

Stimulating Critical Literacy through Extensive Reading: A Qualitative Study in an EFL Classroom at Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika

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Abstrak — Di banyak kelas EFL, pembelajaran membaca masih berfokus pada pemahaman linguistik, sehingga sering kali hanya memberi sedikit ruang bagi mahasiswa untuk mempertanyakan teks atau merefleksikan nilai-nilai sosial yang terdapat di dalamnya. Akibatnya, mahasiswa mungkin memahami apa yang dikatakan teks, tetapi jarang mengeksplorasi maknanya secara lebih mendalam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana Extensive Reading (ER), yang diterapkan sebagai kegiatan membaca tambahan, dapat mendukung pengembangan literasi kritis mahasiswa. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini dilaksanakan pada kelas English Prose Analysis yang melibatkan 38 mahasiswa di Fakultas Sastra Inggris, Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara mendalam lanjutan. Meskipun seluruh mahasiswa mengisi kuesioner, hanya tiga mahasiswa yang secara sukarela berpartisipasi dalam wawancara, dan wawasan mereka menjadi sumber data utama untuk analisis yang lebih mendalam. Data dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif Miles dan Huberman, yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketika ER dipadukan dengan pertanyaan-pertanyaan kritis, kegiatan ini mendorong mahasiswa untuk menantang asumsi, mengaitkan teks dengan isu-isu sosial dan global yang lebih luas, serta mengembangkan kesadaran yang lebih besar terhadap perspektif seperti gender, lingkungan, dan hak asasi manusia. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa ER tidak hanya berfungsi untuk meningkatkan kelancaran membaca, tetapi juga dapat menjadi strategi yang bermakna dalam menumbuhkan literasi kritis di kelas EFL.

Kata kunci: extensive reading, literasi kritis, penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, EFL.

Abstract — In many EFL classrooms, reading instruction still focuses heavily on linguistic comprehension, often leaving little room for students to question texts or reflect on the social values found in them. As a result, students may understand what a text says but rarely explore what it means beyond the surface. This study aims to explore how Extensive Reading (ER), implemented as an additional reading activity, can support the development of students' critical literacy. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the research was conducted in an English Prose Analysis class with 38 students at the Faculty of English Literature, Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika. Data were collected through questionnaires and follow-up in-depth interviews. Although all students completed the questionnaire, three volunteered to participate in the interviews, and their insights served as the primary data for deeper analysis. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that when ER is combined with critical questioning, it encourages students to challenge assumptions, relate texts to broader social and global issues, and develop greater awareness of perspectives such as gender, environmental concerns, and human rights. These results suggest that ER can go beyond improving reading fluency and serve as a meaningful strategy for fostering critical literacy in EFL classrooms. This study adds to the existing discussion on extensive reading by showing how ER activities can also encourage the development of students' critical literacy in an EFL classroom, a perspective that has not been widely explored in previous studies. The findings also suggest that incorporating critical questions into extensive reading activities can help lecturers guide students to read more reflectively and connect texts with broader social issues.

Keywords: extensive reading, critical literacy, descriptive qualitative research, EFL.



INTRODUCTION

The term of critical literacy emerged in the 1980s, and since that period, it has gained much importance in education and has been widely practiced in classrooms across educational levels in Western countries (Tagg & Seargeant, 2021). In defining critical literacy, it is complex because experts and researchers classify it according to different theoretical frameworks and approaches. For example, (Pack, 2022) suggests that critical literacy goes beyond conventional understandings of reading and writing to incorporate critical thinking, questioning, and transformation of oneself and/or the world (Warriner, 2025) states that literacy is the ability to use language and images diversely through reading, writing, listening, speaking, observing, presenting and thinking critically on certain ideas. This is in line with (Tseng, 2024) who stated that literacy has been seen as a social construction and is never neutral. This means that the text written by the author has been created according to their position. (Walgermo et al., 2018) The author's position includes aspects of beliefs, values, attitudes, social position and experience. Because the writer's position differs from the reader's, it is very important for students to develop critical literacy skills. Therefore, the *School Literacy Movement (GLS)* is an overall effort to make schools learning organizations for literate citizens through public involvement. Similarly, (Wiese & Nortvedt, 2023) It highlighted that critical literacy cannot be understood as a single approach, but it must be seen from different socio-political perspectives. Several decades ago, through problem-solving pedagogy, Freire taught Brazilian-Chilean workers how to read by introducing them to meaningful and in-depth vocabulary useful for their daily use (Schwiering & Heyder, 2026).

