



The Social Construction of Critical Literacy among Primary School Students in Contextual Learning

M Zainul Hafizi^{1*}, Muhammad Nur Salim²

¹Pendidikan IPS, Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak, Indonesia

²Prodi Karawitan, Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

*Correspondence: m.zainul.havizi@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines the social construction of critical literacy among elementary school students within the framework of contextual learning. Drawing on sociocultural theory and critical pedagogy, this research explores how literacy is not merely an individual cognitive skill but a socially mediated practice shaped by interaction, discourse, and cultural context. A qualitative approach was employed using a sociological perspective to analyze classroom practices, teacher strategies, and student engagement. The findings indicate that critical literacy emerges through dialogic interaction, contextual problem-solving, and the integration of students' lived experiences into learning processes. The study also reveals that contextual learning environments facilitate the development of interpretative, analytical, and reflective competencies among students. Furthermore, the role of teachers as mediators of meaning significantly influences the formation of critical awareness. These findings reinforce the argument that critical literacy is constructed through dynamic social processes rather than transmitted as fixed knowledge. The study contributes to the theoretical integration of critical literacy and contextual pedagogy in primary education.

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INTRODUCTION

Literacy in primary education has undergone a significant conceptual transformation, shifting from a narrow focus on technical skills such as reading and writing to a more complex capacity involving the ability to comprehend, interpret, and critically engage with social realities as represented through texts. This shift is not merely pedagogical but also epistemological, as it reconfigures how literacy is positioned within educational practice. In contemporary frameworks, literacy is understood as a socially situated practice embedded in cultural contexts, power relations, and broader systems of meaning (Gee, 2015; Street, 2003). Accordingly, literacy can no longer be regarded as a neutral, individual competence; rather, it is a socially constructed phenomenon shaped through interaction, discourse, and learners' lived experiences.

Aligned with the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, critical literacy is conceptualized as an emancipatory instrument that enables individuals to develop reflective awareness (conscientization) of unequal social structures (Freire, 1970). Within this perspective, learning cannot be reduced to the mere transmission of knowledge; instead, it must be understood as a dialogic process through which learners actively and reflexively construct meaning. This orientation necessitates a redefinition of instructional practices in primary education, moving away from transmissive models toward participatory and transformative pedagogical praxis.

However, the implementation of critical literacy at the primary school level continues to face substantial structural and pedagogical constraints. Dominant instructional practices tend to prioritize knowledge reproduction, standardized responses, and outcome-based assessment, thereby limiting opportunities for the development of students' analytical and reflective capacities (Luke, 2012). This condition reveals a persistent disjunction between the theoretical framework of critical literacy and the realities of classroom practice. In



other words, critical literacy largely remains at a normative level and has yet to be fully internalized in everyday pedagogical practices.

From a social constructivist perspective, learning is understood as a socially and culturally mediated activity. The work of Lev Vygotsky underscores that cognitive development is inseparable from social interaction and the use of language as a mediational tool (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, critical literacy among primary school students cannot be cultivated through individualistic approaches; rather, it must be constructed through social practices that involve dialogue, collaboration, and reflection on lived experiences. In this regard, language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for the formation of critical consciousness.

Contextual learning offers a relevant pedagogical framework for integrating critical literacy into classroom practice. Rooted in the educational philosophy of John Dewey, learning is conceived as the reconstruction of experience, enabling learners to connect knowledge with real-life contexts (Dewey, 1938). In parallel, situated learning theory posits that knowledge develops through participation in authentic social practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, contextual learning not only enhances the relevance of instruction but also creates opportunities for the development of critical literacy through students' active engagement with their social realities.

