

## **An EFL Model of Critical Literacies: Adapted and Reshaped from Previous Studies**

Young-Mee Suh and Seonmin Huh \*

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This article aims to suggest a model of critical literacy in English as a Foreign Language (hereafter EFL)-contexts. The paper will introduce previous critical literacy models in first or second language teaching and learning and those in EFL contexts. Then, several empirical studies based on the models are introduced suggesting important issues to consider in implementing critical literacy in EFL contexts. A model of critical literacy in EFL contexts is, consequently, suggested with the three key elements for successful critical literacy implementation in EFL contexts, language for criticality development, affects and criticality development and citizenship and criticality development. The model pursues balancing conventional literacy education, critical literacy education and citizenship education. The researchers suggest balancing conventional skill-based literacy, affective pedagogy, and citizenship education with the development of critical literacies. Teacher-initiated practice and guidance, incorporation of community-sensitive topics and materials, and students' active participation are key elements practitioners should consider in their adaptation of critical literacy instruction in EFL contexts.

**Keywords:** critical literacies, EFL models of critical literacies, language development, affects, citizenship

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\*First Author: Young-Mee Suh, Lecturer, Department of English Education, College of Education, Hanyang University; 222, Wangsimni-ro, Seongdong-gu, Seoul, 04763, Korea; Email: [ymsuh012@hanyang.ac.kr](mailto:ymsuh012@hanyang.ac.kr)

Corresponding Author: Seonmin Huh, Invited Professor, General Education Center, English Division, Chungbuk National University; 1 Chungdar-ro, Seowon-ju, Cheongju, Chungbuk, 28644, Korea; Email: [huhseonmin@cbnu.ac.kr](mailto:huhseonmin@cbnu.ac.kr)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to introduce an EFL model of critical literacies and to suggest EFL-specific needs and considerations to be reflected in education. Literacy education holds immense significance in contemporary society, serving as a key for both socioeconomic participation and the effective functioning of democratic systems. Critical literacy skills, underpinned by the principles of critical thinking and problem-solving, stand as vital components of this educational framework. Critical thinking, in essence, entails the systematic analysis, objective evaluation, and rational categorization of information, untainted by emotional bias or blind deference to authority.

Diverse scholars have provided their interpretations of critical literacy, with Luke (2014) defining it as the utilization of print and various communication media to dissect, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices that govern societal institutions and everyday life. Additionally, critical literacy is viewed as a set of skills and competencies crucial for engaging with a multitude of information sources and media forms, as articulated by scholars like Buckingham (2003), Hobbs (2010), and Kellner and Share (2005). This definition encompasses critical thinking, media literacy, digital literacy, and information literacy, enabling individuals to navigate complex information environments with the ability to question sources, discern biases, and comprehend cultural contexts. This holistic approach fosters informed and active civic participation. For example, readers are expected to go beyond passive reception and engage in transformative action to effect change in the world.

Critical literacy has historically faced marginalization within mainstream EFL literacy education, where the focus primarily centered on vocabulary, decoding, and reading comprehension, leaving limited room for its integration. In reading education, for instance, EFL students have typically been trained to read texts for language acquisition and to accept content without critical examination. Recently, concerns have been raised about how EFL literacy can incorporate critical literacy while maintaining a strong emphasis on decoding and comprehension, sparking interest in critical EFL pedagogy in various educational systems. The existing models of critical literacies are mainly based on first language learning contexts and only concerned with development of criticality without its connections to other dimensions of affects and citizenship education. This observation has prompted the researchers to explore and adapt previous models of critical literacies, backed by empirical research, and propose a model of EFL critical literacies. With this in mind, the researchers try to understand the following research questions:

- 1) What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing critical literacy models?
- 2) What are the core components of an EFL model of critical literacies? How are those components are linked together to develop EFL students' holistic literacy skills as critical intercultural citizens?

## **2. CRITICAL LITERACY MODELS**

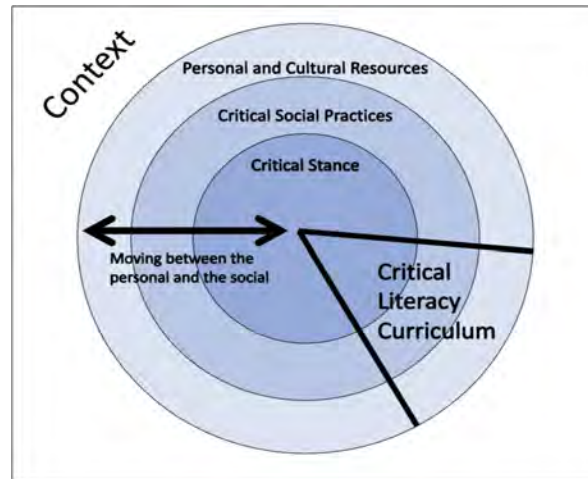
### **2.1. Critical Literacy Models for L1 or L2 Learners**

Numerous educational models of critical literacy have been put forward by scholars in both first language education and ESL (English as a Second Language) education contexts. The researchers searched for critical literacy models on internet search engines and in academic journals and selected four models commonly mentioned and well-known. These models include the work of Bobkina and Stefanova (2016), Janks (2010), Lewison et al. (2008), and Luke and Freebody (1999).

