

## Critical Reading as A Gateway to Interdisciplinary Thinking: Integrating EAP with Global Issues and Ecotheology within The CINTA Curriculum

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### Abstract

This study explores the integration of critical reading into English for Academic Purposes as a pathway to interdisciplinary thinking in Islamic higher education. While EAP in non-English majors often focuses only just on linguistic competence, this study elaborates critical reading as a means to engage with broader global issues, particularly environmental sustainability. Grounded in the CINTA curriculum (Cendekiawan Integratif, Tangguh, dan Adaptif) initiated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, the study highlights how *Ecotheological* perspectives can enrich reading tasks by connecting language learning with ethical and spiritual values. Using authentic texts on climate change and sustainability together with Islamic theological reflections on human responsibility as *khalifah fil ardh*, students were guided to analyze arguments, identify assumptions, and reflect critically on ecological challenges from both scientific and religious viewpoints. Primary findings indicate that such integration enhances reading comprehension, fosters critical literacy, and develops students' capacity for interdisciplinary awareness. The paper argues that inserting *Ecotheology* into EAP reading supports CINTA's vision of development integrative, resilient, and adaptive scholars, while contributing to global issues on education for sustainability and equitable futures.

### Keywords:

Critical Reading,  
English for Academic  
Purposes,  
Ecotheology,  
CINTA Curriculum,  
Interdisciplinary  
Thinking

## 1. Introduction

Studies show that English for Academic Purposes is one of the most extensively examined fields in higher education, particularly in English Medium Instruction contexts. Traditionally, EAP has focused on developing students' linguistic proficiency and academic skills necessary for completing disciplinary tasks. This emphasis is especially important for learners who struggle to access global academic knowledge and participate in international academic communities (Light et al., 2024). In multilingual contexts such as Indonesia, the need for effective EAP instruction is even more pronounced. Recent studies have increasingly examined the implementation, challenges, and impacts of EAP across different higher education settings (Damayanti et al., 2024). However, the rapidly changing educational landscape, particularly in Islamic higher education, demands approaches to language teaching that go beyond technical language skills alone.

While EAP aims to enhance students' academic and linguistic competence, many existing EAP programs still give limited attention to ethical awareness, social responsibility, and real-world problem-solving (Dipta et al., 2025). Consequently, language educators are now expected not only to teach academic skills but also to prepare students to collaborate, think critically, and engage with complex global challenges (Al Lawati & Khan, 2023). This demand is particularly significant for Islamic universities, which are mandated to integrate disciplinary knowledge with religious and ethical values. In this context, a pedagogical approach that combines critical reading, global issues, and Islamic ethical perspectives offers the potential to make EAP more meaningful and transformative.

Critical reading plays a central role in this pedagogical shift. Beyond understanding surface meaning, critical reading involves examining authors' intentions, underlying assumptions, and the social

and ideological contexts in which texts are produced (Simango, 2023). Rather than accepting texts as neutral or absolute, students are encouraged to analyze, evaluate, and interpret them. This process supports the development of higher-order thinking skills that are essential for academic success and professional life (Rasri, 2025). In EAP contexts, critical reading enables students to engage more deeply with complex academic texts and to construct their own informed interpretations (Le & Nguyen, 2024). In line with critical pedagogy, this approach positions students as active meaning-makers who can relate academic discourse to real-world concerns (Eybers, 2025).

The shift toward more critical and contextualized EAP instruction is also supported by the growing emphasis on interdisciplinary education. Addressing twenty-first-century challenges such as climate change and environmental degradation requires learners to integrate knowledge, perspectives, and methods from multiple fields (Davies, 2023; Rana et al., 2025). EAP can serve as a strategic space for developing this integrative capacity by engaging students with texts that connect scientific, social, and ethical dimensions of global issues (Aull, 2022; Tann & Scott, 2021).

Within Islamic higher education, Ecotheology provides a particularly relevant interdisciplinary framework. Ecotheology explores the relationship between religious beliefs and environmental responsibility (Syafaruddin, 2025). By engaging students with scientific texts on environmental issues alongside Islamic theological concepts such as *khalifah fil ardh* (human responsibility as God's stewards on Earth), EAP classrooms can become spaces where linguistic development is intertwined with moral and spiritual reflection (Kadi, 2022; Zohrehfard & Tillman, 2025). Such integration aligns with the mission of Indonesian Islamic universities to produce graduates who are both academically competent and ethically grounded.

