



From Reading Comprehension to Critical Literacy: Adapting Huh's Model in Online Indonesian EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Critical literacy has become an essential component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading instruction, yet its implementation remains challenging in online learning environments where students often struggle to move beyond literal comprehension toward critical engagement with texts. Although Huh's instructional model provides a structured framework for developing critical literacy, evidence regarding its adaptation to online EFL contexts remains limited. This study investigated how an adapted version of Huh's model supported the development of reading comprehension and critical literacy in an online Indonesian EFL classroom. Employing collaborative classroom action research, the study involved 21 undergraduate students across three iterative instructional cycles. Data were collected through reading assessments, students' digital artifacts, and structured online classroom observations, and analyzed using descriptive statistics alongside Miles and Huberman's interactive qualitative analysis. The findings indicate that the adapted model progressively strengthened students' reading comprehension and critical literacy by integrating scaffolded learning activities, explicit instruction in critical literacy concepts, locally relevant sociopolitical texts, and student-generated critical questioning. The iterative refinement of instructional practices also encouraged students to engage more critically with multiple perspectives and develop evidence-based responses to authentic social issues. This study extends Huh's framework by demonstrating how context-sensitive pedagogical adaptations can effectively support critical literacy development in online EFL settings. The findings offer practical guidance for designing online reading instruction that integrates critical pedagogy with meaningful local contexts while fostering students' critical engagement with contemporary societal issues.

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to read critically is increasingly recognized as one of the most essential skills for students in a digital learning environment, as it becomes a natural partner to pedagogical approaches that enable learners to uncover, address, question, and solve social problems (Amgott, 2018; Nurhidayat et al., 2025; Suhono et al., 2025). However, the reading process goes beyond simply decoding text or understanding its surface meaning; the process rarely involves engaging

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with the underlying sociocultural and political contexts that shape the text. In fact, current EFL reading classrooms have shifted away from traditional models that treat texts as isolated entities, encouraging students to analyze the broader sociopolitical factors that influence their production. For instance, prior studies showed that texts related to inclusive education are often analyzed with a focus on the political interests surrounding their creation, prompting students to evaluate the authors' ideological stances (Cho, 2014; Setyaningsih, 2019). This shift in teaching practices is grounded in the concept of Critical Language Awareness (CLA), which emphasizes reading as a process rather than a static product (Fairclough, 1992). Through this lens, students are urged to question the text's content, context, and hidden agendas (Aviyanti et al., 2025).

Despite the growing recognition of critical literacy (CL) as a crucial aspect of reading instruction, EFL classrooms continue to face significant challenges particularly in online context which cover students' bilingual or multilingual backgrounds complicating their ability to engage critically with texts (Keneman, 2016; Lau, 2019), as well as teachers' limited understanding of how to implement CL effectively (Gustine & Insani, 2019; Kuki et al., 2025). In addition, there is often an overemphasis on language skills but less attention paid to the critical engagement required to understand texts deeply (Huh, 2016). These challenges point to the need to adapt and implement powerful instructional practices that link critical and digital literacies, equipping students with the skills to continue questioning multiple viewpoints and to promote social justice issues within and beyond classroom walls (Amgott, 2018; Wibowo & Saliman, 2025).

To address these issues, several CL models have emerged, each offering valuable insights into integrating critical literacy into EFL reading instruction. Some models, however, lack a clear, scaffolded approach applicable across diverse EFL contexts (Huh, 2016). For example, while models from Cope & Kalantzis (2000) and The New London Group (1996) provide frameworks for integrating metalanguage, they do not directly apply to EFL contexts (Huh, 2016). Similarly, the model proposed by Lau (2013) incorporates various dimensions of reading, including textual and personal aspects, but in its implementation, it pays little attention to teacher training and the specific demands of the EFL classroom. In contrast, Huh (2016) offers a balanced framework that combines foundational reading skills with critical engagement, making it more accessible to EFL students across contexts.

Moreover, some recent adaptations of The Huh's (2016) model, such as those proposed by Kurniawati et al. (2020), Suh & Huh (2023), and Vasquez et al. (2019), have sought to refine the framework to address emerging challenges in EFL contexts. For instance, Suh & Huh (2023) have incorporated emotional engagement and citizenship into their model of CL, offering a more holistic approach to CL attainment. On the other hand, Kurniawati et al. (2020) provide a step-by-step guide to teaching CL skills, though their model may lack the progressive, scaffolded approach Huh emphasized. (Vasquez et al., 2019) frame CL as a transformative practice that addresses social and structural issues, requiring higher levels of teacher training and language acquisition, which can be challenging for teachers in many EFL reading settings.

While these newer models build on Huh's (2016) work, his framework remains foundational due to its clarity and accessibility. Several studies have shown that the Huh's model effectively supports EFL students in overcoming challenges related to CL by enabling them to analyze ideological constructs while enhancing their English proficiency (Bacon, 2017; Balıkcıoğlu Akkuş & Uysal, 2024; Novianti et al., 2020; Saiphet, 2025). Despite its strengths, the implementation of CL in Indonesian EFL classrooms remains inconsistent, with existing research relying primarily on qualitative studies rather than concrete, actionable models (Gustine & Insani, 2019; Mambu, 2023; Setyaningsih, 2019). To address these gaps, this study adapts The Huh's (2016) framework, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to enhance students' critical literacy skills in an EFL online academic reading classroom. By adapting this model, the study aims to explore the potential of a practical approach to fostering critical engagement with texts in EFL contexts, ensuring that students not only develop reading comprehension but also the skills to analyze, critique the multiple perspectives and ideologies of texts, and create their own solutions and perspectives in an online learning environment.

