

Adbusting as a Tool in Developing the Critical Thinking Skills in Media Literacy Classroom

Melody O. Castillo

Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University South La Union Campus (MA Student)
Saint Louis College (Faculty)
melodycastilloslc@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of adbusting on Grade 11 students' critical media literacy skills. It utilized a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design to examine how adbusting interventions influenced the students' ability to analyze and deconstruct advertising messages. Critical thinking test was administered to 40 senior high school students before and after the intervention including essays graded using rubrics.

The results indicated that adbusting significantly improved the students' critical media literacy skills. Therefore, the use of adbusting and engaging the students in textual and visual advertisement analysis can enhance students' critical thinking skills.

Consequently, integrating adbusting into media literacy education can empower students to decipher, challenge, and reshape advertising messages, enabling them to navigate the complex media landscape with greater awareness. Further research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of adbusting on students' media literacy skills beyond the educational context.

Keywords: *adbusting, critical media literacy, critical thinking skills, media literacy*

Introduction

Critical media literacy research has provided teachers with a way to connect their language instruction to the world outside the classroom, such as the study of culture, social issues, and real-life phenomena, and to meet the global context of the English language. Nowadays, the idea of what is needed to navigate the world of media literacy becomes increasingly more about the quality of thought and less about the quantity of knowledge. Critical literacy studies involve questioning communication for ideological assumptions and purpose, fostering higher-level reading comprehension, and creating a dialogue (Lundahl, 2010, as cited by Renberg, 2017). Janks (2017) also emphasizes that critical literacy empowers individuals to read, see, and act in the world, providing a way out of oppression for some groups.

Media Literacy Education is also an emerging field in China as Ruan (2015) highlighted the increasing attention to English learners' poor critical literacy and that his blended learning approach effectively increased

students' critical thinking. Meanwhile, in the United States, media-related risks for children call for media literacy training, but most public school media literacy standards need improvement (Spilsbury, 2018). Furthermore, the National Association for Media Literacy Education (2019) notes the lack of prioritization of media literacy education in the United States, leading to a need for robust implementation and integration of media literacy in every curriculum. Being media literate involves accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating media messages (Luft, 2016). However, Recepoglu (2015) highlighted in his study that the process of accurately forming an informative society and using the information transferred by media is among the main problems of 21st-century learners. Thus, becoming media and information literate significantly impacts solving these problems.

Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased media usage and exposure to different technologies, leading to a higher likelihood of encountering false and inaccurate information (Martzoukou et al., 2020). To address this, there is an urgent need to develop and strengthen learners' media literacy and critical thinking skills to create critical independence from the media (Mishra, 2020). Thus, students should be exposed to an inquiry-based approach to enhance the student's skills in asking questions. Students should be encouraged to think critically, ask questions, and create something rather than passively listen to lectures or discussions.

Being a critical thinker involves processing and skillfully analyzing information, thinking independently, formulating opinions, and drawing conclusions (Alban, 2018). As critical thinking becomes increasingly essential for navigating new challenges, integrating critical media literacy into instruction can enhance students' engagement and participation in the classroom.

Combining critical media literacy with modern academic writing lessons offers numerous benefits, such as allowing language learners to evaluate media messages and develop their critical thinking and communication skills (Grigoryan, 2008, as cited by Borromeo, 2016). Media literacy in academic writing facilitates meaningful learning, enhances cognitive and academic strategies, and enables students to evaluate and respond to arguments, developing analytical and communication skills (Borromeo, 2016).

While the importance of developing critical thinking skills has gained attention, there is a lack of effective interventions in the English school context (Milburn-Curtis, 2014). Further research is needed to explore instructional strategies that enhance students' critical thinking in both elementary and high school (Stanley, 2017). Hence, developing research-based strategies is crucial to nurturing students' thinking skills.

Meanwhile, the Philippine education system lacks effective integration of critical thinking skills, leading to many educated Filipinos remaining uncritical (Marquez, 2017). To address this, there is a need for reflective teaching, encouraging students to ask questions, analyze texts, explore possibilities, and engage in meaningful discussions (Palavan, 2020). In fact, the alarming status of critical thinking skills in the Philippines is evident in job vacancies in the business process outsourcing industry, where applicants struggle with critical thinking and communication (Tiangson, 2015). In addition, Gropello et al. (2010) found out that University graduates in the Philippines also lack foundational skills, including critical thinking. Hence, the Philippine education system should focus on developing essential skills, such as critical thinking, rather than solely providing short-term information (PISA, 2018). These results revealed the lack of exposure of learners to different reading materials and the absence of usable teaching materials.

