

## Book Clubs as a Pedagogical Tool for Developing Critical Thinking: Evidence from an English Education Program in Indonesia

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### Abstract

In higher education, critical thinking skills are essential for students to develop their ability to explore problems, questions, or situations, find a solution, and justify their positions. Such skills can be cultivated through sustained, authentic dialogue with peers or in groups. To provide a supportive environment for dialogue and interaction among students, a book club was utilized as an alternative and extension activity of Extensive Reading course within the English Education Study Program at a private university in Indonesia. The book club enables students to connect with others, expressing and exchanging ideas and thoughts, thereby sharpening their critical thinking skills. This mixed-method study investigated the students' reading and critical thinking skills after participating in the book club, the effectiveness of book club in developing these skills, and the ways in which the book club fostered critical thinking skills. Twenty-three freshmen from one class participated in the study. The instruments used were a reading test, a survey of critical thinking skills, and students' work. The reading test and critical thinking survey were administered sequentially after the treatment, while students' work was qualitatively analyzed. The findings reveal that book club is effective in developing student's critical thinking skills, particularly in terms of creating alternative endings to a given story.

**Keywords:** book club, critical thinking skills, developing critical thinking, extensive reading, pedagogical tool

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## 1. Introduction

Developing critical thinking skills for higher education students is crucial for equipping them to navigate real world challenges, such as problem-solving and articulating well-reasoned arguments (Goldberg & Coufal, 2014). Critical thinking, a complex construct encompassing

interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation (Facione, 2011), has been extensively researched across various educational levels. In the context of higher education, (Muslem et al., 2019) emphasized the role of lecturers in facilitating students' engagement with critical thinking at the levels of analysis,

explanation, evaluation, interpretation, and self-regulation.

Various reading programs have been established to promote critical thinking for higher education students across diverse disciplines (Bunsom et al., 2008; Ferrer & Staley, 2016; Switzer & Barclay, 2012) recognizing that critical thinking is a developmental milestone rather than a fixed formula applicable to all contexts. One such approach is the utilization of book clubs, which have been widely implemented across majors at the university level. The adaptability of book clubs renders them suitable for integration into any context (Wyant & Bowen, 2018; Chappell & Dervay, 2016)

In English Education Department at a private Indonesian university, a need for fostering critical thinking skills among students has been observed. In response, the department has endeavoured to provide opportunities to engage and develop these skills. As part of this initiative, a book club has been established as a supplementary program to the Extensive Reading course, aiming to facilitate student access to a diverse range of reading materials (Renandya & Jacobs, 2011). This endeavour is underpinned by the department's commitment to researching and implementing sustainable programs for promoting critical thinking.

In the contemporary context, fostering engagement with book among young adults presents a significant challenge. In response, the book club program has been made compulsory for freshmen enrolled in the Extensive Reading course. The rationale behind this decision is rooted in the recognition that book clubs offer students a valuable platform for sharing their reflections and interpretations after reading.

In designing programs to foster reading skills, critical thinking, and creativity, (Ferrer & Staley, 2016) suggests the integration of intensive and extensive reading. Combining both approaches within a book club context offers students the opportunity to transition Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), with HOTS often serving as a descriptor of critical thinking. However, Krathwohl (2002) claims that terms like "problem solving" and "critical thinking" do not neatly fit into a single category, requiring a consideration of their intended meaning within the specific context.

Previous studies on book clubs has revealed positive findings. For instance, Wyant & Bowen (2018) demonstrated that book clubs in a sociology setting influenced student attitudes and learning outcomes. Similarly, scholars from various Indonesian universities affiliated with the Indonesian Extensive Reading Association (IERA) found that book clubs fostered a love of reading and promoted collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking (Rifai et al., 2023). Notably, Switzer & Barclay (2012) established that book clubs implemented in a business class setting facilitated critical thinking and reasoning skills.

Zagar et al. (2019) found that book clubs for faculty staff in the pharmacy field were engaging and fostered the development of in teaching, scholarship, and service. Likewise, (Robertson & Smith, 2017) demonstrated that an online book club for pre-service teachers provided opportunities for participants to learn from others and themselves, as well as deepen their understanding of pedagogy.

