

FOSTERING CRITICAL THINKING IN ENGLISH LEARNING: AN ANALYSIS OF *ENGLISH FOR NUSANTARA* TEXTBOOK

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Abstract

This study investigates how the “English for Nusantara” Grade IX textbook shapes students’ critical thinking skills by using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). As part of Indonesia’s goals in education, English for Nusantara, published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, aims to integrate local cultural values with English language learning, promoting both linguistic skills and critical thinking skills. The research focused on analyzing the discourse in the textbook, including the languages and activities, to evaluate their potential in shaping students’ critical thinking skills. This study examined whether the textbook contains languages or activities that promotes the indicators by Ilyas’; there are (1) clarification; (2) assumption; (3) reasons and evidence; (4) viewpoints or perspectives; (5) implications, consequences, and alternatives; (6) questions; (7) predictions; (8) agreement and disagreement; (10) summary and conclusion. A qualitative method was chosen because this study focuses on interpreting patterns and themes. CDA is employed in this study to examine verbal and visual texts in the selected textbook. The results showed that eight out of the ten indicators of critical thinking by Ilyas were applied in this textbook. It is also found that this textbook promotes critical thinking linked with the indicators by Facione, called self-regulation.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, English, Textbook, Critical Discourse Analysis

INTRODUCTION

In this evolving world, the ability to think critically has become more essential (van Peppen et al., 2021). Modern education should facilitate students with the skills to analyze, evaluate, and interpret information critically. The fact that there is so much data or information, students are expected to be able to filter misinformation, distinguish between reliable sources, and make informed decisions (Shamboul, 2022; Y. P. Utami et al., 2019). This intellectual rigidity is essential in developing students’ independent learning, who are capable of navigating complex societal issues.

Furthermore, critical thinking prepares students for the challenges of the modern workforce (Parmini et al., 2023; Sulistyaningsih & Rahmawati, 2019). This global era is marked by diverse viewpoints, essential skills of thinking enable individuals to approach different points of view with openness while critically evaluating the logic and evidence behind them (Saleh, 2019). Thus, modern education must prioritize critical thinking to nurture thoughtful, responsible individuals capable of contributing positively to society (Agustina et al., 2022).

In learning the English language, critical thinking skills are also important, and it happens because critical thinking is an indispensable tool for effective English language learning (Li, 2023) . It helps students to dig deeper into the complexities of the language, analyze text critically, and express their ideas with clarity and precision

(Bahadur, 2012). Critical thinking fosters skills such as evaluating source credibility, recognizing biases, and forming informed opinions (Bahadur, 2012; Paul & Elder, 1995).

It is important to note that critical thinking skills can be developed by involving the students in complex activities that require questioning to find solutions (Paul, 1991; Regina et al., 2022). However, challenges are inevitable. According to research, one of the challenges in developing critical thinking skills in the classroom is the cultural sides, the prevailing social expectation which is teachers as the knowledge transmitters, and the perception that critical thinking is hostile (Rahmawan & Perianto, 2021; Tan, 2017).

Critical thinking indicators from Pravita & Kuswandono (2021) found that analysis and explanation skills are the hardest indicators for students to achieve. Saleh (2019) also mentioned that there are several challenges in developing critical thinking skill, such as (a) students' inability to cope with high-order-thinking, (b) the lack of students' awareness of critical thinking, (c) lack of sufficient time, (d) difficulty of measurement, and (e) lack of facilities.

Unfortunately Utami et al., (2019) in their research found that the students have a low level of their critical thinking skills based on Facione's assessment. The research recommended that teachers should design lessons that can stimulate students' critical thinking skills. A research by Hasanah et al., (2023) also showed that 21% students had moderate critical thinking skills, 64% had low critical thinking skills, and 15% had very low critical thinking skills. It is suggested that the teacher develop their materials or teaching tools into something that might encourage students' critical thinking skills.