Freire is using words as motivation and stimulus. He engaged them in critical reflection on the oppressive realities of society at that time. He taught them how to free themselves from oppression and change their world. As a result, Freire found that workers acquired vocabulary more easily after they were brought into critical discussions about real situations. Freire's insights and experience have explained that reading and writing skills can be accelerated by exploring the causes and effects of the realities of students' lives. (Nordbø Kristiansen et al., 2024) has explained that reading materials are categorized into scientific reading (fiction) and literature reading (non-fiction). The word scientific is defined as being scientific or fulfilling the requirements (rules) of science. Scientific reading contains knowledge or information written in a straightforward, practical and efficient manner. (Häbler, 2025) Further states that non-fiction is an essay whose content is not fantasy but reality. Reading literature is an essay whose imaginary content is not actual reality. In addition, (Mendelowitz & Govender, 2024) shows that critical literacy education is also a "theoretical and practical stance". In this case, critical literacy has changed the narrow skills-based model of reading and writing, becoming more important for students in the current 'web and net' era than it was a few decades ago. As mentioned, (Patel et al., 2023) in an age where the production of meaning is being democratized by the web, social networking sites, and portable connectivity, powerful discourses continue to speak to us and speak through us. We often become their unwitting distribution agents.

Based on the explanation above, it can be said that critical literacy plays a quite significant role in students' lives. (Timmer et al., 2026) intensifies the use of language in a strong way and questions the freedoms and injustices that occur in society. (Kainulainen & Tarnanen, 2026) suggests that when students become critically literate, they can examine ongoing developments, the part they play in the world, and how they make sense of experiences. Thus, through critical literacy, students are encouraged to deepen their understanding of language learning, develop self-awareness, and question the knowledge accepted in society. In addition, students are not only literate; they know how to read and write, but also are able to thoroughly examine the assumptions hidden in the text (Rezk, 2026)). However, (Pellikka et al., 2024) shows that critical literacy in the English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education systems seems to be marginalized. Several language practitioners and researchers have conducted research on critical literacy in EFL classrooms in Asia, but the relevance between these cases is still limited (Al-Akbari et al., 2025).

In the context of Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika, ER is implemented in the English Prose Analysis class as an additional reading activity to improve reading fluency and expand students' exposure to English texts. Nevertheless, classroom observations revealed that students primarily focused on summarizing plots and identifying intrinsic literary elements. They rarely questioned authors' ideological perspectives, examined representations of gender or social inequality, or connected texts to real-world issues. Consequently, ER functioned mainly as a linguistic enrichment activity rather than as a platform for critical engagement. This phenomenon highlights the need to investigate whether ER can be pedagogically reframed to foster critical literacy in this specific academic context.

Based on the reasons mentioned above, this research was conducted as an effort to explore deeper into (1) how students' understanding of critical literacy can be developed after Extensive Reading (ER) as an additional activity is assigned, and (2) how students' critical literacy effectively influences students' ER in EFL. ER was adopted

because it gives students more freedom to choose texts based on their level of competence. Its goals are usually related to enjoyment, information and general understanding, and it indirectly encourages students to read as much as possible (Le et al., 2024). Extensive reading is a language-teaching approach in which students read a lot of easy material in a new language (Kunnath & Jackson, 2019). In this case, students choose their own reading material and read it independently from the lecturer. They read for general and overall meaning as well as for information and pleasure. When they read a lot, they become fluent readers. This helps improve their reading and their oral fluency. In other words, students who read a lot develop a positive attitude towards reading and increase motivation to learn foreign languages (Wu & Wu, 2026). (Gerlach et al., 2025) argue that the extensive reading approach has ten principles, namely:

