



# "RELEASE Model: A Critical Literacy-Based Inquiry Approach to Improve Students' Reading-Writing Skills"

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## Authors' contributions

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop and test the effectiveness of the RILIS Model (Critical Literacy-Based Inquiry) in reading and writing learning in higher education. This model integrates five stages of learning, namely Research, Inquiry, Literacy, Interpretation, and Synthesis, which aims to improve students' critical thinking skills through an inquiry approach. The research method used is development research with a quantitative and qualitative approach. Data was collected through tests, classroom observations, and interviews with students and lecturers involved. The results of the study show that the application of the RILIS Model can improve students' critical literacy skills, strengthen text analysis skills, and motivate students to be actively involved in learning. In particular, this model is able to help students build more coherent and in-depth arguments, which reflects the mastery of the critical thinking process in reading and writing. Although there are challenges in implementation, such as the need for longer time and student readiness, the RILIS

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Model makes an important contribution to the development of learning methods based on critical literacy in higher education. This research is expected to be a reference for the development of curriculum and inquiry-based learning strategies in higher education.

**Keywords:** *RELEASE model, critical literacy-based inquiry, reading-writing learning, college, students.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapidly developing digital information, critical literacy skills have become an essential need for every individual, especially students in universities. Critical literacy refers to the ability to understand, evaluate, and analyze text or information in depth, which allows individuals to not only understand the content of the text, but also to question and interpret the messages implied in it (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). This ability not only plays a role in academic success but also becomes an important foundation in forming a society that is knowledgeable, critical thinking, and able to contribute constructively to social life. However, in the current higher education system, students' critical literacy skills have not been fully developed optimally. In learning to read and write, many students still show a tendency to understand texts only at a literal level without a deeper critical thinking process. The teaching methods applied in various universities often only focus on linear text comprehension or passive learning. As a result, students are not invited to be active in exploring, analyzing, and evaluating information critically (Freire, 1970). This gap indicates the need for more innovative learning approaches that can stimulate students' active involvement in the learning process and develop their critical thinking skills.

This gap indicates the need for an approach. In this context, a critical literacy-based inquiry approach emerges as a potential solution to overcome the limitations that exist in reading and writing learning in universities. This approach not only requires students to understand the text but also to engage in the process of meaning search, in-depth analysis, and contextual understanding. The inquiry approach in learning is an approach in which students or students are invited to learn through the discovery or exploration of important questions relevant to the topic being studied (Dewey, 1938). more innovative learning that can stimulate students' active involvement in the learning process and develop their critical thinking skills. In this context, the critical literacy-based inquiry approach emerges as a potential solution to overcome the limitations that exist in

reading and writing learning in higher education. This approach not only requires students to understand the text but also to engage in the process of meaning search, in-depth analysis, and contextual understanding. The inquiry approach in learning is an approach in which students or students are invited to learn through the discovery or exploration of important questions relevant to the topic being studied (Dewey, 1938). With this method, students will be guided to identify, research, and answer a variety of relevant critical questions, which in turn will improve their critical thinking skills.

One of the learning models that has the potential to integrate the inquiry approach with critical literacy is the Release Model, which is an acronym for Research, Inquiry, Literacy, Interpretation, and Synthesis. This model is designed to involve students in an interactive and continuous learning process, starting from initial research on the topic, asking critical questions, reading and evaluating the text in depth, to synthesizing the information obtained into an in-depth and structured view or argument.

Here is a detailed explanation of each stage in the Release Model:

1. **Research:** The first stage in the Release Model is the initial research, where students are expected to gather basic information about the topic to be studied. This research involves searching for various relevant sources, both from scientific literature and other credible media, to build an initial understanding. The goal of this stage is to equip students with a solid foundation of knowledge that will be the foundation for the next stages.
2. **Inquiry:** At the inquiry stage, students are encouraged to develop various critical questions about the topic studied. This stage plays an important role in stimulating students' curiosity and analytical skills, as they are invited to think beyond the limits of the basic understanding that has been acquired at the research stage. By asking in-depth questions, students are expected

to identify more complex issues and diverse perspectives on the topic.

