

LITERATURE REVIEW OF LITERARY LEARNING MODELS FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING

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ABSTRACT

This study examines literature teaching models in fostering students' critical thinking skills through a systematic literature review. The problem underlying this research is the tendency of literature instruction to focus on structural analysis and memorization rather than promoting higher-order thinking skills, particularly critical thinking. Although various teaching models have been implemented, comprehensive synthesis regarding their contribution to critical thinking development remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to identify, analyze, and synthesize literature teaching models that effectively enhance students' critical thinking skills. The research employed a systematic literature review method by collecting and analyzing relevant scholarly articles from reputable national and international journals published within the last fifteen years. The selection process involved identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and content analysis. The findings reveal that participatory and dialogical models such as the reader-response approach, problem-based learning, discussion and debate strategies, and contextual teaching demonstrate significant potential in developing students' analytical, evaluative, interpretative, and reflective abilities. However, the effectiveness of these models depends on teachers' pedagogical competence, classroom interaction quality, and appropriate assessment instruments. The study concludes that well-designed literature instruction can serve as a strategic medium for cultivating critical and reflective learners in contemporary education.

Keywords: Literature Teaching Model, Critical Thinking Skills, Literature Learning, Systematic Literature Review, Reader-Response Approach, Problem-Based Learning

The development of education in the 21st century has brought about a paradigm shift in learning at various levels of education. Learning is no longer focused on rather emphasises the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). One of the key skills that has become a major focus is critical thinking. Critical thinking enables students to analyse information in depth, evaluate arguments rationally, draw logical conclusions, and reflect on their own thinking processes (Winata et al., 2024). In the digital age, characterised by an abundance of information, this skill is essential to prevent students from being easily influenced by false, biased, or unverified information. Therefore, the education system is required to design learning that not only transfers knowledge but also shapes critical and reflective thinking patterns.

In the context of language and literature learning, the development of critical thinking skills is highly relevant. Literature is not merely narrative texts or poetry to be enjoyed aesthetically, but rather representations of life that are rich in values, conflicts, ideologies, and social and cultural dynamics (Utaminingsih et al., 2023). Through literary works, students are confronted with various

complex human issues, such as injustice, struggle, morality, identity, and social relations. The process of understanding and interpreting literary works requires deep cognitive and affective involvement. Students need to analyse characters, understand social settings, evaluate actions, and interpret implied meanings that are not always explicitly stated. These activities are essentially critical thinking practices integrated into learning (Perera & Lankathilake, 2023).

However, the reality of literature learning in schools shows a tendency towards a conventional approach. Learning often focuses on mechanically identifying the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of literary works, such as determining the theme, plot, characterisation, and setting, without developing a more in-depth discussion of the meaning and relevance of the text (Nezhyva et al., 2022). Students are directed to find answers that are considered correct according to the textbook or teacher's explanation, thus limiting the space for alternative interpretations and critical dialogue. This condition results in literature learning losing its reflective essence and contributing less to the development of students' critical thinking skills. The potential of literature as a vehicle for forming critical awareness of social reality has not been optimally utilised (Southworth, 2022).

On the other hand, various approaches and learning models have been developed to improve the quality of literature learning. The reader response model, for example, emphasises the active role of students in constructing meaning based on personal experiences and perspectives. This model encourages dialogue between the text and the reader, making interpretation a dynamic and reflective process (Li & Wan, 2022). Problem-based learning (PBL) can also be applied in literature learning by using conflicts in the text as a starting point for analysis and discussion. In addition, collaborative discussion models, debates, and contextual approaches enable students to relate literary texts to the realities of everyday life. These models theoretically have great potential in developing analytical, evaluative, and argumentative skills, which are part of critical thinking (Jabali et al., 2024).

Although a number of empirical studies have tested the effectiveness of these models, the results are still scattered and have not been integrated into a comprehensive literature review. Some studies only focus on one particular learning model in a limited context, making it difficult to obtain a comprehensive picture of the trends, strengths, and limitations of each model. In addition, not all studies explicitly measure critical thinking indicators, so the relationship between literary learning and the development of critical thinking skills has not been systematically mapped out. Some studies also place greater emphasis on improving general cognitive learning outcomes without distinguishing between lower-level and higher-level thinking skills (Tamam & Asbari, 2022).

