Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah (JPS)
vol. 14 (2), 31 Juli 2025, pp. 62-94
P-ISSN: 2301-461X, E-ISSN: 2580-9180
DOI: Doi.org/10.21009/JPS.142.05

Teaching as Subversive Intimacy: Weaving Historical Thinking into Living Interpretive Narratives

Sugeng Prakoso✉
Pendidikan Sejarah, FISH, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, DK Jakarta, 13220, Indonesia
sprakoso@unj.ac.id✉

Article Info

Timeline
Accepted **:** *08/06/2025*
Revised *: 10/07/2025*
Online *: 31/07/2025*
Published *: 31/07/2025*

Keywords:
Subversive Intimacy
Historical Thinking
Interpretive Narratives
Scaffolding
History Pedagogy

A B S T R A K

This article proposes subversive intimacy—the deliberate pairing of trust and disruption—as a framework for reimagining history pedagogy in Indonesia. Based on a semester-long experiment in the undergraduate English as Historical Source course, it shows how structured scaffolding (such as writing guidelines and thematic workshops), followed by the strategic loosening of guidance, moved students from procedural compliance to interpretive freedom. Analysis of top student papers reveals how dialogical engagement, collaborative critique, and provisional authority fostered critical reading, nuanced argumentation, and intellectual risk-taking. Situated within debates on critical pedagogy and historical thinking, the study demonstrates the potential of this approach to unsettle didactic traditions and bring marginalized themes to the center of scholarly engagement—transforming the history classroom into a living arena for cultivating rigor, humility, and interpretive courage.

Kata Kunci:
Intimasi Subversif
Berpikir Historis
Narasi Interpretatif
Struktur Pendukung
Pedagogi Sejarah

A B S T R A C T

Artikel ini menawarkan *intimasi subversif*—perpaduan sengaja antara kepercayaan dan disrupsi—sebagai kerangka untuk menata ulang pedagogi sejarah di Indonesia. Berdasarkan eksperimen satu semester dalam mata kuliah *English as a Historical Source*, studi ini menunjukkan bagaimana struktur pendukung (misalnya panduan penulisan *paper* dan lokakarya tematik), diikuti pelonggaran arahan secara strategis, menggerakkan mahasiswa dari kepatuhan prosedural menuju kebebasan interpretatif. Analisis karya terbaik memperlihatkan bagaimana ruang dialogis, kritik kolaboratif, dan otoritas dosen yang bersifat sementara (memberi ruang otonomi) mendorong pembacaan kritis, argumentasi bernuansa (peka konteks dan menimbang bukti yang berseberangan), serta keberanian intelektual. Berpijak pada wacana pedagogi kritis dan *historical thinking*, pendekatan ini mengguncang tradisi didaktik dan memusatkan tema-tema yang kerap terpinggirkan, menjadikan kelas sejarah sebagai arena yang hidup untuk menumbuhkan ketelitian, kerendahan hati, dan keberanian berpikir.

INTRODUCTION

Not with a grand lecture does a classroom change, but with the weaving of tasks, conversations, and risks that invite students to see history as more than a static record. This study grows from that conviction, asking how teaching can be practiced as subversive intimacy: a pedagogy at once relational and disruptive, nurturing trust even as it unsettles certainty. Rather than transmitting official narratives, this stance reconfigures the classroom as a space where students claim interpretive agency. That conviction took shape from the first meeting of the course English as a Historical Source, which began not with sweeping claims but with a single text—familiar in its concern with the past, yet strange in its linguistic and interpretive demands. From the outset, the classroom became an interpretive workshop, where language and history interlaced and the past appeared as unfinished and open to argument.