3. **Literacy:** Literacy in the Release Model involves reading texts or literature in an in-depth and critical way. Students are invited to understand, analyze, and evaluate the content of the text systematically. In this stage, students learn to distinguish between facts and opinions, as well as understand biases or assumptions that may be hidden in the text. The literacy stage aims to improve students' ability to read critically and reflectively, which is an important basis for effective critical thinking skills.
4. **Interpretation:** At the interpretation stage, students are involved in analyzing information from various perspectives and relating the information to a broader context. This stage teaches students to look at problems or issues from different perspectives, thus enriching their understanding of the complexity and nuances of the topics studied. Interpretation allows students to relate the concepts they learn to personal experiences or to phenomena that occur in the real world.
5. **Synthesis:** Synthesis is the final stage in the Release Model, where students combine the information and insights they have gained from each previous stage into a cohesive and logical argument. This stage involves the ability to effectively summarize information and generate new ideas or views. Synthesis encourages students to think logically, present structured arguments, and conclude information in a way that can support their critical thinking.

The Release Model has the potential to change the paradigm of reading and writing learning in universities, from passive learning to learning that prioritizes active student involvement. Each stage in this model not only serves to improve students' reading and writing skills, but also trains them to become critical, reflective, and independent learners. By integrating critical literacy into the inquiry approach, students are invited to understand and process information more deeply and complexly.

This research aims to develop and implement the Release Model as an alternative reading and writing learning model in higher education that can improve students' critical literacy. Using

qualitative research methods, this study will observe the effectiveness of the Release Model in developing students' critical thinking skills, as well as see its impact on students' ability to read and write in a more reflective and analytical way. The results of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to the development of learning strategies that support critical literacy in higher education and improve the quality of literacy education in Indonesia.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with literature study and observation methods. The researcher collected data from various literature relevant to the development of a learning model based on critical literacy and inquiry approaches. The literature studied includes books, journal articles, and previous research that discusses critical literacy and inquiry learning.

Data collection was also carried out through observation and interviews with lecturers and students at several universities that have implemented the Release Model in reading and writing learning. The purpose of this method is to gain an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of this model in the context of real learning.

The data obtained were analyzed descriptively by highlighting important aspects in the application of the Release Model and its impact on students' critical literacy skills. Researchers identified patterns that emerged in observations and interviews and compared these results with findings from literature studies.

## 3. RESULTS

The results of this study are presented based on data obtained from observations, interviews, document analysis, and questionnaires. Each finding was analyzed with a focus on the effectiveness of the Release Model in improving students' critical literacy and its impact on the quality of reading and writing learning in higher education.

### 3.1 Active Involvement of Students in the Learning Process

In the early stages of the implementation of the Release Model, observation results show that most students still tend to be passive in asking questions and participating in discussions. However, after several learning sessions using this inquiry-based approach, there was a

significant increase in active engagement in students. They appear to be more eager to ask critical questions, develop their own thinking, and engage in in-depth group discussions. For example, in the Inquiry stage, students are invited to ask questions related to the text read. Observations show that students are able to generate various critical questions, such as questioning the assumptions in the text, exploring the author's perspective, and questioning the relevance of the information provided in the current context. This improvement reflects that the Inquiry stage in the Release Model successfully stimulates students' curiosity and encourages them to actively think critically.

In addition, interviews with lecturers revealed that through the Release Model, students who previously seemed less active in class began to show a higher interest in learning. The lecturer stated that the structure of the Release Model allows students to learn gradually, so that they are more prepared and confident in following the learning process. This shows that the Release Model can provide a good foundation for students to develop their critical literacy through active involvement in the learning process.

### **3.2 Improving Students' Critical Literacy Skills**

The improvement in students' critical literacy was measured through the analysis of their written assignments, which included essays and reflection notes generated during the implementation of the Release Model. Based on the results of the document analysis, it was found that the Release Model significantly improved students' abilities in critical literacy aspects, namely analysis, evaluation, interpretation, and synthesis of information.

- **Analysis:** In the Literacy stage, students are able to analyze the text in more depth, including recognizing the main arguments, distinguishing between facts and opinions, and identifying possible biases in the text. Before the implementation of the Release Model, most students were only able to explain the content of the text descriptively without conducting critical analysis. However, after several times of applying the model, there was a significant change

in their ability to assess and analyze arguments in the text.

