



SNAP TO READ

MULTIMODAL AND ACTIVE LEARNING IN CRITICAL READING: EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Restu Dessy Maulida
Universitas Pasundan
maulidarestu@gmail.com

First received: November 24, 2025

Final proof received: June 20, 2026

Abstract

This study investigates English Literature students' perceptions of the integration of multimodal and active learning strategies, particularly mind mapping and group discussions, in a Critical Reading course at a private university in Bandung, Indonesia. The study is grounded in the growing importance of multimodal literacy and critical thinking as essential competencies in twenty-first-century education. A qualitative descriptive design was employed involving 21 fourth-semester English Literature students who had completed the Critical Reading course. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and non-participant classroom observations and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed four major themes. First, students demonstrated an increased understanding of critical reading as an analytical and evaluative process. Second, multimodal learning materials were perceived as engaging and helpful in supporting text interpretation and critical analysis. Third, active learning activities, particularly group discussions and mind mapping, encouraged participation, collaboration, and engagement during classroom learning. Finally, students reported several challenges, including difficulties with complex vocabulary and interpreting meaning across different media formats. The study suggests that integrating multimodal resources with active learning activities can support student engagement and critical reading experiences in EFL

higher education contexts. The findings provide practical implications for lecturers seeking to design more interactive and critically oriented reading instruction.

Keywords: *Multimodal approach, Active learning, Critical reading, Student perception*

INTRODUCTION

Critical reading has become an essential competence in higher education, particularly in the era of information abundance where students are constantly exposed to various forms of information through digital and multimodal platforms. University students are expected not only to understand written texts but also to evaluate arguments, identify bias, assess evidence, and construct informed judgments. These abilities are closely associated with critical thinking, which is considered one of the key competencies required in the twenty-first century. However, many EFL learners still experience difficulties in moving beyond literal comprehension toward critical interpretation and evaluation of texts, particularly when dealing with complex academic materials.

In the Indonesian EFL higher education context, developing critical reading skills remains a significant challenge. Although university students are increasingly required to engage with academic texts written in English, many still focus primarily on understanding vocabulary and extracting explicit information rather than critically evaluating the content. Previous studies have reported that EFL learners often struggle to identify underlying assumptions, recognize bias, and assess the credibility of arguments due to linguistic limitations and limited exposure to higher-order thinking activities in reading instruction. Consequently, innovative instructional approaches are needed to support students in developing both language proficiency and critical literacy skills.

The Critical Reading course offered in the fourth semester of the English Literature program at a private university in Bandung provides a relevant context for investigating these issues. The course aims to develop

students' abilities to analyze, interpret, and evaluate various forms of texts, including academic articles, advertisements, literary works, and media texts. To facilitate these objectives, the lecturer has incorporated multimodal learning resources such as images, videos, song lyrics, advertisements, and literary texts, alongside active learning activities including group discussions and mind mapping tasks.

A preliminary observation conducted during the course indicated that students appeared more engaged when multimodal materials and collaborative activities were integrated into reading lessons. However, little is known about how students perceive these instructional practices and how such practices contribute to their engagement during critical reading activities. This situation provides a strong rationale for further investigation. In classroom practice, lecturers employ a variety of strategies, including reading academic texts, articles, news reports, and literary works such as excerpts from novels. Students also engage in discussions, individual analyze, and assignments, including summaries, essays, and critical reviews. The learning process typically involves three stages: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. To enhance the learning experience and foster deeper understanding, lecturers integrate multimodal approaches by utilizing texts, images, and videos as learning resources. Through these activities, students are guided to identify arguments, assess evidence, and develop critical responses to the texts they read.

This approach aligns with current educational perspectives that emphasize the importance of multimodal literacy and critical thinking skills, as highlighted in recent literature. By combining traditional and multimodal strategies, the Critical Reading course at one of private university in Bandung seeks to prepare students to navigate and engage critically with complex information in both academic and real world settings.

Multimodality

Multimodality refers to the simultaneous use of various modes of communication. In contemporary communications, including the presentation

of messages in textbooks, it is common to see two or more semiotic modes being employed at the same time. In recent years, the multimodal approach has gained prominence in education. (G. Kress, 2010) said that multimodal learning integrates various modes of communication such as visual, auditory, textual, and kineesthetic to enhance meaning-making and engagement. This approach aligns with Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which suggests that people learn better when information is presented through multiple sensory channels. By combining different modes, multimodal instruction can cater to diverse learning styles and promote deeper understanding.

