Integrating Critical Literacy in Language Teaching: An Innovative Strategy to Develop Reflective Thinking and Intercultural Competence

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Abstract. *This study explores critical literacy strategies, reflective abilities, and intercultural competence in language teaching to develop critical, reflective, and adaptive students. Research objectives include identifying key barriers, developing innovative strategies, and practical solutions for integrating critical literacy in education. The research uses a qualitative approach based on literature review, best practice analysis, and theoretical case studies. Data were analyzed through a descriptive-critical approach and thematic synthesis to produce a holistic framework. The research results show that the main obstacles include limited understanding of the socio-cultural context, difficulty analyzing multimodal texts, and embedded cultural stereotypes. Strategies such as authentic text discussions on socio-cultural themes, multimodal discourse analysis, and cross-cultural simulations have proven effective in improving students' critical literacy skills, reflective abilities, and intercultural sensitivity. This approach allows students to understand global issues in depth, develop analytical skills, and adapt to different cultural norms. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of critical literacy, multidimensional reflection, and intercultural competence in one holistic learning framework. This approach is relevant to facing the challenges of globalization and preparing students to become individuals who are responsive to an ever-evolving world. These findings provide an important contribution to the development of inclusive education that is relevant to the needs of the 21st century.*

Keywords: critical literacy; intercultural competence; language teaching; innovative strategy; reflective thinking

Introduction

The integration of critical literacy into language teaching has become a major concern in 21st-century education. Critical literacy involves the ability to understand, evaluate, and analyze texts in various socio-cultural contexts, making it essential for students in the age of information and globalization. This literacy not only helps students understand information but also encourages them to think reflectively and critically, which is highly relevant in facing the complex challenges of modern society (Supriandi, 2023; Walsh, 2021; Yanto et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, cultural diversity and the challenges of multicultural education present an urgent need for innovative learning approaches. Critical literacy serves as a means to build intercultural competence, which is crucial amidst social diversity. Strategies such as problem-based learning and reflective practice have demonstrated effectiveness in fostering students' critical thinking skills. For example, research by Aveling (2020), Purba (2023), and Purbarani et al. (2019) demonstrates how writing reflective poetry can integrate the creative process with the development of critical literacy. Furthermore, teacher training to enhance reflective practice and

classroom exploration is a crucial step in creating a learning environment that supports the development of critical literacy (Aminullah, 2021; Lestari, 2022; Yanto et al., 2023).

However, challenges remain in implementing critical literacy, particularly in ensuring a relevant and contextualized curriculum. Teaching modules and assessments specifically designed to support critical literacy are still lacking. This highlights the need for stronger collaboration between teachers, students, and the curriculum to create a holistic approach to language education (Lauder et al., 2021; Nindiasari, 2023; Ramli, 2023). The formulation of this research is: (1) What are the main obstacles faced in implementing critical literacy strategies towards students' reflective abilities and intercultural competence?; (2) What critical literacy strategies can be applied in language teaching to develop reflective thinking skills and intercultural competence?; (3) What practical solutions can be offered to overcome obstacles in implementing these critical literacy strategies?. This research aims to: (1) Analyze the obstacles of critical literacy strategies towards students' reflective abilities and intercultural competence; (2) Design innovative strategies that support the integration of critical literacy in language teaching; (3) Offer practical solutions to overcome obstacles in implementing critical literacy strategies to develop reflective thinking skills and intercultural competence.

The urgency of this research lies in the relevance of critical literacy as a key to facing the challenges of the digital era and globalization. Critical literacy supports students in understanding and evaluating information in a reflective manner, thus preparing them to become adaptive individuals in a global society. In the Indonesian context, critical literacy also plays a crucial role in building cross-cultural understanding, fostering tolerance, and enhancing students' social engagement in multicultural communities (Hunter, 2020; Purbarani et al., 2019; Yanto et al., 2023). As a tool for building intercultural dialogue, critical literacy supports students in understanding different sociocultural values, strengthening empathy, and broadening their perspectives. Learning strategies based on critical reflection have been shown to increase student motivation and engagement in learning. For example, through the analysis of literary texts or digital media, students can connect their personal experiences to the broader social context, creating meaningful and relevant learning (Nindiasari, 2023; Suthiwan, 2020) .

