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Teacher Strategies in Improving Students' Critical Thinking Skills Through In-Depth Learning of SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa Students

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the strategies, obstacles faced by teachers, and supporting factors in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa. This research is a descriptive qualitative study. Data collection techniques used were observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects were Indonesian language teachers and eighth-grade students at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa. Data analysis consisted of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that 1). Teachers' strategies for improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa consist of planning, implementation, and assessment. 2). Obstacles faced by teachers in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa consist of two factors: internal and external. Internal factors include differences in students' understanding levels and visual impairments experienced by some students. Meanwhile, external factors include insufficient family support, negative community influences, and limited adequate learning tools and media. These obstacles pose challenges for teachers in implementing effective in-depth learning to improve students' critical thinking skills. 3). Supporting factors for improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa include collaboration between teachers and support from the principal. Collaboration between teachers plays a crucial role in designing learning strategies that enhance students' critical thinking skills, while also enabling teachers to exchange experiences, ideas, and best practices in the teaching and learning process. The principal provides support through training, guidance, and advice to teachers, enabling more effective implementation of in-depth learning.

Keywords: Strategy, Skills, Critical Thinking, Deep Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Learning Indonesian at the junior high school level plays a crucial role in helping students communicate effectively and improving their language skills in everyday life. Furthermore, Indonesian language learning also serves to train students' critical thinking skills in absorbing and processing knowledge. Through this learning, students can recognize their own identity, understand their own and others' cultures, and express thoughts and feelings in clear and precise language, while honing analytical and imaginative skills.

However, the reality on the ground shows that Indonesian language learning often focuses solely on cognitive aspects and memorization. The dominant lecture method results in students being less actively involved in the learning process. Based on observations conducted on October 20, 2025, at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa, this condition was evident in low student participation in discussions, a lack of understanding of the concepts being taught, and limited critical thinking skills during teaching and learning activities. It was also apparent that teachers had not sufficiently developed strategies and approaches in their teaching methods. This resulted in students having difficulty understanding the material, particularly critical thinking in Indonesian language lessons. As a result, the learning process felt monotonous, students were less active, and there was a lack of interaction between students and teachers during the learning process.

This situation impacts students' low critical thinking and in-depth learning abilities in Indonesian language subjects, particularly in drawing conclusions and identifying the main idea of a text or report. Many students only know the definition and procedural steps for finding the main idea, without a comprehensive understanding of the purpose, principles, and process of identifying the main idea in a text, and drawing conclusions based on the information obtained. This situation contributes to low student learning outcomes, both in terms of material comprehension and critical thinking development. This is further reinforced by the statement of Ms. Hijrah Wahyuni, S.Pd., an Indonesian language teacher, who stated that students tend to be less enthusiastic about participating in learning due to a monotonous approach and minimal active student involvement in discussions and problem-solving relevant to real life.

According to Suryanto (2025:15), this problem requires a transformation in learning approaches, one of which is implementing the concept of deep learning. In an educational context, deep learning is not only related to a deeper understanding of the material but also involves conscious, meaningful, and enjoyable aspects. By using this approach, Indonesian language teachers are expected to make the learning process more educational and to engage students' feelings and behavior.

The urgency of this research lies in the need for innovation in Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level, particularly at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa. According to Hartini (2017:14), implementing the deep learning concept provides a concrete solution to the classic problem of monotonous Indonesian language learning and the lack of critical thinking skills in students. Through this research, teachers can improve the quality of learning while developing students' character more holistically.

In this situation, deep learning emerges as an approach aimed at meeting current educational needs. This approach emphasizes comprehensive conceptual understanding, meaningful information

processing, and students' ability to relate learned knowledge to everyday life. Unlike surface learning, which emphasizes memorization and mastery of facts, deep learning encourages students to think critically, reflectively, and creatively in solving various problems.

Suryanto (2025:15) states that implementing the deep learning concept is crucial, considering the various dynamics of the learning process and the demands of today's world. According to the data the researcher collected, social issues and high exposure to gadgets are contributing factors to reduced attention and motivation in learning activities. Therefore, in-depth learning that engages students' emotions is necessary, enabling them to become more aware of their own state. This learning approach also emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning of the subject matter being taught.

