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INTEGRATING CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS INTO ENGLISH TEACHING MATERIALS: A CRITICAL PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) into English teaching materials to promote students' critical literacy and engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The study addresses the problem that English teaching materials often prioritize linguistic competence while paying limited attention to critical awareness of ideology, power relations, and social meanings embedded in texts. The purpose of this study is to examine how CDA principles are integrated into English teaching materials and to identify classroom activities that support students' critical discourse awareness. A qualitative case study design was employed in one Indonesian senior high school involving one English teacher and twenty Grade 11 students. Data were gathered through document analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. English textbooks, teacher-developed materials, and supplementary texts served as the primary data sources. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to classroom implementation, student engagement, and learning challenges. The findings indicate that CDA was mainly integrated through interactive and student-centered activities, including discussions, open-ended questioning, and role plays, rather than through systematic discourse analysis. Students generally demonstrated positive responses, increased participation, and emerging critical awareness, although differences in language proficiency and confidence remained significant challenges. The study highlights the pedagogical value of integrating CDA into EFL instruction to foster critical literacy and reflective learning. Its originality lies in providing empirical evidence from an Indonesian secondary school context, contributing to the growing discussion on critical pedagogy and socially responsive English language teaching.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Literacy, Critical Pedagogy, EFL Learning, English Teaching Materials

INTRODUCTION

In the context of 21st-century education, English language teaching is no longer limited to developing students' linguistic competencies, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Instead, English language teaching is increasingly expected to develop higher-order thinking skills, including critical thinking, critical literacy, and social

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awareness. English, as a global language, contains not only linguistic forms but also social meanings, ideologies, power relations, and cultural values embedded in texts. Therefore, English teaching materials do not only serve as tools for language practice, but also as resources that enable learners to understand and question the social realities represented in discourse (Barker, 2021)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing how language constructs and reflects social power, inequality, and ideology. CDA views language as a social practice and emphasizes the relationship between discourse and social structures (van den Broek et al., 2022). Through CDA, students are encouraged to analyze who produces the text, whose voices are represented or marginalized, what ideologies are promoted, and how language influences the reader's perception. In the context of education, CDA can be used as a pedagogical tool to develop students' critical awareness of the texts they encounter in everyday life, such as news articles, advertisements, textbooks, and digital media (Luke & Luke, 2011).

From a critical pedagogical perspective, education is not a neutral process but a political and ideological practice. (Nugraha et al., 2024) argues that education should empower learners to become critical subjects who are capable of questioning social injustice and transforming society. Critical pedagogy emphasizes dialogue, reflection, and problem-posing learning, where students actively engage with knowledge rather than passively receiving it. In this sense, integrating CDA into English teaching materials aligns with the principles of critical pedagogy, as it positions students as critical readers and social agents who can interpret and challenge dominant discourses.

However, in many English classrooms, teaching materials are still dominated by decontextualized texts that focus primarily on linguistic structures and communicative functions, with limited attention to social and ideological dimensions. Textbooks often present topics in a neutral or simplified manner, avoiding controversial or critical issues, which may limit students' opportunities to develop critical literacy (Aini, 2018). As a result, students may become proficient in using English but lack the ability to critically interpret texts and understand how language shapes social meanings.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be integrated into English teaching materials. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to explore (1) ways in which CDA principles can be integrated into English teaching materials, and (2) types of learning activities that promote critical discourse awareness. This study was conducted to address the need for more critical and socially responsive English teaching practices in contemporary education.

The main hypothesis of this study is that the integration of CDA into English teaching materials can significantly improve students' critical literacy and critical thinking skills. It is expected that students exposed to CDA-based teaching materials will show greater awareness of power relations, ideology, and social issues in texts compared to students using conventional teaching materials. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that the integration of CDA

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encourages more active student participation, reflective learning, and meaningful classroom discussions, which are at the core of critical pedagogy (Luke & Luke, 2011; Nugraha et al., 2024).