Furthermore, the emergence of the multiliteracies paradigm has expanded the scope of literacy by incorporating multimodal, digital, and social dimensions into the learning process (New London Group, 1996). This expansion underscores that critical literacy is no longer confined to written texts but also encompasses the ability to interpret and critique various forms of representation, including visual and digital media. In the context of increasingly complex contemporary societies, the integration of critical literacy and contextual learning becomes an imperative rather than an option.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on critical literacy and contextual learning, existing studies largely treat these constructs in isolation. Prior research tends to emphasize pedagogical aspects without sufficiently interrogating the sociological dimensions underlying the construction of critical literacy (Ajayi, 2015; Hendriani et al., 2018). As a result, understanding of how critical literacy emerges as a social practice within contextual learning environments remains limited. This gap highlights the need for an analytical approach that simultaneously integrates pedagogical and sociological perspectives.

Based on this framework, the present study aims to analyze the social construction of critical literacy among primary school students within the context of contextual learning. The analysis focuses on the mechanisms of social interaction, pedagogical practices, and the roles of educational actors in shaping students' critical consciousness. Thus, this study not only describes instructional practices but also interprets the underlying social processes that inform them.

The primary contribution of this study lies in its integrative effort to connect critical literacy with contextual learning through a social constructivist lens. In addition, it offers a conceptual formulation that can serve as a foundation for developing more reflective, contextual, and transformative learning models in primary education. Accordingly, this study is expected to enrich academic discourse while providing practical implications for the development of educational policy and practice.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a sociological-constructivist analytical design, aimed at understanding critical literacy as a social practice constructed through pedagogical interactions within learning contexts. This approach was selected on the premise that critical literacy cannot be reduced to quantifiable variables; rather, it constitutes a complex phenomenon intertwined with meaning-making processes, lived experiences, and social relations within classroom settings (Creswell, 2018).

Theoretically, this study is grounded in the framework of social constructivism, which conceptualizes knowledge as a collective construction emerging through social interaction and language mediation. The perspective of Lev Vygotsky is employed to elucidate how internalization processes occur through dialogue and collaboration, particularly within the zone of proximal development, enabling students to gradually

develop critical thinking capacities (Vygotsky, 1978). In parallel, the critical pedagogy advanced by Paulo Freire is utilized to analyze how critical consciousness (conscientization) is formed through dialogic practices in educational settings (Freire, 1970).

The research design is interpretative, focusing on the exploration of contextual learning practices in primary education as arenas for the construction of critical literacy. The unit of analysis encompasses teacher–student interactions, instructional strategies, and forms of student participation within the learning process. Data were collected through three primary techniques: (1) participant observation of classroom learning activities, (2) in-depth interviews with teachers and students to explore perceptions and learning experiences, and (3) document analysis of instructional materials and student work. Methodological triangulation was employed to enhance the validity of findings and ensure consistency in interpretation (Wells, 1999).

The research procedure was conducted in sequential stages. The first stage involved identifying the learning context and mapping pedagogical practices relevant to critical literacy. The second stage consisted of data collection through observation and interviews, with particular attention to interactional dynamics, language use, and students' responses to contextual learning stimuli. The third stage involved data analysis using a thematic-critical approach, integrating critical discourse analysis to identify patterns of power relations, ideology, and meaning construction within pedagogical practices (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

During the analytical process, the data were categorized into several core themes: (1) dialogic practices in learning, (2) the linkage between instructional content and students' social experiences, (3) forms of active student participation, and (4) indicators of emerging critical consciousness. This process was conducted iteratively by continuously comparing empirical findings with the theoretical frameworks of critical literacy and contextual learning (Luke, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

To ensure research credibility, validation techniques included source and method triangulation, as well as member checking with research participants. Additionally, researcher reflexivity was maintained by critically considering the researcher's positionality in the process of data interpretation, thereby minimizing potential subjective bias. Accordingly, the methodological design was structured to comprehensively capture the processes underlying the social construction of critical literacy within contextual learning environments, while ensuring both theoretical robustness and empirical validity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Critical Literacy as a Social Practice in Primary Education

Critical literacy in primary education cannot be adequately understood as a mere technical ability to decode texts, extract explicit information, or respond to comprehension questions. From a sociological perspective, critical literacy constitutes a social practice shaped through the interaction among students, teachers, texts, and the broader social context in which learning occurs. Consequently, students' capacity for critical reading does not emerge naturally; rather, it is constructed through learning experiences that enable them to connect textual content with their social realities.