Janks (2010) and Lewison et al. (2008) are critical literacy models that can be utilized in L1 or L2 educational contexts. Janks (2010) introduced a comprehensive synthesis model for critical literacy education that incorporates the key principles of ‘domination, access, diversity and design’. In this model, these four concepts are intricately interconnected and seamlessly integrated into instructional strategies. The concept of domination, for instance, revolves around the recognition of language, as well as other symbolic forms and discourse in a broader sense, as potent tools for upholding and perpetuating systems of dominance. In this framework, the provision of access to dominant forms and the cultivation of varied approaches to interpreting and expressing one’s understanding of the world across various modes are central components within the realms of ‘access’ and ‘diversity’. Additionally, the model places significant emphasis on enabling students to generate a multitude of new meanings of the texts. Janks’ (2010) model originated from the educational context in the Republic of South Africa where English is the most commonly spoken language in business and government and is often used as a second language by many South Africans. Even though the model is innovative in the sense that it organizes and represents well the key concepts of critical literacy, it is hard for EFL instructors to implement the model in their classrooms since it does not consider the importance of language development for EFL learners.

Besides Janks (2010), Lewison et al. (2008) introduced a representative model that can be used in L1 or L2 educational settings. They put forth an instructional model of critical literacy, portraying it as an interactive process involving the utilization of personal and cultural resources, engagement in critical social practices, and the adoption of a critical stance, both within classroom settings and in the broader world context. This multifaceted transactional approach is illustrated in Figure 1, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these dimensions in the pursuit of critical literacy education.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Lewis et al.'s (2008) Instructional Model of Critical Literacy<sup>1</sup>**



More specifically, personal and cultural resources encompass a wide array of elements, including one's individual experiences, literature related to societal issues, popular culture media, textbooks, spoken narratives, the unique interests of students, and issues pertinent to the local community. Critical social practices consist of four distinct dimensions: 1) disrupting the commonplace, 2) interrogating multiple viewpoints, 3) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and 4) taking action and promoting social justice. Concurrently, the critical stance embodies another four dimensions: 1) consciously engaging, 2) entertaining alternate ways of being, 3) taking responsibility to inquire, and 4) being reflexive. It is crucial to recognize that these four dimensions are interconnected. In essence, the critical literacy curriculum commences by tapping into students' personal knowledge, interests, and concerns, yet it continually embeds these within the broader societal context. This model represents important concepts of critical literacy well so that critical literacy instructors are able to understand and adopt the ideas of critical literacy in their own classrooms. The model is useful for L1 or L2 learners in English Language Arts classes per se since it shows a concrete and adaptable process for L1 or L2 teachers to follow. However, it puts an emphasis on criticality in personal, social, and cultural contexts with little consideration for EFL contexts where readers often face difficulties in reading texts in English as a foreign language learner.

The pedagogy of multiliteracies by Cope and Kalantzis (2000), which originated from the

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Lewis-et-als-2015-critical-literacy-framework\\_fig1\\_363662830](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Lewis-et-als-2015-critical-literacy-framework_fig1_363662830)

New London Group (1996), emphasizes the need for a broader perspective on literacy education. Traditional reading and writing skills are no longer sufficient, and multiliteracies encompass a wider array of abilities, including visual, digital, and social literacy, which are crucial for effective communication. These multiliteracy skills are referred to as ‘Designing’ in their model.

In this conceptualization of multiliteracies, their pedagogical model includes four components: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Situated practice involves providing learners with meaningful experiences and immersing them in meaning-making, related to their personal and social contexts. Overt instruction is focused on teaching students an explicit metalanguage of Design, enabling them to understand how certain meanings take precedence over others through different modes. Critical framing involves fostering students’ critical awareness and helping them view designed meanings within larger social and cultural contexts. In this component, Cope and Kalantzis (2000) explain that it is necessary for students to step back from what they study and interpret it critically. Critical framing leads to transformed practice, which Cope and Kalantzis (2000) refer to as ‘the Redesigned’ (p. 35). Students learn to create newly transformed meanings (the Redesigned) by applying their critical framing skills in other societal contexts. The pedagogy of multiliteracies broadened the notion of criticality as multimodal life skills. Four components in their pedagogy focused on explicitly acquiring a metalanguage to interpret the meanings and deepening their critical framing and applying them into new contexts, where new meanings should also emerge. Highlighting criticality, this model does not include how to acquire a new foreign language to design and redesign new meanings with multiliteracies skills.