Multimodal learning, supported by research from (G. R. , & V. L. T. Kress, 2001), incorporates various modes of communication, including visual, auditory, gestural, spatial, and digital to enhance meaning-making and engage students effectively. Their studies show that combining these modes in educational settings significantly improves students' comprehension and critical thinking skills. This evidence highlights the importance of using multimodal approaches in language learning classrooms to address diverse learning needs and foster a deeper understanding of the material. Consequently, this study aims to explore the implementation of multimodal strategies in critical reading instruction, building on the established effectiveness of these approaches.

From a policy perspective, promoting critical thinking and multimodal literacy is mandated in numerous national education standards aimed at preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century. Educational frameworks underscore the importance of developing critical, creative, and digital literacies as essential competencies. Consequently, (Majdi et al., 2025) stated that implementing multimodal approaches in critical reading instruction addresses these educational directives, with the goal of producing graduates capable of navigating complex, multimodal information environments. Active learning is characterized as an educational methodology that engages students in the learning process, wherein they do not simply absorb information

passively but also partake in activities that promote reflection, analysis, and problem-solving. (Uyun et al., 2021) asserted that active learning requires critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation by learners, while direct education emphasizes the transmission of concepts. (Majdi et al., 2025) elucidated that active learning transitions the emphasis of education from a teacher-centered model of information dissemination to a student-centered approach, fostering learners' active processing and construction of knowledge grounded in their past experiences. This method has shown efficacy in improving students' critical thinking abilities and reading comprehension.

The incorporation of multimodal techniques enhances the content and resources in Critical Reading education; yet, encouraging deeper comprehension necessitates active student engagement to convert passive exposure into substantive critical analysis. Active learning strategies transition the pedagogical emphasis from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered engagement, allowing learners to actively develop knowledge through reflection, collaboration, and problem-solving. Such methodologies are especially essential in the realm of 21st-century education, where critical thinking necessitates not only access to varied multimodal texts but also the ability to examine and synthesise them interactively.

Although numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of multimodal learning in improving comprehension, motivation, and critical thinking, most existing studies have focused on general language learning contexts such as reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, or digital literacy development. Limited attention has been given to how multimodal learning is implemented specifically within Critical Reading courses in Indonesian higher education settings. Furthermore, students' perceptions of multimodal practices and their influence on classroom engagement remain underexplored, particularly in EFL literature programs.

Active Learning

Active learning comprises many tactics aimed at enhancing student involvement and educational performance. (Phan, 2022) said that discussions

and question-and-answer sessions are among the most often used approaches in active learning for EFL reading lessons. (Ni'mah, 2024) emphasized The Power of Two technique as an active learning approach that incorporates partnered small-group collaboration to enhance critical thinking. (Solikhah, 2023) delineated 10 efficacious ways used by educators to foster active learning, including visual-based instruction, problem-solving approaches, collaborative learning, dramatic techniques, role-playing, gamification, peer instruction, Jigsaw learning, and panel discussions. According to (Solikhah, 2023) these tactics are designed to increase engagement in learning and promote active student involvement, hence improving critical thinking abilities and understanding of the topic.

The amalgamation of active learning with multimodality, although not clearly delineated as a singular phrase in the cited publications, may be comprehended via the utilization of diverse media and activities that stimulate numerous senses and learning modalities. Existing studies have consistently reported positive outcomes of active learning strategies in promoting student participation, critical thinking, and reading comprehension. For example, (Phan, 2022) highlighted the role of discussion-based learning in EFL reading classes, while (Ni'mah, 2024) demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative techniques in fostering critical thinking. Similarly, (Solikhah, 2023) identified various active learning approaches that increase student engagement. Despite these findings, previous studies have generally examined active learning strategies as separate instructional interventions. Limited research has explored how active learning is combined with multimodal learning resources within Critical Reading instruction. Moreover, few studies have investigated students' perspectives regarding the integration of these approaches and how such integration shapes their engagement in learning activities.

Even though, the well-established advantages of multimodal and active learning strategies, there are still few empirical studies on how they are integrated into Critical Reading courses at private universities in Indonesia, particularly with regard to student perceptions and engagement effects. This

is especially true of mind mapping and group discussions.

Therefore, this study investigates the perspectives and reactions of English Literature students about the use of multimodal and active learning strategies, including mind mapping and group discussion, in critical reading teaching. Then, this study analyzes the impact of using multimodal and active learning strategies on student engagement and motivation to enhance critical thinking abilities during critical reading exercises.