The lack of exposure to different reading materials and inadequate teaching methods contributes to the decline in critical thinking among Filipinos, leading to issues with misinformation and a lack of awareness of various issues (Manlapig, 2020). The study of Arevalo (2019) revealed that the Philippines ranked 16th most ignorant country when it comes to awareness of the different issues. This problem is partly because of our educational system today, specifically the rote learning approach wherein teachers dwell on memorization

and repetition rather than actively involving students in real-life issues. That is why giving students a solid grounding in critical literacy is needed to attain the demands of 21st-century education. The same observation was also observed by the researcher in grade 11 students, as they demonstrated a lack of skills in analyzing and constructing media messages. In fact, according to the results of the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (ARC) conducted by the Global Resources for Assessment Curriculum and Evaluation (GRACE) in Saint Louis College, the students displayed scores described as "approaching proficiency" on most of the subject content areas that will help measure their academic readiness for college based on Commission on Higher Education's College Readiness Standards (CRS). These results suggest that attention and continuous development in the teaching-learning process involving the curriculum and teaching strategies are needed to prepare the learners academically for college and future careers.

Thus, this research focuses on developing students' critical thinking skills by analyzing the ads in the Adbuster in a multi-skill academic writing lesson since the researcher observed that students lack critical thinking skills, especially in constructing media messages. The views presented in this study include Conformity Theory which can somehow explain why people lack critical thinking when they follow the ideas of others without reflecting on and understanding the message. To aid this problem, Critical Discourse Analysis, Framing Theory, and Semiotics are the theories that will guide the researcher helping the students to analyze and understand the hidden meanings of various media messages.

Considering the mentioned problems and limited local research, the research aimed to assess and enhance Grade 11 students' critical thinking skills through textual and visual advertisement analyses with adbusting as the primary learning intervention. Specifically, it aimed to identify the level of critical thinking skills of students measured in terms of their, pretest score, post-test score, textual ads analysis rubric score, visual ads analysis rubric score and created adbuster rubric score and to determine the significant difference in the critical thinking skills of the students after the employment of adbusting based on the pretest-posttest mean gain.

Framework of the Study

This research is anchored on the following theories: Conformity Theory, Semiotics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Framing Theory, Metacognitive, and Constructivism Theory.

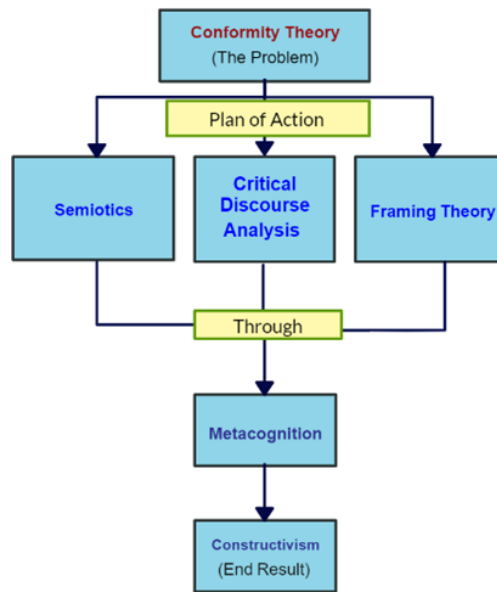


Fig 1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Conformity Theory. Conformity is a social influence that involves individuals changing their beliefs or behavior to align with a group. This conformity may lead to a lack of critical thinking, as people base their opinions on others' perceptions without evaluating the information encountered (McLeod, 2016). Myers (2011) identifies two types of conformity: Identification and Internalization. Identification occurs when individuals adopt specific behaviors to be in a satisfying relationship with those they identify with, such as liking and sharing posts on social media to fit in with influential individuals or society. On the other hand, internalization involves accepting and believing in accordance with social pressure, motivated by the desire to be correct and often leading to permanent changes in beliefs and behavior.

The influence of conformity cannot only impact an individual's judgment and behavior but also affect their thinking and decision-making, leading to unfavorable outcomes on individual and institutional levels (Forsyth, 2013 as cited in Ward, 2016).

Hence, Conformity Theory can contribute to people becoming uncritical as they conform to the attitudes and behaviors of the majority without reflection. To encourage critical thinking and understanding of information and media texts, the researcher proposes three theories: Critical Discourse Analysis, Frame Theory, and Semiotics. These proposed theories offer a plan of action to help individuals think critically and analyze information and media more effectively.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This theory was developed by Norman Fairclough and views language as a social practice, examining how social and political control is embedded in texts (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough's version of CDA has three dimensions: discourse as a text, discourse as a discursive practice, and discourse as a social practice (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000).

In the first dimension, CDA analyzes the grammar and structure of texts, including advertisements, to understand how meaning is conveyed (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). The second dimension focuses on how information is created, delivered, and consumed in society, particularly in media messages like advertisements, and the third dimension examines power and authority in speech, revealing ideologies and hidden meanings (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). According to Hejazi (2015), applying CDA to analyze media messages, especially advertisements exposes underlying motives and encourages critical thinking. Consequently, Fairclough's work aims to reveal power struggles within language, breaking barriers between the sophisticated and uneducated (Fairclough, 1989). The theory emphasizes a systematic breakdown of text to uncover hidden meanings and ideological implications (Hejazi, 2015).