To summarize, Janks (2010), Lewison et al. (2008) and Cope and Kalantzis (2000) were originally designed for the application of critical literacy among both native language and second language English speakers. These established models primarily aimed to enhance students’ critical thinking abilities, raise awareness of critical issues, and encourage social activism, with less emphasis on language development or targeting students engaged in first language literacy learning. Given the dual objectives of teaching language and promoting critical literacy, it becomes imperative for EFL educators to adopt a distinct approach to critical literacy education (Huh, 2016; Suh & Huh, 2017). To achieve this balance between traditional and critical literacies in EFL contexts, an instructional model of critical literacy should be established, one that seamlessly integrates conventional and critical literacy practices.

## 2.2. Critical Literacy Models for EFL Learners

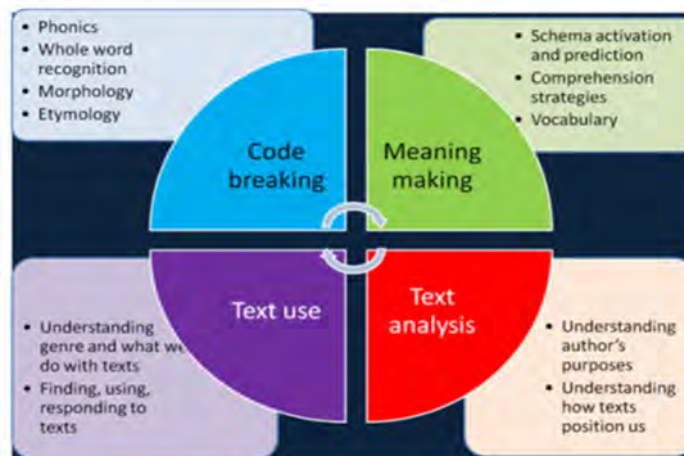
It is noteworthy that within the realm of literature, existing instructional models of critical

literacy do incorporate conventional literacy elements, as demonstrated by Luke and Freebody (1999) and Bobkina and Stefanova (2016).

Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model includes the component code-breaking, as illustrated in Figure 2. The model places significant importance on cultivating proficiency in four primary learner roles, namely the code-breaker, meaning constructor, text analyst, and text utilizer. Firstly, in the role of a code-breaker, learners engage in exercises focused on decoding, encompassing phonics, word recognition, morphology, and etymology. Secondly, in the capacity of a meaning constructor, learners are tasked with activating their prior knowledge and making predictions about the subject matter they are about to encounter. They are also encouraged to employ comprehension strategies and deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words. Thirdly, as text analysts, learners place particular emphasis on comprehending the intentions of authors and how texts position them. Finally, in the role of a text utilizer, learners receive instruction on comprehending the characteristics of various genres and how to effectively engage with texts. They learn to locate, employ, and respond to texts as a part of this role. This model is useful for EFL language teachers to apply to their students since it includes code-breaking as well as meaning-making as core components, essential parts for EFL classes. However, the model is a rationality-based, literacy-based, and reading-based model that does not reflect academic shifts putting emphasis on citizenship and emotional engagement in critical literacy instruction as claimed in academic literature (Byram et al., 2017; Crookes, 2013; Janks, 2010; Leander & Ehret, 2019).

**FIGURE 2**

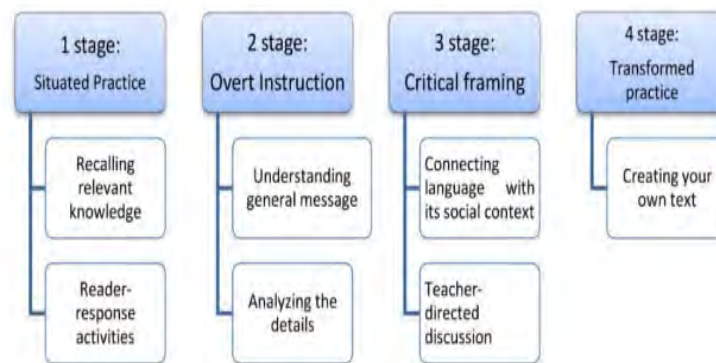
**Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> <https://images.app.goo.gl/AwkBwsUBZBycprWJ6>

Bobkina and Stefanova (2016) introduced one of the latest models for critical literacy instruction, applicable for EFL teachers to use in their classes. They incorporated the ideas of The New London Group (1996) based on pedagogy of multiliteracies and integrated the model of critical thinking skills into their teaching approach. The model requires adopting four curricular components which include situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice, as shown in Figure 3.

**FIGURE 3**  
Application of the Model of Teaching Critical Thinking Skills  
(Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016, p. 686)



As per their approach, during the initial ‘situated practice’ stage, the primary focus revolves around students’ real-life experiences, their thoughts, opinions, and expectations. At this level, there is no deliberate reflection or the use of specialized language to describe concepts. Instead, students draw upon their relevant knowledge and typically engage in reader-response activities. In the subsequent ‘overt instruction’ phase, students are systematically instructed to grasp the core messages conveyed in the text. This entails a thorough examination of various elements contributing to the text’s meaning. The stage of ‘critical framing’ involves connecting language usage to its broader social context, often through teacher-led discussions that encourage students to analyze the societal implications of language. Finally, ‘transformed practice’ entails the creative reshaping of texts. In this phase, students typically generate their own written content. This model includes the comprehension stage as in Luke and Freebody (1999), and it further extends its scope to make connections between what students read to their personal reflection. One weakness of this model, however, is that it is designed to be used in literature class, and its transformed practice is limited to creating students’ own text. As pointed out in the weakness of Luke and Freebody (1999), this model focuses on a rationality-based approach neglecting emotion

and morality in pursuing intercultural citizenship.

