



IMPLEMENTING CRITICAL LITERACY TO REFRAME NARRATIVE STORIES: A CASE STUDY OF INDONESIAN TERTIARY EFL CLASSROOM

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APA Citation: Adiantika, H. N., Emilia, E., & Gustine, G. G. (2025). Implementing critical literacy to reframe narrative stories: A case study of Indonesian tertiary EFL classroom. *Indonesian EFL Journal*. 11(2), 425-446. <https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v11i2.11856>

Received: 04-03-2025

Accepted: 17-05-2025

Published: 30-07-2025

Abstract: Critical literacy (CL) emphasizes the analysis of texts to understand power dynamics and promote social justice, helping students challenge established norms. However, further research is needed on its integration into the English curriculum for Indonesian university students. This case study explores the strategies used by an EFL teacher to foster CL development among 28 student-teachers at an Indonesian university through narrative texts. Data was gathered through classroom observations, students' reflective journals, and interviews, and thematically analyzed. Findings revealed that the teacher applied strategies such as "reader as code breaker," "reader as meaning maker," "reader as text user," and "reader as text analyst." Additionally, the Four Resources Model of CL enhanced students' abilities, particularly in meaning-making and text critique. Practical implications for curriculum design suggest that integrating CL strategies into the EFL curriculum can encourage students to engage more critically with texts, fostering deeper understanding and social awareness. For teacher training, this study highlights the importance of equipping educators with strategies for facilitating critical literacy in diverse classroom settings. The study advocates for a systematic integration of CL in EFL curricula across Indonesian higher education to enhance the quality of English programs and prepare students for more active participation in global discourse.

Keywords: *critical literacy; EFL tertiary education; narrative texts; the four resources model of critical literacy; EFL classroom.*

INTRODUCTION

Critical literacy (CL) is a dynamic pedagogical approach that emphasizes the interrogation of texts, the deconstruction of dominant ideologies, and the exploration of power relations within language (Bozkurt & Zehir Topkaya, 2023; Y. J. Lee, 2022; Pederson, 2023; Tentolouris, 2023). Rooted in various disciplines such as feminism, anti-racist pedagogy, and multiculturalism, CL is not a singular, fixed concept but an evolving process shaped by context (Brown, 2022; Muszyńska & Parra, 2023). It is a mechanism for cultivating a language of critique (Brown, 2022; Egitim & Watson, 2024) that encourages students to analyze, deconstruct, and question the embedded ideologies in texts, thereby promoting active participation in democratic processes (Fu & Wang, 2022; S. Lee & Suh, 2022; Olson, 2024).

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), CL plays an essential role in developing students' ability to critically engage with language, enabling them to understand societal power dynamics and ideologies beyond mere linguistic proficiency. The increasing emphasis on English education in non-English-speaking countries like Indonesia presents both opportunities and challenges for integrating CL. Although CL research is more common in English-speaking countries (Egitim & Watson, 2024; Sirén & Sulkunen, 2023), its application in non-English-speaking regions, especially in Asian contexts such as Indonesia, remains underexplored. Existing studies in Indonesia have focused on CL's role in secondary education (Emilia et al., 2022; Novianti, 2024), but there is limited research on its integration into tertiary-

level EFL classrooms, especially in relation to narrative texts.

The current Indonesian EFL landscape has been critiqued for its emphasis on vocabulary and grammar, primarily preparing students for high-stakes reading assessments, while neglecting the critical examination of texts' social, ideological, and cultural dimensions (Diani & Fazri, 2023; Novianti, 2023). This gap in CL integration results in a restricted form of literacy that focuses primarily on comprehension rather than fostering the critical thinking necessary for understanding the power dynamics within texts (Hmood, 2024). CL, when effectively implemented, empowers students to challenge societal norms, decode hidden meanings, and engage with global discourses—skills essential for navigating the complexities of a globalized world (Adunyarittigun, 2022; Dwyer, 2023).

CL is essential in Indonesia's EFL context, as it encourages students to critically analyze texts and understand the power dynamics within language. Unlike traditional critical thinking (CT) frameworks that focus mainly on logical reasoning and problem-solving, CL emphasizes the deconstruction of texts to reveal underlying ideologies, power structures, and social inequalities (Dwikamayuda et al., 2024; Lee & Suh, 2022; Louloudi, 2022; Riwayatningsih, 2022; Rumaf et al., 2024; Wells et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2023). In a globalized world, CL goes beyond mere language proficiency, fostering deeper CT about social, cultural, and ideological issues, and urging students to question dominant narratives. This approach challenges students not only to evaluate content but also to reflect on the broader societal context in which texts are produced and consumed, offering a more holistic and transformative learning experience than conventional CT models.

While studies on CL in Indonesia are expanding, especially in secondary-level EFL contexts (Novianti, 2023, 2024), there remains a lack of research on how narrative texts can be used to promote critical literacy in tertiary-level EFL classrooms. Previous research has largely focused on non-narrative texts or general pedagogical frameworks, neglecting the potential of narrative genres to foster critical engagement with social issues (Arifin et al., 2023; Emilia et al., 2022). This study aims to fill this gap by examining how narrative texts can be recontextualized from a CL perspective to enhance EFL students' critical literacy skills,

particularly in terms of identifying inherent biases and ideologies embedded within the narratives.

CL empowers students to interrogate the ideologies within texts, aligning with sociocultural theory, which views learning as a social, context-driven process (Blixen & Pannell, 2020). CL encourages students to see texts as shaped by power dynamics and cultural influences. This approach also connects to transformative pedagogy, which aims to foster critical thinking and social change by challenging dominant narratives (Lee & Suh, 2022). In EFL classrooms, CL not only enhances language skills but also promotes active, socially conscious engagement with texts. Pedagogically, this study is grounded in CL theory, a multifaceted approach to education that encourages students to engage critically with texts and question the ideologies embedded within them (Besral, 2022; Brown, 2022; Lee, 2022; Pederson, 2023; Tentolouris, 2023). CL emphasizes the importance of not just reading and writing, but also developing a critical awareness of the world, enabling students to understand and act upon the social, cultural, and political forces that shape texts (Brownell, 2023; Maghsoudi et al., 2022; Rizqiani et al., 2024). It encourages students to recognize that texts are not neutral but are shaped by ideological convictions, which may be intentional or subconscious (Lamsal, 2024).

The Four Resources Model of CL (Luke & Freebody, 1999) offers a comprehensive framework for integrating CL into educational settings, particularly in language teaching. This model outlines four key roles that readers adopt when engaging with texts: code breaker, meaning maker, text user, and text analyst. Each role reflects a different aspect of literacy, from technical decoding and meaning-making to understanding the social and cultural functions of texts, as well as critically analyzing the ideological biases they present. Code Breaker focuses on the technical aspects of reading, including decoding symbols, phonetics, grammar, and punctuation, which form the foundational skills for reading (Hromova et al., 2022; Weng, 2023). It emphasizes the linguistic elements that enable students to interpret written language accurately. Meaning maker allows readers go beyond the surface level of a text, using their background knowledge and experiences to interpret both explicit and implicit messages (Dwyer, 2023; Pederson, 2023). This role encourages readers to construct meaning by relating text elements to their own lives and

cultural contexts (Akkuş & Uysal, 2024; Pupah & Sholihah, 2022; Utami & Mahardika, 2023). Text user allows readers as text users engage with texts in social and cultural contexts. This role involves understanding the genre, purpose, and audience of the text, and applying this understanding to real-world situations (Chou, 2022; Hromova et al., 2022). It emphasizes the functional use of texts in society and how readers apply their comprehension in various social interactions (Rahayu et al., 2024; Zhao, 2022). Text Analyst allows readers critically analyze texts for biases, ideologies, and perspectives that are either foregrounded or marginalized (Brownell, 2023; S. Lee & Suh, 2022; Şenbayrak & Hart, 2024; Suh & Huh, 2023). Texts are seen as products of the author's perspectives, and readers are encouraged to question the assumptions and viewpoints presented, recognizing that all texts reflect specific worldviews (Olson, 2024).

