



Investigating power in critical literacy pedagogy to develop critical language awareness

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Abstract

Understanding persuasive language that presents certain groups or ideas as superior has become increasingly important in today's rapidly changing global, technological, and socio-political landscape. People are constantly exposed to texts through education, the media, and institutions, which carry implicit ideologies and power relations. In this context, students need critical abilities that allow them to question how language influences beliefs, normalises dominance, and shapes social realities. However, reading instruction in many Indonesian classrooms still focuses mainly on literal understanding, providing few opportunities for students to develop critical language awareness. This gap underscores the need for critical literacy as a teaching approach that explicitly links language use to power and sociocultural contexts. Addressing this need, the present study examines how critical literacy pedagogy, grounded in the Four Dimensions Model, supports higher education students in recognising and analysing power relations embedded in texts. The study draws on a classroom-based critical literacy intervention, using artefact analysis and classroom observations to examine students' engagement with texts through Lewison lens. The finding indicates that students moved beyond surface-level reading to identify identity construction, silenced voices, conflicting perspectives, dominant norms, and counter-narratives. Building on these findings, the study proposes a pedagogical framework that integrates text familiarisation, critical questioning, multimodal resources, authentic materials, and critical discourse analysis. Therefore, the implications of this approach underscore the necessity of fostering critical literacy to cultivate awareness and expose underlying power relations in contemporary global contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary EFL contexts, learners are increasingly exposed to ideologically charged texts, particularly those concerning political narratives, media representations, and gender relations. In Indonesia, English-language texts used in higher education, such as news articles, opinion pieces, films, and online media, frequently reproduce global discourses on democracy, gender equality, and social power (Rahimi & Sharififar, 2015). However, EFL instruction has largely prioritised linguistic comprehension and general critical thinking skills, offering limited support for students to examine how language constructs dominance, marginalisation, and social identities (Luke, 2012; Janks, 2010). As a result, Indonesian EFL learners often engage with such texts at a surface level, without critically interrogating whose perspectives are privileged and how power relations shape meanings (Curd-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015).

Empirical studies in Indonesian EFL classrooms indicate that reading instruction remains predominantly text-centred and skills-oriented, with a focus on vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and literal comprehension (Ijabah & Asdar, 2024; Latif, 2022). While political and gender-related topics are increasingly present in EFL materials, students are rarely guided to analyse the ideological dimensions of these texts or to connect them with their own sociocultural contexts. Research has shown that Indonesian EFL learners tend to accept textual authority uncritically, particularly in discussions of gender roles and social hierarchy, reflecting broader cultural norms that discourage questioning dominant narratives (Gandana et al., 2021). This pedagogical gap is significant, as it limits learners' capacity to use English as a resource for critical engagement rather than mere information consumption.

Critical Literacy (CL) has been widely proposed as a pedagogical response to this challenge because it foregrounds the relationship between language, ideology, and power (Freire, 1985; Meller & Hatch, 2008; Ng, 2017). However, despite its firm theoretical grounding, CL remains marginal in EFL classroom practice, particularly in higher education and non-Western contexts (Alford & Jetnikoff, 2016). Existing CL studies in Indonesia and similar EFL settings are primarily descriptive or small-scale qualitative case studies, offering limited insight into how students' critical language awareness develops over time or how instructional practices systematically support that development (Hidayat et al., 2020). Moreover, few studies provide empirical evidence that combines measurable learning outcomes with a detailed analysis of classroom processes, leaving a methodological gap in CL research within EFL education.

This gap is particularly urgent given persistent concerns about Indonesian students' literacy development. National and international reports continue to highlight low levels of reading engagement and limited analytical literacy, especially in interpreting complex or ideologically loaded texts (Rozi et al., 2024). Without pedagogical models that explicitly address how language encodes power and ideology, EFL learners risk becoming proficient readers of English without developing the critical awareness necessary to navigate global discourses on identity, diversity, and social justice.