Despite the wealth of research on utilizing book clubs for developing critical

thinking, there remains a paucity of studies investigating how HOTS are incorporated into the book club activities and assessment, or how students articulate their perspectives on the book club experience. To address this gap, this study employs a survey of critical thinking, a reading test, and students work to investigate the potential of book clubs in fostering critical thinking skills. The novelty of the research lies in its explicit focus on integrating HOTS questions into both the book club activities and the reading test, encompassing the highest layer of Bloom's revised taxonomy, namely creating (Krathwohl, 2002).

The objective of this research is to examine the impact of book clubs on students' critical thinking skills. Reading, with its numerous advantages, can be an effective tool for fostering creativity and curiosity in students, encouraging them to think critically about the content they engage with and to consider diverse perspectives. Through participation in book clubs, students, particularly freshmen, can develop a passion for learning that is essential for success in both academic and professional pursuits. Thus, this study aims to investigate: 1) the impact of book club participation on students' reading skills; 2) the effect of book club participation on students' critical thinking skills; 3) the effectiveness of the book club as a pedagogical tool for developing critical thinking; and 4) the specific mechanisms through which the book club fosters critical thinking in students.

## **2. Method**

This study employed a mixed method research design (Creswell, 2008), utilizing a one-group time-series design for the collection of quantitative data. The research examined the relationship between an independent variable, the book club

intervention, and dependent variable, students' critical thinking.

The research participants consisted of twenty-three freshmen from a single Extensive Reading class of the English Education Department who voluntarily filled the informed consent. To assess the effectiveness of the book club intervention, three sets of measurement comprising a reading test and a critical thinking survey, were applied. The critical thinking survey, consisting of 22 items, was designed based on Krathwohl (2002) level of critical thinking. The reading test, consisting of 10 items, incorporated both LOTS and HOTS questions. To ensure the reliability of the instruments, interrater reliability was assessed with two raters, demonstrating a high degree of agreement between their measurements.

To investigate the mechanisms through which the book club fosters critical thinking skills, students' work was qualitatively analysed based on Anderson and Krathwohl's (2002) revised Bloom's Taxonomy framework for HOTS. The research procedure is outlined as follows:

Measurement I → Treatment I  
→ Measurement II → Treatment II →  
Measurement III → Treatment III

Prior to the implementation of the book club, a baseline assessment was conducted using the critical thinking survey and reading test. Subsequently, the book club intervention, consisting of two sessions (reading and sharing), was implemented. During the reading session, students were allowed to freely choose graded reader books and read for approximately half an hour. The lecturer facilitated pre-reading activities by posing questions related to the chosen books. Students were then given time

to read at their own pace, either individually or in pairs. The book club discussion session commenced after the reading session. Students took turns sharing and discussing their thoughts on the books. To guide the discussion, prompts incorporating both LOTS and HOTS were provided.

The second set of measurements, consisting of the critical thinking survey and reading test, was administered several weeks after the commencement of the book club intervention. The final, the third measurement was conducted upon completion of the book club program.

The research hypothesis posited that the book club intervention would effectively develop students' critical thinking skills. To test the hypothesis, a repeated measures ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) equivalent of one-way ANOVA for related samples and an extension of the dependent t-test, was employed. This statistical analysis, also referred to as a within-subjects ANOVA or ANOVA for correlated samples, was

conducted using SPSS 25.0. A one-way ANOVA was also used to assess the development of the critical reading ability after the intervention. Prior to analysis, a normality test was performed to ensure the data met the assumptions of normality.

To analyse the critical thinking level, the researcher employed a non-parametric test for repeated measurement, specifically the Friedman Test. This test was utilized to determine whether there were significant differences between the mean score of the data sets collected at different time points during the book club intervention.