This pedagogical orientation is strongly supported by Indonesia's CINTA curriculum (Cendekiawan Integratif, Tangguh, dan Adaptif), which promotes integrative, resilient, and adaptive scholars (Atsani & Hadisaputra, 2024). Despite its growing importance, there is still limited empirical research on how EAP instruction can be aligned with the CINTA framework through the integration of critical reading and Ecotheological perspectives.

Accordingly, this study investigates, through a descriptive qualitative classroom-based approach, how the integration of critical reading and Ecotheology in an EAP course supports students' interdisciplinary thinking and aligns with the goals of the CINTA curriculum in an Islamic higher education context. By examining classroom practices, student engagement, and learning products, this study aims to provide both a theoretical and pedagogical foundation for the development of value-based and interdisciplinary EAP instruction in Indonesian Islamic universities.

## 2. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive qualitative approach as the primary methodological orientation. The descriptive qualitative method was selected to allow an in-depth exploration of how critical reading practices integrated with Ecotheological perspectives were implemented within an English for Academic Purposes classroom and how students responded to this pedagogical integration. This approach emphasizes meaning-making, contextual interpretation, and rich description of educational phenomena as they occur in natural instructional settings, rather than measurement or statistical generalization (Aull, 2022).

Although this study draws on conceptual insights from previous literature, it does not establish a conceptual systematic review as a standalone research design. Instead, relevant literature was used to inform the analytical lens and pedagogical framework that guided data interpretation, functioning as a theoretical support rather than as a separate methodological identity.

Similarly, while the study involved classroom-based pedagogical intervention, it is not positioned as full action research. Elements commonly associated with action research, such as reflective teaching practice and instructional adjustment, are treated as pedagogical characteristics of the classroom context rather than as the core research design. Therefore, the study is best understood as a descriptive qualitative classroom-based study informed by reflective teaching practice.

The study was conducted at a State Islamic University in Indonesia within an English for Academic Purposes course offered to non-English major undergraduate students. The participants consisted of one intact class comprising approximately 96 students enrolled in the EAP course during one academic semester. The students came from diverse disciplinary backgrounds within economics and education programs, reflecting the interdisciplinary orientation of the institution. The class was

selected purposively because it implemented reading materials that combined academic texts, environmental discourse, and Islamic Ecotheological perspectives. The researcher also served as the course instructor, enabling sustained observation of classroom interactions and learning processes over time.

The pedagogical intervention focused on integrating critical reading activities with Ecotheological content within regular EAP instruction. Students engaged with selected academic and semi-academic texts addressing environmental issues, climate change, and Islamic concepts such as *khalifah fil ardh* (human stewardship of the earth). Critical reading tasks included identifying author perspectives, questioning assumptions, linking scientific arguments with ethical and religious values, and producing reflective and analytical written responses. The intervention was implemented over 6 weeks, embedded within normal course activities, ensuring that learning processes occurred naturally without experimental manipulation.

To ensure methodological rigor and contextual credibility, multiple qualitative data sources were employed using Classroom Observation, Student Products (Artifacts), and FGD. The researcher conducted non-participant and participant observation during EAP sessions, focusing on students' engagement in critical reading activities, group discussions, and text interpretation. Field notes were systematically recorded to capture students' verbal responses, interaction patterns, and observable indicators of critical and interdisciplinary thinking. Furthermore, data were collected from students' written work, including reading summaries, analytical essays, reflective responses, and group-based assignments. These artifacts were used to examine how students articulated critical reading strategies and connected Ecotheological concepts with academic content. Moreover, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with a selected subset of students to explore their perceptions of the learning experience, challenges encountered, and perceived benefits of integrating Ecotheology into EAP instruction. Each FGD involved 15 students and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The use of multiple data sources enabled triangulation and enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following an iterative and inductive process (Le & Nguyen, 2024). The analysis involved several stages: familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, theme review, and interpretation. Coding was conducted based on recurring patterns emerging from the data rather than predefined categories. The identified themes were then interpreted in relation to the study's conceptual framework, particularly focusing on the development of critical literacy, interdisciplinary thinking, and ethical awareness. This analytical process allowed the researcher to provide a thick description of learning processes and pedagogical outcomes rather than fundamental claims.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Results**

##### **3.1.1 The Effect of Integration Critical Reading with Ecotheology**

Using Ecotheological materials within a critical reading pedagogy in the EAP course led to obvious impacts on students' critical reading comprehension, critical literacy development, interdisciplinary awareness, and alignment with the CINTA curriculum. These findings were derived from classroom observations, analysis of student products, and focus group discussions. Rather than indicating fundamental measurement, the findings reflect frequent patterns of learning behavior, discourse, and meaning-making processes identified across multiple qualitative data sources.