- **Evaluation:** The Interpretation stage shows an improvement in students' ability to evaluate the validity of the information obtained. Students are able to relate the information in the text to relevant personal experiences or social phenomena, as well as evaluate the relevance of that information in a broader social or academic context. Some students also began to question the impact of the information they read on their daily lives, which is an indicator of good critical thinking.

Overall, the results of the document analysis showed a significant improvement in students' critical literacy skills. They are not only able to understand the text more deeply, but also are able to evaluate and synthesize information better, which is one of the main indicators of the success of the Release Model in improving critical literacy.

### **3.3 Evaluation of Student Satisfaction with the Release Model**

The questionnaire distributed to students after the implementation of the model showed that most students were satisfied with the use of the Release Model in reading and writing learning. The questionnaire data showed that 80% of students stated that the Release Model was very helpful in understanding the text more critically, while 15% stated that it was quite helpful. Only 5% of college students felt that the model was less helpful to them, citing that they still struggled to ask critical questions and develop in-depth analysis. From the results of in-depth interviews, students stated that the Release Model helps them in structuring a more structured learning process, where they are gradually able to master more complex reading-writing skills. Some students also stated that they felt better prepared to face other academic tasks that required critical literacy skills.

However, there are also several challenges expressed by students in the application of this model. For example, some students feel that the Inquiry stage takes a long time because they have to develop critical questions and discuss them in groups. They feel they need more practice in asking relevant and in-depth questions. Nonetheless, they realize that this

process helps them to think more critically and independently.

### **3.4 Challenges in Implementing the Release Model**

In its implementation, the Release Model also faces several challenges. One of the main challenges is the difficulty of students in understanding the concept of critical literacy in the early stages of implementation. The lecturers involved in this study stated that students need additional guidance to understand and carry out each stage in the model, especially in the Inquiry and Synthesis stages. To address these challenges, lecturers provide further guidance on how to ask critical questions and structure logical arguments.

Another challenge is the time it takes to implement each stage in the Release Model, which is quite long when compared to conventional learning methods. Students and lecturers suggested that the implementation time of this model can be arranged flexibly, adjusted to the number of meetings in one semester. This will allow students to have more time in undergoing each stage optimally.

### **3.5 Positive Impact on Other Academic Skills**

One of the interesting findings of this study is that the skills gained from the application of the Release Model also have a positive impact on students' academic abilities outside of reading and writing courses. Some students report that they feel better prepared to work on other tasks that require critical thinking skills, such as drafting research proposals, academic presentations, and class discussions. This shows that the critical literacy developed through the Release Model is transferable and provides long-term benefits for students in facing other academic challenges.

The results of this study show that the Release Model is effective in improving students' critical literacy, both in terms of active involvement, analysis, evaluation, and information synthesis skills. This model has also succeeded in increasing student learning satisfaction, although there are still challenges in its implementation, especially related to the time and ability of students to understand the concept of critical literacy comprehensively. These findings provide

new insights for the development of learning models that support the development of critical literacy in higher education and provide recommendations for improving the model to be more effective and efficient in its implementation.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

The results of this study show that the Release Model, as a critical inquiry-based reading-writing learning approach, has great potential in developing students' critical literacy in higher education. This discussion will explore the contribution of the Release Model to critical literacy, the factors that support the active involvement of students, the challenges faced in the application of the model, and the relevance of these findings to previous research.

### **4.1 Release Model in Developing Critical Literacy**

Critical literacy is an important need in the context of higher education because these skills allow students to not only understand texts in depth, but also to criticize and synthesize information from various perspectives. The Release Model, which consists of the Research, Inquiry, Literacy, Interpretation, and Synthesis stages, shows effectiveness in building these skills through a holistic and structured learning approach.

The results of the study show that students' analysis and synthesis skills have increased significantly through the application of the Release Model. In the Inquiry and Literacy stage, students are encouraged to ask critical questions and analyze information in depth. This stage involves a deeper thought process, where students must interpret the information in the text and relate it to a broader context. These findings are consistent with previous research that shows that inquiry-based learning is able to improve students' critical thinking skills, including the ability to evaluate information and build logical arguments (Arends, 2012; Brookfield, 2017).