### 3. Result and Discussion

To address the first research questions regarding the impact of the book club on students' reading comprehension, the reading test results are illustrated in the following tables.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Reading test**

	Reading Test 1	Reading Test 2	Reading Test 3
N	Valid	23	23
	Missing	0	0
Mean	18.5435	22.1304	21.7826
Std. Error of Mean	1.12504	.60156	.79265
Median	19.5000	22.0000	22.5000
Mode	15.00 <sup>a</sup>	21.00 <sup>a</sup>	23.00
Std. Deviation	5.39552	2.88498	3.80139
Variance	29.112	8.323	14.451
Range	19.00	13.00	16.00
Minimum	6.50	16.00	11.50
Maximum	25.50	29.00	27.50
Sum	426.50	509.00	501.00

The table illustrates a notable increase in the mean score of students' reading comprehension from initial test (18.54) to the second test (22.13) following the book club intervention. However, a slight decrease in the mean score was observed in the third test (21.78) compared to the second test. Despite

this minor fluctuation, the overall mean score across all three tests is 20.82 which can be considered a good performance.

The statistical results indicate that the first test exhibited the highest standard error of the mean (1.12504). This metric reflects the degree to which the sample mean is

likely to vary if the study were replicated with different samples drawn from the same population. In this context, the higher standard error of the mean for the first test suggests greater variability in scores compared to subsequent tests. This observation is further supported by the Standard Deviation (SD) and variance values for the first test, which are the highest among the three tests (SD=5.39552 and Variance=29.112).

Therefore, it can be inferred that the reading proficiency of the students prior to joining the book club exhibits variability, with some students demonstrating high proficiency and others displaying lower proficiency. Furthermore, the data reveals that the range score for the initial test is the highest among all administered tests (Range = 19.00).

The initial condition of the students' reading proficiency before the treatment indicates varying level of proficiency, as indicated by the high standard deviation, variance, and range. When comparing reading the first test to is to the second and third tests , there is a decrease in the mean score. This observation suggests an improvement in students' proficiency and a narrowing of the gap between them, which can be interpreted as a measure of learning success.

However, the data from the third test displays that the SD, variance and range are increasing. This indicates that after the first treatment, some students' critical reading abilities remain the same while others decrease. The factors causing this phenomenon should be rigorously observed and evaluated rigorously.

Possible factors contributing to these observations include the psychological condition of the students and the difficulty level of the test items. The students are

freshmen who are in a transition phase adapting to the college environment. The pressure of being tested may contribute to incomplete or unsuccessful test performance. In addition, they may not have been extensively exposed to the types of questions that cover both lower-order and higher-order thinking skills in their prior education. Consequently, the test might be perceived as challenging for them to navigate affectively.

Each test consists of 10 items worth a total of 30 points, covering cognitive levels ranging from remembering, understanding, and applying (LOTS), to analysing, evaluating, and creating (HOTS) as categorised by Krathwohl (2002). Additionally, the complexity of the texts has been incrementally higher across the tests, with text levels of 11.60, 16.10, and 16.40, and while word counts of 448, 499, and 657 respectively.

The texts are sourced from er-central (<https://www.er-central.com>), selected presumably based on students' interest in genre stories. Text 1, The Argument, categorized under the subgenre romance, closely relates to teenagers lives, depicting a couple's argument leading to the end of their relationship. While students grasp the content well, they appear to struggle with higher order thinking questions related to the text.

After joining the book club, students' reading comprehension and ability to derive meaning from texts have shown improvement. This progress is evident in the results of the second test, where the text "The Umbrella" categorized as drama/human interest, was used. In the book club sessions, students engage in reading graded readers before participating in discussions. The questions posed during these sessions are thoughtfully designed to address HOTS.

The text used for the third test, titled “The Perfect Face,” spans various subgenres. Surprisingly, despite this diversity, the scores showed a slight decrease compared to the second test. Thus decline could potentially be attributed to the slightly higher word count of the text compared to that of the second text.

Several aspects such as word count, difficulty level, and text type for the tests are carefully tailored to adhere to the principles of Extensive Reading. In addition, the types of questions are structured based on critical thinking levels, a practice regularly integrated into the book club with diverse texts and books. These questions serve as prompts to stimulate discussions among students. Previous research highlights that students can successfully respond to HOTS questions across phases from remembering to creating in reading comprehension (Silalahi et al., 2022). Additionally, exposure to a variety of texts enhances reading comprehension and foster critical awareness (Kurt Taşpınar & Cubukcu, 2020).