The Four Dimensions Model (FDM) offers a promising yet underexplored framework for addressing this issue. By guiding learners through disrupting the commonplace, examining multiple perspectives, analysing socio-political issues, and taking action, FDM integrates critical thinking within a structured critical literacy pedagogy (Hayik, 2016; Lewison et al. 2002). However, there remains limited empirical research demonstrating how FDM can be operationalised in Indonesian tertiary EFL classrooms to foster Critical Language Awareness (CLA), particularly through engagement with political and gender discourses Fairclough (1989; 1995).

Responding to this gap, the present study employs FDM as both a pedagogical framework and an analytical lens to investigate the development of students' CLA in a tertiary EFL context. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the study examines changes in students' critical engagement with texts alongside classroom practices that support those changes. By providing empirical evidence of learning development and a replicable model for classroom implementation, this study addresses an urgent need in Indonesian EFL education: equipping learners not only to read English texts accurately but also to critically interrogate how language constructs power, identity, and inequality.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the Four Dimensions Model support students' critical awareness?
2. What pedagogical practices are required to enhance students' Critical Language Awareness in a tertiary EFL classroom?

METHODS

Research design and context

This study employed a classroom-based critical literacy intervention situated within a qualitative case study design. Rather than treating critical literacy as an abstract construct, the research examined its design as an instructional practice embedded in a real classroom context. A case study approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of pedagogical processes, learner engagement, and meaning-making within a bounded educational setting (Stake, 1995). This outline was particularly appropriate for capturing how students interacted with texts, peers, and instructional prompts during critical literacy activities.

The intervention was implemented in a Discourse Analysis course within the English Literature Study Programme at a public university in Semarang, Indonesia. The course was chosen deliberately because discourse analysis foregrounds language, ideology, and power, aligning closely with the principles of critical literacy and critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1992b). Participants consisted of 27 undergraduate students (20 female and 7 male), all of whom had prior experience with conventional reading instruction but limited exposure to critical literacy pedagogy.

Classroom-based critical literacy intervention

The intervention was designed to integrate critical literacy pedagogy grounded in the Four Dimensions Model into regular classroom instruction. Teaching activities were structured to guide students through stages of text engagement, beginning with text familiarisation and moving towards critical interrogation and reflection. Texts used in the intervention included authentic materials, such as news articles, opinion pieces, and media texts addressing socio-political issues. These texts were selected because they reflect real-world discourse and provide rich opportunities for analysing dominance, marginalisation, and ideological positioning.

During classroom activities, students were encouraged to answer texts using prompts aligned with critical literacy principles. These questions supported students in moving beyond surface comprehension towards analysing how language constructs power relations.

Instruments

Two primary instruments were developed for data collection: artefact documentation and classroom observation protocols. Artefacts included students' written responses, reflective notes, summaries, reviews, and answers to critical questions produced during classroom activities. These artefacts served as tangible evidence of students' engagement with texts and their emerging critical language awareness.

The classroom observation protocol was designed to capture students' verbal interactions, questioning behaviours, and participation in discussions. Observations focused on how students responded to critical prompts, negotiated meanings with peers, and articulated perspectives related to power and ideology. The instruments were developed based on Freirean critical literacy principles and CDA frameworks to ensure theoretical alignment.

Data collection procedures

Data were collected throughout the intervention period using systematic classroom observations and continuous artefact collection. The lecturer-researcher documented classroom interactions through detailed field notes, paying attention to moments where students demonstrated critical engagement, resistance, or shifts in interpretation. Student artefacts were collected at multiple stages of the intervention to trace development over time. To enhance credibility, data were collected consistently across instructional sessions, and all materials were carefully organised and archived.

Data analysis

This study used thematic analysis to examine how power was represented in the texts. Thematic analysis enables researchers to identify and interpret recurring patterns in qualitative data in a systematic way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved organising the data, repeated reading, open coding, and developing themes that captured meaningful patterns (Forest & Kimmel, 2016).