In-depth learning focuses not only on cognitive processes but also encompasses affective and psychomotor aspects. In this approach, students not only learn a concept but also understand the rationale behind it, are able to apply it in relevant contexts, and assess its implications.

RESEARCH ELABORATIONS

The author acknowledges that this is not the first research in the field of education. This literature review serves as a comparison to assess the strengths and weaknesses of previous research. Furthermore, previous studies also play a significant role in obtaining additional information related to the proposed research. The literature review used as initial references in conducting this research includes:

1. Proceedings of the 2018 National Seminar on Indonesian Language and Literature Education by Prof. Dr. Sarwiji Suwandi, M.Pd. from Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, entitled "Implementation of Indonesian Language Learning Oriented to the Development of Students' Higher-Order Thinking Skills." This paper explains the concept of higher-order thinking skills and the corresponding learning practices, as well as the roles and challenges faced by teachers. The difference between this paper and the current research is that the paper focuses on the presentation of the concept of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and its implementation in Indonesian language learning, including the roles and challenges faced by teachers. While the current research focuses on teacher strategies in implementing an in-depth learning approach to improve students' critical thinking competencies.
2. An article by Refiliza from Padang State University, Faculty of Education, Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, 2025, entitled "Indonesian Language Learning Strategies to Develop Critical Thinking Skills in the Context of 21st-Century Education." This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on exploring the effectiveness of problem-based and project-based learning strategies in improving students' critical thinking skills in Indonesian language learning. The results of this study indicate that problem-based learning is more effective in improving students' critical thinking skills compared to project-based learning. Problem-based learning encourages students to think analytically and evaluate arguments, while project-based learning emphasizes the application of knowledge in real-world contexts. The difference between

previous research and the current study lies in the focus of the study. The previous study focused on exploring the effectiveness of problem-based and project-based learning strategies in improving students' critical thinking skills in Indonesian language learning, while the current study focuses on teachers' strategies in implementing deep learning approaches to improve students' critical thinking competencies.

3. A journal by Yeni Nuraini from Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Department of Indonesian Language Education, 2025, entitled "The Role of Teachers in Implementing Deep Learning Strategies to Improve Critical Thinking in Elementary School Students." This study used a qualitative approach, focusing on investigating teachers' contributions to developing children's critical thinking skills in elementary schools through problem-based learning methods. The results of this study model positively contributed to improving critical thinking skills, active participation, and student engagement in the learning process. The difference between the previous research and the current study lies in the focus of the study. Previous research focused on developing elementary school students' critical thinking skills through problem-based learning methods, while the research to be conducted focuses on teacher strategies in implementing an in-depth learning approach to improve students' critical thinking competencies.

METHODS

The type of research the researcher will conduct is qualitative descriptive research. According to Sugiyono (2017:15), research that relies on a qualitative approach produces data in the form of descriptions. The researcher chose this approach because the research objective aligns with the characteristics of a qualitative approach, namely to explain a phenomenon by collecting in-depth and meaningful data. In other words, this research seeks to uncover the hidden values behind the visible data. Therefore, qualitative research places more emphasis on meaning, in contrast to quantitative research, which focuses on generalizations.

According to Sugiyono (2010:320), data collection techniques are an important process in research, because the main goal of research is to obtain and collect data. This research conducted the data collection process using the triangulation method, which is a combination of the following three methods: Observation, Interviews, and Documentation.

Data analysis is a technique for searching and compiling structured data obtained during observation, interviews, and documentation. Categories are then described through organization, synthesized, and patterns are created, and conclusions are determined, which are then determined and considered important, and conclusions are drawn that can be easily interpreted by both the individual and others.

The Miles and Huberman data analysis model was used in this study. Qualitative research analyzes data both during data collection and over specific periods. From the beginning of the interview, the researcher analyzes the data using the informant's answers. If the interview results do not provide an answer, the researcher will ask another question or move on to the next question. Qualitative data analysis is carried out continuously and interactively until the data is saturated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

1. Teacher strategies in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning for students of SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa.