A well-planned and systematic extensive reading program has been shown to provide significant advantages for students’ learning (Renandya et al., 1999). In this context, the book club serves as a practical manifestation of extensive reading, facilitating the development of students’ reading skills (Yamashita, 2008). Noor (2021) similarly found that students perceive their reading skills positively improved through the practice of extensive reading. Indeed, reading skills are essential in every academic discipline and remain invaluable throughout one’s lifetime (Tekşan, 2019).

To test the relationship between the tests and analyze how the reading club influences students’s reading proficiency, we employed ANOVA test for repeated measurement. This test assumes the data are normally distributed. The results are summarized in the following table.

**Table 2 Tests of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Standardized Residual for test1	.112	23	.200*	.919	23	.064
Standardized Residual for test2	.097	23	.200*	.987	23	.984
Standardized Residual for test3	.158	23	.144	.916	23	.054

a. \*. This is a lower bound of the true significance

b. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Since the number of respondents is 23, the researchers used the Shapiro-Wilk test to assess normality. The Significance scores (Sig) for all three reading tests were above 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed. Based on these normality test results, the researchers conducted the ANOVA test. The analysis is presented in Table 6.

In this research, the analysis of critical thinking levels includes data gathered from Likert Scale questionnaires. Scores were calculated to assess students’ critical thinking abilities. To investigate students’ critical thinking skills in response to the second research question, a repeated survey was conducted after the treatments. The results are presented in the following table:

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Critical Thinking Test**

		Critical Thinking 1	Critical thinking 2	Critical Thinking 3
N	Valid	20	20	20
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		46.9500	49.5500	50.8000
Std. Error of Mean		1.44818	1.09898	1.18233
Median		47.0000	48.0000	49.0000
Mode		48.00	47.00	48.00
Std. Deviation		6.47648	4.91480	5.28752
Variance		41.945	24.155	27.958
Range		27.00	17.00	21.00
Minimum		34.00	43.00	42.00
Maximum		61.00	60.00	63.00
Sum		939.00	991.00	1016.00

The table above illustrates that the mean score of the third survey is the highest among the three surveys. This suggests that the treatments have influenced the students' critical thinking skills.

The book club adhered to structured format of regular silent reading and interactive sharing session. This repetitive and tailored approach effectively trained students in both reading comprehension and active participation within the book club setting. Through these blended activities, students honed critical thinking abilities such as making informed judgments, applying personal experience, synthesizing ideas and information, and critically evaluating peer contribution (Othman & Hashim, 2006).

The same survey was administered at different times; initially (46.95), midway through (49.55), and at the conclusion (50.80) of the treatment. The results of the final survey indicate a significant improvement in student's critical thinking skills. However, the SD of the third test increased, indicating greater variability in scores compared to the second test. A high standard deviation signifies more dispersed data, reflecting variability among student performance.

Similar to the reading test, the critical thinking test also shows that the first test has the highest standard error (1.45), SD (6.48), and Range (27.00). This variability underscores the diverse levels of students' critical thinking abilities. The range from the minimum to the maximum score spans 27 points, highlighting the need for some students to enhance their critical thinking skills to approach the level of their peers. This improvement can be achieved through practice in remembering, analysing, evaluating, and generating new ideas through critical reading.

Reading and developing critical thinking skills are symbiotic because engaging in reading helps students to develop reasoning abilities. This reasoning skills, in turn, enable students to read more effectively for comprehension and deeper understanding (Thomson, 2023).

Muslem et al., (2019) found that students typically demonstrate a moderate level of critical thinking skills, particularly in inferencing. Teaching critical thinking skills is essential for preparing students for future challenges and opportunities. These skills are integrated into the e teaching and learning process, providing ample exposure to reading and associated activities

(Kusumaningtyas et al, 2023). This approach enables students to questions facts and ideas, challenge assumptions and appreciate differing viewpoints.

To analyse the critical thinking test and determine the type of statistical test used, a normality test was conducted and the results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Tests of Normality Critical Thinking Test**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Standardized Residual for Test1	.086	20	.200*	.991	20	.999
Standardized Residual for Test2	.224	20	.010	.869	20	.011
Standardized Residual for Test3	.283	20	.000	.843	20	.004

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The results shows that not all items of the survey were normally distributed. Therefore, a non-parametric Friedman test was employed. Table 5 presents the mean ranks, and Table 9 displays the significant difference in mean comparisons. The

Friedman test serves as a non-parametric alternative to repeated measures ANOVA, assessing whether there is a statistically significant difference between group means when the same individuals are measured across three or more groups.

