



Critical Literacy in Indonesian Language Learning in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe students' critical literacy skills in Indonesian language learning at university. The study was conducted at Indraprasta PGRI University, Jakarta, in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The study population consisted of 120 students taking Indonesian language courses, while the sample consisted of 35 students selected using a purposive sampling technique. The study employed a descriptive quantitative approach. The research instrument was a critical literacy questionnaire covering indicators of text analysis, argumentation evaluation, social interpretation, critical reflection, and opinion formation. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages to determine the level of students' critical literacy skills. The results showed that students' critical literacy skills were in the good category with an average percentage of 81.8%. The social interpretation indicator achieved the highest percentage at 85%, while the argumentation evaluation indicator achieved the lowest percentage at 78%. Furthermore, learning activities based on critical discussion, text analysis, and learning reflection showed a relationship with the development of students' critical literacy skills. The results of this study indicate that Indonesian language learning at university plays a crucial role in developing students' critical thinking skills in the digital era.

Keywords: critical literacy, Indonesian language learning, students

Literasi Kritis dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia di Perguruan Tinggi

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kemampuan literasi kritis mahasiswa dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia di perguruan tinggi. Penelitian dilaksanakan di Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta, pada semester genap tahun akademik 2025/2026. Populasi penelitian berjumlah 120 mahasiswa yang mengikuti mata kuliah Bahasa Indonesia, sedangkan sampel penelitian terdiri atas 35 mahasiswa yang dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif deskriptif. Instrumen penelitian berupa angket literasi kritis yang mencakup indikator kemampuan analisis teks, evaluasi argumentasi, interpretasi sosial, refleksi kritis, dan kemampuan menyusun opini. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan statistik deskriptif berupa persentase untuk mengetahui tingkat kemampuan literasi kritis mahasiswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan literasi kritis mahasiswa berada pada kategori baik dengan persentase rata-rata sebesar 81,8%. Indikator interpretasi sosial memperoleh persentase tertinggi sebesar 85%, sedangkan indikator evaluasi argumentasi memperoleh persentase terendah sebesar 78%. Selain itu, aktivitas pembelajaran berbasis diskusi kritis, analisis teks, dan refleksi pembelajaran menunjukkan keterkaitan dengan perkembangan kemampuan literasi kritis mahasiswa. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia di perguruan tinggi memiliki peran penting dalam mengembangkan kemampuan berpikir kritis mahasiswa pada era digital.

Keywords: literasi kritis, pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia, mahasiswa

Submitted
15/05/2026

Accepted
20/07/2026

Published
23/07/2026

Citation	Dinihari, Y., Wiyanti, E., Karyati, Z., Ningsih, R., Puspitasari, A. C. D. D. (2026). Critical Literacy in Indonesian Language Learning in Higher Education. <i>Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra</i> , Volume 5, Nomor 4, Juli 2026, 3189-3196. DOI: https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v5i4.1491
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Publisher
Raja Zulkarnain Education Foundation

INTRODUCTION

Critical literacy skills in Indonesian language learning in higher education have become a crucial competency in the digital era and the development of 21st-century information. Students are not only required to be able to read and understand texts literally, but also to analyze, evaluate, and critically reflect on the meaning of texts in relation to various social, cultural, and academic phenomena. These skills are necessary for students to sort out valid information, understand the ideology behind the text, and convey logical arguments in both academic and social life. In the context of higher education, critical literacy is a crucial part of developing higher-order thinking skills, supporting students' analytical and reflective abilities (Facione, 2015). Furthermore, Luke (2012) explains that critical literacy is the ability to understand the relationship between text, power, and social reality, enabling students to be reflective about various forms of information (Luke, 2012). The development of digital technology and social media has also influenced student literacy patterns in higher education. The rapid flow of information often leads students to receive information without verifying and critically evaluating the source. This situation means that Indonesian language learning no longer focuses solely on conventional reading and writing skills, but also requires developing critical thinking skills in understanding multimodal texts and digital information. Critical literacy is the ability to understand the relationship between language, power, and social reality, enabling students to read the world critically, not simply read words (Fiala, 2024). This opinion is reinforced by Kress (2009), who explains that the development of digital communication requires students to have the ability to understand various forms of multimodal text critically and contextually (Kress, 2009).