Based on the reviewed literature, three gaps can be identified. First, previous studies have largely examined multimodal learning and active learning separately, while limited attention has been given to their combined implementation in Critical Reading instruction. Second, research focusing on Indonesian EFL higher education contexts, particularly English Literature programs, remains limited. Third, although student engagement is frequently claimed as a benefit of multimodal and active learning, students' own perceptions and experiences regarding these instructional practices have received insufficient attention. Addressing these gaps is important for understanding how multimodal and active learning can support critical reading development in higher education.

This study offers novelty by investigating the integration of multimodal learning resources and active learning strategies within a Critical Reading course in an Indonesian EFL higher education context. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on learning outcomes, this study explores students' perceptions and engagement toward the combined implementation of multimodal materials and active learning activities, specifically mind mapping and group discussions. The findings are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these approaches function together in supporting critical reading instruction.

Therefore, this study aims to explore students' perceptions of the use of multimodal and active learning strategies in Critical Reading instruction and to examine how these instructional practices contribute to students' engagement during critical reading activities.

The following is a series of activities carried out to practice critical reading. The source is adapted from the Critical Reading course lesson plan developed by the course lecturer.

Table 1. Critical Reading Activities

Meeting	Theme	Learning Media/ Sources	Activities (Discussion/Mind mapping)
1	Introduction to Critical Reading & Aspects (Fact, Opinion)	Theoretical materials (slides, articles)	-
2	Advertisement: Cigarette Ads	Picture	Discussion
3	Main Topic Identification	Theory and examples	-
4	Poetry: "I Rise" & "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou	Poems (print/video recitation)	Discussion
5	Tone in Critical Reading	Theory on tone, sample texts	-
6	Advertisement: Condom Ads (Sutra)	Video/print condom ads multimodal texts	Discussion
7	Bias in Texts	Theory on bias, examples from articles	-
8	Advertisement: Condom Ads (Hari Rusli)	Video/print condom ads multimodal texts	Discussion
9	Evaluating Arguments	Theory on argument structure	-
10	Plastic Surgery Ads	Full text from (print/digital)	Mind mapping
11	Critical Reading Review	Summary of previous theories	-
12	Novel: "Bumi Manusia"	Full book (print/digital)	Mind mapping
13	Multimodality in Texts	Theory and examples	-

14	Songs: "Zombie" (Cranberries), "Black or White" (Michael Jackson)	Song lyrics, music videos	Discussion
----	---	---------------------------	------------

METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative methodology, as defined by (Creswell, 2022) “an approach used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on measuring variables and testing hypotheses, qualitative research prioritizes the depth and diversity of human experiences to capture the complexity of social phenomena. Here, it examines how fourth-semester English Literature students perceive and react to multimodal and active learning strategies (e.g., mind mapping and group discussions) in Critical Reading teaching.

A qualitative descriptive design is employed to investigate students' attitudes, engagement, and motivation. This involves two primary data sources: open-ended surveys for narrative insights and classroom observations for real-time interactions. The flexible nature of this design allows adaptation as new themes emerge, with trustworthiness ensured through triangulation (cross-verifying survey and observation data) and reflexivity.

Respondents

The study population consists of all fourth-semester students in the English Literature program at One of private university in Bandung, Bandung, for the 2024/2025 academic year. These students have completed the Critical Reading course, which follows foundational courses like Intensive Reading, making them suitable for reflecting on multimodal and active learning experiences.

A sample consists 21 students. Participants were recruited after completing the Critical Reading course. The researcher invited all students enrolled in the course to participate voluntarily. Students who agreed to

participate and completed the questionnaire were included in the study. The selection criteria required participants to (1) be fourth-semester students in the English Literature program, (2) have completed the Critical Reading course, and (3) have experienced the multimodal and active learning activities implemented during the course. Purposive sampling ensured participants had direct involvement in Critical Reading classes and multimodal activities, providing rich, relevant data aligned with the study's aims. This approach prioritizes depth over generalizability, focusing on those with substantial insights into the strategies' implementation.

Instruments

The primary instrument is an open-ended questionnaire designed to elicit detailed responses on students' perspectives, experiences, and challenges with multimodal and active learning in Critical Reading. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on the study objectives and the literature on multimodal learning, active learning, student perception, and engagement. The questions were designed to encourage participants to provide detailed descriptions of their learning experiences rather than short responses. Prior to administration, the questionnaire was reviewed by two English education lecturers to ensure clarity and relevance to the research objectives.