**Table 5. Ranks of Critical Thinking Test**

	Mean Rank
Critical Thinking 1	1.50
Critical Thinking 2	2.03
Critical Thinking 3	2.48

The mean rank demonstrates the progression of critical thinking skills, with mean scores showing gradual improvement following participation in the book club. This indicated that the book club positively influence the students' critical thinking

abilities. Statistical calculations confirm that this improvement is statistically significant.

The third research question investigated the effectiveness of the book club in developing students' critical thinking skills. The data are presented in the table below:

**Table 6. Tests of Within-Subjects Effects Reading Test**

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Bookclub	Sphericity Assumed	180.007	2	90.004	7.460	.002
	Greenhouse-Geisser	180.007	1.868	96.381	7.460	.002
	Huynh-Feldt	180.007	2.000	90.004	7.460	.002
	Lower-bound	180.007	1.000	180.007	7.460	.012
Error (Bookclub)	Sphericity Assumed	530.826	44	12.064		
	Greenhouse-Geisser	530.826	41.089	12.919		
	Huynh-Feldt	530.826	44.000	12.064		
	Lower-bound	530.826	22.000	24.128		



The ANOVA test results in the table above shows that the coefficient for Sphericity Assumed is .002, which is less than .05, and Greenh-Geisser is .002, also less than .05. This suggests that the book club significantly influences students' critical thinking skills, given that the data were normally distributed.

The significance levels for the variations between the different stages of treatment are presented in Table 6. It is evident that the influence of the book club varied statistically between pre-treatment, and first treatment into the intervention ( $p < .013$ ), as well as between pre-treatment and post-treatment ( $p = .015$ ). However, there was no significant difference between the first treatment and post-treatment stages ( $p = 1.00$ ). The mean difference after the first treatment compared to the second treatment was found to be insignificant.

In conclusion, the first treatment provided by the book club significantly improved students' reading proficiency, whereas the second treatment showed

insignificant improvement. Despite the similarity in genre and difficulty level between the reading texts of the second and third test, the large number of words in the third test may have posed a challenge. A longer text requires more time for comprehension and addressing questions especially those involving HOTS (Sulistyanto et al, 2022). However, the allotted time remained constant at 60 minutes. Moreover, awareness of being tested could potentially influence students' anxiety levels. Salehi & Marefat (2014) assert that foreign language anxiety and test anxiety is correlated.

Table 7. Pairwise Comparisons

Measure: Reading

(I) Bookclub	(J) Bookclub	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>	95% Confidence Interval for Difference <sup>b</sup>	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-3.587*	1.127	.013	-6.508	-.666
	3	-3.239*	1.042	.015	-5.939	-.539
2	1	3.587*	1.127	.013	.666	6.508
	3	.348	.889	1.000	-1.957	2.652
3	1	3.239*	1.042	.015	.539	5.939
	2	-.348	.889	1.000	-2.652	1.957

Based on estimated marginal means

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

To assess whether the Book Club significantly influences students' critical thinking, we present data from Friedman test statistics. Table 8 provides the Friedman test

results and indicates whether there was a statistically significant difference between the mean ranks of the respective groups.

**Table. 8 Friedman Test of Critical Thinking**

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
N	20
Chi-Square	10.438
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.005

a. Friedman Test

Since the Asymp. Sig. is lower than 0.05 ( $p= 0.005 < 0.05$ ), it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in students' critical thinking after the treatment. This indicates that the book club significantly influences students' critical thinking levels.

This research finding aligns with [Ramadhani et al. \(2023\)](#) who assert a significant correlation between critical thinking and reading ability.

The book club facilitates participants in gaining new knowledge and sharing opinions in English, the target language within the group. This supports previous research indicating that book club enhance pedagogical or academic skills ([Álvarez-Álvarez 2016](#); [Robertson and Smith 2017](#); [Zagar et al. 2019](#)), and contribute to enhancing language proficiency ([McCaughy 2017](#); [Rifai et al. 2023](#)).