By examining the integration of CDA into English teaching materials, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and pedagogically. Theoretically, it strengthens the connection between discourse studies and language education. Pedagogically, it provides practical insights for teachers and material developers in designing English learning resources that not only improve language proficiency but also promote critical awareness and social responsibility. Ultimately, this research supports the view that English education should function not only as a means of communication, but also as a tool for empowering learners to critically engage with the world around them.

Despite growing scholarly interest in CDA as a pedagogical framework, a significant research gap remains. Most existing studies have examined CDA primarily in higher education or Western contexts (Hamdi, 2023; Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012; Matin, 2017), with limited attention to its implementation at the secondary school level in non-Western EFL settings such as Indonesia. Furthermore, while theoretical arguments for integrating CDA into language teaching are well established (Fairclough, 2003; Luke & Luke, 2011), empirical classroom-based evidence of how teachers actually adapt and operationalize CDA in everyday instructional practice remains scarce. Specifically, it is still unclear how CDA principles are translated into concrete teaching activities, how students at the secondary level respond to critical discourse-based learning, and what challenges emerge in EFL contexts characterized by diverse language proficiency levels. This study addresses these gaps by providing an empirical account of CDA integration in a Grade 11 EFL classroom in Gorontalo, Indonesia, contributing locally grounded evidence to a body of literature that has largely been developed in other educational contexts.

In the study of modern English language learning, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become a key approach for understanding the relationship between language, power, and ideology. CDA views language not merely as a tool for communication, but also as a means of shaping and representing social reality. This means that every text, including textbooks, contains specific values and perspectives that can influence readers' ways of thinking. In an educational context, this indicates that learning materials are not entirely neutral because they often carry specific social and ideological interests (Barker, 2021) (van den Broek et al., 2022). Findings from recent studies also confirm that textbooks often contain knowledge that is indirectly influenced by specific ideologies, making it necessary to analyze them critically.

(Leotti, 2021) further emphasize that CDA is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that moves beyond simply analyzing what a text says, toward critically examining what a text *does*. They argue that CDA is fundamentally concerned with how discursive practices establish, maintain, and promote dominance and inequality, operating within wider social, political, and historical contexts. Importantly, CDA is not a single unified methodology but a school of research grounded in shared ontological and epistemological assumptions, particularly the view that reality is socially constructed through discourse. This perspective

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is directly relevant to English language teaching, as it positions texts in classroom materials not as neutral objects but as sites where power relations are encoded and potentially reproduced or challenged.

Furthermore, education is viewed as a social space that plays a role in shaping students' worldviews. Textbooks hold a particularly important position because they are often regarded as a source of accurate and reliable information. However, beyond that, textbooks can also convey dominant values that reinforce the power of certain groups. Therefore, CDA is used to reveal how texts can represent social inequalities, such as gender bias, cultural stereotypes, or the marginalization of certain groups. Research shows that textbooks not only convey information but also shape students' identities and ways of thinking (Apple, 1990) (Luke & Luke, 2011).

This ideological dimension of textbooks is also demonstrated in (Said & Weijer, 2023) integrated CDA study of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks in Morocco, which found that official school textbooks function as ideological tools for disseminating state-endorsed values and constructing national identity. Said argues that EFL textbooks are not merely "innocent" or "pedagogical" artefacts; rather, they serve as social capital sites that institutionalize and naturalize dominant national narratives while marginalizing minority ethnic groups. This study reinforces the argument that CDA is a powerful analytical instrument for revealing how power and dominance are embedded in language textbooks, and highlights the urgent need for critical examination of teaching materials used in multicultural and multilingual educational contexts such as Indonesia.

In addition to linguistic aspects, CDA also considers multimodality—the use of various forms of communication such as images, colors, symbols, and other visual media. In English textbooks, meaning is conveyed not only through text but also through images and visual design that can reinforce specific messages. Therefore, an analysis of instructional materials must encompass all these elements to fully understand their meaning. This multimodal approach helps reveal how various elements within a text work together to construct a specific ideology (Molloy et al., 2023) (Pido et al., 2025) (Studies, 2019).

