

Development of Critical Literacy among Junior High School Students in Language Learning: A Systematic Literature Review

Switia Dewi Quraisyin^{1*}, Eva Leiliyanti², and Siti Gomo Attas³

¹⁻⁵ Applied Linguistic, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

The development of the digital era requires junior high school students to evaluate information, identify bias, and interpret texts critically, yet language learning often remains focused on basic comprehension. This systematic literature review synthesizes evidence on the concepts, pedagogical strategies, implementation contexts, and assessment approaches used to develop critical literacy among junior high school students in language learning. Studies published from 2020 to 2026 were searched across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar using predefined Boolean terms. Study selection followed PRISMA 2020 procedures, with independent screening by two reviewers and thematic synthesis of the 12 studies reported in the final review set; methodological quality was appraised using CASP for qualitative studies and JBI tools for quantitative studies. The synthesis indicates that critical literacy is most consistently supported by contextual and active-learning approaches, including problem- or project-based and collaborative learning, critical reading, digital and multimodal texts, and higher-order-thinking-oriented assessment. However, evidence is heterogeneous across language settings, study designs, samples, and assessment tools, limiting direct comparison and transferability. Teacher competence and contextual adaptation emerged as recurrent implementation conditions. The review concludes that critical literacy should be integrated through evidence-based, context-sensitive language pedagogy, while future studies should strengthen methodological consistency, longitudinal evidence, and standardized assessment.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 1 April 2026

Revised : 31 July 2026

Accepted : 26 August 2026

KEYWORDS

Critical Literacy, Junior High School, Language Learning, Systematic Literature Review, Teaching Strategies

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license.



CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

* **Switia Dewi Quraisyin**, Applied Linguistic, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia. Email: switiadewi@gmail.com

Introduction

The development of the digital era requires students not only to possess reading and writing abilities but also to develop critical literacy skills to analyze, evaluate, and reflect on information comprehensively (Silvhiany et al., 2021). These skills have become increasingly relevant amid the proliferation of digital information, which requires thorough evaluation of source credibility to prevent the spread of misleading content (Nurjanah et al., 2024). The integration of *critical digital literacy* into educational curricula has been proven effective in improving students' abilities to face challenges in the digital era (Hidayat et al., 2021). Therefore, strengthening critical literacy through critical pedagogical approaches is a strategic step in preparing students to become competent digital citizens (Setiawardani et al., 2021).

Junior high school students are at a strategic developmental stage for building critical thinking abilities, as students at this age are capable of developing abstract and analytical thinking in accordance with adolescent cognitive development (Billah et al., 2021). However, language learning at this level still tends to emphasize technical aspects, including literal reading, grammar mastery,

and basic comprehension, which limits the development of higher-order thinking skills (Darwin & Saputra, 2024). Empirical studies have revealed that the integration of *higher order thinking skills* in foreign language learning at the junior high school level remains constrained by teaching practices that predominantly emphasize lower-order skills (Jumariati et al., 2026; Setyarini, 2020). Therefore, a reformulation of language learning strategies that are more oriented toward developing critical thinking abilities is required to optimize the cognitive potential of junior high school students.

Language learning curricula have considerable potential to integrate critical literacy as a transformative pedagogical approach in developing students' critical thinking abilities (Durante, 2025). However, its implementation remains suboptimal, particularly within the context of Indonesia's *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which continues to face challenges in comprehensively integrating critical and cultural literacy (Ridwanulloh et al., 2025). These challenges are further intensified by factors such as limited resources, large class sizes, and inconsistencies between local cultural contexts and the expected learning approaches within competency-based curricula (Atuhura & Nambi, 2024). Therefore, comprehensive strategies are needed to overcome these implementation gaps so that the potential of language learning curricula in advancing critical literacy can be fully optimized (Wilson & Defianty, 2024).

The development of critical literacy among junior high school students in language learning remains an important issue, particularly in Indonesia, where the PISA 2022 reading literacy score of 359 points was substantially below the OECD average of 476. Although recent studies address critical digital literacy, critical reading, higher-order thinking, and media literacy, the evidence is dispersed across educational levels, language settings, and methodological traditions. Existing reviews tend to examine broader literacy or critical-thinking populations, vocational or higher-education contexts, or curriculum-level trends rather than focusing specifically on junior high school students in language-learning settings (Aisyah et al., 2025; Nurtanto et al., 2026; Novianti, 2024). Consequently, it remains unclear which pedagogical strategies, media, assessment practices, and contextual conditions are consistently associated with critical literacy development at this developmental stage, and how variation in study design affects the strength and transferability of the evidence.

