

ABSTRACT

Critical reading has become an essential skill in English language learning, particularly in the digital era where students are increasingly exposed to multimodal digital texts combining verbal and visual elements. However, many students still experience difficulties in critically interpreting and evaluating information presented through these texts. This study aimed to explore high school students' experiences in developing critical reading skills through multimodal digital texts and to identify the challenges they encountered during the learning process. This study employed a qualitative case study design involving 30 eleventh-grade students from a vocational high school in Ciamis Regency, West Java. Classroom observations were conducted with all students, while semi-structured interviews were carried out with six purposively selected participants. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, with data triangulation applied to enhance credibility. The findings revealed that multimodal digital texts provided positive learning experiences by increasing students' engagement, motivation, and comprehension through the integration of verbal and visual elements. Students also demonstrated the development of critical reading skills by analyzing information, questioning credibility, comparing different sources, and verifying information before accepting it. Nevertheless, several challenges remained, including limited vocabulary, difficulties in interpreting abstract visual elements, and difficulties integrating verbal and visual information. The study concludes that multimodal digital texts can effectively support the development of students' critical reading skills in EFL classrooms when accompanied by appropriate teacher guidance, vocabulary support, and instructional scaffolding.