METHOD

To address the issues identified in this study, Classroom Action Research (CAR) was implemented because its iterative, emancipatory nature is well-suited to developing critical literacy in an online EFL context. Critical literacy is not a static set of skills, but a situated social practice that requires students to deconstruct power dynamics, biases, and multiple perspectives within texts (Janks, 2010; Luke, 2012). In an online EFL environment, instructional strategies must be responsive to students' evolving linguistic and analytical needs. CAR accommodates this through its cyclical process, allowing the English teacher and researchers to continuously monitor, evaluate, and adapt online facilitation strategies to ensure the digital classroom remains a dialogic space that empowers students to question assumptions and actively negotiate meanings of texts.

To enact this methodology, CAR was conducted through systematic, collaborative reflection. According to Angelides et al. (2005), collaborative inquiry in CAR encourages English teachers to investigate their practices in partnership with other researchers, enriching their learning experience and enhancing student outcomes (Mettetal, 2002). In this study, collaborative reflection was operationalized as a structured partnership between the English teacher-researcher and a peer observer. This reflection occurred at the end of each cycle after every three online sessions. During these reflective sessions, the researchers collaboratively analyzed specific pedagogical data, including online observation sheets and students' digital artifacts. By examining this data, the collaborators were able to identify gaps in students' critical engagement, such as their ability to respond to critical questions and share their perspectives. These insights directly informed the planning of the subsequent cycle by dictating specific pedagogical adjustments, such as introducing the abstract concepts of CL in cycle1, redesigning the activities that allow the students to brainstorm and understand the texts, and engage in critical discussion in cycle 2, and replanning the activities to chance for students to initiate their own critical questions in the last cycle, thereby systematically refining the online instructional approach.

Participants and contexts

This research was conducted in the Department of Teacher Training and Education and the Faculty of English Education at a State university in East Java, Indonesia. The study aimed to enhance students' critical literacy (CL) skills, which, according to the syllabus, are part of the extended general competence and are integrated into skills-based reading courses. The participants were fourth-semester students enrolled in the online academic reading course during the 2024-2025 academic year. They were selected for their limited CL skills, as indicated by their reading test results and online observations during the preliminary study. The students' English proficiency ranged from intermediate to upper-intermediate, which was deemed sufficient to address the course's critical literacy skills.

There were 21 students (5 males and 16 females), aged between 18 and 25. A total of 21 respondents can be considered sufficient for conducting collaborative classroom action research because the researcher will be able to interact effectively with this group of participants while still being able to conduct an efficient data analysis. As stated by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000), the practice of collaborative action research usually involves working with a small number of participants, approximately between 10 and 30 people, because this will facilitate the depth and quality of collaborative reflection. In addition, since it is known that the main goal of Classroom Action Research is to enhance the quality of the teaching process in a certain educational environment, the sample was deliberately selected.

Reading comprehension and critical literacy tests

The researchers used reading tests with 10 questions per cycle: two comprehension questions and eight critical literacy (CL) questions. The CL questions were categorized into three main areas: analysis, evaluation, and creation, and were grounded in the frameworks of Janks (2013), Lam (2022), and Luke & Freebody (1999), who highlight the dimensions of CL skill. First, the Analysis category assesses students' ability to examine how texts present social issues from different viewpoints, aligned with Luke and Freebody's (1999) concept of "textual practice," which involves analyzing the structure and meaning of a text. An example analysis question is: "Why does

the author present this social issue from different perspectives?" Second, the evaluation category examines how students evaluate multiple perspectives and the potential reinforcement or challenge of stereotypes within the text, aligning with Lam's (2022) work on critical evaluation, which encourages students to question and assess the perspectives presented in texts. An example evaluation question is: "How do the perspectives differ? Do they challenge or reinforce any stereotypes?" Third, the creation category focuses on students' ability to develop their own viewpoints or questions, encouraging them to apply insights from the text, which aligns with Janks' (2013) emphasis on "transformative practice," where students are encouraged to think critically and propose alternatives or solutions. An example creation question is: "What sort of solution can you suggest for addressing the social issue presented in the text?"

While the reading texts may have been different from one another between cycles 1 to 3 in this CAR, control was still implemented in order to ensure that the texts had some equivalence among one another. First, for the sake of controlling topic familiarity, manual checks were conducted for relevance of topics to the contexts of the students, wherein the passages were related to local issues in Indonesia, such as social, economic, or political topics, ensuring that they have an equal amount of baseline knowledge on each topic. Objective means were used to check the equivalence of texts about their difficulty and readability levels. This was done by ensuring that each text had an equal number of approximately 500 words per passage. In addition, lexical complexity and readability were checked using the Text Inspector application, which resulted in an average readability rating of 22.16 for all texts. Also, there was lexical equivalence wherein all texts contained 19.52% of academic words in relation to the B1 level. Finally, before implementation, both the texts and the test items underwent expert judgment validation by a senior English lecturer specializing in reading comprehension and critical thinking, who confirmed the equivalence of linguistic complexity, topic accessibility, and item difficulty across the study. Table 1 is a sample rubric for analysis, evaluation, and creation questions, along with examples of student responses:

Table 1. Rubric of Critical Literacy (CL) Skills

CL Category (Skill)	Emerging Level (1-4 Points)	Developing Level (5-7 Points)	Proficient Level (8-10 Points)
Analysis (Examining texts and viewpoints)	Descriptor: Fails to identify distinct perspectives or restates the text literally without recognizing the author's specific viewpoint or structural choices. Example: "The text is about the free meal program and what happened."	Descriptor: Identifies one or more perspectives but lacks depth; struggles to explain the implications or <i>why</i> the author presented the issue in this manner. Example: "The author shows the government's opinion and the student's opinion in the text."	Descriptor: Thoroughly analyzes multiple perspectives, clearly understanding their implications and the author's structural intent. Example: "The author gives different opinions, but only focuses on one single example. I think it is to make us think positively of the topic."
Evaluation (Assessing stereotypes and credibility)	Descriptor: Accepts the text at face value; cannot identify stereotypes, biases, or differing credibility among the perspectives presented.	Descriptor: Recognizes some perspectives, stereotypes, or biases, but provides limited critical analysis or labels them without deeper evaluation.	Descriptor: Clearly identifies and critically evaluates how different perspectives challenge or reinforce stereotypes, assessing the text's underlying assumptions.

CL Category (Skill)	Emerging Level (1–4 Points)	Developing Level (5–7 Points)	Proficient Level (8–10 Points)
	Example: <i>"I agree with the author because that is just how things are in Indonesia."</i>	Example: <i>"The text shows a stereotype about women staying at home, which is unfair to them."</i>	Example: <i>"The author presents one perspective as more credible, but the other side challenges common Indonesian stereotypes, such as that females should stay at home."</i>
Creation (Developing viewpoints and solutions)	Descriptor: Struggles to formulate a personal viewpoint; proposes an irrelevant, entirely unfeasible, or missing solution. Example: <i>"I do not know what the solution is for this social problem."</i>	Descriptor: Proposes a basic solution or personal viewpoint but lacks strong justification, specific details, or clear grounding in the text's analysis. Example: <i>"We should tell people to stop thinking this way so things can get better."</i>	Descriptor: Offers a well-reasoned, actionable solution or deeply developed personal viewpoint strongly justified by insights from the text. Example: <i>"I think a better approach to solving this issue would be focusing on educating society to make them aware of the issue."</i>

The reading comprehension test was scored on a 1-100 scale, with the score reflecting students' overall reading performance across all 10 questions. To establish this scale, each of the 10 questions was evaluated using the criterion-referenced rubric and awarded a score from 0 to 10 points. The sub-scores were calculated based on the distribution of the question types: the two comprehension questions contributed a maximum of 20 points (20% of the total score), while the eight critical literacy (CL) questions contributed a maximum of 80 points (80% of the total score). This 80% CL portion was subdivided into three analysis questions (30%), three evaluation questions (30%), and two creation questions (20%). While "creation" represents a higher-order critical literacy skill, it inherently imposes a significantly heavier cognitive load and requires more time for EFL learners to synthesize and articulate. Therefore, the test was designed with fewer creation items (two) compared to analysis and evaluation items (three each) to balance the cognitive demands and time constraints of the online test environment, while still effectively measuring this advanced skill level.

This criterion-referenced instrument was designed to assess students' performance against predetermined criteria, rather than comparing them to one another as in a standardized test. To ensure its validity, the instrument underwent a rigorous review by two experts in English education and literacy studies. The experts evaluated the instrument using a structured validation form on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Not Relevant to 4 = Highly Relevant. They assessed the content relevance, clarity, appropriateness of question types, and alignment with the research objectives. Based on their scores and qualitative feedback, specific revisions were made to enhance the test's validity. For example, the original evaluation question, "What do you think about the text?", was revised to "How does the author's perspective challenge or reinforce existing stereotypes in this text?" to ensure it explicitly elicited the targeted CL skill rather than a general opinion.

Students' digital artifacts

Other than the reading tests, digital artifacts of the participants were also obtained to ensure that they provided authentic evidence for the process and development in their online learning journey. The digital artifacts involved written critical reflection exercises done using Padlet, an online platform used in the collection and display of participants' work while undertaking online

reading exercises. The number of digital artifacts obtained from each participant was three, with one digital artifact obtained per research cycle. Analysis of these digital artifacts offered insight into the manner in which the participants comprehended and practiced CL while engaging in online academic reading exercises. These digital artifacts were analyzed through qualitative techniques, allowing the identification of aspects of critical literacy that might not have been reflected in the reading test scores. In summary, analysis of these digital artifacts was crucial since it helped verify the qualitative data gathered from observations.

Online Observation Sheet

Observation was employed as one of the primary data collection techniques to monitor and document the teaching-learning process throughout the three cycles of this collaborative classroom action research (CAR). Conducted during each online meeting, the classroom observation aimed to capture students' interactions and participation in reading activities within a virtual learning environment. To ensure reliability, the observations were conducted simultaneously by two researchers acting as independent observers. An online observation sheet, guided by The Huh's Model (Huh, 2016), was used to structure the observation, categorizing it into four stages: brainstorming, decoding, comprehension, and critical literacy (CL). Before implementation, this observation sheet was validated by an expert to ensure it was appropriate for capturing the intended behaviors.

