

## Teacher Communication Strategies: Fostering Critical Thinking Skills in The Classroom

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received Des 29, 2024

Accepted Feb 03, 2025

Published Online Mar 03, 2025

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#### Keywords:

Strategies for teacher communication

Critical thinking in students

Critical discourse analysis

Assessment-focused education

Professional development for educators

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### ABSTRACT

This study seeks to examine educators' communication tactics in instruction to enhance the development of students' critical thinking abilities. This study employs a qualitative methodology utilizing Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis paradigm to investigate three primary dimensions: texts, discursive practices, and social practices. Data were gathered from lesson plan documents, transcripts of classroom exchanges, and instructional materials at the secondary school level. The findings indicate that teachers predominantly employ directive and evaluative communication strategies, however there are encouraging signs of incorporating open-ended inquiries and rhetorical techniques that promote elaboration. Nonetheless, these techniques have not been uniformly implemented throughout the research population. Furthermore, the research of discursive practices uncovered conflicts between the requirements of an exam-centric educational framework and the necessity to cultivate students' critical thinking abilities. The study revealed that discourses regarding standardization and the integrative role of education impact learning at the level of social practice. This research significantly enhances the comprehension of communication strategy dynamics in education and provides recommendations for the reform of educational policy and teacher professional development. The findings are pertinent for equipping pupils to navigate the complexities of the modern world by fostering critical thinking abilities.

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## *Teacher Communication Strategies: Fostering Critical Thinking Skills in The Classroom*

### **1. Introduction**

The function of topic learning in secondary education extends beyond the enhancement of language skills; it is also crucial for fostering students' critical thinking abilities. This skill is seen as a fundamental competency necessary in the contemporary age of information and globalization (Farisma et al., 2023). The efficacy of cultivating critical thinking skills in topic learning is significantly contingent upon the communication tactics employed by educators during classroom interactions. The teacher's communication style is a vital element in the learning process that can either enhance or impede students' cognitive growth. Research by Setyowati and Sukmawan (2022) demonstrated that employing suitable communication techniques enhances students' capacity for critical text analysis and logical argument construction. Conversely, communication tactics that are monologic and solely focused on knowledge transfer impede the cultivation of students' critical thinking (Sholichah et al., 2020).

Critical discourse analysis of educators' communication methods provides a comprehensive insight into the utilization of language as a mechanism for constructing educational realities and influencing power dynamics within the classroom. This methodology enables the revelation of concealed assumptions and ideologies that underpin communication practices in education (Baroroh & Tolinggi, 2020). Critical discourse analysis enables an understanding of how teachers' communication tactics influence the development of students' identities as critical thinkers or, alternatively, as passive consumers of information. This study employs Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach, encompassing three analytical dimensions: text, discursive practices, and social practices. The text dimension emphasizes a micro-linguistic analysis of educators' communication tactics, encompassing lexical selection, syntactic arrangement, and rhetorical characteristics employed (Purwanti, 2020). The dimension of discursive practice analyzes the processes of text creation, dissemination, and consumption within the framework of subject learning. The social practice factor examines how teachers' communication techniques are shaped by and impact the wider socio-cultural milieu (Pedersen et al., 2024).

Employing Fairclough's paradigm to analyze subject instructors' communication methods facilitates an in-depth examination of the intricacies of classroom interactions. Kumaravadivelu's research (2020) demonstrates that this approach elucidates how educators