In an information age saturated with text and media, critical literacy is a fundamental skill that students must possess. This literacy enables students to evaluate and understand information in depth, helping them develop broader social and cultural awareness (Jaya, 2020; Muhtadi, 2023) . By using a critical literacy approach, language teaching becomes not only a tool for developing communication skills but also for building important intercultural competencies. Language, as a medium for social transformation, plays a crucial role in fostering intercultural dialogue. Critical literacy-based language instruction can help students understand and appreciate cultural diversity and build better relationships with people from different backgrounds. Previous research has shown that strengthening intercultural competence through critical literacy can enhance students' understanding of diverse cultural values, preparing them to contribute positively to a global society (Salsabila, 2022; Yusuf, 2020) . This study aims to address several shortcomings in critical literacy studies, namely:

1. Theory and Practice Gap: Previous research has focused more on critical literacy theory without applicable practical guidance for teachers.
2. Multicultural Context: Studies that describe in detail critical literacy integration strategies in multicultural language teaching contexts are still limited.
3. Relationship with Intercultural Competence: Research that explicitly links critical literacy with the development of intercultural competence is still rare.

This research offers novelty by combining reflective and intercultural approaches and developing innovative teaching modules to support critical literacy-based learning. Furthermore, this research will explore the use of various digital media and creative strategies, such as reflective poetry, to increase student engagement in the learning process. Critical literacy, as explained by Freire (2000) and Henry Giroux (1997) , is not merely the ability to read texts, but also to understand the socio-cultural context within them (Setiawan, 2021) . In the context of

modern education, critical literacy helps students analyze and question social realities, equipping them with the skills to face complex global challenges (Muhtadi, 2023) .

Intercultural competence is a key skill for navigating the increasingly intense intercultural interactions of the globalization era. Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006) describe this competence as a combination of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable an individual to adapt and communicate effectively in a cross-cultural environment (Ali et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2020) . In language learning, this competence not only fosters cross-cultural communication but also strengthens cross-cultural understanding. Reflective thinking, as formulated by John Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) , is an integral part of learning that encourages students to reflect on their experiences. In the context of language education, this reflection allows students to evaluate their learning experiences and develop a deeper understanding of the nuances of language and culture (Zakaria et al., 2019; Zen, 2023).

Critical Literacy in Language Teaching

Critical Literacy Integration

Language teaching is a highly strategic medium for integrating critical literacy. Hidayat et al. (2021) demonstrated that critical literacy enriches students' analytical skills, not only in reading texts but also in understanding the surrounding social context. Mukhlisin (2023) supports this with evidence that problem-based learning (PBL) models can significantly improve students' critical thinking skills. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the broader socio-cultural context, which is often overlooked in conventional language learning.Critical literacy studies also highlight the need to develop the ability to recognize ideology and bias in texts. This is crucial in the face of global information flows that are often rife with propaganda or manipulation.

Critical Literacy Strategy

Practical strategies such as text analysis, critical discussions, and issue-based projects have been shown to improve students' critical thinking skills. For example, Rengganis et al. (2019) examined the implementation of critical literacy through environmental issues in elementary schools, showing that students were able to develop both environmental awareness and analytical skills.

Furthermore, the use of digital media and technology in language learning, as outlined by Muhtadi (2023) , opens up new opportunities to explore critical literacy. Technology-based collaborative projects enable students to engage in the analysis of globally relevant social issues, strengthening the relevance of learning to real life.

Rahmi (2020) emphasized the importance of innovative learning models for improving literacy skills. Issue-based projects give students the freedom to explore issues they deem important, increasing their engagement in the learning process.

Intercultural Competence in Language Teaching

The Relationship between Language and Culture

Language is not only a means of communication but also a reflection of culture. Research by Ermitati (2022) shows that effective language teaching cannot be separated from cultural teaching. Language embodies the values and norms inherent in the culture of its speakers. Therefore, language learning must encompass cultural understanding to enhance students' intercultural competence.

Menggo (2023) shows that integrating local cultural elements into English language learning in Indonesia provides students with a richer perspective on cultural diversity. This helps students understand English not only as a global communication tool but also as a means of understanding different cultural perspectives.

Implementation of Intercultural Competence

Implementing intercultural competency in the classroom requires a creative and innovative approach. Wahyudi (2021) noted that a project-based approach provides students with opportunities to collaborate in problem-solving, develop cross-cultural communication skills, and appreciate diversity.

However, there are challenges that need to be addressed, including a lack of teacher training and resources to integrate cultural elements into language learning (Rosni, 2021) . Furthermore, creating an inclusive learning environment that values all students remains a major challenge.

Digital technology offers solutions to some of these challenges. As explained by Nahdi et al. (2021) and Adnyana (2022) , digital resources can be used to enrich students' learning experiences, providing access to relevant cross-cultural learning materials.