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, the use of CDA has become increasingly relevant because learning objectives focus not only on language proficiency but also on the development of students' critical thinking and social awareness. Students are expected to understand that language is closely tied to social and cultural contexts. Through CDA, students can learn to critically analyze texts, identify hidden meanings, and understand how language is used to influence others. Research shows that the application of CDA in learning can help students become more reflective and critical in understanding various types of texts (Janks, 2010), (Seely, 2014).

In addition, cultural aspects are also an important part of English language learning materials. EFL textbooks typically include various cultural representations, including local culture (source culture), the culture of the native-speaking country (target culture), and international cultures. However, many studies have found that cultural representations in textbooks are often unbalanced. Some cultures are more dominant, while others are less visible. This situation can influence how students view their own culture as well as other

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cultures. Therefore, analysis using CDA is necessary to ensure that learning materials are more inclusive and reflect cultural diversity (Ariawan et al., 2022) (Byram, 2013).

The integration of CDA into teaching materials is also consistent with the critical pedagogy approach, which emphasizes the importance of education as a tool for fostering critical awareness and social justice. In this approach, students do not merely receive information but are encouraged to question and analyze it. As a result, learning becomes more active, reflective, and meaningful. Teachers act as facilitators who help students understand social realities through language. The integration of CDA into English language learning is expected to help students become critical learners capable of addressing various social issues in real life (Freire, 2005; McLaren., 2005).

Emphasizes that education should not be a tool of oppression, but rather a means of liberation for students. In the context of language teaching, this theory rejects the "banking model," in which teachers merely deposit information and words into students' minds, which are viewed as empty vessels. Instead, English language teaching materials should be designed to stimulate students' critical thinking about the social realities around them, so that they do not merely memorize texts but also understand the power dynamics underlying the use of language (Nugraha et al., 2024).

The integration of discourse analysis can be achieved through a "problem-based education" approach. Teaching materials should not focus solely on technical aspects or superficial narratives, but must address real-world issues that students face in their daily lives. Through an equal dialogue between teachers and students, students are encouraged to analyze who benefits from a piece of information and how language is used to shape opinions or even legitimize injustice. In this way, students transform from mere passive recipients of information into active agents capable of voicing their thoughts.

Ultimately, language teaching curricula must be flexible and sustainable, involving students' active participation in determining content that is relevant to them. English language education from a critical pedagogy perspective aims to foster "critical consciousness," where students use their language skills as tools to achieve social justice and societal transformation. Thus, language learning is no longer merely about pursuing grades or meeting job requirements, but rather a practice of freedom for humanity.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach to explore how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is integrated into English teaching materials within a real educational context. A qualitative approach was chosen because it prioritizes understanding meanings, experiences, and perspectives of participants rather than measuring variables numerically (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This bounded case—limited to one classroom in one school during one academic semester—enabled the researcher to examine the complexity of CDA integration in its specific social and pedagogical context. This study was grounded in a critical pedagogical perspective, which views language learning as a socially situated process that involves ideology, power relations, and critical awareness (Freire, 2005). By adopting an interpretive paradigm, this research aimed to understand

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how teachers and students make sense of CDA-based learning rather than to generalize findings to a broader population.

The study was conducted in one public senior high school (SMK Negeri 1 Limboto) in Gorontalo, Indonesia, selected purposively due to its implementation of critical reading practices in English classes. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that the selected site and participants could provide rich and relevant information related to the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants consisted of one English teacher with five years of teaching experience and twenty Grade 11 students (12 female, 8 male), ranging in age from 16 to 17 years. The teacher held a Bachelor's degree in English Education and had attended a professional development workshop on active learning strategies. Students were chosen based on their active participation in classroom activities and their enrolment in the same English class during the semester of data collection. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. For student participants who were minors, parental or guardian consent was also obtained.