utilize language to build authority, affirm their professional identity, and position pupils within the learning process. This multidimensional approach can reveal revolutionary possibilities in teachers' communication strategies to foster students' critical thinking. The findings of this study are anticipated to yield profound insights into the dynamics of language use in topic learning and its ramifications for the enhancement of students' critical thinking abilities. This comprehension is essential due to the pivotal function of critical thinking in equipping pupils for the intricacies of the modern world (Deni Hadiansah et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the research findings may provide a foundation for the formulation of more effective communication strategies to enhance critical thinking education. This research may also contribute to educational policy reform and the professional development of teachers. This research can establish a basis for developing more focused and successful teacher training programs by identifying communication patterns that either facilitate or obstruct critical thinking (Agung, 2018). This aligns with global aspirations to enhance educational quality and equip youth for the challenges of the 21st century. This study can contribute to the conversation on the importance of language in shaping national identity and character development. According to (Ramadha & Zuhaida, 2021), subject learning serves not only as a communication tool but also as a vehicle for imparting civic values and fostering critical understanding of socio-political issues. Consequently, a critical discourse study of subject teachers' communication tactics can facilitate a more extensive dialogue regarding the significance of language education in the framework of national development (Karman, 2023).

This section examines four fundamental characteristics of topic learning in secondary education: critical discourse analysis, pedagogical communication tactics, the notion of critical thinking in education, and subject content. Exploring these factors will yield a deeper understanding of the complexity and transformative possibilities of topic learning in the modern day.

### ***Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis***

Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis paradigm provides a thorough methodology for examining discourse across three interconnected dimensions. This methodology has been extensively employed across multiple research domains, such as linguistics, sociology, and communication studies (Wilson, 2024). The initial component, text analysis, emphasizes micro-linguistic elements including language choice, grammatical structure, and textual order. The second dimension, discursive practices, analyzes the production, dissemination, and interpretation of texts within a specific social environment. The third component, social practices, investigates the interplay between speech and its impact on

larger social systems. the influence of discourse on and its effects on broader social structures (Lipovšek & Ilc, 2023).

Fairclough's technique is robust due to its capacity to connect micro-linguistic research with the wider sociocultural context. This enables academics to elucidate the correlation between language utilization and power dynamics within a society (Putra, 2023). In an educational context, critical discourse analysis can be employed to investigate how teachers' communication tactics affect students' formation of knowledge and identity (Rihlah et al., 2022). This method additionally aids in uncovering concealed ideologies inside texts and discursive practices, as well as their reproduction or contestation through language (Arifin & Firmansyah, 2020)

### ***Teacher Communication Strategy in Learning***

The communication strategy employed by teachers is an essential element of the learning process, encompassing various verbal and nonverbal strategies. These strategies are employed to efficiently convey educational content and promote significant interactions in the classroom (Pedersen et al., 2024). As stated by (Akram et al., 2023), teacher communication tactics function not just as a method for conveying knowledge but also as instruments for fostering relationships, regulating the classroom, and establishing a supportive learning environment. Commonly employed strategies encompass questioning techniques, feedback provision, the use of analogies and metaphors, and scaffolding, each serving a distinct function in facilitating the learning process (Mirja, 2022). The efficacy of teacher communication tactics is significantly influenced by numerous environmental circumstances. Dongoran et al. (2023) underscored that the selection and implementation of communication techniques must take into account student profiles, learning objectives, and classroom dynamics. Moreover, (Roosita & Setyawan, 2023) contend that educators' flexibility and adaptability in employing many communication styles are essential for effective learning interactions. This highlights the necessity of ongoing professional development for educators to enhance their array of communication tactics and their capacity to implement them effectively in diverse learning environments.

### ***The Concept of Critical Thinking in Education***

Critical thinking is a multifaceted cognitive process that encompasses a range of advanced mental abilities. Facione (2020) characterizes it as a process encompassing the study, appraisal, and synthesis of information to generate rational judgments and conclusions. These skills encompass information processing, the evaluation of source credibility, the identification of implicit assumptions, and the consideration of diverse perspectives. Moreover, Ennis (2018) underscores that critical thinking encompasses the inclination to apply these abilities

consistently, which entails healthy skepticism, open-mindedness, and a readiness to evaluate evidence that challenges one's own convictions.