Language teaching that integrates critical literacy and intercultural competence offers significant benefits. Critical literacy equips students with the ability to analyze information in depth, while intercultural competence helps them understand and appreciate cultural diversity. With innovative approaches, such as project-based learning and the use of digital technology, language education can prepare students to face the challenges of a globalized world.

Method

This study departs from a theoretical approach that connects three main concepts: critical literacy, intercultural competence, and reflective thinking. The theoretical frameworks of Freire (2000) and Henry Giroux (1997) serve as the basis for understanding critical literacy as a tool for liberation from oppressive structures. Freire and Giroux emphasize the importance of an individual's ability to critically read texts and contexts, which is relevant to language teaching as a means of building social consciousness. Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006) , through their intercultural models, highlight the importance of knowledge, attitudes, and skills in building effective cross-cultural competence, while John Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) reinforces the importance of reflection in the learning process to enhance understanding and skills. This line of thinking is combined with an analysis of best practices and a synthesis of relevant literature to produce strategies that can be effectively implemented in the classroom.

Data collection was conducted through three main steps: a literature review, an analysis of best practices, and a theoretical case study. The literature review included searching academic sources such as journals, books, and recent research reports that discuss **critical literacy.** (Andreani et al., 2021; Cahyani et al., 2023; Damaianti et al., 2020; Halimah, 2020; Hibino & Matruglio, 2024; Khramchenko, 2023; Nabhan, 2021; Novianti et al., 2020; Perales-Escudero et al., 2023; Setyarini et al., 2020) , **reflective thinking** (Gozali et al., 2021; Lateh et al., 2021; Mashaqba et al., 2022; Rahimpour et al., 2020; Sumekto et al., 2022; Tjahjani & Jinanto, 2021; Triastuti et al., 2022) , and **intercultural competence** (Idris, 2020; Lugman, 2023; Mahriyuni et al., 2024; Nurlaelawati et al., 2022; Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021; Sumardi & Guci, 2023; Zhou & Halim, 2022) indexed by Scopus that appeared within the last 5 years (2020-2024). The selected literature meets the criteria of relevance, credibility, and novelty.

Data analysis was conducted through three main approaches: descriptive-critical analysis, thematic synthesis, and framework development. Descriptive-critical techniques were used to identify key elements of critical literacy, intercultural competence, and reflection in relevant literature. This analysis provided a basis for understanding the relationship between key concepts and their application in language teaching. Thematic synthesis was conducted by identifying key themes from the literature, such as the relevance of critical literacy in social issue-based learning.

This research refers to several key reference standards that underlie the validity and effectiveness of the methodology. For critical literacy, the concepts of Freire (2000) and Giroux (1997) serve as a reference in building social awareness through language learning. Intercultural competence refers to the model developed by Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006) which

provides a framework for understanding cross-cultural communication. Reflective thinking follows the approach of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) who emphasize the importance of reflection in learning. Evaluation standards include three main criteria: effectiveness, sustainability, and innovation. Effectiveness is measured based on the strategy's impact on student learning outcomes, sustainability is assessed through the potential for adaptation across cultural contexts, and innovation is evaluated through the novelty of the approach used in language learning.

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Barriers to the Implementation of Critical Literacy Strategies, Reflective Skills, and Intercultural Competence

Category	Major Obstacles	Impact
Critical Literacy Strategy	1. Limited student understanding of certain socio-cultural issues raised in authentic texts (Andreani et al., 2021; Cahyani et al., 2023; Damaianti et al., 2020).	Students need more time to understand the context before they can provide critical analysis.
	2. Difficulties in analyzing complex multimodal texts (Halimah, 2020; Hibino & Matruglio, 2024; Khramchenko, 2023).	The results of student analysis are sometimes not in-depth or only focus on elements that are more clearly visible.
	3. Challenges in expressing different views rationally during debates (Nabhan, 2021; Novianti et al., 2020; Perales-Escudero et al., 2023; Setyarini et al., 2020).	Students who lack self-confidence tend to be passive, so they are less than optimal in exploring other perspectives.
Reflective Ability	1. Lack of student experience in identifying implicit bias (Gozali et al., 2021; Lateh et al., 2021; Mashaqba et al., 2022) .	The results of student bias analysis tend to be superficial or focused on explicit elements only.
	2. Students' reflective thinking patterns are still developing, so the critical questions asked are not yet in-depth enough (Rahimpour et al., 2020; Sumekto et al., 2022; Tjahjani & Jinanto, 2021; Triastuti et al., 2022) .	The questions asked are often descriptive, rather than analytical or evaluative.
Intercultural Competence	1. Cultural stereotypes that are embedded in students' thinking (Idris, 2020; Lugman, 2023; Mahriyuni et al., 2024) .	Students need additional effort to shed false assumptions about other cultures before they can deeply understand diversity.
	2. Difficulty in adapting communication styles to different cultural contexts (Nurlaelawati et al., 2022; Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021; Sumardi & Guci, 2023; Zhou & Halim, 2022) .	Some students demonstrated a lack of cultural sensitivity or a tendency to use their own cultural norms in cross-cultural simulations.