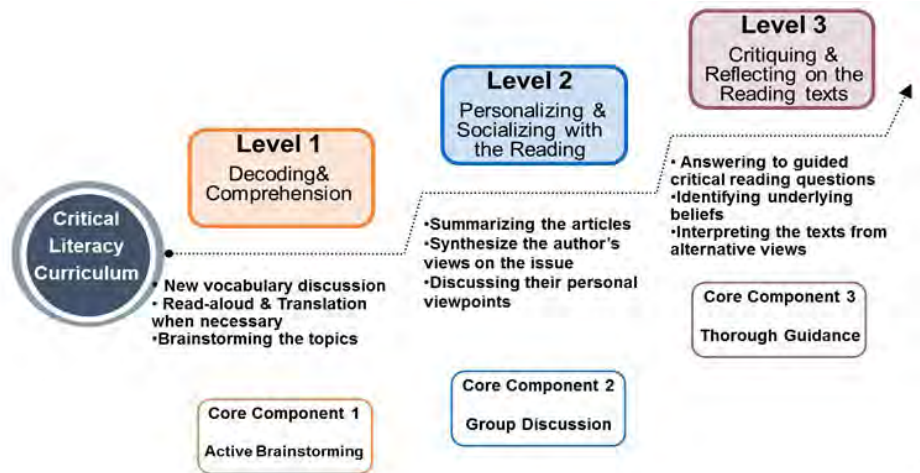
The previously mentioned works predominantly focused on conventional literacy within the context of critical literacy instruction. However, there has been limited exploration and theorization regarding how to effectively balance conventional and critical literacies. Huh (2016) represents one effort to address this challenge by proposing a model of instructional engagement consisting of three levels of engagement between a teacher and university students. Further details on these ideas are elaborated in Figure 4.

Originally the model progresses from levels 1 through to level 3. In this model, the coexistence of Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 is essential for achieving a balanced literacy curriculum. The majority of interactions between teachers and students within this framework typically commence at Level 1. At level 1 students engage in discussions concerning new vocabulary, read the texts with translation, and brainstorm their existing knowledge about the topic at hand. Subsequently EFL learners personalize and engage in social discourse regarding the reading materials, through group discussions, which corresponds to Level 2. During this phase, they condense and synthesize the content they have read, primarily aiming to comprehend the main ideas or perspectives of the authors and compare them to their own viewpoints. Level 3 represents the critical engagement phase, where students respond to guided critical questions, identify the underlying beliefs within the text, and introduce alternative or omitted perspectives. It is crucial to emphasize that the concurrent presence of these three levels is vital for the holistic development of EFL literacy education.

Level 1 serves as a foundation, especially when dealing with texts that challenge students in terms of understanding the language. Level 3 demands strong, explicit guidance from teachers to encourage students to reflect on the ideological foundations or to recognize what has been overlooked or omitted. While each level may appear to follow a linear progression, students and teachers have the flexibility to navigate across these levels freely, depending on the complexity of the texts and their familiarity with the topics. Each level reinforces and strengthens the others, striking a balance between conventional and critical literacies, ultimately fostering holistic growth of students as users of the English language. This model tries to show how to balance conventional and critical literacies in EFL class, but it primarily focuses on addressing critical awareness within her reading class, omitting the inclusion of components related to the affective domain and intercultural citizenship.



**FIGURE 4**  
**Instructional Model of Critical Literacy in an EFL Context**



Based on the models mentioned above and their weaknesses, the researchers set forth the second research question: what should be the core components of an EFL critical literacy model, and how the components are linked together to develop EFL students' holistic literacy skills as critical intercultural citizens? Under the belief that intercultural citizenship education should be the goal of critical literacy education, the researchers have tried to make strong connections between criticality and language development, criticality and citizenship in addition to between criticality and emotion. The next session introduces empirical studies that helped the researchers build up their model.