The Four Resources Model has been successfully applied in various EFL contexts, particularly in secondary education in Indonesia (Emilia et al., 2022; Rahmadina & Emilia, 2022; Utami & Mahardika, 2023). Research has shown its effectiveness in fostering critical engagement, promoting social interaction, and facilitating the interpretation of visual and multimodal texts (Al-Jumaily & Alazzawi, 2025; Hamdi, 2023; Sirén & Sulkunen, 2023). However, there is limited research on the application of this model in tertiary-level classrooms, particularly when recontextualizing narrative texts.

This study aims to explore how EFL teachers can implement CL in the analysis of narrative texts, particularly in tertiary-level classrooms. Tertiary EFL students are well-suited for CL interventions, as they possess a solid language foundation and are ready to engage with abstract concepts. At this stage, students are more receptive to questioning norms and critically evaluating texts, making them ideal for exploring power dynamics and marginalized perspectives. By using the Four Resources Model as a framework, this research will investigate how narrative texts can be deconstructed to reveal the ideological perspectives embedded within them. Narrative texts are uniquely suited for CL because they often convey complex cultural and social ideologies, making them ideal for fostering critical thinking and analysis. This study will examine how teachers can guide students to engage critically with these texts, helping them uncover hidden meanings and challenge the

perspectives presented, particularly from the viewpoints of marginalized characters.

By integrating CL into the analysis of narrative texts, this study seeks to promote a deeper understanding of the sociocultural contexts that shape narratives and encourage students to recognize the complexities of human experiences. In doing so, it will contribute to curriculum development by highlighting the importance of narrative texts in fostering critical literacy skills and offering practical strategies for their inclusion in EFL instruction. For this reason, the study described here addresses the following research questions, which are in line with the objective of the study: (1) How do tertiary-level EFL students engage with Luke and Freebody's Four Resources Model of CL (code breaker, meaning maker, text user, text analyst) when analyzing narrative texts? (2) How does this engagement enhance their CL skills?

METHOD

This study employed qualitative research by using case-study design. Based on the classification of research designs from (Meister & Ahrens, 2011) Nunan (1992), this study can be characterized as a qualitative program evaluation because in this study the researcher designed and implemented a teaching program. In terms of the case study, this study is characterized as case study because it was carried out in a small scale or a single case (Freebody, 2003) and the researcher acted as a teacher (Stake, 2010) by designing a CL-based teaching program and subsequently implemented it in an EFL classroom. Precisely, the researcher implemented a program through the use of multiple sources of evidences or multiple data collections and analytic procedures to allow for in-depth study (Brown, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Freebody, 2003; Yin, 2018; Yunus & Ubaidillah, 2021). In the course of the program, he evaluated the value and the effectiveness of the program through ongoing assessment of students' achievements (classroom observation, students' group interview, individual interviews students' reflective journal) relevant to the objectives of the program. In this study, the CL-based teaching program was implemented by the teacher-researcher and students' CL development was also observed and assessed during multiple sessions of the program. In the context of instructional resources, the narrative stories incorporated within the precisely designed critical literacy-oriented English classroom encompassed three narratives stories (e.g. Indonesian folklore,

fable, and fairy tale). These three narratives texts served as the primary resources since they encompass various dimensions of social and cultural context, enabling students to recognize and engage in discourse regarding multiple values pertinent to their everyday experiences (Maligkoudi et al., 2023; Murillo Egurrola & Flórez García, 2023; Ryan et al., 2023).

In this study, the teacher-researcher assumed a dual role as both the program designer and instructor, which could introduce bias in the data collection and analysis. To mitigate this, several strategies were employed including: role separation (teacher separated the roles of teacher and researcher to ensure objectivity in both teaching and data analysis), triangulation (teacher utilized observations, interviews, and reflective journals as multiple data sources), ongoing assessment (teacher employed continuous evaluation of student progress to adjust the program based on feedback), member checking (students provided feedback on their experiences to ensure the accuracy of interpretations), and peer review (the teacher consulted with colleague to review the study study’s design and analysis). These strategies were applied to reduce the potential biases from the teacher-researcher's dual role and strengthen the study's reliability.

This study was conducted at a private university in Cirebon, West Java, within the English education program, which holds an "A" (excellent) accreditation. The study involved 28 student-teachers in their second semester of a Bachelor's program. All participants volunteered after being informed of the study’s purpose and expectations. The participants, aged 20 to 21, were selected for their potential to apply their learning to future teaching practices. They had demonstrated commendable English proficiency, evidenced by their TOEFL scores at university admission.

Although the participants consented to engage in the study, it is important to note that their prior pedagogical training could introduce a potential bias in how they engage with CL. As most participants had not received extensive instruction on CL prior to the study, their understanding of CL might be influenced by previous experiences or training in different pedagogical models. This prior knowledge could shape how they interpret and apply the CL framework, particularly in the context of narrative texts. To minimize this bias, a baseline assessment of their familiarity with CL was conducted before the intervention. Additionally, pseudonyms were assigned to

participants to ensure confidentiality throughout the study.

The application of CL in this study was designed to help student-teachers understand how classroom interactions influence broader social dynamics and power relations (S. Lee & Suh, 2022; Y. J. Lee, 2022; Suh & Huh, 2023). Through this approach, it was anticipated that participants would reflect on their future teaching practices and interactions within the classroom and beyond.

Data were collected from multiple sources and methods for comprehensive analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Freebody, 2003; Yin, 2018). Initially, classroom observations were conducted across eight meetings to capture the teacher-students interaction indicating the critical moments of CL. Subsequently, the interviews were also systematically conducted twice, covering both group and individual interviews. Every participant was asked about their insights on their experiences with CL pedagogy. Besides that, Participants were instructed to write reflective journals post-session. The students utilized a provided template for their reflections, submitting them at the beginning of the following session. In EFL CL education, reflective journal writing is recognized as a beneficial practice that enhances self-reflective writing skills and critical awareness (Şenbayrak & Hart, 2024).

Thematic analysis was adopted to analyze interview data. This process involved the identification and reporting of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis comprises six distinct phases, detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. *Thematic analysis procedure*

No	Phase	Description of the Process
1	Familiarizing yourself with your data	The process of reading and rereading the data to get initial codes.
2	Generating initial codes	The data were coded.
3	Searching for themes	The code is organized into potential themes.
4	Reviewing themes	Themes are reviewed (creating a thematic map).
5	Defining and naming themes	Refining and naming the specific themes.
6	Producing the report	Writing a research report.

The thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) procedures followed the steps: First, to analyze classroom observations, we comprehensively reviewed the video and field notes prior to transcription. After thorough analysis, we identified key themes in CL teaching and English pedagogy. We then focused on critical classroom dialogues emphasizing critical moments for teacher and students in CL and English education. We, afterward, transcribed the classroom

interactions utilizing the classroom discourse convention. For the analysis of interview data and students' reflective journals, we transcribed them and emphasized significant moments regarding engagement and experiences in the teaching program.

The themes were derived through a deductive approach, based on Luke and Freebody's Four Resources Model (1999). This means that the coding process was guided by the model's predefined roles (Code Breaker, Meaning Maker, Text User, and Text Analyst), and the data were categorized according to these roles. During initial coding, data were categorized according to the model's components: *code breaker* (identifying moments when students decode linguistic elements), *meaning maker* (coding how students interpret and derive meaning from texts), *text users* (tracking students' practical and social engagement with the texts, and *text analysts* (identifying critical evaluations of ideologies and power dynamics in the texts. Subsequently, theme development involved clustering the coded data into themes corresponding to each role, such as decoding and interpretation. Lastly, final analysis linked the themes to research questions regarding how CL enhances students' critical engagement with narratives.