Table 2. Innovative Strategies for Integrating Critical Literacy, Developing Reflective Thinking Skills, and Enhancing Intercultural Competence

Findings	Strategy	Results/Impact
Critical Literacy Strategy	Discussion of Authentic Texts with Socio-Cultural Themes (Andreani et al., 2021; Cahyani et al., 2023; Damaianti et al., 2020).	Students demonstrate critical thinking, for example identifying gender bias in local short stories.
	Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Halimah, 2020; Hibino & Matruglio, 2024; Khramchenko, 2023).	A deeper understanding of culture and values through comparison of advertising between countries.
	Debate and Critical Reflection (Nabhan, 2021; Novianti et al., 2020; Perales-Escudero et al.,	Awareness of other perspectives is increasing, as in discussions about "English as a Global

	2023; Setyarini et al., 2020).	Language".
Development of Reflective Thinking Skills	Identifying Biases and Different Perspectives (Gozali et al., 2021; Lateh et al., 2021; Mashaqba et al., 2022) .	Students can note bias in texts and critique unbalanced depictions of groups.
	Critical Questioning Ability (Rahimpour et al., 2020; Sumekto et al., 2022; Tjahjani & Jinanto, 2021; Triastuti et al., 2022).	Reflective thinking is enhanced by in-depth questions such as those about the dominance of a particular perspective.
Improving Intercultural Competence	Understanding Diversity (Idris, 2020; Lugman, 2023; Mahriyuni et al., 2024).	Awareness of cultural diversity is increasing, as evidenced by the assignment on cultural stereotypes.
	Adaptation Skills in Intercultural Communication (Nurlaelawati et al., 2022; Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021; Sumardi & Guci, 2023; Zhou & Halim, 2022).	Increasing students' confidence in cross-cultural communication through simulation.

Table 3. Practical Solutions to Critical Literacy Strategies and the Development of Reflective-Intercultural Competence

Category	Major Obstacles	Practical Solutions	Expected results
Critical Literacy Strategy	1. Limited student understanding of certain socio-cultural issues (Andreani et al., 2021; Cahyani et al., 2023; Damaianti et al., 2020).	- Provide initial context through introductory discussions. - Provide supporting materials such as related videos or articles.	Students understand the context more quickly, so that analysis becomes more critical and in-depth.
	2. Difficulties in analyzing multimodal texts (Halimah, 2020; Hibino & Matruglio, 2024; Khramchenko, 2023).	- Train students with multimodal element analysis guides. - Use simple examples for the initial stage.	Students' understanding of multimodal elements increases, including the relationship between verbal and non-verbal elements.
	3. Challenges in expressing different views rationally (Nabhan, 2021; Novianti et al., 2020; Perales-Escudero et al., 2023; Setyarini et al., 2020).	- Create a supportive and stress-free discussion environment. - Provide examples of good arguments.	Students are more confident in participating in discussions, so that exploration of other perspectives is more optimal.
Reflective Ability	1. Lack of student experience in identifying implicit bias (Gozali et al., 2021; Lateh et al., 2021; Mashaqba et al., 2022) .	- Uses texts containing explicit bias as a starting exercise. - Provides a step-by-step guide to identifying implicit bias.	Students are more skilled at recognizing bias, both explicit and implicit.
	2. Students' reflective thinking patterns are still developing, so critical questions are not yet in-depth (Rahimpour et al., 2020; Sumekto et al., 2022; Tjahjani & Jinanto, 2021; Triastuti et al.,	- Train students in problem reframing methods. - Encourage the use of reflective guiding questions during learning.	Student questions progress from descriptive to analytical and evaluative.

	2022).		
Intercultural Competence	1. Cultural stereotypes that are embedded in students' thinking (Idris, 2020; Lugman, 2023; Mahriyuni et al., 2024).	- Engage students in real-life case studies that debunk stereotypes. - Use media such as films or documentaries to provide new cultural insights.	Students become more open to other cultures and reduce false assumptions.
	2. Difficulty adapting communication styles to different cultural contexts (Nurlaelawati et al., 2022; Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021; Sumardi & Guci, 2023; Zhou & Halim, 2022).	- Train students through cross-cultural simulations with various scenarios. - Provide direct feedback on the communication styles used.	Students demonstrate increased confidence and sensitivity in cross-cultural communication.