The observations of the learning process were done in a systematic manner at the four stages. Firstly, at the brainstorming stage, the teacher noted how the students responded to the visuals, such as pictures that represented issues such as mental well-being or the availability of free meals provided by an organization that was used as an online platform. Secondly, at the decoding stage, how the students used context clues or even online dictionaries to decode new words was observed. At this stage, the teacher played a very important part in helping the students with their decoding processes and giving them hints on inferring the meaning of unknown words from the context. Thirdly, at the comprehension stage, the students were noted for summarizing the main viewpoints in the text using collaborative tools like online discussion forums and documents. Lastly, at the critical literacy (CL) stage, the students analyzed viewpoints, noted missing viewpoints, developed their own viewpoints, offered possible solutions to societal issues, or argued about the viewpoints.

Collaboration between the teacher and the two researchers played a critical role in the observation phase. As the teacher directed the students through each stage of the lessons, the two researchers observed them. They took thorough notes about the ways in which the students engaged with the material and developed critical literacy skills. After recording information from the two sets of observations, the information obtained was coded together. This strategy made it possible for the researchers to get a clear understanding of how the students learned during the CAR cycles.

Procedures and analysis

This study followed the cyclical process of classroom action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) over three cycles, each consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection phases. During each cycle, the planning phase involved identifying the problem, reviewing literature, and preparing the lesson plan, while the implementation phase focused on executing Huh's adapted model. The observation phase involved collecting relevant data during the intervention, and the reflection phase included analyzing students' learning and refining the process for the next cycle. To guide researchers in evaluating comprehension and critical literacy (CL) reading tests, which provide clear, comprehensive, and structured criteria, the frameworks of Janks (2013), Lam (2022), and Luke and Freebody (1999) were used. The reading tests included 10 questions each, scored on a 0-10 scale, with a total possible score of 100. Successful learning was defined as achieving an average score of at least 70, a cutoff score based directly on the established passing criteria for this academic reading course. This study considered using and combining these three frameworks, as they have been validated in similar EFL contexts and their concepts have been adopted in several EFL-related studies (Lam & Putri, 2024; Susilowaty et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, to ensure a rigorous and reliable evaluation of the students' reading test results, two raters independently scored the tests and resolved discrepancies through consensus. Descriptive statistics were then used to track general trends in students' progress across the cycles. However, to avoid drawing definitive conclusions about the intervention's effectiveness from descriptive statistics alone, these quantitative trends were triangulated with robust qualitative evidence. Specifically, the results of the observations and students' artifacts were analyzed qualitatively using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, relevant information from the observations was selected and coded based on Huh's model categories: Brainstorming, Decoding, Comprehension, and CL (Huh, 2016). These categories were refined based on recurring patterns in the data. In the data display stage, the data were organized to highlight patterns. In the conclusion-drawing phase, the qualitative data were analyzed in depth to assess students' progress in reading comprehension and CL in ways that go beyond numerical scores. The findings were then compared with previous research to validate the results. In reporting the data from the online observations, some verbatim student expressions were included to provide a more authentic representation of their involvement in the learning process during the intervention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Making adaptations to The Huh's (2016) model

This study considered making adaptations, as it was suggested that addressing issues such as student heterogeneity and varying learning contexts requires further adjustments to the model's implementation (Novianti et al., 2020). It was suggested that the selection of reading material is a crucial element in adapting the model (Huh, 2016). Three primary considerations were then taken into account when choosing the readings for this study: (1) the complexity of the texts (including the length), (2) controversial contemporary issues, and (3) local (social) issues. To ensure precise control over text complexity, length was standardized to approximately 500 words per passage. Additionally, the texts yielded an average readability score of 22.16. Vocabulary levels were kept consistent, with texts containing an average of 19.52% academic words and general vocabulary aligning with the CEFR B1 level.

In general, the selected readings were expected to develop both the students' comprehension and CL skills. Unlike the original version of the model, this study used controversial contemporary issues that were more factual, allowing students to take a critical stance from here-and-now contexts. The topics used were based on trending news published in 2025 sourced from various Indonesian news websites such as the *jakartapost.com*. Topic categories included: education (e.g., the free meal program, or *Makan Bergizi Gratis*, and the Indonesian literacy rate); gender (e.g., being single in Indonesia: between stigma and emancipation); health (e.g., mental health is not a menial problem for millennials); socioeconomic and immigration issues (e.g., the "*kabur aja dulu*" [just run away first] trend, which went viral on Indonesian social media to express young people's desire to leave the country in search of better job opportunities due to Indonesia's economic and social conditions); and political controversy (e.g., comedians' criticism toward Indonesian public political awareness). The titles make it clear that this study also incorporates the concept of localities, making the practice more meaningful and relevant to students' real-life experiences (Novianti et al., 2020).