The cultivation of critical thinking skills has emerged as a primary goal of education across multiple fields, including language acquisition (Syafiti et al., 2022). The use of critical thinking in language education enhances students' capacity to analyze texts, assess arguments, and derive meaning more profoundly (Setyawati et al., 2020). This aligns with the perspective of Pol et al. (2024), who asserted that cultivating critical thinking skills within language learning enhances not only students' linguistic proficiency but also their capacity to engage effectively in academic discourse and confront real-world challenges. (Ariyanto et al., 2020) asserted that incorporating critical thinking into language education enhances students' metacognitive awareness of their cognitive processes, hence improving their capacity for independent and adaptive learning.

### ***Disciplines in Secondary Education***

Subjects in secondary education have a crucial role in developing students' communication and literacy competencies. The curriculum and learning objectives of the subject have been revised multiple times to align with the evolving national educational requirements. The current emphasis in education encompasses not only the mastery of grammar and writing skills but also the cultivation of critical and creative thinking abilities through language (Wirawan, 2022). The learning objectives encompass enhancing knowledge of cultural variety and reinforcing national identity via language (Rosiana, 2020). Nonetheless, the execution of this curriculum continues to encounter obstacles, particularly with the adaptation of pedagogical approaches to meet the requirements of 21st-century competences (Ationg et al., 2021).

Instructing the topic in secondary schools encounters numerous modern obstacles. A primary problem is reconciling the disparity between the formal language instructed in educational settings and the vernacular spoken by students, which is shaped by slang and social media (Riwayatningsih et al., 2022). Furthermore, educators must integrate technology into language instruction, necessitating the cultivation of digital capabilities for both instructors and learners (Nurhidayat et al., 2022). A significant problem is sustaining the relevance and appeal of subject learning in the context of English's worldwide dominance, while also fostering an appreciation for the richness of Indonesian language and literature among the younger generation (Hernanda et al., 2022).

## **2. Research Methods**

This study employed a qualitative methodology utilizing critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate the communication techniques of subject teachers within the classroom setting. CDA is utilized in this research due to its effectiveness in analyzing language, power, and ideology in education. The research data were gathered from multiple sources, including lesson plan documents that demonstrate the communication strategies devised by educators, transcripts of classroom interactions that capture the direct application of these strategies, and subject teaching materials utilized at the secondary school level. This study specifically focuses on senior high schools in Palopo City. The data analysis employed Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework, comprising three dimensions: text analysis, which scrutinizes the linguistic characteristics of teachers' communication strategies; discursive practice analysis, which investigates the production, distribution, and interpretation of these strategies within the educational context; and social practice analysis, which explores the influence of and impact on the wider socio-cultural environment regarding teachers' communication strategies. This methodology enables researchers to reveal both the linguistic dimensions of educators' communication techniques and its ramifications for knowledge building, power dynamics within the classroom, and the enhancement of students' critical thinking abilities in subject matter learning.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

This section provides a thorough examination of three essential elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) according to Norman Fairclough's theory, applied to the context of subject learning. The text dimension is analyzed to uncover micro linguistic features, the discursive practice dimension is detailed to comprehend the mechanisms of discourse production and consumption, and the social practice dimension is investigated to discern the interrelationship between discourse and larger social structures. This study seeks to enhance comprehension of the intricacies of speech in topic learning through a multidimensional approach.