To address this gap, the present systematic literature review focuses on junior high school students and early adolescents in language-learning contexts and synthesizes primary studies published from 2020 to 2026. Specifically, this study aims to (1) clarify how critical literacy is conceptualized and operationalized in junior high school language learning; (2) identify the pedagogical approaches, strategies, media, and assessment practices used to develop it; (3) evaluate recurring implementation conditions, methodological limitations, and the consistency of evidence across contexts; and (4) formulate evidence-based directions for classroom practice and future research.

Method

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to identify, appraise, and synthesize primary empirical evidence on the development of critical literacy among junior high school students in language-learning contexts. The review process was structured according to PRISMA 2020 principles to improve transparency, traceability, and reproducibility across identification, screening, eligibility assessment, quality appraisal, data extraction, and synthesis.

A comprehensive search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar. The core Boolean query combined four concept blocks:

("critical literacy" OR "critical thinking literacy") AND ("middle school student*" OR "junior high school student*" OR "early adolescent*") AND ("language learning" OR "language education" OR "literacy instruction") AND (education OR pedagogy OR "learning strateg*"). Database-specific syntax was adapted to the available title, abstract, keyword, topic, and full-text fields while retaining the same conceptual structure. Searches were limited to studies published from 2020 to 2026 and to English- or Indonesian-language records.

Studies were eligible when they (1) were peer-reviewed primary empirical articles published from 2020 to 2026; (2) were available in full text; (3) were written in English or Indonesian; (4) examined junior high school/middle school students, teachers, or early adolescents approximately corresponding to this educational level; and (5) addressed critical literacy within language learning, reading, literacy instruction, or closely related language-education practices. Exclusion criteria comprised review articles, non-peer-reviewed conference outputs, non-scientific publications, records without accessible full text, studies outside the junior-high/early-adolescent population, studies outside language-learning contexts, and records that did not provide extractable empirical findings relevant to the review questions.

Article selection was undertaken through duplicate removal, title-and-abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. Two reviewers independently applied the predefined criteria. Disagreements were resolved through discussion and, when necessary, consultation with a third reviewer. This dual-review procedure was used to reduce selection bias and improve screening consistency. Any available reviewer-agreement statistic should be reported in the final manuscript if it was recorded during the original screening process.

Data were extracted using a structured coding matrix covering author and year, country and language-learning context, research design, participant characteristics, critical-literacy conceptualization, pedagogical intervention or strategy, assessment approach, principal findings, implementation conditions, methodological limitations, and implications. Methodological quality was appraised using design-appropriate tools, including the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) for qualitative studies and Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) appraisal tools for quantitative designs. The appraisal considered clarity of research aims, appropriateness of design and sampling, validity or trustworthiness of data collection, adequacy of analysis, reporting transparency, and risks affecting transferability or inference. Extracted findings were then coded and compared across studies before thematic synthesis.