To achieve the goals in learning, we cannot forget that the teacher has a pivotal role in it. By choosing the right approach and learning strategies, creating a stimulating and inquiry-based learning environment, teachers can encourage students to do the critical thinking activities, such as question and answer, analyze, and evaluate the information critically. However, teachers in Indonesia are focus in rote memorization than critical thinking development (Agustina et al., 2022) , but we cannot deny the urge of being able in using critical thinking. Elder and Paul in B. Utami et al., (2018) stated that Critical thinking skill is considered as the ability to articulate important questions and issues, formulate them correctly and succinctly, gather and evaluate pertinent data, apply abstract concepts to effectively interpret them to arrive at conclusions and solutions, evaluate them in light of pertinent, standards-based alternative thinking criteria and standards, and recognize and evaluate their needs, assumptions, implications, and practical consequences. Furthermore, from Saleh, (2019) results show that a lack of facilities is one of the challenges to developing critical thinking skills, and a textbook is one of the facilities that has a function to help the teaching learning process.

A good textbook is also needed in order to develop students' critical thinking skills in learning the English language. A textbook can significantly influence the development of critical thinking skills for students (Arifin, 2020). A well-designed textbook presents information in a way that encourages students to question, answer, analyze, and evaluate the content (Errington & Bubna-Litic, 2015). Textbook can promote students critical thinking skills and their deeper comprehension of the material by including thought-provoking questions, difficult exercise, and a range of viewpoints (Nainggolan & Wirza, 2021). Moreover, textbooks that promote individual inquiry and study can aid students in acquiring the skills necessary to compile, examine, and assess data from a variety of sources (Ilyas, 2018).

Hasnah et al., (2024) Researched how locally produced EFL textbooks endorse critical thinking skills in Indonesia and used the content analysis method to examine how the textbooks develop students' critical thinking skills. They analyzed the 10th, 11th, and 12th-grade English textbooks by the Indonesian Ministry of National Education, and these textbooks are still based on the 2013 curriculum. It was found that those textbooks only provide some critical thinking criteria such as clarification, reasons and evidence, perspectives, and agreement and disagreement. It means, the other criteria such as assumption, implication, consequences an alternatives, questions, predictions, and summary and conclusions are excluded.

In addition, a study in Morocco Es-Salhi and Elfatihi (2019) revealed that their Ministry of Education in their country required the students to have critical thinking skills. But unfortunately, the research showed that their textbooks have a low level of critical thinking skills. It is suggested that they need to enrich, develop, or revise the textbooks in terms of developing students' critical thinking skills.

This research aims to analyze a textbook, "English for Nusantara," for English language learning in order to develop students' critical thinking skills. This book was chosen because the book is for pre-intermediate students. Lezberg and Hilferty in Sepúlveda (2017) said that pre-intermediate and intermediate students are known for their struggle to apply their linguistic knowledge in real-world communication. These students may see language as a system for decoding isolated words or sentences, rather than a tool for delivering meaning and establishing social relationships. This problem can help the students understand how to produce coherent and effective discourse. In addition, discourse analysis is related to critical pedagogy, which emphasizes empowering learners to think critically and gain a deeper understanding. By analyzing text, dialogues, or pictures, discourse analysis can encourage students to analyze critically, evaluate the language use, which can lead students to develop their critical thinking skills.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative method with critical discourse analysis (CDA) because this study examined how “English for Nusantara” as a textbook develops students’ critical thinking. Since a textbook is known as an educational text that contains a lot of meanings through verbal and non-verbal languages. CDA is selected as an analytical tool in this research. CDA was selected as the analytical framework because it enables a thorough analysis in which language, power, and ideology are incorporated into instructional materials. By using this method, the study aimed to determine how textbook texts and activities inspire students to critically engage, question, and evaluate the material rather than taking it at face value. The qualitative nature of the study allowed for a detailed interpretation of both explicit and implicit meanings conveyed through language choices and instructional design.

