

## English Teacher's Strategies in Enhancing 9th Grade Students' Critical Thinking at Junior High School 25 Muaro Jambi

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**Abstract.** The aim of this research was to describe the English teacher's strategies in enhancing the critical thinking skills of 9th grade students at Junior High School 25 Muaro Jambi. This study employed a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected through observation and interviews. The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings revealed that the teacher's instructional strategies played a crucial role in fostering the development of students' critical thinking skills. The teacher implemented various approaches such as posing open-ended questions, facilitating classroom discussions, conducting debates, and assigning writing tasks. These strategies were designed to promote analytical thinking and encourage students to express and defend their opinions. In addition to these core strategies, the teacher also used a combination of teaching methods, including reading comprehension exercises, translation and interpretation of texts, dictionary use, group work, dialogue practice, storytelling, vocabulary games, and writing simple essays for daily communication. These methods not only engaged students in active learning but also made the learning process more dynamic and enjoyable. As a result, students were able to think more clearly, quickly, and effectively, which significantly contributed to the development of their critical thinking abilities. The research concludes that a diverse and interactive set of teaching strategies can successfully enhance critical thinking among junior high school students. Teachers are encouraged to integrate a variety of methods tailored to students' needs and classroom contexts to achieve optimal learning outcomes and better prepare students for higher-level thinking and problem-solving.

**Keywords:** Classroom strategies, Critical thinking, English learning, Instructional methods, Teacher's strategies

**Abstrak.** Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan strategi guru Bahasa Inggris dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berpikir kritis siswa kelas 9 di SMP Negeri 25 Muaro Jambi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi dan wawancara. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif yang diusulkan oleh Miles dan Huberman (1994), yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan/verifikasi kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa strategi pengajaran guru memainkan peran penting dalam mendorong perkembangan keterampilan berpikir kritis siswa. Guru menerapkan berbagai pendekatan seperti mengajukan pertanyaan terbuka, memfasilitasi diskusi kelas, melakukan debat, dan menugaskan tugas menulis. Strategi-strategi ini dirancang untuk mendorong pemikiran analitis dan mendorong siswa untuk mengungkapkan dan mempertahankan pendapat mereka. Selain strategi inti ini, guru juga menggunakan kombinasi metode pengajaran, termasuk latihan pemahaman bacaan, penerjemahan dan interpretasi teks, penggunaan kamus, kerja kelompok, latihan dialog, mendongeng, permainan kosakata, dan menulis esai sederhana untuk komunikasi sehari-hari. Metode-metode ini tidak hanya melibatkan siswa dalam pembelajaran aktif, tetapi juga membuat proses pembelajaran lebih dinamis dan menyenangkan. Hasilnya, siswa mampu berpikir lebih jernih, cepat, dan efektif, yang berkontribusi signifikan terhadap perkembangan kemampuan berpikir kritis mereka. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa serangkaian strategi pengajaran yang beragam dan interaktif dapat berhasil meningkatkan kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa SMP. Guru didorong untuk mengintegrasikan beragam metode yang disesuaikan dengan kebutuhan siswa dan konteks kelas untuk mencapai hasil belajar yang optimal dan mempersiapkan siswa dengan lebih baik untuk berpikir tingkat tinggi dan memecahkan masalah.

**Kata Kunci:** Berpikir kritis, Metode pengajaran, Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, Strategi guru, Strategi kelas

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Teaching offers continuous opportunities for learning and personal development. It involves various techniques that engage students actively in the learning process and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning (Darminto et al., 2025). Teachers often apply active teaching methods sometimes without realizing it through habits like asking questions as part of their natural teaching style. Teaching strategies reflect the teacher's attitude and preferred instructional methods. Hakim et al., (2020) explains that some teachers rely heavily on question-and-answer techniques, while others use more programmed instructional approaches. In practice, each teacher implements a different strategy suited to their context. Nyoman et al., (2023) define teaching strategies as the methods used to make decisions related to courses, classroom sessions, or curricula.