Several previous studies have also highlighted the importance of selecting reading materials for students in developing their CL (Halimah et al., 2020) achieved positive results due to the suitability of the reading materials. Text selection plays a vital role in CL practice. In addition to text selection, Setyaningsih (2019) argued that students' proficiency has also been a topic of debate in CL. While Weng (2023) summarized that students' English proficiency can impede the success of CL in the EFL curriculum, Huh (2016) believed that, under appropriate instructional practices, CL can be taught to students at any level of English proficiency. (Huh, 2016) further explained that CL should be planned progressively, implying that a critical stance can be built gradually through the stages of reading. This study made a compromise by adapting activities to the stages students went through to help them build their CL skills. The stages of The Huh's model are illustrated in Figure 1.

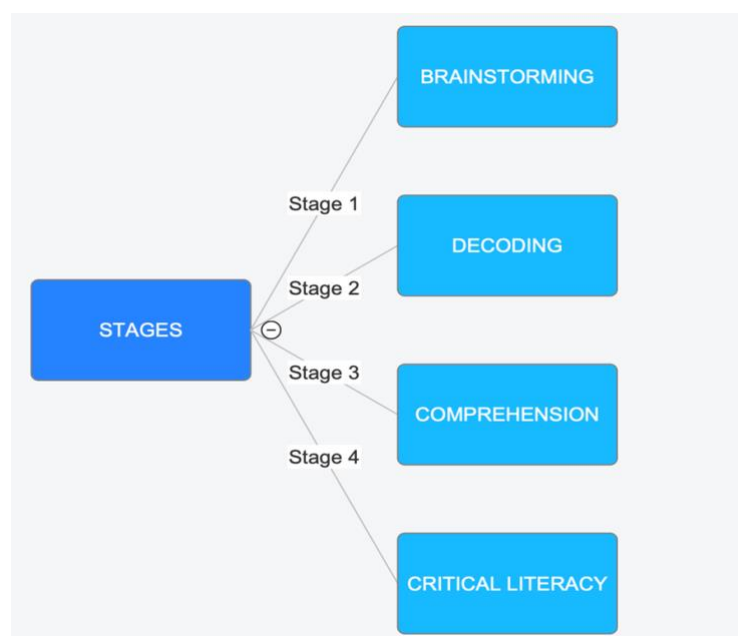


Figure 1. The Stages of The Huh's Model

Implementing the Adapted Model

Since this study employed classroom action research (CAR) with collaborative reflection as the design, the data collection process was conducted in three cycles. Each cycle consisted of four key stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. These were done to address the problem identified in this study: students' lack of CL skills.

Cycle 1: Introducing the concept of CL to students

The first cycle began with the planning phase, during which the English teacher and researchers collaborated to design the lesson plans. It focused on developing learning objectives and adapting The Huh's model. First, the learning objectives were formulated by addressing both comprehension and CL domains. This was because comprehension is one of the specific competencies that should be achieved in academic reading lessons. It is also believed that good comprehension would enable the students to engage in CL (Gustine & Insani, 2019). To translate the concept of CL into practice, this study then focused on McLoughlin & DeVogd (2011), who define CL as reading from a critical stance that requires students to analyze and evaluate information from texts and to create their personal viewpoints by questioning the texts and the author's hidden agenda. The English teacher and the researcher in this study agreed that these specifications would be suitable for encouraging students' CL using The Huh's adapted model (Huh, 2016).

The adaptation of the activities covered the introduction of CL skills to students in cycle one, which was to stimulate them to think about the hidden agenda of a text. Additionally, the students participated in activities designed to introduce them to the concepts of multiple perspectives and stereotyping. These were carried out through:

- Focusing on one particular idea in the text, and identifying whether the idea challenges or reinforces any stereotype in Indonesian society.
- Setyaningsih (2019) provided a stereotype worksheet, by which students matched a word and the stereotype, and continued a sentence based on the students' personal beliefs
- Introducing the texts that offer multiple perspectives, and creating a Venn diagram that compares the perspectives
- Writing down similarities and differences of two or more contrasting viewpoints on the texts

This introduction enabled the students to understand the concept of CL in cycle one before they were ready to participate in the text analyst/critique role in cycles two and three. The results of cycle one's observations showed that students could refer to one or more specific pieces of information in the text and shared their evaluations of whether it challenged or reinforced

stereotypes in their local (social) context. For instance, in a text titled “Indonesian literacy rate.” The students were asked to focus on the author’s perspective on the text, which was *“It is not that the Indonesian students’ reading interest, but they were struggling to access books.”* Some students perceived the author’s perspective as challenging the stereotype that Indonesian students are less interested in reading. As one of them exemplified, in her town, students rarely visited the library because they lacked motivation to read. Another student wrote on her review paper that *“there are just a lot of books available on the internet. So, the main problem is the students’ lack of reading interests”*. This finding is consistent with Setyaningsih (2019), who introduced CL and found it effective in developing students’ critical perspectives. In contrast, Huang (2011), who did not provide an introduction to CL, found it difficult for students to automatically assume the role of a text critic when reading.

However, as this cycle one focused mainly on implicitly introducing the concept, there was still no notable improvement in students’ overall CL skill development. This study continued into cycle two, with planning preceding action implementation. The planning covers adjusting the time allocation to ensure the intervention’s effectiveness. Hence, a document analysis was also conducted, focusing on the official syllabus and the researcher-designed lesson plans. The analysis indicated that implementing the model required three online meetings, each lasting approximately 100 minutes. The meeting sessions and timeframe were deemed sufficient to support students’ learning in CL in an online reading classroom.

