teachers and peers, contributes to enhancing students' achievement motivation (Nurrahman & Kharunisa, 2024). Teacher performance also plays an important role in the success of the action. The teacher does not merely serve as a transmitter of information but also as a facilitator who directs discussions, provides prompting questions, offers reinforcement, and assists students in developing their thinking. The change in the teacher's role from a center of information to a facilitator of learning constitutes one of the essential characteristics of student-centered learning (Sholihah & Amaliyah, 2022).

During the implementation of the action, several obstacles were encountered. The primary obstacle was the persistence of students who lacked confidence in expressing opinions and were not accustomed to articulating logical reasoning. In addition, students' ability to conduct comparative analysis was uneven. This condition caused student engagement in the learning process to be suboptimal in Cycle I. To address these obstacles, the researcher implemented several improvements in Cycle II. Students were provided with more equitable opportunities to express opinions, while prompting questions were employed to assist students in developing their thinking systematically. The teacher also provided reinforcement of student responses so that students became more confident in participating. These improvements helped create a more active learning atmosphere and supported the development of students' critical thinking ability (Rahmayati et al., 2026).

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted in only one class with a limited number of subjects, so the generalization of research results to broader contexts must be undertaken with caution. Second, the research was conducted across two cycles, so the development of students' abilities over a longer period could not be determined. Third, some data on students' abilities were obtained through test instruments and observation, which still carry the possibility of being influenced by evaluator subjectivity. Fourth, the research focused more on willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability, so other aspects of student development were not analyzed in depth.

The findings of this study have important implications for the practice of Pancasila and Civic Education learning. Teachers can develop learning that provides students with broader

space to express opinions, analyze problems, compare various concepts, and construct arguments logically. Such learning can serve as an alternative for developing critical thinking ability while simultaneously enhancing students' courage in communication (Manik, 2025; Prayogi et al., 2022). In addition, teachers need to attend to the importance of instilling character and social attitudes in students as part of Pancasila Education learning, as demonstrated by research on the implementation of social care character through the content of Pancasila and Civic Education subjects (Rafifah et al., 2024).

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the view that student-centered learning can be an effective approach for developing higher-order thinking abilities (Minarni & Napitupulu, 2020; Susanto et al., 2025). The success of the action is determined not only by the delivery of material but also by the opportunities provided to students to experience thinking processes, engage in discussion, reflect on ideas, and improve their understanding continuously (Swandana et al., 2026; Hermansyah et al., 2025). Accordingly, this study demonstrates that learning designed reflectively and oriented toward active student involvement can contribute to the development of willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability. The gradual implementation of actions, accompanied by evaluation and improvement based on actual classroom conditions, constitutes an important factor in creating more effective and meaningful learning. In a broader context, learning that emphasizes cultural empathy and intercultural dialogue can also enrich students' learning experiences and support the development of their critical thinking ability in a pluralistic society (Gultom, 2025).

Conclusion

The implementation of student-centered learning strategies is proven capable of improving the willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability of Grade XI students through learning processes that provide students with broader opportunities to express ideas, develop logical reasoning, analyze problems, and conduct comparisons critically. This improvement is evident from the average analytical ability of students, which increased from 58.3 at the pre-cycle stage to 71.0 in Cycle I and 83.7 in Cycle II, while classical mastery increased from 33.3% to 60.6% and ultimately reached 84.8%. These results indicate that student-centered learning strategies are effective for improving willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability because actions implemented gradually through reflection and refinement are capable of enhancing students' active involvement in the learning process. Accordingly, in the context of research on Grade XI students as research subjects, student-centered learning strategies can serve as a relevant learning alternative for developing willingness to express opinions and critical thinking ability, although application in different classroom contexts, student characteristics, and learning materials requires further adjustment.

Acknowledgments

I express my profound gratitude to Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang for all the support, guidance, and academic facilities provided throughout this process. I also extend my highest appreciation to the entire academic community of Sekolah Menengah Atas 6 Kota Malang for providing me with a valuable opportunity to serve while gaining invaluable experience in the real world of education.

Authors' Note

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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