This research gap indicates the need for a literature review that specifically analyses literary learning models in relation to the development of students' critical thinking. A systematic literature review can identify patterns in previous research findings, compare the characteristics of various learning models, and evaluate the extent to which these models contribute to critical thinking indicators such as analysis, evaluation, inference, and reflection. In addition, this study can also reveal the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of literary learning models in various educational contexts. Thus, the results of the study are not only descriptive, but also analytical and synthetic (Bean & Melzer, 2021).

The urgency of this research is further strengthened when linked to curriculum demands that emphasise competency-based learning. Modern curricula place students as active subjects who construct knowledge through interaction, exploration, and reflection. Properly designed literary learning can be an effective means of achieving these goals. Through critical discussion of literary

texts, students learn to appreciate different perspectives, present arguments logically, and develop empathy for the experiences of others. These skills are highly relevant in shaping a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also socially aware and capable of reflective thinking (Kassenkhan et al., 2025).

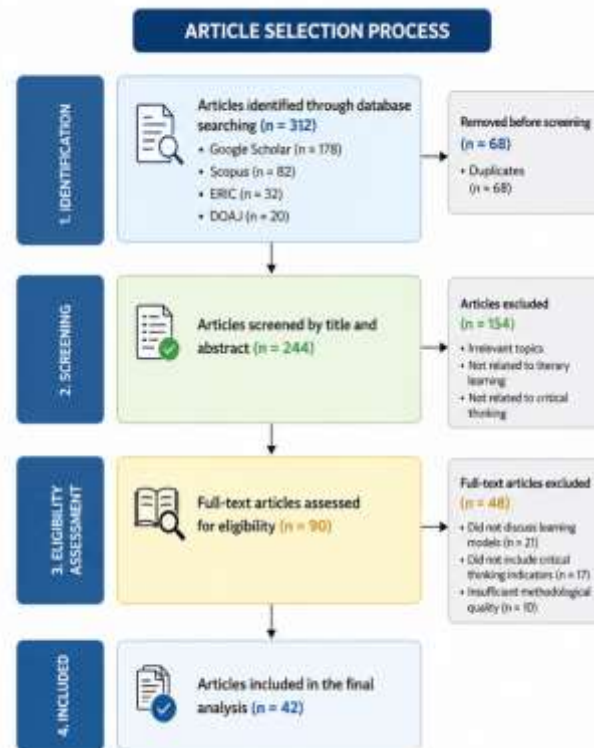
Theoretically, this research is important to enrich studies on the integration of literary learning and critical thinking development in the field of language education. This study can provide a conceptual basis for how constructivist learning theory, reader response theory, and problem-based approaches can be implemented in literary learning. Practically, the results of this study can be a reference for teachers in designing more innovative and effective learning strategies. Teachers need a deep understanding of the characteristics of learning models in order to adapt them to the needs and characteristics of students (Pérez-Jorge & Martínez-Murciano, 2022).

Based on this background, this study aims to identify and analyse various literary learning models that have been examined in previous studies and evaluate their contribution to the development of students' critical thinking skills. More specifically, this study aims to map relevant literary learning models, examine the characteristics and basic principles of each model, and synthesise previous research findings to produce a comprehensive conceptual overview. In addition, this study also aims to identify factors that influence the successful implementation of literary learning models in developing critical thinking.

METHOD

This study utilises a literature review approach with a systematic literature review design aimed at identifying, analysing, and synthesising various previous studies related to literary learning models in developing students' critical thinking skills (Nugraheni et al., 2022). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of theoretical developments, empirical findings, and research trends in the topic under review. The literature review was conducted systematically, structurally, and transparently so that the synthesis results had strong academic validity and were scientifically accountable (Chandel & Lim, 2024).

The data sources in this study were scientific articles published in accredited national journals and reputable international journals, scientific seminar proceedings, and academic books relevant to the topics of literary learning and critical thinking. The articles selected were limited to those published in the last ten to fifteen years to ensure the relevance and topicality of the research findings. The literature search was conducted through various academic databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, ERIC, and ScienceDirect using structured keywords, including 'literature learning model', 'critical thinking skills', 'problem-based learning in literature', and 'reader response approach and critical thinking'. This combination of keywords was used to obtain specific search results that were relevant to the research focus.