In this study, the instrument used a textbook titled “English for Nusantara” published by KEMENDIKBUDRISTEK. “*English for Nusantara*” Grade IX is an innovative English language teaching program designed to integrate cultural and linguistic diversity into its curriculum. This book was chosen because Sepúlveda (2017) explained that pre-intermediate and intermediate level students often demonstrate a strong command of grammar and syntax, however, they may struggle to apply their linguistic knowledge in real-world communication. Rooted in the unique sociocultural context of Indonesia, the program emphasizes localized content that reflects the nation's rich heritage and varied cultural identities. By incorporating themes such as traditional values, modern societal issues, and regional narratives, *English for Nusantara* seeks to make English learning more relevant and meaningful for Indonesian students. Additionally, since this book published by KEMENDIKBUDRISTEK, this book can provide the students with a critical pedagogy approach, encouraging learners to analyze and question power relations, ideologies, and cultural assumptions embedded in texts. This dual focus on language proficiency and critical literacy positions *English for Nusantara* as a transformative educational model aimed at fostering both communicative competence and critical thinking skills.

Critical and non-critical activities, tasks, and instructions are the categories that will be used to distinguish whether it train students’ critical thinking skill or not. To collect the data the textbook is analyzed by the critical thinking framework by (Ilyas, 2018). This framework was synthesized from 21 critical thinking theories; 2 taxonomies (Bloom’s and Freeman’s), 6 empirical studies on critical thinking in English Language Teaching, 9 critical thinking programs, and 4 critical thinking tests. The data were collected by reading passages, discussion tasks, and activities from the textbook that explicitly or implicitly aimed to promote critical thinking. The selection criteria focused on identifying content that required students to interpret, evaluate, or challenge idea.

The analysis process included processes of skimming or surface examinations of the textbook and interpretation. Here, the CDA was used to analyze the verbal and non-verbal languages used in the textbooks. The analysis focused on the use of vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structures that influence students to critically engage. The

discursive practice analysis examined how the textbook activities positioned learners as critical thinkers, considering how texts were produced, distributed, and consumed within the educational context. Through this multi-level analysis, the study aimed to uncover how the “English for Nusantara” textbook either supports or limits students’ critical engagement with English learning content.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine verbal and visual texts in the selected textbook “English for Nusantara” Grade IX CDA was used to analyze the representation of critical thinking.

The findings show four important points that imply that this textbook can shape students’ critical thinking skills. First, “English for Nusantara” Grade IX emphasizes analytical reading activities. This textbook provides various reading activities that encourage students to analyze texts deeply. In this textbook, after reading a text, there are tasks, and the students are asked to identify the main ideas, infer meaning from the text, and answer detailed questions about the text. These types of instructions require students to go more deeply into the material, questioning assumptions, and drawing conclusions based on the text and their understanding.

Second, “English for Nusantara” Grade IX provides instructions that encourage students’ opinions in speaking and discussion tasks. These instructions often require students to express their opinions on numerous topics, and they are asked to support their opinions with reasons or evidence. Furthermore, the instructions ask them to discuss their opinion with their peers. By participating in debates or group discussions, students are challenged to consider multiple perspectives, construct logical arguments, and defend their own point of view. These processes are not only empowering their critical thinking but also embedding their skills in reasoning and articulation. Through these interactive instructions, this textbook can contribute to the growth of students’ critical thinking skills.

Third, it is also found that “English for Nusantara” Grade IX has instructions that are based on problem-solving types and project-based. This textbook empowers students’ critical thinking skills by fostering them in a real-world context. The instructions ask them to synthesize information, collaborate for the teamwork, analyze the errors in their projects, and give and ask feedback for each other’s projects.

Last, the findings also show that “English for Nusantara” Grade IX includes reflective exercises and self-assessment opportunities that can contribute to the growth of students’ critical thinking skills. For this kind of task, the students are driven to evaluate their learning process, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and consider their improvement. These tasks help the students to be more aware of their critical thinking process and how they achieve their learning goals. By systematically engaging in self-assessment, students can develop their critical awareness of their own learning strategies, which is a key component of becoming more independent and reflective thinkers.