After coding, these codes were thematically organized to address the research questions. Relevant data was collected for each theme concerning the effects of CL implementation through narrative texts on students' CL skills and how engagement with CL promotes the development of CL skills among students. Subsequently, we made a thematic map to assess topic relevance to code extracts and the full dataset. Subsequently, we elaborated on each theme, articulated the research narrative, and formulated clear definitions and labels for each subject. Finally, we conducted a formal report

summarizing the study and addressing the research questions concerning the implementation of CL through the reconceptualization of narrative stories.

Since this study employs qualitative research through case study design, data triangulation was performed to ensure reliability and validity of the findings. Data triangulation is also crucial to reduce bias and increase the study's credibility and validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Grønmo, 2020; Yin, 2018). In this study, multiple data collection methods were carried out to enhance trustworthiness by crosschecking classroom observations, interviews, student journals, and teaching artifacts (students' answers towards critical questions from the texts). The findings or patterns from classroom observations indicating critical moments of students' engagement with CL were verified through interviews, reflective journals, and teaching artifacts. This triangulation was conducted to accurately represent students' development of CL through narrative texts in the EFL classroom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of teaching strategies in reconceptualizing narrative texts through critical literacy viewpoints

This section elucidates the findings derived from the data acquired during the empirical investigation. Rooted in the fundamental tenets of the four resources framework, the findings and discussion are systematically organized according to four pivotal literacy dimensions: (1) *breaking the code of text*, (2) *participating in making meaning*, (3) *using text functionally*, and (4) *critically analyzing the text*. The following presents a comprehensive synthesis of principal themes identified across various data sources.

Table 3. Summary of key themes across data sources

Theme	Data Source	Findings/Examples	Key Insights
Breaking the Code of the Text	Classroom Observations, Journals	Students engaged in recognizing vocabulary, understanding narrative structures, and analyzing visual/non-verbal codes.	Decoding linguistic and non-verbal elements is essential for text comprehension.
Participating in Meaning Making	Interviews, Reflective Journals	Students connected personal experiences to characters in the narrative, such as Manda's experience of premature judgment at work, linking social context to text interpretation.	Critical literacy requires drawing from personal and social experiences.
Using Text Functionally	Classroom Observations,	Students identified moral lessons and the functional purposes of texts,	Students understand narratives' moral and social functions and

	Group Discussions	e.g., Vita emphasized themes of friendship and teamwork in <i>The Lion and the Mouse</i> .	their implications.
Analyzing Text Critically	Classroom Observations, Interviews, Journals	Students critiqued narratives like <i>Cinderella</i> , challenging gender stereotypes and roles, e.g., Aira's rejection of Cinderella as a role model.	Encouraging critique of embedded ideologies in narratives promotes critical thinking.

This table summarizes the key themes observed across multiple data sources, highlighting the students' development in critical literacy and their engagement with texts through decoding, interpretation, social application, and critical analysis. The more comprehensive explanation regarding findings is elucidated in the following section.

Breaking the code of the text

In this phase, students engaged as code breakers to comprehend essential text attributes, including alphabets, phonetics, punctuation, syntactic structures, and lexeme formation. This critical phase underscored the necessity of decoding and encoding various codes, guiding students through four stages of code-cracking: (1) vocabulary recognition, (2) comprehension of narrative

information, (3) analysis of visual code, (4) interpretation of non-verbal codes.

Vocabulary recognition

Initially, the recognition of vocabulary stimulated the students in recognizing several challenging vocabularies extracted from each narrative text. For instance, several students were unfamiliar with the definition of the terms “obstacles” and “prosperous” as presented in the narrative of *The Lion and The Mouse*. This observation is illustrated in Excerpt 1 below. T represents the teacher, while A signifies Aira, and L signifies Lela, two of the students involved in this study. In adherence to ethical guidelines for research, all participants' names have been altered to pseudonyms.

Excerpt 1

T : Really? Have you found any difficult vocabularies from the text?
L : Yes, sir I have one (while raising her hand)
T : Yes what?
L : In paragraph 3, sir.
T : In paragraph 3. What lines? Which one? In paragraph 4 you mean? Fourth paragraph? Last one? Which one? Which word?
L : “Obstacle”.
T : Obstacle? Okay obstacle. Okay. Do you know what obstacle is (asking to other students)?
A : Problem?
T : Yes, obstacle is problems or *hambatan* or probably you can say it as problems or issues or something which is difficult to deal with. Okay very good, Latifah. Are there any other difficult words?
A : The next one is “prosperous”
T : Okay, prosperous place. They thought the other animals in the jungle the importance of cooperation and friendship and the jungle became a peaceful and prosperous place. Can anyone answer it? Prosperous? So, we have peaceful beforehand and prosperous probably is still related with peaceful.
A : Yaa, something like *aman*?
T : Yes, comfortable. It's like comfortable. So, they, they have finally found their comfort zone. All right? Very nice. <...>

Figure 1. Excerpt 1

According to Excerpt 1, Aira demonstrated the ability to break the code and comprehend the word "obstacle," albeit with noticeable hesitation. Additionally, the recognition of vocabulary was evident with the term “prosperous,” as Aira,

despite initial uncertainty, endeavored to deduce its meaning after contemplation, paralleling Ade's successful decoding of the word “scout” in the story of *Roro Jonggrang* following teacher-provided clues, as elaborated in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt #2
Ad : A man. What about 'scout'?
T : What is 'scout'? You know what 'scout' is?
Ad : 'Pramuka'?
T : Yeah, it's like, what does *Pramuka* do actually?
Ad : 'Kemah' [camping]?
T : And then?
Ad : '*Bersembunyi*' [Hide], '*Menyamar*' [Undercover]?
T : Erm, no, if it is scout then you have to see it silently.
Ad : Oh, *mata-mata*.
T : *Iya, memata-matai*.
Ad : *Oh, jadi mengirimkan mata-mata untuk memantau begitu ya?*

Figure 2. Excerpt 2

The next occurrence of breaking the code of *Cinderella*. Comparable to Ade, Vita was able to crack the code as well as elaborated the meaning of the word *indecisiveness*. It can be seen from the text is also demonstrated in the Excerpt 3 when Vita was capable of cracking the meaning of the word "indecisiveness" in the story of Excerpt 3 below.

Excerpt #3
T : Any difficult words?
V : 'Indecisiveness'...
T : 'Indecisiveness'? *Apa itu?* Jadi 'indecisiveness' *itu* you are really confused what to do
V : Oh, we don't know what to do?
T : You are confused what to do or in other words probably you can say it...
V : We can't decide something.

Figure 3. Excerpt 3

Initially, Vita was unsure of the term 'indecisiveness', yet she soon grasped its meaning and elaborated on it; the engagement of students in deciphering unfamiliar vocabulary is a crucial aspect of CL, as demonstrated by both the teacher and students in the code-breaking process evident in Excerpts 1, 2, and 3.

Identifying fundamental information about narrative texts

Subsequently, students were instructed to reveal essential information of narrative texts to analyze their generic structure. During the instructional process, the teacher employed diverse strategies,

such as a text poster, story map, and visual representations, to enhance students' comprehension of narrative texts. Several questions as were also adopted by the teacher including (1) *what kind of text is this?* (2) *who wrote the text?* and (3) *what is the text about?*

In an effort to ascertain the main topic of the narrative, Vita (V) recognized that the friendship depicted in *The Lion and The Mouse* is transformative, illustrating the transition from enemy to eventually become close allies who provide mutual assistance. This is exemplified in Excerpt 4 below.

Excerpt #4
T : Okay. So, the next question is, what is the text about? Ini tentang apa? What is the text about? Don't answer the title okay. No, it's not the title. Jadi *teksnya tentang apa?*
V : A friendship, sir
T : A what? What kind of friendship they have?
V : Enemy friends.
T : Yes?
V : Enemy friends, sir.
T : Yes, from enemy to friends. So, it is friendship, right?
V : Yes.