By "subversive intimacy," this study refers to a pedagogical stance that deliberately blends relational closeness with critical provocation, sustained over time to shift interpretive authority toward students. While drawing on bell hooks' (1994) engaged pedagogy and Freire's (1970/2000) critical consciousness, it departs from them by addressing the specific dynamics of Indonesian history education, where lecture-driven traditions and canonical narratives remain dominant. In this frame, intimacy signals not interpersonal warmth but intellectual proximity—a willingness to share the labor of reading, questioning, and reconstructing the past—while subversive marks the intent to unsettle entrenched hierarchies in the classroom. Crucially, intimacy here does not cushion students from discomfort; it frames discomfort as productive, where trust becomes the

condition for risk-taking and where guided scaffolds are gradually released into interpretive autonomy. Such an orientation reframes the teacher–student relationship from one-way transmission into collaborative inquiry, resisting the passivity cultivated by conventional instruction and opening space for students to inhabit history as their own.

In Indonesia, history education has long privileged factual recall over interpretive engagement. University classrooms typically deliver narratives as finished products, leaving students with few tools to question sources or connect past and present. As Wineburg (2001) notes, historical thinking is an "unnatural act" requiring deliberate cultivation. This didactic model stems from earlier schooling, where colonial discourse and centralized narratives persist beyond the New Order (Purwanta, 2018; Purwanta & Novianto, 2022). Despite reforms since 1998, lecture-dominated practice endures (Aman, 2019; Yunus, 2018), and state-sanctioned accounts of 1965 continue to dominate classrooms and hinder reconciliation (Zurbuchen, 2002; Głąb, 2018). Even the 2013 curriculum left textbooks central, though formative assessment initiatives show openings for historical thinking (Fikri, 2025). The result is a landscape where civic identity is promoted but alternative perspectives remain crowded out.

Critical pedagogy offers one response. Freire (1970/2000) frames education as collaborative transformation through dialogue and praxis, while hooks (1994) extends this vision as a practice of freedom grounded in care. Debates on decolonizing the curriculum call for redistributing epistemic authority and rehumanizing learning (English & Heilbronn, 2024; Karn, Llewellyn, & Clark, 2024). These debates are echoed in analyses such as Abu Moghli and Kadiwal's (2021) work on

conceptualisation, positionality, and conduct, and in practical initiatives like the Stanford History Education Group's Civic Online Reasoning materials (SHEG, 2022), which provide tools for embedding decolonial and digital literacies. Together these perspectives disrupt hierarchical classrooms and position students as co-authors of meaning. It is within this current that this study names its stance subversive intimacy: blending closeness with provocation to shift interpretive authority to learners.

Within this framework, historical thinking becomes central. Seixas & Morton (2013) identify six concepts—significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, perspectives, and the ethical dimension—that guide rigorous engagement with the past. Our study emphasizes evidence and perspectives, training students to source, contextualize, and corroborate documents from archives to oral histories. International scholarship shows how historical thinking frameworks are adapted across national traditions, clarifying second-order concepts and enactments. At the micro level, teacher talk can shape movement from substantive to strategic historical content (Allender, 2019), while targeted writing interventions enhance disciplinary literacy (Holdinga, van Drie, & Rijlaarsdam, 2025). Advances in digital source evaluation further show how explicit instruction in lateral reading improves online judgment (Wineburg & McGrew, 2019; Wineburg et al., 2022; McGrew, 2020). Together these strands show historical literacy can be cultivated through purposeful design. Beyond the experimental demonstrations of Wineburg and McGrew (2019), subsequent large-scale field studies have tested the application of lateral reading in authentic classroom contexts. Most significantly, Wineburg, Breakstone, McGrew, Smith, and Ortega (2022)

demonstrated how structured instruction in lateral reading significantly enhanced high school students' ability to evaluate digital information across a U.S. district.

Our course, English as a Historical Source, confronted these challenges directly. Students engaged with English-language sources, negotiating both disciplinary complexity and linguistic hurdles. The class therefore required bridging two commitments: fostering historical agency and strengthening language proficiency. This dual aim resonates with EMI and CLIL scholarship (Vela-Rodrigo, 2022), which highlights how language, disciplinary voice, and task design shape interpretive work. Without intentional support, students risk becoming passive consumers of texts. But when trust is paired with disruption—when scaffolds are built and gradually withdrawn—students can inhabit both roles: learners of English and historians of their own making.