### 3. OUR CRITICAL LITERACY PRACTICES IN EFL CONTEXTS

A few scholars have published their research in the field of EFL teaching and learning implementing critical literacy instruction over the last two decades, and reports have emerged regarding the utilization of critical EFL pedagogy in various educational systems across Asia; for instance, Hong Kong (Wong, Chan, & Firkins, 2006), Iran (Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005; Izadinia & Abednia, 2010), Japan (Konoeda & Watanabe, 2008), Korea (Kim, 2004; Shin & Crookes, 2005), and Singapore (Kramer-Dahl, 2001; Kwek, Albright, & Kramer-Dahl, 2007). The researchers of this study also have tried to implement critical pedagogy in their own educational settings for the last decade (Huh, 2016; Huh & Suh, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021; Suh, 2019, 2023; Suh & Huh, 2014, 2017). In conducting empirical studies, the researchers adapted the ideas of the instructional models

of critical literacy in EFL contexts mentioned in the preceding section, especially Luke and Freebody (1999) and Huh (2016). By making efforts to implement critical literacy, the researchers found that critical affective pedagogy, critical questioning and discussion for transformed actions are effective in increasing students' critical perspectives. They also found that language skills instruction should be further enforced in critical literacy instruction. The following are three main themes summarizing the studies: Language for criticality development (Huh, 2016; Suh & Huh, 2014, 2017), affects and criticality development (Huh & Suh, 2020, 2021; Suh, 2023), and citizenship and criticality development (Huh & Suh, 2017, 2018; Suh, 2019).

### 3.1. Language for Criticality Development

Many critical literacy studies in EFL contexts were designed to improve students' functional and critical literacy by engaging them with multimodal texts (readapted from Weng, 2023); utilizing graphic novels (Huh & Suh, 2015; Sun 2019), literature (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Fredricks, 2012), fairy tales (Hayik, 2015b, Huang, 2019b), picture books (Hayik, 2015a, 2015d; Kim, 2016; Kim & Cho, 2017; Kuo, 2009; Lee, 2017), news stories (Ko, 2013, Ko & Wang, 2013) and video (Cho & Johnson, 2020, Huang, 2015a, 2015b).

In a similar vein, Huh (2016) and Suh and Huh (2014, 2017) introduced critical reading strategies when reading newspaper articles to Korean EFL learners at universities. The reading course was designed based on the three levels: decoding and comprehension, personalizing and socializing with the reading, and critiquing and reflecting on the reading texts. The topics covered in the course included education, culture, gender, and media. Each instructor aided students in improving their understanding of the texts they read, encouraging critical analysis, and facilitating discussions involving diverse viewpoints on the readings. In other words, the teachers offered comprehension questions, followed by critical inquiries, to both assess the students' grasp of the text and prompt them to articulate their thoughts on the text's issues from a critical standpoint. The examination of student discussions and the teacher's observational records indicated that the students evolved a critical perspective regarding the author's presuppositions within the reading material. They proposed alternative perspectives to interpret the societal matters discussed in the texts and assumed the role of editors by highlighting what was missing from the content. Another noteworthy theme was their emotional involvement with the material; they employed emotionally laden language in their responses, establishing personal connections to the texts through their own experiences and subjective emotions.

The classes demonstrated the potential for implementing a critical reading approach within EFL contexts. Many students expressed that they had transcended the practice of reading English texts word by word, let alone translating them into their native Korean

language. Furthermore, they found satisfaction in encountering English texts that offered diverse viewpoints and presented opinions differing from those of the authors. Nevertheless, the students also encountered several challenges during the course. Primarily, they struggled with assuming the role of readers with resistant viewpoints, likely because Korean students tend to hold the text in high regard. Additionally, students felt hesitant to share their perspectives when they had difficulty comprehending the texts.

Especially, low-proficiency level students especially had a difficult time moving on to sharing their opinions from a critical stance if they did not understand the text fully. Furthermore, students requested more specific instructions and guidance from their instructors regarding the activities and tasks in the reading class. Some scholars (Beck, 2005; Freire, 1996; Garcia et al., 2015; Luke, 2000) insisted not to offer explicit instructions to students on critical text reading techniques; however, the EFL students in the class expressed a desire for more precise guidance from the teacher.

### 3.2. Affects and Criticality Development

In Huh and Suh (2020, 2021) and Suh (2023), the significance of emotions in critical literacy practices was explored within the context of critical literacy education, which traditionally prioritizes rational methods for fostering critical thinking. More specifically, in Huh and Suh (2020), children (Grade 5) were taught critical affective literacy. The subjects of this 2020 study were in American history were Native Americans and enslaved individuals. One illustrative literacy activity involved students composing imaginative dialogues between characters from the books they had read and expressed their emotional reactions to the experiences of these characters. Students were encouraged to revise the dialogues to encompass a more diverse range of perspectives, both critically and emotionally. Another literacy activity consisted of posing thought-provoking questions to challenge the primary book characters after considering their emotions. These emotions served as valuable tools for students to envision the life experiences of others and served as a means for students to deepen their critical thinking on social issues. Huh and Suh (2021) also elaborated on how affective turns evolved in critical literacy education. The multifaceted emotions of a particular child, which are constantly in flux and occasionally appear unclear, contradictory, and difficult to decipher, were examined to gain insight into how intricate feelings intersected with the child's evolving understanding. This involved blending the child's emotions with those of others in both the real world and the imaginative realms of book characters. By promoting these dynamic and ever-changing forms of literacy, students can remain receptive to various interpretations continuously and are less likely to view their own interpretations as definitive without questioning them. In this sense, the application of critical affective pedagogy helps researchers explore emotional dimensions that are not typically

represented in the context of critical literacy.