Discussion Table 1: Barriers to the Implementation of Critical Literacy Strategies, Reflective Skills, and Intercultural Competence

Critical literacy is a crucial element in learning that aims to improve students' ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate complex socio-cultural issues. However, students' limited understanding of the socio-cultural context in authentic texts is often a major obstacle. Previous research by Halimah et al. (2020), Damaianti et al. (2020), and Sabhan (2021) showed that students require more time to understand the context before being able to provide in-depth critical analysis. This obstacle can be overcome by introducing a more structured context, such as an initial discussion guide or supplementary learning materials. This step allows students to accelerate the process of understanding the socio-cultural context raised in the text.

Another difficulty students often experience is analyzing multimodal texts, which contain both verbal and visual elements. According to Novianti et al. (2020), Muniroh et al. (2021), and Perales-Escudero et al. (2023), students' analysis tends to be limited to more obvious elements, such as images in advertisements, while implicit meanings are often overlooked. To address this, students need additional training to identify non-verbal messages and the relationship between verbal and visual elements. Interdisciplinary approaches, such as integrating visual arts with language learning, can also help students understand the hidden meanings in multimodal texts. Furthermore, low self-confidence often limits students' ability to express their rational views during debates. Research by Setyarini et al. (2020), Cahyani et al. (2023), and Khramchenko (2023) noted that students who lack self-confidence tend to be passive, resulting in less than optimal exploration of alternative perspectives. Possible solutions include the use of small group discussions to create a more supportive environment and the application of role-play techniques to help students understand different points of view.

In addition to critical literacy, students' reflective skills are also an important component of the learning process. However, students often face difficulties in identifying biases, especially implicit ones. Rahimpour et al. (2020), Mashaqba et al. (2022), and Tjahjani & Jinanto (2021) found that students' analytical results tend to be superficial because they focus more on explicit biases. To improve this ability, students can be taught deeper analytical techniques, such as narrative deconstruction and observing the author's perspective. Furthermore, students' reflective thinking patterns are often still developing, so the questions they ask tend to be descriptive rather than analytical or evaluative. Lateh et al. (2021), Gozali et al. (2021), and Sumekto et al. (2022) note that this mindset indicates the need for more systematic exercises, such as analytical thinking simulations and issue reframing. This approach can help students develop critical thinking skills gradually.

Intercultural competence is also an important area that must be developed in education. Cultural stereotypes embedded in students' thinking often hinder their understanding of cultural diversity. Research by Idris (2020) and Zhou & Halim (2022) shows that students need additional effort to dismantle their false assumptions about other cultures before they can

understand diversity in depth. Specially designed activities, such as case studies or analysis of real-life experiences, can help students overcome these stereotypes. Another challenge is students' difficulty adapting their communication styles to different cultural contexts. Permatasari & Andriyanti (2021) and Lugman (2023) note that a lack of cultural sensitivity often leads to the use of their own cultural norms in cross-cultural simulations. To address this challenge, interactive training involving intercultural communication simulations can be provided to students. This training not only builds students' confidence but also increases their sensitivity to different cultural norms.

Based on these findings, efforts to improve critical literacy learning, reflective skills, and intercultural competence require a holistic approach. Barriers such as limited understanding of context, shallow bias analysis, and cultural stereotypes can be overcome through enriched learning resources, in-depth analysis exercises, and more frequent simulations. A supportive learning environment is also key. Teachers need to create a safe space where students can experiment with their critical ideas without fear of being wrong, especially during debates and discussions. The combination of critical literacy strategies, reflective training, and increased intercultural sensitivity can accelerate students' development in reflective thinking and cultural competence. Thus, students will not only be able to face learning challenges but also be prepared to engage in complex global interactions.

Discussion Table 2: Innovative Strategies for Integrating Critical Literacy, Developing Reflective Thinking Skills, and Enhancing Intercultural Competence

Critical literacy and intercultural competence are two complementary aspects of education in preparing students to face the challenges of globalization. Critical literacy helps students understand texts deeply by identifying biases, imbalanced perspectives, and ideological implications. Meanwhile, intercultural competence encourages students to understand cultural diversity, increase sensitivity to differences, and strengthen cross-cultural communication skills (Halimah et al., 2020; Idris, 2020). Strategies that support the development of these two aspects include discussions of authentic texts with socio-cultural themes, multimodal discourse analysis, and intercultural simulations. These findings demonstrate a significant impact on the development of critical thinking, reflective skills, and cultural adaptability, which are highly relevant for creating a generation of humanistic and globally oriented learners.