This research was conducted at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa starting on January 19, 2026, with the title "Teacher strategies for improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa." The study's resource persons included the Vice Principal for Curriculum, an Indonesian language teacher, and seventh-grade students at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa. This was done to focus the research findings on the research problem.

Based on observations and interviews conducted by the researcher at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa, the researcher was able to identify teachers' strategies for improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa. All data and results of this study will be described based on the following research questions:

A. Planning Stage.

1) Preparation for Implementing Deep Learning

SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa has demonstrated good readiness in planning the implementation of an immersive learning approach. This readiness is demonstrated through teacher participation in various professional development activities, such as training, webinars, seminars, and mentoring aimed at improving teacher understanding and skills in effectively implementing an immersive learning approach in the classroom.

2) Teachers understand CP, formulate TP, compile ATP, plan learning and assessment.

Teacher strategies in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning are as follows: a) Preparation for Implementing In-Depth Learning; b) Teachers Understand CP, Formulate TP, Compile ATP, Plan Learning and Assessment.

B. Implementation Stage.

Based on interviews and observations, core activities that integrate an in-depth learning approach can improve students' critical thinking skills. Teachers implement the stages of understanding, applying, and reflecting continuously, starting with building initial understanding through appropriate media, such as images, text, or fictional video stories, accompanied by trigger questions. Students then apply their understanding through group discussions using Student Worksheets (LKPD) with the teacher's guidance as a facilitator. The reflection stage is carried out through presentations, responses from other groups, and individual evaluations, thereby strengthening students' learning experiences. Differences in material, media, and evaluation focus at each meeting indicate that teachers adapt core activities to the characteristics of the material and students' needs, so that learning consistently increases motivation, engagement, and critical thinking skills.

C. Closing Activities

Students' critical thinking skills are enhanced through an in-depth learning approach throughout the learning process, from the initial,

core, and closing activities. In the initial activities, prompts and questions and answers build students' readiness to think and stimulate analysis. During the core activities, students observe images or videos, discuss in groups, work on worksheets, present discussion results, and respond to other groups' opinions, thus training them to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information. In the closing activities, reflection and drawing conclusions allow students to reassess their understanding, recognize errors, and draw logical conclusions, thus continuously developing their critical thinking.

2. Obstacles faced by teachers in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning for students at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa.

Internal factors include students having difficulty understanding lessons, having varying characteristics, having blurred vision, lacking enthusiasm for learning, and not paying attention to teacher explanations. External factors, on the other hand, involve the school environment, such as interactions between teachers and students. Good interaction between the two can support an effective learning process. Families also play a crucial role, with parents constantly supervising and providing attention to their children while they study at home. Furthermore, the social environment, including students' social circles and the influence of gadget use, can cause students to lose focus on learning. Learning devices are also a crucial factor; inadequate devices can disrupt the learning process. Conversely, with good learning devices, learning becomes more enjoyable and students can be more actively involved.

3. Supporting factors in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning of SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa students.

Interview results indicate that the principal of SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa is proactive in providing support to teachers for professional development. He provides training and opportunities for teachers to improve new skills, which leads to better confidence and motivation among them. The principal supports new ideas and always provides the necessary materials and resources. He also gives teachers the freedom to try innovative teaching methods, so they can concentrate more on developing students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa.

DISCUSSION

1. Teacher strategies in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning for students of SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa.

There are several obstacles faced by teachers in their efforts to improve students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa, namely:

a. Internal Factors

Factors originating from within the students are important elements that impact the learning process. The unique characteristics of each student, such as variations in understanding material and difficulties with visualization, can complicate teaching. Furthermore, some students may learn more slowly, requiring a more personalized approach to the learning process. To address this, teachers must consider each student's individual needs and abilities when planning learning strategies.

b. External Factors

There are several internal factors that influence the learning methods faced by teachers in their efforts to improve students' critical thinking skills at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa, namely:

1) Environment

An unsupportive family, where parents are not actively involved in helping their children learn at home, can be a significant barrier to the development of students' critical thinking skills. Furthermore, an unsupportive school environment or a lack of good communication between teachers and students can hinder the learning process. Therefore, teachers must collaborate with parents and schools to create a better learning environment and encourage the development of students' critical thinking skills.