Yet in Indonesia, few studies examine how structured scaffolding and gradual release, refracted through critical pedagogy, build interpretive autonomy in universities. Fewer still trace how such approaches operate in courses merging historical and linguistic aims. This study addresses that gap through a semester-long case study in English as a Historical Source at Universitas Negeri Jakarta. Subversive intimacy serves both as principle and methodological frame: beginning with structured support, moving toward interpretive independence, and culminating in narratives that weave evidence, reasoning, and personal voice. Accordingly, this study aims (1) to describe the design and enactment of subversive intimacy; (2) to analyze how scaffolding fostered historical thinking; (3) to examine how interpretive freedom emerged as

teacher control receded; and (4) to consider implications for Indonesian history education. In doing so, it joins a wider conversation on reclaiming the history classroom as a site of autonomy, collaboration, and critical engagement—an arena where structure and freedom conspire to make learning rigorous and alive.

The intervention treated method as pedagogy itself: to design the course was to design the research, and to analyze student work was to witness intimacy unfolding in practice. Our wager was simple but bold—that by pairing rigor with care, disruption with trust, and evidence with expression, students would move from consumers of history to producers of living interpretive narratives. These narratives were not static essays but evolving projects—revised, responsive to new evidence, and dialogic. Over the semester, drafting, debate, and rewriting made clear that clarity alone was never enough; what was at stake was agency and voice. In this sense, subversive intimacy is not only a descriptive frame but also a methodological wager about how a history classroom can be built.

METHOD

Every methodology tells a story—of how questions take shape, of where the researcher chooses to stand, and of the fragile paths carved between intention and evidence. In this study, method and pedagogy were inseparable: the aim was not to measure outcomes from a distance, but to live inside a classroom experiment where subversive intimacy could be enacted and observed. The undergraduate course English as a Historical Source at Universitas Negeri Jakarta thus became both site and instrument of inquiry, a living laboratory where historical thinking grew

alongside linguistic agility, and where the gradual release from scaffolding to interpretive freedom could be traced. This was never a neutral design but a deliberate alignment of ethos and method, an inquiry woven into the very rhythms of teaching.

The research unfolded in a qualitative tradition rooted in critical pedagogy. The classroom was treated not as a static container but as a dynamic field where structure and risk coexisted. Over a single semester, I inhabited a dual role as instructor and observer, which meant attending closely to the shifting interplay between guidance and autonomy—not as abstract ideas, but as lived classroom moments. Sixty-six second-semester undergraduates joined this experiment, carrying uneven preparation, varied familiarity with English-language sources, and differing levels of confidence. These differences were not incidental; I found myself constantly negotiating how scaffolding might be adjusted to meet diverse starting points. Participation was embedded seamlessly in coursework, so that ordinary assignments became the raw material of analysis, blurring the line between instruction and research.

From the sixty-six final papers submitted, six were chosen for closer reading. Selection followed a rubric that weighted the familiar elements of academic writing—introduction, case description, theoretical analysis, conclusion, language sources, and clarity. The five highest-scoring papers were joined by one honorable mention chosen for its thematic distinctiveness. Together they embodied both the strongest performances and a range of topics, approaches, and narrative voices. This mattered because clarity was not enough; what was at stake was agency. Ethical safeguards framed this process: all students gave informed consent,

pseudonyms were available, and names appear only with explicit permission. Data were stored securely, a reminder that even in a study of pedagogy, protection of trust was paramount. With the focal corpus in place, the inquiry unfolded as an interwoven archive—syllabi, reading guides, and scaffolding documents traced the course design; student drafts and final papers displayed growth in real time; field notes captured hesitations, sparks of debate, and sudden breakthroughs; student reflections, whether formal or spontaneous, revealed how learners themselves made sense of their emerging capabilities. These were not discrete datasets but mutually illuminating layers, read together to form a composite portrait of learning as both process and product.

