TEACHER STUDENTS' CRITICAL LITERACY IN THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

In an academic setting, critical literacy necessitates that teacher-students be critical of every text message (textbooks, videos, films, and other electronic media) that they read from courses. This study aims to illustrate the critical literacy of teacher students in an academic college environment in Jakarta, Indonesia, describing how critical literacy becomes a habit, a need, and eventually becomes a teacher-student culture. This case study employs a qualitative technique with an ethnographic design. Purposive sampling is used in this study. The research participants were a group of 14 female and two male teacher-students from the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education study program. Observation and documentation are used to collect research data. Observer becoming an insider who participates in critical literacy exercises in the classroom. Portfolios, notes on critical literacy activities, assignments, midterm exam scores, and final exam scores are among the documents gathered. According to the findings of this study, we should first put up an online platform scaffolding for critical literacy. Second, it demands significant encouragement from lecturers at the start of students' teaching preparation program, as well as commitment from lecturers and teacher students. Third, teamwork among lecturers in the study program is required. Fourth, critical discussions must be constructed using multiple narratives from scholarly papers and social media texts.

Keywords: *Critical literacy; scaffolding; critical discussion; academic texts; social media texts*

Abstrak

Dalam lingkungan akademik, literasi kritis mengharuskan guru-siswa bersikap kritis terhadap setiap pesan teks (buku teks, video, film, dan media elektronik lainnya) yang mereka baca dari kursus. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan literasi kritis siswa guru di lingkungan akademik perguruan tinggi di Jakarta, Indonesia, menggambarkan bagaimana literasi kritis menjadi kebiasaan, kebutuhan, dan akhirnya menjadi budaya guru-siswa. Studi kasus ini menggunakan teknik kualitatif dengan desain etnografi. Purposive sampling digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah sekelompok 14 orang guru-murid laki-laki dan perempuan dari program studi Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Observasi dan dokumentasi digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data penelitian. Observer menjadi orang dalam yang mengikuti latihan literasi kritis di kelas. Portofolio, catatan kegiatan literasi kritis, tugas, nilai ujian tengah semester, dan nilai ujian akhir termasuk di antara dokumen yang dikumpulkan. Menurut temuan penelitian ini, pertama-tama kita harus memasang perancah platform online untuk literasi kritis. Kedua, menuntut dorongan yang signifikan dari dosen di awal program persiapan mengajar mahasiswa, serta komitmen dosen dan mahasiswa guru. Ketiga, kerjasama antar dosen di prodi sangat diperlukan. Keempat, diskusi kritis harus dibangun dengan menggunakan narasi ganda dari karya ilmiah dan teks media sosial.

Kata kunci: Literasi kritis; perancah; diskusi kritis; teks akademik; teks media sosial

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Introduction

Literacy is a key aspect of any education improvement program. So, what is literacy? In general, literacy means literacy, namely the ability to write and read. The concept of literacy continues to develop in a broader meaning in all disciplines and is translated flexibly in all scientific perspectives. Initially, the concept of literacy was quite simple, namely the ability to write and read. Literacy makes life easier in terms of finding your way when travelling without asking other people, being able to read scripts, and many other useful things. However, the concept of literacy in the 21st century is developing very quickly. The concept of literacy is becoming more critical, where news comes and goes so quickly because of the abundance of information sources.

Critical literacy demands a sceptical approach to everything, including the written word or text. Critical literacy in academia recommends students as readers to be able to navigate the new modernity of this postmodern era. Critical literacy requires students to question every text that he reads, whether it is linear, whether it is readable, observable, or subliminal. The literacy problem has been extensively studied. The study of Hobbs and Frost (2003) concluded that teaching media literacy was proven to improve students' ability to identify main ideas from written, audio, and visual media. Students' ability to analyze specific texts also increases, including the ability to identify the purpose, and point of view of the text.

But in fact, the literacy rate in some developing countries is still quite low. The low literacy skills of Indonesian students, as shown by the results of the 2018 survey (PISA), where Indonesia scores 74th out of 79 countries (https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/). Instead of involving critical literacy, instilling literacy awareness in teacher students throughout the semester of lectures are still a critical pedagogy of lecturers so that students have the willingness to be literate and in the long term become a literacy culture. Many factors contribute to the low literacy rate of people in developing countries, which we will explore in the college community. However, efforts to cultivate literacy are currently being promoted by the Indonesian government through literacy programs into school and university curricula. Therefore, this research must be carried out to determine where the critical literacy position of teaching, students have reached at one of the colleges in the city of Jakarta, Indonesia.