CDA is not limited to vague statements but can analyze concise and clear reports, revealing power relations and control trends (Wodak, 1995). Understanding the context and social relations between text and society provides deeper insights into the messages' impact. Unpacking each statement step by step and removing biases leads to more direct and critical results (Wodak, 1995). Familiarizing oneself with CDA allows readers to identify hidden ideologies, power dynamics, and manipulative language in various texts, enhancing their understanding and critical judgment (Hejazi, 2015).

Thus, CDA is a powerful tool for analyzing language and uncovering hidden meanings, ideologies, and power structures in texts, such as advertisements. It promotes critical thinking by encouraging systematic breakdown and deeper examination of the messages, helping individuals develop informed opinions and understanding of complex issues (Fairclough, 1989).

Frame theory. Developed by Erving Goffman, focuses on how information is presented to shape the beliefs and context of the reader (Goffman, 1974). It explores two aspects: frame building, which portrays

discourse and is often done by media, elites, or cultural norms, and frame setting, which involves readers' interaction with the presented frame and their prior knowledge (Goffman, 1974).

CDA and Frame Analysis complement each other, with CDA breaking down data and Frame Analysis examining how data is presented (Hejazi, 2015). Framing influences public opinion on various issues, such as in political campaigns, advertisements, and news headlines (Goffman, 1974). Framing is an integral part of society, shaping how information is perceived and influencing consumer choices and public opinions. Raising awareness of framing helps individuals think critically and uncover hidden biases, allowing them to arrive at neutral conclusions based on minimal research and transparent frames (Goffman, 1974). The theory emphasizes the importance of analyzing information and hidden messages through critical discourse analysis to understand the underlying ideologies that shape beliefs (Goffman, 1976). Understanding frames and employing CDA enables individuals to decipher hidden messages and make informed judgments about the information. The Semiotics Theory, which studies signs, and symbols to convey messages, was employed in this study to analyze hidden messages in advertisements (Correa, 2011). It draws upon the work of Swiss Linguists Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, pioneers in the field.

Semiotics. Sign systems in advertising serve to persuade, reinforcing societal notions and ideologies (Chandler, 2001). Advertisements become vehicles for reflecting the ideology of a culture, generated through the signs and messages they present (Correa, 2011). The use of semiotics is relevant in analyzing advertisements as it helps examine the denotative (surface) and connotative (symbolic and ideological) meanings of objects, images, and colors (Correa, 2011). The theory allows researchers to analyze the textual and pictorial aspects of advertisements, considering semantic, symbolic, cultural, and narrative codes. Hence, semiotics Theory provides valuable insights into the hidden messages conveyed through signs and symbols in advertisements. By analyzing both textual and visual aspects, researchers can unveil the ideologies and persuasive tactics used in advertising.

Metacognitive Theory. Developed by John H. Flavell (1979), involves "thinking about thinking" and goes beyond cognition, emphasizing self-regulation and self-reflection in cognitive tasks (Flavell, 1979). This theory is a critical component of successful learning, as it enables individuals to master information and problem-solving skills. Metacognition is closely linked to critical thinking, as it allows students to verbalize and express their ideas logically and reflectively (Büyükahiska, 2018). Critical thinking involves using higher-level cognitive skills in the information process and being aware of one's thinking and reflection on oneself and others.

The development of critical thinking is likely to be facilitated through metacognition, and instruction for critical thinking often includes metacognitive monitoring (Magno, 2010). Students engaged in critical thinking need to use metacognitive skills to monitor their thinking process, ensure progress toward reasonable goals, ensure accuracy, and make decisions about time and mental effort. Without metacognition, individuals may struggle to monitor their thinking and become uncritical in their approach to information and problem-solving (Cakici, 2018).

Lastly, this study is also anchored to the Constructivist Theory of Jerome Bruner. Constructivists view learning as an active process resulting from self-constructed meanings and a meaningful connection is established between prior knowledge and present knowledge (Corpuz & Salandanan, 2013). This theory is relevant to this study as the students construct their version of Adbuster through textual and visual advertisement analysis. Furthermore, constructivism also emphasizes the ability of the students to create and develop ideas collaboratively, allowing them to reflect not only on their ideas but on their peers as well, thus making it learner-centered.

Objectives

This research assessed the critical thinking skills of senior high school students and consequently developed said skills using adbusting and exposure to different media and information messages. The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To identify the level of critical thinking skills of students measured in terms of their, pretest score, post-test score, textual ads analysis rubric score, visual ads analysis rubric score, and created adbuster rubric score
2. To determine the significant difference in the critical thinking skills of the students after the employment of adbusting based on the pretest-posttest mean gain.