The four dimensions of critical literacy guided the analysis, focusing on students' questioning, recognition of multiple perspectives, attention to socio-political issues, and post-reading actions

(Lewison et al., 2002). Treating data analysis as an iterative process allowed for more profound and more coherent interpretation of how students developed critical literacy awareness through their engagement with texts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Uncovering power that provides critical literacy awareness

Because the traditional method of teaching reading is still implemented in most educational institutions, teachers are unable to teach students critical reading using the new method; however, they may begin to combine both. To develop critical language awareness, the teacher provides short, simple texts to initiate critical reading, such as memes taken from websites. Memes are considered chosen data because they typically consist of a few sentences and are simple texts. In teaching critical literacy, educators should foster students' flexibility to enable them to think critically and analytically. The data sources are authentic materials that relate to students' daily lives and L1 contexts. This is because the primary objective is to enable students to express their views, respond to others' opinions, and discuss specific issues.

PowerPoint presentations, websites, movies, audio recordings, and images are all acceptable teaching and learning tools that teachers may use. The teacher introduces the "beauty standard" issue by displaying a picture of a "beautiful" woman, as defined by Indonesian standards, sourced from a website. To encourage student involvement, the teacher asks a simple question related to the topic. This preliminary step leads to more complex questions that will emerge in students' critical-thinking awareness. She managed the class discussion by posing a question about the ads and allowing students to express their thoughts. The ad's text producer selected three "beautiful" girls with white skin, smooth faces, and attractive appearances. That was one example of an ad promoting its product by endorsing a "beautiful and good-looking" woman. Most advertising producers created it to encourage consumers to purchase the products. The teacher posed questions to prompt students to consider alternative viewpoints and to critique the "beauty standard." The critical questions, such as "What do you think if the women are not beautiful?" that were raised during the preliminary discussion before entering FDM, revealed that some learners already had a critical awareness of this issue, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. What if the women are not beautiful?

S1	All women are beautiful.
S2	No problem, <i>tidak harus cantik, yang penting</i> charming
S4	I think no problem. Because beauty is not only has white, glowing, and smooth face.
S9	No problem. Because beauty is not just a matter of physical
S12	They are beautiful in their own way
S17	No problem mam, there are ads with fat and black colour girl in shampoo ads. It's okay.
S19	Smart is also beautiful

According to the students' comments, beauty encompasses more than physical attributes; it also includes traits such as intelligence, charisma, kindness, good behaviour, and talent. They were able to embrace the range and diversity of beauty standards, which varied across cultures, social statuses, and personal preferences. It showed that students resist the power of beauty standards in social and cultural settings by articulating a counter-narrative.

The class began with exploring FDM following the pre-reading exercise. The discussion of beauty standards in the advertisement at the start of class was the text's theme. The text "Woman covered head-to-toe in moles," which aspires to the Miss Universe Malaysia title, was published by Global News on June 30th, 2017, and was selected for its emphasis on diverse perspectives on beauty standards. The discussion focused on Evita Delmundo, who competed in Miss Universe Malaysia despite having moles covering her body from head to toe. Jenna Talackova, a transgender person who joined Miss Universe Canada, and Winnie Harlow, who has vitiligo and joined America's Next Top Model, are two notable examples of women who challenge the "beauty standard". It would be an interesting topic to discuss because each learner could express their thoughts freely without fear of blame, and there was no right or wrong in sharing their ideas. The teacher invited students to discuss prevailing beauty standards, noting that a Beauty Pageant is an

event in which women of a certain age compete to win the title of beauty queen by showcasing their physical beauty, modelling skills, talent, intelligence, and social grace.