This perspective aligns with the work of Street (2003), who emphasizes that literacy is always embedded in social practices, values, and ideological frameworks. Accordingly, when primary school students engage with texts addressing themes such as environment, family, labor, poverty, cultural diversity, or social life, reading extends beyond linguistic comprehension. It involves interpreting how social structures are represented and negotiated within the text. At this juncture, critical literacy operates as a process of interrogating the relationship between language and social reality.

Within contextual learning practices, critical literacy begins to develop when teachers position texts not as objects of memorization, but as entry points for exploring students' lived experiences. Instructional texts function as dialogic media when teachers pose questions that extend beyond factual recall toward reflective and problem-oriented inquiry. Questions such as "Why does the character experience difficulties?", "Who benefits or is disadvantaged in this situation?", or "Does this घटना resemble situations in our surroundings?" encourage students to perceive texts as social representations rather than isolated linguistic constructs.

Pedagogically, this process demonstrates that critical literacy is formed through social mediation. The theoretical contribution of Lev Vygotsky highlights language as a primary instrument in children's cognitive development. Thus, primary students' critical thinking abilities do not develop in isolation but are cultivated through classroom interactions involving dialogue, explanation, questioning, and response (Vygotsky, 1978). In this regard, teachers function as mediators who facilitate students' progression from literal comprehension toward interpretative and reflective understanding.

Nevertheless, the construction of critical literacy must be aligned with children's cognitive developmental stages. The developmental theory of Jean Piaget posits that primary school-aged children typically operate within the concrete operational stage, in which cognitive development is optimized when abstract concepts are linked to tangible experiences (Piaget, 1952). Therefore, contextual learning becomes particularly relevant, as it provides a bridge between textual content, concrete experiences, and students' emerging social reasoning. Accordingly, critical literacy at the primary level should not be equated with advanced argumentative competencies typically associated with secondary or higher education. Rather, it should be conceptualized as an emergent capacity encompassing the ability to question, compare, relate texts to personal experiences, recognize simple forms of injustice, and articulate context-based reasoning. In essence, critical literacy at this stage represents an early form of reflective consciousness, gradually developed through sustained social interaction within the learning process.

Contextual Learning as a Site for Meaning Construction

Contextual learning provides a crucial pedagogical space for the development of critical literacy, as it connects school-based knowledge with students' social experiences. The educational philosophy of John Dewey asserts that meaningful education must be grounded in experience, as experience serves as the foundation for reflection and knowledge construction (Dewey, 1938). Within this framework, learning is not merely the transmission of content but a process of reconstructing experience through reflective engagement.

This principle carries significant implications for literacy instruction in primary education. When reading materials are linked to students' everyday lives, comprehension becomes more meaningful, as students interpret texts through their existing experiential frameworks. For instance, texts addressing environmental cleanliness become more critically accessible when connected to students' observations of school surroundings, waste disposal habits, or experiences with flooding and pollution. Through such processes, texts are not merely read but actively negotiated within real-life contexts.

The concept of situated learning proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) further reinforces that knowledge develops through participation in authentic social practices. Accordingly, critical literacy cannot be effectively transmitted through abstract explanation alone; it must be enacted through meaningful social activities. Group discussions, environmental observation, engagement with simplified news texts, visual analysis, and reflective writing based on lived experiences represent pedagogical practices that facilitate the gradual construction of critical understanding.

In parallel, Wells (1999) emphasizes the importance of dialogic inquiry in learning. Through dialogic processes, students do not passively receive information but actively formulate hypotheses, test ideas, and co-construct understanding. In primary education, such dialogue need not take the form of formal debate. Instead, it can emerge through everyday classroom interactions, including open-ended questioning, responses to narratives, and discussions of personal experiences. These seemingly simple forms of interaction provide a pedagogically effective foundation for the development of critical literacy.