Methodology

This research used the quasi-experimental research design which involved obtaining a pre-test measure of the outcome of interest before administering the treatment, followed by a post-test on the same measure after treatment occurs to determine the level of critical thinking skills of Grade 11 senior high school students before and after the treatment. The respondents were 40 Grade 11 who belonged to Humanities and Social Sciences Strand and were enrolled during the first semester SY. 2020-2021. Two data-gathering tools were employed in this study. The first data-gathering tool was in the form of a pretest and posttest exam, which consisted of a free critical thinking exam created by Watson and Glaser (1994) and the second data-gathering tool was in the form of rubrics for scoring students' analysis as an output for analyzing textual and visual meaning of the advertisements presented.

In the conduct of the critical thinking test, the researcher scheduled meeting days to conduct the pretest exam and posttest exam; the researcher used the Genyo-e-learning digital platform (of SLC) where the test was uploaded. Moreover, the experimental intervention was employed for five weeks; the first week was allotted for discussion and familiarization with the lesson. The succeeding weeks were devoted to the exposure of the students to different textual and visual analyses and the creation of their Adbusters. During their exposure to different textual and visual advertisement analyses, the students focused on answering the deconstruction questions such as: a) who is the target audience of the advertisement? b) What is the message of the advertisement? c) What do you notice about the way the message (textual element) is constructed? What are the meanings of these elements? D) What are the visual design elements used in the picture? What are the meanings of these elements? e) What is the general ambiance of the advertisement? What mood does it create? How does it do this? These deconstruction questions prompt students to analyze different aspects of advertisements, fostering critical thinking skills such as interpretation, evaluation, and analysis. By examining the target audience, message, construction of textual and visual elements, as well as overall ambiance, students develop a deeper understanding of the persuasive techniques employed in advertisements. Grigoryan & King (2008) listed three steps in conducting academic writing lessons and creating adbuster. The first step is the sample paragraph and adbuster. The learners were tasked to choose or bring their adbuster in this stage. Afterward, the teacher showed sample paragraphs and adbuster to further enhance the students' background knowledge and develop mastery of the lesson.

Subsequently, the teacher and her students analyzed sample paragraphs and Adbusters, particularly those that they produced. The second step was understanding, examining, evaluating, and finding the hidden messages. In this stage, the students were tasked to describe the codes and conventions in their advertisements and determine the purpose, assumptions, and possible consequences of their advertisements. The last step is the evaluation administered by their Media and Information Literacy teacher using the identified rubric.

Since the students' outputs were in the form of a writing lesson, the teacher evaluated the students primarily on their work in the paragraphs' final outputs. Notwithstanding, the teacher also assessed the student's progression through the various drafts and the clarity of ideas represented in the adbuster. Hence, this process led to creating an adbuster as another means of measuring the student's critical thinking skills.

Data Analysis

To assess the level of critical thinking skills of the students, the scores obtained from the Watsons and Glaser's Critical Thinking Aptitude (WGCTA) were subjected to the following scale:

Scores	Descriptive Rating
0-28.33	Below Average
28.34-56.66	Average
56.67-85.00	Above Average

The score distribution below was also used to interpret the performance obtained by the students in each critical thinking sub-skill:

Critical Thinking Sub-skills Scales					
Inferences	Assumptions	Deductions	Interpretation	Analyzing Arguments	Descriptive Rating
0.00-4.67	0.00- 4.33	0.00- 7.00	0.00- 4.00	0.00- 8.33	Limited Proficiency
4.68-9.33	4.34-8.67	7.01- 14.00	4.01- 8.00	8.34- 16.66	Moderate Proficiency
9.34-14.00	8.68-13.00	14.01- 21.00	8.01- 12.00	16.67- 25.00	High Proficiency

To guide the researcher in the implementation of the learning intervention, the Media Literacy through Critical Thinking Rubric (Worsnop, 2008) was used to evaluate their textual and visual ad analysis, and the scores obtained were subjected to the following Critical Thinking Competency Scale (Rio Salado College, 2017)

Scores	Descriptive Rating
0-3.00	Poor level of Critical Thinking
3.01-6.00	Below-average level of Critical thinking
6.01-9.00	The average level of Critical thinking
9.01- 12.00	Above Average level of Critical thinking
12.01- 15.00	Excellent level of Critical Thinking

Furthermore, to guide the researcher in identifying the level of the critical thinking skills of the students based on their adbuster scores, the adbusting scale taken from Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (2005) was used.

Scores	Descriptive Rating
0-8.00	Poor
8.01-16.00	Limited
16.01-24.00	Satisfactory
24.01-32.00	Proficient

Results and Discussions

The following presents the results and discussions of the study:

Focusing on the level of critical thinking skills of the Grade 11 HUMSS students, the data includes the scores/ratings in the pretest, posttest, textual ad analysis, visual ad analysis, and the quality of Adbusters created.