In a study conducted by Jones and Enriquez (2009), it was shown that the impact of university program work can encourage small or significant habitus (instinctive) changes and interactions between habitus and certain fields can strengthen critical literacy perspectives and limit these perspectives. In addition, according to Rogers and Mosley (2006) that the development of racial literacy, like other literacy processes in the classroom, must be guided.

We investigated ethnographically a co-cultured group at a university in the city of Jakarta. We view academic literacy in this teacher-student environment as a systematic effort to build critical literacy. We explore how critical literacy becomes a habit, a need to become a teacher-student culture because after they become teachers, the expectations of students, parents, and society become their challenges in acquiring knowledge, attitudes, and skills of their students through the teaching and learning process. As stated by Gilbert (2001) in his research, it is necessary to offer a curriculum that emphasizes formal, theoretical analysis, and

imaginative and creative language games. Thus, access to a repertoire of literacy practices is needed that goes beyond such simple differentiation: a flexible and intelligent repertoire of literacy practices that prepares students for the changing dynamics of contemporary literacy practice. The current study contributes to our knowledge by addressing four important issues such as. First, an overview of the research findings of Skerrett and Bomer (2011) that teachers can affirm urban student literacy outside of school. Second, linking this literature with the formal curriculum. Third, increase the involvement and success of student literacy in schools. Fourth, Thoman and Jolls (2004) say this opens the way to mastering the skills needed for lifelong learning in a changing world.

There is a paucity of empirical research that focuses specifically on critical literacy in the teacher-student academic environment. The purpose of this paper is to describe the critical literacy of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* (PGMI) teacher education students in college in the city of Jakarta, Indonesia. The contribution of this research is obvious as the resulting outcomes can be capitalized as a guideline for building critical literacy in teacher students' classes through the various courses that are followed.

Critical literacy is defined as a learning system where reading is required before, during, and after lectures take place. The teacher students who are dominated by women are charged with reading in several courses taught by a female lecturer. Before the lecture, these students read the textbook recommended by the lecturer at home. During the lecture, their literacy was tested through questions asked and they had to answer without looking at the text. Students' ability to remember and understand is trained here. In addition, in the context of a particular topic, it requires them to analyze, and synthesize. After the lecture, they were asked to find the main idea in the text, then analyze it.

Critical Literacy in Academic Environment

In 1962, UNESCO defined an educated person in the following relativist terms, namely that a person is said to be literate when he acquires the necessary knowledge and skills that enable him to engage in all literacy activities which are indispensable for a person to take on a role in his society, so that his attainment in reading, writing and arithmetic enable him to continue to use these skills for self and societal progress (Wragg et al., 1998). Literacy according to Barton and Hamilton (1998) is the main thing people do; it is an activity that sits in the space between thought and text. Literacy does not only exist in the head as a set of skills to be learned, and not just on paper, literacy is captured as text to be analyzed. As in general all human activities, literacy is social and lies in human relationships (Papen, 2016).

However, being literate today means more than just being able to read and write. In a world that is diverse with culture, printed texts, media, and technology, an educated person must have certain specific abilities (Connolly & Giouroukakis, 2016). In college or at home, students do their homework by navigating the internet, looking for sites curated by lecturers. Students synthesize the information they need, identify the sources they find, analyze their assignments by source. They communicate their ideas while other students provide feedback.

In essence, students find information, analyze it, share it, build relationships with others, and communicate what they see, read, think, experience, and feel.

In addition, Connolly and Giouroukakis (2016) conclude the next seven generations of literacy, namely: literate individuals show independence with texts; build strong content knowledge; respond to various audience demands, tasks, goals, and disciplines; understand and criticize; value evidence; use technology and digital media strategically and competently and understand other perspectives and cultures.

Furthermore, White and Cooper (2015) convey good news regarding critical literacy, that critical literacy does not need to have its own space, because it is not taught like a separate subject. It can (and should) be taught in the context of any subject or topic currently under the auspices of the public school system. But what exactly is critical literacy? Put simply, critical literacy is an instructional attitude that stems from the neo-Marxist approach to critical pedagogy. This approach adopts a "critical" attitude towards the text. Text can be defined as anything that contains a message. For example, any manuscript can be text, as can any film, video or performance, or technological medium.