Contextual learning also enables students to recognize that texts are never neutral or context-free. Each text embodies particular perspectives, linguistic choices, and underlying interests. The discourse-oriented framework advanced by James Paul Gee underscores that language is inherently linked to identity, social practices, and specific ways of perceiving the world (Gee, 2015). Thus, when students are guided to examine who is represented in a text, whose voices are absent, and which values are emphasized, they begin to engage with the critical dimensions of literacy.

However, the implementation of contextual learning for fostering critical literacy requires careful pedagogical design. The mere introduction of real-life examples into classroom instruction is insufficient if not

accompanied by reflective engagement. Contextualization that remains at the level of concrete illustration risks reducing learning to descriptive understanding. For learning to become critical, context must be treated as an object of analysis. This entails guiding students to identify patterns, causal relationships, inequalities, values, and potential actions embedded within their experiences.

At this stage, the role of the teacher becomes pivotal. Teachers must design questions that effectively connect textual content with contextual realities while remaining aligned with students' cognitive capacities. Critical inquiry at the primary level does not necessitate abstract reasoning; rather, it can begin with fundamental questions such as "Is this situation fair?", "Why did this occur?", or "What can be done to improve the situation?" Such questions serve as entry points for cultivating critical consciousness in ways that are developmentally appropriate for young learners.

The Teacher's Role as a Mediator in the Construction of Critical Literacy

Within the framework of contextual learning, the teacher no longer functions as the primary source of knowledge but rather as a mediator who facilitates the collective construction of meaning. This mediating role is pivotal in the development of critical literacy, as students' critical thinking capacities do not evolve automatically but emerge through deliberate pedagogical intervention. Accordingly, the quality of critical literacy developed among students is contingent upon how teachers design, manage, and mediate classroom interactions.

From a sociocultural perspective, teachers act as mediating agents who bridge formal knowledge structures and students' lived experiences. This aligns with the theoretical contributions of Lev Vygotsky, who emphasizes that cognitive development occurs through scaffolding—temporary support that enables learners to achieve higher levels of understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of critical literacy, scaffolding extends beyond conceptual explanation to include reflective questioning, clarification of meaning, and the reinforcement of students' reasoning processes.

The mediating role of the teacher becomes increasingly significant when literacy is conceptualized as an ideological practice. Paulo Freire argues that emancipatory education must be grounded in dialogue rather than domination (Freire, 1970). Within this framework, teachers must avoid "banking education" practices, in which students are positioned as passive recipients of information. Instead, pedagogical spaces should be structured to enable students to articulate their perspectives, interrogate social realities, and reflect upon their own experiences. Consequently, critical literacy develops as a dialogic process involving the negotiation of meaning between teacher and students.

However, mediation in pedagogical practice is not ideologically neutral. Teachers inevitably bring particular values, perspectives, and assumptions into the learning process. Henry Giroux conceptualizes teachers as transformative intellectuals who not only transmit knowledge but also shape students' social consciousness (Giroux, 1988). Therefore, the role of teachers in fostering critical literacy is inherently tied to ideological dimensions, particularly in determining how texts are selected, interpreted, and discussed within the classroom. Empirically, the mediating role of teachers in critical literacy instruction can be identified through several pedagogical practices. First, teachers design open-ended and problem-oriented questions that do not yield a single correct answer but instead stimulate reasoning, argumentation, and the comparison of perspectives. Second, teachers facilitate peer interaction through collaborative activities, such as group discussions, enabling the exchange of ideas and experiences. Third, teachers provide feedback that transcends binary evaluations of correctness, focusing instead on developing students' modes of thinking and reasoning.

In addition, teachers play a crucial role in selecting and adapting instructional materials. Within a critical literacy framework, texts should possess social relevance and allow for multiple interpretations. Overly normative or unidirectional texts tend to constrain students' critical engagement, whereas texts containing social conflicts, divergent perspectives, or moral dilemmas serve as effective stimuli for critical inquiry.