Cycle 2: Critical Literacy (CL) Discussion

In the second cycle, this study focused on implementing the activities and integrating them with the four stages of The Huh’s model: brainstorming, decoding, reading comprehension, and CL. At the first stage, activities such as responding to a visual image of the text, making personal connections with the text (text-to-individual), and jotting down what the text would be about were designed to activate students’ personal resources. For instance, the English teacher tried to brainstorm using the title *“mental health is not a menial problem for millennials”* and had students share their experiences regarding mental health. Following brainstorming, this study considered decoding a crucial aspect of EFL learners’ understanding. In the first meeting, the students were allowed to list and check the meaning of difficult words. In meetings two and three, this study had students guess the meaning using contextual clues. The students looked enthusiastic about guessing the meaning, as evidenced by their active participation in the class. When the students asked about specific terms that they could not find the meaning of, the teacher explained them implicitly and explicitly by providing some specific examples, like the word negative stigma, which is having a negative judgment toward people with mental disorders, which made them socially isolated in the Indonesian context.

Moreover, to assess students’ comprehension, this study had them write summaries to articulate the main idea of each paragraph in the text. While the summarizing activity clarified their comprehension, CL helped them evaluate and analyze multiple perspectives. After summarizing the information about “mental health problems experienced by millennials due to societal issues such as child marriage, lack of general awareness of well-being in Indonesian society, and poverty,” the students were encouraged to analyze and critique the author’s proposal to enhance the role of psychologists in healthcare centers (*Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat* or PUSKESMAS) as a solution. Some students agreed with this idea, while others suggested that raising awareness in the local community was a better solution. Despite these positive interactions, the students had not reached the creation level of CL, as their responses showed they did not go beyond summarizing, analyzing, and debating the author’s ideas. It was expected that the students would propose new ideas for mental health interventions or offer other alternative solutions, rather than merely endorsing the PUSKESMAS and psychologist’s proposal from the text. Since the students did not engage in this generative step, we concluded that they had not yet reached the creation level of CL.

Based on this reflection, the study identified that the issue was related to critical questioning. It seemed the students were hesitant to question the text’s perspectives or ideological positions. This interpretation was directly supported by the qualitative data gathered during the cycle. For instance, the observation excerpt revealed that none of the students formulated independent critical questions regarding the text’s underlying ideology. Furthermore, during the online

observation, when prompted to critique the author's stance, students frequently responded with passive statements in the chat, with two students explicitly stating, "*The author presents health experts' ideas, so their solution must be the only correct one*", which demonstrates a reluctance to challenge authority. As a result, the study revised the planning, particularly the students' questioning activities, for cycle three.

Cycle 3: Students initiate CL Questions

The third cycle was focused on improving the critical literacy (CL) activities that were found to be dominated by the teacher in cycle two. The domination of the teacher's questions during cycle two made the students see reading as a passive process where all they needed to do was answer the questions given to them without engaging with the content of the text. The activities were improved to ensure that the students became more active and were able to come up with critical questions themselves, making them partakers rather than receivers. For instance, when studying the article on the Indonesian Free Meal Program (*Makan Bergizi Gratis*), the students questioned the author's decision not to include any other point of view apart from the views of the student featured in the article. This led them to evaluate the hidden agenda of the author, as some of the students pointed out that the author aimed at creating a positive image of the government's free meal program by only showcasing the perspective of one student who benefited; as one of the students stated, "*it might be to make the program appear positive to the readers*". This self-initiated questioning helped develop their critical literacy skills, as evidenced by their improved cycle-based reading test scores. Observations in the final sessions further showed the students actively participating in questioning and discussing various perspectives, demonstrating the effectiveness of the revised activities. The interventions implemented during the acting phase of the cycles are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Classroom Interventions Based on the Adapted Model of Huh (2016)

Sequential stages	Learning Activities		
	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
Brainstorming	Responding to a visual image related to the text	Making personal connections with the text	Jotting down what the text would cover
Decoding	Identifying unfamiliar words and determining their meanings using an online dictionary	Guessing unfamiliar words using the context clues strategy (e.g., based on the surrounding words or sentences).	Understanding technical terms in the texts (e.g., negative stigma, liberal self-image, conservative control, and so on).
Comprehension	Identifying and understanding the viewpoints and information in the text.	-Understanding perspectives, such as when students rewrote the viewpoints using their own words. -Summarizing the information, followed by the teacher's revision. The English teacher explained the key components to include when writing a summary of a text. This was followed by a summary contest of students.	Pair discussions about what the students think regarding the issue, leading to a critical analysis of the texts.
Critical Literacy	Analyzing: Whose viewpoints are expressed, such as when students analyzed and	Discussing: - Whose voices are missing in the text, such as when students analyzed and	Creating opinion and action: - The student's personal opinion that

Sequential stages	Learning Activities		
	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
	evaluated the perspectives of a public policy analyst, a Jakarta-based nutritionist, and a doctor in the text about the 'Free Meal Program/ <i>Makan Bergizi Gratis</i> . - Whether the text challenges or reinforces any stereotyping in Indonesian society, such as when students were introduced to the concept of stereotyping by examining the author's perspective.	discussed the perspectives that were omitted in the text, 'Comedians' Criticism Toward Indonesian Public Political Awareness'. This encouraged students to consider whose viewpoints were not represented and the potential impact of these omissions. - How alternative perspectives might be presented, such as when the English teacher asked students how different viewpoints could be incorporated, providing a specific example from the text.	might support or contradict an ideological text (e.g., 'single in Indonesia: between stigma and emancipation') - What action might you take to deal with the issue (e.g., the English teacher asked the students) - Students initiated the questions, guided by the teachers (e.g., the students asked questions about why particular perspectives were excluded)