The research materials included English teaching materials such as textbook chapters published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (specifically the "Bahasa Inggris" Grade 11 textbook), teacher-developed worksheets, and supplementary texts taken from online sources such as *BBC Learning English* and *The Guardian*. Data were collected through document analysis, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews. Document analysis focused on identifying CDA elements in teaching materials using (Fairclough, 2003) three-dimensional model, which examines textual features, discursive practices, and social practices. Classroom observations were conducted in four sessions to examine how CDA-based materials were implemented and how students engaged in critical discussions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher and six selected students to explore their perceptions of critical discourse-based learning, following (Luke & Luke, 2011) critical literacy framework. Each interview was audio-recorded with participants' permission and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

All data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase procedure outlined by (Braun & Clarke, 2012): familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The three data sources were triangulated to enhance the credibility and depth of analysis. (Fairclough, 2003) three-dimensional framework served as the analytical lens for document analysis, examining texts at the levels of textual features (vocabulary, grammar), discursive practices (text production and consumption), and social practices (ideological and power-related dimensions). Observational field notes were coded inductively and then compared against interview data to confirm or disconfirm emerging patterns. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts yielded four main themes: (1) teacher interpretation of CDA, (2) implementation strategies, (3) challenges encountered, and (4) student responses and learning outcomes.

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To elaborate further on the coding process, after transcribing all interview data verbatim, the researcher conducted an initial close reading of the entire dataset to achieve familiarity with its content. Open coding was then applied independently to each data source: transcripts were annotated line-by-line, observational field notes were coded by episode, and document analysis notes were coded by material type. Each code represented a distinct unit of meaning related to CDA practices, student responses, or pedagogical challenges. Codes were subsequently grouped into candidate themes through an iterative process of comparison, where codes with shared conceptual properties were clustered together. For instance, codes such as "fear of mistakes," "silent during discussion," and "reluctance to speak" converged into the theme of "challenges in implementation," which was then refined through review against the raw data to ensure it accurately represented the dataset. This process was guided by Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional framework, which provided theoretical anchors for identifying patterns related to textual features, discursive practices, and social practices in the data. Member checking with the teacher participant was conducted to verify the accuracy of initial thematic interpretations, enhancing the credibility of the analytical process.

Ethical Consideration. This study adhered to the ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Prior to commencing data collection, formal permission was obtained from the principal of SMK Negeri 1 Limboto and the relevant school authority. All participants—the teacher and students—were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Written informed consent was secured from the teacher and from students' parents or guardians, given that student participants were minors under 18 years of age. Participants' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms and anonymization of all identifying information in the research report. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, and the data collected were used solely for academic research purposes. The researcher also ensured that classroom observations were conducted in a non-intrusive manner to minimize disruption to the natural learning environment.

Trustworthiness. To ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, (Guba, 1985) four criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—were applied. *Credibility* was established through data triangulation (combining document analysis, classroom observation, and interviews), prolonged engagement in the field across four observation sessions, and member checking, whereby preliminary findings were shared with the teacher participant for verification. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures, enabling readers to judge the applicability of findings to other EFL settings. Dependability was addressed by maintaining a detailed audit trail of data collection and analysis decisions, including field notes, coding logs, and reflexive memos. Confirmability was ensured through reflexivity, where the researcher consistently reflected on her own positionality and potential biases as

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both a researcher and an English educator. Peer debriefing was also employed, involving a colleague familiar with qualitative methodology to review coding decisions and analytical interpretations.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings derived from three data sources: document analysis, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews. Triangulating these sources allowed for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how CDA is integrated in English teaching practice. The observed aspects include teaching practices, student engagement, challenges, and learning outcomes, which are systematically summarized in Table 1. Following the table, each finding is elaborated with supporting evidence from all three data collection techniques.

Table 1. Summary of finding on classroom observation

Aspect	Observation Findings	Description
Teachers' Understanding of CDA	Teacher encouraged students to actively participate and express opinions during the lesson	The teacher understood CDA as an approach to stimulate critical thinking and student participation rather than focusing on theoretical discourse analysis
Classroom Implementation of CDA	Teacher used open-ended questions, group discussions, and role plays	CDA was implemented through interactive and student-centered activities that encouraged students to share ideas and engage in communication
Challenges in Implementation	Some students were passive, hesitant to speak, and showed lack of confidence	Differences in students' language abilities and psychological factors such as fear and embarrassment affected participation
Students' Responses	Students showed enthusiasm, paid attention, and participated in discussions	Students responded positively to CDA-based learning, although some still struggled to express their ideas clearly
Impact on Students' Skills	Students gradually became more confident and active in expressing opinions	CDA activities helped improve students' critical thinking, argumentation skills, and self-confidence over time

The findings of this study provide a clear picture of how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is understood and applied in the English classroom, as well as how students respond to it. Overall, the results show that CDA has been implemented in a practical way, even though it is not always used as a formal analytical framework.