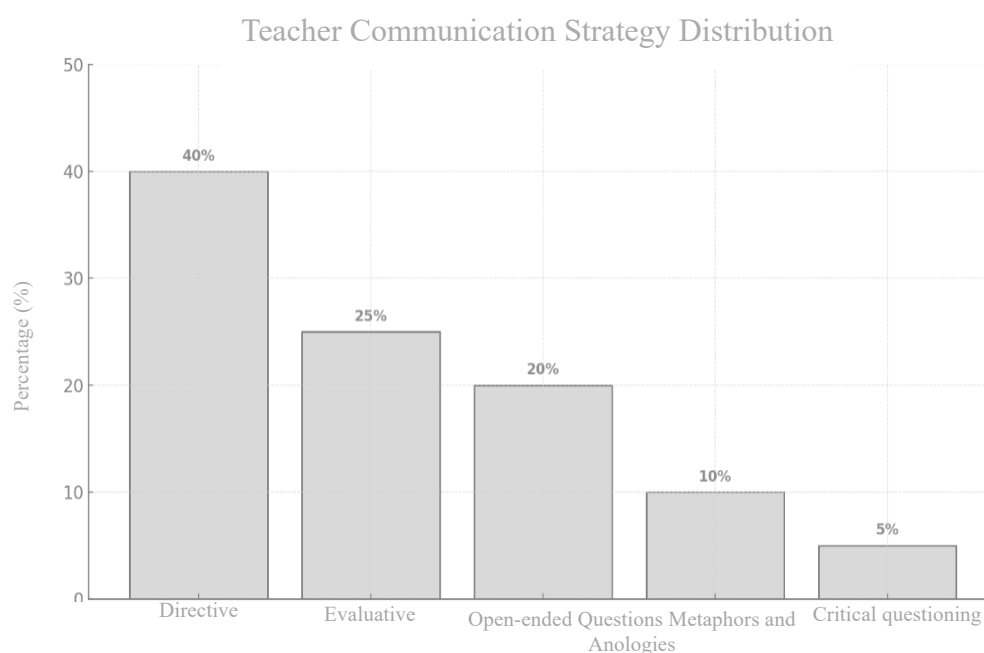
### ***Text Dimension Analysis***

An investigation of subject teachers' communication tactics at the micro-linguistic level uncovers intricate and varied patterns of language utilization. Directive and evaluative language and sentence structures remain prevalent, frequently exemplified by modalities like “must,” “mandatory,” and “necessary” in teacher instructions. This phenomenon signifies the presence of uneven power relations in classroom interactions (Suryandani & Budasi, 2021). Nonetheless,

initiatives exist to equilibrate these power dynamics by employing open-ended inquiries and prompts that foster elaboration, such as “What is your perspective?” and “Please elaborate further” (Lee and Moon, 2023). These linguistic methods can stimulate students' critical thinking, albeit their application requires enhancement (Kawalkar and Vijapurkar, 2023).

Rhetorical study reveals substantial employment of metaphors and analogies in elucidating abstract topics. These tactics have demonstrated efficacy in aiding students' comprehension of intricate topics, particularly in literature and language acquisition (Diana et al., 2022). Nevertheless, several researchers caution that excessive reliance on metaphors and parallels without thorough analysis may constrain students' views and impede independent thought (Retnomurti & Hendrawaty, 2022). Consequently, it is essential for educators to equilibrate the use of these rhetorical tactics with inquiries that promote critical analysis and evaluation.

The findings revealed discrepancies in the application of communication tactics among educators. Certain educators shown a pronounced inclination to employ inquiries that promote higher-order cognition, such as “Why is this so?” and “What is the evidence?” (Febrianti et al., 2022). This method aligns with instructional ideas that underscore the significance of scaffolding in cultivating students' critical thinking abilities (Riyanto et al., 2013). The utilization of this method remains infrequent and inconsistent among the examined teachers, highlighting the necessity for further focused professional development in this area (Anjarsari et al., 2022)



**Figure 1.** Distribution of Teacher Communication Strategies



The data presented above depicts the distribution of communication strategies employed by subject teachers within this research sample. While directive and evaluative tactics remain predominant, there are initiatives to incorporate strategies that foster students' critical thinking. This discovery underscores the necessity for a paradigm shift in pedagogical approaches to prioritize the cultivation of students' critical and creative thinking abilities (Yasinta et al., 2020). The findings of a critical discourse analysis of the communication strategies employed by subject teachers indicated a conflict between conventional, authoritative methods and innovative attempts to promote students' critical thinking. The findings underscore the necessity for ongoing evolution in pedagogical methods, more targeted professional development for educators, and curriculum modifications that facilitate the incorporation of dialogic and inquiry-based communication tactics. Consequently, subject learning can enhance not only linguistic proficiency but also critical and creative thinking abilities, which are vital for pupils navigating the complexities of the modern world.