In the context of English Language Teaching, teachers aim to make learning relevant to students' real-life contexts by employing effective strategies and one of which is critical thinking. Critical thinking encourages students to evaluate information critically based on their experiences and classroom materials. According to Mulyanti (2021) this strategy allows learners to reflect on their thoughts and behaviors in relation to learning English. Critical thinking also encourages students to become active learners rather than passive recipients of knowledge, enabling them to generate new ideas and enhance their language proficiency.

Students who develop critical thinking skills are capable of understanding connections between concepts, identifying the relevance of arguments, and forming or evaluating logical reasoning. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of English teachers in Indonesia to help students cultivate these skills. Without sufficient practice in critical thinking, students may lose opportunities to build meaningful relationships and improve their (Sari et al., 2024) This highlights that critical thinking positively influences student achievement in the classroom.

Rohmi & Wahyuni (2024) states that critical thinking involves analyzing and evaluating information to make sense of content. Teachers play a central role by posing questions that prompt students to reflect and reason. One key step in this process is framing lesson activities around essential questions that guide students in making sense of the knowledge gained. Teachers also need to observe and support how students respond during class discussions to ensure meaningful engagement with the content.

Critical thinkers ask important questions, define problems clearly, evaluate relevant information, and communicate openly and effectively. In contrast, passive thinkers often rely on simplistic yes-or-no answers and assume their perspectives are the only valid ones (Iskandar et al., 2021). Critical thinking also serves practical functions it is vital in professional settings,

supports emotional and moral reasoning, and helps individuals evaluate social systems (Yazidi, 2023).

Effective questioning techniques make learning content more engaging and meaningful for both teachers and students. According to Asfiranti et al., (2025) questioning helps teachers discover new perspectives on their content. Though some educators may misunderstand what teaching critical thinking entails, integrating well-crafted questions into lessons without needing to overhaul the curriculum can help students develop critical thinking more naturally.

Casmini et al., (2024) suggests that critical thinking comprises both skills for processing and generating information, and the consistent application of those skills in guiding behavior. Critical thinkers enhance their thought processes by carefully analyzing and evaluating issues. Collaborative learning, open-ended questions, and problem-based tasks support this development by challenging students to consider multiple solutions and justify their reasoning.

Darminto et al., (2025) emphasizes that teachers should implement critical thinking strategies in all learning environments, whether traditional or online. Often, teachers deliver material without encouraging deep interaction. Factors that influence the success of critical thinking instruction include teacher knowledge, classroom size, cultural context, available time, and teacher commitment. Open-ended questions and allowing time for reflection also help students engage more meaningfully with the material (Muthoharoh & Hartono, 2022).

Critical thinking equips students with transferable skills like reflection, analysis, and planning, applicable in many life situations. It enhances students' ability to communicate clearly, express ideas effectively, and develop their creativity. Rather than depending solely on teachers, students become independent learners (Rahima et al., 2023). Critical thinkers are better prepared to assess information, solve problems, and adapt their knowledge to new situations.

Junior High School 25 Muaro Jambi is known for promoting student engagement through activities such as speech contests, debates, and drama performances. These events foster students' interest in learning and have helped the school achieve notable success in academic competitions. Teachers in this school encourage students to assess their learning styles and enhance their critical thinking, which contributes positively to academic performance. Students who demonstrate strong critical thinking skills often achieve higher scores and can connect classroom knowledge with real-world issues, such as analyzing historical events or formulating arguments.

Teachers use critical thinking strategies to guide students in managing their emotions during discussions or decision-making processes. These strategies help students express

opinions with empathy and openness. For instance, during group activities, students are encouraged to listen to diverse viewpoints, negotiate solutions, and reach agreements. Such experiences teach cooperation, promote tolerance, and reduce biased assumptions core outcomes of critical thinking.