Suh (2023) aimed to expand the boundary of understanding by exploring rationality and emotions in tertiary-level critical literacy education. The reading materials of the 2023 study, centered on themes of workplace gender discrimination and gender roles in the home, with newspaper articles chosen as the primary texts for analysis. In addition to discussing readings with rational stances, the students were encouraged to take emotional stances with the following reasons: establishing an emotional bond with their reading material, scrutinizing the causes behind their emotional responses, empathizing with the emotions of others, dissecting the processes by which emotions are generated and disseminated, and contemplating strategies for advancing social justice related to the matter. The primary responsibility of the teacher involved facilitating discussions that could fluidly and cyclically transition between rational analysis and the expression of emotions within the classroom. Data analysis demonstrated that students' emotional involvement with the reading materials encouraged them to become more proactive in addressing overlooked viewpoints and fostered a more well-rounded approach to the issues they encountered in their readings. Consequently, this approach has the potential to cultivate a more balanced perspective among students, ultimately empowering them to become engaged readers who can propose strategies for achieving social justice in the issues they discuss. The research proposed an alternative approach to fully participating in critical literacy practices, asserting that such practices should strike a balance between rationality and affects. Critical affective pedagogy offers researchers a means to move beyond sole reliance on rational analysis and incorporate emotions, thereby achieving equilibrium between rationality and emotional engagement in critical literacy practices (Leander & Ehret, 2019; Massumi, 2002).

### 3.3. Citizenship and Criticality Development

Huh and Suh (2017), Huh and Suh (2018), and Suh (2019) are studies to connect critical literacy with citizenship education and action components. Huh and Suh (2017) and Huh and Suh (2018) are based on a two-year curriculum focusing on critical citizenship literacy, tailored for children, covering subjects such as family dynamics, school experiences, gender, and race. Some examples of the books used were: *The tale of Despereaux* (Dicamillo, 2006), *The adventures of Tintin: Tintin in America* (Hergé, 1979), *Diary of a Wimpy Kid #2: Rodrick rules* (Kinney, 2008), *Big Nate makes the grade* (Peirce, 2012), and *Geronimo Stilton graphic novel #1: The discovery of America* (Stilton, 2007).

The study proposed three teaching methods for critical intercultural citizenship education: dialoguing pedagogy, pedagogy of speaking for marginalized perspectives, and embracing pedagogy. Dialoguing pedagogy involves teachers prompting students to first relate stories to their own lives, followed by engaging in discussions with both their peers and the

characters in the books. This approach encouraged students to question their individual viewpoints and experiences. The pedagogy for speaking for marginalized perspectives revolves around actively seeking out overlooked or underrepresented viewpoints within reading materials. This teaching method helps students visualize prevailing cultural norms and encourages them to question these norms, a crucial skill for intercultural citizenship. Embracing pedagogy aims to help students bridge the gap between themselves and issues that may seem physically and emotionally distant, thereby fostering intercultural citizenship. This approach encourages students to establish connections with others, deepen their comprehension, and assume responsibility as intercultural citizens. Teachers encourage students to create imaginative narratives and act them out as a means to enhance their understanding of different cultures. In the study, researchers addressed various issues, including students' personal concerns, familiar cultural stereotypes, and remote societal problems. They found that each cultural issue required a unique teaching approach, depending on the level of familiarity.

Suh (2019) incorporated an action component into critical literacy teaching with university students in Korea. The design of the reading course was rooted in the belief that active participation and tangible steps toward societal transformation are fundamental in critical pedagogy. In the reading class, following their engagement in critical reading exercises with materials about gender roles and race within newspapers or magazine articles, which were chosen by the instructor, students were given the freedom to pick their own readings related to the topics covered in the course. They convened in groups to collectively explore and enhance their understanding of the readings. Furthermore, they were prompted to both ask and respond to critical questions within their groups, fostering the development of critical thinking skills as readers. At the end of the semester, students shared their inquiries about the readings and their activities conducted as educational initiatives beyond the classroom setting such as doing a survey, making a video, mailing, and editing. This class served as a notable example of integrating action components into critical literacy instruction. It demonstrated that engaging in critical dialogue activities could prompt students to generate questions about the readings that inspire action, resulting in a diverse range of outcomes. Similar to the findings in Hayik (2015a, 2015b, 2015c), the students' feedback regarding the course indicated that they perceived themselves as more engaged readers who actively contributed to their respective communities, thanks to their direct involvement and proactive participation. By taking transformed actions, "literacy is conceived as a transformative practice to promote social change and develop citizens into social activists" (Lewison et al., 2008; readapted from Weng, 2023, p. 201). In the next section, based on the findings conducted by the researchers, an EFL-specific instructional model of critical literacies will be introduced incorporating action components, balancing criticality and affects, and enforcing functional language instruction further.