The questionnaire includes the following questions:

1. Do you know the definition of critical reading?
2. Do you know the elements needed when practicing critical reading?
3. Regarding the critical reading course, did you learn something new?
4. What new knowledge and experiences did you gain from the critical reading course?
5. What is your opinion about the use of various learning media in the critical reading course? For example, learning through advertisements, videos, short stories, novels, official texts.
6. With the use of these different media, did you have any difficulties practicing critical reading in class? Please explain why.

Classroom observations were conducted using a non-participant observation approach. The researcher observed students during Critical Reading sessions without actively participating in classroom activities. The observations focused on how students interacted with multimodal learning materials and engaged in active learning activities such as group discussions and mind mapping. Field notes were used to document students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional responses during the learning process. The types are active participation (e.g., note-taking and inquiry during media exposure), motivation (e.g., enthusiasm in discussions and peer support), engagement (e.g., idea exchange in mind mapping exercises), and challenges (e.g., requests for clarification regarding intricate media).

The categories were derived from established educational frameworks, including Classroom Assessment Techniques by (Angelo, 2010) for behavioral and cognitive indicators, the Active Learning model by (Bonwell, 1991) for assessing student participation, the ARCS Model of Motivational Design by (Keller, n.d.) and Self-Determination Theory by (Deci, 2013) for motivational elements, the Multidimensional Model of Student Engagement by (Fredricks et al., 2004) for engagement dimensions, and the Reflective Teaching Framework by (Zeichner, 2013) for identifying instructional challenges. Observations were assessed using qualitative scales (e.g., high-middle-low for active involvement; elevated-middle-weak for motivation; high-moderate-low for challenges) to document frequency and patterns. The observations focused on recurring patterns of student participation, engagement, motivation, and challenges encountered during multimodal critical reading activities. Descriptive field notes were used to capture naturally occurring classroom interactions and responses. This strategy facilitated the triangulation and enhancement of data acquired via surveys, offering a comprehensive perspective on student reactions to multimodal critical reading activities.

The observations were conducted by the researcher as the sole observer throughout the study. The observation sheet served as a guiding framework

for recording classroom events and student responses rather than as a scoring instrument. Observation notes were reviewed repeatedly during the analysis process to identify emerging patterns and themes. Below is the classroom observation sheet, those are:

Table 2. Classroom Observation Sheet

No	Observation Category	Scale		
		High	Middle	Low
1.	Active Involvement (e.g., note-taking/ questions during media)			
2.	Motivation (e.g., eagerness in discussions)			
3.	Motivation (e.g., eagerness in discussions)			
4.	Challenges (e.g., clarifications for complex media)			

Classroom observations were conducted across six instructional meetings in which multimodal materials and active learning activities were implemented. Each observation lasted approximately 90 minutes, corresponding to the regular class duration. The observed sessions included activities involving advertisements, poetry, songs, novels, and mind mapping tasks.

Procedures

The researcher first secured authorization from the institution and got informed consent from the students, therefore addressing ethical issues

like confidentiality and voluntary participation. The open-ended questions were sent to the chosen students using Google Forms after an explanation of the study's objective. Classroom observations occurred during designated critical reading periods, with the researcher discreetly documenting thorough notes to accurately record genuine student behavior and interactions. Data collecting was conducted over many weeks to provide enough data for study.

Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before they completed the questionnaire and participated in the observations. To protect confidentiality, participants' names were replaced with codes during data analysis and reporting. Since the study involved minimal risk and was conducted as part of regular classroom activities, institutional permission was obtained from the program administration before the research commenced.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using (Clarke, 2017) thematic analysis framework. The analysis involved six stages. First, the researcher familiarized herself with the data by repeatedly reading the questionnaire responses and observation notes. Second, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments related to students' perceptions, engagement, motivation, and learning experiences. Third, similar codes were grouped into potential themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined by comparing them across data sources and ensuring their relevance to the research questions. Fifth, each theme was defined and named to capture its central meaning. Finally, the themes were interpreted and reported using representative excerpts from participants' responses and observation notes.

To enhance trustworthiness, data triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from questionnaires and classroom observations. In addition, reflective memos were maintained throughout the analysis process to minimize researcher bias and increase transparency.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the descriptive findings from the open-ended questionnaire and observation administered to 21 fourth-semester English Literature students at one of private university in Bandung, who had completed the Critical Reading course. The limited responses provided by a small number of participants suggest variations in students' understanding of critical reading. However, the present study did not specifically investigate the factors contributing to these differences. Future research may explore how prior reading experiences influence students' critical reading development.