Figure 4. Excerpt 4

The next occurrence of breaking the code of the text is also demonstrated in the Excerpt 3 when Vita was capable of cracking the meaning of the word "indecisiveness" in the story of *Cinderella*. Comparable to Ade, Vita was able to crack the code as well as elaborated the meaning of the word *indecisiveness*. It can be seen from the Excerpt 3 below.

From Excerpt #4, Vita highlighted a pivotal incident illustrating that the friendship between

the lion and the mouse originated from rivalry. Additionally, Hera (H), supported by Vita, stated that such friendships require trust and collaboration to achieve shared goals. Hera further emphasized the importance of mutual assistance in challenging times. This phenomenon is exemplified in Excerpt #5 below:

Excerpt #5

T : And then what else? Probably, if I ask you what is the text about, probably it's related with moral values. The values. What kind of values that you will get from the text? First is friendship, right? Enemy becomes friendship. And then what else probably?

H : Team work?

T : Team work, good, yeah. Team work. How did they do that? *Ngapain tuh team work nya gimana?*

H : *Kerja samanya itu saling membantu ketika kesusahan* [Their cooperation is helping each other when they are in trouble]

T : *Saling membantu ketika kesusahan* okay. And then what else? Thank you very much, Hera. Anything else probably what is the text about?

V : The lion learned to appreciate the mouse's courage and quick thinking and the mouse learned to not judge others based on their size. They were together and they became friend.

T : So, the lion learned to appreciate the mouse's courage and quick thinking. So, if it implies to us as human, how do you say about that? So, they are animals, right? Is it close with us? I mean friendship. Do we have friendship?

V : Trusting each other.

Figure 5. Excerpt 5

According to Excerpt #5, the teacher's strategy appeared to be effective, as he asked questions that prompted students to break the meaning of a word. In her response, Hera referenced a specific event in the narrative to substantiate her interpretation of "teamwork." She additionally emphasized the significance of assisting individuals in distress.

Afterwards, the teacher also employed a story map in this study as an additional teaching strategy to facilitate students in recognizing the generic structures of the narrative text. At this stage, the story map was distributed to small group of students and prompted them to engage in discussion regarding components within each of the section.

Title : The Lion and The Mouse

Story Map Narrative Text		
Orientation	Complication	Resolution
in a jungle, a mighty lion caught a small mouse.	the lion got caught in a hunter's trap and couldn't free himself and the mouse heard his roar and help him	the lion was grateful and realized that even the smallest creatures can be helpful.
Moral/Lesson		
the moral of the story is the importance of friendship, and not judging other. it also highlights that everyone can be helpful.		

Figure 6. The story map

As illustrated above, a particular group made this story map. The students exhibited an intensive effort to discover the generic structures of the narrative, *The Lion and The Mouse*. In the

story map, the students were instructed to recognize generic structure of the narrative fable *The Lion and The Mouse* such as an *orientation*, a *complication*, and a *resolution*. Furthermore, the

students were also able to recognize a moral lesson, whether implicitly or explicitly, within the narrative. Regardless certain inaccuracies present in their English usage; these student participants demonstrated an encouraging comprehension of the dynamics of narrative structure. For instance, in terms of *orientation* as the first generic structure of the narrative text in the verbatim data, the students wrote *a might [mighty] lion caught a small mouse*. The students in this group appeared to develop a robust comprehension that the orientation not only establishes the context and tone but also serves to introduce the characters involved. This particular action directs the readers' attention towards forthcoming event in the narrative.

Within the *complication*, the students wrote the subsequent assertion: *the lion got caught in a hunter's trap and couldn't free himself and the mouse heard his roar and help him*. In this instance, the students attempted to elucidate a sequence within the narrative in which a conflict emerges. Simultaneously, in the context of *resolution*, the students wrote the following: *the lion was grateful [grateful] and realized that even the smallest creatures can be helpful*. It appeared that they were able to comprehend the notion that resolution pertains to the manner in which the conflict is ultimately solved. Eventually, inside the circumstance of moral lessons, the students

wrote in verbatim data *the moral of the story is the importance of friendship, and not judging other. It also highlights that everyone can be helpful*. In this instance, the students were able to infer several moral lessons embedded in the narrative such as the value of friendship, the pitfalls of hasty judgments based on limited perspectives, and the importance of helping others regardless of their appearance. Based on the story map provided by the teacher, it appeared that several students were able to identify the generic structures of the narrative text as they attempted to pinpoint three distinct components. Initially, the teacher decided not to revise students' writing compositions; rather, the teacher praised the manner in which students articulated their perspectives in alignment with the given framework.

Analyzing visual codes

Subsequently, visual code analysis was conducted by the teacher as the third phase of the reader as a code breaker. This visual code included characters traits and contextual elements of the narrative, with several students, including Reno (R), successfully identifying character attributes from the story of *Roro Jonggrang*, as illustrated in Excerpt #6 below.

Excerpt #6

T	: What about the characteristics of Roro Jonggrang? What do you think from this text? Personality <i>nya gimana? Kepribadiannya?</i>
R	: <i>Licik gitu ya</i> [She is so cunning yea].
T	: What? Roro Jonggrang <i>nya licik?</i> Oh okay. Very <i>licik ya</i> . What else? Is she smart?
R	: <i>Iya smart</i> .
T	: Why? Why is Roro Jonggrang very smart?
R	: <i>Dia kasih tantangan ke Bandung Bondowoso yang notabene mustahil begitu</i> [She gave a challenge to Bandung Bondowoso which was actually impossible].

Figure 7. Excerpt 6

From the aforementioned Excerpt #6, Reno was able to identify the characteristic of Roro Jonggrang as depicted in the story. In the beginning, he stated that Roro Jonggrang was cunning to deceive Bandung Bondowoso. Afterwards, the teacher asked additional question to encourage him to provide more thorough explanation. Finally, Reno could comprehensively elaborate the reason behind his justification towards the characteristic of Roro Jonggrang.

The subsequent occurrence regarding visual code was similarly recognized by Vita (V). In this instance, she could identify the characteristics of Roro Jonggrang and Bandung Bondowoso. Furthermore, she was able to implicitly reveal physical appearance of Bandung Bondowoso as portrayed in the story of Roro Jonggrang. This is exemplified in the Excerpt #7 below.

Excerpt #7	
T	: Okay, good. Now, what about the character? So, after reading this text probably you can visualize the characteristic of Roro Jonggrang, Bandung Bondowoso, and who else is mentioned in this text? Prabu Patih, right? So, can you visualize their characteristics probably based on text that you have read? What about starting from Roro Jonggrang, what do you think about her personality? Based on the text that you have read?
V	: <i>Orangnya lebih ke realistik begitu</i> [She's kind of a realistic person], sir.
T	: And what does Roro Jonggrang feel when she knows that Bandung Bondowoso wants to marry her? Is she happy?
V	: No...
T	: Why not?
V	: Because she realizes that Bandung Bondowoso <i>adalah pembunuh ayahnya ketika ada peperangan dulu</i> [BB was the murderer of her father during the war].
T	: So, that's the reason why. So, it means that what she feels is unhappy
V	: Yes, she's not happy.
T	: Even she refuses to marry him. And what about Bandung Bondowoso?
V	: He's kind of ambitious people.
T	: So, okay can you visualize the appearance of Bandung Bondowoso? Based on the text that you have read?
V	: He's probably like tall, big...handsome.

Figure 8. Excerpt 7

According to Excerpt #7, Vita identified *Roro Jonggrang* as a realistic character. She articulated the rationale for *Roro Jonggrang's* rejection of *Bandung Bondowoso's* proposal. When questioned by her teacher, she answered each question comprehensively. Additionally, Vita visualized the characteristics and visual appearance of *Bandung Bondowoso*. She described him as ambitious in character. In terms of appearance, she imagined him as potentially tall, large, and handsome. This suggests that Vita effectively visualized distinct characters from the text.

