

ABSTRACT

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Critical literacy has gained increasing attention in English Language Teaching (ELT) as an approach that enables learners to critically engage with texts by examining issues of power, ideology, and representation. In Indonesia, the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, particularly in Phase E of senior secondary education, emphasizes deep learning, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. However, the extent to which such critical perspectives are represented in official English instructional documents remains underexplored. This study aims to 1) identify the theoretical and instructional approaches associated with critical engagement in English instructional documents of *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Phase E); 2) examine the extent to which these approaches align with global critical frameworks and Indonesia's national educational goals; and 3) analyze how critical orientations are represented explicitly or implicitly across these instructional documents. Employing a qualitative content analysis approach, the study analyzes *Capaian Pembelajaran* (CP), *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* (ATP), *Program Tahunan* (Prota), *Program Semester* (Prosem), *Modul Ajar*, and English textbooks for both students and teachers, using NVivo as the analytical tool.

The findings indicate that 1) the English instructional documents reflect theoretical and instructional orientations that implicitly support critical engagement, particularly through learner-centered pedagogy, higher-order thinking skills, contextualized learning, and engagement with authentic and multimodal texts, although such orientations are rarely articulated as an explicit pedagogical framework. Furthermore, 2) these orientations demonstrate partial alignment with global critical frameworks and Indonesia's national educational goals, especially in promoting deep learning, critical thinking, and learner autonomy; however, limited attention is given to sociopolitical dimensions such as ideology, power relations, and social critique. Finally, 3) critical competencies are represented unevenly across the instructional documents, with more explicit forms of critical engagement found in *Modul Ajar* and English textbooks through interpretive tasks, discussions of social issues, and multimodal activities, while curriculum planning documents primarily emphasize learning outcomes, instructional sequencing, and administrative coherence with minimal critical orientation.

Overall, the representation of critical perspectives within English instructional documents of *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Phase E) partially supports the development of students' analytical and reflective literacy competencies. While the curriculum framework facilitates deep learning and critical thinking, the limited explicit emphasis on issues of power, ideology, and social transformation constrains its

broader transformative potential. Therefore, strengthening the explicit integration of critical orientations within English instructional documents is recommended to enhance coherence between curriculum intentions and critical pedagogical practice.

Keywords: Critical literacy, Critical pedagogy, EFL curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka*, Multiliteracies.