Discussing authentic texts on socio-cultural themes is one approach that has shown significant results in developing students' critical literacy. Teachers use texts relevant to global issues, such as gender equality and cultural diversity, which students then discuss in groups. This activity encourages students to identify bias and evaluate underrepresented perspectives. For example, students successfully identified gender bias in local short stories and provided suggestions for creating a balance between character perspectives (Damaianti et al., 2020; Sabhan, 2021). Furthermore, multimodal discourse analysis provides students with a broader perspective through the analysis of non-verbal media such as advertisements and videos. For example, students compared advertisements from different countries and found that cultural norms are reflected in the way messages are conveyed. Advertisements from Asian countries, for example, often emphasize group harmony, while advertisements from Western countries focus more on individualism (Novianti et al., 2020; Muniroh et al., 2021; Perales-Escudero et al., 2023). This strategy broadens students' understanding of cultural symbols and strengthens their ability to understand the world from multiple perspectives. Within the context of critical reflection, debates on global issues, such as "English as a Global Language," encourage students to evaluate their views. After the debate, students record in reflective journals how their views have evolved. For example, one student realized that English can be seen as a tool of cultural colonialism in some countries (Setyarini et al., 2020; Cahyani et al., 2023; Khramchenko, 2023). This activity helps students understand other perspectives and develops their ability to construct rational and critical arguments.

The development of students' reflective thinking skills is also an important outcome of the critical literacy approach. Students become increasingly skilled at identifying explicit and implicit bias in texts. In analyzing stories about ethnicity, students noted how certain groups

were portrayed as "heroes," while others were portrayed negatively without clear justification (Rahimpour et al., 2020; Mashaqba et al., 2022; Tjahjani & Jinanto, 2021). Furthermore, students' critical questioning skills improved significantly. Student journals show that they frequently asked reflective questions, such as "Why is only a certain perspective highlighted in this text?" or "How might this text influence how we view other cultures?" (Lateh et al., 2021; Gozali et al., 2021; Sumekto et al., 2022). These questioning skills reflect a deeper reflective mindset, enabling students to connect the text to its broader social context.

In addition to critical literacy, findings indicate that students' intercultural competence develops through activities that foster an understanding of cultural diversity. Through group discussions and discourse analysis, students become more aware of the importance of respecting different cultural perspectives. In their final project assignment, students successfully developed a presentation exploring cultural stereotypes and their impact on cross-cultural communication (Idris, 2020; Zhou & Halim, 2022). This activity helped students reduce inaccurate assumptions about other cultures while raising their awareness of the importance of diversity. Intercultural communication simulations, in which students played the roles of tourists, tour guides, or diplomats, also strengthened their ability to adapt their communication styles to different cultural norms. As a result, students demonstrated increased confidence in cross-cultural interactions, including the ability to use relevant and polite expressions appropriate to specific cultural contexts (Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021; Lugman, 2023).

These findings suggest that critical literacy and intercultural competence strategies can have a significant impact on developing critical, reflective, and adaptive students. By utilizing authentic texts, discourse analysis, and intercultural simulations, students not only broaden their horizons but also develop skills relevant to their future lives. Discussions of authentic texts with socio-cultural themes help students understand the texts both literally and evaluatively. Multimodal discourse analysis allows students to see how culture and values are reflected in diverse media, while intercultural simulations encourage them to adapt to different cultural norms. From an educational perspective, these findings underscore the importance of integrating critical literacy and intercultural competence into the curriculum. Critical thinking, reflective inquiry, and cultural adaptation are essential skills for facing the challenges of globalization. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of these strategies across various educational and cultural contexts to ensure their broad and flexible applicability.

Overall, the critical literacy and intercultural competency strategies outlined in these findings provide a strong foundation for an inclusive, humanistic, and globally oriented education. By implementing these approaches, students not only become better learners but also individuals who are more aware of their role in a multicultural society. Further research is needed to explore how these strategies can be applied more broadly, particularly in an era of education that must face the challenges of globalization and rapid technological development.