The presentation of Friedman test results includes the test statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) value ("Chi-square"), degrees of freedom ("df"), and significance level ("Asymp. Sig."), all of which are provided in Table 8. Based on the mean ranks of the associated groups, we observe statistically significant differences overall. It is crucial to note that the Friedman test, similar to its parametric counterpart, is an omnibus test; meaning it indicates general differences but does not specify which groups differ from one another. Therefore from this test, we can generally conclude that both the first treatment and the second treatment significantly influenced to students' critical thinking.

To address the fourth research question concerning the developmental impact of the book club on students' critical thinking skills, a set of ten questions were devised following Blooms' revised Taxonomy. These questions encompass dimensions such as remembering understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating. The test items are standardized yet flexible, tailored to suit specific content. Presented below is an illustrative excerpt from the first test, titled "*The Argument*."

1. Identify three words that represent the essence of the story.

This question is classified at the understanding level. It is relatively straightforward to answer as it pertains directly to the story's subject matter. Typically, the most frequently mentioned words provide clues to the answer.

2. Do you have a similar experience to the described in the story? Please elaborate.

This question falls under the evaluating level. It prompts students to evaluate the story by drawing on their ability to synthesize personal experiences with the narrative.

3. If you were the main character in the story, would you make the same choices?

This question is classified at the application level. It requires students to relate the story to everyday life by considering what actions they would

take if they were in the protagonist's position.

4. What are the key takeaways or lessons learned from the story?

This question is categorized at the analysing level. Students are tasked with analysing the story to identify and articulate the lessons or insights gained from it.

5. In your opinion, how should one maintain a good relationship?

This question is categorized at the evaluating level. Students are expected to articulate their viewpoint based on their judgment of the story. Their assessment of the story. Their understanding of the narrative will greatly aid in elaborating their ideas.

6. Have you ever had an argument with others? whether a friend or a boyfriend/girlfriend?

7. How did you resolve the problem at that time?

Questions 6 and 7 are classified at the applying level. Students are tasked with relating the problem occurred in the story with their own lives, as if they had experienced a similar situation.

8. Which part did you enjoy the most?

This question is classified at the lowest level, the remembering level. Students identify their favourite part of the story based on their understanding.

9. Why do you think it is the most interesting part?

This question is one level higher than the remembering level. After identifying their favourite part, students are expected to provide reasons for their choice.

10. Create your own ending for the story in three sentences.

This question corresponds to the highest level of the creating level category.

After reading the story, students are instructed to compose a new ending for the story in paragraph form.

This final question carries the highest score weight. Score are classified into four levels; poor, fair, good, and excellent. Students' responses are analysed to gauge creativity in comparison to the original story. For instance, one of the stories titled "*The Perfect Face*" narrates Kylie's struggle with feeling ugly due to her large nose, until she encounters a man seeking a cosmetics model who believes Kylie is perfect for the role. Here are examples illustrating how students generate ideas:

Student A wrote:

*"Kylie agrees for the job from the man and after coming with her father, the company agree to accept Kylie into that company. After months the dream comes true. Kylie has much money. The mother was healthy, she can buy many clothes. She can have blonde hair, she has a small nose and after that her live is good."*

This paragraph shows that student A can enhance her text comprehension, adapt her original ideas, and logically express them in a paragraph. Now, regarding Student B's response:

*"Kylie accepted the offer and earned a lot of money and made what she dreamed of and she became a successful model and was not insecure anymore and her mother recovered because she got good treatment and Kylie got her partner who accepts her for who she is and they live happily."*

In this paragraph, Student B attempts to expand the story by describing Kylie's mother's health condition and introducing Kylie's spouse in a simple yet acceptable manner. This alteration provides happier ending of the story reflecting the student's expectation as a reader.