The reality on the ground shows that students' critical literacy skills are still suboptimal. Based on the results of the research questionnaire, the argumentation evaluation indicator achieved the

lowest percentage at 78%, while the social interpretation indicator achieved the highest percentage at 85%. These results indicate that students are quite capable of understanding the social context of a text, but still experience difficulties in evaluating arguments and formulating academic opinions logically and systematically. These findings indicate that the Indonesian language learning process in higher education still requires strengthening learning strategies that can develop students' critical thinking skills more deeply. Critical literacy skills can develop if students are involved in reflective reading activities, critical discussions, and in-depth interpretation of the meaning of texts (Fangl et al., 2005).

Students' poor argumentative evaluation skills are influenced by a learning process that is still oriented toward memorization and textual comprehension. In learning practices, students are often simply asked to comprehend the content of a reading without being guided to critically analyze the ideas, ideologies, or social meanings behind the text. Critical literacy positions students as active subjects capable of questioning the power relations, meanings, and ideologies contained within a text (Avenue et al., 2015). Meanwhile, Street (2003) emphasized that literacy practices cannot be separated from the social and cultural context of society (Brian Street, 2003). Therefore, Indonesian language learning needs to be directed toward developing reflective activities, argumentative discussions, and problem-solving based on social issues.

The development of students' critical thinking skills in higher education is inseparable from learning strategies that encourage reflective and analytical activities. Yeh, Yang, Fu, and Shih (2023) explained that reflective writing activities can improve students' critical thinking skills because they are trained to evaluate information, reflect on learning experiences, and systematically construct arguments (Yeh et al., 2023). These findings indicate that Indonesian language learning



in higher education needs to provide students with space for critical reflection through reading, writing, and academic discussions. Thus, learning should not only focus on text comprehension but also on students' ability to construct critical reasoning on various social and academic issues. Furthermore, developing students' critical thinking skills is also a priority in higher education in various countries. Qian, Hailun, and Mingtao (2018) explain that university students' critical thinking skills need to be developed through learning that emphasizes problem analysis, information evaluation, and rational decision-making (Qian et al., 2018). This research shows that students accustomed to critical thinking tend to be more active in the learning process and have better problem-solving skills. This opinion is supported by Li, who stated that critical thinking skills are an important competency for students facing the development of science and technology in the era of globalization (Li, 2020). Therefore, lecturers need to implement learning strategies that encourage students to think reflectively, argumentatively, and independently in understanding information.

This situation is relevant to Indonesian language learning in higher education, which aims not only to improve students' language skills but also to develop critical thinking skills in understanding texts and social realities. Through critical literacy-based learning, students are expected to be able to evaluate information objectively, understand the social meaning behind texts, and convey academic opinions logically and systematically. Thus, critical literacy is one of the key competencies that needs to be developed in Indonesian language learning to support students' academic abilities in the digital age.

Previous research has shown that literacy is closely related to students' critical thinking skills. Research by Yulian Dinihari and Parwati (2026) found that reading literacy activities involving analysis and reflection can improve students' critical thinking skills in understanding information. This research confirms that critical

reading skills can help students develop evaluative skills in various academic and social texts. These research findings align with Behrman's (2006) opinion, which states that critical literacy learning can help students understand the relationship between language, power, and ideology in texts (Behrman, 2006).

Furthermore, research by Yulian Dinihari and Musringudin in an article shows that digital literacy and Indonesian language skills influence students' ability to use social media critically and responsibly (Musringudin & Dinihari, 2025). Students with strong digital literacy skills tend to be able to evaluate digital information and avoid the spread of invalid information. The results of this study indicate that critical literacy is closely linked to the development of digital technology in students' lives. This opinion is supported by Yelland (2013), who explains that digital literacy skills play a crucial role in supporting individuals' social and academic participation in the information technology era (Yelland, 2013).

Indonesian language learning also needs to be supported by innovative teaching materials relevant to the characteristics of today's students. Research by Yulian Dinihari et al. explains that gamification approaches and modern pedagogy can increase student engagement in the literacy learning process (Dinihari et al., 2025). The use of interactive learning media can help students become more active in reading, analyzing, and evaluating information, thus optimally developing their critical literacy skills. According to Gee (1993), experiential learning and social interaction can build a deeper understanding of literacy than conventional learning, which focuses solely on memorization (Hill & Gee, 1993).

Critical literacy is also related to 21st-century skills, known as the 4Cs (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication). Research by Angela et al. shows that critical thinking skills are a key aspect of language and literature learning (Angela et al., 2025). Through 21st-century literacy-based learning, students not only understand text content but also develop

broader communication and social reflection skills. UNESCO (2021) also emphasizes that information and media literacy skills are key competencies students must possess to actively participate in global society (UNESCO, 2006).