Discussion Table 3: Critical Literacy Strategies and the Development of Reflective-Intercultural Competence

Critical literacy is a crucial skill in modern learning that enables students to understand, analyze, and evaluate information with a critical perspective. However, students often face complex obstacles in developing critical literacy, such as limited understanding of socio-cultural issues, difficulties analyzing multimodal texts, and challenges in conveying rational perspectives. Based on previous research (Halimah et al., 2020; Damaianti et al., 2020; Sabhan, 2021), students' limited understanding of socio-cultural contexts can be addressed through preliminary discussions and the provision of supporting materials such as documentary videos or related articles. In this way, students can gain relevant initial insights before engaging in text analysis, enabling them to understand the broader context and produce more critical analysis.

Difficulty analyzing multimodal texts, which involve both verbal and non-verbal elements, is also a major challenge (Novianti et al., 2020; Muniroh et al., 2021; Perales-Escudero et al., 2023). To overcome this obstacle, teachers can provide analytical guidance that includes elements such as images, colors, symbols, and words. Gradual exercises starting with simple examples, such as comparing advertisements from two different cultures, can help

students understand the relationship between verbal and non-verbal elements. This approach not only improves students' analytical skills but also enriches their understanding of the complexity of multimodal texts.

Another challenge students face is the difficulty in expressing rational and logical views, especially when those views differ from the majority (Setyarini et al., 2020; Cahyani et al., 2023; Khramchenko, 2023). A safe and pressure-free discussion environment can encourage students to actively participate. Teachers can also provide examples of well-structured arguments to help students construct their own rational arguments. Through this strategy, students become more confident in exploring other perspectives, enriching discussions, and deepening their understanding of the topic.

Students' reflective skills are often limited, especially in recognizing implicit bias (Rahimpour et al., 2020; Mashaqba et al., 2022; Tjahjani & Jinanto, 2021). To improve these skills, teachers can begin by providing texts containing explicit bias as initial practice. They can then provide step-by-step guidance for identifying implicit bias, such as using the guiding question: "What is not said in this text, and why?" This strategy helps students gradually hone their critical thinking skills, enabling them to recognize hidden biases in the text.

Furthermore, students' reflective thinking patterns are often not fully developed, so the critical questions posed are still descriptive in nature (Lateh et al., 2021; Gozali et al., 2021; Sumekto et al., 2022). In this case, problem reframing techniques can be used to encourage students to view the problem from different perspectives. Teachers can also provide a list of reflective questions to help students develop analytical questions, such as "What are the underlying assumptions in this text?" or "Who benefits and loses from this perspective?" With these strategies, students can develop more evaluative questions, improving their overall reflective skills.

In the context of intercultural competence, cultural stereotypes embedded in students' thinking become a significant obstacle (Idris, 2020; Zhou & Halim, 2022). Real-life case studies that debunk cultural stereotypes can help students recognize and address false assumptions. The use of media such as films or documentaries also provides new insights into cultural diversity, making students more open to differences and able to appreciate diversity. Another challenge faced is adapting communication styles to different cultural norms (Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021; Lugman, 2023). In this regard, cross-cultural simulations involving interactive scenarios, such as playing the role of a diplomat or tour guide, can train students to communicate effectively in various cultural contexts. Direct feedback from teachers also helps students understand their mistakes and improve their communication styles.

Overall, a systematically designed critical literacy strategy, combined with the development of reflective skills and intercultural competence, can equip students with relevant skills to face global challenges. This approach emphasizes the importance of providing early context, gradual training, and relevant learning experiences to effectively build students' analytical, reflective, and culturally sensitive skills. Implementing these practical solutions not only improves students' ability to comprehend texts but also enriches their perspectives on social, cultural, and global issues, preparing them to become critical and responsive individuals in an ever-evolving world.

The Emergence of New Theories and Modification of Existing Theories

In modern language teaching, developing learning theories based on critical literacy, multidimensional reflection, and intercultural competence is essential. Based on a synthesis of key theories and recent research findings, five new theories or modifications to key theories can be proposed to address the challenges of 21st-century learning. These theories are designed to produce more adaptive, relevant, and innovative learning strategies, taking into account the integration of technology and the challenges of globalization.

Dynamic Critical Literacy Theory

This theory is rooted in the concept of critical literacy introduced by Paulo Freire (1970) and Henry Giroux (1997), which emphasizes literacy as a tool for liberation from oppressive

structures. The proposed modification is the integration of modern multimodal elements into critical literacy, such as the ability to read and analyze the relationship between verbal and visual elements. In this context, students are not only trained to understand texts in the traditional sense, but also to evaluate ideological bias in digital media-based texts, such as social media or advertisements. Findings from Novianti et al. (2020), Muniroh et al. (2021), and Perales-Escudero et al. (2023) indicate that students often struggle to analyze complex multimodal texts, so their understanding tends to be limited to the more explicitly visible elements. Therefore, this theory introduces a visual literacy approach as an integral part of critical literacy, by training students to identify non-verbal messages and the relationship between verbal and visual elements in multimodal texts. This approach can be implemented through learning modules that integrate digital text analysis to help students address contemporary biases.