Table 1. Students' Understanding of the Definition of Critical Reading

No	Response Category	Percentage (%)
1	Comprehensive (active analysis, evaluation, bias detection)	76
2	Basic (focus on comprehension and critical thinking)	19
3	Vague/Incomplete	5

The dominant trend (76%) shows students viewing critical reading as an active, evaluative process beyond surface-level comprehension, emphasizing cognitive engagement like questioning and bias identification. This pattern indicates strong foundational awareness, with only minor instances of superficial responses. The trend aligns with the course's emphasis on analytical skills, suggesting effective initial instruction, though the 5% vague responses highlight potential gaps in depth for a few participants.

Table 2. Students' Knowledge of the Elements Needed in Practicing Critical Reading

No	Key Elements Mentioned	Percentage (%)
1	Comprehension	81
2	Analysis (structure/arguments)	71
3	Evaluation (credibility/logic)	67
4	Interpretation (deeper meanings)	57
5	Reflection (personal connection)	48
6	Other (e.g., open-mindedness)	38
7	Limited/Ambiguous Responses	19

A clear upward trend emerges in recognition of sequential elements (comprehension, analysis, evaluation), with 81% identifying at least three core components, reflecting a structured understanding influenced by course activities. However, reflective elements (48%) were less consistently mentioned, indicating a trend toward analytical focus over personal integration. The 19% limited responses suggest variability in depth, possibly due to differing prior exposure, but overall, the data trend points to robust knowledge acquisition.

Table 3. Students' Learning Experience in the Critical Reading Course

No	Experiential Gain	Percentage (%)
1	Shift to analytical/skeptical reading	67
2	Awareness of biases/hidden meanings	57
3	Enhanced critical thinking (argument analysis)	71
4	Broader perspectives/multiple angles	48
5	Negative/Ambiguous	9.5

The trend is overwhelmingly positive (90.5% reporting gains), with a peak in critical thinking enhancement (71%), showing a progression from passive to active engagement. Awareness of real-world applications (e.g., media) trends higher among those mentioning biases (57%), suggesting the course's multimodal elements fostered practical transfer. The low negative responses indicate consistent experiential value, though the 9.5% ambiguity trends toward isolated cases of limited reflection.

Table 4. New Knowledge and Experiences Gained from the Critical Reading Course

No	Experiential Gain	Percentage (%)
1	Deconstructing arguments (claims/evidence)	81
2	Contextual analysis (cultural/social)	67
3	Practical skills (annotating/summarizing)	76
4	Critical thinking (questioning sources)	71
5	Writing improvement	48
6	Awareness of social issues	57

Trends show a strong emphasis on analytical deconstruction (81%),

evolving into synthesis and application (71-76%), with practical skills as a consistent bridge to real-life use. Social awareness (57%) trends as a secondary benefit, linked to multimodal exposure. The 48% writing gain suggests spillover effects, but overall patterns indicate transformative knowledge, with minimal gaps in core areas.

Table 5. Students’ Opinions on the Use of Various Learning Media in the Critical Reading Course

No	Opinion Category	Percentage (%)
1	Positive (engaging/relevant)	86
2	Accommodates learning styles	76
3	Prepares for real-life analysis	67
4	Broadens perspectives	57
5	Challenges (e.g., tech issues)	24

A dominant positive trend (86%) highlights engagement and relevance, peaking in style accommodation (76%), which correlates with multimodal strategies. Real-life preparation (67%) trends as a key perceived benefit, while challenges (24%) are minor and logistical. This pattern underscores the media's role in sustaining interest without overwhelming drawbacks.

Table 6. Difficulties Encountered in Practicing Critical Reading with Different Media

No	Difficulty Type	Percentage (%)
1	No significant difficulties	43
2	Complex vocabulary/language	48
3	Media-specific analysis (e.g., videos vs. texts)	57
4	Time management/focus	38
5	External factors (context/tech)	24

While 43% reported ease, challenges trend toward media complexity (57%), particularly in adapting skills across formats, with language barriers (48%) as a persistent issue. Time-related hurdles (38%) suggest pacing needs, but the trend of improvement through practice (implied in quotes) indicates adaptability. External factors remain low (24%), pointing to targeted rather than systemic problems.