- a. The reading material is easy to understand. In this principle, students read a text containing few or no unfamiliar vocabulary or grammar items.
- b. A variety of reading materials on various topics are available. For an extensive reading approach to be successful, students must be able to find topics they are interested in. It is advisable to have many books on various topics.
- c. Students chose whatever topic they wanted to read. This is the basic approach to extensive reading, enabling students to choose what they want to read based on their interests.
- d. Students read as much as possible. The language-learning benefits of an extensive reading approach derive from the sheer volume of reading. This means lecturers need to ensure their students have the opportunity to read and read more.
- e. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower. Because students choose what they want to read, so they can easily understand and encourage reading fluency.
- f. The purpose of reading is usually related to enjoyment, information and general understanding. Again, while students select their own reading, extensive reading encourages reading for pleasure and information.
- g. Reading is individual and silent. Most extensive reading is done outside of class on the student's own time, when and where the student chooses.
- h. Reading is its own reward. Extensive reading is usually not followed by comprehension questions. Follow-up activities respect the integrity of the reading experience, and they encourage rather than discourage further reading.
- i. Lecturers direct and guide students. Lecturers need to explain the importance of extensive reading, why they do it and how to do it. They also need to ensure that students stay on track by finding out what and how much students are reading, as well as students' reactions to that reading.
- j. Lecturers are role models for readers. If the lecturer reads some of the same material the students read and discusses it with them, this gives the students a model for being a reader.

According (Wordofa et al., 2025) There are many reasons why extensive reading is good for language development. Namely: (1) It allows students to encounter language in its natural context and see how it works in extended discourse beyond the language found in textbooks, (2) builds vocabulary, (3) helps students build reading speed and fluency, (4) build self-confidence, motivation, enjoyment and love of reading, (5) enable students to read and listen so they can develop good reading and listening habits, and (6) help students understand how grammatical patterns work in context. Thus, by using an extensive reading approach in class, students are helped to become readers. In addition, students' general language competence and general knowledge are developed, as is their independent learning. In addition, ER was chosen as an additional activity because it teaches English prose analysis courses. Apart from that, introducing various kinds of literary works to students is one of the course's objectives, especially to familiarize them with them. In this case, students are encouraged to analyse and understand texts not only based on their intrinsic elements but also in a broader sense, for example, by allowing students to recognize how language is influenced by and influences social (Weigelt et al., 2026).

Correspondingly, ER appoints students to read multiple texts based on their interests. From his review, (Cuevas-Cerveró et al., 2023) concluded that the text encourages students to understand writing as a situated activity. He added that students who are allowed to read multiple texts can consider “who created the text, when, where, why and the values on which it is based. By experiencing different treatments of the same topic or event, students begin to realize that a text is not “true” in any absolute sense, but rather a translation as described by an author” (Taye & Teshome, 2025). Thus, ER can be thought of as a repository where students can make meaning from multiple perspectives, based on their level of competency and areas of interest.

Extensive Reading (ER) has long been recognized as an effective approach for improving students' reading fluency, vocabulary growth, and overall language proficiency. For this reason, ER is often implemented in EFL classrooms primarily as a tool to support students' linguistic development. However, the role of extensive reading in encouraging students to think critically about the texts they read has received less attention. In many classrooms,

students tend to focus mainly on understanding the content of a text rather than questioning its underlying meanings or relating it to broader social contexts.