The critical literacy developed from Freire's pedagogy is based on several key concepts. First, literacy education must pay attention to increasing the conscientious, or critical awareness, of students. Perhaps one of Freire's most famous teachings is that 'reading consists not only of decoding written language words; on the contrary, it is preceded by and interwoven with the knowledge of the world. Second, dialogue is the essence of learning. Third, teaching must recognize students' prior knowledge (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Pahl and Rowsell (2005) explain in more detail that literacy and learning practices are embedded in various discourses, or ways of knowing, doing, speaking, reading, and writing, which is constructed and reproduced in social and cultural practices and interactions. Literacy practice is closely related to spoken language and how it is used.

Moreover, because critical literacy can be taught or trained in the context of any subject and topic, the term literacy coach has emerged. This literacy coach plays a role in improving instruction in all fields. Jay and Strong (2008) define a literacy coach as someone who is considered a reading specialist who is recognized as an expert teacher by peers and superiors whose main function is to provide professional development to teachers both one-on-one and in groups to improve their reading and writing skills. The trainer as a professional develops the most structured model for one-to-one observation, feedback, and teacher mentoring. The literacy trainers here are research lecturers who teach various subjects, designing learning models systematically and interactively. Fisher (2007) and Pitcher et al (2007) added a literacy component, namely literacy leadership teams and incorporating technology into teaching (Pitcher & Mackey, 2013).

As prospective teachers, education for teacher students must be literacy-based. Anders and colleagues (2000) were not the only ones requesting research on teacher literacy development. Hoffman and Pearson (2000), reviewing the educational status of teachers in literacy, present an agenda for the "reading teacher education community" which includes taking a leadership role in generating a research agenda, establishing a database for teacher

education in reading, developing a scoring system for productive evaluation of education. teachers, creating space for dialogue and consideration on these issues and ensuring that one of the issues is diversity (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006).

The main task of the lecturer is to provide professional and pedagogical competencies to teaching students, including through critical literacy. It is expressed by (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006) that our responsibility is to educate teachers who can accelerate the learning of students who have the greatest difficulty in acquiring literacy. We take this very seriously in terms of the implications for what is taught, how these teachers teach, what they teach, as well as the long-term learning trajectory after they leave us.

Given the importance of acquiring literacy skills, it is understandable that education systems around the world are trying to achieve excellence in literacy education (Tunmer and Chapman, 2015). Therefore, it is a serious effort for us to form a literacy culture in a society without sufficient literacy capital. The importance of these literacy skills is expressed by Gee (2015) who has assumed for centuries that literacy gives rise to higher-order cognitive abilities, such as analytical thinking and logic more than typical speech culture. Furthermore, Historian Harvey Graff reveals that: literacy is one of the core elements of Britain's centuries-old radical tradition. In the context of complex political, cultural, social, and economic transitions, a completely new element in the history of literacy is formed: the relationship between literacy and radical political activity, as well as with "useful knowledge".

In addition, literacy involves understanding different genres – knowledge of how language is used in certain contexts and for certain purposes (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009). Competence here means knowing what a text is and how it is presented and knowing what to do with it. This is known as 'cultural knowledge' and is mostly acquired through the process of socializing, taking part in literacy-related activities, supervising and copying others, and also being told and shown how to do it (Papen, 2016).

Method

The purpose of this qualitative research with this ethnographic design is to describe critical literacy among students of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (PGMI) teacher education in Jakarta, through case studies, by exploring critical literacy in-depth based on extensive data collection.