Nevertheless, the enactment of this mediating role faces several challenges, particularly in primary education. Teachers often encounter constraints related to limited instructional time, rigid curricular demands, and pressure to meet standardized academic targets. As a result, instructional practices tend to prioritize measurable learning outcomes—such as correct answers—over the cultivation of critical thinking skills. This condition

reflects an inherent tension between the goals of critical education and prevailing evaluation-oriented educational practices.

Therefore, strengthening the teacher's role as a mediator of critical literacy requires systemic support, including pedagogical training, curricular flexibility, and a reorientation of assessment paradigms. Without such support, efforts to develop critical literacy risk being reduced to peripheral activities rather than being fully integrated into core instructional processes.

Dialogue, Language, and Power Relations in Critical Literacy Practices

Critical literacy is inseparable from the role of language as the primary medium through which social reality is constructed. Language functions not merely as a tool for communication but also as a mechanism for shaping meaning, identity, and power relations. Consequently, the analysis of critical literacy practices must account for how language is utilized within classroom interactions.

Within the framework of critical discourse analysis, language is conceptualized as a social practice that both reflects and reproduces structures of power (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In classroom contexts, power relations between teachers and students are often manifested through communicative patterns. For instance, teacher-dominated discourse can limit student participation, resulting in unidirectional learning processes. Conversely, open dialogic spaces facilitate a more egalitarian distribution of power, enabling students to actively contribute to the construction of knowledge.

In alignment with this perspective, the concept of dialogic inquiry proposed by Wells (1999) underscores the importance of dialogue as a collaborative process of meaning-making. Through dialogic engagement, students do not merely express opinions but also learn to listen, respond, and revise their understanding based on interaction with others. This process constitutes a central dimension of critical literacy, as it involves the capacity to engage with multiple perspectives.

However, dialogic practices in primary classrooms are not always optimally implemented. Instructional interactions frequently remain dominated by closed-ended questioning patterns, wherein teachers pose questions with predetermined answers. Such practices tend to inhibit the development of critical literacy, as students become oriented toward identifying the "correct" response rather than engaging in reflective thinking processes.

Furthermore, the language used in instruction significantly influences students' access to critical literacy. James Paul Gee argues that language varieties are embedded within specific social practices, meaning that students who are less familiar with academic language may encounter difficulties in critically engaging with texts (Gee, 2015). Therefore, teachers must mediate the gap between students' everyday language and the academic discourse required in formal learning environments.

In this context, the use of inclusive and contextually grounded language becomes essential. Instruction can begin with language that resonates with students' lived experiences, followed by the gradual introduction of more abstract concepts and terminologies. This strategy enables students to develop critical literacy without experiencing cognitive or linguistic alienation.

Moreover, critical literacy entails the ability to identify bias, assumptions, and ideological positions within texts. This can be facilitated by guiding students to analyze who is represented in a text, whose voices are marginalized or excluded, and which values are being conveyed. Although such analysis must be adapted to students' developmental levels, it can be effectively introduced through simple, contextually relevant examples.

In sum, dialogue, language, and power relations constitute fundamental elements in the construction of critical literacy. These dimensions are interrelated and collectively shape the dynamics of classroom interaction, ultimately determining the extent to which students can develop critical thinking capacities. Therefore, advancing critical literacy requires not only modifications in instructional content but also transformations in communicative practices and interactional patterns within the classroom.

Indicators and Manifestations of Critical Literacy among Primary School Students

The construction of critical literacy among primary school students cannot be adequately measured solely through quantitative cognitive outcomes; rather, it must be understood through qualitative indicators that reflect the development of students' reflective awareness in interpreting social realities. In this context, critical literacy is manifested through patterns of thinking that demonstrate students' ability not only to comprehend texts but also to question, relate, and reflect upon the meanings embedded within them.

