

## Developing Students' Critical Thinking Skills through Reading Literacy

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Received: 15 Jan 2026

Revised: 11 Feb 2026

Accepted: 23 Feb 2026

### Abstract

This study aims to describe the development of students' critical thinking skills through reading literacy in Indonesian language learning. The study used a qualitative descriptive method because it focuses on the process of students understanding, interpreting, evaluating, concluding, and responding to texts. The object of this study is students' reading literacy activities in Indonesian language learning, specifically in the use of expository texts, argumentative texts, news, editorials, and popular scientific articles. Research data were obtained through observations of learning activities, students' written responses, discussion results, and learning documentation. The instruments used included observation sheets, student response analysis guidelines, and documentation of student work results. Data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that reading literacy plays a role in developing students' critical thinking skills through several stages. First, students are able to understand texts by finding main ideas and important information. Second, students are able to interpret explicit and implicit meanings. Third, students are able to evaluate information by distinguishing facts and opinions and assessing the strength of arguments. Fourth, students are able to draw conclusions and provide critical responses based on reasons and evidence from the text. Thus, reading literacy can be an effective learning strategy to develop students' critical thinking skills in Indonesian language learning.

**Keywords:** reading literacy, critical thinking, Indonesian language learning, critical reading, text

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## INTRODUCTION

Learning Indonesian plays a crucial role in shaping students' thinking skills because language is not only used as a means of communication but also as a means of understanding, processing, interpreting, and conveying ideas. In learning Indonesian, students encounter various forms of text, such as expository texts, argumentative texts, news stories, editorials, observational reports, and popular scientific articles. Through these texts, students are not only required to understand the content of the text but also to assess the accuracy of the information, connect ideas, and formulate logical responses. The OECD (2019) explains that reading literacy encompasses the ability to understand, use, evaluate, reflect on, and engage with texts to achieve goals, develop knowledge, and participate in society (OECD, 2019).

Critical thinking skills are becoming an essential skill in 21st-century education. Students live in a rapidly changing information environment filled with a variety of reading resources, both print and digital. This situation demands that students be able to sort information, distinguish between fact and opinion, evaluate arguments, and draw conclusions based on evidence. Halpern (1998) explains that critical thinking is related to the use of cognitive skills and thinking strategies to increase the likelihood of making the right decisions (Halpern, 1998). Similarly, Dwyer, Hogan, and Stewart (2014) emphasize

that critical thinking involves the processes of analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation necessary for rational decision-making (Dwyer et al., 2014).

A common problem often encountered in reading instruction is that students are able to read texts technically, but are not yet fully able to understand the text critically. Students are often able to answer literal questions, but are not necessarily able to explain implied meanings, assess the strength of arguments, or criticize the author's point of view. Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) distinguish between reading skills and reading strategies; reading skills tend to be automatic, while reading strategies involve awareness, purpose, and self-regulation in understanding texts (Afflerbach et al., 2008). Thus, the reading skills required in Indonesian language learning are not only reading fluency, but also reading strategies that lead students to critical understanding.

Reading literacy is closely related to comprehension and reasoning. Reading is not just a process of recognizing words, but also a process of constructing meaning by connecting information in a text with the reader's existing knowledge. Kintsch (1988) explains that text comprehension is built through a process of constructing and integrating information so that readers can form meaningful representations of the text they read (Kintsch, 1988). Graesser, Singer, and Trabasso (1994) also emphasize that readers construct inferences when comprehending text, particularly to connect pieces of information that are not always stated directly (Graesser et al., 1994). Therefore, reading literacy can be an important foundation in developing students' critical thinking skills.

In Indonesian language learning, reading literacy needs to be directed towards critical reading literacy. Critical reading literacy requires students to not only understand the content of the text, but also evaluate how the text constructs meaning, what interests the author brings, and how readers can respond to the text's content reflectively. Janks (2000) explains that critical literacy is related to the ability to understand the relationship between language and power, including how texts shape meaning, the reader's position, and how readers respond to social reality (Janks, 2000). Janks (2013) also emphasizes that critical literacy includes dimensions of domination, access, diversity, and design, so readers need to understand texts as social constructions that can be interpreted, criticized, and redesigned (Janks, 2013).