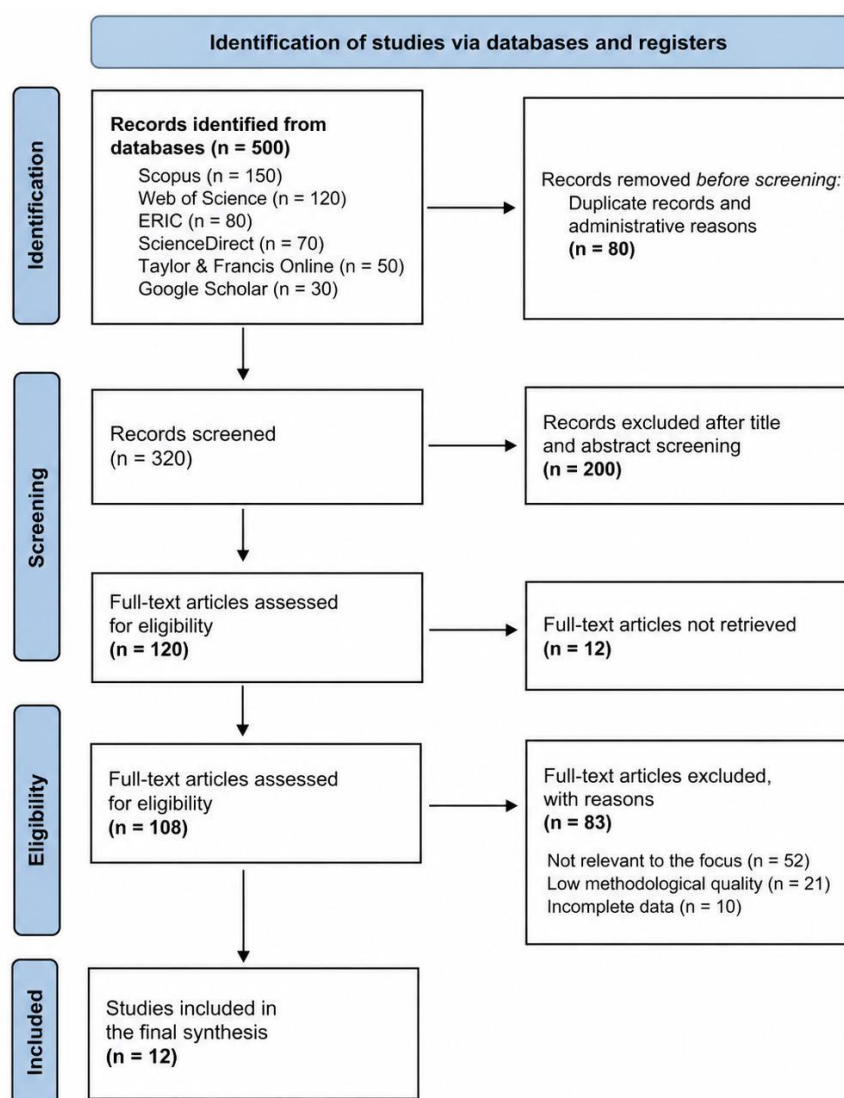


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram (Source: https://estech.shinyapps.io/prisma_flowdiagram/)

The database-specific identification totals displayed in the current PRISMA figure sum to 500 records: Scopus (n = 150), Web of Science (n = 120), ERIC (n = 80), ScienceDirect (n = 70), Taylor & Francis Online (n = 50), and Google Scholar (n = 30). The manuscript also reports 12 studies in the final synthesis. However, the intermediate counts currently shown for duplicate removal, records screened, full-text retrieval, eligibility exclusions, and final inclusion are arithmetically inconsistent. These counts must be reconciled against the original screening log and the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram regenerated before publication; no unverified numbers have been introduced in this revision.

Thematic synthesis was conducted in three stages: line-by-line coding of extracted findings, grouping of codes into descriptive categories, and development of analytical themes across studies. The synthesis focused on (1) conceptualizations and indicators of critical literacy; (2) pedagogical approaches, strategies, media, and assessment practices; (3) implementation conditions, including teacher competence and contextual factors; and (4) methodological quality, risk of bias, heterogeneity, and limitations affecting the consistency and transferability of evidence. Interpretive claims were restricted to patterns traceable to the included studies.

Results and Discussion

Search Strategy

The database search identified 500 records according to the database-specific totals reported in the PRISMA figure. The manuscript reports 12 studies in the final synthesis. Because the intermediate screening counts in the current draft are internally inconsistent, this revision does not repeat the conflicting numbers as if they were verified. The final manuscript should report one reconciled PRISMA 2020 sequence that matches the original screening log and should use the same verified counts consistently in the Method, Results, abstract, and figure.

Quality Assessment and Risk of Bias

Methodological quality was appraised using design-appropriate CASP and JBI criteria. Across the draft synthesis, the evidence base appears methodologically heterogeneous: qualitative studies provide contextual depth but often have small or localized samples, while quasi-experimental and survey designs provide comparative or outcome data but use different instruments and outcome definitions. Potential risks include participant-selection bias, limited sample sizes, self-report or teacher-report dependence, intervention variability, and restricted external validity. Because study-level appraisal scores are not displayed in the present manuscript, confidence in the synthesis should be interpreted cautiously. A study-level appraisal table or supplementary file should be added in the final resubmission if the original appraisal records are available.

Study Characteristics

The synthesis table reports 12 study entries spanning qualitative case studies and phenomenological work, quasi-experimental and survey designs, and mixed-methods research. The studies cover EFL and Indonesian-language learning, critical reading, collaborative and problem-based learning, local-culture texts, digital or multimodal materials, and higher-order-thinking-oriented assessment. This diversity enables cross-context synthesis but also limits direct comparison because populations, instructional settings, intervention duration, and outcome measures are not standardized. In addition, the author should re-screen the final study list against the stated inclusion criteria and verify duplicate author-year entries and population descriptions before submission so that every included record is both eligible and uniquely represented.