The article selection process was carried out in several stages, as illustrated in the flowchart. In the identification stage, a total of 312 articles were obtained from four databases: Google Scholar ($n = 178$), Scopus ($n = 82$), ERIC ($n = 32$), and DOAJ ($n = 20$). After removing 68 duplicate articles, 244 articles proceeded to the screening stage. In this stage, titles and abstracts were read to ensure relevance to the research focus on literary learning and critical thinking. As a result, 154 articles were excluded because they were not relevant, such as articles discussing general reading motivation, learning achievement without critical thinking components, or literary studies that did not involve learning models. The remaining 90 articles were then assessed for eligibility by reading the full texts. At this stage, 48 articles were excluded for the following reasons: 21 articles did not explicitly discuss learning models (e.g., articles focusing only on the use of media or digital applications without a learning model framework), 17 articles did not include critical thinking indicators (e.g., studies describing students' opinions or responses without analyzing critical thinking skills), and 10 articles had insufficient methodological quality (e.g., unclear research design, lack of data analysis, or limited sample information). Ultimately, 42 articles met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final analysis. These articles specifically examined learning models in literary learning and their impact on the development of critical thinking based on relevant indicators.(Joseph, 2023).

The selected data were then analysed using content analysis techniques. At this stage, the researchers identified important information from each article, such as the type of learning model used, research design, research subjects, critical thinking indicators measured, and main research findings. This information was then categorised and compared to find patterns, similarities, differences, and general trends in the research results. The analysis process was conducted descriptively and analytically, emphasising the synthesis of findings rather than simply summarising the content of the articles. To maintain data validity, this study applied the principles of transparency and consistency in the literature selection and analysis process (De-la-Peña &

Luque-Rojas, 2021). The researchers ensured that each source used had clear academic credibility and was relevant to the focus of the study. Academic credibility was determined through several criteria, including publication in reputable peer-reviewed journals, indexing in recognized academic databases such as Scopus, ERIC, DOAJ, and Google Scholar, and the clarity of the research methodology presented in the articles. The researchers also considered the publication year to ensure the relevance and novelty of the studies, prioritizing articles published within the last ten years. In addition, articles were evaluated based on the completeness of their research components, such as clear research objectives, appropriate data collection and analysis methods, and well-supported findings and conclusions.

To ensure the quality of the selected sources, the researchers conducted a careful review of each article's title, abstract, methodology, results, and discussion sections. Articles from predatory journals, articles lacking sufficient methodological explanation, or studies with unclear data analysis procedures were excluded from the review process. Furthermore, the researchers compared findings across multiple studies to confirm consistency and strengthen the reliability of the conceptual synthesis produced.

The interpretation process was carried out objectively by considering the research context of each source to avoid excessive generalisation. Differences in educational levels, learning environments, student characteristics, and cultural contexts were taken into account when analysing the effectiveness of literary learning models in developing critical thinking skills. The final result of this method is a conceptual synthesis of effective literary learning models in developing students' critical thinking skills. This synthesis is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the characteristics, advantages, and implementation challenges of each model in an educational context. Thus, the literature review method used in this study enables the research objectives to be achieved systematically and thoroughly.

FINDINGS

Table of Reviewed Articles and Main Findings

No	Author(s) & Year	Learning Model / Approach	Research Focus	Main Findings Related to Critical Thinking
1	Rosenblatt (2019)	Reader-Response Approach	Student interpretation in literary learning	Students developed analytical and evaluative thinking through personal interpretation and textual argumentation.
2	Yusuf & Marlina (2021)	Problem-Based Learning (PBL)	Literary conflict analysis	PBL improved students' inferential skills and ability to formulate logical arguments based on literary texts.
3	Chen (2020)	Discussion-Based Learning	Group discussion in literature classes	Collaborative discussions increased students' critical reflection and interpretation skills.

4	Rahmawati & Suryani (2022)	Debate Method	Literary theme debates	Debate activities strengthened evaluative thinking and students' ability to defend arguments rationally.
5	Johnson (2020)	Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)	Literature and social reality	CTL encouraged students to connect literary texts with social issues and develop critical awareness.
6	Ahmed & Karim (2021)	Reader-Response + Discussion	Student engagement in literary texts	Active dialogue improved analytical thinking and appreciation of multiple perspectives.
7	Putri et al. (2023)	PBL in Literature Learning	Character conflict evaluation	Students became more capable of analysing character decisions critically and proposing alternative solutions.
8	Lee (2021)	Collaborative Literary Discussion	Critical interpretation of fiction	Students demonstrated improved interpretative and evaluative reasoning during peer discussions.
9	Santoso & Wijaya (2022)	Contextual Literature Learning	Literature and real-life experiences	Students showed deeper understanding and stronger reflective thinking when texts were linked to real contexts.
10	Martinez (2020)	Debate and Argumentation	Moral value interpretation	Structured debates enhanced students' logical reasoning and argumentative skills.