Several previous studies have explored the benefits of extensive reading in language learning, particularly in relation to reading motivation and comprehension. Nevertheless, fewer studies have examined how ER can support the development of critical literacy. When combined with critical questioning, reading activities can encourage students to reflect on the ideas presented in texts, examine different perspectives, and consider how language relates to social realities. In this sense, extensive reading may function not only as a linguistic learning tool but also as a pedagogical approach that supports critical engagement with texts.

In the Indonesian EFL context, especially in private universities, studies exploring the connection between extensive reading and critical literacy remain relatively limited. Much of the existing research continues to focus on the linguistic outcomes of ER rather than its potential role in fostering students' critical awareness. Therefore, further investigation is needed to understand how extensive reading activities can be designed in ways that encourage students to think more critically about what they read. To address this gap, this study explores how integrating extensive reading with critical questioning can support the development of students' critical literacy in an English Prose Analysis class at a private university in Indonesia. By examining students' reflections on the texts they read, this study seeks to provide a clearer picture of how ER can contribute not only to language development but also to the growth of students' critical perspectives toward texts and social issues.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted at the Faculty of English Literature, Bina Sarana Informatika University. There are 38 (thirty-eight) students in the class who are asked to read any text every day based on their level of competency and interest. Because ER is neither a required nor an elective course, assessments are not provided to students. After one semester had been completed, a self-completion questionnaire was distributed to all students to immediately determine their demographic background. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, along with several open-ended questions that allowed students to elaborate on their perspectives. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed by two lecturers in English education to ensure content validity and clarity. Apart from that, to gain broader insight and a comprehensive understanding from the students, they were also invited for interviews. The interview took approximately one hour for each student. However, only 3 (three) students were willing to be questioned based on their answers in the questionnaire. All interviews, totaling 3 hours, were audiotaped, transcribed, and translated into English. In addition to the interviews, we conducted several follow-up phone calls with the interviewees to clarify.

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore how the implementation of Extensive Reading (ER) in an English Prose Analysis class contributes to the development of students' critical literacy. A qualitative design was selected because the study aimed to obtain in-depth insights into students' perceptions, reflections, and interpretative responses rather than to measure statistical relationships. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman, which involves three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic coding. First, the researchers conducted open coding to identify key ideas and recurring themes in the participants' responses. The codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories related to critical literacy development, such as social awareness, gender perspectives, and global issues. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. First, data triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from questionnaires and interviews. Second, member checking was conducted by confirming several interview interpretations with participants to ensure their perspectives were accurately represented. These procedures helped enhance the credibility and reliability of the qualitative findings. The research focused on describing the phenomenon observed in the ER classroom at Bina Sarana Informatika University (BSI), where reading activities were initially oriented toward fluency and comprehension, with limited explicit critical engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To provide a clearer understanding of the context in which this study was conducted, the following chart of students' demographics presents key information, including students' academic levels, fields of study, and previous experiences with English reading activities. It highlights the diversity of the class in terms of prior knowledge and reading habits, also sets the stage for interpreting how these backgrounds may have influenced students' engagement with Extensive Reading (ER) and the development of their critical literacy skills. By

situating the findings within the participants' characteristics, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of how ER functions in practice within the BSI class.

Table 1. Background Students Demography

Name/Sex	Background	Favourite reading
Iwan Maulana/ Male	Iwan Maulana is a sophomore student at the Faculty of English Literature, Bina Sarana Informatics University. He is active in campus organizations and is a member of the Student Executive Board (BEM).	Iwan Maulana likes to read fiction, especially Batman Knight. According to Iwan Maulana, all articles and stories about Batman are able to attract his interest in reading further. He added that by reading Batman he could increase his knowledge of Marvel superhero characters and stories.
Gilang Febrian/ Male	Gilang Febrian is asophomore student at the Faculty of English Literature, Bina Sarana Informatics University. Gilang Febrian is a member of the photography club and he likes to spend his time taking photos of nature and people.	Gilang Febrian likes to read fiction novels. One of his favorite novels is <i>Percy Jackson and The Olympians</i> . Gilang Febrian said that the novel enabling his fantasy towards myth and modern life. He added that this novel could make him imagine the adventures and journey of Percy Jackson.
Lia Safitri/ Female	Lia Safitri is also a sophomore student at the Faculty of English Literature, Bina Sarana Informatics University. Because of her hobby, Lia Safitri joined a photography club on campus.	Lia Safitri likes to read non-fiction stories, short stories, articles and magazines. One of her favorite stories is the <i>Pangeran Muda</i> . But recently, she read about young marriages that happened in several countries around the world. She said that the stories have opened her mind and knowledge about the difficulties of being a woman in this modern era.