Table 1. Characteristics and Main Findings of Studies Included in the Critical Literacy Synthesis

Author	Year	Country	Study Design	Population	Intervention	Findings
Jumariati et al.	2026	Indonesia	Qualitative	Grade VII–IX EFL	Critical-thinking discussion	Authentic-text discussion improved critical analysis and awareness of power.
Rizqiani	2024	Indonesia	Quasi-experimental	EFL junior high	Critical-literacy model	The model significantly improved scores and students’ detection of bias.
Mukti	2025	Indonesia	Qualitative	Draft: junior-high/MTs	Participatory literacy	Local cultural texts increased participation and social awareness; eligibility requires verification.
Setyarini et al.	2021	Indonesia	Action research	Grade VIII	HOTS assessment	HOTS assessment improved text analysis

Author	Year	Country	Study Design	Population	Intervention	Findings
						and real-life connections; reference metadata require verification.
Mirasol	2024	Philippines	Survey + test	Junior high	Multimodal reading	Multimodal reading improved critical-reading performance and cultural interpretation.
Setyarini, Salim, & Harto	2021	Indonesia	Qualitative	Grade VIII EFL	Contextual HOTS tasks	Contextual HOTS tasks supported functional literacy; citation metadata require verification.
Perdana	2021	Indonesia	Qualitative	Junior high	Digital folklore	Digital folklore materials strengthened cultural appreciation and critical analysis.
Khairi	2025	Indonesia	Experimental	Rural EFL junior high	Collaborative Strategic Reading	Collaborative Strategic Reading improved comprehension, analysis, and motivation.
Muhria	2025	Indonesia	Mixed methods	EFL junior high	Local-wisdom PBL	Local-wisdom PBL improved contextual interpretation and personal-text connections.
Ardani & Lolita	2025	Indonesia	Qualitative	Junior high	Jigsaw reading	Jigsaw improved collaboration, discussion, and text evaluation.
Jumariati, Yamin, & Sutiono	2026	Indonesia	Phenomenology	EFL junior-high teachers	Critical-thinking integration	Teachers integrated critical-thinking strategies; this record should be checked for duplication.
Sari et al.	2025	Indonesia	Training study	Population requires verification	Critical-literacy training	Training improved instructional capacity; re-screen eligibility against the protocol.

Discussion

The synthesis indicates that no single instructional strategy can be regarded as universally superior for developing critical literacy among junior high school students. Instead, the reviewed studies converge on a set of complementary pedagogical principles: dialogic interrogation of texts, collaborative and problem-based learning, culturally contextualized materials, digital and multimodal engagement, and assessment requiring analysis, evaluation, justification, and perspective-taking. Jumariati et al. (2026), Rizqiani et al. (2024), Khairi and Alfaresi (2025), and Mirasol (2024) collectively suggest that students demonstrate stronger analytical engagement when literacy instruction moves beyond retrieving explicit information toward questioning authorship, assumptions, representation, evidence, and social meaning. However, the apparent consistency of these findings should not be interpreted as evidence of a homogeneous intervention effect. The included studies differ substantially in research design, participant characteristics, language settings,

intervention duration, instructional intensity, and assessment instruments. The most defensible conclusion is therefore that critical literacy develops through active, mediated, and context-sensitive engagement with texts, rather than through any standardized instructional technique.

This interpretation is strongly supported by recent international research. Zhang (2023), examining critical-literacy practices in secondary transnational education, demonstrated that critical literacy was enacted differently across classrooms because curricular expectations, teacher experience, multilingual resources, students' cross-border experiences, and access to multimedia interacted in shaping meaning-making. Thus, critical literacy cannot be detached from the sociocultural and material conditions under which texts are interpreted. Likewise, Ilomäki et al. (2023), in a systematic review of critical digital literacies at school level, identified information literacy, media literacy, digital citizenship, online participation, data literacy, creativity, digital well-being, and source evaluation as interconnected dimensions of contemporary critical literacy. These international findings reinforce the present synthesis by showing that critical literacy is broader than conventional critical reading: contemporary learners must interpret not only verbal propositions but also the social purposes, multimodal constructions, credibility, power relations, and digital contexts surrounding information.

Multimodality further strengthens this argument. Smith et al. (2021), synthesizing research on digital multimodal composition in secondary classrooms, found that multimodal practices provide linguistically diverse learners with opportunities to mobilize their linguistic, cultural, and semiotic resources for identity expression and academic meaning-making. Pacheco et al. (2021) similarly identified collaboration, explicit instruction, exemplar texts, translanguaging, discussion, encouragement, and questioning as recurrent forms of scaffolding in secondary multimodal literacy instruction. Importantly, the authors did not claim that one scaffold automatically produces one outcome; rather, the effectiveness of scaffolding depended on learner identities, available resources, and instructional context. This qualification is consistent with the present review. Digital and multimodal materials are pedagogically valuable not simply because they are technologically engaging, but because they enable students to compare representational modes, investigate how meaning is constructed, recognize omissions or emphasis, and justify competing interpretations. Accordingly, the findings reported by Kriswantara and Perdana (2021) and Mirasol (2024) should be understood within a broader critical-multimodal framework rather than as evidence that digital media themselves generate critical literacy.