Interpreting non-verbal codes

Breaking non-verbal codes was utilized in this research as the last stage of readers as code breakers. This includes gestural elements like facial expressions and body language demonstrated by characters (Barkas et al., 2022; Jumiah, 2024; Walker et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2023). To assist students in breaking non-verbal cues, teacher presented multiple video displays aimed at improving students' literacy skills (Al-Jumaily & Alazzawi, 2025; Jones & Manion, 2023; Maghsoudi et al., 2022). Engaging with video narratives allowed students to enhance their imaginative capacities and develop a more profound understanding of intricate narrative texts. In the tale of *Roro Jonggrang*, Reno, a participating student, effectively identified the facial and gestural attributes exhibited by the character *Bandung Bondowoso*. In the video,

Bandung Bondowoso displayed intense anger due to *Roro Jonggrang's* deliberate interference with the temple's completion. From this non-verbal signal, Reno inferred that *Roro Jonggrang's* sabotage incited *Bandung Bondowoso's* wrath, leading to her transformation into a statue.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the teacher implemented various teaching strategies to facilitate student participation in the initial stage of reader as a code breaker, which encompassed dialogue surrounding vocabulary, the generic structures of narrative texts, as well as the analysis of visual and verbal codes. With the enhancement of their basic knowledge of narrative texts, the students advanced to the subsequent stage of making meaning of the texts.

Participating in meaning making

In a critical literacy framework, understanding text necessitates utilizing students' prior knowledge, including their social, cultural contexts, and personal experiences related to the text (Suh & Huh, 2023; Yulianto et al., 2024; Zarei & Dobakhti, 2024). A student-participant in *The Lion and The Mouse* identified a personal experience that mirrored a character in the narrative. Manda (M) recounted a moment of premature judgment from senior colleagues at her workplace. Moreover, her colleagues underestimated her competence, viewing her as incapable of certain tasks solely based on her new employee status. This assertion is supported by Excerpt #8 provided below.

Excerpt #8

T : Nanda okay. *Misalnya Nanda punya pengalaman* [in case you have an experience], in case you have an experience and your experience is very related with this text for example people tend to judge you too quickly and then what did you do to overcome that kind of judgment *seperti itu ya*.

M : *Jadi yang akan saya lakukan adalah erm membuktikan bahwa saya itu tidak seperti apa yang mereka judge atau bicarakan* [So what I'm going to do is to prove that I'm not like what they judge or talk about].

T : *Tapi* [but] have you ever experienced something like that? I mean from people?

M : *Iya sir pernah* [Yes, sir. I have].

T : How? People judged you? How did the people judge you?

M : *Jadi mereka itu berpikirnya kalo aku itu tidak bisa melakukan sesuatu atau meremehkan* [So they think that I can't do something or they underestimate me].

T : Oh, they tend to underestimate you. So, what you have to do? You know what to do right?

M : *Yeah. Cuma tinggal membuktikan kepada mereka* [Yes, I just have to prove it to them].

Figure 9. Excerpt 8

From Excerpt #8, Manda aimed to demonstrate her competencies to those who undervalued her professional contributions, despite initial discomfort with such treatment. Moreover, based on the findings from the interview, she stated that the initial experience was quite distressing. She

also revealed that she wept in the restroom due to this treatment. Nevertheless, she emphasized to her classmates the importance of showcasing their best capabilities when facing analogous inequalities in treatment as she had experienced. This is illustrated in the interview excerpt below.

Interview Excerpt

T : So, initially, how did you feel when you were treated like that? Do you feel uncomfortable or what?

M : Yes... I even cried in the bathroom because at that time I was also very tired, dealing with all kinds of guests, plus working in a service, and you have to smile all the time. So, yeah, that's it while. I perceive it as a valuable learning experience.

T : So, do you have any message for your classmates when dealing with that kind of similar situation?

M : Don't be afraid and no hard feelings, as long as we don't make a mistake. It's normal to feel hurt, but just make it an experience, because everyone is working, so everyone is tired. If we are underestimated, show that we can be better than that person

Figure 10. Interview excerpt

During the classroom discussion, the teacher took this momentum to introduce critical literacy pedagogy principles aimed at promoting social justice (Adunyarittigun, 2022; Cuevas-Cerveró et al., 2023; Diaz, 2024). At this phase, the teacher encouraged students to reflect on experiences of injustice stemming from differences. Initially hesitant, students were prompted to consider actions when facing disagreements with peers or family. The discussion revealed that most students recognized the importance of respecting differing viewpoints. This suggests that students across various educational levels can enhance their social awareness, with critical literacy being a potential strategy for this development.

The subsequent stage involves using the text functionally, with an emphasis on comprehending intention of the text and the sociocultural context that informs and influences how the text is composed and constructed.

Using text functionally

In this stage, students were expected to develop a deeper understanding of the text's motives, analyze its genres, and identify its cultural and social conventions (Pardede & Dewanti, 2022; Rahayu et al., 2024; Romero & Bobkina, 2023; Sugiharti et al., 2023). Additionally, this phase was consistent with pragmatic methodologies, encouraging students to interpret contexts and evaluate the technical features of narratives (Li, 2022). To achieve proficiency as proficient "text users," it is essential for students to grasp the purposes behind the text, identify various utilization options, recognize distinct genre characteristics, determine appropriate contextual actions, and understand potential reader interactions with the text (Dwyer, 2023; Jones & Manion, 2023; Ramasamy & Zainal, 2023; Salimi & Abedi, 2022).

Most students fruitfully recognized the text structures during classroom discussion. They discerned that narrative texts primarily aim to impart moral values through sequential events. In this instance, Vita (V) identified the moral lessons inherent in *The Lion and The Mouse*. Vita (V)

emphasized the significance of friendship, teamwork, and refraining from hasty judgments based on appearances, as illustrated by the characters in the story. This event is exemplified in Excerpt #9 below.

Excerpt #9
T : And what about the Lion and the Mouse? Can you tell me the moral values that you have learned?
V : From the Lion and the Mouse, the moral values, I think it's about team-work and friendship.
T : Friendship.
V : It would be the main story is about friendship and about don't judge other people by their appearance
T : So, okay, in your opinion, what's wrong with their friendship in the beginning?
V : In the beginning, they were enemies. So, the lion caught the mouse. So, the mouse said, if you let me go, I'd help you in the future. And then the lion at first was like no way you are small; there's no way you can help me.
T : Underestimating?
V : Yes, there's no way the mouse could help the lion.
T : So, it means that the mouse, sorry, the lion owes the mouse, right? *Berhutang ya, berhutang budi*. Yea because the...but you know what... the mouse has fulfilled its...?
V : Promises.

Figure 11. Excerpt 9

According to the Excerpt #9 above, Vita was also able to recognize that it is important to fulfil our promise when we owe someone as represented by The Mouse, one of the characters, in the story of *The Lion and The Mouse*. Several students also stated the moral values embedded in the story of Roro Jonggrang, for instance, put an emphasis on the significance of upholding honesty and integrity in one's actions, as articulated by Gea (G) "The moral story [of Roro Jonggrang narrative] is the importance of honesty and integrity". Kika (K), another student-participant, similarly stated that seeking vengeance is not a feasible resolution, as it is useless. It is indicated by her statement "We should never commit revenge with others". Reno (R) also expressed the importance of addressing the issue peacefully and without aggression as depicted in the story of Roro Jonggrang. He further said "We have to live peacefully. We must overcome the problem with a calmly without violence". Vita, Gea, Kika, and Reno might have comprehended the beliefs, philosophies and moralities inherent in the text as she engaged in using the text functionally.

The final stage involves developing into a text analyst by engaging in critical analysis and transformation of text.