Procedure

Sampling. This study uses purposive sampling, which according to Creswell (2012) researchers deliberately determine people and places to investigate or understand the central phenomenon. *Participants.* The researcher has determined a group of teacher-students from the PGMI study program who have been following the research lecturer courses since the first semester. The participants, two of whom were male, and 13 were female, were from semester one to semester five (when this research was conducted). *Observation.* Researchers collected open-ended information by observing the behavior of student participants during the teaching and learning process in the classroom through critical literacy from semester one to five. The

researcher recorded every actual behavior that was obtained based on the literacy process observed in class. The role of the observer here is as a participant-observer in which the researcher takes part in various activities in the realm being observed. The researcher acts directly as an "insider" who is involved in various activities in the classroom. *Document.* The documents here are personal notes in the form of student portfolios, notes on activities during the teaching and learning process, assignments, evaluation scores, and assessments for the midterm and final exams. *Trustworthiness.* The researcher chose triangulation in validating the findings. Triangulation here is the process of strengthening evidence from students and lecturers, for data types in the form of observation field notes and portfolio documents, from collecting observation data and documents.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of these findings and discussions is to describe the critical literacy of teacher students in the PGMI study program at a college in the city of Jakarta, Indonesia. The discussion of the results begins with the critical literacy efforts carried out on these teacher students in the early years of lectures. Researchers set English-language e-books and other English-language online platforms as scaffolds in basic instruction in the classroom. Fifteen students consisting of thirteen women and two men are required to read and understand the content of the text, present it in groups, discuss it, and elaborate on the results of the discussion. These results are consistent with data obtained by Kunnath and Jackson (2019) that educators are challenged by the implementation of critical literacy, which is impregnated with additional technologies.

At the beginning of the lecture, these students seemed unfamiliar with English textbooks, instead of translating and understanding the book, even Indonesian textbooks were not liked to read and study. They tend to copy directly the tasks given through the search engines Google and Mozilla. The first year of lectures with literacy aided by English textbooks and the use of the online platform google translate seems to be enough to create strong pressure and encouragement for students. Although the final grades of these students are satisfactory, the findings show that there are factors of pressure and encouragement as a contribution. Research lecturers want the pressure and encouragement of critical literacy to turn into awareness of needs. However, the researcher realized that the researcher had dealt with culture. Cultural matters are not an instant or one-time affair, we need a very long time to change the behavior and habits of the same cultural group. As said by LeCompte et al, (1993) culture is everything related to human behavior and beliefs.

In the second semester, the researcher did not teach the teacher students. The researcher taught them again in the third semester. The researcher continued the use of literacy in the classroom. In this lesson planning course, literacy is not as strict as the previous courses, because lectures are dominated by practical activities, however, these students are required to fully master the competencies of the unit of study. Obtaining midterm and final exam scores for the lesson planning course is further described in table 1.

Table 1. Midterm Exam Scores and Final Exam for Learning Planning Course

Scores	Midterm Exams	Final Exams
Scores ≤ 80	11 students	6 students
Scores ≥ 80	4 students	9 students

The finding highlights that critical literacy does not need to have its own space, because it is not taught in separate courses. So that literacy can be taught in the context of any subject or topic. These results agree with the findings of other studies, in which literacy must be taught independently of any subject or discipline as the goal of the teacher education curriculum (Yavuz-Konokman, 2020). These results are consistent with those of Hastings and Trexler (2021) and suggest educators design and revise their literacy curriculum and teaching. This study indicates that critical literacy has not been achieved optimally, perhaps because critical literacy awareness has not yet become a class culture. The encouragement and sustainability of literacy assignments need to be maintained throughout the semester, the need for collaboration and synergy between teaching lecturers in one study program, reducing one-way lectures in class, building critical discussions from various narratives of academic texts and social media texts, can help achieve this critical literacy success.

In the fourth semester, the researcher taught these teacher students for the lesson planning course. Here the researcher begins to do a combination for the sourcebook. Researchers used printed books and e-books for the same author, but students preferred to use printed books even though they had to buy them, instead of free books in English. In this course, literacy is again a class culture. The researcher assigned the students to read and understand it. After that, the researcher will check their understanding of the content of the text they read. When the researcher interacted to check their understanding, only a few people seemed ready to answer well. This takes place almost throughout the lecture.

Researchers continue to think about ways so that these students acquire high-level cognitive abilities, namely the ability to analyze and logic, as well as think analytically as expected. Finally, the researcher determined midterm exams and final exams through the use of oral tests. Researchers are getting stricter on their literacy. However, the midterm exam scores of students for the lesson planning course showed that there were only four students who scored 80 and above, out of a total of 15 students. Meanwhile, the final exam scores data showed that nine people scored 80 and above. Although literacy has been defined as critical pedagogical during lectures, midterm exams, and final exams, this does not make students more serious in reading and have not achieved high-level cognitive abilities, such as analytical thinking and logic as expected. These results further support the idea of Hendrix-Soto (2021) that the pedagogical approach positions youth as producers of knowledge and centralizing their social interests facilitates this.