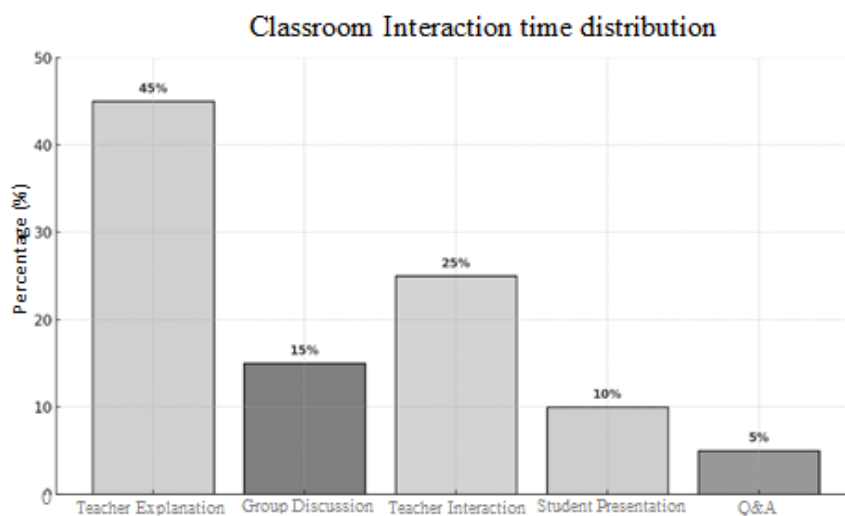
#### ***Dimensional Analysis of Discursive Practices***

The formulation of communication strategies by subject instructors is profoundly affected by their understanding of the curriculum and the requirements of the educational system. Research indicates a propensity for educators to embrace a test-centric methodology, evidenced by the prevalence of practice questions and a focus on "correct" responses (Handayani et al., 2022). This behavior can be ascribed to the pressures of an evaluative system that continues to prioritize standardized test outcomes (Maroun & Tienken, 2024). Nonetheless, there are progressive initiatives aimed at incorporating modern topics and authentic texts pertinent to students' life, which may foster critical thinking (Anjarsari et al., 2022). This method aligns with pedagogical ideas that underscore the significance of contextualizing education and fostering critical literacy (Trixa & Kaspar, 2024).

The distribution of discourse in classroom interactions exhibits a teacher-centered pattern, characterized by a predominance of instructor explanations and directions in the allocation of speaking time. Research indicates that, on average, 70% of classroom engagement time is dominated by the teacher's voice (Sulistiyowati, 2019). However, there are discrepancies in teachers' particular methodologies, with certain educators employing group discussion techniques and student presentations that facilitate increased student engagement (Dewi et al., 2023). Participatory tactics have been beneficial in enhancing student involvement and fostering communication skills (Mirja, 2022). Nonetheless, their implementation remains constrained and inconsistent among educators, highlighting the necessity for more focused professional development in this area (Rosni, 2021).



The consumption of texts by students reveals a disparity between the expectations of professors and the interpretations of students. Certain students often employ a rote methodology, seeking the "correct" response rather than cultivating a critical study of the text (Saputri et al., 2020). This phenomena can be ascribed to entrenched learning habits and the impact of an assessment system that prioritizes knowledge reproduction (Susanto et al., 2022). This signifies the necessity for more explicit communication tactics to promote and reward students' diverse thinking. Recent studies indicate that employing tactics like think-aloud protocols and planned academic debates might enhance students' critical thinking skills in language acquisition (Suantari, 2020).