Table 7. Outcomes of Classroom Observations

No	Observation Category	Frequency/Trend Notes
1	Active Involvement (e.g., note-taking/questions during media)	High (80% of students; sustained attention in 4/5 sessions)
2	Motivation (e.g., eagerness in discussions)	Elevated (70%; peer encouragement noted in group activities)
3	Engagement (e.g., idea-sharing in mind mapping)	Strong (75%; collaborative in 90% of groups, but 2 groups needed prompting)
4	Challenges (e.g., clarifications for complex media)	Moderate (30%; tech pauses in 2 sessions; time rushes in 3)

Observations trend toward high involvement and motivation (70-80%), especially in interactive elements like discussions, mirroring questionnaire positivity. Engagement peaks in collaborative tasks (75%), but dips slightly with complex media (30% interruptions), indicating a pattern of initial hurdles overcome through activity. Overall, trends confirm multimodal-active integration boosts real-time participation, with challenges aligning to self-reported issues.

Comprehension of Critical Reading by Students

The prevailing trend in Table 1, indicating that 76% of students perceive critical reading as an active, evaluative process that entails questioning and bias identification, closely corresponds with (Putu, 2020) definition, which underscores the necessity of higher-order thinking skills for comprehension that transcends mere literal elements such as main ideas, specific details, textual references, and word meanings. This thorough understanding indicates that the course's multimodal approaches such as the analysis of films and advertisements successfully promoted analytical engagement, enhancing Putu's framework by integrating several modes to reveal deeper significances. (Facione, 2015) perspective on critical reading as essential to critical thinking, encompassing interpretation and evaluation, aligns with the cognitive focus on "reading with your brain on," suggesting that pupils have internalized self-regulatory judgment. The 19% of basic responses and

5% of imprecise responses stand in stark contrast to the findings of (Ilyas, 2024), which indicate that EFL teachers effectively foster inquiry and critical thinking through activities such as group discussions. This variation may arise from differing past exposure in the fundamental Intensive Reading course, indicating a potential deficiency in support for less prepared students.

The researcher's observations (Table 7) confirm this, indicating significant engagement (80%) during interactive sessions, with just small breaks for clarifications. The findings suggest that although multimodal-active integration improves foundational comprehension, specific interventions may rectify superficial trends, thereby advancing the study's aim of evaluating strategy effects and offering practical recommendations for EFL educators to enhance 21st-century critical literacies.

Students' Understanding of Critical Reading Components

Table 2 illustrates that the sequential recognition of fundamental elements. The findings indicate that comprehension was the most frequently identified element (81%), followed by analysis (71%) and evaluation (67%). This pattern suggests that students were generally familiar with the foundational stages of critical reading, although fewer participants explicitly mentioned higher-order processes such as evaluation and reflection. reflects a systematic advancement shaped by course activities, aligning with (Facione, 2015) critical thinking components in reading: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. The focus on analysis (71%) and evaluation (67%) corresponds with (Ilyas, 2024) classroom application, wherein EFL educators employ these strategies through text dissection and credibility evaluation, as evidenced by students' references to "deconstructing arguments" and "distinguishing facts from opinions." This facilitates critical reading's role in cultivating reflective readers, according to Istaryatiningtias et al., by allowing informed decisions in both academic and everyday situations.

Nonetheless, the diminished consistency in reflection (48%) and other competencies such as open-mindedness (38%) deviates from Facione's

comprehensive model, which emphasizes dispositions like inquisitiveness and self-regulation for complete cognitive integration. In contrast to (Putu, 2020) indicators, the 19% limited responses suggest inadequate mastery of interpretive depth, likely attributable to EFL difficulties with subtle word meanings. Analysis of observations (Table 7) indicates that engagement reached its zenith in collaborative mind mapping (75%), suggesting that active learning components, such as group discussions, alleviate analytical biases but necessitate more explicit prompts for reflection, in accordance with (Vygotsky, 1978) social learning theory as cited by (Siregar, 2024). This research addresses the gap by empirically demonstrating how multimodal methods, such as visual assistance in mind mapping, boost information acquisition in Indonesian contexts, providing implications for curriculum design to foster balanced skill development and higher-order thinking.

Students' Educational Experiences and Acquired Knowledge

Tables 3 and 4 indicate significant experiential improvements, with 90.5% reporting changes, particularly in critical thinking enhancement (71%) and argument deconstruction (81%), highlighting the course's perceived learning gains. This transition from passive to skeptical reading corresponds with the critical reading functions described by (Ilyas, 2024), wherein analysis, evaluation, and inquiry prepare students for intellectual development and social consciousness—demonstrated by 57% acquiring bias awareness and 67% enhancing contextual analysis skills. (Facione, 2015) description of critical thinking as deliberate judgment is elaborated upon, as students indicated the synthesis of multimodal texts (e.g., advertisements and films) for practical application, promoting dispositions such as open-mindedness and truth-seeking.