One primary indicator of critical literacy is students' ability to pose reflective questions about texts. This capacity signifies that learners do not passively receive information but begin to develop an active epistemological stance. As argued by Ira Shor, critical literacy is marked by the willingness to interrogate assumptions and structures of meaning that appear "natural" within texts (Shor, 1999). At the primary education level, such questioning may remain relatively simple; however, it plays a crucial role in establishing the foundational dispositions of critical thinking.

A second indicator is the ability to connect textual content with social experience. Within the framework of New Literacy Studies, literacy is inherently rooted in concrete social practices (Street, 2003). Therefore, when students are able to relate the content of a text to their everyday lives—for instance, linking environmental narratives to conditions in their home or school surroundings—the literacy process moves beyond literal comprehension toward contextual understanding. This capacity further indicates that students begin to perceive texts as representations of reality rather than merely linguistic artifacts.

The third indicator concerns students' ability to recognize values and perspectives embedded within texts. James Paul Gee emphasizes that every text carries ideological dimensions, whether explicitly or implicitly (Gee, 2015). In the context of primary school students, this awareness may emerge in the form of identifying characters as "fair" or "unfair," accompanied by basic reasoning for such judgments. Although still elementary, this ability represents an initial step toward understanding the ideological dimensions of literacy.

The fourth indicator is active participation in dialogic learning processes. Critical literacy develops through social interaction that enables students to share viewpoints, engage with alternative perspectives, and revise their understanding. Wells (1999) underscores dialogue as the primary medium for knowledge construction. Accordingly, the extent of students' participation in classroom discussions can serve as a key indicator in assessing the development of critical literacy.

Another equally significant indicator is students' ability to construct simple arguments. Peter McLaren asserts that critical literacy involves the capacity to articulate positions grounded in reasoning (McLaren, 2007). At the primary level, arguments need not be complex but should demonstrate a clear relationship between opinion and justification. For example, when a student identifies an action in a narrative as "unfair" and provides reasoning based on personal experience or internalized values, this reflects an emerging process of critical thinking.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that these indicators do not develop in a linear or uniform manner across all students. The development of critical literacy is influenced by multiple factors, including students' social backgrounds, prior learning experiences, and the quality of pedagogical interactions they encounter. Therefore, the evaluation of critical literacy must be conducted contextually and should not rely solely on universalized standards.

In sum, the manifestation of critical literacy among primary school students can be understood as a gradual and developmental process encompassing the abilities to question, connect, evaluate, engage in dialogue, and construct arguments. These interrelated indicators underscore that critical literacy is not an immediate or innate competence but rather the outcome of sustained, structured, and socially mediated learning processes.

Conceptual Model of the Social Construction of Critical Literacy in Contextual Learning

Based on the theoretical synthesis and conceptual analysis presented, this study formulates a conceptual model that explicates how critical literacy is socially constructed within contextual learning in primary education. The model positions critical literacy as the outcome of dynamic interactions among four principal components: social context, pedagogical practices, dialogic interaction, and students' cognitive development.

1. Social Context as the Foundation of Construction

Social context encompasses students' lived experiences, family environments, local culture, and the social realities they encounter in everyday life. From a social constructivist perspective, this context functions as the primary source of meaning-making. The educational philosophy of John Dewey emphasizes that experience constitutes the foundation of learning; thus, instructional processes disconnected from students' contexts tend to lack relevance and meaning (Dewey, 1938).

2. Pedagogical Practices as Mechanisms of Mediation

Pedagogical practices refer to the instructional strategies designed by teachers, including the application of contextual approaches, selection of learning materials, and structuring of learning activities. In this regard, teachers act as mediators who guide the process of knowledge construction. Henry Giroux conceptualizes teachers as transformative agents who play a strategic role in shaping students' critical consciousness (Giroux, 1988).

3. Dialogic Interaction as the Process of Construction

Dialogic interaction constitutes the core process through which meaning is constructed. Through dialogue, students are not merely recipients of information but active participants in the negotiation of meaning. This perspective aligns with the concept of dialogic inquiry advanced by Wells (1999), wherein knowledge is co-constructed through collaborative interaction.