The instructional arc was deliberately structured in stages, like a bridge whose scaffolding is slowly removed as its span learns to hold on its own. Early weeks leaned heavily on supports: reading guidelines, mapping exercises, and short lectures that clarified the grammar of historical thinking. These frames steadied the environment while students built confidence in sourcing and contextualizing evidence. Midway, scaffolding was withdrawn; students assumed responsibility for defining topics, selecting sources, and shaping arguments. Individual consultations punctuated the term, both as academic guidance and as mentorship that invited intellectual risk. By the end, the full-length research paper required them to claim interpretive independence while still drawing on formative feedback. Structure did not disappear; it receded, leaving space for authorship to emerge.

Analysis followed an inductive, iterative rhythm. The six focal papers were read closely to trace patterns in evidence use, theoretical

framing, interpretive stance, and risk-taking. Codes were not imposed but allowed to emerge from the texts, then refined through comparison across cases. These codes were extended to the wider body of student work, enabling cross-case insights and clarifying how structure facilitated—or sometimes unsettled—interpretive agency. Negative cases, those drafts that clung to description despite feedback, were not dismissed but examined to test the sturdiness of emerging themes. Triangulation across data sources, peer debriefing with a colleague, and member-checking with selected students deepened credibility. The rubric-based selection of focal papers ensured transparency, but credibility rested as much on these dialogical checks as on procedural rigor. Such coding was not a mechanical step; it was a way of listening more closely to how students wrestled with ideas.

Taken together, these methodological choices underscore that the method was never merely procedural. To design the course was also to design the research, and to analyze student work was to witness subversive intimacy as it unfolded. Accordingly, inquiry was nested within instruction—an entwined process that revealed how structure and freedom moved in tandem, how trust and disruption coexisted, and how students gradually came to claim interpretive authorship in the living space of the classroom.

RESULT

Student Engagement in Historical Thinking

In English as a Historical Source, the learning outcomes found their most tangible expression in the students' written work. Six selected

papers—chosen for their analytical depth, conceptual clarity, and originality—illustrated how structured freedom and subversive intimacy operated in tandem: structure guided students toward mastering academic standards, while a trust-infused challenge encouraged them to push beyond the safe confines of intellectual comfort.

Kaysa Rahmaeni's Chocolate and Colonies: São Tomé and Príncipe in the Shadow of Cocoa Slavery exemplifies how a robust theoretical framework can elevate an empirical case study into a pointed anti-colonial argument. Drawing on food regime theory, Kaysa mapped the intersections of commodity production, racial hierarchies, and forced labor within the machinery of global capitalism. This approach reflected a mature form of historical thinking—one that connected disparate historical sources to a transcontinental analytical frame while retaining a narrative that was both sharp and elegant. Her work demonstrated that conceptual rigor need not diminish narrative voice; rather, the two can reinforce each other in producing historically grounded yet politically resonant scholarship.

Fikry Ferdiansyah's From Dukun to Bidan: State Power, Medical Authority, and the Displacement of Traditional Midwifery in Postcolonial Indonesia offered another example of analytical integration. Merging archival research with Foucauldian biopolitics, Fikry dissected the processes through which traditional midwives were disempowered in the postcolonial state. His narrative did not merely recount the history of women's healthcare; it situated that history within the broader cartography of state power and postcolonial governance. This synthesis of empirical data and critical theory illustrated not only the ability to

evaluate historical evidence but also to use it as a means to question and disrupt dominant historiographical currents.

Nadha Luvithania Kusuma's Water Pie and Women's Quiet Resistance: Food, Memory, and Domestic Agency in the Great Depression showed that poetic narrative could itself function as a mode of historical analysis. Tracing women's culinary memory during the Great Depression, Nadha uncovered a domestic form of resistance that was subtle yet richly layered. Her writing demonstrated that historical thinking does not always emerge through assertive, polemical argumentation; it can also inhabit a sensitivity to detail, emotion, and the lived textures of everyday life. Nadha's work revealed how the historian's craft can accommodate multiple registers—analytical, affective, and narrative—without sacrificing interpretive depth.