This research, critical thinking becomes an important focus in English Language Teaching (ELT), there are still only a few studies that explore how English teachers in rural or suburban junior high schools in Indonesia apply different strategies to develop students' critical thinking. Most previous research focuses on schools in urban areas or higher education levels, and rarely looks at how teachers in less-researched schools, like Junior High School 25 Muaro Jambi, teach critical thinking in their classrooms. This study fills that gap by showing how teachers use various strategies such as asking questions, doing group work, and giving creative assignments to help students think critically. The new value of this research is in its focus on a real classroom context and the use of different teaching strategies that work together. This study also shows how important it is to teach critical thinking from an early age so students are ready to face academic and real-life challenges in today's complex world.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Teacher Strategies**

Teachers use different strategies to make learning easier and more interesting for students. Nyoman et al., (2023) said a teacher strategy is a planned way to teach that helps students understand the lesson better. For example, some teachers use group work, games, or discussions to keep students active in class. Others use questions, pictures, or real-life examples to explain ideas clearly. The goal is to make sure students are involved and can connect the lesson to their daily lives. Every classroom is different, so teachers choose strategies based on students' needs and the topic they are teaching. Some strategies help students think critically, while others improve communication or teamwork. Teachers also give feedback and support to help students grow. By using the right strategy, teachers help students become more confident, active, and successful in their learning.

Teachers use different strategies to help students learn better, and one of the most effective is teaching critical thinking. Critical thinking includes mental skills like understanding, explaining, connecting, and making judgments. In class, teachers can use strategies such as calling on students randomly, asking them to summarize, give examples, or connect the topic to their own experience (Darminto et al., 2025).. These methods keep students alert and involved in the lesson. Teachers also encourage students to write down ideas, ask

questions, and discuss them with classmates. All of these activities help students think more deeply.

According to Rohmi & Wahyuni (2024) critical thinking helps both children and adults in their daily lives. It teaches them how to reflect, make good decisions, and think carefully about moral, social, or political issues. A critical thinker knows how to apply knowledge from one situation to another. This skill also includes being confident, open-minded, and willing to listen to different opinions. Students who think critically are able to analyze ideas, provide evidence, and avoid thinking only from their own point of view.

Critical thinking is a very important skill in education and real life. It helps students become active learners who can solve problems, make good decisions, and understand different situations. That is why teachers need to use strategies that support critical thinking in the classroom. By doing this, students not only learn better, but also grow into thoughtful and responsible individuals

### **Teacher Strategies to Promote Critical Thinking**

Teachers play an important role in helping students develop critical thinking skills. While many strategies can support this goal, teachers also need proper support and training. As Hapsari et al., (2025) states, teachers are also learners of critical thinking, and they set the tone for how it is practiced in class. Experts like Joanne Gainen Kurfiss, Jeremy Harmer, and Gregory Bassham agree that teachers must first understand and be confident in using these strategies before they can apply them effectively (Novita & Paragae, 2023). Yazidi (2023) explains that three main strategies are often used to promote critical thinking: asking questions, leading classroom discussions or debates, and giving writing assignments.

#### **a. Questioning**

Using questions is one of the most common and useful strategies to develop students' critical thinking. The way a question is asked can encourage students to analyze, evaluate, and reflect before answering. Yazidi (2023) mentions that asking thoughtful questions is a key part of good teaching. These questions should not only ask students to remember facts, but also to explain, compare, give opinions, or make connections. Teachers can use Bloom's Taxonomy to create questions at different thinking levels. For example:

- 1) Knowledge: "What is...?", "Define..."
- 2) Comprehension: "Explain...", "Give an example of..."
- 3) Application: "How would you solve...?"
- 4) Analysis: "What are the reasons?", "What assumptions are made?"

- 5) Synthesis: "Can you suggest a solution?", "What would you create?"
- 6) Evaluation: "Do you agree?", "Which is better and why?"

Another effective method is Socratic questioning, where teachers ask follow-up questions or call on students who have not raised their hands. This encourages all students to participate and think carefully. Teachers may also ask one student to summarize another's answer to check if they were listening and understood the idea. Giving students time to think before answering called "wait time" is also important. Waiting 5 to 10 seconds allows students to organize their thoughts and give better responses.

b. Classroom Discussions and Debates

Classroom discussions and debates help students express their ideas, consider other perspectives, and defend their opinions. Yazidi (2023) suggests that exposing students to different and even opposing viewpoints can increase their ability to think critically. Students may discuss controversial issues like technology or education, and by doing so, learn how to argue both sides of a topic. Teachers can organize agree/disagree discussions, where small groups discuss statements like "People learn best when they travel" versus "People learn best when they read." Another helpful tool is the pro and con grid, where students list the advantages and disadvantages of an issue. These activities train students to think deeply and from multiple viewpoints.