Teacher mediation consequently emerges as one of the most consistent implementation conditions. Jumariati et al. (2026) indicate that teachers can facilitate critical literacy by helping students distinguish facts from opinions, interrogate textual assumptions, analyze linguistic choices, and connect texts with wider social meanings. This pattern is consistent with Pacheco et al. (2021), whose synthesis demonstrates that questioning, discussion, direct instruction, and collaborative scaffolding are central to multimodal literacy practices. The importance of teacher mediation also helps explain why pedagogical approaches cannot be transferred mechanically across contexts. A collaborative or digital strategy that is productive in one classroom may be substantially less effective where students have lower language proficiency, teachers have limited experience facilitating open-ended discussion, class sizes restrict interaction, or access to learning media is uneven. Teacher competence therefore operates not as an additional variable surrounding critical-literacy instruction

but as a mechanism through which its conceptual principles are converted into meaningful learning activity.

The Indonesian evidence reinforces the importance of contextualization. Studies emphasizing local wisdom, culturally situated texts, collaborative learning, and multimodal resources indicate that students engage more meaningfully when literacy tasks connect textual interpretation with recognizable social experiences (Kriswantara & Perdana, 2021; Muhria et al., 2025). Ardani and Lolita (2025) similarly demonstrate the instructional potential of peer-supported learning, while Mukti et al. (2025) locate active participation within broader learner-centered approaches. Related work by Muhammad Sufian and colleagues provides additional contextual support, although these studies should be treated as evidence about language pedagogy and instructional design, not as direct measurements of critical literacy. Koderi et al. (2023), for example, demonstrated that integrating Lampung local wisdom into audiovisual language materials generated meaningful contextual learning, illustrating the value of culturally situated multimodal resources. Sari et al. (2024) showed that interactive team-based instruction and motivation were relevant to language-learning outcomes, while Rokmana et al. (2025) reported improved participation and achievement through STAD cooperative learning supported by video among eighth-grade students. These studies support the present synthesis at the level of pedagogical conditions: participation, collaboration, contextualization, and multimodality can create productive environments in which higher-order literacy activity may be developed.

Other publications involving Sufian extend this local argument toward the design of instructional materials and value-sensitive reading. Pribowo et al. (2024) demonstrated that interactive flipbook-based modules can improve learning when multimedia resources are systematically aligned with instructional objectives rather than used merely for technological novelty. More directly relevant to reading and interpretation, Erlina et al. (2025) developed a gender-responsive *qira'ah* module that foregrounded equality and inclusivity, illustrating how reading materials can be designed to encourage engagement with social representation and value-laden content. In addition, Erlina et al. (2025) found that problem-based Arabic instruction incorporating religious-moderation issues supported reading comprehension, discussion, balanced reasoning, and respectful disagreement. Although these studies differ from the junior-high critical-literacy studies synthesized in this review, they provide locally grounded evidence that language learning can be designed around contextual problems, social values, collaborative inquiry, and multiple perspectives. Such features correspond closely to critical literacy when they are explicitly directed toward questioning discourse, evaluating representation, and justifying interpretations.

Assessment constitutes another important source of variation. Setyarini et al. (2021) emphasize HOTS-oriented assessment, while other studies employ pretest–posttest measures, open-ended responses, observational indicators, teacher judgments, or qualitative evidence of textual interpretation. Consequently, the term *critical literacy improvement* does not necessarily denote an equivalent outcome across studies. A student who performs better on inferential reading questions may demonstrate higher-order comprehension without necessarily showing the capacity to identify ideological positioning, interrogate whose perspectives are marginalized, or reconstruct a text from an alternative standpoint. This distinction is important because critical literacy overlaps with critical thinking, reading literacy, media literacy, and digital literacy but is not synonymous with any of them. Rojas-Estrada et al. (2024), reviewing Media and Information Literacy integration across curricula,

similarly found that critical media competencies depend on coherent formulation, curriculum implementation, teacher preparation, and evaluation rather than simply introducing digital content into classrooms. Future assessment frameworks therefore need to distinguish cognitive analysis from specifically critical-literacy dimensions involving perspective, ideology, representation, credibility, and social consequence.