The analysis shows a transition from predominantly linguistic-oriented reading strategies toward more reflective, ethical, and interdisciplinary responses. Students increasingly demonstrated the ability to question textual assumptions, relate academic content to environmental realities, and connect scientific discourse with religious and ethical considerations.

##### **3.1.1.1 Enhancing Critical Reading and Literacy Proficiencies**

Students' reading comprehension and critical literacy showed obvious development through continued exposure to authentic environmental texts combined with guided critical reading activities. Classroom observations indicated that students gradually moved beyond surface-level comprehension toward interpretative and evaluative reading practices. For instance, during group discussions, students frequently raised questions about author intention, bias, and ideological positioning when engaging with texts on climate change and sustainability.

Analysis of student-written products further supports this finding. Several analytical essays revealed students' ability to identify argumentative structures, evaluate evidence, and relate textual claims to broader socio-environmental contexts. One student reflected:

*"Before this class, I only focused on understanding vocabulary. Now I try to understand why the author writes this and whose interests are represented."* (Student MNH, reflective writing)

This supports earlier findings by Spirovska (2022), which suggest that critical reading exercises in advanced language courses enable learners to actively construct meaning rather than merely retrieve information. In addition, students' reading strategies evolved from localized, line-by-line processing toward more global and goal-oriented approaches (Carrell & Carson, 1997). This shift was evident in students' increased use of summarizing, questioning assumptions, and synthesizing ideas across paragraphs and texts. Beyond linguistic gains, engaging with controversial global issues encouraged students to reflect critically on knowledge encountered both inside and outside the classroom. Such engagement indicates the development of critical literacy, understood as the capacity to examine texts within their social, political, and ideological contexts.

### 3.1.1.2 Promoting Interdisciplinary Awareness via Ecotheology

Ecotheology played a crucial role in fostering students' interdisciplinary awareness by bridging scientific discourse and Islamic ethical perspectives. Through the use of texts grounded in Islamic Ecotheological principles alongside environmental science readings, students demonstrated an emerging ability to integrate knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.

Student products revealed that learners were able to connect scientific explanations of environmental degradation with religious concepts such as *khalifah fil ardh*. In reflective assignments, several students explicitly linked environmental responsibility to moral and spiritual accountability. One participant stated:

*"Reading about climate change together with Islamic values makes me realize that environmental problems are not only scientific issues but also moral obligations."* (Student NSKA, FGD)

These findings align with Sunalini et al. (2024), who argue that integrating religious perspectives with environmental knowledge fosters interdisciplinary thinking. Classroom discussions further showed that students began to view environmental science not as an isolated discipline but as interconnected with theology, ethics, and social responsibility.

This interdisciplinary engagement extended beyond conceptual understanding. Students increasingly framed environmental issues as complex problems requiring ethical reasoning, scientific evidence, and spiritual reflection simultaneously. As Tann and Scott (2021) suggest, such learning experiences enable deeper cognitive engagement that transcends conventional disciplinary boundaries.

### 3.1.1.3 In line with the CINTA curriculum.

The findings also demonstrate alignment with the objectives of the CINTA (Cendiaawan Integratif, Tangguh, dan Adaptif) curriculum promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Khairani et al., 2025). The integration of Ecotheology and critical reading contributed to the development of integrative, resilient, and adaptive learning dispositions. The integrative dimension was reflected in students' ability to synthesize perspectives from EAP, environmental science, and Islamic theology. This was evident in analytical essays where students combined academic argumentation with ethical and religious reasoning. The resilient dimension emerged through students' engagement with complex and sometimes unsettling global issues such as climate change. Observation data and interview responses indicated that students gradually became more confident in discussing controversial topics, questioning dominant narratives, and articulating their own positions. Critical reading practices supported the development of cognitive resilience by enabling students to analyze complexity and ambiguity (Spector-Cohen et al., 2001). Finally, the adaptive dimension was reflected in students' ability to use EAP skills flexibly across contexts. Students reported that critical reading strategies learned in class helped them engage with academic texts in other courses and understand global issues more independently. This adaptability supports the view that EAP can function as a dynamic and responsive pedagogical space preparing students for evolving academic and societal demands (Cristovão et al., 2022).

Overall, the findings indicate that integrating Ecotheology with critical reading pedagogy in EAP contributes to the development of critical, interdisciplinary, and value-based literacy. Rather than merely enhancing linguistic competence, the approach facilitated students' intellectual and moral engagement

with global issues, aligning closely with the core values of the CINTA curriculum. This study thus provides qualitative evidence that EAP can serve as a transformative educational framework within Islamic higher education.