**Figure 2.** Distribution of Classroom Interaction Time

The data presented above depicts the allocation of class interaction time in subject learning. Despite the predominance of teacher-centered activities, there is an effort to incorporate more participatory learning practices. This discovery underscores the necessity for a paradigm shift in instructional methodologies to prioritize the enhancement of students' critical and creative thinking abilities (Yurinda & Hidayat, 2023). The examination of the production, distribution, and consumption of discourse in subject learning uncovers a conflict between the requirements of an exam-centric educational system and initiatives aimed at fostering students' critical thinking abilities. A systemic transformation necessitating alterations in education policy, teacher professional development, and evaluation system reform is essential to foster a learning environment that enhances students' critical and creative thinking skills within the framework of topic learning.

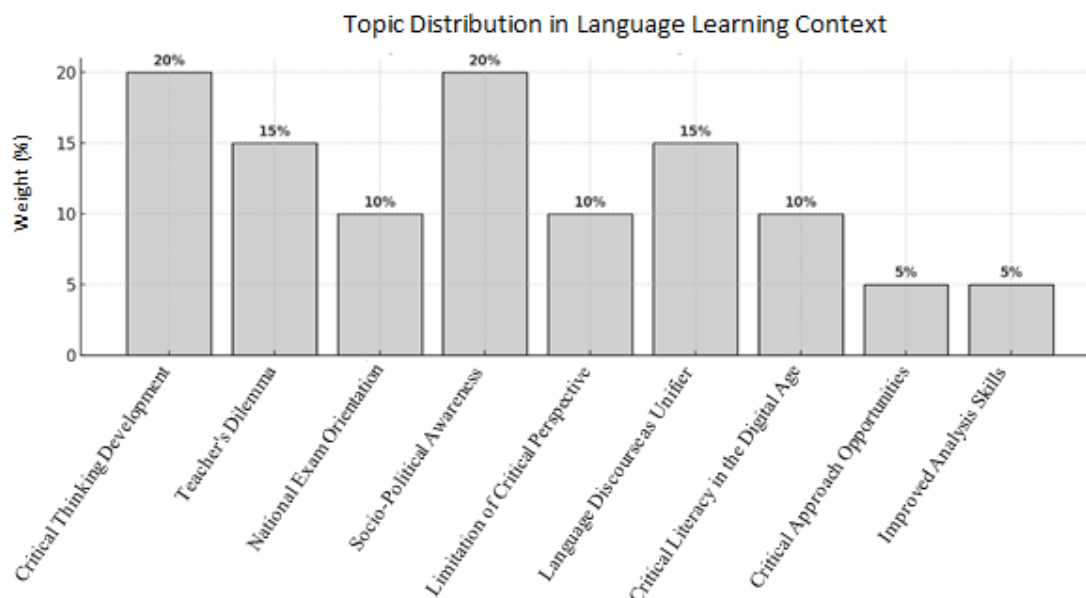
#### ***Analysis of the Social Practice Dimension***

The institutional framework for subject learning in secondary schools remains

significantly shaped by a focus on national examinations and standardization. Research indicates that the obligation to ready pupils for standardized assessments presents a quandary for educators, forcing them to choose between test-centric instruction and fostering advanced critical thinking abilities (Lesmana & Bunawan, 2016). This issue occurs not just in Indonesia but also in several nations with test-oriented educational systems (Muntari et al., 2019). A poll of 500 subject teachers revealed that 68% felt pressured to implement a "teaching to the test" methodology, despite acknowledging its shortcomings in fostering students' critical thinking abilities (Widodo, 2019). This scenario exemplifies what (Berliner, 2011) refers to as the "dilemma of competing imperatives" in education, when accountability requirements frequently clash with overarching educational objectives.