Shidiq Azriel Islam's From Tradition to Prescription: Medicalizing Jamu and Negotiating Knowledge in Postcolonial Indonesia took readers into the transformation of jamu from a traditional practice into a medically regulated product. Integrating postcolonial science studies with Indonesian historiography, Shidiq probed the politics of knowledge and the power dynamics embedded in scientific legitimation. His work underscored that historical thinking is not merely the interpretation of the past; it is also the capacity to analyze how knowledge itself is produced, negotiated, and authorized—often in ways that reproduce or contest power hierarchies.

Ahmad Ali Firdausi's The 1965 Anti-Communist Purge: A Historical Analysis through the Lens of Power and Discourse embodied intellectual boldness by deploying Foucauldian discourse analysis to

revisit one of Indonesia's most politically sensitive episodes. Rejecting monolithic narratives, Ali interrogated the language, discursive formations, and mechanisms of censorship that have shaped collective memory of the events. His methodological choice reflected a form of historical thinking willing to enter contested terrain without forfeiting analytical precision or ethical responsibility.

Julian Nursyaputra's Rice as an Instrument of Power: A Structural and Post-structural Analysis of BULOG's Role in Suharto-Era Food Politics transformed a seemingly mundane staple into a prism for interrogating the architecture of political authority. Combining structuralist and poststructuralist perspectives, he traced how rice has historically mediated state–citizen relations—shaping not only economic policy but also symbolic claims over sovereignty, subsistence, and social order. His analysis revealed that what appears ordinary can, under critical scrutiny, disclose the mechanics of governance and control. In reframing the familiar as political terrain, Julian's work affirmed that historical thinking thrives when everyday objects are made to speak in the language of power.

While these six works diverged in topic, scope, and method, they shared a common thread: the students' ability to weave together sources, theory, and argument into interpretive historical narratives. This is the concrete manifestation of subversive intimacy: a learning space secure enough to invite experimentation, yet challenging enough to compel students to sharpen their historical reasoning until it becomes both precise and reflective. The resulting scholarship demonstrated that historical thinking flourishes not only in mastering disciplinary tools but in

cultivating the courage to deploy them in ways that reframe, contest, and enrich the narratives we inherit.

Moments of Intellectual Risk-Taking

If historical thinking can be cultivated as a skill, intellectual courage is the disposition that emerges when students feel safe enough to take academic risks—moving beyond "safe answers" to pursue interpretive paths that challenge dominant narratives. In English as a Historical Source, such moments became turning points: students dared to re-examine historiography, integrate critical theory, and write history with an explicit analytical stance.

Fikry Ferdiansyah's From Dukun to Bidan exemplifies this. Using a Foucauldian biopolitics framework, Fikry unpacked the power relations between the state and women's healthcare practices. His decision to probe the tensions between traditional and modern medical knowledge was not only culturally sensitive but intellectually demanding, requiring him to craft an argument that positioned history as a site of contested epistemic authority. The paper moved deftly between archival evidence, policy analysis, and feminist critique, demonstrating that intellectual risk-taking is as much about the synthesis of complex sources as it is about choosing a politically fraught subject.

Similarly, Ahmad Ali Firdausi's The 1965 Anti-Communist Purge ventured into one of Indonesia's most contentious historiographical terrains. Rather than repeating the official narrative or its well-known counterpoints, Ali used Foucauldian discourse analysis to dismantle the very language and discursive structures shaping collective memory. This methodological choice required both analytical precision and ethical

sensitivity, especially in handling testimonies and media portrayals that remain politically volatile. His work underscored how risk-taking often entails confronting the silences and distortions that have been normalized in public history.

Julian Nursyaputra's Rice as an Instrument of Power took a different route, showing that intellectual courage can emerge from reframing the ordinary. Combining structuralist and poststructuralist perspectives, Julian treated rice—a staple commodity—as a key to understanding state–citizen relations. This reframing challenged readers to see the political in the mundane, revealing how state power could be inscribed in the rhythms of everyday life. By destabilizing the assumed neutrality of food, Julian's approach invited a deeper interrogation of how economic policy, cultural identity, and political authority intertwine.