Any multimodal source, such as a website or YouTube, can be searched to deepen understanding of critical awareness. The way one party is positioned and constructed by the media could be examined by viewers. By asking, "Who gets the benefit from the pageant?" the teacher encouraged the class to analyse the images from the advertisements and the pageant video to determine how the media portrays the women. The list of students' responses will be displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Who gets the benefit from the pageant

S2	The one who has benefits from the show is women who have the Miss Universe's beauty standard
S13	People considered "beautiful" in Miss Universe, who are typically white and possess an idealised body, receive benefits such as awards and popularity.
S18	Those who have those standards
S19	That one party is benefitted in Miss Universe women who have beauty standards.
S20	The advertisement, sponsorship, the girl that pretty, tall, and have a white skin.

In the cases of Jenna Talackova and Evita Delmundo, both were permitted to compete in the pageant but were unable to win because they lacked the necessary qualifications. It demonstrated how the committee positioned women who adhered to the "beauty standard" as having greater privileges than those who did not. Women who met those "beauty standards" were given the golden ticket based on the reactions of students who were able to analyse specific criteria set by the committee, such as being tall, white, attractive, pretty, and having the ideal body. The competition showed that women who met the "beauty standard" were more dominant than those who did not, demonstrating the power of beautiful women.

The teacher asked, "What language shapes the identity of the pageant?" to analyse how language determines cultural discourses and shapes identities. The teacher assisted the students in identifying the language used in the text that reflected societal identities and culture. Given that the theme was a beauty pageant, the goal was to identify a language that more accurately reflected physical performance as the prevailing standard of beauty. The teacher gave the example of a linguistic feature in the text that shaped beauty standards. The title "Woman covered head-to-toe in moles" and the subsequent strive for the Miss Universe Malaysia title have shaped the pageant's identity. Participants with moles covering their entire body must overcome this challenge to compete. On the other hand, the participant with no moles may join the pageant without any struggle. It indicates that the participant must be free of moles. The students' responses regarding identity recognition through languages are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Language that shapes the identity of the pageant

S24	"Pageants have taught us anything, it's that beauty in the pageant world is based on a bikini-ready body, healthy hair, and flawless skin" (line 1-2)
S23	"That beauty in the pageant world is based on a bikini-ready body, healthy hair and flawless skin" (line 1-2)
S5	"Words like 'showcase my uniqueness and newfound confidence' (line 38-39), 'beauty is not only skin deep' (line 7), and 'inspire others to accept their bodies' (line 30).
S8	"Beauty is not only skin deep" (line 7)
S7	"The language of self-acceptance and self-love shapes the text's pageant identity. The 20-year-old competitor, Evita Delmundo, has learnt to embrace the beauty in her moles and will not have them removed in spite of years of bullying and being called a <i>monster</i> " (line 10).
S4	"Everyone has something special about them" (line 35)

To study how language shapes identity, learners focus on specific words or phrases to recognise the identity of the "beauty standard". After identifying the language that reflects identity, the teacher delves deeper into the reasons. They clarified that the phrase "that beauty in the pageant

world is based on a bikini-ready body, healthy hair, and flawless skin" in lines 1-2 refers to the fact that the Beauty Pageant is a platform that influences people's ideas that beauty necessitates a shaped body, hence a bikini makes the body appear slender. To be deemed "beautiful," a woman must possess both flawless skin and healthy hair, which are also indicators of a perfect woman. In line 7, "Beauty is not only skin deep," the idea that a beautiful woman must have perfect, smooth, and soft skin is established. Line 10's use of the word "monster" refers to Delmundo's display of body moles, which suggested that her identity was anything but beautiful and should be free of them. "Inspire others to accept their bodies" (line 30) also emphasised a more inclusive and expansive notion of beauty and spoke to the individuality of every person. The statements "everyone has something special about them" (line 35) and "showcase my uniqueness and newfound confidence" (lines 38–39) were meant to emphasise that each individual is unique, special, and capable of boosting her confidence based on her individuality—not always by the Beauty Pageant beauty standard. It can be inferred from these words that "beautiful" denoted a sculpted figure and perfect skin. Women are not "beautiful" if they are unusual and different and do not meet the "beauty standard" as judged by society.