#### 4. OUR EFL MODEL OF CRITICAL LITERACIES

Our model illustrates the importance of including the components of language development, affects and criticality development, and intercultural citizenship and criticality development into EFL critical literacy education. Our model suggests these crucial components for administrators, educators, parents and students to consider when developing EFL critical literacy skills.

**FIGURE 5**  
EFL Model of Critical Literacies



In Figure 5, language for criticality development includes decoding, comprehension, that is, teaching and learning activities that center around getting access to the English language. This component is what EFL educators and students mainly focus on traditionally. We argue this component is crucial and should always be included for EFL learners to grow as critically literate beings.

Second, affects and criticality development involves educational activities connected to raising critical awareness and strengthening affects that can reach out to understanding others. Students should get support from rational criticality perspective, for example, distancing themselves from their own personal, social, cultural and political boundaries and analyzing social issues of their own and those of others critically. Students should also have opportunities to affectively analyze social injustice issues, political, cultural diversity and to embody affects from their own perspectives as well as those of others, which also help them grow criticality affectively. Critical literacy research tends to address rational critical dimensions and affective dimensions separately. We argue that criticality development

should be thought from the continuum of rationality and affects and educational activities should address both ends of the continuum to help students develop their affects and rationality.

Third, citizenship and criticality development is the least explored component for EFL education. Citizenship and criticality development is about developing students' positioning as intercultural citizens and their responsibilities to exercise critical literacy skills to elicit social action. Social action can encompass anything from having one new alternative perspective that they have never considered to social and political activism. We think the EFL action component should be elaborated on further to understand what it means to be an intercultural citizen with critical literacies. Some scholars identify this as reconstruction, taking action and promoting social justice and transformed practice. EFL critical literacies education should conceptualize critical literacies in EFL context to be citizenship and criticality development teaching and learning practices. Along with previous research (Huang, 2015b; Suh, 2019; Weng, 2023), citizenship and criticality development is what many critical literacies researchers and educators have started to raise their voices concerned that citizenship and criticality development needs to be addressed in this field.

The strength of this model includes the potential of holistic development of students' critical literacies from linguistic, rational and affective and critical citizenship perspectives. Language development for criticality is one goal for EFL. At the same time, this model shows this is not the only goal for EFL literacy education. Expanding previous studies, this model also diversifies the ways to be critical. Huh (2016), for example, did not include affective domain and intercultural citizenship components, mostly tackling critical awareness raised in her reading class. Also, expanding on Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model, we emphasize EFL-specific support of language for criticality development and suggest two representative ways to engage students in critical literacies both from affects and criticality developmental perspectives. However, this model suggests the importance of affective development and intercultural citizenship growth to help EFL learners to be balanced critical literacy implementers. Affective and rational dimensions are combined to engage students in their critical development. This model also brings in citizenship into EFL critical literacies, so that provides food for thoughts to conceptualize social actions in EFL critical literacies education. Citizenship development is visualized to show the importance of social action in EFL critical literacy education.

In the application of this model, EFL practitioners should be vigilant to address any language support required for critical analysis and social action project and should always be ready to provide language lessons of vocabulary, comprehension, and meaning-making as well as language for presentation, discussion and writing that involves representing students' ideas and voices for social justice. Furthermore, each development represented in the model should always co-exist to holistically support students' critical literacy

engagement in EFL settings. Depending on students' personal experiences, knowledge about other cultures and societies and levels of difficulties in engaging using English language, this model encourages educators to support students differently. Sometimes, language for criticality development can dominate and proceed at the beginning of the curriculum. At other times, when students are dealing with familiar topics and thus already have lots of personal, cultural connection to the topics and when language is manageable enough for them to focus on their affective and critical development, educators can dominantly address affects and criticality development. Citizenship and criticality development should be co-introduced to students in their journey of language for criticality development and affects and criticality development, so that students can broaden their positioning as intercultural citizens and active participants of local and international communities. In the process, EFL educators should not fail to provide any language, affects and criticality development lessons to help students articulate their thoughts and positioning in English. In this sense, each component does not have any particular sequence. However, we believe we cannot neglect any component over others and should consider each component to be crucial to EFL critical literacy education.

We conclude that any EFL critical literacies curriculums and teaching and learning practices should consider their education encompasses these three core components to balance EFL students' development as critical literacies. Balanced EFL critical literacies education can be achieved by incorporating this model.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In this educational model, the focus extends beyond mere language proficiency, encompassing critical awareness and social engagement as essential objectives. EFL educators and learners must recognize that language skills are not the sole outcome of teaching and learning. Instead, the goal is to facilitate critical analysis and social activism, nurturing individuals to become critically literate in English. Unlike earlier models of critical literacy that concentrated primarily on enhancing critical thinking and raising awareness, this model integrates language development into that process. Foundational concepts such as Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model, addressing language acquisition requirements, and Janks' (2010) notion of access as the acquisition of skills to decode and engage with dominant discourses, serve as cornerstones. In the context of EFL education, we advocate for an expansion of the concepts of code-breaking and access to encompass foreign language acquisition. A balanced approach, merging traditional skill-based literacy instruction with critical literacy cultivation, provides students with a holistic literacy education that supports their development as English users, critically literate beings and



intercultural citizens. The implications for each component in the suggested model follow.