This study aims to investigate the critical thinking skill integration in the English textbook titled “English for Nusantara” Grade IX. By using the indicator from Ilyas’ indicators, this study tried to reveal how this book can shape students’ critical thinking skills. 1) clarification; (2) assumption; (3) reasons and evidence; (4) viewpoints or perspectives; (5) implications, consequences, and alternatives; (6) questions; (7) predictions; (8) agreement and disagreement; (10) summary and conclusion (Ilyas, 2018). Meanwhile, Facione (2011) proposed six indicators of critical thinking, there are; (1) interpretation, the ability to perceive and communicate the meaning of an issue, situation, topic, or problem; (2) analysis, recognizing and inferring links between ideas, opinion, statements, or even concepts; (3) evaluation, the ability to investigate the validity of an issue, and also the ability to access the link between the concept logically; (4) inference, the ability to recognize and collect the information needed to conclude; (5) explanation, the ability to explain a report, descriptions, opinions, or conclusions by giving the reasons convincingly and cohesively; (6) self-regulation, the ability to keep maintain track of cognitive activities. Self-regulation, also known as metacognition, which means promotes critical thinking skills. Self-regulation can be done by self-monitoring. So, based on these indicators above, the researcher decided to use the indicators by Ilyas.

The results showed that students are expected to be able to interpret some ideas, analyze the idea, and do the analysis to get deeper information and understanding, evaluate the credibility of the information to avoid a hoax, explain their own opinion, and then exchange their ideas with their peers. Thus, the “English for Nusantara” Grade IX has proven can shape students’ critical thinking skills because the instructions required students to develop their critical thinking skills. This result aligns because critical here implies evaluation of thoughts, ideas, or judgments with awareness, creativity, and refinement of these processes as needed (Alfira et al., 2022). Báez (2004) defined critical thinking as a kind of lateral thinking that helps people to assess and analyze data regarding an issue, phenomenon, or circumstance in order to make decisions that are appropriate for the circumstances.

The findings imply that the “English for Nusantara” grade IX textbook effectively incorporates discursive elements that force students to question underlying assumptions in text and encourage a more nuanced approach to language learning. Moreover, the findings align with the indicators promote by Ilyas (2018), it was found that of the ten indicators of critical thinking proposed by Ilyas, there are seven indicators included into “English Nusantara” Grade IX textbook; reasons and evidence; viewpoints or perspectives; questions; predictions; agreement and disagreement; summary and conclusion. This textbook provides many analytical readings which followed by questions that require students’ comprehension, which supports the statement Nainggolan & Wirza (2021) that a well-designed textbook helps students not only in understanding the content but also to question assumption, draw connection between concepts, and interpret evidence. In terms of comprehension, students as critical thinker assess an issue by a multitude of perspectives (Cojocariu & Butnaru, 2014), as stated in the excerpt below:

“Describe the situation in the comic. Say what happened on the trip.”

“What do you think about the sky and the water?”

The above questions require students to engage with the reading comprehensively. The response not only asks the students to find the answer in the reading section but also requires them to give their own perspectives. This finding aligns with research (Lailly & Wisudawati, (2015) that stated that this type of question can force the students’ critical thinking skills by stimulating them to dig deeper into thought and understanding.

“Make predictions about Monita’s personal experience according to the pictures.”

Using these kinds of questions will reinforce students cognitive process and require discourse that may activate their critical thinking skills. Dialogic critical thinking is important for teaching students to dig deeper into their understanding beyond what they already thought (Roohani & Heidari, 2012). This result is different from Huang (2019), which said that the textbook was not using more communicative instructions. Meanwhile, “English for Nusantara” Grade IX provides the students with communicative instructions.

“What do you think about the picture? How to save the Kingkong for being endangered?”