Students can also identify that the social system puts "beautiful women" in a higher position than "not beautiful women," as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The privilege for "beautiful women"

S3	Often, social systems do privilege beautiful women, giving them more opportunities in certain fields such as entertainment and media.
S17	Yes, according to what I see on social media, beauty women always have privilege.
S20	Yes. I think. Because people will judge that those who are more beautiful will be more admired.
S23	The social system always puts beautiful women who are good looking always in a higher position, even in finding a job a candidate must good look as one of the criteria that companies are looking for to be accepted.
S25	Yes, society often gives greater attention and better opportunities to people considered beautiful.
S27	Body privilege, or pretty privilege, is a concept used to examine the economic, social, and political advantages conferred on women solely based on their physical appearance.

The pageant committee positioned women who met "beauty standards" as the more privileged group than those who did not, as students realised when they read the theme. The golden ticket was awarded to women who met the committee's "beauty standards," as assessed by student responses that analysed specific criteria, such as being tall, white, attractive, pretty, and having the perfect body. It was evident to them that women who met the "beauty standard" in the competition were superior to those who did not.

The social system shapes how the world views "beautiful women" as having more privilege than those who are not. The privilege of being a "beautiful woman" is getting more opportunities, attention, and admiration. Beautiful women are often perceived as having high economic and social status, as they require costly treatments to maintain their appearance. On social media, people often judge others based on appearance, so those who are attractive receive more positive feedback due to their appearance. In addition, their outstanding performance during the job search attracts more attention and consideration than that of others.

Students can identify the women's position, which indicates that "beautiful women" have more power than "not beautiful women" through the language. While exploring women's identity, students can also uncover the opposing narrative regarding beauty standards. They could counter prevailing beauty standards by emphasising inner beauty (well-mannered, strong, courageous, loving, caring, intelligent), communication competence, and impact. Students got the reference in text that goes against the beauty standard by giving an example such as "Winnie Harlow's achievements in fashion shows that she is valued just as much, although not meeting traditional beauty standards with her vitiligo" and "in 2012, transgender model Jenna Talackova made history by being the first transgender woman to compete in the Miss Universe Canada pageant. Talackova

did not win the title, but she did finish among the top 12, CNN reported. How students identified the beautiful woman's identity, whose voice was missing, the non-standard beauty or contradictory perspective of the beauty standard, and the counter-crafted narratives indicated that they were able to view the issue of "beautiful women" power through the text.

Critical literacy pedagogy grounded in the four dimensions model to reveal power

To integrate both traditional and transformative teaching approaches, educators can introduce students to critical literacy. Since critical literacy is a relatively new concept for learners, teachers should begin by providing critical literacy materials and using the four-dimensions model as a preliminary stage in reading instruction. At the start of the lesson, the teacher may present short texts, such as advertisements that reflect real-life issues relevant to students. This approach helps learners gain initial insights and understanding before engaging with longer, more complex texts by applying the four-dimensions model.

During the main reading phase, these extended texts serve to implement the four dimensions of critical literacy. Teachers pose critical questions that encourage students to respond with thoughtful and analytical perspectives. Questioning remains a fundamental element of critical literacy-focused instruction and is consistently highlighted in text, though it has yet to be fully embedded in classroom practice. Transitioning from traditional to critical reading practices helps both educators and students become more accustomed to inquiry-based learning, an essential component of critical literacy.

Educators should also foster students' flexibility to support their development of critical and analytical thinking. Teaching materials should be authentic and drawn from students' everyday experiences, as such texts are easier to engage with compared to decontextualised textbook content, which may feel distant or irrelevant.

Incorporating multimodal teaching strategies helps students engage more effectively and interactively with texts. The ability to critically interpret various multimodal sources, such as online articles, social media posts, websites, and videos, has become vital in the 21st century, where digital media shapes information access, communication, and social interaction. Using multimodal materials not only enhances learning but also increases student motivation by making the experience more enjoyable.