Methodological heterogeneity also determines the level of confidence that can be placed in the synthesis. Qualitative studies provide rich explanations of classroom interaction, teacher mediation, identity, and sociocultural meaning, but their contextual specificity restricts statistical generalization. Experimental and quasi-experimental studies provide stronger evidence of performance change, yet differences in intervention duration, comparison conditions, sampling procedures, and measurement prevent straightforward aggregation. Survey studies can reveal broad patterns of literacy practices or perceptions but remain sensitive to self-report bias. Accordingly, the current evidence base should be interpreted as convergent evidence for pedagogical principles rather than pooled causal evidence for a standardized intervention. This interpretation also explains why apparently successful strategies such as Jigsaw, project-based learning, multimodal instruction, and contextual reading should not be ranked solely by reported score increases. Their educational significance depends on what kind of critical literacy they activate, for whom, under what instructional conditions, and how the outcome is assessed.

Theoretically, pedagogically, and from a policy perspective, the synthesis supports a conception of critical literacy as socially situated meaning-making in which cognitive analysis is integrated with awareness of perspective, discourse, power, multimodality, and context. Theoretically, this extends a purely cognitive account of literacy by emphasizing that interpretation is shaped by learners' linguistic repertoires, cultural experiences, textual modes, and social environments, consistent with recent critical and digital-literacy scholarship (Ilomäki et al., 2023; Zhang, 2023). Pedagogically, teachers should combine explicit questioning, dialogic discussion, collaborative interpretation, culturally meaningful texts, multimodal comparison, source evaluation, and tasks requiring students to explain and defend interpretations. Such practices may also strengthen engagement and media literacy because students become active evaluators rather than passive recipients of information. At the curriculum and policy level, critical literacy should be integrated across language and media education rather than confined to isolated enrichment activities. Rojas-Estrada et al. (2024) similarly show that meaningful media-literacy integration requires coordination among curriculum, teacher preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The present review, however, did not directly evaluate mental-health outcomes, online identity development, or social-media regulation; consequently, policy claims concerning psychological intervention would exceed its evidence. Its more defensible policy implications concern teacher professional development, critical media education, responsible digital participation, and the systematic inclusion of critical-literacy outcomes in language curricula.

The novelty and contribution of this review lie in rejecting a search for a single "best" critical-literacy method and instead organizing the heterogeneous evidence around transferable pedagogical mechanisms. The synthesis identifies five recurring mechanisms dialogic interrogation, collaborative meaning-making, contextualization, multimodal engagement, and higher-order assessment while simultaneously showing that their effectiveness is conditioned by teacher mediation, language proficiency, cultural context, available media, and measurement choices. This perspective advances

beyond descriptive lists of instructional strategies because it distinguishes the visible instructional model from the underlying mechanism through which critical literacy may develop. Furthermore, by bringing Indonesian evidence into dialogue with international work on critical, digital, and multimodal literacies, the review demonstrates that culturally situated texts and local knowledge are not peripheral supplements but potential resources for interrogating perspective and social meaning. The contribution is therefore both conceptual and pedagogical: critical literacy is positioned as an integrated interpretive competence rather than a synonym for reading comprehension, generic critical thinking, or digital competence.

Several limitations and future research directions delimit these conclusions. Database coverage was restricted to Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar, potentially excluding relevant studies indexed elsewhere. English- and Indonesian-language restrictions may introduce linguistic and regional bias, while the relatively small and methodologically heterogeneous evidence base prevents meaningful statistical pooling. Differences in language proficiency, intervention duration, text genre, research design, and outcome measurement further constrain cross-study comparability, and the absence of complete study-level quality-appraisal scores limits the strength of methodological weighting. Any unresolved PRISMA counts and metadata inconsistencies should also be reconciled with the original review records before publication. Future research should therefore employ broader international database coverage, transparent quality appraisal, longitudinal and comparative classroom designs, and clearer operational definitions distinguishing critical literacy from critical thinking, reading literacy, and media literacy. Particular priority should be given to developing validated assessment frameworks that capture textual analysis, perspective recognition, evidence evaluation, ideological awareness, and reconstruction of alternative meanings. Multi-site studies should further test whether contextual, collaborative, multimodal, and HOTS-oriented approaches produce sustained effects across different junior-high-school language environments, rather than merely immediate improvements within individual interventions.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review indicates that critical literacy development in junior high school language learning is best understood as a multidimensional process supported by active, dialogic, and context-sensitive pedagogy. Across the reviewed evidence, critical text analysis, collaborative and problem-based learning, digital or multimodal materials, and higher-order-thinking-oriented assessment are recurrently associated with stronger analytical, evaluative, and reflective engagement with texts. The contribution of the review lies not in identifying one universally superior model, but in showing that effective implementation depends on the alignment of instructional strategy, teacher mediation, language proficiency, sociocultural context, and assessment design.