This type of question asks the students to observe and find the implied information generated in the picture. Therefore, critical thinking will be used for analyzing, applying, and evaluating implied information from the information given in the textbook (Heidari, 2020; Nainggolan & Wirza, 2021).

Unexpectedly, this textbook also provides learning-reflection in each chapter, and the students are asked to write their learning experience and assess their own process. This part is linked with one of critical thinking indicators proposed by Facione (2011) self-regulation, the ability to maintain track of cognitive activities. Self-regulation, also known as metacognition, which means promotes critical thinking skills. Self-regulation can be done by self-monitoring. This finding supports research Jamrus and Razali (2019) that found that self-reflection can be effective in the language learning process because it promotes students’ cognitive level, since they should think more deeply about their learning process. The students will assess their own work and take responsibility to fix or improving their learning. This process requires them to use critical thinking skills to spot mistakes and offer constructive criticism.

Then, this textbook also provides many kinds of project-based activities which can develop students’ critical thinking skills by immersing the students in real-world interactions and problems that require the students to do analysis, evaluation, and make decisions. These kinds of activities usually include identifying problems, searching credible information, giving solutions, evaluating different opinions, justifying their understanding and perspectives with evidence, and working in a team. Through these processes, students practically develop their critical thinking skills since they apply their knowledge in an authentic context, making learning more meaningful and

impactful. The active engagement from the textbook shows that the collaborative approach effectively encourages students to voice their perspectives while considering alternative viewpoints. A study Shamboul (2022) revealed that collaboration in the teaching and learning process is one of the processes to develop students' critical thinking skills.

"Write your review whether you agree or disagree with the writers. Post your review on the wall."

"Do you agree with the writer statement? Why? Or why not?"

Agreement and disagreement questions with a follow-up prompt "Why?" can also promote students' critical thinking skills. Students are forced to answer the questions with a reasonable explanation for the answer. This type of questions just like the Yes or No questions but oriented in agreement and disagreement, followed with "Why" question, it can develop analytical skills because it provokes dialogical critical thinking when the conversations become deeper than the common one, it might encourage students' critical thinking skills, this result prove the statement from research by (Hasnah et al., 2024; Ilyas, 2015) Moreover, with agreement and disagreement questions students should analyze the statement, review to their own experience or knowledge, and consider multiple perspectives. These processes not only train their opinions but also address counterarguments, fostering skills in giving reasoned arguments with evidence (Alfadda et al., 2020; Nizaruddin & Kusmaryono, 2023).

However, this book contains many questions with a yes or no type. Sadly, the questions only stop with Yes or No as the answer; this type of question will not stimulate learners to engage in higher levels of the cognitive process. *"Do you know why Orang Utan are the protected animals because it almost extinct? Support your argument with reasons."* This type of question asked the students not only to provide Yes or No as an answer, but also, they elaborate their answer with a reasoning and credible arguments. So that, this type of question can stimulate students' critical thinking skills because it requires more than simple answers and justifies their responses. According to Hamiloglu & Temiz, (2012) Yes or No questions with a follow-up prompt such as *"Why do you think so?"* or *"Explain your reason"* force the students to analyze the situation, giving and evaluate credible evidence, and articulate their thinking process. These processes challenge them to think comprehensively. Consider multiple perspectives and filter their reasons.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Through understanding the discourse in the textbook, we can know how far the textbook can develop the students' learning process. It helps the students to achieve their learning goals both in linguistic proficiency and other skills needed in learning, such as critical thinking skills.

This study found that the "English for Nusantara" Grade IX textbook holds potential for shaping students' critical thinking skills since the languages and activities in this textbook contain eight indicators of critical thinking skills promoted by Ilyas.

Additionally, this book also has languages and activities that can develop students' critical thinking skills by self-assessment, which are applied in each chapter of this textbook. However, this study only investigates a textbook titled "English for Nusantara" and only examines the ninth grade of Junior High School; in future research, maybe other researchers could explore more textbooks with different levels.

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