### 5.1. Language for Criticality Development

Traditionally, EFL students have been exposed primarily to conventional literacy instruction, and introducing critical literacy elements can lead to confusion. In EFL contexts, we recommend that teachers offer gradual and explicit guidance when introducing these concepts of language for criticality development, enabling students to take more ownership of their learning with clear direction. To elaborate, considering EFL-specific factors, selecting discussion topics and determining appropriate language difficulty levels are essential. Topics should range from personally meaningful and relevant subjects to those that challenge students, expanding their linguistic and cultural horizons simultaneously. Addressing linguistic difficulties is important, as overly challenging materials can hinder students' engagement in critical literacy practices. Therefore, striking a balance between addressing language difficulties and maintaining familiarity with discussion topics is a primary concern in EFL education.

This leaves literacy educators with challenging missions of conceptualizing what it means to teach language for critical development. They should think of what it means to teach foreign language itself, language for critical and affective development and language for citizenship development. It would also involve students' resistance to critical literacies and their difficulties with engaging in criticality with a foreign language. Teacher education and practitioners' implementation of this idea would benefit academic community.

### 5.2. Affects and Criticality Development

Our model seeks to enhance students' development in both rational thinking and emotional awareness. We believe that when students engage with both rational thinking and emotions, while remaining open to linguistic, cognitive, and emotional vulnerability, they can approach critical literacies from various angles. It is essential to strike a balance between rational thinking and emotions, which involves specific teaching strategies, curriculum design, and teacher-student interactions. While previous research focused on critical thinking as a form of rationality, we have found that affects, both positive and negative, play a crucial role in deepening students' understanding of diverse cultural perspectives. Reflecting on their own affects, empathizing with others in situations of social injustice, and comparing these emotions with their own experiences enhance critical thinking and connect students more profoundly to societal issues. Incorporating both rational and affective analysis breaks down personal and cultural barriers, fostering intercultural awareness and acceptance of different ways of existing in the world.

However, introducing affects into education can be challenging. Some students may find it overwhelming and uncomfortable to express their emotions openly, especially in contexts where such practices are uncommon. Adapting emotional literacy education to local contexts and carefully designing critical questions while prioritizing facilitated conversations are crucial adjustments. In summary, transitioning from traditional literacy teaching to critical literacy education can be demanding, but our efforts are centered on embracing critical practices while simultaneously advancing students' language skills, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and active engagement in social issues.

### 5.3. Citizenship and Criticality Development

Previous research (Byram et al., 2017; Crookes 2013; Janks, 2010; Lewison et al., 2008; Pandya & Avila, 2014) has highlighted the importance of transformative actions within critical literacy education. However, there is limited documentation on social actions within critical literacy education in EFL contexts. Building on previous critical literacy models that incorporate action components, we posited that critical literacy education in an EFL context should also involve citizenship elements. We believe that our efforts to expand the scope of social action in critical literacy education with Korean EFL university students showed that students can be involved in specific citizenship-related actions albeit on a small and community-sensitive scale.

However, it is essential to note that teachers should guide students gradually through the process of taking action, and action doesn't necessarily equate to engaging in social activism alone. It can also involve raising awareness about historical and social injustices within different cultural groups, or it could be different conceptualization of their roles as intercultural citizens. In this sense, transformed action can manifest in various forms and degrees of intensity. Many EFL educators perceive citizenship education to be the task for other academic disciplines such as social studies, moral education and ethics education. To challenge this commonplace belief about EFL education, we argue that citizenship and criticality development challenges us to expand our academic boundaries crossed into other fields of studies while developing their English skills.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This paper proposes a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning critical literacies in EFL contexts, emphasizing three components that are required: language development, affective and citizenship development. Our proposal advocates for a comprehensive approach where learners develop language proficiency alongside critical literacies and

citizenship perspectives. Both conventional and critical literacies should be nurtured, integrated, and treated as complementary in EFL literacy education. This approach not only enhances English literacy skills but also fosters critical intercultural citizenship skills, ensuring a well-rounded literacy development for students. We argue for the need to adapt critical literacy models to the EFL context, expanding the traditional concepts by including critical thinking, empathy, social-political action, and language development in one. We believe this approach can be tailored and localized in various EFL educational settings. We hope our model benefits educators interested in critical literacy instruction in EFL contexts, encouraging them to consider local topics, diverse materials, and various teaching approaches.

Future research should explore how to implement the suggested model of EFL critical literacies and identify broader literacy educational components, address new social and political challenges, and tackle interdisciplinary approaches to develop students' intercultural citizenship. Additionally, documenting teacher identity struggles and extending research to adolescent groups would enrich our understanding of EFL critical literacy education.

Applicable levels: Primary, secondary, tertiary, adult

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