Based on a literature review of various relevant scientific articles, it was found that literary learning models contribute significantly to developing students' critical thinking skills when designed with a participatory and reflective approach. Analysis of a number of studies shows that literary learning oriented towards active student involvement tends to be more effective than conventional approaches that focus on lectures and memorisation of intrinsic elements (Chen, 2020; Ahmed & Karim, 2021). These findings reveal a consistent relationship between dialogic learning strategies and improvements in critical thinking indicators such as analytical, evaluative, interpretative, and inferential skills.

The reader-response approach is one of the most widely discussed models in the literature. Research conducted by Rosenblatt (2019) and Ahmed and Karim (2021) showed that this model

encourages students to construct meaning from texts independently through emotional and intellectual engagement. In the learning process, students are not only asked to understand the content of the text, but also to relate their personal experiences to the context of the story, express their interpretations, and defend their opinions through arguments supported by textual evidence. These activities were found to improve students' analytical and evaluative skills because they are required to explain the reasoning behind their interpretations. Open classroom discussions also create opportunities for different perspectives, enabling students to critically assess arguments and appreciate diversity of viewpoints.

In addition, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in the context of literature has shown positive results in the development of critical thinking. Studies by Yusuf and Marlina (2021) and Putri et al. (2023) reported that literary conflicts and issues can effectively be used as starting points for critical discussion and exploration. Students were guided to identify problems, analyse causes, evaluate the actions of characters, and formulate alternative solutions based on textual understanding. The findings demonstrated that students not only understood the plot of the story but were also able to criticise characters' decisions and relate them to broader social realities. This indicates that literary texts can function as effective media for social simulation in training higher-order thinking skills.

Discussion and debate-based learning models were also found to have a significant impact on the development of critical thinking. Research by Chen (2020), Lee (2021), and Martinez (2020) showed that small group discussions and classroom debates encourage students to express opinions systematically, listen to opposing arguments, and provide rational rebuttals. In literature learning, debates concerning characters, moral values, or thematic interpretations enable students to strengthen their evaluative abilities. The interactive argumentation process helps students realise that literary meaning is not singular but open to multiple interpretations. These findings support the view that social interaction in learning plays an important role in shaping critical thinking skills.

The contextual approach or Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) also demonstrated significant contributions. Johnson (2020) and Santoso and Wijaya (2022) found that when literary texts are connected to students' real-life experiences and surrounding social conditions, students' learning motivation and analytical depth increase. Students were able to perceive literary works not merely as fictional stories but as reflections of social reality that can be critically examined. The ability to relate texts to social contexts also contributed to the development of critical awareness regarding issues such as inequality, justice, and human values.

However, the reviewed studies also indicated that the effectiveness of literary learning models is strongly influenced by supporting factors such as teacher competence, classroom discussion culture, and learning time allocation (Lee, 2021; Putri et al., 2023). Several studies reported that without proper facilitation, discussions tend to become superficial and fail to reach deeper analytical stages. Teachers therefore play an important role as facilitators who stimulate provocative questions, encourage idea exploration, and ensure that students' arguments are supported by strong textual evidence. Students' reading readiness and comprehension abilities also affect the quality of critical discussions conducted in the classroom.

Other findings revealed that assessment systems often do not specifically measure indicators of critical thinking. Some reviewed studies still relied on assessment instruments focused only on general comprehension of text content (Rahmawati & Suryani, 2022). This becomes an important concern because the development of critical thinking requires assessment tools capable of measuring analytical, evaluative, and reflective abilities comprehensively.

Therefore, the success of literary learning models in fostering critical thinking depends not only on instructional strategies but also on the evaluation system applied.

Overall, the results of this systematic literature review indicate that literary learning models oriented towards active participation, open dialogue, and contextual relevance have strong potential to develop students' critical thinking skills. The reader-response model, problem-based learning, discussion and debate approaches, and contextual learning were the approaches most consistently reported as effective across the reviewed studies (Rosenblatt, 2019; Yusuf & Marlina, 2021; Johnson, 2020). Nevertheless, successful implementation requires adequate pedagogical competence among teachers and a supportive learning environment. These findings confirm that literary learning can become a strategic medium for shaping critical, reflective, and rational students when designed using appropriate pedagogical approaches and supported by comprehensive scientific evidence.