Table 1. *Critical Thinking Pretest Scores of the Grade 11 HUMSS Students*

Critical Thinking Test	Mean Score	Descriptive Rating
Inferences	7.7	Moderate Proficiency
Assumptions	7.02	Moderate Proficiency
Deductions	11.2	Moderate Proficiency
Interpreting information	6.2	Moderate Proficiency
Analyzing Arguments	13.43	Moderate Proficiency
Total	45.55	Average

The table above shows that Grade 11 HUMSS students demonstrated a moderate level of proficiency in various critical thinking sub-skills, with mean scores of 7.70 for inferences, 7.02 for assumptions, 11.20 for deductions, 6.20 for interpreting information, and 13.43 for analyzing arguments. However, there is room for improvement in specific areas to enhance their overall critical thinking abilities, such as recognizing assumptions within context, improving logical reasoning and drawing conclusions, identifying logical fallacies, and assessing arguments within context.

Additionally, the student's overall mean pretest score was 45.55 which is interpreted as average level of critical thinking. This suggests that the students can already analyze information and make objective judgments. However, the students' critical thinking skill sets are still lower than the expected ideal condition which is above average level considering that the Grade 11 students were screened before their admission. Nauman (2017) emphasizes that a primary factor contributing to students' deficiency in critical thinking abilities is the lack of encouragement of active thinking in the classroom by teachers. Instead, conventional teaching often revolves around passive learning, characterized by mindless drills and extensive lectures, resulting in the development of only basic cognitive skills. Fadhlullah & Ahmad (2017) corroborate this notion, suggesting that traditional instructional methods, which heavily emphasize memorization of facts rather than conceptual understanding, do not foster critical thinking skills. Consequently, they advocate for the adoption of active learning approaches, empowering students to take control of their thought processes. This entails granting students the freedom to explore subject matter, analyze and evaluate resources, reflect on their knowledge, and apply the information they have acquired.

To develop successful critical thinkers, it is essential to integrate critical thinking into the curriculum and teaching approaches, as highlighted by Alsaleh (2020) and Aiyub et al. (2021). Aiyub et al. (2021) proposed various methods to enhance critical thinking skills, including critical reading, strengthening analytical abilities, and implementing student-centered activities that expose students to diverse media messages. Notably, focusing on textual and visual advertisement analysis presents an excellent opportunity for students to improve their critical thinking abilities further. By honing skills in recognizing assumptions, refining logical reasoning, identifying logical fallacies, and assessing arguments, students will be better equipped to navigate and evaluate the information-rich landscape of media and advertising.

Table 2. *Critical Thinking Post-Test Scores of the Grade 11 HUMSS Students*

Critical Thinking Test	Mean Score	Descriptive Rating
Inferences	9.55	High Proficiency
Assumptions	8.97	High Proficiency
Deductions	14.2	High Proficiency
Interpreting information	8.53	High Proficiency
Analyzing Arguments	16.63	High Proficiency
Total	57.88	Above Average

The table above displays the post-test mean scores of the respondents after implementing the Adbusting learning intervention. In the Inferences section, the pre-test mean score was 7.70 (Moderate Proficiency), which improved significantly to 9.55 (High Proficiency) out of 14 in the post-test. This indicates that participants made notable progress in their ability to draw accurate inferences after the learning intervention. The increase in mean score suggests that the intervention effectively enhanced participants' reasoning skills and logical connections based on given information. Improving this critical thinking aspect has significant implications, as making inferences is crucial in problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluating information from various sources.

Anent to this, Assumptions section's pre-test mean score was 7.02 (Moderate Proficiency), which gradually increased to 8.97 (High Proficiency) out of 13 in the post-test. The observed improvement indicates that participants better understood identifying and evaluate underlying assumptions during the intervention. This improvement is noteworthy as assumptions are crucial in critical thinking, influencing how individuals perceive and interpret information. By becoming more proficient in recognizing assumptions, participants are better equipped to approach situations more critically and nuanced, leading to more informed judgments and decision-making.

In the making of Deductions, the participants showed a significant improvement. The pre-test mean score was 11.02 (Moderate Proficiency) and it increased to 14.20 (High Proficiency) out of 21 in the post-test. This notable increase suggests that the learning intervention positively impacted participants' deductive reasoning skills. Deductive reasoning involves drawing logical conclusions based on given premises, and this improvement indicates that participants became more adept at applying logical thinking processes to reach valid conclusions. Strong deductive reasoning skills can enhance critical thinking abilities in various contexts, including problem-solving, analyzing arguments, and evaluating evidence.

For the Interpreting Information section, participants showed considerable progress. The pre-test mean score was 6.20 (Moderate Proficiency), which increased to 8.53 (High Proficiency) out of 12 on the post-test. This improvement demonstrates that the learning intervention enhanced participants' ability to analyze and interpret complex information effectively. The ability to interpret information is crucial in critical thinking, as it involves comprehending and extracting meaning from different sources of information. Improving this skill enables individuals to process and evaluate information more accurately, enhancing their decision-making capabilities and overall critical thinking competence.