The focus of this research is the development of students' critical thinking skills through reading literacy in Indonesian language learning. Reading literacy is not merely the ability to understand explicit information in texts, but also includes the ability to interpret information, evaluate ideas, distinguish between facts and opinions, assess arguments, and draw conclusions based on evidence. Aloqaili (2012) explains that reading comprehension and critical thinking have a strong theoretical relationship because both involve cognitive processes, knowledge schemas, reasoning skills, and critical thinking dispositions (Aloqaili, 2012). Thus, reading learning can be the right space to develop students' critical thinking skills.

The relationship between reading and critical thinking is further strengthened by recent research. Paige, Rupley, and Ziglari (2024) explain that critical thinking is an essential 21st-century skill and is closely linked to reading comprehension because the reading process is inseparable from the ability to reason, infer, and connect information (Paige et al., 2024). This research emphasizes that critical thinking needs to be considered in reading comprehension models because reading involves complex cognitive processes, including induction, deduction, language comprehension, and monitoring meaning. These findings are relevant to Indonesian language learning because students need to be guided to read texts actively, not simply find superficial answers.

Other research also shows that critical thinking interventions can impact reading skills. Bakhtiari Moghadam, Narafshan, and Tajadini (2023) found that implementing a critical thinking intervention program resulted in positive changes in critical thinking skills,

reading comprehension, and classroom climate for language learners (Bakhtiari Moghadam et al., 2023). These findings suggest that reading activities accompanied by critical thinking exercises can help students understand texts more deeply. In Indonesian language learning, these research findings can be applied through activities such as reading argumentative texts, discussing reasons and evidence, and developing critical responses to the reading content.

Reading strategies are also an important factor in developing critical thinking skills. Mante-Estacio (2023) explains that metacognitive reading strategies help readers understand texts because they can plan, monitor, and evaluate their own reading process (Mante-Estacio, 2023). This metacognitive awareness is important in learning Indonesian because students need to know when they understand a text, when they are having difficulty, and what strategies to use to overcome these difficulties. With the right reading strategies, students can more easily find main ideas, connect information, and critically evaluate the content of a text.

Reading literacy also relates to students' ability to evaluate information. In the digital age, students frequently encounter texts containing data, opinions, claims, and specific viewpoints. Sirén and Sulkunen (2023) explain that critical literacy in the 2018 PISA reading assessment places the ability to evaluate information as a crucial component of reading literacy (Sirén & Sulkunen, 2023). This demonstrates that reading today requires students not only to acquire information but also to assess its validity, relevance, and quality. In Indonesian language learning, these skills can be honed through reading news texts, editorials, popular articles, and argumentative texts.

The need for critical literacy is growing as students now face a constant flow of digital information, including hoaxes, manipulated discourse, and multimodal texts. Discourse analysis of digital hoaxes can be used as a critical literacy strategy in Indonesian language education because it helps students understand the characteristics of false information, interpret texts carefully, and strengthen their ability to verify information (Dinihari et al., 2025). This study shows that reading literacy in Indonesian language learning must be directed at the ability to read texts critically, especially when students are faced with digital information that is not necessarily accurate.

The development of digital technology and artificial intelligence has also given rise to a shift in academic literacy. Trends in artificial intelligence-based research in linguistics and literature journals indicate a shift in academic literacy, requiring the strengthening of reading and writing skills to ensure the use of AI remains ethical, reflective, and supports scientific development (Pribadi et al., 2025). These findings are relevant to this study because students' critical thinking skills are inextricably linked to their ability to read, evaluate, and use information responsibly amidst technological developments.

Furthermore, literacy learning also needs to be supported by innovative teaching materials and media. Innovation in literacy teaching materials based on gamification and modern pedagogy is crucial for creating literacy learning that is relevant, engaging, and aligned with the needs of the digital era (Dinihari et al., 2025). This idea reinforces the idea that reading literacy in Indonesian language learning cannot be achieved solely through conventional reading activities but needs to be developed through teaching materials that can encourage student engagement, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

The development of reading literacy can also be strengthened through the use of culturally and environmentally based digital media. Wiharja et al. (2025) found that digital learning media based on ecology-based folktales can strengthen ecoliteracy, increase learning enthusiasm, aid comprehension, and shape students' ecological behavior (Wiharja et al., 2025). This finding is important because Indonesian language learning based on local and ecological texts can be a way to connect reading activities with critical awareness of students' environment and social life.