First, related to teachers' understanding of CDA, findings from all three data sources converge on the same pattern: the teacher perceives CDA primarily as a strategy for stimulating critical thinking and active participation rather than as a formal analytical framework. Document analysis revealed that none of the teacher-developed worksheets contained explicit instructions for analyzing discourse structures, power relations, or

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ideology embedded in texts. Instead, the materials focused on open-ended comprehension questions and opinion-sharing prompts. This was corroborated by classroom observations, in which the teacher consistently guided students to share opinions and respond to issues rather than to systematically deconstruct language. During the semi-structured interview, the teacher explained her understanding of CDA in the following terms:

> *"I think critical discourse analysis is about helping students to think more deeply, to not just accept what they read. I always try to ask them: who wrote this? Why? What do they want us to believe? I don't teach it as a theory, I just make them question things." (Teacher, Interview)*

This statement indicates that the teacher's understanding of CDA is intuitive and practically oriented. Although this understanding does not fully align with Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model, it reflects a meaningful pedagogical adaptation that prioritizes learner engagement over theoretical rigor, while still opening up critical space in the classroom.

Second, in terms of classroom implementation, CDA is applied through interactive activities such as open-ended questions, group discussions, and role plays. Document analysis showed that the supplementary materials from BBC Learning English and The Guardian were used as authentic texts to prompt discussion rather than as objects of formal discourse analysis. During the four observed sessions, the teacher consistently posed questions that required students to evaluate perspectives and express opinions. Role play activities were particularly prominent in session three, where students assumed the roles of journalists and community members responding to a local environmental issue. Observational field notes recorded a notably more dynamic classroom atmosphere during these activities compared to conventional reading exercises. The participatory quality was confirmed in student interviews. One student remarked:

> *"I like when the teacher asks us 'what do you think?' because there is no wrong answer. I can say my own opinion. Before, in English class, I only had to answer yes or no or find the answer in the book." (Student 3, Interview)*

This student's comment reflects a meaningful shift from convergent to divergent thinking. Document analysis of the Ministry textbook further revealed that the standard comprehension tasks were predominantly closed-ended, reinforcing the significance of the teacher's supplementary activities in creating critical space for students.

However, the study also finds several challenges in implementing CDA. A recurring challenge observed across all four sessions was the difference in students' abilities. Observational data showed that approximately six students consistently remained silent during group discussions, even when directly invited to contribute. This was corroborated by the teacher's account in the interview:

> *"Some students have good ideas but they don't know how to express them in English. They are afraid to make mistakes. I try to encourage them, but sometimes they prefer to be quiet rather than speak and be wrong in front of the class." (Teacher, Interview)*

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Students themselves also acknowledged this challenge. One student explained:

> *"I understand what I want to say in Indonesian, but when I have to say it in English in front of everyone, I get nervous and I forget the words." (Student 7, Interview)*

This tension between critical thinking capacity and linguistic production is a key finding of this study, highlighting a gap that teachers must strategically address when implementing CDA in EFL contexts.

Despite these challenges, the findings show that students generally respond positively to CDA-based learning. Multiple students interviewed expressed increased interest and a sense of ownership over the learning process. One student shared a particularly revealing comment about emerging discourse awareness:

> *"This kind of lesson makes me think more. Like when we read the article about the environment, I started to notice that the language used is different depending on who wrote it. I never thought about that before." (Student 1, Interview)*

This statement is significant because it demonstrates nascent discourse awareness—the recognition that language choices are purposeful and reflect the writer's perspective—which is central to CDA as described by Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (2011). While not yet systematic, this shift from passive comprehension to active interpretation represents a foundational step toward critical literacy.