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has also influenced changes in literacy practices in academic settings. Research by Pribadi, Yulian Dinihari, Rosdiana, and Wardhani shows that the development of AI technology has driven a shift in literacy patterns in the fields of linguistics and literature. Students are required to possess critical literacy skills to be able to use digital technology and AI wisely in the academic process. Mills (2015) explains that the development of digital technology has changed the way individuals read, understand, and produce information, so literacy learning must be adapted to the needs of modern society (Mills, 2015).

The research problem is formulated as follows: "What are students' critical literacy skills in learning Indonesian at university?"

Based on this problem formulation, the purpose of this study is to describe students' critical literacy skills in learning Indonesian at university based on indicators such as text analysis, argumentation evaluation, social interpretation, critical reflection, and the ability to formulate opinions.

This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research can enrich studies on critical literacy in learning Indonesian, particularly in the context of higher education. Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide evaluation and consideration for lecturers in designing more innovative, contextual Indonesian language learning strategies oriented toward developing students' critical thinking skills. Furthermore, this research can serve as a reference for future researchers examining critical literacy in higher education.

Several relevant studies demonstrate that critical literacy plays a crucial role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills. Research by

Dinihari & Parwati (2026) demonstrated that reading literacy activities involving analysis and reflection can improve students' critical thinking skills. Furthermore, Musringudin and Dinihari (2025) found that digital literacy and Indonesian language skills contribute to students' ability to use social media critically. Dinihari et al. (2025) also reported that gamification and modern pedagogical approaches can increase student engagement in literacy learning. Internationally, studies by Abdelhalim (2024), Yeh et al. (2023), and Qian et al. (2018) demonstrated that critical literacy-based learning can improve students' analytical, reflective, and argumentative skills. However, these studies primarily discuss the influence or implementation of critical literacy, while research specifically describing the profile of students' critical literacy skills in Indonesian language learning at university based on five key indicators is still limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill this gap.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with descriptive methods to describe students' critical literacy skills in learning Indonesian at university. The research design used a quantitative descriptive survey. The study was conducted in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at Indraprasta PGRI University, Jakarta. The study population was all 118 students taking Indonesian language courses in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The sample consisted of 35 students selected using purposive sampling. The criteria were students who had taken Indonesian language courses and were willing to participate as respondents.

The research instrument was a critical literacy questionnaire using a five-level Likert scale structured based on five indicators: text analysis, argumentation evaluation, social interpretation, critical reflection, and opinion formation. The instrument development process involved several stages: (1) identifying critical literacy indicators based on theoretical studies and previous research



findings, (2) compiling an instrument outline based on the established indicators, (3) developing questionnaire items, (4) conducting content validation by experts in Indonesian language learning and educational evaluation, (5) revising the instrument based on the validator's suggestions, and (6) determining which instrument was deemed suitable for use in data collection.

Data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires to respondents. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics through percentage calculations to illustrate the level of students' critical literacy skills for each research indicator. The percentage results were then classified into ability categories to provide a description of the state of students' critical literacy in Indonesian language learning at university.

RESULTS

The results of this study were obtained by distributing questionnaires to 35 university students who had taken Indonesian language courses. The research focused on students' critical literacy skills, which include text analysis, argument evaluation, social interpretation, critical reflection, and opinion formation. The research data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages to determine the level of students' critical literacy skills for each research indicator. The results showed that students' critical literacy skills were generally in the good category, although several indicators still needed strengthening, particularly in the aspects of evaluating arguments and conveying opinions logically.

Furthermore, the research findings also indicate that learning activities involving critical discussion, text analysis, and reflection on learning are related to the development of students' critical literacy skills. Students tend to be better able to understand the social context of a text than to conduct in-depth argumentation evaluations. Therefore, the results of this study are presented in several subheadings based on research findings related to students' critical literacy skills in Indonesian language learning at university.

1. Students' Critical Literacy Skills in Indonesian Language Learning

The results indicate that students' critical literacy skills in Indonesian language learning are in the good category. Data were obtained through a questionnaire distributed to 35 students covering five critical literacy indicators: text analysis, argumentation evaluation, social interpretation, critical reflection, and opinion formation. The percentage results for each indicator are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Results of Students' Critical Literacy Skills

Critical Literacy Indicator	Percentage	Category
Text analysis ability	82%	Good
Argumentation evaluation	78%	Sufficient
Social interpretation	85%	Good
Critical reflection	80%	Good
Opinion formation ability	84%	Good

Based on Table 1, the social interpretation indicator achieved the highest percentage of 85%, categorized as good. Meanwhile, the argumentation evaluation indicator achieved the lowest percentage of 78%, categorized as sufficient. These results indicate that students are better able to understand the social context in texts than to critically evaluate arguments. Furthermore, the opinion formation indicator achieved a percentage of 84%, categorized as good. The text analysis ability indicator achieved a percentage of 82%, while critical reflection achieved a percentage of 80%. These findings indicate that the majority of students have the ability to understand and reflect on text content, although their ability to evaluate arguments still needs strengthening.