In debates, students work in teams to defend or oppose a topic (called a motion). They define key terms, build arguments, and offer rebuttals (responses to opponents). Each debate usually follows a structure: opening statements, rebuttals, and closing summaries. Debating improves students' ability to find evidence, weigh ideas, and make logical conclusions.

c. Writing Assignments

Writing activities are powerful tools for developing critical thinking. According to Yazidi (2023) writing involves important mental processes like analysis, reflection, explanation, and evaluation. Whether in-class or as homework, writing helps students express their thoughts clearly and connect ideas. Simple writing tasks like free writing (writing without stopping for 5–10 minutes) allow students to explore ideas freely. Other types of writing include journals, summaries, book reviews, and short essays. These tasks connect reading, listening, and thinking, making students more active learners. Before writing, students can brainstorm using lists, concept maps, or questions (Who? What? Why? etc.). They also benefit from feedback through peer reviews or teacher rubrics. A typical essay includes an introduction (with topic and purpose), body paragraphs (with details and arguments), and a conclusion (with final thoughts or recommendations).

Based on the expiation above it can be concluded that teachers can use strategies like questioning, classroom discussions or debates, and writing assignments. These methods encourage students to express opinions, analyze ideas, and think beyond memorizing facts. They also make learning more interactive and meaningful. When teachers use these approaches in the classroom, they not only help students learn better but also prepare them to face real-world challenges with confidence and critical thinking.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

This chapter explains the research methodology, including the research design, setting description, subject of the research, sources of data, technique of data collection and technique of data analysis:

#### **Research Design**

This research used a qualitative design with a case study approach. According to Creswell (2022) qualitative research studied phenomena in natural settings to understand or interpret them. The case study design aimed to describe a phenomenon in detail based on the characteristics of the subject, including events, problems, processes, activities, or individuals. The researcher focused on exploring participants' ideas and perceptions by seeing things from their perspective (emic view). To do this, the researcher became actively involved and deeply engaged in the setting. This immersion helped the researcher gather rich descriptions from interviews and observations. A trusting relationship between the researcher and participants was necessary and was built through good communication and interpersonal skills. Based on the explanation above, qualitative research focused on analyzing descriptive data collected from natural situations. It allowed the researcher to explore the strategies used by teachers in promoting students' critical thinking through written or spoken data.

#### **Setting Description**

This study was conducted at Junior High School 25 Muaro Jambi, located in Sungai Bahar, Muaro Jambi, Jambi Province. The school was chosen because the English teachers there showed good knowledge, understanding, teaching styles, and interest in encouraging students' critical thinking. Some students could be assessed for their learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses. Many students were active in class, made decisions, and confidently expressed their opinions.

#### **Subject of the Research**

The participants in this study were the English teacher and the 9th-grade students at Junior High School 25 Muaro Jambi in the academic year 2025.

## **Sources of Data**

### a. Primary Data:

Primary data were the main sources directly related to the research topic. In this study, the researcher collected data from teachers and students through observations, interviews, and documentation (Asfiranti et al., 2025). These included: Teaching strategies used by the teacher to support students' critical thinking. Participants, including: The teacher as the subject applying the strategy. The students as the object experiencing the strategy. Documents, such as student data and evaluation results.

### b. Secondary Data:

Secondary data came from additional sources that supported the research indirectly, such as books, journals, websites, newspapers, and other literature related to teacher strategies and critical thinking.

## **Technique of Data Collection**

This research used three techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation.

### a. Observation

Observation was used to directly examine the implementation of the teacher's strategy. The researcher filled out observation sheets containing date, class activity, teaching strategy, and topic. Observations were conducted over two to three months during English classes, with the data guided by Creswell (2022) which emphasized motivation, confidence, and anxiety in language learning.

### b. Interview

Interviews were conducted individually with teachers and students for about 10–20 minutes. The researcher prepared a quiet space, recording tools, and an interview guide. Unstructured interviews were used, allowing participants to speak freely based on broad guiding questions. These interviews aimed to collect opinions about how the strategies were applied and their effect on students' critical thinking.