A discussion of critical literacy must also involve critical discourse analysis (CDA), a key method for examining power dynamics, authority, ideology, and ethics within educational texts and practices. CDA equips students and teachers with the tools to foster critical awareness and expose social, cultural, and political dominance in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms, promoting more equitable and reflective learning environments.

The findings, which revealed power as a means of providing critical literacy awareness through critical literacy pedagogy grounded in the four dimensions model, demonstrated that critical literacy awareness developed as students learned to uncover power through accessible texts, guided questioning, and close analysis of language. By engaging with socio-political issues such as beauty standards, students moved from passive readers to critical meaning-makers who could identify dominance, privilege, exclusion, and resistance within discourse. This process demonstrates the role of classroom-based critical literacy in enabling learners to understand how power operates through language and how alternative narratives can challenge dominant ideologies. Table 5 presents an analysis of how critical literacy pedagogy, using the four-dimensions model, helps students become critically aware of power in texts.

Table 5. A four-dimensional model-based critical literacy pedagogy to develop students' awareness of textual power

Theme	Sub-theme
Disrupting the commonplace	Rethinking reading by using familiar, everyday text
	Questioning what is usually accepted as 'normal' beauty
	Seeing simple text as carriers of hidden messages and power
Considering multiple viewpoints	Creating space for students to share their own voices

	Engaging with alternatives and marginalised ideas of beauty
	Broadening understandings of beauty beyond physical appearance
Focusing on the socio-political issue	Recognising the media's role in shaping privilege and dominance
	Understanding how language constructs identity and exclusion
	Connecting beauty standards to broader social and economic inequalities
Taking action	Challenging dominant beauty discourses through counter-narratives
	Reclaiming value through individuality and inner qualities
	Using critical awareness of language to question social justice

Discussion

By implementing CL, students' linguistic awareness, critical reading, and reader-response abilities will improve. The primary goal of all education, including language instruction, should be the development of a critical awareness of the world and the potential for change (Fairclough, 1992). The teacher's role in critical literacy pedagogy is crucial, particularly during pre-, in-, and post-learning phases, as explored in this research. In teaching critical literacy, the teacher plays a central role in implementing this approach. Teacher's duties in the critical literacy classroom include scheduling lesson plans (Minott, 2011; Park, 2011) and implementing them, guiding students' evaluations and criticisms thoughtfully, inspiring them to read texts critically and ask questions, emphasizing the reading of texts from a variety of perspectives, allowing them to use journals to make a composition of writing from various viewpoints, and facilitating general discussions (Minott, 2011). Research has shown that teaching critical literacy skills at the tertiary level has pedagogical implications. Specifically, teachers can gradually help students understand the importance of critical reading and develop their ability to process information effectively (Kaur & Sidhu, 2014). Critical language awareness involves uncovering hidden curricula and power dynamics, such as those related to beauty standards and discrimination, and viewing readers as independent critical thinkers (Taylor et al., 2017). Awareness of their own beauty also supports their development as more reflective learners, as they become more attentive to texts and recognise that language conveys messages (Mohammadzadeh, 2017).

For the instruction of critical literacy, there are no standard models (Luke, 2012). Teachers teach literacy using a variety of techniques, which supports the diversity of learning styles. Since teaching from a sociocultural and critical literacy perspective depends on the traits of the individuals, schools, and societies involved, no instructional model can be universally and exclusively correct (Lundgren, 2013). The everyday power relations, problems, and struggles of students and teachers significantly shape how educators shape and apply the strategies, attitudes, and philosophies of critical literacy.

Familiarising students with CL instruction can be achieved by integrating traditional teaching methods into CL pedagogy. By introducing CL and FDM before reading text, and providing a short and simple text of CL to initiate reading texts critically, for example, images in the *Advanced Reading* textbook taken from a website, teachers expressed a desire to move toward developing critical literacy as significant in teaching and across the curriculum (Chafel & Neitzel, 2012; Iyer, 2010). Integrating traditional literacy with critical and multimodal approaches helps students better navigate modern texts (ads, social media, digital media) meaningfully (Patty, 2025).