Analyzing text critically

The final learning circle focuses on enhancing critical literacy through the analysis and

transformation of texts to adopt a critical perspective regarding various issues and values within narrative texts (Rahayu et al., 2024; Sayekti et al., 2022; Simorangkir et al., 2024; Soomro & Mirza, 2023). At this stage, students assume the role of text analysts, articulating their viewpoints to persuade peers (Akkuş & Uysal, 2024; Arvianti, 2023; Bendraou & Sakale, 2023). This phase underscores the importance of recognizing the author's intention, the influence of texts on thoughts and perspectives, recognizing the modalities by which information is conveyed to shape reader perspectives, and the identification of biases and omissions, which may be either subtle or dominant (Dardjito et al., 2023; Darling-Aduana et al., 2022; Kortesoja, 2023; Sayekti et al., 2022; Zarobe & Gutiérrez, 2024).

To enhance their text analysis skills, students were encouraged to articulate their positions on the issues and principles depicted in the narrative texts. In the classroom discussion of the Cinderella story, numerous students, predominantly females, displayed significant disapproval of the narrative. During the discussion of Cinderella, many female students expressed profound disapproval with the Cinderella story. Upon analyzing Cinderella's character with problem posing questions, the teacher asked about her goal. The students replied that she desired to go to the ball, wear a beautiful gown, and dance with the prince. The teacher subsequently asked this question, "what efforts

did she do [to achieve the goal]?" The students contemplated for a moment and responded, "Nothing!", "She cried", "She was so clingy and weak", and "She didn't do anything but expecting the prince to come". After being asked to critique various characteristics of Cinderella, Aira subsequently stated, "obviously, Cinderella is not the figure I genuinely aspire to emulate as my role model." Vita joined in by stating "Yea, Disney is a kind of racist." During the classroom

discussion, the teacher noted that posing questions enabled female students to critically assess their beloved fairy tale. This moment of realization led to a discussion regarding the manner in which such narratives represent female characters.

Following the initial realizations of the two female students, the teacher asked, "Does the story of Cinderella represent a female, a strong female?" The subsequent replies from the students were as follows:

Ade	: I mean, I mean, <i>karena Cinderella itu di sini dideskripsikan sebagai cewek yang lemah. Terus di teks ini tuh mendeskripsikan bahwa cewek itu harus cantik.</i> [I mean, I mean, because Cinderella here is described as a weak girl. This text continues to illustrate that girls must be beautiful].
Ade	: <i>Kalo every woman has different life. There's a moment that the woman is not always sweet. Terus cewek itu harus, eh, bergantung kepada orang lain gitu, sir.</i> [If every woman has a different life. There's a moment that the woman is not always sweet. Then the girl has to depend on other people, sir].
Reno	: <i>Sebenarnya, erm, perempuan juga ada gitu yang kuat gitu contohnya pahlawan Raden Ajeng Kartini gitu tokoh perempuan terus ada... Najwa Shihab yang bisa jadi jurnalis ya</i> [Actually, erm, there are also women who are strong, for example the hero Raden Ajeng Kartini is a female character and then there is Najwa Shihab who can become a journalist].
Manda	: <i>Mereka itu memanfaatkan kelemahan dari Wanita sebagai senjata mereka untuk mengontrol. Jadi kalo misalkan misal cewek yang kuat gitu kan, jadi kita itu gak bisa dikontrol sama laki-laki. Jadi hal itu selalu menjadi kelemahan yang sering dijadikan senjata oleh kaum lelaki.</i> [They exploit women's weaknesses as their weapons to control. So, for example, if a girl is strong like that, then we can't be controlled by men. So, this is always a weakness that is often used as a weapon by men].
Aira	: (Harusnya Cinderella) <i>Jangan selalu diam saja kalau ditindas.</i> [Cinderella should not always remain silent when being bullied].
Reno	: <i>Harusnya Cinderella itu harus mandiri.</i> [Cinderella should be independent].

Figure 12. Students' responses

In their responses, students identified "men" or "the prince" as potential exploiters of women, as articulated by Manda during classroom discussions. Ade further asserted that the narrative of Cinderella inadequately reflects the representation of robust women relevant to contemporary society. She emphasized that women's identities transcend mere beauty or amiability, shaped by varied life circumstances. Reno, a male student, cited several inspiring female figures to challenge the negative

stereotypes associated with Cinderella. He also advocated for women's development of independence rather than excessive dependence on others. Aira asserted the necessity for women to exhibit resistance against oppression and bullying. Subsequently, Vita (V) and Yona (Y) discerned manifestations of racism and discrimination as socio-political issues within the dominant narrative of Disney, particularly regarding Cinderella and similar narratives. This observation is evident in Excerpt 10 below.

Excerpt #10	
V	: <i>Tapi kalo Disney itu Rasis, sir. [But Disney is a kind of racist, sir].</i>
T	: <i>Rasis kenapa? [How is it racist?].</i>
V	: <i>Disney itu loh sir Rasis. Banyak cerita yang mengandung rasisme. Rasis keras pokoknya. [Disney is a kind of racist. Some stories contain racism. It really is racist].</i>
T	: <i>Oh, iya benar. Kan banyak dikritik memang cerita-cerita di Disney itu. [Oh, yeah right. There have been many criticisms of Disney's stories].</i>
V	: <i>Iya, sir. Kayak yang di Little Mermaid itu. [Yes, sir. Like the one in the Little Mermaid].</i>
Y	: <i>Iya, sir di Little Mermaid itu Rasis. [Yes, sir. Little Mermaid is sort of racist].</i>
T	: <i>Little mermaid kenapa tuh? [What's wrong with the little mermaid?].</i>
V	: <i>Yang Ariel nya kan pemeran pengisi suaranya kulit hitam. Jadi apa ya? [Ariel is starred by a black voice actress. So, what is it...?].</i>
Y	: <i>Jadi kayak seolah-olah gak cocok sama Ariel yang sebagai mermaid kulit putih gitu. [It's like the black voice actress is not compatible with Ariel as a white mermaid].</i>

Figure 13. Excerpt 10

According to Excerpt #10, students revealed racism by criticizing the replacement of a black voice actress solely due to her race. They problematize the necessity of depicting Ariel, a white mermaid, through a voice actress of similar racial background. In essence, two female students recognized that such racial biases should be excluded from narratives, especially in widely recognized stories.

According to Besral (2022) and Wells et al. (2022), narrative stories influence societal norms surrounding gender roles. Student responses reveal an awareness and critique of these norms. Manda and Ade's comments highlighted the relationship between women's oppression and men's dominance, challenging the stereotype of women's weakness in contemporary society. The two female students critically analyzed accepted fairy tale narratives. By engaging with feminist perspectives, they adopted a contrarian approach, questioning traditional interpretations and resisting patriarchal ideologies. In summary, the students opposed notions of women's weakness, control, ignorance, and underdevelopment.

In the next stage of analyzing text critically, the teacher prompted students to reconstruct the text according to their perspectives on justice against dominant power relation within the story. The teacher also interrogated differing viewpoints and dominant voices, encouraging students to express their own interpretations, thereby demonstrating the potential for alternative constructions and reader positions. The reconstructed versions of Cinderella story were authored by two different groups, as depicted below.