Adaptive Intercultural Competence Model

This model modifies the theory of intercultural competence developed by Michael Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006). Traditional intercultural competence focuses on developing knowledge, attitudes, and skills for cross-cultural communication. The proposed modification is the addition of the element of "digital adaptation," namely students' ability to interact across cultures through virtual media. Findings from Idris (2020), Zhou & Halim (2022), and Permatasari & Andriyanti (2021) indicate that students often struggle to adapt their communication styles to different cultural norms, especially in cross-cultural contexts. Therefore, this model introduces the concept of "Digital Intercultural Competence," where students not only understand other cultures but also adapt their communication in cross-cultural digital contexts. Practical applications of this model include virtual intercultural communication simulation-based training, such as role-playing scenarios as diplomats or online tour guides, to train students to adapt to various cultural norms.

Multidimensional Critical Reflection

This theory modifies the reflection approach proposed by John Dewey (1933) and Donald Schön (1983). Traditional critical reflection focuses on evaluating past experiences to enhance understanding and skills. The proposed modification is the addition of a "Predictive Reflection" dimension, in which students not only evaluate bias but also predict the social impact of that biased representation. Findings from Rahimpour et al. (2020), Mashaqba et al. (2022), and Tjahjani & Jinanto (2021) indicate that students often struggle to identify implicit bias, resulting in shallow analysis. This theory emphasizes teaching in-depth analysis techniques, such as narrative deconstruction and observing the author's perspective, to help students recognize explicit and implicit bias in texts. This approach can be implemented through exercises analyzing the social impact of online news or opinion texts, which help students understand the consequences of unbalanced perspectives.

Holistic Teaching Strategies for Critical Literacy and Intercultural Competence

This theory integrates critical literacy, multidimensional reflection, and intercultural competence into a holistic learning model. This approach combines critical literacy strategies with reflective skills and intercultural competence to equip students with relevant skills in the era of globalization. A proposed modification is the use of a "Real-World Simulation Project," where students engage in learning activities that include socio-cultural text discussions, critical reflection, and intercultural simulations. Based on findings from Setyarini et al. (2020), Cahyani et al. (2023), and Khramchenko (2023), students often show increased awareness of other perspectives after engaging in critical discussion and reflection. This strategy can be implemented through learning activities such as debate simulations on global issues, where students must present their views after conducting critical text analysis and intercultural simulations. This approach not only helps students understand socio-cultural issues but also builds their ability to adapt to different cultural norms.

Multimodal Literacy and Intercultural Competence Integration Framework

This framework modifies critical literacy and intercultural competence theories by adding a multimodal analysis dimension. This framework is designed to analyze multimodal texts with a focus on intercultural sensitivity. Based on findings from Damaianti et al. (2020), Sabhan (2021), and Perales-Escudero et al. (2023), students often struggle to understand the relationship between verbal and visual elements in multimodal texts, especially in different cultural contexts. This framework includes analyzing verbal and visual elements in advertisements, videos, or other media, linked to their underlying cultural values. Practical applications of this framework include modules analyzing advertising texts from various countries to identify cultural differences and hidden messages. Through this approach, students not only learn to understand multimodal texts but also develop sensitivity to different cultural values.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the application of critical literacy strategies, reflective skills, and intercultural competence can make a significant contribution to developing critical, reflective, and adaptive students. Common obstacles, such as students' limited understanding of socio-cultural contexts, difficulties in analyzing multimodal texts, and embedded cultural stereotypes, can be overcome with a structured and innovative approach. Strategies such as authentic text discussions, multimodal element analysis training, and cross-cultural simulations have been shown to accelerate students' understanding of socio-cultural issues and enhance their reflective thinking skills. These findings also highlight the importance of providing a supportive learning environment where students can explore critical ideas and diverse perspectives without pressure.

The main novelty of this study lies in the integration of a critical literacy approach with multidimensional reflection and intercultural competence within a holistic learning framework. This approach not only helps students develop analytical and reflective skills but also builds their sensitivity to cultural diversity, thus better preparing them to face the challenges of globalization. By combining these strategies, learning becomes more relevant to the needs of an increasingly complex world, especially in the era of technology and cross-cultural interaction. This integration emphasizes the importance of linking critical analysis of texts with practical applications in global social and cultural contexts.

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