4. Cognitive Development as the Outcome of Internalization

Cognitive development reflects the internalization of social interactions occurring within the learning process. Within the developmental framework of Jean Piaget, primary school students operate within the concrete operational stage, where critical thinking abilities emerge through engagement with concrete and contextual experiences (Piaget, 1952). At this stage, critical literacy manifests in foundational forms, such as the ability to understand causal relationships, recognize values, and construct simple reasoning.

These four components do not operate independently; rather, they interact within a dynamic system. Social context provides the experiential foundation, pedagogical practices direct the construction process, dialogic interaction serves as the medium for meaning negotiation, and cognitive development represents the cumulative outcome of these processes. The model thus underscores that critical literacy is not the product of a single determinant but emerges from the complex interplay between social structures and pedagogical practices. Consequently, efforts to foster critical literacy in primary education cannot rely solely on curricular reform but must also involve transformations in instructional practices and classroom interaction.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that critical literacy among primary school students is not an isolated cognitive competence but the result of a socially constructed process emerging through pedagogical interaction within learning contexts. Critical literacy develops as a social practice involving the interplay of language, experience, and the social realities encountered by students. Accordingly, approaches that reduce literacy to purely technical skills are insufficient to capture the complexity underlying the formation of critical consciousness.

The conceptual findings indicate that contextual learning plays a strategic role in facilitating the construction of critical literacy. The integration of instructional content with students' lived experiences enables deeper reflective processes, allowing students not only to comprehend texts at a literal level but also to interpret their social meanings. In this regard, experience serves as the primary medium linking formal knowledge with social reality, consistent with the principles of social constructivism.

Furthermore, the role of the teacher as a mediator emerges as a key determinant in the development of critical literacy. Teachers function not merely as transmitters of information but as facilitators of dialogue, guides of reflective processes, and agents who shape discursive spaces within the classroom. The quality of teacher-student interaction significantly influences the extent to which critical literacy can develop. Therefore, critical literacy is inherently dependent on pedagogical practices that are dialogic, participatory, and reflective.

The analysis also demonstrates that critical literacy among primary school students is manifested through foundational indicators, including the ability to pose questions, relate texts to experience, recognize values

within texts, participate in dialogue, and construct simple arguments. These indicators suggest that critical literacy at the primary level develops gradually in alignment with students' cognitive characteristics.

The principal contribution of this study lies in the formulation of a conceptual model that positions critical literacy as the outcome of interactions among social context, pedagogical practices, dialogic interaction, and cognitive development. This model reinforces the argument that critical literacy cannot be instantaneously produced through curricular intervention alone but must be cultivated through sustained social processes within educational practice.

Based on these findings, several implications can be proposed. First, at the pedagogical level, there is a need to strengthen teachers' capacity to design learning processes that extend beyond cognitive achievement toward the development of students' reflective abilities. This may be achieved through professional development focusing on dialogic strategies, critical questioning, and the integration of social context into instruction.

Second, at the curricular level, greater flexibility is required to enable teachers to implement contextual learning approaches effectively. Overly standardized curricula risk constraining pedagogical creativity and inhibiting the development of critical literacy. Educational policy, therefore, should seek to balance academic standards with the need to cultivate critical thinking competencies.

Third, in the domain of research, further empirical studies are necessary to test and refine the proposed conceptual model across diverse educational settings. Ethnographic and classroom-based research approaches may provide deeper insights into the dynamics of critical literacy construction in practice.

Fourth, the integration of critical literacy with multiliteracies and digital literacy frameworks should be advanced to respond to the demands of contemporary society. In the digital era, critical reading extends beyond written texts to include the analysis of visual, audiovisual, and digital information, which are increasingly complex and pervasive.

In conclusion, the development of critical literacy among primary school students requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses not only cognitive dimensions but also social, cultural, and pedagogical factors. Such an approach is essential for fostering a generation capable not only of understanding information but also of critically engaging with the evolving complexities of social reality.

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