The development of critical thinking skills through reading literacy also depends on teachers' readiness to develop a scientific culture and innovative learning. Musringudin and Dinihari (2025) explained that elementary school teachers in Jakarta demonstrated a strong scientific culture in developing active, creative, and innovative lesson plans, as well as using a variety of learning strategies, models, methods, and media, although weaknesses remained in classroom action research and scientific publications (Musringudin & Dinihari, 2025).

Critical thinking skills through reading literacy can also be strengthened through writing activities. Students who read critically will be better prepared to construct written responses and arguments because they have practiced evaluating ideas, reasons, and evidence in texts. Sato (2022) explains that critical thinking skills in argumentative writing can be seen through the quality of ideas, reasons, evidence, and organization of arguments (Sato, 2022). Thus, Indonesian language learning can connect reading and writing as mutually supportive processes. Reading trains students to understand and evaluate texts, while writing trains students to reorganize ideas logically and responsibly.

Furthermore, critical reading learning needs to be supported by collaborative and reflective activities. Xiong (2024) explains that collaborative reading strategies can help students understand texts through questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and discussing meaning (Xiong, 2024). This type of collaborative activity is important in Indonesian language learning because students can compare understandings, test opinions, and strengthen their reasoning through discussion. Thus, reading literacy is not only an individual activity but also a social activity that encourages students to think critically through interaction.

Although the relationship between reading literacy and critical thinking has been extensively researched, there remains a research gap that needs to be addressed. Most international research addresses the relationship between reading and critical thinking in the context of learning English as a foreign language, second language learning, or higher education. Meanwhile, studies that specifically position reading literacy as a means of developing critical thinking skills in Indonesian language learning still need to be strengthened. Davies (2013) explains that critical thinking is often discussed generally across various disciplines, but its application needs to consider the context of specific fields of study and learning practices (Davies, 2013). Therefore, Indonesian language learning requires studies that position text as the primary medium for developing students' critical thinking skills.

Another gap is evident in reading instructional practices, which often position students as recipients of information rather than evaluators. Reading instruction is often directed at answering questions about the content of a reading, but not always at evaluating ideas, assessing arguments, or providing critical responses. Al Roomy (2022) explains that critical reading skills influence reading comprehension because critical readers not only understand information but also question, compare, and evaluate the content of a text (Al Roomy, 2022). Therefore, Indonesian language learning needs to develop reading activities that require students to be active and reflective readers.

The novelty of this research lies in its placement of reading literacy as a process of developing students' critical thinking skills in Indonesian language learning. This research does not view reading literacy solely as the skill of understanding texts, but as a thinking process involving comprehension, interpretation, evaluation, and inference. Perfetti and Stafura (2014) explain that word knowledge and text comprehension are essential parts of reading theory because comprehension cannot be separated from the ability to connect the meaning of words, sentences, and context (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). Thus, reading literacy in this study is understood as the basis for developing critical thinking skills through in-depth processing of text meaning.

Another novelty is that this study positions Indonesian language learning as a strategic space for developing critical thinking skills through text. Texts in Indonesian language learning are not only used as reading material, but also as a means to train students to analyze information, evaluate ideas, distinguish between facts and opinions, and draw conclusions. Abrami et al. (2015) explain that critical thinking skills can be improved through explicitly designed and directed learning strategies (Abrami et al., 2015). Thus, reading literacy in Indonesian language learning needs to be consciously designed as a strategy to develop students' critical thinking skills.

Based on this description, this research is important because reading literacy plays a crucial role in developing students' critical thinking skills. Reading literacy in Indonesian language learning should be directed toward the activities of understanding, interpreting, evaluating, and concluding texts. Through these activities, students become not only readers capable of finding information but also readers capable of assessing information and conveying logical responses. Thus, Indonesian language learning can play a role in developing students who are critical, reflective, and able to handle various information responsibly.

Based on this background, the problem formulation in this study is: how is the formation of students' critical thinking skills through reading literacy in Indonesian language learning? This problem formulation is directed at explaining the process of reading literacy in helping students understand texts, interpret meaning, evaluate ideas, distinguish facts and opinions, and draw critical conclusions. The purpose of this study is to describe the formation of students' critical thinking skills through reading literacy in Indonesian language learning. This objective is in line with the needs of Indonesian language learning which not only develops literal reading skills, but also forms students' critical thinking skills through analytical, evaluative, and reflective reading activities.