### c. Documentation

Documentation involved collecting written records and media such as photos or videos. It included data on school background, teacher qualifications, student characteristics, and

classroom facilities. The researcher also collected students' notes and assignments to see how the strategies were applied in practice.

### **Technique of Data Analysis**

The researcher used descriptive qualitative analysis through the following steps:

a. Data Reduction

The researcher reduced the large amount of raw data by summarizing and selecting key points relevant to the research focus. This helped in organizing the data and avoiding unnecessary information.

b. Data Presentation

After reducing the data, the researcher presented it descriptively in a narrative form. This step helped to organize the information and prepare for drawing conclusions (Creswell, 1997).

c. Drawing Conclusions and Verification

The researcher drew conclusions based on the interpreted data and verified them for accuracy and reliability. This process ensured that the findings reflected participants' real experiences

d. Triangulation

Triangulation was used to check the validity of the data. The researcher compared data from different sources observations, interviews, and documents to confirm consistency. For example: Comparing interview results with classroom observations. Checking consistency between public and private statements of participants. Matching documentation with observed behavior during teaching.

## **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Teacher's Ways in Promoting Student's Critical Thinking**

The information regarding the teacher's strategies in enhancing the critical thinking skills of 9th-grade students at Junior High School N 25 Muaro Jambi was obtained through interviews and classroom observations. This section presented three main strategies employed by the teacher: posing questions, facilitating classroom discussions and debates, and assigning writing tasks.

a. Questions

In applying this strategy, the teacher made thorough preparations for each lesson. She designed specific and targeted questions to be asked during class. These questions were aimed at ensuring the teaching and learning process ran smoothly, and she anticipated students'

inquiries, especially related to previous lessons. This approach helped enhance student participation and fostered active learning. By asking questions, the teacher modeled a strategy that students were encouraged to adopt themselves. She guided students to use questioning techniques to evaluate their understanding, sharpen their thinking skills, and prepare for assessments. The teacher utilized questions not only to promote skill practice but also to convey key facts, ideas, and ways of thinking essential to the lesson. She explained,

*"I had to create questions to help my students develop their critical thinking. Through this, they learned how to communicate ideas, understand facts and concepts from texts, and express their own opinions about the topics being studied. This was crucial to encourage their engagement and problem-solving skills."*

The teacher emphasized the importance of asking students to explain the reasoning behind their answers. She avoided asking multiple questions at once, recognizing that it often caused confusion and hesitation among students. Instead, she asked questions throughout the lesson to keep the session interactive and assess students' understanding. She mentioned that she refrained from asking complex questions in the last few minutes of class due to time constraints. Ideally, she began such interactions at least twenty minutes before the end of the lesson to allow enough time for clarification and guidance.

The teacher also gave students time to think before responding typically between 5 to 10 seconds thereby increasing the number of volunteers. If students did not answer immediately, she waited patiently, repeated the question if necessary, and refrained from interrupting their responses. She believed in letting students think independently and showed genuine interest in their answers by maintaining eye contact and using engaged facial expressions. Even when students gave incorrect or weak answers, she pointed out the errors and followed up with guiding questions to help them reach stronger conclusions. Another strategy involved encouraging students to summarize or conclude discussions. She stated,

*"I asked them to provide a conclusion. If they struggled to answer directly, I asked them to reflect and try to summarize their understanding. When they still couldn't form a conclusion, they were asked to listen again and try to formulate it based on what they understood."*

This practice allowed the teacher to evaluate how well students grasped key ideas. If a student failed to recall an important point, she posed further questions to the class to revisit and reinforce the concept. The questions used were intended to stimulate deeper thinking moving beyond simple recall to evaluation and synthesis. Prompts like "explain," "compare," "why,"

“what is the best solution and why,” and “do you agree or disagree with this statement?” were examples of how the teacher encouraged higher-order thinking.

Additionally, the teacher guided students to consult dictionaries when encountering unfamiliar words, promoting independent learning habits. This activity was not limited to the classroom but was also encouraged at home. Students were often asked to translate unfamiliar terms on their own using dictionaries, which gradually strengthened their vocabulary and comprehension skills.