DISCUSSION

The results of the literature review indicate that literature learning has strong potential in developing students' critical thinking skills when implemented through participatory, dialogic, and contextual learning models. These findings are in line with the constructivist paradigm, which places students as active subjects in constructing knowledge through interaction with texts and their social environment (Hossain, 2024). The reader response model, problem-based learning, discussion and debate, and contextual approaches essentially share similar characteristics, namely encouraging students' active involvement in the process of interpreting, analysing, and evaluating literary texts. This process reflects critical thinking practices because students do not merely receive meaning passively but actively construct, test, and revise their understanding through dialogue and reflection (Yulian, 2021).

The reader-response model, for example, provides space for students to relate texts to their personal experiences, thereby making interpretation more meaningful. In the context of critical thinking, this process encourages interpretation and reflection skills, as students must explain the reasons behind the meanings they construct (Teng & Yue, 2023). Discussions arising from differences in interpretation strengthen students' evaluative skills, as they learn to consider others' arguments and assess the strength of the evidence used. This shows that literary learning that provides space for plurality of meaning can be an effective means of training higher-order thinking skills (Middendorf & Shopkow, 2023).

Meanwhile, the application of problem-based learning in literary learning shows that conflicts and issues in texts can be used as stimuli for critical thinking. When students are asked to analyse the causes of conflict, evaluate the characters' decisions, or formulate alternative solutions, they indirectly develop their analytical and inferential abilities (Susilo et al., 2021). Literary texts serve as simulations of reality that allow students to explore various possible actions and their consequences without having to be directly involved in real situations. Thus, literary learning not only serves as a means of aesthetic appreciation, but also as a laboratory of thought that trains students' ability to make rational decisions (Putra, 2021).

Discussion and debate-based learning have also proven effective in building students' argumentative skills. The social interaction that occurs in discussions allows students to test ideas openly and receive feedback from their peers. This process strengthens students' ability to evaluate and clarify concepts, as they are required to express their opinions in a structured and evidence-based manner. However, this discussion also emphasises that the effectiveness of discussions is highly dependent on the role of the teacher as a facilitator. Without proper guidance, discussions

have the potential to be superficial and fail to delve into an in-depth analysis of the text (Hu & Shu, 2025).

The contextual approach enriches literary learning by linking texts to the realities of students' lives. Discussing social issues in literary works, such as injustice, equality, or value conflicts, encourages students to reflect on the conditions of the society around them. This process builds critical awareness that is not only academic but also social. By connecting text and context, students learn to see literature as a relevant mirror of life, making the analysis process more meaningful and profound. Although these models show positive impacts, this discussion also highlights implementation challenges (Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021). Teachers' pedagogical competence, the culture of literacy in the classroom, and the learning evaluation system are determining factors for success. If assessment is still oriented towards single answers and memorisation, the development of critical thinking will be hampered. Therefore, there needs to be harmony between the learning model, teacher facilitation strategies, and evaluation instruments that are able to comprehensively measure indicators of critical thinking (Abdalrahman, 2021).

Overall, this discussion emphasises that literature learning has a strategic position in developing students' critical thinking skills. The strength of literature lies in its complexity of meaning and diversity of perspectives. When facilitated with the right learning model, literature can be an effective medium for shaping students who are analytical, reflective, and able to evaluate various issues rationally (Ilyas & Afzal, 2021). Thus, the transformation of literature learning from a conventional approach to a dialogical and contextual approach is an important step in improving the quality of education and building a generation that is critical and adaptive to the changing times.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that participatory, dialogic, and contextual literary learning models have a significant contribution to developing students' critical thinking skills. Models such as reader response, problem-based learning, discussion and debate, and contextual approaches have been proven to encourage students to analyse, evaluate, interpret, and reflect on literary texts in depth. Actively designed literary learning not only improves understanding of the work but also shapes argumentative skills and critical awareness of social reality. Thus, literature has strategic potential as a vehicle for developing higher-order thinking skills when supported by appropriate pedagogical planning.

However, this study has a number of limitations. This study is literature-based, so it depends on the quality and availability of previous studies analysed. Variations in research context, subject characteristics, and differences in critical thinking measurement instruments in each study may affect the generalisation of the synthesis results. In addition, not all studies reviewed explicitly used standardised critical thinking indicators, so there may be differences in interpretation when analysing the findings. Therefore, further research is recommended to conduct empirical studies that directly test the synthesis of the literary learning models identified in this study. Experimental or quasi-experimental research with standardised critical thinking measurement instruments will provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of these learning models in various educational contexts.

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