## **METHODS**

This study used a qualitative descriptive method because it aimed to describe the development of students' critical thinking skills through reading literacy in Indonesian language learning. This method is appropriate for examining the process of reading literacy as an activity of understanding, interpreting, evaluating, and concluding text content. Reading literacy in this study is understood as the reader's ability to comprehend, use, evaluate, and reflect on text, as defined by the OECD (2019), while critical thinking is understood as the process of analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation in rational decision-making, as proposed by Dwyer et al. (2014).

The research procedure was carried out in three stages: preparation, implementation, and data analysis. In the preparation stage, the researcher determined the focus of the study, selected reading texts, and developed instruments in the form of observation sheets, guidelines for analyzing student responses, and documentation of student work. In the implementation stage, students were directed to read Indonesian texts including expository texts, argumentative texts, news stories, editorials, and popular science articles. After reading, students were asked to find the main idea, interpret information, distinguish between fact and opinion, evaluate arguments, and draw conclusions. This activity aligns with Janks' (2000) view that critical literacy requires readers to understand how texts construct meaning and how readers respond reflectively to texts.

The research data consisted of observations, written student responses, discussion results, and learning documentation. Data were analyzed qualitatively through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction was carried out by selecting data related to reading literacy and critical thinking skills. Data presentation was

done in the form of descriptive descriptions according to indicators of understanding text, interpreting meaning, evaluating information, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was strengthened through technical triangulation by comparing observation results, student responses, and learning documentation.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### *Results*

The results of this study are compiled based on the problem formulation, namely how is the formation of students' critical thinking skills through reading literacy in Indonesian language learning? Based on the results of observations, student written responses, discussion results, and learning documentation, it was found that reading literacy plays a role in forming critical thinking skills through four main processes, namely understanding texts, interpreting meaning, evaluating information, and drawing conclusions. These four processes appear in the activities of reading expository texts, argumentative texts, news, editorials, and popular scientific articles.

#### **1. Developing the Ability to Understand and Interpret Texts**

##### **a. Ability to Find the Main Idea in a Text**

The first finding shows that reading literacy helps students find the main idea in a text. During reading activities, students are guided to understand the entire content of the text before responding. Students are not only asked to read the text but also to identify the main issues, important information, and relationships between paragraphs. In Indonesian language learning, the ability to find the main idea forms the initial foundation for developing critical thinking. Students who are able to find the main idea find it easier to understand the direction of the text's discussion and avoid getting caught up in irrelevant additional information. This is evident when students are able to distinguish between the main idea and the supporting details in expository texts and news texts.

**Table 1. Forms of Text Comprehension Ability**

No.	Reading Literacy Aspects	Student's Ability Manifestations
1	Finding the main idea	Students are able to determine the main topic of the text
2	Identifying important information	Students are able to distinguish between primary and supporting information.
3	Understanding the relationship between paragraphs	Students are able to see the continuity of ideas in the text
4	Explaining the content of the text	Students are able to retell the content of the reading in their own words.

Based on Table 1, the ability to understand text is an important initial step in developing critical thinking. Students who understand text well have a stronger foundation for interpreting, evaluating, and drawing conclusions from information.

##### **b. Ability to Interpret Explicit and Implied Meaning**

The second finding shows that reading literacy encourages students to interpret the meaning of texts, both the directly stated and implied meanings. In argumentative and editorial texts, students are not only satisfied with understanding the written information but also need to understand the author's intent, point of view, and message. The ability to interpret meaning indicates that students are beginning to move from literal reading to critical reading. Students not only receive texts as

information but also strive to understand why the text was written, what interests arise in the text, and how the information is structured to influence the reader.

**Table 2. Forms of Text Interpretation Ability**

No.	Reading Literacy Aspects		Student's Ability Manifestations
1	Interpreting meaning	explicit	Students understand information written directly in the text.
2	Interpreting meaning	implicit	Students understand messages that are not conveyed directly.
3	Identifying the point of view	author's	Students are able to recognize the author's attitude or position.
4	Connecting text with context		Students are able to relate the content of the text to social situations or everyday experiences.

These findings demonstrate that reading literacy serves as a bridge to critical thinking skills. When students are able to interpret texts, they begin to develop the ability to grasp deeper meaning and not rely solely on surface information.

## 2. Developing the Ability to Evaluate Information

### 1. Ability to Distinguish Facts from Opinions

The third finding shows that reading literacy helps students distinguish between facts and opinions in texts. In news texts, editorials, and popular articles, students are guided to recognize statements that can be proven true and statements that are the author's opinions or judgments. The ability to distinguish between facts and opinions is an important part of critical thinking because students need to understand that not all information in a text has equal validity. Facts can be verified through data or real events, while opinions contain the author's views and must be carefully evaluated.