Finally, the findings indicate that CDA has a positive impact on students' skills, especially in terms of critical thinking and self-confidence. Classroom observation data from sessions three and four recorded a noticeable increase in voluntary contributions compared to sessions one and two, suggesting that repeated exposure to CDA-based activities gradually lowered the affective barrier to participation. Students who were actively involved in discussions and debates showed improvement in their ability to express opinions and give reasons for their arguments. One student reflected on this progression:

> *"At first I was scared to speak because I thought my English was not good enough. But after a few times, I felt more comfortable. The teacher always said our ideas are important, not only the grammar. So I tried to speak more." (Student 5, Interview)*

This is an important result because it shows that learning is not only about linguistic accuracy but also about developing the ability to think critically and communicate ideas. The teacher's consistent affirmation of students' ideas over linguistic correctness created a psychologically safe environment that is essential for critical discourse to flourish.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that teachers tend to interpret Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) more as a pedagogical strategy than as a systematic analytical framework. Although this understanding does not fully align with the theoretical concept of CDA as proposed by (Fairclough, 2003) and (van den Broek et al., 2022), it reflects a practical adaptation of CDA in classroom settings. Teachers prioritize student engagement and participation, which aligns with the principles of critical pedagogy (Nugraha et al., 2024).

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This finding extends the work of Matin (2017), who reported similar patterns in an Indonesian university EFL context, where teachers also prioritized participatory strategies over formal discourse analysis procedures. However, the present study adds a new dimension by demonstrating that this pedagogical adaptation occurs not only in higher education but also at the secondary school level, a context that has received far less empirical attention in the CDA literature. Furthermore, while Hamdi (2023) documented the potential of CDA to develop critical perspectives among EFL learners in general terms, this study provides specific classroom-level evidence of how that potential is activated—and constrained—through teacher-mediated pedagogical choices. The contribution of this study thus lies in its empirical specificity: it documents, for the first time in the Gorontalo EFL context, the gap between teachers' intuitive understanding of CDA and the theoretical framework that formally defines it, and argues that this gap can be productively narrowed through structured professional development rather than through rejection of teachers' existing practices. Viewed through Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model, the findings suggest that while the textual and discursive dimensions of CDA are partially addressed through authentic text use and open-ended questioning, the social practice dimension—which requires explicit engagement with ideology and power relations—remains largely underdeveloped. Addressing this dimension should become a priority in future iterations of CDA-based curriculum design in similar Indonesian EFL contexts.

The implementation of CDA through interactive activities such as discussions and role plays demonstrates that critical literacy can be fostered even without formal discourse analysis procedures. This supports the view of (Luke & Luke, 2011) that critical literacy in classrooms can be developed through dialogic and participatory learning processes. This finding is also congruent with (Barker, 2021) argument, highlighted in the introduction, that English teaching materials serve not only as tools for language practice but as resources enabling learners to understand and question social realities embedded in discourse. When the teacher uses open-ended questions and role plays to probe the social meanings behind texts, she is operationalizing this principle, even if not in explicitly theoretical terms. However, the absence of systematic discourse analysis may limit students' deeper engagement with ideology and power relations embedded in texts, as called for by (Fairclough, 2003) three-dimensional model. As the introduction noted, (Parry & Metzger, 2023) (Aini, 2018) observed that textbooks often present topics in a simplified, neutral manner, avoiding critical issues. The findings of this study suggest that this limitation persists not only in the official textbook but also in the teacher's supplementary practices, where critical discourse is invited but not yet systematically scaffolded.

The challenges related to students' language proficiency and confidence highlight an important issue in EFL contexts. Limited linguistic ability can hinder students' participation in critical discussions, which is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the role of language competence in critical engagement (Matin, 2017). Psychological barriers such as fear and lack of confidence further complicate the implementation of CDA. This tension is particularly significant in light of the theoretical framework established in the introduction: (Freire, 2005) call for education as a tool of liberation presupposes that students have the linguistic means to engage in critical dialogue. When students possess the critical thought

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but lack the English vocabulary to articulate it, the liberatory potential of CDA-based pedagogy is constrained. This finding also resonates with (Gee, 2011) argument that critical discourse analysis in educational settings must account for the relationship between students' discourse identities and their access to dominant language codes. For EFL students in Indonesia, English itself is a form of cultural capital, and uneven access to it creates asymmetries in critical participation that teachers must deliberately address.