Below is the analysis summary of the questionnaire and interviews of the three respondents. The analysis was divided into 3 such as: The Hero Fiction, The Novel Fiction and The Non-Fiction. They were divided into three groups because the variation in the answers is three.

1. Hero Fiction: Social Awareness and Environmental Consciousness

During the interview, Iwan Maulana explained that his favorite reading was Batman. He describes the story of Batman and why Batman is Marvel's most powerful superhero. Iwan Maulana reflects Batman's life in Gotham City and the real situation in his city. He said that if all the rich people in Samarinda (the city where he lives) were to help each other like Batman, he believes social problems could be solved. Another important point he highlighted was that if he were as rich as Batman, he would want to create more sustainable job vacancies in his hometown of East Kalimantan. He chose Batman as his fantasy role model; in other words, he wishes to have Batman's power so he can help his hometown. He explained that East Kalimantan Province is highly dependent on the mining and Crude Palm Oil industries. He believes that if this kind of industrial activity continues, Samarinda will be a 'dead city' in the near future because the environment has been damaged. That is why he wanted to build a sustainable tourism industry.

By creating a more sustainable tourism industry, he believes in Samarinda's potential. According to Iwan Maulana, a sustainable tourism industry will have a fruitful impact on both the environment and society. From his presentation through environmental awareness activities, his awareness of social issues in his hometown has increased. During the interview, he could also challenge and ask questions, as Iwan Maulana believes that a sustainable tourism industry would have a positive impact on both the environment and society. It is obvious that ER has a positive impact on Iwan Maulana. Through ER, he is able to portray himself as a hero in his own hometown. The hero fiction directly encourages him to do good things or even better.

2. The Novel Fiction: Gender Awareness and Challenging Patriarchal Assumptions

Gilang Febrian's favorite reading is *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*. This interview was quite interesting because Gilang Febrian talked more about one of the female characters in the story. He explained about Annabeth, not Percy. When he first read the novel, he didn't really like Annabeth's characterization because she was described

as an intelligent woman, good at making war plans and strategies, and, most importantly, her architectural skills were above average.

According to Gilang Febrian, it is a bit strange when stories about knights and heroes also position female characters as influential figures. He thinks that women like Annabeth in real life must be annoying and irritating because the existence of independent and intelligent women is a threat to men. Later, the more he read the story, the more he realized that women should be seen as individuals as well. They have the right to express opinions, voice their thoughts and be who they want without social judgment. From Gilang Febrian's explanation, it is evident that ER activities play an important role in his critical literacy skills. He challenges basic assumptions about women, where Indonesia's patriarchal society seems to uphold the perception of what women should be. It can also be concluded that, through ER, Gilang Febrian is able to understand the concept of feminism, though perhaps not in depth. However, the reading alerted him that there are many inequalities in this life, especially in gender issues. Besides the social alarm alert, Gilang Febrian's interest in social topics also increased. His empathy for society becomes more acute, and he understands that he – himself – should also be an agent of change.

3. Non-Fiction Texts: Global Awareness and Human Rights Perspectives

Lia Safitri's favorite story is *The Little Prince*. However, during the interview, she explained several articles she had read on young marriages. The article is about a Pakistani girl who was forced to marry at the age of eleven, and another story from Bangladesh about an underage girl who was forced to marry by her family. Initially, Lia Safitri thought that getting married at a very young age was not a big problem and was accepted on the basis of her religious beliefs. However, gradually she began to change her perspective, and when she read articles about the issue of young marriage, she realized that these things actually degraded women's dignity because women should have the freedom to voice their thoughts and opinions.