**Table 3. Ability to Distinguish Facts and Opinions**

No.	Elements Assessed	Facts	Opinions
1	Basis of Information	Data, Events, or Evidence	Opinions, Assessments, or Attitudes
2	Nature of Information	Objective	Subjective
3	Possibility of Proof	Verifiable	Needs Critical Consideration
4	Manifestation in Learning	Students find data in the text	Students recognize the author's perspective

Based on Table 3, the ability to distinguish between fact and opinion indicates that students are beginning to use reasoning when reading. Students no longer accept all information equally but are beginning to assess the basis and validity of the information.

### 2. Ability to Assess the Strength of Arguments

The fourth finding shows that reading literacy shapes students' ability to evaluate arguments. In argumentative and editorial texts, students are guided to identify the main opinion, supporting reasons, evidence used, and the author's conclusion. The ability to evaluate arguments is evident when students can determine whether the reasons provided by the author align with the main idea. Students also begin to assess whether the evidence used is strong enough, relevant, and able to support the stated opinion. This process demonstrates critical thinking activities because students not only understand the text's content but also assess the quality of the ideas within it.

**Table 4. Forms of Argument Evaluation in Text**

No.	Argument Elements	Critical Questions Used
1	Main idea	What is the author's main opinion?

2	Reason	Is the reason given reasonable?
3	Evidence	Does the evidence support the author's opinion?
4	Linked ideas	Are the ideas, reasons, and evidence interconnected?
5	Conclusion	Does the conclusion align with the content of the text?

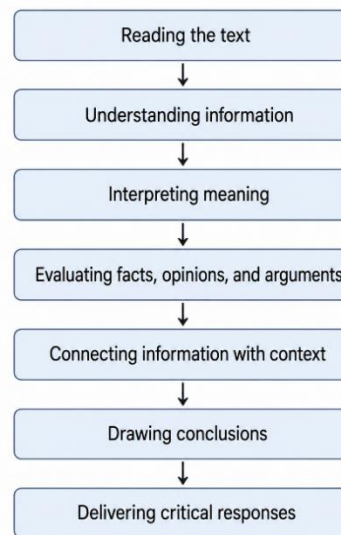
These findings indicate that reading literacy learning can be directed toward developing critical readers. Students not only find information but also evaluate how that information is constructed and presented.

### 3. Developing the Ability to Draw Conclusions and Critical Responses

#### a. Ability to Draw Conclusions Based on Text Content

The fifth finding shows that reading literacy helps students draw conclusions based on the content of the reading. Good conclusions are not based on guesswork, but on relevant information in the text. In learning activities, students are guided to gather important information, select appropriate information, and then draw logical conclusions.

The ability to draw conclusions indicates that students have processed information through the thinking process. Students do not simply repeat the text content but construct new understandings based on the information they have read. Thus, the activity of drawing conclusions is an important indicator in developing critical thinking skills.



**Figure 1.** Flow of Forming Critical Thinking Skills through Reading Literacy

Based on Figure 1, the development of critical thinking skills through reading literacy occurs in stages. The process begins with understanding text and then develops into the ability to interpret, evaluate, conclude, and provide responses.

#### b. Ability to Provide Critical Responses to Texts

The sixth finding shows that reading literacy encourages students to provide critical responses to text content. Critical responses are not simply statements of agreement or disagreement, but must be accompanied by logical reasoning and be in line with the content of the reading. In Indonesian language learning activities, students who read critically are able to express opinions based on evidence from the text. They can also connect the content of the reading to

experiences, other knowledge, or issues occurring in their environment. This ability demonstrates that reading literacy not only develops understanding but also fosters a reflective attitude in responding to information.

**Table 5. Student Critical Response Indicators**

No.	Critical Response Indicators	Embodied in Learning
1	Expressing an opinion	Students state their attitude towards the content of the text.
2	Providing reasons	Students explain the basis for their opinion.
3	Using evidence	Students cite information from the text as support.
4	Connecting with context	Students relate the content of the text to real life.
5	Drawing reflective conclusions	Students summarize the content of the reading with critical consideration.

Based on Table 5, the ability to provide critical feedback is the pinnacle of reading literacy activities. Students not only understand the content of the text but are also able to respond to it with justifiable reasons and evidence.