Discrepancies arise in the 9.5% unclear responses and 48% writing enhancements, which diverge from Facione's focus on explanation and self-regulation for thorough skill transfer. The Table confirm heightened motivation (70%) due to peer support, The observation data showed that students frequently exchanged ideas and negotiated interpretations

during group discussions accompanying the mind-mapping activities. This collaborative process reflects Vygotsky's view that learning occurs through social interaction and shared meaning-making. The results achieve the study's objective of examining the effects on motivation and critical thinking, highlighting the importance of integrated techniques in enhancing EFL engagement, equipping students for intricate information contexts while recognizing the necessity for more practice.

Students' Perspectives on Diverse Learning Media and Challenges Faced

The favorable judgments in Table 5 (86% consider media engaging) and the obstacles in Table 6 (57% identify media-specific issues) critically examine Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2001, 2006) notion of multimodality, wherein concurrent modes (visual, auditory, spatial) generate meaning that transcends language. The 76% alignment with learning styles and 67% readiness for real-life scenarios reflect (Jewitt, 2009) emphasis on multimodality in adaptable communication, as students valued videos and advertisements for their relevance, hence augmenting critical awareness in media-rich environments. This corroborates Kress's (2003, 2009, 2015) framework, wherein the active creation of multimodal texts (e.g., mind mapping pictures) enhances interpretative abilities, corresponding with 57% wider viewpoints.

Nonetheless, obstacles such as intricate vocabulary (48%) and adaptability across formats (57%) juxtapose with positive elements in multimodal proficiency (e.g., visual as per Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; digital according to European Commission et al.), exposing EFL-specific impediments like cultural contexts or technological accessibility, which are lacking in Western-centric research. Triangulated observations (Table 7) indicate moderate interruptions (30%), implying that (Sukardi, 2025) incorporation of multimodal visuals with active talks diminishes cognitive load but necessitates scaffolding, given the difficulties reported by participants when interpreting different media formats, lecturers may consider providing

additional guidance and scaffolding when introducing complex multimodal texts. This research empirically confirms the multimodal advantages in Indonesian private institutions, suggesting 21st-century digital literacies, in accordance with the study's importance.

Results of Classroom Observations and Comprehensive Integration

The trends observed in Table 7 (80% active involvement, 75% engagement) validate the effectiveness of multimodal-active integration, as articulated by (Sukardi, 2025) and (Siregar, 2024), wherein mind mapping (visual-spatial mode) and group discussions (auditory-gestural). Previous studies have also reported that combining collaborative learning activities with visual tools such as mind mapping can support student interaction and comprehension. Elevated motivation (70%) during conversations corresponds with (Bonwell, 1991) notion of active learning, establishing students as architects of knowledge, and (Vygotsky, 1978) social theory, promoting reflective engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This expands upon (G. Kress, 2010) synthesis, wherein multimodal approaches (e.g., colors and symbols in mind mapping) coupled with proactive strategies diminish obstacles, reflecting 86% favorable media perceptions.

Meanwhile, the challenges such as technological interruptions (30%) and prompting requirements (across two groups) contrast with the 15% outcome enhancements reported by (Sukardi, 2025), underscoring local limitations (e.g., time management, 38%), which reflexivity recognizes as possible biases in the pace of observations. In contrast to (Ilyas, 2024), observations corroborate criticism and inference via peer challenges, although highlight the necessity for lecturer facilitation in EFL environments. The findings confirm the objectives: positive impressions (86%) and increased engagement/motivation foster critical thinking (71%), providing localized evidence on mind mapping and group discussions.

Thus, the study concludes that multimodal and active learning strategies substantially improve. Overall, the findings suggest that students perceived multimodal and active learning activities as engaging, meaningful,