#### b. Classroom Discussion and Debates

One of the main strategies the teacher used to develop students’ critical thinking was classroom discussion. The students were asked to read stories or texts that matched the lesson of the day, which were usually taken from their textbooks. While reading, students were expected to understand the content. Sometimes the teacher read the text aloud, and sometimes she asked the students to do so. The types of texts used included notices, narratives, and recounts. The teacher explained unfamiliar words before, during, and after the reading activity. As the teacher explained,

*“I asked my students to open their textbooks and read the given texts. Sometimes, I added other reading materials to improve the learning process. Texts like notices, narratives, and recounts helped them use their own experiences to understand the content better.”*

Before the reading began, the teacher identified which parts of the story might be new or difficult for the students and introduced them beforehand. During reading, she guided students to read aloud, and after reading, she clarified the overall meaning of the text. She also discussed new information and asked students to answer comprehension questions. This process helped students expand their understanding as they encountered new ideas and events. One teacher noted, “By reading, students gained new knowledge and information.”

The teacher believed it was important for students to understand the meaning of the texts clearly, especially since the texts were in English. Students often worked in groups to find the meanings of difficult words, discuss the content, retell the stories, or share their opinions. Sometimes, the teacher used both English and Indonesian to help students understand the story better. Based on field notes from the observation on September 3rd, 2016, the teacher asked students to read in groups, starting with one group and continuing to the next. Then, the students discussed the story and explained it in Bahasa Indonesia. This showed that the teacher used the native language when necessary to help students comprehend the text.

Group discussions were also a part of the learning activity. Students worked with their peers to do exercises from the textbook or module. The teacher often asked them to read and

retell the story in front of the class to check their understanding. She explained, "*I taught English skills such as reading, listening, writing, and speaking. For speaking and listening, I usually asked my students to create dialogues based on the texts they had learned, then practice and perform them.*"

This statement showed that another effective way to promote students' critical thinking was through conversations and debates. The teacher started by reading a dialogue or story while students listened to understand the content. Afterward, they were asked to provide more detailed information about what they heard. Because students had different levels of English proficiency, the teacher chose debate topics based on current social issues to keep discussions relevant and engaging.

Students were divided into teams and assigned positions either supporting or opposing a motion. Each team needed to prepare solid arguments to defend their stance. The central idea behind their argument, known as the *theme line*, answered the key question: "Why does this side support or reject the motion?" According to Darby (2007), the theme line was essential for building the foundation of the debate and for attacking the opponent's arguments.

This debate activity worked like a structured argument battle. Each team had to defend its position, challenge the opponent's view, and respond logically and critically. To win, a team not only needed strong arguments but also effective rebuttals against attacks. Rebuttals were crucial to claim victory. Through this process, students gained knowledge and developed critical thinking by working as a team. However, preparing for a debate was not easy. Students had to research and gather information from various sources to support their arguments.

Preparation included building strong arguments, defining their team's stance, attacking the opposition's ideas, and defending their position. This method proved to be a powerful way to foster critical thinking skills. Since the debates were held in class, the teacher could monitor and guide the students directly as they delivered and defended their arguments.

### c. Writing Assignments

In applying writing assignments, the teacher made use of short papers as a strategy to develop students' writing skills. According to Smith (2012), short papers were one of the seven recognized types of writing assignments. Based on the researcher's observation, the teacher implemented free writing sessions lasting between five to ten minutes. During this time, students were encouraged to write freely about anything that came to their minds whether related or unrelated to the topic. This technique was especially helpful for overcoming writer's block. After that, the students were guided to continue their writing following a more structured format. This writing activity helps to stimulate both critical thinking and creativity, as it

establishes a link between reading and writing. Students can express ideas from their daily lives based on what they read, heard, observed, and experienced. The teacher explained:

*"I had to use guiding questions like the 5W + 1H, but sometimes not all of them such as asking what the author's or the text's perspective was. The key was for students to understand the writer's purpose, the information conveyed, the interpretations, and also the implications."*

From this, it was clear that students were expected to follow a set of guidelines when constructing their texts. They needed to define the perspective, clarify the purpose, present information or solutions, and explain the implications of their topic. The students were also taught to ask questions such as: What problem needs solving? What facts are important? How is the information interpreted? What ideas are involved? What assumptions are made? And what are the consequences of this topic?