### **4.2 Active Student Involvement as the Key to Success**

Active student involvement is one of the key factors in the success of the Release Model. This study found that the Inquiry stage in this model functions as a "driving motor" for students to participate and interact more deeply. By being given the freedom to ask questions and discuss

relevant topics, students not only become passive recipients of information, but also become active actors in the learning process.

In the perspective of constructivist learning theory, active engagement is an important part of effective learning. Students who play an active role in the learning process tend to have a deeper understanding and can retain information for a longer period of time (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the Release Model that supports active participation through critical inquiry creates a learning environment that allows students to build an understanding based on their own discoveries. These findings are in line with studies that show that learning models involving inquiry activities can improve students' conceptual understanding and critical thinking skills (Savery & Duffy, 2001).

### **4.3 Challenges in Implementing the Release Model**

Although effective, this study identifies several challenges in the implementation of the Release Model. The main challenge faced is the difficulty of students in understanding the concept of critical inquiry, especially in the early stages of implementation. Many students find themselves awkward and confused in asking relevant questions, because they are not yet familiar with the deeper critical thinking process.

This challenge shows that critical literacy skills require continuous development and adequate support from lecturers. The role of lecturers is very important in guiding students to understand and master each stage of the Release Model, especially in the Inquiry and Synthesis stages which require analytical and creative thinking. As Brookfield (2017) points out, critical literacy does not only depend on technical skills, but also on critical attitudes and mindsets that take time to develop. Therefore, this study suggests the need for initial training and specific guidance for students to improve their readiness to implement this model.

In addition, the time factor is also a challenge in the implementation of the Release Model. Some students feel that each stage in this model takes a long time, so they feel rushed to complete the task under the existing time limit. This shows that the implementation of the Release Model requires careful time planning so that each stage can run effectively without compromising the

quality of learning. In this context, more flexible scheduling and curriculum adjustments are needed so that the implementation of this model can be properly integrated into existing lecture meetings.

### **4.4 Relevance of Research Results to Critical Literacy in Higher Education**

These findings support previous literature that states that critical literacy is an important skill that must be developed at the higher education level (Giroux, 2006; Freire, 1970). The Release Model has proven to be effective in building critical literacy through a research-oriented, exploratory, and in-depth understanding approach. This is relevant in the context of higher education which increasingly prioritizes critical thinking skills as part of graduate competencies.

This study also shows that the development of critical literacy can have a long-term impact on students' academic abilities in various disciplines. Students who are trained to think critically through the Release Model show improvements in analytical and evaluation abilities required for other academic tasks. These findings are consistent with studies that state that critical literacy can support a wider range of academic skills, such as academic writing and effective presentation skills (McPeck, 1990; Ennis, 1987).

### **4.5 Implications and Recommendations for the Development of Learning Models in Higher Education**

The implications of this study are very relevant for lecturers and higher education institutions who are committed to improving students' critical literacy. The Release Model offers a learning approach that can accommodate different learning styles of students and improve their skills in dealing with the complexity of information. Therefore, this study recommends that higher education institutions consider integrating the Release Model or similar learning models into the curriculum as a learning strategy to improve critical literacy.

To support wider implementation, it is recommended that lecturers be provided with training in the application of this model, especially in the aspect of developing students' critical inquiry skills. In addition, curriculum

adjustments that provide more room for inquiry-based approaches also need to be considered so that this model can be applied optimally without excessive time pressure.

Overall, this study shows that the Release Model has great potential in improving students' critical literacy, although there are several challenges that need to be overcome. The implications of these findings make an important contribution to the development of learning models in higher education that better support critical thinking skills and deep literacy, which is an important need for graduates in today's information age.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the development of the Release Model (Critical Literacy-Based Inquiry) in reading and writing learning in higher education shows significant results in improving students' critical literacy. This model, which consists of five stages: Research, Inquiry, Literacy, Interpretation, and Synthesis, provides an effective learning framework to train students in analyzing, evaluating, and integrating information critically.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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