and supportive of their critical reading experiences. The observation data further indicated active participation and collaborative engagement during classroom activities. This enhances education by providing insights for inclusive implementation, fostering 21st-century skills like as critical thinking, teamwork, digital literacy, and informed citizenship. The limitations encompass a small sample size (n=21) and a qualitative emphasis, which restrict generalizability; further mixed-methods research could quantify effects across larger EFL populations, enhancing strategies for sustainable involvement.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore English Literature students' perceptions of multimodal and active learning strategies in Critical Reading classes and to examine how these instructional practices contributed to student engagement during learning activities. The findings revealed that students generally perceived multimodal learning resources and active learning activities positively. The use of various learning media, combined with collaborative activities such as group discussions and mind mapping, helped students engage more actively with texts, develop critical reading awareness, and participate more confidently in classroom interactions. Students also reported gaining a broader understanding of how to analyze arguments, identify bias, and interpret texts from multiple perspectives.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on multimodal and active learning in EFL higher education by providing insights into students' learning experiences within a Critical Reading course. The findings suggest that integrating multimodal materials with active learning activities can create a supportive learning environment that encourages participation, collaboration, and critical engagement with texts.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study involved a relatively small number of participants from a single English Literature program, which limits the transferability of the findings to other contexts.

Second, the study relied primarily on students' self-reported experiences and classroom observations without incorporating additional data sources such as interviews or learning assessments. Third, the study focused on students' perceptions and engagement rather than measuring actual improvement in critical reading performance.

Practical implications can be drawn from these findings. EFL lecturers may consider integrating diverse multimodal resources and collaborative learning activities into Critical Reading instruction to increase student engagement and support critical text analysis. In addition, lecturers should provide appropriate scaffolding when introducing complex multimodal texts to help students overcome linguistic and contextual challenges.

Future research may involve participants from different institutions and educational settings to obtain a broader understanding of multimodal and active learning practices in EFL contexts. Further studies may also employ mixed-methods designs or longitudinal approaches to investigate how these instructional strategies influence students' critical reading development over time.

REFERENCES

- Angelo, T. A. and C. P. K. (2010). Classroom Assesment Techniques.
- Bonwell, C. C. , & E. J. A. (1991). Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom. ERIC Digest.
- Clarke, V. , & B. V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297–298.
- Creswell, J. , & C. W. J. (2022). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*.
- Deci, E. L. , & R. R. M. (2013). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Facione, P. A. (2015). *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts*.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence. In *Source: Review of Educational Research* (Vol. 74, Number 1). <http://www.jstor.orgURL:http://www.jstor.org/stable/3516061>
- ILYAS, H. , I. I. , A. S. , & M. A. H. (2024). FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: EFL TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CRITICAL READING. *ERLINGUA: JURNAL PENDIDIKAN BAHASA ASING DAN SASTRA* , 8(2), 457.
- Jewitt, C. (Ed.). (2009). *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis* (8). Routledge.
- Keller, J. M. (n.d.). *Development and Use of the ARCS Model of Instructional Design*.
- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*.
- Kress, G. R. , & V. L. T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*.
- Majdi, Z., Khalili Sabet, M., & Mahdavi-Zafarghandi, A. (2025). Exploring the effect of using active learning strategies on Iranian intermediate female EFL learners reading comprehension: a mixed methods study. *Frontiers in Education*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1539722>
- Ni'mah, F. et al. (2024). EFEKTIVITAS PENERAPAN STRATEGI ACTIVE

LEARNING THE POWER OF TWO DALAM MENINGKATKAN
KEMAMPUAN BERPIKIR KRITIS PADA PEMBELAJARAN
AL-QUR'AN HADITS DI MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH.

- Putu, I. C. M. (2020). THE COMPARATION OF STUDENTS' READING AND CRITICAL READING COMPETENCY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL.
- Phan, M. N. V. (2022). EFL Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of Active Learning in Reading Classroom. *International Journal of Language Instruction*, 1(1), 65–85. <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.22117>
- Siregar, R. G. M. , & A. M. (2024). Analisis Hasil Survei Refleksi Group Discussion dalam Pengembangan Pembelajaran Kolaboratif. *QOUBA: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 1(2), 98–103.
- Solikhah, N. (2023). Teacher's Strategies for Stimulating EFL Students' Active Learning in An Indonesian Senior High School.
- Sukardi, R. H. , & T. M. (2025). Penggunaan metode mind mapping dalam meningkatkan pemahaman konsep dan retensi belajar siswa: Kajian literatur. *Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan*, 1249–1258.
- Uyun, S. N., Ali, M., & Badarudin, B.-. (2021). Pengaruh Model Active Learning dan Kecerdasan Majemuk Logis-Matematis Terhadap Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis Siswa Pada Pembelajaran Abad 21. *Educatio*, 16(1), 9–23. <https://doi.org/10.29408/edc.v16i1.2770>
- Vygotsky, L. S. , & C. M. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard university press.
- Zeichner, K. M. , & L. D. P. (2013). *Reflective teaching: An introduction*. Routledge.