The fact that child marriages are happening really breaks her heart because it is not only in Pakistan (where stereotypes are mostly related to religious beliefs), but it has happened all over the world. She said, there are two factors that influence child marriage, namely cultural and financial problems. According to Lia Safitri, it is not the child's fault for being born a woman and into a society that holds such traditional views. Society must be aware enough to differentiate between traditional values and human rights. She added that one day she would like to work at the UN (United Nations) and help all women who suffer and struggle for their lives and education. She wants to work at the United Nations (UN) because she will be able to make small changes in society. It was all the articles and stories that Lia Safitri read during the activity that ultimately formed her awareness of the global issue related to child marriage. The last respondent loves to read news and any kind of articles; therefore, her social understanding was activated before she knew ER. However, her critical literacy skills became better after she learned ER. It is obvious that through ER – an enjoyment of reading – one of the social issues can be introduced well.

The findings across the three cases indicate that ER can effectively support the development of critical literacy in EFL classrooms when accompanied by critical questioning. Students were not only able to comprehend texts but also to interrogate underlying ideologies, relate narratives to social realities, and reflect on issues of power, gender, environment, and human rights. Besides, ER can also become a strategy for the students who don't yet understand English or are just learn about English. They could comprehend any kind of text by practicing ER. By carrying out this practice, students' awareness can be developed, and their understanding of the text extends beyond its content to the construct. Additionally, this research has shown that such activities to encourage students to develop their critical thinking need to be practiced frequently in the classroom. Besides, understanding critical or sensitive issues can be studied through enjoyment.

Students' critical literacy effectively influences their Extensive Reading (ER) practices in the EFL context by enabling them to engage with texts more critically and reflectively. Based on the findings from questionnaires and interviews, students demonstrated an increased ability to identify the purpose of the text, understand the author's perspective, and recognize implicit meanings presented in their reading materials. Through regular ER activities, students were not only able to improve their reading comprehension but also develop a deeper awareness of social issues and messages conveyed in the texts. This indicates that ER provides meaningful opportunities for students to develop their critical literacy skills by encouraging them to interpret and evaluate texts beyond surface-level understanding.

Furthermore, ER encourages students to become more independent, motivated, and confident readers. Since students were allowed to select reading materials based on their interests and proficiency levels, they showed greater engagement and positive attitudes toward reading. The findings also revealed that students were able to

relate the content of their reading to real-life contexts and express their own perspectives more critically. Therefore, ER plays a significant role in enhancing students' critical literacy by fostering their analytical thinking, interpretive abilities, and reflective engagement with texts, which are essential competencies for EFL learners in higher education.

CONCLUSION

The discussion above shows that ER has played an important role in developing students' critical literacy. ER not only plays important roles but also increases the students' critical thinking. Researchers can motivate students to approach texts critically, challenge basic assumptions in society, relate texts to global issues, increase their awareness of how to see and understand humans, and question the meaning of texts from different perspectives. ER shall always be introduced or practiced by the English students; therefore, their critical literacy could be formed. Since this study involves both closed-ended and open-ended questions, it can be studied in a subsequent study to examine one type of question at a time. Moreover, integrating critical literacy questioning into extensive reading activities enables students to move beyond surface-level comprehension toward deeper reflection on the social values, power relations, and ideological assumptions embedded in texts. This suggests that extensive reading can function as a bridge between linguistic competence and critical consciousness. Finally, despite the limited number of participants, this study provides valuable insights into how extensive reading can be meaningfully integrated into English language teaching. Future research is encouraged to involve larger samples, longer implementation periods, and diverse educational contexts in order to further examine the long-term impact of extensive reading on students' critical literacy development.

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