(Freire, 1993) situate Freire's critical pedagogy within the broader project of social transformation, arguing that education must function as a means of liberation for subordinate populations from structures of domination and ideology. They emphasize that Freire's approach is not merely a pedagogical method but a cultural politics committed to transformative human action. In the context of English language teaching, this perspective reinforces the importance of designing materials that do not merely transmit knowledge but invite students to question, analyze, and contest the social realities encoded in texts. The integration of CDA into EFL teaching thus becomes an act of critical pedagogy in Freire's sense: it positions students as active subjects capable of reading language as a social practice, not passive recipients of predetermined meanings.

Despite these challenges, the positive responses from students indicate that CDA-based learning has strong potential to enhance motivation and engagement. The improvement in students' critical thinking and argumentation skills confirms findings from earlier research that CDA contributes not only to cognitive development but also to affective aspects such as confidence and motivation (Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012). The emerging discourse awareness observed in students—particularly the recognition that language choices reflect the writer's perspective—resonates with (Janks, 2010) view that literacy education should help students understand the relationship between language, power, and social identity. Furthermore, (Apple, 1990) observation that textbooks convey dominant values that can reinforce the power of certain groups receives empirical support in this study: when students begin to question whose voices are represented in a text, they are enacting precisely the critical awareness that critical pedagogues have long advocated.

The results of this study indicate that teachers primarily view the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) into English teaching materials as an effort to encourage students to think critically and actively participate in the learning process. Teachers define CDA simply as a form of learning that encourages students to engage and express their opinions confidently. This finding aligns with the view that CDA in an educational context focuses not only on language analysis but also on developing students' critical awareness of language use (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000).

In teaching practice, teachers integrate CDA through challenging activities such as open-ended questions, discussions, and the expression of opinions. Methods such as interactive lectures, group discussions, and role-playing are used to increase student participation. This is consistent with previous research showing that collaborative and interactive strategies can enhance student engagement and motivation in CDA-based learning (Jalalzai et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, the main challenge identified was the heterogeneity of students' abilities, particularly in speaking skills. These differences in ability affected the level of student

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participation in CDA-based activities. This finding is supported by research indicating that low language proficiency can be a barrier to the development of critical thinking in EFL learning (Matin, 2017).

However, students' responses to CDA-based learning tended to be positive. Students demonstrated interest and enthusiasm, even though they still struggled to express their opinions. This indicates that students actually possess the potential for critical thinking but require appropriate pedagogical support. This finding aligns with studies stating that CDA can enhance critical awareness and student engagement in understanding texts more deeply (Hamdi, 2023).

In addition, the implementation of CDA also contributes to enhancing students' self-confidence and critical thinking skills, particularly through debate and discussion activities. These findings support previous research indicating that CDA is effective in improving students' critical thinking and interpretive skills in language learning contexts (Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012).

Overall, this study indicates that the success of CDA integration heavily depends on the teacher's role. Teachers must be willing to continuously learn and develop innovative teaching strategies. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of teacher professionalism and reflective practice in improving the quality of language learning (Nugroho et al., 2020).

A further dimension that this study partially reveals is the multimodal nature of the teaching materials used. The introduction drew on (Molloy et al., 2023) and (Studies, 2019) multimodal approach, which emphasizes that meaning in texts is constructed not only through language but also through images, layout, and visual design. In this study, document analysis revealed that the teacher-developed worksheets relied almost exclusively on written text, with little attention to the visual or multimodal dimensions of the supplementary materials from online sources. This represents a gap: a more complete CDA-based approach would engage students in analyzing how images and visual elements in news articles and digital texts work together with language to construct particular social meanings. Future iterations of this curriculum could benefit from incorporating explicit multimodal analysis tasks, building on the visual literacy dimensions of CDA to give students a fuller analytical toolkit.