In analyzing arguments, the participants performed high and displayed significant improvement. The pre-test mean score of 13.43 (Moderate Proficiency), was increased to 16.63 out of 25 in the post-test although it is still within the Moderate Proficiency level. Somehow, this improvement demonstrates that the learning intervention led to a noteworthy increase in their scores. This progress aids the participants in honing their abilities to construct logical and persuasive arguments. Developing strong argumentation skills allows individuals to articulate their thoughts coherently, support their viewpoints with evidence, and critically

evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different arguments. This improvement has practical implications, as effective argumentation skills are valuable in academic, professional, and personal settings.

Lastly, it is also evident that the overall average post-test scores of the students significantly improved from 45.55 (Average) in the pretest to 57.88 (Above Average) in the post-test, indicating a 12.33 increase from their overall average scores after the implementation of adbusting.

This suggests that the average mean score of students has increased beyond the expected typical scores following the implementation of the learning intervention (See Table 1 on page 10).

According to Rybina (2018), a student who manifests an above-average level of critical thinking skills knows how to evaluate advertising information; they use and improve the methods of critical analysis and recognize the principles of responsible use of media communication and content creation. Rybina (2018) also highlighted in her study that integrating critical media literacy and advertisement analysis in her lessons positively affected a central component of critical thinking. The intervention has helped the students increase their critical attitude toward advertising. Moreover, they employed a similar methodology in the follow-up study by Smith et al. (2019), investigating the impact of integrating critical media literacy and advertisement analysis in the curriculum on students' critical thinking skills. They assessed students' attitudes toward advertising before and after the intervention. The results showed a significant increase in students' critical attitude towards advertising, supporting the findings of Rybina's study. Rybina's (2018) conclusions suggest that incorporating critical media literacy and advertisement analysis into lessons can positively affect students' critical thinking skills, specifically regarding their attitude toward advertising. By engaging students in analyzing and critically evaluating advertisements, they develop a heightened awareness of persuasive techniques, biases, and manipulative strategies employed in advertising. This was evident in the current study, particularly in the student's performance on the textual and visual advertisement tasks.

Table 3. Textual Advertisement Analysis Scores of Grade 11 HUMSS Students

Advertisements	Mean Scores	Descriptive Rating
1	6.33	Below Average
2	7.68	Average
3	8.63	Average
4	9.88	Average
5	10.75	Above Average
Over-all Mean	8.65	Average

It can be gleaned from the table that the overall mean score of the Grade 11 students is 8.65 (average). This means that students can identify and summarize the general issues in the advertisements; however, they cannot clearly explain the substantial elements as well as their underlying meanings or symbolisms due to a limited evaluation of evidence in the ad. For example, in the advertisement about body size with the text "*Save the whales, go vegetarian*". When students were asked about the general ambiance of the ad, one answered, "*It makes me mad because the message is bad, the message is not good because it does not care for people*". The students are aware that the ad is discriminatory. Still, they could not provide justifications for their claim and failed to interpret the symbolisms in the ad as many students focused solely on the surface-level interpretation that the ad implied people should lose weight without delving into the deeper meanings and implications embedded within the text.

Consequently, it is evident from the students' analysis that they could draw basic inferences from the information provided in the advertisement. They can identify explicit messages or claims. However, their in-depth inferences were limited since they could not fully capture the implicit meanings or underlying motives.

The researcher observed that the students could only identify the literal meaning of the text or the surface level of the advertisements and could not dwell on the underlying level. For instance, the ad for McDonald's featuring the slogan *"You're Not Alone, Millions of people love the Big Mac"* can be perceived as offensive due to its comparison of a desire for a Big Mac to mental illness. However, some students analyzed the text literally, interpreting it as a reflection of the Big Mac's popularity by stating, *"It shows about the popularity of the Big Mac, saying that you're not the only one who loves it"* Gunter (as cited in Stanley, 2020) also argued that developing the learner's capacity to think abstractly about advertising requires exposure to activities that allow them to think critically and distinguish facts from opinions and persuasion. This explains the students' performance at the beginning of their advertisement analysis as they lack exposure to analysis activities. This is also evident in the student analysis; although the students could evaluate arguments presented in the advertisement, their evaluations were still limited. Notwithstanding, it is good to emphasize the progression of the average scores of both sections as they started at a below-average level, moved to an average level, and culminated at an above-average level for their final analysis.