To promote awareness of critical thinking, the instructor provides students with short, easily understood critical literacy texts to begin reading critically, such as news items or advertisements from websites. Advertisements and news items are considered selected data because they are typically short texts. According to research by Kuo et al., (2014) This tactic can be used progressively. The chosen text can therefore be started gradually, going from simpler to more sophisticated texts.

One way to become a critical learner is to pose challenging questions. The questioning will not stop when the definition of critical literacy-oriented is discussed. Although this crucial element has been included in almost all research on the application of critical literacy, it has not been incorporated into the teaching methodology. Several academic research studies support the idea that students should be asked critical questions to increase their critical awareness (Abdenia, 2015; Alford, 2021; Govender, 2019; Huang, 2011a; Kuo, 2014). Asking questions helps students focus on what they should concentrate on and provides an opportunity to express critical opinions.

CDA analysis in EFL is used to develop students' critical thinking. Some scholars support this statement (Dabiri, 2018; Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012; Millan, 2021; Nasution et al., 2020; Rahimi & Shariffar, 2015; Sadek & Sassi, 2017). Critical language awareness is essential for students to navigate not just academic settings, but also social and professional environments. As such, it should be fostered through language education, particularly in the context of learning the Indonesian language (Sarasati, 2020). In teaching EFL, CDA has been used to analyse a foreign textbook, to analyse teacher-student interaction in a foreign language classroom, to analyse the presentation of a foreign language in the media, to analyse the identity and discourse of students, and to analyse teacher-student interaction in the classroom. Those are the implementations of CDA in EFL as a pedagogical learning approach. Research by some scholars reported that CDA develops students' critical language awareness (Al-Issa et al., 2017; Avenando & Fonseca, 2009; Bonyadi, 2019; Gyawali, 2019; Hamdi, 2022; Marsh, 2011; Martínez, 2012; Mujiyanto, 2009; Sharma, 2011).

CONCLUSION

To uncover the power embedded in the language process, the critical literacy framework can be used to examine the dominant party, which seeks to maintain and legitimate its supremacy. Models for investigating power include students' perceptions of identity, the missing voice, contradictory perspectives, standards, and counter-crafted narratives. Dominance and power have all been connected to those frameworks as a critical literacy approach. The critical literacy model's conceptual frameworks for uncovering dominance include familiarising students with the text, utilising multimodality, utilising authentic materials, asking critical questions, and analysing critical discourse. The use of these conceptual frameworks can teach students to read and analyse texts critically, enabling them to examine power. Therefore, reading critically to reveal power in texts seems necessary, underscoring the significance of speakers who can raise critical language awareness.

The findings of this study present several prospects for further development and application. First, the central role of teachers in critical literacy pedagogy across the pre-, in-, and post-learning phases suggests the need for future research on teacher training and professional development programs to enhance their capacity to implement this approach. Second, since questioning is a key pathway toward becoming a critical learner, subsequent studies could focus on designing frameworks and classroom practices that systematise questioning strategies to foster deeper engagement. Third, the integration of critical discourse analysis (CDA) into critical literacy pedagogy offers opportunities to expand curriculum design, enabling students to uncover bias and power relations embedded in texts. Finally, as CDA in EFL contexts contributes to cultivating critical thinkers, future research should conduct longitudinal, empirical studies to assess the long-term impact of CDA-based instruction, ensuring that its application supports both language proficiency and critical awareness.

Although this study demonstrates the potential of critical literacy pedagogy to help EFL students uncover power relations in texts, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, it was conducted in a single higher-education EFL classroom, which limits the generalisability of the findings to other educational levels, institutional settings, and EFL contexts. Second, although the study highlights the importance of teacher mediation and critical questioning, it does not systematically analyse teachers' pedagogical decision-making processes or identify which questioning strategies most effectively promote critical engagement. Third, the use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) was confined to short-term classroom practices, limiting insights into its sustained impact on students' language proficiency and critical language awareness.

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