

Improving Learners' Critical Thinking and Social Understanding Through English Content About Hunger and Health Issues

Aninda Saffira Wihardi^{1*}

ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT This research aims to find out what challenges and learning methods are best for improving students' critical thinking through hunger and health issues in learning English. This study includes library research with a qualitative descriptive method design, where secondary data is used in the data collection process for this study. Three journal articles were selected and reviewed to answer the research questions. Based on the results of this literature review, it can be concluded that the main challenges identified include students' lack of interest and awareness of hunger and health issues, teachers' limited experience and readiness to deliver such content, inadequate curriculum support, and difficulties in assessing students' critical thinking and engagement with these topics. The findings also show that collaborative learning methods such as group discussions and problem-solving activities are highly effective in fostering critical thinking and social awareness

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Social Understanding, English Content, Hunger and Health Issues

1 Introduction

In this day, the ability to think critically and understand social issues is essential for everyone, especially for students who are directly connected to the world of education. Good critical thinking skills mean that a person is able to see and judge and also has the ability to combine information which will ultimately help a person make smart choices and also help to solve problems. (Sadoo et al., 2023)

Due to its importance, cultivating critical thinking has become a primary goal for language instructors. For many years, English teachers have strived to integrate critical thinking strategies into foreign language instruction by using activities and assignments like problem-solving exercises, stimulating questions, and group discussions (Negoescu, 2023)

One of the global issues that is happening and needs to be discussed is the issue of hunger and health. Hunger is currently a significant problem affecting millions of people around the world, it is closely related to health challenges such as malnutrition, disease, and inadequate access to health services. By incorporating topics related to hunger and health into English learning materials, educators can provide learners with authentic and relevant contexts to practice language skills while simultaneously developing their critical thinking and social awareness. According to Astawa et al. (2024) exposure to global issues is known to improve students' understanding, awareness, and ability to solve urgent issues faced by global society.

Based on the background above, this study aims to provide an overview of the improvement of critical thinking and social understanding in English language learning through the discussion of hunger and health issues. Some questions raised as a guide in data collection are:

¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang

*Alamat korespondensi: anindasaffira08@gmail.com

1. 1. What are the challenges faced in integrating hunger and health issues into English learning to improve critical thinking and social understanding?
2. 2. What learning methods are most effective for developing critical thinking and social understanding through English material about hunger and health issues?

2 Literature Review

Some previous literature has discussed critical thinking in the world of education, especially in English language learning. According to Made et al. (2021) critical thinking is an essential skill that enables students to solve complex problems and make good decisions. This competency encompasses three core skills: quick thinking; Creativity and analytical thinking are essential for success in a global society. According to research conducted by Negoescu (2023), teachers who use effective questioning techniques, engage students in discussions about difficult topics, and encourage diverse types of thinking can improve students' critical thinking processes. This is in line with a study conducted by Shakil et al. (2021) that combining critical thinking skills by delivering certain themes into English language teaching significantly improves language learning among students.

Apart from discussing critical thinking, several previous studies also discussed in detail about sustainable development which is linked to English language learning. One of the studies that discusses sustainable development (including hunger and health issues) is a study by Oraif (2024), this study is one of the few studies that analyzes the application of sustainable development issues in higher education. Through this topic, students receive a smooth introduction to some of the pressing issues related to sustainable development. Another study that also discusses the same thing is a study by Abu-Hassan et al. (2024) which shows that adding sustainable development integration into pre-sessional English programs in AUS can be an effective way to combine language teaching with sustainability topics. Despite some obstacles, this study shows great opportunities for transformative learning that can improve students' language skills while fostering their sense of social responsibility and critical thinking. According to Astawa et al. (2024), sustainable development should also be integrated into learning materials and classroom discussions, which serve as themes for educational activities.

3 Research Methods

This study includes library research with a qualitative descriptive method design, where secondary data is used in the data collection process for this study. Three journal articles were selected and reviewed to answer the research questions. The selection of papers was based on various criteria, including relevance to the topic, and reviews of related journals. The researcher collected important materials on concepts related to assessment. The researcher examined, characterized, categorized, and developed conclusions based on empirical data to obtain significant results for this study.

4 Result and Discussion

This systematic literature review research uses three previous research journals which also discuss improving students' abilities regarding awareness of issues related to sustainable development which also includes hunger and health issues. The three selected journals were used to answer the first research question regarding the challenges faced in integrating hunger and health issues into English learning to improve critical thinking and social understanding. The three journals will also be used to answer the second research question regarding the most

effective learning methods for developing critical thinking and social understanding through English material about hunger and health issues.

The first discussion is about the challenges faced regarding integrating hunger and health issues into English learning to improve critical thinking and social understanding. According to Oraif (2024), the first challenge faced when delivering material on sustainable development with the theme of hunger and health issues to foster critical thinking in students is the lack of interest in the theme of hunger and health issues, making it difficult for teachers to foster critical thinking in students through the theme. This is in line with research from Abu-Hassan et al. (2024) that ensuring students are interested in the topic of hunger and health issues is a challenge in itself in learning English. In addition, research from Astawa et al. (2024) also shows that students lack awareness of the topic of hunger and health issues, so this can cause students to be disinterested in the material.

In addition to student awareness and interest, another challenge faced is the lack of readiness of materials related to hunger and health issues by teachers. This is in line with research conducted by Oraif (2024) and Astawa et al. (2024). In the two studies, it was stated that many teachers also lack experience with the theme of sustainable development including hunger and health issues, in addition, the existing curriculum also does not support the application of the theme in English learning. Another challenge according to Oraif (2024) and Abu-Hassan et al. (2024) is the difficulty of conducting assessments, this can happen because measuring students' understanding and critical thinking about these issues can be intricate and multifaceted, in addition traditional assessment methods may not adequately capture students' critical thinking skills or their ability to engage meaningfully with these topics.

The second discussion is about learning methods are most effective for developing critical thinking and social understanding through English material about hunger and health issues. According to Oraif (2024), Astawa et al. (2024) and Abu-Hassan et al. (2024), collaborative learning is very effective for teaching critical thinking with the theme of sustainable development, especially about hunger and health issues. Collaborative learning such as discussions is considered capable of making students learn to express opinions and think critically, in addition, with collaborative learning, students are expected to be able to think critically together to find solutions to the problems they face.

5 Conclusion

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CITATION:

Aninda Saffira Wihardi (2025). Improving Learners' Critical Thinking and Social Understanding Through English Content About Hunger and Health Issues. *OASE*, 7(4), 647–650.