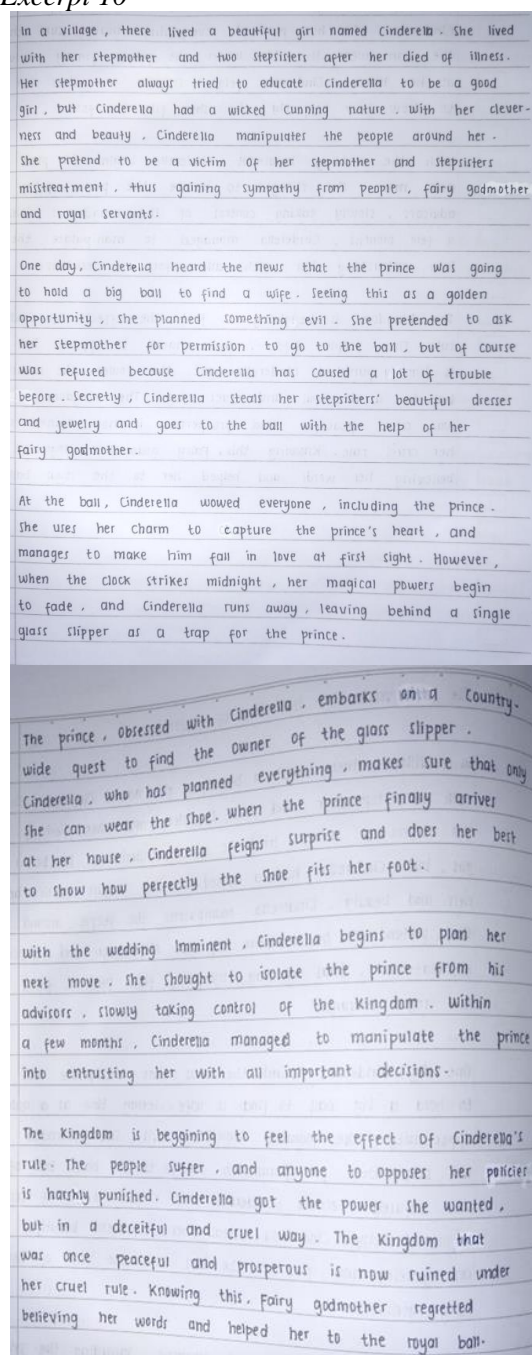


Figure 14. Cinderella story (1st version)

In the first version of Cinderella story, the students decided that Cinderella should possess significantly greater strength, even being portrayed as someone who manipulates circumstances to challenge the ordinary ending as depicted in traditional story. In the original story, Cinderella was depicted as weak and submissive woman who obediently fulfilled her stepfamily's instructions. Furthermore, in this first reconstructed version, the students portrayed her as a cunning and ethically ambiguous character, who actively deceives others for personal advantage through the use of her charm. This portrayal problematizes traditional representations of Cinderella as a victim, illustrating her as being equally manipulative as her stepfamily. This adaptation explores more threatening themes of manipulation and dishonesty, showcasing Cinderella's rise to power as queen through decree, which ultimately yields contrary consequences. It is very contradictory with the original story of Cinderella where she finally lived happily ever after with the prince in the palace instead of ruling the palace herself. In summary, it provides a sophisticated investigation of the dynamics of human nature and power, thereby problematizing the traditional figures of classic fairy tales. In the second version of Cinderella story, the ending was composed differently as follows.

once upon a time . in a beautiful village , there lived a bright and lovely young woman named Cinderella . she resided with her stepmother and two stepsisters , Anastasia and Drizella . They all lived happily together with simplicity . Cinderella worked as a library keeper in her village , while her stepsisters worked as entrepreneurs and clothing shops .

One day , Cinderella accidentally overheard her stepsisters' conversation . she learned that she was a princess of royal descent and that both of her parents were killed by the current king , who was very greedy for power and wealth . Cinderella was then raised by her mother's loyal servant it is her stepmother , she provided her with love and happiness despite their limitations in the countryside .

Cinderella was confused , sad , and angry . Because the current king was very unwise and arrogant . she decided to take back her rights . But Drizella was against it . she said to Cinderella that they just a small and peripheral society , so what could they do ? Meanwhile , Anastasia supports Cinderella , she wants to help Cinderella regain her rights . And her stepmother supports whatever Cinderella wants to do .

The next day , the palace guards spread flyers about the ball that will be held in 2 weeks . Because of the prince's wish , he wanted this party to be attended by all circles of society . Cinderella who heard this , immediately asked for help from her two sisters . Thanks to her sisters , she was able to attend the ball .

At the Royal ball , when the Royal family into the party yard Cinderella deliberately spill something on the King's clothes , something that is attractive to bees , namely nectar , sugar , and fragrances that smell floral or sweet . Then the bees flew out from underneath the beautiful dress that Cinderella wore that night . The bees swarmed the King , and the people focused their attention on the King . Cinderella took advantage on this by declaring that she was a legitimate royal descendant .

The people at the party were shocked by Cinderella's words and evidence . The people , who felt wronged by the current King's rule , began to voice their rights , opinions , and voices . They asked for justice and truth . Then the depressed king admitted that he had taken away Cinderella's rights . And the party ended with return of the rightful princess of the kingdom .

Figure 15. Cinderella story (2nd version)

In the second version of Cinderella narrative, students aimed to incorporate themes such as male dominance, marginalized voices, and female leadership relevant to contemporary society. The original narrative's intent was Cinderella's ascent to the palace, meeting the prince, and achieving eternal happiness. Conversely, in the students' reconstructed version, Cinderella, with support from her benevolent stepmother and stepsisters, endeavors to overthrow the authoritarian regime of the prince ruling the palace. Different from the first version where Cinderella was the only main character of this study; in the second version, the main characters were entirely women such as Cinderella, her stepmother, and her two stepsisters. The students also wrote that Cinderella's mother was the previous queen prior to the reign of the tyrant prince, and her stepmother was formerly a devoted attendant to her mother. In the end, the students stated that Cinderella successfully regained control of the kingdom and tried to attentively listen to each and every voice of the people in which the prince failed to do so during his leadership.

The reconstructed versions of narrative composed by two different groups of students may exemplify that texts frequently emphasize specific voices or perspectives; simultaneously, they may marginalize other viewpoints. By stimulating students to compose their own narratives, the students became very attentive that texts as literary works could be written in diverse manners. In other words, it can be inferred that,

the students seemed to be able to identify several issues in line with the crucial agenda of critical literacy (Appatova & Horning, 2023; Rumaf et al., 2024; Tryanasari et al., 2024; Yulianto et al., 2024).

CL encourages students to engage with texts on a deeper level by deconstructing dominant ideologies and questioning underlying power structures. In this study, student-teachers applied CL to the traditional *Cinderella* story, aiming to critically examine its portrayal of gender roles, marginalized characters, and the representation of female leadership. The Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1999) served as the guiding framework, positioning students as "text analysts" who actively challenge and reframe traditional narratives. The role of the reader as a text analyst in CL is central to this process. It expects students to critique and question the embedded ideologies within a text, particularly around themes of gender, power, and marginalized voices. In the context of *Cinderella*, students were tasked with critiquing the passive role of the female protagonist and reimagining her as an active and empowered figure. The results showed that some students succeeded in deconstructing Cinderella's traditional passive role, offering alternative portrayals of the character that emphasized female empowerment and leadership (Wang et al., 2022). However, not all students were able to fully challenge the entrenched gender norms present in the original story. Some continued to see Cinderella within traditional frameworks, which reflected the limitations in their critical engagement with gender roles. Several students showed resistance to completely reframing the narrative. This reluctance could be linked to cultural or pedagogical factors that shaped their understanding of the story. Similar resistance has been noted in other studies (Dwikamayuda et al., 2024), where students struggled to shift their mindset beyond conventional interpretations, possibly due to ingrained cultural norms or a lack of exposure to alternative readings. While many students engaged with the gendered aspects of power dynamics, fewer explored the intersectionality of race, class, or other social factors. This limited the scope of their critique, making it less comprehensive. This finding aligns with (Darling-Aduana et al., 2022), who noted that critical analyses often remained centered on gender, neglecting the complex ways in which other identities intersect and influence the representation of power in texts. In summary, while some students demonstrated a strong

understanding of CL principles by critiquing gender roles and proposing alternative readings, others struggled to move beyond traditional interpretations or to engage with more complex social dynamics, such as race or class. These findings suggest that additional support and exposure to diverse perspectives are necessary to deepen students' engagement with CL and help them fully embrace its transformative potential.

The strategies employed by teachers to facilitate the reconstruction of narrative texts among EFL tertiary students through critical literacy (CL) framework as proposed by Luke and Freebody (1999) reveal a beneficial impact on the development of students' CL skills. The aforementioned findings are evidenced by their responses during classroom activities, interviews, and students' reflective journal. This study should elaborate on several aspects of the theories or concepts to corroborate the findings.