#### **4. Patterns of Critical Thinking Skills Development Through Reading Literacy**

##### **a. Reading Literacy as a Gradual Process of Critical Thinking**

The seventh finding shows that the development of critical thinking skills through reading literacy occurs in stages. The first stage is understanding the text, namely the student's ability to find the main information. The second stage is interpreting the text, namely the ability to understand explicit and implicit meanings. The third stage is evaluating the text, namely the ability to assess facts, opinions, and arguments. The fourth stage is drawing conclusions and responding critically to the text.

This pattern shows that reading literacy is not only an initial activity in Indonesian language learning but also a process for developing students' reasoning. The better students understand and evaluate texts, the stronger their ability to formulate reasons and draw conclusions.

**Table 6. Patterns of Critical Thinking Formation Through Reading Literacy**

No.	Reading Literacy Stage	Critical Thinking Skills Developed
1	Expressing an opinion	Identifying information and main ideas
2	Providing reasons	Analyzing explicit and implied meaning
3	Using evidence	Assessing facts, opinions, evidence, and arguments
4	Connecting with context	Drawing conclusions based on relevant information
5	Drawing reflective conclusions	Expressing critical opinions based on reasoning

Based on Table 6, reading literacy has been shown to be a crucial process in developing critical thinking skills. Each stage of reading produces different forms of thinking skills, from comprehension to evaluation and critical response.

##### **b. Indonesian Language Learning as a Space for Strengthening Critical Literacy**

The eighth finding shows that Indonesian language learning is an appropriate space for developing critical thinking skills because it is text-based. Various types of texts in Indonesian language learning can be used to train students to understand information, evaluate content, and provide responses. Expository texts help students understand ideas and information. Argumentative texts help students assess reasons and evidence. News texts help students distinguish between fact and opinion. Editorial texts help students understand the author's perspective and interests. Popular scientific articles help students interpret data-based

information. Thus, Indonesian language learning has great potential for developing critical thinking skills through reading literacy.

**Table 7. Types of Text and Critical Thinking Skills Developed**

No.	Text Type	Critical Thinking Skills Developed
1	Expository text	Understanding ideas and information
2	Argumentative text	Assessing reasons, evidence, and conclusions
3	News text	Distinguishing facts and opinions
4	Editorial text	Criticizing the author's point of view
5	Popular science article	Interpreting information and data
6	Observation report	Drawing conclusions based on facts

Based on Table 7, each text type has the potential to develop students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, Indonesian language learning needs to be designed not only to understand the text's content, but also to train students to read analytically, evaluatively, and reflectively.

### ***Discussion***

The findings show that reading literacy plays an important role in developing students' critical thinking skills in Indonesian language learning. This development appears through several stages, namely understanding texts, interpreting meaning, evaluating information, drawing conclusions, and providing critical responses. These findings indicate that reading activities should not be treated merely as activities for obtaining information, but as learning processes that guide students to analyze, evaluate, and respond to texts critically.

The first finding shows that students' ability to identify the main idea becomes the initial foundation for critical thinking. Students who are able to identify main ideas, distinguish important information from supporting details, and understand the relationship between paragraphs tend to have a stronger basis for interpreting and evaluating texts. Wilson (2016) explains that critical reading requires careful scaffolding so that students can move from literal comprehension to deeper and more critical understanding (Wilson, 2016). This means that the teacher's role is important in guiding students to read texts gradually and critically.

The second finding indicates that reading literacy helps students interpret explicit and implicit meanings. In argumentative and editorial texts, students are required to understand not only the written information but also the author's intention, point of view, and message. Le and Nguyen (2024) explain that reading and critical thinking skills are interconnected because readers need to construct meaning through interpretation, discussion, and understanding of context (Le & Nguyen, 2024). Therefore, reading activities in Indonesian language learning should encourage students to understand why a text is written and how the text influences its readers.

The third finding shows that reading literacy supports students' ability to distinguish facts from opinions. This skill is important because students often encounter texts that contain data, claims, opinions, and certain perspectives. Erkek and Batur (2025) explain that critical reading and critical thinking are related cognitive skills because both require students to evaluate information analytically (Erkek & Batur, 2025). Thus, the ability to distinguish facts from opinions shows that students have begun to assess the validity and reliability of information in texts.