A similar writing made by Student C is as follows:

*“In the next day, Kylie comes to the company and says that she wants to be a model and Kylie realizes her dream. Now she has a small nose and makes her hair long and blonde. And then Kylie became famous and friends with the super model Gigi Hadid and Kendall Jenner. Kylie became rich and makes her mom well. She is so grateful about what she has.”*

This brief paragraph describes how Student C crafts the ending of the story through her own interpretation. She articulates her understanding of the narrative using her own words and draws parallels to real-life examples involving popular model like Gigi Hadid and Kendall Jenner. This thoughtful approach demonstrates critical thinking and deserves recognition. Grammatical errors were overlooked in this assessment, as the emphasis was placed on the ideas conveyed. Furthermore, the sentences remain comprehensible. Another student, Student D, wrote a simpler paragraph as follows::

*“Kylie will take the offer from that man. She will be a good model and be a famous girl. Then she will be rich and her dreams come true. She will be good at her job and she becomes more independent woman, and she will realize that she is beautiful”*

This paragraph demonstrates that Student D expands on the basic idea of Kylie accepting the offer to become a model, envisioning a future with fame, wealth, and beauty.

This research finding aligns with [Bunsom et al. \(2014\)](#), who emphasized the use of creating different endings of stories to develop students' critical thinking skills. Additionally, [Yamin et al., 2021](#) find out that critical thinking can be used in analysing short stories to support identity theory. Students' responses at the creating level reflect various facets of critical thinking, including rationality, emotions, creativity, and imagination ([Brodin, 2007](#)).

In a broader context, [Husna \(2019\)](#) demonstrated that participating in an

extensive reading program improved students' critical thinking abilities. The activities and assessments within the program were believed to contribute to this enhancement in critical thinking skills.

Based on the satisfaction shown in the test results for reading comprehension, and the surveys on students' critical thinking skills, it is evident that the book club foster students' critical thinking abilities. Empirical research has established a clear relationship between book clubs and critical thinking skills, with many scholars dedicating significant attention and research to this theme. The implementation of book clubs has garnered positive feedback from students, fostering a love of reading and reading for pleasure ([Álvarez-Álvarez, 2016](#); [Rifai et al., 2023](#); [Rusiana et al., 2024](#)). In relation to pleasure reading, [Hawkins \(2012\)](#) reveals a significantly positive correlation between critical thinking skills and voluntary reading.

Based on the findings, students who achieve the highest level of Bloom's revised taxonomy typically demonstrate competence across all lower levels. According to [Ichsan et al. \(2021\)](#), acquiring proficiency in lower order thinking skills such as remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, and evaluating serves as a foundation for developing higher order thinking skills, culminating in the ability to create.

During the book club sessions, the questions encompassing comprehension and critical thinking skills were formulated by the lecturers and further elaborated upon by the students during discussion.

The department also provided snacks and beverages to enhance the appeal of the book club, as suggested by [Switzer & Barclay \(2012\)](#). Some students require additional incentives and encouragement to

actively participate in the discussion, Ro & Burch (2020)

The book club fosters the developmental of critical thinking skills through tailored HOTS questions, which shape thought processes and cultivate a sense of community within a supportive learning environment (Butler & Hildreth, 2018). The customized HOTS questions help students in expressing their thoughts in a more systematic way among their peers. Moreover, participating in sharing and discussion within the club encourage students to respect others' opinion and justify their own positions, reflective of their respective levels of critical thinking skills as assessed in reading tests and critical thinking surveys. The ability to independently articulate one's stance on specific issues posed through these questions can be identified as a manifestation of critical thinking.

Overall, the book club provides opportunities for developing critical thinking skills (Ferrer & Staley, 2016; Rifai et al., 2023; Switzer & Barclay, 2012; Yamin et al., 2021). This research supports previous studies indicating that book club enhance students' critical thinking skills, particularly in terms of creating different endings for specific stories.

#### 4. Conclusion

The book club has been the milestone of the department, serving as a supplementary program to the Extensive Reading course embedded in the curriculum. It is evident that the department's efforts to promote students' critical thinking skills through the book club have yielded favourable outcomes. The sustained interactions during discussion over a specific period provide opportunities to students to apply and enhance their critical thinking skills in response to the club's

inquiries. Based on the reading tests, surveys of critical thinking skills, and the students' performance in these assessments the conclusion drawn is that the book club effectively develops the students' critical thinking skills. The implication is that the book club, as an extension program of the extensive reading program, should be maintained to nurture critical thinking and foster a sense of community. For future research, the book club could be more broadly implemented not only within the department but also across departments, catering to both students or faculty members within the university.

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