Syarifudin (2023:23) highlights that there is another factor, namely societal influence, which can also hinder students' critical thinking skills. Everyday interactions and the impact of technology, especially through the use of devices, can distract students from learning and reduce their engagement in the learning process. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to be aware of societal influences on student learning and strive to help students develop critical thinking skills despite these influences.

According to Suryanto (2025:35-36), the learning environment emphasizes the integration of physical space, virtual space, and a learning culture to support critical thinking. Physical and virtual spaces are designed flexibly to encourage collaboration, reflection, exploration, and the sharing of ideas, thus optimally accommodating various student learning styles. The learning culture in critical thinking involves the formation of positive norms centered on core values, such as faith and devotion to God Almighty, strengthening citizenship attitudes, communication skills, critical reasoning, creativity, developing collaborative and independent attitudes, and promoting physical and mental well-being. With this integration, the learning environment not only supports the development of knowledge but also develops holistic skills and character in accordance with the dimensions of the graduate profile.

c. Lack of Learning Resources

The lack of adequate learning resources is a problem for teachers at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa. Iba (2023: 359-374) states that inadequate learning tools, such as outdated textbooks and a lack of modern tools for visualizing material in a more engaging and effective manner, can reduce the quality of teaching and affect student participation levels during the learning process. Therefore, schools need to strive to provide adequate learning tools to support teaching effectiveness and maximize the development of students' critical thinking.

According to Suryanto (2025: 36), the use of digital technology also plays a crucial role as a catalyst for creating more interactive, collaborative, and contextual learning. The availability of diverse learning resources provides an opportunity to create meaningful knowledge for students. The role of digital technology is not limited to presentation tools and information providers (e.g., displaying materials, videos, and searching for information), but also serves as a collaboration tool (e.g., through workspaces or e-learning platforms), and is a medium that supports student exploration and innovation, enabling students to critically select and filter information.

Based on the analytical data above, the researcher concluded that teachers' obstacles in improving students' critical thinking skills

through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa are influenced by internal factors such as differences in student abilities and characteristics, as well as external factors such as lack of family and community support, a less than conducive learning environment, and limited learning resources. This situation requires cooperation from all parties and optimal utilization of resources for more effective in-depth learning.

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4. Supporting factors in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning of SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa students.

According to Suryanto (2025:35), learning partnerships form dynamic relationships between teachers, students, parents, communities, and professional partners. This approach shifts control of learning from the teacher alone to collaborative learning. Teachers can build students' roles as active co-learners who design and direct the teacher's learning strategies. Teachers can involve families, communities, or other groups as partners, providing support and an authentic context for learning. They can also facilitate connections with experts or professional partners to provide feedback and increase the relevance of learning.

Supporting factors in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa are as follows: collaboration Between Teachers and principal Support.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Teacher strategies for improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa consist of planning, implementation, and assessment.
2. Obstacles faced by teachers in improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa consist of two factors: internal and external. Internal factors include differences in students' understanding levels and visual impairments experienced by some students. Meanwhile, external factors include insufficient family support, negative community influences, and limited adequate learning tools and media. These obstacles pose challenges for teachers in implementing effective in-depth learning to improve students' critical thinking skills.

3. Supporting factors for improving students' critical thinking skills through in-depth learning at SMPN Satap Kalama Mamasa include collaboration between teachers and support from the principal. Collaboration between teachers plays a crucial role in designing learning strategies that enhance students' critical thinking skills, while also enabling teachers to exchange experiences, ideas, and best practices in the teaching and learning process. The principal provides support through training, guidance, and advice to teachers, so that the implementation of in-depth learning can run more effectively.

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