These conclusions should be interpreted within the limits of the review: database coverage was selective, only English- and Indonesian-language studies were considered, the study set was relatively small and methodologically heterogeneous, and study-level appraisal scores are not reported in the current manuscript. Future research should therefore use broader and more transparent search coverage, longitudinal and comparative designs, explicit study-level quality appraisal, and validated critical-literacy measures that permit stronger comparison across language and cultural settings. Before resubmission, the PRISMA counts and the eligibility and bibliographic

metadata of all included studies should also be reconciled with the original review records so that the final evidence base is fully auditable and reproducible.

References

- Aisyah, S., Inawati, I., & Pratolo, B. W. (2025). Critical reading and literacy in EFL context: A systematic literature review. *Professional Journal of English Education (PROJECT)*, 8(2), 475–485.
- Ardani, K. F., & Lolita, Y. (2025). Jigsaw in action: Bridging collaboration gaps in junior high school classrooms. *JADEs Journal of Academia in English Education*, 6(1), 145–169. <https://doi.org/10.32505/jades.v6i1.11797>
- Atuhura, D., & Nambi, R. (2024). Competence-based language curricula: Implementation challenges in Africa. *ELT Journal*, 78(3), 245–254. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccae003>
- Billah, A., Masykuri, M., Sarwanto, & Sajidan. (2021). Analysis of critical thinking in junior high school students through science learning in Indonesia: A systematic review. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1796(1), Article 012013. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1796/1/012013>
- Darwin, D., & Saputra, D. G. (2024). The role of Indonesian language in developing critical thinking skills of junior high school students 16 Jambi City. *MSJ: Majority Science Journal*, 2(4), 119–127. <https://doi.org/10.61942/msj.v2i4.262>
- Durante, P. G. C. (2025). Advancing critical literacy through critical literature pedagogy-based principles of literary education. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 83(2), 196–217. <https://doi.org/10.33225/pec/25.83.196>
- Erlina, E., Hijriyah, U., Ghazi, F., Sufian, M., & Syahril, S. (2025). Arabic problem-based learning for religious moderation: Classroom action research in Islamic education. *JPI: Jurnal Pustaka Indonesia*, 5(3), 111–125. <https://doi.org/10.62159/jpi.v5i3.1806>
- Erlina, E., Koderi, K., & Sufian, M. (2025). Designing a gender-responsive Qira'ah learning module: Bridging equality and inclusivity in Islamic higher education. *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 25(1), 239–262. <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v25i1.29305>
- Hidayat, R. A. U., Suherdi, D., & Purnawarman, P. (2021). English as foreign language students' understanding and knowledge of critical digital literacy. *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Conference on Applied Linguistics (CONAPLIN 2020)*, 546, 422–427. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210427.064>
- Ilomäki, L., Lakkala, M., Kallunki, V., Mundy, D., Romero, M., Romeu, T., & Gouseti, A. (2023). Critical digital literacies at school level: A systematic review. *Review of Education*, 11(3), Article e3425. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3425>
- Jumariati, Yamin, M., & Sutono, C. (2026). Integrating critical thinking in junior high school EFL classrooms: Teachers' perspectives and instructional practices. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 16(1), 166–188. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v16i1.10439>
- Khairi, L., & Alfaresi, I. (2025). Empowering young Indonesian readers: The effectiveness of CSR in a rural junior high school. *Explorations in English Learning*, 1(1), 1–8.
- Koderi, K., Sufian, M., & Erlina, E. (2023). Developing Lampung local wisdom film of Arabic communication skills for Madrasah Tsanawiyah students. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 13(12), 2004–2013. <https://doi.org/10.18178/ijiet.2023.13.12.2015>
- Kriswantara, G., & Perdana, I. (2021). Bahan ajar digital membaca teks cerita rakyat Kalimantan Tengah bermuatan pendidikan karakter dan literasi kritis. *Sawerigading*, 27(2), 191–204. <https://doi.org/10.26499/sawer.v27i2.926>
- Mirasol, R. G. (2024). Exploring junior high school students' critical reading strategies and reading performance. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), Article 2416814. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2416814>
- Muhria, L., Fitriati, S. W., Suwandi, & Wahyuni, S. (2026). Recontextualizing EFL reading instruction through local wisdom: A mixed-methods study of problem-based learning. *Jurnal Eduscience*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.36987/jes.v13i2.8856>
- Mukti, A. P. Y., Wicaksana, M. F., & Pardyatmoko, P. (2025). Model pembelajaran literasi kritis dalam pembelajaran bahasa Indonesia: Studi kasus di sekolah menengah kejuruan. *Bahasa: Jurnal Keilmuan Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 7(2), 483–490. <https://doi.org/10.26499/bahasa.v7i2.1531>
- Novianti, N. (2024). Negotiating critical literacy in junior high: A teacher's exploration using fairy tales. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 10(2), 175–186. <https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v10i2.10095>