Finally, this study reinforces the argument introduced earlier from (McLaren., 2005) and (Freire, 2005) that education should be a transformative practice rather than a neutral transmission of knowledge. The findings show that even in a resource-constrained EFL classroom in Gorontalo, Indonesia, meaningful steps toward critical literacy are possible when teachers are committed to dialogic, student-centered pedagogy. This is also consistent with (Ariawan et al., 2022) finding that critical analysis of teaching materials reveals uneven cultural representations that shape students' worldviews. By encouraging students to question the sources, perspectives, and purposes of the texts they read, the teacher in this study was fostering the kind of critical consciousness that Freire envisioned: an awareness that language, ideology, and power are inseparable, and that naming and questioning these forces is itself an act of emancipation. This study therefore contributes empirical evidence from an Indonesian EFL context to a body of literature that has largely been developed in

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Western or higher-education settings, enriching our understanding of how critical pedagogy can be enacted across diverse educational environments.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be integrated into English teaching materials and how it influences students' learning in an EFL classroom. Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that CDA has meaningful potential to support the development of students' critical thinking, participation, and awareness of social issues, even when it is applied in a simple and practical way.

First, the study shows that teachers tend to understand CDA not as a complex analytical theory, but as an approach that encourages students to think critically and actively participate in classroom activities. Although this understanding is still basic, it plays an important role in shaping teaching practices. Teachers focus on creating opportunities for students to speak, express opinions, and engage in discussions. This indicates that even a simplified interpretation of CDA can bring positive changes to classroom interaction.

Second, the integration of CDA is mainly carried out through interactive learning activities such as group discussions, open-ended questions, and role plays. These activities help students become more involved in the learning process. Instead of only focusing on language forms, students are encouraged to share ideas, respond to issues, and practice expressing their thoughts. This kind of learning environment supports not only language development but also critical awareness.

However, this study also identifies several challenges in implementing CDA. One of the main challenges is the difference in students' abilities, especially in speaking. Some students find it difficult to express their ideas in English due to limited vocabulary and lack of confidence. In addition, psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes and feeling embarrassed can reduce students' willingness to participate. These challenges show that CDA cannot be applied effectively without considering students' readiness and support needs.

Despite these limitations, the results indicate that students respond positively to CDA-based learning. Many students show interest and enthusiasm during classroom activities, even though they still need guidance. Over time, students who are frequently involved in discussions and debates begin to show improvement in their ability to express opinions and think more deeply about issues. This suggests that CDA can gradually build students' confidence and critical thinking skills if applied consistently.

Another important conclusion is that the success of CDA integration depends greatly on the role of the teacher. Teachers need to be willing to learn, adapt, and reflect on their teaching practices. They also need to create a safe and supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas. Without teacher readiness and commitment, the potential of CDA may not be fully achieved.

In conclusion, integrating CDA into English teaching materials is a valuable approach to make language learning more meaningful and relevant. It helps students not only learn English as a communication tool but also understand and question the social meanings behind texts. For future practice, it is recommended that teachers receive more training on

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CDA and critical pedagogy, so they can apply it more effectively. In this way, English education can contribute not only to language skills but also to the development of critical and thoughtful learners. Several practical implications follow from this study. First, English teachers in Indonesian secondary schools should be encouraged to move beyond open-ended questioning toward more structured CDA scaffolding, for example by using guided analysis templates that prompt students to identify who produces a text, whose interests it serves, and what social groups are represented or silenced. Second, school administrators and curriculum developers should incorporate CDA awareness into in-service teacher training programs, recognizing that teachers' current intuitive approaches, while valuable, require theoretical grounding to unlock the full critical potential of CDA. Third, materials developers should design supplementary EFL resources that explicitly include multimodal analysis tasks, inviting students to interrogate how images, layout, and language work together to construct social meanings. These implications are particularly relevant for contexts like Gorontalo, where students bring rich local cultural perspectives that can serve as powerful resources for critical discourse engagement when appropriately scaffolded by the teacher.

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