In the fifth semester, the researcher taught this PGMI student the subject of research methodology and science learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Literacy is again emphasized as cultural knowledge that is defined in the critical pedagogical class. Students were again

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instructed to read books, study, and write research designs for research methodology courses, and make lesson plans for science courses. Midterm exams and final exams for both courses require students to reveal the results of their literacy. The results of this study will now be compared with the findings of previous work from Sipitanos (2021), that the evaluation of complex critical literacy practices can be through providing useful feedback to students regarding critical literacy awareness. This can be done, among others, through project work. As the study of Takidin et al, (2019) states that the development of learning carried out by teachers, is proven to be able to improve students' thinking skills.

Although literacy has been so strict during the teaching and learning process, the researcher tolerates the students by providing a scaffold by publishing the exam questions one week before the oral test begins. The results of the midterm exams for the science learning course at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah showed that five students scored 80 and above, and seven students scored less than 80, out of a total of 13 students who took the course. Meanwhile, the final exam scores showed that all students scored above 80.

Table 2. Midterm Exam Scores and Final Exam for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Science Learning Course

Scores	Midterm Exams	Final Exams
Scores ≤ 80	7 students	0 students
Scores ≥ 80	5 students	13 students

These results agree with the findings of other studies, which reveal that students' critical literacy thinking is sometimes limited and shallow, indicating that students' understanding of critical literacy can be deepened with additional instruction and scaffolding (Forrest & Kimmel, 2016). These results are in line with those of previous studies, where Wong (2021) suggests integrating critical literacy practices in a problem-based learning approach. Cho and Peter (2021) added that the instructional challenges for critical literacy can be through opportunities for critical conversations on controversial topics. This is expanded through a critical understanding of literacy, the multimodal nature of literacy, and opportunities for social response Johnston et al, (2021). Murray-Orr et al, (2021) highlight deliberate planning that inculcates critical literacy, critical literacy in the wider community, and the use of multimodal practices in teaching for critical literacy.

Table 3. Midterm Exam Scores and Final Exam for Research Methodology Course

Scores	Midterm Exams	Final Exams
Scores ≤ 80	5 students	3 students
Scores ≥ 80	8 students	10 students

Our finding revealed that critical literacy can be trained through social and cultural interactions, also the use of online platforms can navigate students in technology in today's digital era. Where text narratives from various media that are accessed by students are not

only read and write but are also able to bring up high-level cognitive abilities, such as analytical thinking and logic. Azizah and Fahriany (2017) mention that students' knowledge of genres and their critical attitude are related to their reading comprehension ability. Therefore, this study highlights the important role of lecturer leadership in having implications for what they teach, how they teach, what they teach, which has an impact on students' lives in their community after they leave college. Therefore, the results of the study by Rosfiani et al, (2019) suggest the need for teacher leadership to create a learning environment that involves the experience of inquiry, and which encourages students' interest in learning. Donovan and Erskine-Shaw (2019) add from their study that institutions can provide the support that enables the building of a shared academic identity and fosters a sense of belonging to the university environment.

Furthermore, educators must be responsible for incorporating critical thinking into their teaching. The main activities that are considered effective are debates, class discussions, evaluation of presentations, listening to main ideas and details, reading main ideas and evaluating sources, writing argumentative essays, academic reports, and reflections (Toshpulatova & Kinjemuratova, 2020). Yasdin et al, (2021) revealed the need for educators to make equity related to circulation models that can help students predict future needs.

Conclusions

This study explores in depth the critical literacy of teaching students in the academic environment of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teacher education study program located at a college in the city of Jakarta. Important conclusions from this work include. First, critical literacy requires scaffolding from various online platforms to achieve high-level cognitive abilities, including analytical and logical skills. Second, in order to build literacy awareness and high-level cognitive thinking from critical literacy, it takes strong encouragement from lecturers when students take their first lectures in higher education, as well as the need to maintain critical literacy throughout the semester. Third, collaboration and synergy are needed between teaching lecturers in one study program, so that critical literacy is not interrupted. Fourth, lecturers need to build critical discussions from various narratives of academic texts and social media texts.

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