2. Student Ability in Argumentation Evaluation and Critical Reflection

The results also show differences in achievement in the argumentation evaluation and critical reflection indicators. Based on the questionnaire results, students tended to have

difficulty identifying weaknesses in their arguments and expressing their opinions logically and systematically. The research data on argumentation evaluation and critical reflection indicators are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Results of Student Argumentation and Critical Reflection Evaluation

Indicator Critical Literacy	Percentage	Category
Identifying the main idea of the text	83%	Good
Assessing the accuracy of the argument	76%	Sufficient
Expressing opinions logically	79%	Sufficient
Connecting the text to social reality	86%	Good
Reflecting critically on the text's content	81%	Good

According to Table 2, the aspect of connecting the text to social reality achieved the highest percentage, at 86%, categorized as good. Conversely, the aspect of assessing the accuracy of the argument received the lowest percentage, at 76%, categorized as sufficient. These results indicate that students are relatively capable of understanding the relationship between text and social phenomena, but still experience difficulties in evaluating arguments in depth.

Furthermore, the aspect of expressing opinions logically achieved a percentage of 79%, categorized as sufficient, while the aspect of reflecting critically on the text's content achieved a percentage of 81%, categorized as good. These findings indicate that students' reflective abilities have developed quite well, but argumentative abilities still require improvement in Indonesian language learning at university.

DISCUSSION

Several relevant studies demonstrate that critical literacy influences students' thinking skills. Internationally, Janks (2000) explains that critical literacy helps students understand the relationship between language, power, and ideology in a text, enabling them to be more reflective about various social phenomena (Janks, 2000). Furthermore, Comber (1997) demonstrates that a critical literacy approach to language learning can improve students' ability to evaluate information and construct critical arguments on social issues in their environment (Comber & Cormack, 1997).

Other research also demonstrates that the development of digital technology is closely linked to students' critical literacy skills. Internationally, Hobbs (2010) explains that digital literacy and critical literacy skills are essential competencies for students to navigate the increasingly complex flow of digital information (Hobbs, 2010). Furthermore, Lankshear and Knobel (2011) state that students with new literacy skills tend to be better able to understand, evaluate, and produce information critically in digital environments (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011).

In the context of higher education, international research also shows that reflective activities can improve students' critical thinking skills. Yeh et al. (2023) demonstrated that reflective writing activities can improve students' critical thinking skills because they are trained to evaluate information, reflect on learning experiences, and systematically construct arguments (Yeh et al., 2023). These findings suggest that reflection-based learning can help students develop deeper analytical and evaluative skills.

Furthermore, research on the development of students' critical thinking was also conducted by Qianet al. (2018). This research demonstrated that students' critical thinking skills need to be developed through learning that emphasizes



problem analysis, information evaluation, and rational decision-making (Qian et al., 2018). This opinion is supported by Li (2020), who explains that critical thinking skills are a crucial competency for students in facing the development of science and technology in the era of globalization (Li, 2020).

In the context of Indonesian language learning, research by Yulian Dinihari and Parwati shows that reading literacy activities involving analysis and reflection can improve students' critical thinking skills in understanding information. Furthermore, research by Yulian Dinihari, Rafli, and Boeriswati explains that the use of gamification approaches and modern pedagogy can increase student engagement in literacy learning, enabling students to be more active in analyzing and critically evaluating information (Dinihari et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that students' critical literacy skills in Indonesian language learning at university are in the good category. Students demonstrated a relatively high level of ability in understanding the social context of a text, critically reflecting on the text's content, and forming opinions based on the information obtained. The social interpretation indicator achieved the highest percentage, while the argumentation evaluation indicator achieved the lowest percentage. These findings indicate that students are better able to understand the relationship between texts and social reality than they are in evaluating arguments in depth and expressing opinions logically and systematically.

Furthermore, the research results indicate that learning activities based on critical discussion, text analysis, and learning reflection are related to the development of students' critical literacy skills. Learning that involves reflective and argumentative activities can help students understand, evaluate, and reflect on information

more deeply. Therefore, Indonesian language learning in higher education needs to be directed toward developing more innovative, contextual, and critical literacy-based learning strategies so that students' critical thinking skills can develop optimally in line with the demands of 21st-century learning.

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