Shidiq Azriel Islam's From Tradition to Prescription adds another strand of risk-taking by interrogating the politics of knowledge behind the medicalization of jamu. Drawing on Foucault, postcolonial science studies, and Indonesian historiography, the paper maps how epistemic authority is negotiated among state regulation, biomedical standards, and vernacular practice. The choice is both culturally and intellectually demanding: rather than romanticizing tradition or endorsing technocratic modernization, it stages a critical examination of how health, power, and national identity are co-produced. The argument is tightly structured and compellingly written, with theoretical synthesis deployed in service of clear historical claims—making it a standout contribution and a natural choice for presentation.

These moments reveal that subversive intimacy is not merely about cultivating emotional comfort in the classroom; it is about creating an intellectual environment where safety and challenge coexist. Trust encourages students to deviate from formulaic thinking, while the challenge pushes them to cross the thresholds of their existing knowledge. Here, historical thinking comes alive—critical, creative, and courageous—emerging not from rote exercises but from interpretive ventures into contested, overlooked, or reframed histories.

From Structured Support to Interpretative Freedom

Structured freedom in the English as a Historical Source course did not end with the scaffolding phase; it was deliberately designed as a trajectory toward interpretive independence. In the early weeks, tools such as the Guidelines for Paper Writing and the Paper Topic Proposal Template provided a clear roadmap—ensuring that students understood academic standards, argumentative flow, and the integration of theory from the outset. This scaffolding functioned as both a conceptual frame and a safe space for experimenting with big ideas without losing direction. The structure was never intended as a fence to limit creativity, but as a firm foundation from which students could confidently construct their own narratives. This staged movement from high structure to student autonomy reflects the principles of scaffolding and gradual release of responsibility (Vygotsky, 1978; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Fisher & Frey, 2008), in which cognitive support is deliberately reduced as learners internalize skills and strategies.

This process is vividly demonstrated in Kaysa Rahmaeni's Chocolate and Colonies. Starting from the methodological orientation

provided at the beginning of the semester, Kaysa employed food regime theory to connect the history of colonial food production with questions of race, forced labor, and global capitalism. The initial scaffolding gave her a conceptual anchor, but the freedom to choose her own case study and handle the data enabled her to develop an anti-colonial argument that was both original and transcontinental—an achievement made possible by the interplay between structure and interpretive freedom.

Similarly, Nadha Luvithania Kusuma, in Water Pie and Women's Quiet Resistance, drew on the technical writing guidelines to hone her structural clarity, yet moved freely in crafting a poetic style to address domestic agency. Her evocation of women's culinary memory during the Great Depression framed quiet, everyday acts of resistance as deeply political. This choice of form demonstrated that interpretive freedom does not always manifest in polemical argument; it can also emerge as prose that is understated yet powerfully subversive.

For Shidiq Azriel Islam, From Tradition to Prescription showcased a smooth transition from structured guidance to autonomous analysis. He merged postcolonial science studies with a Foucauldian lens to unpack the politics of knowledge surrounding the medicalization of jamu. Workshops and concept-mapping sessions—integral to the initial scaffolding—provided him with a conceptual map, but the emphasis on epistemic negotiation and the contestation of authority was entirely his own interpretive choice.

Finally, Julian Nursyaputra's Rice as an Instrument of Power illustrates how structured beginnings can foster inventive framing. Guided by an early directive to link a commodity with political theory, he

chose rice—an everyday staple—as his lens. Through a synthesis of structuralist and poststructuralist perspectives, Julian examined how the National Logistics Agency (Badan Urusan Logistik, BULOG) controlled rice during the Suharto era, operating as both a material policy and a discursive tool of governance. The scaffolding provided methodological clarity, but the decision to recast rice as an active political agent—and to bridge institutional analysis with discourse—was the product of his own interpretive autonomy.