The Students' Reading Comprehension and Critical Literacy (CL) Improvement

The cycles aimed to improve students' reading comprehension and critical literacy, as evidenced by their reading test results, which assessed two key aspects of these skills. The inclusion of both components was based on the understanding that a strong foundation in reading comprehension is essential for effective critical engagement with texts. To evaluate this improvement, the study used a reading assessment framework based on Lam (2022), focusing on two main aspects: (1) reading comprehension, consisting of literal and inferential understanding categories, and (2) critical literacy (CL) with analysis, evaluation, and creation categories. The above-mentioned dimensions and categories offered a well-defined method for analyzing students' answers, providing insights into the logic behind them, their clarity, and overall argumentative competence. The descriptive statistics, including average values, minima, maxima, and standard deviations, given in Table 3 show how much students have improved their reading and critical literacy skills. To prove that improvements were actually related to skill acquisition and not to simple repetition of taking tests, quantitative results were supported by qualitative data gathered through classroom observations and digital artifacts, showing an evident transition from passive reading to actively initiated critical analysis. Moreover, as was mentioned earlier, parameters such as text length, readability, complexity of language used, and subject matter were strictly controlled during all three experimental sessions, thus confirming a statistically valid improvement due to the implemented educational program.

Table 3. The Development of Students' Reading Comprehension and Critical Literacy (CL) Skills Across Three Cycles

Cycle	Aspect	N	Mean	Min	Max	Standard Deviation
Cycle 1	Reading comprehension	21	70.24	62	78	5.32
	Critical literacy	21	68.81	60	77	6.04
Cycle 2	Reading comprehension	21	75.62	68	82	4.75
	Critical literacy	21	73.19	66	81	5.21
Cycle3	Reading Comprehension	21	80.38	75	86	3.89
	Critical Literacy	21	78.67	72	85	4.35

The statistical overview presented in Table 3 reflects students' progress across the three cycles in both reading comprehension and critical literacy skills. Moreover, Figure 2 provides a

more detailed visualization of this improvement, comparing the mean scores for students' reading comprehension and critical literacy across the three cycles. These data display the development of students' skills throughout the CL intervention.

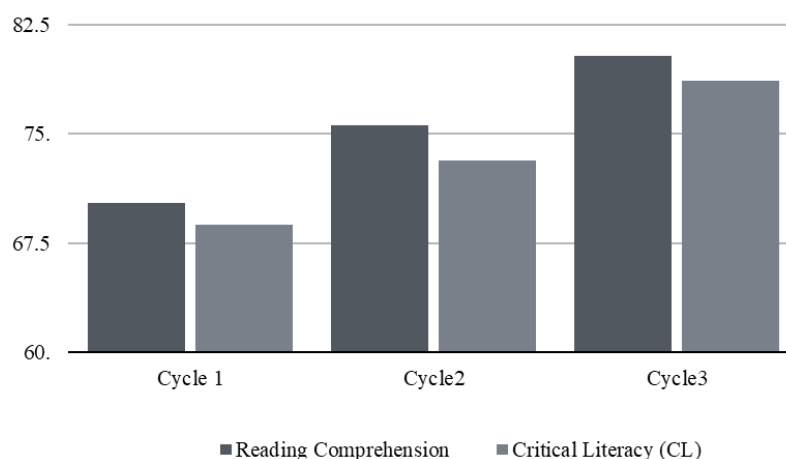


Figure 2. The Mean Scores of Students' Reading Comprehension and Critical Literacy (CL)

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the applied intervention was effective in improving the targeted students' critical literacy (CL). Through observing the students' level of participation during each cycle of the action research process, there were various lessons learned in terms of the way the targeted students' CL skills develop in a virtual environment. First, according to the set objectives for the research, the students' test scores indicated that there was an improvement in their CL skills. Those students who had prior knowledge about the subject matter being taught online demonstrated an increased capability to progress from comprehending literal and inferential information to critical thinking. This development in the level of students' understanding of the online material indicates that they could critically analyze and evaluate the content of the text. As Gustine & Insani (2019) and Olin-Scheller & Tengberg (2017) state, development is crucial since it indicates that students are not just receivers of information.

Among many other factors that led to this kind of adaptation, an important one is the selection of appropriate texts. For example, those students who felt that they could relate well to the reading materials were more motivated to participate in the discussion. This was not just a claim but actually a conclusion that was based on some measurement of students' familiarity with and the relevance of texts, which included both inferences made by the researcher while selecting the texts, and qualitative analysis of the students' digital works, wherein they mentioned how personally connected they felt to the texts. The readings used in this case study were thus selected so as to be related to contemporary Indonesian society. This finding supports the conclusions of previous studies, including those by Briceño and Rodriguez-Mojica (2022), Lee (2017), and Novianti et al. (2020), which highlight the importance of engaging students with topics that resonate with their lives and contexts.