Table 4. Visual Advertisement Analysis Scores of Grade 11 HUMSS Students

Advertisements	Average Mean	Descriptive Rating
1	8.23	Average
2	8.78	Average
3	10.13	Average
4	11.13	Average
5	12.83	Average
Overall Mean	10.22	Above Average

The table above shows the progress of the level of critical thinking skills of the students. It can be seen from the table that the students gained an overall average of 10.22 which is interpreted as above average level of critical thinking skills. This means that the students generally understand the visual data by formulating a judgment about the evidence by correctly identifying multiple contexts and assumptions and their integration into the discussion. The progression of the student's critical thinking level from average to above average and excellent is truly noteworthy, and it is a direct outcome of their exposure to diverse textual and visual advertisement analysis. These findings indicate that the students are already equipped with analyzing skills due to their exposure to the different analytic strategies during their textual ad analysis. This is evident in the students' initial outputs. Upon conducting their first textual analysis, the researcher noticed that the students encountered difficulties deciphering the more profound meaning conveyed by the advertisements. Instead, they predominantly interpreted the ads at face value, lacking sufficient justification for their analyses. For instance, when examining an advertisement for Herbalife featuring the text *"Lose weight, look great, and feel healthy,"* students stated that this is to *"Promote healthy living"* and *"Losing weight makes you look great and feel healthy."* while the students could identify the literal meaning of the advertisements, they failed to grasp the underlying message being communicated.

However, as the students were exposed to various advertisement analyses, a noticeable shift occurred in their interpretations. It was observed that their analyses went beyond the literal meaning, indicating a deeper understanding of the underlying messages conveyed by the advertisements; this improvement can be seen through these students' outputs as some of them stated that *"The advertisement sells health supplements, but implicitly sells good looks and healthiness. People are concerned with the idea that they want to be physically fit and respected by society. Health supplement ads like these try to exploit the insecurities of a consumer, especially if they are physically unhealthy and would want to look good and be healthy."*

Moreover, another student stated, *"The advertisement offers their healthy product implying that it can help a person lose weight and look wonderful like the model. In our society, having a small and wonderful figure*

has been the expected beauty standard, and most women are continuously looking for products that would help them lose weight quickly. Thus, this advertisement aims to exploit women's self-consciousness about their weight" It can be seen from the analysis of the students that they already skillfully interpreted the information presented in the advertisement and were able to consider contextual factors, such as cultural and social influences, and analyze how these elements shape the message and impact of the intended audience. This remarkable improvement can be attributed to the students' exposure to a diverse range of advertisements, which allowed them to use their prior knowledge and apply it effectively in analyzing the advertisements. This observation validates the findings of Wenk (2017), claiming that the construction of new knowledge is established based on students' prior knowledge. In this study, the previous learning experience of textual ad analysis helped the HUMSS students better understand their visual analysis as manifested in their performance.

Perhaps, another reason students performed better is that people find it easier to process visuals than texts, as humans can process visuals 60,000 times faster (The Media Education Center, 2015). Kellner and Share (2019) explain this phenomenon by asserting that since visual pictures surround children before they can speak, their prevalence makes it easier to instruct pupils to think visually about aesthetics, design, and the politics of representation. Khadimaly (as cited by Vanichvasin, 2020) also puts a premium on visual images, arguing that learners demonstrate greater interest when media messages are presented visually rather than through texts. This data explains how the students improved their performance as they are naturally visual learners due to the prominence of visual images (and multimedia orientation) in their upbringing and education.

Overall, the above-average performance may also be credited to the semiotic approach in which this activity is anchored. Semiotics is the study of symbols and the creation of their meaning through social interactions (Stephan and Akyuz, 2022). The compounding learning brought by previous and new knowledge combined with learners' exposure to visual media messages guided the students in producing a more detailed analysis. This is evident in the students' adbuster outputs, where their exposure to textual and visual ad analysis enabled them to utilize their prior knowledge to deliver more profound analysis and counter advertisements. By integrating textual and visual ad analysis, students could apply their knowledge and understanding of media literacy concepts to assess advertisements critically. This equipped them with the necessary tools to delve beyond the surface-level interpretation and dig into the underlying messages, techniques, and intentions advertisers employ.

As a result, students showcased their ability to provide more insightful analyses, drawing connections between the advertisements and broader social, cultural, and economic contexts. They could identify and challenge persuasive techniques, implicit biases, and manipulative strategies employed by advertisers. Also, their inferencing, interpretation, deduction, and evaluation skills go beyond basic comprehension, reflecting a deep understanding of the advertisements' intended messages, target audience, and underlying assumptions in the ad, making them skillful in evaluating the effectiveness of advertising strategies.

Table 5. *Adbuster Scores of the Grade 11 HUMSS Students*

Adbuster	Mean Score	Descriptive Rating
Overall Percentage	31.03	Proficient

It can be seen from the table that the grade 11 students' scores are classified as proficient based on the overall mean score of 31.03. This implies that the students could effectively analyze the adbuster by writing a quality evaluation of evidence and reasoning and examining the situations from multiple perspectives. This further means that adbusting is effective in improving the students' critical thinking. Their writing performance is enhanced by going through their different analysis activities as evidenced in their adbuster outputs. This result parallels the findings of the study conducted by Borromeo (2016), which revealed

that adbusting effectively improves the students' critical thinking skills. She further emphasized that one factor that affected the students' performance was that they were engaged during the activity and enjoyed preparing Adbusters. She posited that students' engagement in learning can contribute to successful learning and retention. Indeed, creating Adbusters is an example of active learning as the experimental students of this study were actively involved in creating Adbusters and were also allowed to choose their advertisement to debunk. This allowed the students to control and take charge of their learning.