- Nurjanah, N., Abdulkarim, A., Komalasari, K., Bestari, P., & Suwandi, M. A. (2024). Critical literacy of young citizens in the digital era. *Jurnal Civics: Media Kajian Kewarganegaraan*, 21(2), 342–351. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jc.v21i2.70232>
- Nurtanto, M., Nawanksari, S., Okianna, Sutrisno, V. L. P., Majid, N. W. A., & Kholifah, N. (2026). A systematic literature review on the impact of reading literacy on students' critical thinking skills in vocational education. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 20(1), 119–136. <https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v20i1.10049>
- Pacheco, M. B., Smith, B. E., Deig, A., & Amgott, N. A. (2021). Scaffolding multimodal composition with emergent bilingual students. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 53(2), 149–173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X211010888>
- Pribowo, M. A., Hadiati, E., Koderi, K., & Sufian, M. (2024). Pengembangan e-modul Pendidikan Agama Islam interaktif berbasis flipbook untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran di sekolah menengah pertama. *Jurnal PAI Raden Fatah*, 6(4), 961–974. <https://doi.org/10.19109/pairf.v6i4.24668>
- Ridwanulloh, M. S., Bagus, S., Maulana, K., & Apriyanto, S. (2025). Systematic literature review on trends and challenges in language, literature, and cultural education. *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature*, 5(001), 396–409. <https://doi.org/10.54012/jcell.v5i001.605>
- Rizqiani, D. A., Yuliani, S., Roziyah, R., & Putra, A. M. I. (2024). The effectiveness of a critical literacy model to improve students' critical literacy skills. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 16(2), 1249–1260. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i2.5139>
- Rojas-Estrada, E.-G., Aguaded, I., & García-Ruiz, R. (2024). Media and information literacy in the prescribed curriculum: A systematic review on its integration. *Education and Information Technologies*, 29, 9445–9472. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-12154-0>
- Rokmana, I., Akmansyah, M., Erlina, E., Koderi, K., & Sufian, M. (2025). Enhancing Arabic vocabulary learning outcomes through cooperative learning model STAD with video media assistance. *'A Jamiy: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Arab*, 14(1), 97–112. <https://doi.org/10.31314/ajamiy.14.1.97-112.2025>
- Sari, N., Muslim, A. B., Sodik, A., Erlina, E., & Sufian, M. (2024). Influence of Teams Games Method by Kokami and learning motivation on Arabic language learning outcomes. *Loghat Arabi: Jurnal Bahasa Arab dan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, 5(1), 59–74. <https://doi.org/10.36915/la.v5i1.180>
- Sari, N. T. A., Wulan, N. S., Nurmahanani, I., Nurrohmat, T., Althamiranda, A., & Anugrah, Y. F. (2025). Pelatihan critical literacy guna meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran bahasa Inggris tingkat sekolah dasar. *Sivitas: Jurnal Pengabdian dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*, 5(2), 123–130. <https://doi.org/10.52593/svs.05.2.06>
- Setiawardani, W., Robandi, B., & Djohar, A. (2021). Critical pedagogy in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 to improve digital literacy students welcoming Society 5.0 in Indonesia. *PrimaryEdu: Journal of Primary Education*, 5(1), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.22460/pej.v5i1.2073>
- Setyarini, S. (2020). Scientific approach in EFL young adolescents to promote higher order thinking skills: Teacher's strategy, benefits, and challenges. *JALL (Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literacy)*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.25157/jall.v4i2.3857>
- Silvhiany, S., Huzaiyah, S., & Ismet, I. (2021). Critical digital literacy: EFL students' ability to evaluate online sources. *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics*, 6(1), 249–269. <https://doi.org/10.21462/ijefl.v6i1.364>
- Smith, B. E., Pacheco, M. B., & Khorosheva, M. (2021). Emergent bilingual students and digital multimodal composition: A systematic review of research in secondary classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56(1), 33–52. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.298>
- Wilson, K., & Defianty, M. (2024). The critical challenge for ELT in Indonesia: Overcoming barriers in fostering critical thinking in testing-oriented countries. *TESOL in Context*, 33(1), 82–96. <https://doi.org/10.21153/tesol2024vol33no1art2011>
- Zhang, Z. (2023). Pedagogical variations of critical literacies practices in a secondary transnational education program. *Linguistics and Education*, 75, Article 101185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2023.101185>