### 3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating Ecotheology and critical reading within an English for Academic Purposes course contributes meaningfully to the development of students' critical literacy, interdisciplinary awareness, and alignment with the objectives of the CINTA curriculum. These results are consistent with prior studies highlighting the transformative potential of EAP when it moves beyond technical language instruction toward higher-order thinking and value-based education. Within the context of Islamic higher education, this pedagogical approach positions EAP as a strategic space for intellectual, ethical, and spiritual development.

Consistent with earlier research, this study confirms that the incorporation of critical reading practices enhances students' reading comprehension and critical literacy. Rather than functioning as passive recipients of information, students are encouraged to interrogate authors' purposes, evaluate assumptions, and synthesize ideas across texts. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that critical reading strengthens higher-order thinking and strategic reading behavior (Spirovska, 2022; Hosseini et al., 2012; Carrell & Carson, 1997). By engaging with complex environmental texts, students demonstrated a shift from surface-level linguistic processing toward goal-oriented and reflective reading practices. This supports the argument that EAP instruction should prioritize cognitive engagement and meaning-making as central components of academic literacy development.

Beyond literacy development, the integration of Ecotheology provided a meaningful interdisciplinary dimension to EAP instruction. By connecting Islamic theological concepts such as tawhid and khalifah fil ardh with scientific discussions on environmental issues, students were able to contextualize academic knowledge within their ethical and spiritual frameworks. This integration fostered deeper learning experiences by positioning environmental problems as moral, religious, and scientific concerns rather than purely technical issues. Such findings reinforce the view that interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches are essential for addressing complex global challenges in higher education (Tann & Scott, 2021; Eybers, 2025). In the context of Islamic education, Ecotheology serves as a relevant and culturally grounded lens for promoting environmental awareness and responsible citizenship.

The pedagogical implications of this study are closely aligned with the principles of the CINTA curriculum. The integrative dimension is reflected in students' ability to synthesize knowledge from EAP, environmental science, and Islamic theology. The resilient dimension emerges through engagement with challenging global issues that require critical reflection and ethical reasoning, while the adaptive dimension is evident in students' capacity to apply EAP skills across academic and social contexts. These findings support the view that EAP is a dynamic and flexible discipline capable of preparing students for the intellectual and moral demands of the contemporary world (Cristovão et al., 2022).

To sum up, this study reinforces the argument that EAP can function as a transformative pedagogical framework within Islamic higher education. Through the integration of critical reading and Ecotheological content, EAP moves beyond linguistic competence to support interdisciplinary thinking, ethical awareness, and global engagement. This approach aligns academic rigor with moral consciousness, offering a comprehensive educational model that responds to the goals of the CINTA curriculum and the broader challenges of twenty-first-century education.

### 4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrating critical reading pedagogy with Ecotheological content in an English for Academic Purposes course can contribute meaningfully to the development of students' critical literacy, interdisciplinary awareness, and value-based academic engagement in Islamic higher education. By positioning EAP as more than a linguistic support course, this approach highlights its potential as a transformative educational space that connects language learning with ethical reasoning, environmental awareness, and spiritual reflection.

The findings indicate that critical reading practices encourage students to move beyond surface-level comprehension toward evaluative and reflective engagement with academic texts. When combined with Ecotheological perspectives, these practices enable students to interpret global environmental

issues not only through scientific reasoning but also through Islamic ethical frameworks. This integration supports the development of interdisciplinary thinking and reinforces students' understanding of their moral responsibilities as academically and socially engaged learners.

Pedagogically, this study provides empirical support for aligning EAP instruction with the objectives of the CINTA curriculum. The integration of critical reading and Ecotheology fosters integrative, resilient, and adaptive learning dispositions by encouraging students to synthesize knowledge across disciplines, engage with complex global issues, and apply academic skills flexibly across contexts. These outcomes suggest that EAP can play a strategic role in implementing value-based and holistic education within Islamic universities.

While this study is limited to a descriptive qualitative classroom context, it offers a conceptual and pedagogical foundation for future research and curriculum development. Further studies may expand this framework through longitudinal designs, comparative studies, or mixed-method approaches to examine learning outcomes across institutional and disciplinary contexts. Overall, this study affirms that the integration of critical reading and Ecotheology in EAP represents a viable and contextually relevant model for fostering academically competent, ethically grounded, and globally aware graduates in Islamic higher education.

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