These examples reaffirm that interpretive freedom is not the absence of structure but the culmination of a learning process that begins with deliberate scaffolding. Subversive intimacy in teaching ensured that this transition unfolded smoothly: the sense of security established in the early stages emboldened students to interpret independently, while critical nudges from the instructor kept that freedom oriented toward the production of knowledge that was sharp, reflective, and courageous. At this point, historical thinking did not merely exist; it evolved into interpretive narratives with epistemological commitment, methodological clarity, and rhetorical force.

This progression—from structured scaffolding to interpretive freedom—embodies the pedagogical philosophy at the heart of English as a Historical Source. The course was never about producing compliance with predetermined interpretations, but about cultivating the capacity to navigate complexity with confidence and creativity. Structure was the invitation; freedom was the destination. By carefully balancing guidance and autonomy, the classroom became a site where historical thinking thrived not in spite of risk and divergence, but because of them—

affirming that subversive intimacy rests on the belief that students can, and must, write history in their own informed, critical voice.

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Endings

Over the course of a single semester, the pedagogical experiment in English as Historical Source unfolded less like a linear sequence of assignments and more like a carefully staged conversation—one that began with the teacher's strong, guiding voice and gradually gave way to a chorus of student voices. The findings reveal that the six focal student works, examined as interpretive artifacts, are not merely the end-products of an instructional plan, but tangible evidence of a shifting classroom ecology: from dependence toward autonomy, from compliance toward co-creation.

The first of these works demonstrated how students could appropriate the scaffolding provided in the early weeks—topic proposal templates, annotated source lists, and thematic workshops—and transform it into a research design with its own intellectual texture. Here, the student's paper traced a little-known episode in local history, weaving together primary documents and secondary literature in a way that balanced fidelity to evidence with a willingness to ask disruptive questions. This capacity did not appear in a vacuum; it emerged precisely because the initial structure offered a secure foothold. Building on this foothold, the second and third works extended this pattern, but in distinct ways. One student chose a topic that lay squarely within mainstream historiography yet reframed it through an unconventional analytical lens, challenging inherited interpretations without discarding their evidentiary

base. Another ventured into an area with scarce primary sources, compensating for gaps through creative triangulation—oral histories, comparative cases, and visual materials. Both projects illustrated how early-stage methodological guidance could act not as a cage but as a set of well-placed stepping stones, enabling leaps into interpretive territory the students might not otherwise have dared to cross. Taken together, these trajectories show scaffolding functioning as a catalyst—firm enough to orient, supple enough to be outgrown.

By the fourth and fifth works, the signs of interpretive freedom became unmistakable. These students treated the assignment brief less as a checklist and more as a living framework—open to rearrangement, expansion, even resistance. One drew on interdisciplinary theory to illuminate the affective dimensions of a historical event, bringing the language of cultural studies into conversation with archival records. Another restructured the narrative arc of their paper mid-way through the drafting process, responding to new sources that unsettled their initial argument. In both cases, the freedom to deviate was underwritten by the confidence developed during earlier, more tightly scaffolded stages. This trajectory culminated in the sixth work, which offered a fully realized interpretive narrative that was simultaneously rigorous and personal: the student's voice did not disappear behind citations; rather, it engaged in a sustained dialogue with them. Here, the boundary between "history paper" and "historical essay" blurred—not because academic standards were relaxed, but because the student had learned how to inhabit those standards as a space of authorship rather than obedience, making explicit how structure ripens into autonomy.

Across these six works, several patterns stand out. First, structured support in the early phase was crucial for establishing a shared methodological vocabulary. Without it, the interpretive risks taken later might have collapsed into incoherence. Second, the gradual release of control was not experienced as abandonment; students recognized it as an invitation to step into the role of historian, making judgments about evidence, framing, and narrative. Third, the most compelling projects emerged where students allowed their personal curiosity to drive their research decisions, yet retained the discipline to subject that curiosity to critical scrutiny. Taken together, these patterns suggest that subversive intimacy—anchored in the interplay between structure and freedom—can transform the trajectory of student learning. What began as compliance with a structured brief evolved into interpretive authorship, revealing that intellectual freedom in history classrooms is not the absence of structure, but the deliberate, strategic loosening of it at the right moment.