Before starting the actual writing task, the teacher introduces the theme or issue to the class. These topics often come from daily life, making them easier for students to relate to. After the introduction, students usually have questions and become more engaged in discussion. To help them organize their thoughts, the teacher sometimes asks them to create a concept map. The teacher mentioned:

*"I told my students that if they wanted to succeed in writing, they needed to focus during the lesson. For example, they had to listen carefully when I explained the topic or the story. I also asked them to take notes, which served as a kind of concept map of what I explained. At the end, I would reveal the writing topic, and they could ask questions so they could stay engaged and think critically."*

This demonstrates that before students begin writing, the teacher provided assistance by sharing stories or issues to generate interest. She introduced the idea that students could choose based on what appealed to them most. At times, students were encouraged to engage in brainstorming by writing freely. This helped them connect prior knowledge and personal experiences with the new writing task, while also establishing clear goals and intentions.

Setting learning objectives gives students a strong foundation to build upon in their writing (Haris, 2006, p. 339). The more students can relate the task to their own lives and knowledge, the better they can perform. To enhance this foundation, the teacher guides students through open discussions about the features of a good writing assignment, comparing it with how a quality term paper was structured. Students were taught that writing assignments should be formal, objective, concise, yet detailed and logically ordered.

These conversations often led students to share their own writing experiences, including any difficulties they faced. Many students expressed concerns, but through discussion and guidance, those issues were gradually addressed. The teacher believed that this method not only supported writing development but also encouraged critical and reflective thinking. During the observation, it was evident that the teacher followed specific steps to help students produce writing that was clear, structured, and even enjoyable. This structured guidance allowed students to develop confidence and skill in expressing their thoughts through writing.

This study explored how a teacher promoted students' critical thinking in the classroom at Junior High School N 25 Muaro Jambi, the teacher considered these elements while choosing and applying her strategies. Referring to Yazidi (2023) three main strategies were used to promote critical thinking: questioning, classroom discussions and debates, and writing assignments.

The first strategy was questioning. The teacher carefully planned her questions before class, aiming to trigger higher-order thinking rather than simple recall. She used questions to evaluate students' understanding and to synthesize ideas. In addition, she incorporated short stories into the lessons, often displayed via a projector, and asked students to retell them. This combines reading, listening, and speaking skills, requiring students to apply vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation simultaneously.

The second strategy involved discussions and debates. The teacher selected suitable texts and introduced difficult vocabulary or concepts before reading. After the text was read aloud, students discussed its content, answered questions, and explored new ideas. Debates were used to engage students in argumentation. They were divided into teams to support or oppose a motion, using logical reasoning and critical thinking. Each team had to defend their position, attack opposing arguments, and deliver rebuttals, which strengthened their analytical abilities and collaboration.

The final strategy was through writing assignments. The teacher used short papers, beginning with five to ten minutes of free writing to help students generate ideas. She guided them through steps such as understanding the question, planning, outlining, researching, drafting, and finally editing. This process helps students structure their thoughts, connect prior knowledge, and express ideas clearly. Concept maps were also used to support organizations.

These strategies questioning, discussion, and writing are aligned with the framework by Walker (2003). They help students develop independence and deeper thinking. The teacher also integrated other practical classroom techniques such as storytelling, dictionary use, translation, dialogue practice, and word games. These activities not only promoted critical

thinking but also made learning more interactive, enjoyable, and effective in real-life communication.

In conclusion, the combination of diverse strategies supported students in becoming more thoughtful, reflective, and engaged learners. The teacher's approach proved effective in fostering a classroom environment that nurtured critical thinking skills across multiple dimensions of learning.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The findings showed that the teacher's strategy in encouraging students' critical thinking was very important for their development. The teacher applied several methods such as questioning, classroom discussions and debates, as well as writing assignments to enhance critical thinking in class. In addition, the teacher also created a friendly learning environment by combining various teaching strategies, including reading texts, translating and understanding content, using dictionaries, participating in discussions, practicing dialogues and storytelling, playing word games, and writing simple essays for daily communication. These strategies helped students think more easily, quickly, and enjoyably, which effectively supported the improvement of their critical thinking skills.

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