In the wider societal environment, a prevailing narrative frames the subject as a mechanism for unifying the nation and its national identity. An analysis of language policy in Indonesia indicates a preference for the integrative role of the national language, overshadowing the cultivation of critical viewpoints regarding language use within a socio-political framework. This phenomena aligns with Tollefson's (2020) concept of "hegemonic language ideologies," which can restrict the scope for pluralistic methods in language acquisition. A longitudinal study by Lie (2022) indicated a steady transformation in the perspectives of teachers and students regarding the subject's role, with 57% of respondents acknowledging the significance of cultivating a critical awareness of language use across many social contexts.

The growing recognition of the significance of critical literacy in the digital information era creates opportunity for the incorporation of more critical methodologies in language education. Recent study indicates that students engaged in critical literacy-based language learning methodologies demonstrate notable enhancements in text analysis capabilities and socio-political consciousness. The findings are supported by a comparative study by (Luke, 2012), which demonstrated a favorable link between the application of critical literacy approaches in language acquisition and the enhancement of students' higher-order thinking skills. Data from 20 schools using a critical literacy-based curriculum indicated an average enhancement of 23% in students' critical thinking scores following one year of execution (Janks, 2013).



**Figure 3.** Context of Subject Learning

The diagram above depicts the intricacy of the topic learning context shaped by numerous institutional and social elements. Despite obstacles related to examination orientation and prevailing narratives regarding the function of language, the growing recognition of the significance of critical literacy presents chances for transformative learning methodologies. The examination of the institutional and social environment of subject learning uncovers conflicts among the imperatives of standardization, the unifying role of the national language, and the necessity for fostering critical literacy. A comprehensive approach is required to reconcile these needs while prioritizing the cultivation of students' critical thinking abilities and socio-political consciousness. This transition necessitates alterations in pedagogical methods as well as comprehensive educational policy reforms to establish a learning ecosystem conducive to fostering critical literacy within the framework of subject learning.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the offered discussion, three conclusions may be reached regarding text dimension analysis: Communication styles employed by subject teachers exhibit a dichotomy between conventional directive methods and innovative ones aimed at fostering students' critical thinking. While directive and evaluative language remains prevalent, there are encouraging signs of incorporating open questions and rhetorical methods that promote elaboration. Nonetheless, the prevalence and allocation of tactics that foster critical thinking remain constrained and inconsistent. This emphasizes the necessity of reforming teaching

methodologies and enhancing focused professional development for educators to maximize the efficacy of topic learning in fostering students' critical and creative thinking abilities.

*Examination of the aspects of discursive practices:* The production, distribution, and consumption of discourse in subject learning illustrates the conflict between the requirements of an exam-centric education system and the goal of fostering students' critical thinking abilities. The prevalence of teacher-centered activities and students' inclination towards rote learning suggest that discursive practices remain predominantly conservative. The rise of progressive initiatives to incorporate modern challenges and participative tactics suggests the possibility of transformation. Systemic transformation, encompassing the revision of education policies, enhancement of teacher professional development, and reconfiguration of the evaluation system, is essential for establishing a learning ecology that fosters the cultivation of critical and creative thinking skills within subject learning.

*Examination of the Aspects of Social Practices:* The institutional and social circumstances of subject learning are shaped by the conflict between standardization demands, the unifying role of the national language, and the necessity for critical literacy development in the digital age. Despite the prevailing emphasis on national examinations and the predominant narrative regarding language as a unifying force for the nation, there are signs of a changing perspective and a growing recognition of the need of critical literacy. Both findings underscore the necessity for a comprehensive approach to subject learning that reconciles both demands, while prioritizing the cultivation of students' critical thinking abilities and socio-political consciousness. This transition necessitates innovation in pedagogical methods and a comprehensive reformation of educational policy to establish a learning ecosystem that fosters the advancement of critical literacy within the framework of current Indonesian identity.

A revolution in classroom communication strategies is necessary to enhance critical thinking abilities by allowing increased active student participation, promoting critical text analysis, and incorporating pertinent contemporary topics. This requires support through modifications in educational policy and teacher professional development that underscore the significance of critical literacy in language acquisition.

## **5. Conflict of Interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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