

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the background of the study, the research question, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, and its significance.

1.1 The Background of Study

The 21st century has brought significant change in various aspects of people's lives, particularly in communication, learning, the economy, and production. These changes require people to have new abilities, namely 21st century skills that have become part of our lives. These skills are essential for enhancing students' preparedness for college, careers, and their future. According to the popular framework established by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2019), mastering these skills is crucial for students' success in both work and life.

21st – century skills are grouped into different categories; learning and innovations skills, digital literacy skills, and career and life skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Learning skills, often referred to as the “four Cs” include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. However, there is development of the skills into “six Cs” that Fullan and Scott (2014) refers to as other Cs as character and citizenship. These skills will be useful for students to adapt to any situation in future.

Trilling and Fadel (2009) emphasize critical thinking as key component for fostering lifelong learning and developing knowledge skills that meet the demands of new work environments. The ability to ask and answer important

questions, critically evaluate others' viewpoints, solve problems, collaborate in learning, and create innovative solutions to improve the world has always been central to the processes of learning and innovation (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Ultimately, critical thinking has become essential in learning across all fields, as it helps in analyzing experiences, studies and job opportunities.

Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and logically about what to do or what to believe (Alfadda, Fatima, Ghaffar, & Afzaal, 2020). It involves generating questions, evaluating information and arguments, making connections, identifying patterns, reasoning, constructing knowledge and applying these skills to solve real-world problems (Lau, 2011). Critical thinking is a cognitive skill that can be enhanced by developing a skill that involves three components such as understanding the theory, practicing intentionally, and having the right attitude (Lau, 2011). Research indicates that learning is based on the integration of skills and knowledge (Silva, 2009). It means students need to learn the basic knowledge about critical thinking skills to possess critical thinking. Then, students need to practice regularly to turn the knowledge into ability. Further, they need to have a positive attitude as it is essential to help students commit and improve their critical thinking.

Schools should prioritize these skills to prepare students for the demands they will face after graduation (Erdem, Bağcı, & Koçyiğit, 2019). In line with the research that examines profiling of English teachers in teaching with a new paradigm, it was found there are four abilities that language teachers must possess, such as 21st century skills (Islamiyah & Huda, 2023).

Learning English can be accomplished through a textbook. Textbooks as primary sources for acquiring information must be designed as learning guides. Textbooks play a crucial role in developing critical thinking among ESL (English as a Second Language) learners and have been shown to be an effective scaffold (Alfadda, Fatima, Ghaffar, & Afzaal, 2020).

A textbook is a book used for studying a particular subject. It helps learners acquire both facts and methods related to that subject. Inside the textbook there are materials and assignments. Betsy Parish as cited in El-Dakhs (2011) lists some advantages of using textbooks. Textbooks organize for the course, allowing for logical progression in class. Also, they help teachers to minimize their preparation time and give new teachers with certain guidance. Textbooks give students a reliable resource for studying, revising, and planning ahead as well. Moreover, essential supplementary materials like tapes, CDs, films, and self-study workbooks are frequently included with textbooks.

The study conducted by Utami, Liahmad, and Rusnindita (2019) aimed to investigate the attainability of critical thinking within an English textbook in Indonesia. In this study, critical thinking refers to the ability to think based on revised Bloom's taxonomy and the disposition of critical thinking. The results showed that English textbooks cover most of Bloom's Taxonomy skills, incorporated meaningful critical thinking dispositions, and provide various critical thinking tasks. A similar study was also carried out by Namirah (2022). The findings indicated that all aspects of critical thinking, according to revised Bloom's Taxonomy were fully represented in each unit, with the dominant aspect being the analysis level of High Order Thinking. The results also

indicated that the textbook could assist teachers in their teaching and learning activities since the materials are connected to real-life situations and include and step-by-step guidance for developing four key skills.

In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia has introduced the Pancasila Students Profile, which outlines the fundamental values and competencies that Indonesian students are expected to embody (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2022). These values are categorized into six dimensions: 1) faithfulness and devotion to God Almighty, along with noble character; 2) independence; 3) cooperation; 4) global diversity; 5) critical thinking; and 6) creativity.

Consequently, there is an expectation that Indonesian students will develop the ability to engage in critical thinking. This skill entails the capacity to critically analyze both qualitative and quantitative data, identify connections among different sources, assess information, and draw conclusions. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the incorporation of critical thinking in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning materials for junior high school students. The study specifically examines the 7th grade material titled “English for Nusantara” for 7th grade, published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. what are critical thinking elements incorporated in EFL learning materials for junior high school students?
2. how are critical thinking elements represented in EFL learning material for junior high school students?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the purposes of this research can be seen as follow:

1. to analyze the critical thinking elements incorporated in EFL learning materials for junior high school students; and
2. to describe the ways critical thinking elements is represented in EFL learning materials for junior high school students.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study is focused on the incorporation of critical thinking in EFL learning materials for junior high schools. The learning materials are in terms of questions and instructions from a textbook for 7th grade entitled “English for Nusantara” published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically ways. Theoretically, the findings can support further research in the area of critical thinking incorporation. Practically, the research can provide useful information for English teachers in selecting and evaluating EFL learning materials to strengthen student's critical thinking.