Regarding reader as code breaker in this study, the students were able to participate in the aspects of breaking the code of the text such as: vocabulary recognition, identifying fundamental information about narrative texts, analyzing visual codes, and interpreting non-verbal codes. The importance of the reader as code breaker role was highlighted by the study conducted by Walker et al. (2024). Furthermore, Walker et al. (2024) articulated that equipping students with the ability to adeptly decode the textual features of text is crucial prior to critically uncover underlying meanings, power dynamics, and ideologies as delineated in CL frameworks. In other words, this phase is also characterized as an initial transition aimed at moving beyond surface level comprehension to critically engage with the text (Dwikamayuda et al., 2024; Ijabah, 2024; Zarobe & Gutiérrez, 2024).

Due to the reader as a meaning maker, most students could successfully participate in the process of meaning making of the narrative text. The importance of the readers' role as meaning makers was also highlighted by the study carried out by Rahmadina and Emilia (2022). Rahmadina and Emilia (2022) further asserted the significance of bridging the students' access to a text by activating their prior or background knowledge to help them understand the text. Furthermore, the study conducted by Riwayatningsih (2022) aimed at depicting how CL pedagogy principles were incorporated in EFL writing class in Indonesian higher education context. Riwayatningsih (2022) also stated that one of the most beneficial principles was the

significance of relating students' background knowledge to assist them effectively comprehend the texts (see also: Akkuş & Uysal, 2024; Nugraha et al., 2024; Viono et al., 2023; Wells et al., 2022).

In terms of reader as a text user, the students were able to reveal the specific structures of the narrative texts being explored. In other words, the students could recognize the technical features as well as moral values embedded in the texts (Luke, 2000). It is pertinent to the study from Bakken (2024) in which most students were able to articulate their role as a text user by successfully comprehending the purpose of the text and learning something valuable from the texts or regarded as moral values or lesson. Moreover, the study conducted by Novianti (2024) also highlighted the importance of readers' role as text users role for beginning EFL readers (see also: Hmood, 2024; Lee, 2022; Maghsoudi et al., 2022; Nkansah, 2025; Pederson, 2023).

In respect of reader as a text analyst, the students were considered capable of transforming the traditional story of Cinderella to contend against several issues as the manifestation of critical literacy agendas such as: the domination of males over females, the representation of marginalized communities, and the significance of female leadership. This study is in line with the study conducted by Romero and Bobkina (2023) who problematized gender stereotypes and religious diversity present in Spanish EFL context by prompting adolescent students to criticize the traditional fairy tales through various critical literacy engagements through cinema-based affective literacy practices. Furthermore, Dwikamayuda et al. (2024), Besral (2022) and Utami and Mahardika (2023) conducted a research by reframing narrative stories from critical literacy perspectives as proposed by Luke and Freebody (1999). Their study put an emphasis on encouraging EFL students to reconstruct texts in order to fill the voices marginalized in several narrative texts. The findings of this study also corresponds to a study conducted by Darling-Aduana et al. (2022) in which he engaged students in a critical analysis of ideologies associated with race, class, gender, and sexuality. She utilized classroom discussion focusing on contradictory narratives regarding the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's 'real; fairy tale and recent animated adaptations that claim to endorse empowered princesses. The aforementioned previous studies were considered relevant and effective in terms of integrating CL, emphasizing

the role of the reader as a text critique or analyst, in language classroom particularly in EFL and ESL classroom.

In this study, students acted as text analysts by critically reframing the Cinderella story, addressing gender roles, marginalization, and female leadership—core concerns of critical literacy (CL). These findings align with prior studies (Dwikamayuda et al., 2024; S. Lee & Suh, 2022; Y. J. Lee, 2022) that used CL to challenge dominant ideologies in narrative texts. In contrast, non-CL EFL classrooms often emphasize surface-level comprehension and language accuracy, treating texts as neutral and overlooking power, identity, and cultural issues. Without a critical lens, students are less likely to question dominant narratives or develop as socially aware readers. This study shows that CL encourages deeper engagement and positions students as active agents in meaning-making.

In a nutshell, this study was conducted at a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of its findings to other contexts. While the insights gained are valuable for understanding the engagement of student-teachers in this specific setting, the results may not fully reflect the experiences of students from different universities or regions. Factors such as institutional culture, teacher training programs, and local educational norms could influence how CL is implemented and received. As a result, while the study provides important insights into CL in a particular context, further research across multiple institutions would be needed to determine if these findings can be applied more broadly to other educational settings.

In order to effectively implement CL pedagogy, the fundamental aspect of its process depends on the curriculum. One of the curriculum components is justifying the teaching methods to foster students' critical learning patterns through critical thinking, critical pedagogy, and critical literacy. Thus, incorporating CL practices into the curriculum is crucial to equip students to be critical literate as an active citizen in contemporary education. As stated by Han et al. (2024) CL is essential for educators to create culturally responsive learning experiences that address diverse student needs, facilitating awareness of power dynamics and social issues while fostering more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Diaz (2024) also revealed that the implementation of CL has been shown to provide a meaningful educational experience by fostering critical perspectives on social and

cultural realities. Furthermore, Rizqiani et al. (2024) revealed that CL models in language education enhance students' reading and comprehension abilities, underscoring the necessity of incorporating these practices into the curriculum. However, while critical literacy is crucial for developing analytical (Diaz, 2024; Rizqiani et al., 2024) and cultural awareness (Han et al., 2024), its implementation can be challenging. Teachers must be adequately trained to facilitate critical literacy learning effectively, and curricula should be designed to provide meaningful feedback and representative assignments. Additionally, fostering an inquisitive community-based approach can further enhance students' engagement and understanding of diverse perspectives.

This study provides empirical support for the development of the CL curriculum, offering novel perspectives for policymakers. It implies that the primary objective of CL in the design of curricula or syllabi is to guarantee that the curriculum is effective, aligns with educational goals, remains sustainable, is culturally relevant, and fosters ongoing enhancement through evidence-informed decision-making and active participation of stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of the Four Resources Model of Critical Literacy (CL) through narrative texts. Findings show that engaging students as meaning makers, text users, and text analysts enhanced their ability to deconstruct texts and question embedded ideologies, reinforcing the role of CL in promoting critical reading and active citizenship. The results provide important insights for Indonesia's national EFL curriculum reforms. By integrating CL, the curriculum can move beyond a traditional focus on grammar and vocabulary to include critical thinking, social awareness, and civic engagement. This empowers students not only to understand texts linguistically but also to interrogate their cultural, ideological, and societal implications. For classroom application, this study highlights several practical strategies to support CL pedagogy: scaffolding text analysis, encouraging multiple perspectives, incorporating diverse genres, and facilitating reflective dialogue. However, scaling CL practices across institutions presents challenges. These include limited teacher training in CL pedagogy, rigid curriculum structures, and the dominance of standardized assessments that prioritize language

accuracy over critical engagement. Addressing these barriers requires systemic support, professional development, and curriculum flexibility to adapt CL approaches across diverse contexts. To evaluate CL's long-term impact, future research should consider both qualitative and quantitative metrics, such as students' ability to engage in critical dialogue, demonstrate ideological awareness in writing, and apply critical perspectives across genres. Longitudinal studies could track how these skills evolve and influence students' academic and civic lives. While this study focused on narrative texts, future research should explore CL's application across varied genres and adopt diverse frameworks to deepen understanding. Scaling up CL - both in pilot and institutional levels - will be essential to shaping contextually responsive, equity-driven EFL education in Indonesia and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is not supported with any grants, fellowships, or alternative funding mechanisms. This study constitutes a segment of a dissertation conducted by the first author under the mentorship of the two co-authors. The authors would like to acknowledge the two co-authors.

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Implementing critical literacy to reframe narrative stories: A case study of Indonesian tertiary EFL classroom