The fourth finding shows that reading literacy develops students' ability to evaluate arguments. In argumentative and editorial texts, students learn to identify the main opinion, supporting reasons, evidence, and conclusions. Christodoulou and Diakidoy (2017) explain

that reading argumentative texts is closely related to both reading comprehension and critical thinking because readers need to understand the content and evaluate the quality of arguments (Christodoulou & Diakidoy, 2017). This finding confirms that argumentative and editorial texts are useful materials for training students to assess reasons, evidence, and conclusions critically.

The fifth finding indicates that reading literacy helps students draw conclusions based on text content. A good conclusion should be based on relevant information, not merely on personal assumptions. Through reading activities, students learn to collect important information, select relevant ideas, and construct logical conclusions. This process shows that reading literacy supports students in processing information and transforming it into new understanding.

The sixth finding shows that reading literacy encourages students to provide critical responses to texts. A critical response is not only a statement of agreement or disagreement, but must be supported by logical reasons and textual evidence. Al Roomy (2022) explains that critical reading skills influence reading comprehension because critical reading encourages students to activate prior knowledge, connect information, and use higher-order thinking skills (Al Roomy, 2022). Therefore, critical responses in Indonesian language learning can be seen as the result of meaningful interaction between students and texts.

Overall, the findings show that the development of students' critical thinking skills through reading literacy occurs gradually. The process begins with understanding the text, continues with interpreting meaning, evaluating facts, opinions, and arguments, drawing conclusions, and finally delivering critical responses. This pattern provides a contribution to Indonesian language learning by showing that reading literacy can be positioned as a systematic pedagogical process for developing students' critical thinking skills.

The contribution of this study lies in the view that reading literacy is not merely a receptive language skill, but also a cognitive and reflective process. Reading should be understood as an activity that enables students to question, evaluate, connect, and respond to information. In practical terms, Indonesian language teachers can use various types of texts to develop critical thinking. Expository texts can be used to train students to understand ideas, argumentative texts to assess reasons and evidence, news texts to distinguish facts and opinions, editorials to criticize the author's point of view, and popular scientific articles to interpret data-based information.

Therefore, Indonesian language learning needs to be designed not only to improve students' literal comprehension, but also to strengthen their analytical, evaluative, and reflective reading skills. Through reading literacy, students can be guided to become active readers who are able to understand texts, evaluate information, draw conclusions, and deliver critical responses based on reasons and evidence. This finding strengthens the position of reading literacy as an important foundation for developing students' critical thinking skills in Indonesian language learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the formation of students' critical thinking skills through reading literacy in Indonesian language learning occurs gradually through the processes of understanding texts, interpreting meaning, evaluating information, drawing conclusions, and delivering critical responses. Reading literacy does not only function as an activity for obtaining information, but also as a learning process that encourages students to analyze, evaluate, and respond to texts based on logical reasoning and textual evidence.

1. Reading literacy helps students develop basic critical thinking skills through the ability to understand texts. Students are able to identify main ideas, distinguish important information from supporting details, understand relationships between paragraphs, and explain the content of texts in their own words.
2. Reading literacy supports students in interpreting explicit and implicit meanings. Through argumentative texts, editorials, news texts, expository texts, and popular scientific articles, students are trained to understand the author's intention, point of view, and message, as well as to connect the text with social contexts and everyday experiences.
3. Reading literacy develops students' ability to evaluate information. Students learn to distinguish facts from opinions, assess the validity of information, identify arguments, examine reasons and evidence, and determine whether conclusions are relevant to the content of the text.
4. Reading literacy encourages students to draw conclusions and deliver critical responses. Students do not merely repeat the content of the text, but construct new understanding, express opinions, provide reasons, use evidence from the text, and relate their responses to real-life contexts.
5. Indonesian language learning provides a strategic space for strengthening critical thinking because it is text-based. Various types of texts can be used to train different critical thinking skills, such as understanding ideas, evaluating arguments, distinguishing facts and opinions, criticizing perspectives, interpreting data, and drawing conclusions based on facts.

The findings of this study indicate that reading literacy can be developed as a systematic pedagogical strategy for strengthening students' critical thinking skills. In future studies, this research can be expanded by examining the use of digital texts, multimodal texts, folklore-based texts, or artificial intelligence-assisted reading activities to support students' critical literacy. Further research may also explore the relationship between reading literacy, argumentative writing, digital literacy, and students' ability to respond critically to information in broader learning contexts.

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