Furthermore, it is also noteworthy to emphasize that the students did not only create their adbuster but also created a write-up of the adbuster containing their analysis of the advertisement. The researcher observed that their writing skills improved as they analyzed their Adbusters. This is evident in the students' writing output showing their ability to produce organized ideas and present evidence, arguments, and counterarguments compellingly and logically. Indeed, these findings revealed how a sound knowledge of language structure and teacher guidance can improve critical thinking. According to Manalo & Sheppard, (2016), combining language proficiency and instruction on academic discourse affects the students' critical thinking performance. This finding was reflected in the researcher's study as she taught critical discourse analysis to her students as they performed learning activities that promoted language proficiency through the argumentative essays of the visual and textual analyses.

Kadlub (2017) further emphasized this idea when he mentioned that people should carefully evaluate, assess, and choose words based on the idea that they want to convey to avoid misunderstandings, for when read alone, a sentence is frequently unclear, but in particular contexts, it can be made clear. Through the employment of the adbusting strategy and the guided instruction of critical discourse analysis, learners could properly discern the media messages and their evaluation of these advertisements.

Overall, the adbusting strategy helped the students to showcase their ability to create Adbusters that challenge the original message effectively. Their inferencing, interpretation, deduction, and evaluation skills allowed them to develop persuasive and thought-provoking messages that challenged the original message of the advertisement.

Table 6. Comparative Analysis of the Difference between the Pretest and Post-test Scores of the Grade 11 HUMSS Students

	Mean Score	t-value	p-value
Pretest	45.55	2.023	0.001*
Post-test	57.88		

* Significant at 0.05 alpha

The data reveals that the mean score for the pretest is 45.55, whereas, for the posttest, it is 57.88. This indicates an average improvement in students' scores from the pretest to the posttest. The observed difference in performance between the pretest and posttest scores is statistically significant, as evidenced by the p-value of 0.001, which is less than the alpha or critical value; hence, the H_0 is rejected, implying that there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the students. Consequently, compelling evidence suggests a noteworthy disparity in the students' performance before and after the intervention. This means that exposing the students to different advertisement analyses and allowing them to create an adbuster provided a relevant improvement to the level of critical thinking skills of the students. This result affirms the study of Borromeo (2016), revealing that adbusting can significantly increase the level of critical thinking skills of the students as their critical thinking test scores improved after creating an adbuster. The results of the current study further imply that exposing the students to media analysis strategies helps them develop their literacy skills, such as critical media literacy and writing skills. This supports the finding of Novia (2018) that the use of adbusting effectively improves students' writing skills. Particularly, Novia noted that the improvement is due to the frequency of practice using the systematically structured format of adbusting, such

as showing sample paragraphs and adbuster, understanding, analyzing, evaluating, and finding the hidden messages of the adbuster. This pattern was observed by the researcher in the conduct of her study when she performed the textual, visual ad analyses and adbuster to her experimental subjects as this strategy generally improved the level of critical thinking skills of the students as evidenced by the progressive increase in their critical thinking scores and the significant difference in their performance before and after the treatments.

Conclusions

Exposing the students to various textual and visual advertisements can improve critical thinking skills. Hence, the use of adbusting as an intervention is an effective classroom tool for developing critical thinking. The interactive nature of adbusting, where students work in groups to create and analyze their advertisements, promotes collaboration and communication skills. Thus, the adbusting strategy effectively improves the students' critical thinking skills. It requires them to critically analyze and evaluate media messages, develop persuasive arguments, and collaborate with others, all of which are essential skills for success in the 21st century.

Recommendations

In light of the implementation of adbusting as a tool for improving the critical media literacy of the students, it is recommended that educators should incorporate textual and visual advertisement analysis strategies as part of the teaching materials and activities in various subjects, such as language, social studies, and media literacy. This strategy can help students develop their ability to analyze and evaluate advertising messages, understand the impact of consumerism on society, and recognize the persuasive techniques advertisers use. Moreover, educators should guide and support students as they engage in adbusting activities. This includes providing clear instructions on creating and analyzing advertisements and opportunities for students to practice their critical thinking skills regularly by offering feedback to help them improve their critical thinking skills. Lastly, Teachers may utilize the enhanced media literacy syllabus incorporating activities focused on analyzing textual and visual advertisements and guidelines for creating an adbuster.

Ethical Statement

The researcher ensured that the ethical standards of research were followed during the course of the study. Before conducting the critical thinking test, a letter was communicated to the principal and department heads of the Basic Education Schools where the participants were enrolled. The letter included the research objectives, a short description of the procedure, assurance of the participants' privacy, and that the result of the test and experiment would only be used for research purposes. Moreover, the researcher also ensured that all the participants received and experienced the intervention.

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