In addition to the reading test results, findings from classroom observations and analysis of students' digital artifacts further corroborated the intervention's positive impact. One key observation was that the introductory session played a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of critical literacy. In the initial stages, students were introduced to the concepts of CL, including identifying multiple perspectives, analyzing stereotypes, and examining sociocultural contexts in texts. This introductory session gave students a chance to move from basic comprehension to more critical analysis. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Kuo (2014) and Setyaningsih (2019), have also demonstrated the importance of introducing critical literacy concepts. In Kuo's study, for example, the teacher used a colored-glass activity to encourage students to examine texts through different lenses. At the same time, Setyaningsih (2019) employed matching worksheets and sentence-completion activities to help students understand concepts related to multiple perspectives and stereotyping. Accordingly, Kurniawati et al. (2020)

emphasized that the concept of CL should be explicitly explained to students before they begin CL learning. This is because texts often contain abstract elements of critical literacy that can hinder understanding. On the other hand, in his study, Huang (2011) found that without such an introductory session, students could practice basic text analysis but still struggled to take a critical stance when conceptualizing reading.

This research not only addresses CL but also reveals the importance of the formulation of critical questions asked by teachers to students. How teachers frame questions related to the content taught has been found to be influential in developing CLs among students. Indeed, the outcomes of this study align well with those of Eshach et al. (2014). The authors underscore the crucial importance of the teacher's questioning in shaping the affective and cognitive growth of the students. According to Weng (2023), the creation of a discourse-based environment where students have the opportunity to formulate and raise questions is essential. In this way, the pitfalls of the teacher-oriented model of traditional education will be sidestepped. This model makes students passive recipients of knowledge without engaging in any sort of active discussion or posing questions. Indeed, Degener and Berne (2017) argue that the framing of questions affects students' responses. As noted by Bowker (2010), it is highly unrealistic to expect immediate and meaningful answers from students. It would be even more naïve to expect them to come up with profound questions.

The adaptation of The Huh's (2016) model of critical literacy to the virtual context is important precisely because it expands on the need for the construction of a favorable discursive environment, which can be considered a significant theoretical contribution of the current research. While created for traditional classrooms, where the facilitation of the entire process occurs through direct interaction with the teacher, the modification of the model performed in this study allowed for the utilization of technological tools to support students' autonomy in the process of critical questioning and reflection. For instance, the application of platforms such as Padlet when conducting the critical literacy part of the process enabled students not only to formulate their questions but also to map various perspectives prior to answering them. In essence, this theoretical contribution relates to the shift of responsibility from the teacher to the student in CL instruction; given the increased freedom of reading in the online environment, instruction models need to take into account students' independent negotiations and critiques.

LIMITATIONS

Several issues limit this study that need to be taken into consideration while interpreting its results. Firstly, the number of participants in the study consisted of 21 learners participating in only one course of online academic reading at a particular Indonesian institution. Although a sufficient number of participants were available for collaborative classroom action research, this can affect the possibility of generalizing the results across other settings or learner groups. Secondly, as collaborative classroom action research involved the participation of a teacher experimenting, teacher-researcher bias is possible, although there were certain measures taken by the researchers to minimize the effect. Thirdly, the intervention was limited only to the online environment with the teaching of English as a foreign language; hence, the results may be affected by the context of the process. Fourthly, there was no comparison or control group in the study, and hence, any improvement in the reading comprehension skills of the learners needs to be interpreted carefully since other contextual factors may be responsible for the success achieved. Lastly, the intervention was undertaken in three action research cycles within a brief period of time, thereby not allowing the researchers to investigate whether students' acquisition of critical literacy was sustainable over time. This gap can be filled by future researchers who use large and more diverse samples, conduct longitudinal research, and contrast their model with other instructional models.

CONCLUSION

This study thus found that the modified version of the Huh model managed to combine reading comprehension and CL development among learners effectively. Indeed, from the results of the modified model by Huh, it was observed that the learners with low CL competence displayed gradual development across cycles. As such, the modified model by Huh seemed to be helpful in

developing CL among the participants in the EFL environment, specifically an online reading classroom, through a number of important considerations. First, it involves the selection of reading materials, considering their language complexity, accuracy of the topic, and students' familiarity with the content. Second, another important consideration involves the introduction of CL notions to the students before teaching CL. Classroom activities, therefore, require the involvement of brainstorming, decoding, comprehension, and CL phases of the model. Last but not least, posing questions to motivate learners to ask their own questions is crucial in order to elevate the CL creativity level of the students.

Research should also consider integrating broader theoretical aspects, such as emotional engagement and social responsibility, alongside critical pedagogy. Additionally, expanding the study to include global or cross-cultural perspectives on CL would provide a more comprehensive view of the impact and application of adapting this instructional model. In particular, it would be valuable to also consider local sociopolitical texts as catalysts for CL development, especially in global contexts. Lastly, researchers should explore how some CL models can be adapted to encourage social action in critical literacy, fostering students' engagement with real-world issues in the online classroom.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

DRPA conceived the study, conducted the classroom action research, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. UW supervised the study, contributed to the research design, validated the methodology, and critically reviewed the manuscript. EDL contributed to the methodology, instrument validation, data analysis, and manuscript revision. SM contributed to the conceptual framework, critical literacy pedagogy design, data interpretation, and manuscript revision. DMI assisted in data collection, classroom observation, documentation, and manuscript review. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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