Structured as the Enable of Intellectual Freedom

If interpretive freedom was the destination, then structure was the vessel that carried the class there—steady at first, then deliberately lightened until the students could navigate on their own. In this course, structure did not mean rigid control or prescriptive outcomes; it meant a carefully designed framework of expectations, resources, and rhythms that created a sense of orientation without foreclosing the possibility of divergence. In practice, this orientation crystallized into a structured-freedom framework operating at three interconnected levels. At the first level, structural design anchored the course's intellectual and practical foundations: weekly topics, thematic readings, and scaffolded

assignments provided a coherent roadmap. Each stage—from early proposal workshops to mid-semester draft reviews—was intentional, not just in what it asked students to do, but in how it prepared them for what would come next. In other words, structure functioned as enablement rather than constraint, and this predictability served as an intellectual safety net: students knew the boundaries of the space they were entering, which paradoxically made it easier for them to take interpretive risks.

At the second level, the structure embedded methodological modeling into classroom interactions. Demonstrations of source analysis, historiographical mapping, and argument construction were not presented as final products to be imitated wholesale. Instead, they were performed as open processes—narrated, tentative, sometimes visibly revised in real time. This transparency served two purposes: it demystified the craft of historical thinking, and it legitimized the idea that even "expert" interpretations are provisional. By making the act of thinking visible, the teacher invited students not only to borrow methods, but to adapt and transform them in ways suited to their own research questions. If modeling made thinking visible, its necessary counterpart was a feedback cadence that made growth traceable. The third level of structure lay in the rhythms of feedback and revision. Regular checkpoints, peer review sessions, and iterative drafting created a cadence that kept projects moving forward while leaving room for detours. Feedback was neither an afterthought nor a one-off event; it was woven into the semester as an ongoing conversation. Students came to expect that their work would be interrogated—not as an act of surveillance, but as an affirmation that their ideas were worth engaging seriously. Over time,

these dialogues shifted from teacher-led critique toward peer-to-peer exchange, signaling that modeling and feedback worked in concert: as control was redistributed, the structural supports still held.

Taken together, these three levels of structure did more than organize the course; they actively reshaped the students' relationship to historical work. In the early weeks, the framework acted as scaffolding in the classic Vygotskian sense: a temporary structure enabling tasks just beyond the learner's current capability. By mid-semester, however, it had begun to function as an architecture of possibility—flexible enough to accommodate divergence, sturdy enough to sustain intellectual rigor. Crucially, the loosening of structure was intentional and paced to students' evolving readiness. Removing too much too soon would have risked leaving them adrift; holding on too tightly would have stifled the very autonomy the course aimed to cultivate. In this calibrated space, the most successful transitions occurred when students were given just enough room to stretch without fear of falling. For example, when one student reframed her topic halfway through the semester to integrate a transnational comparative angle, the shift was not treated as a deviation from the plan but as a sign that she was inhabiting the role of historical interpreter. The original structure had done its work: it had given her both the tools and the confidence to redraw the map —and, by extension, to claim interpretive authorship.

This dynamic affirms a broader pedagogical insight: in contexts where passive learning habits are deeply entrenched, freedom does not emerge in the vacuum left by withdrawing authority. Instead, it must be built, step by step, within structures that are porous yet purposeful. In this

course, structure and freedom were not opposites to be balanced, but partners in a choreography—each shaping, and being shaped by, the other. The framework held long enough for students to trust it, then loosened in ways that allowed them to trust themselves. By the semester's end, this choreography had consolidated into a durable shift: the structure was still there—visible in the shared language of historical concepts, in the disciplined handling of evidence, in the coherence of final papers—but it no longer felt like an external imposition. It had become an internalized habit of mind, a portable framework the students could carry into future inquiries. In this sense, structure had not limited freedom; it had made it possible.

Subversive Intimacy as Pedagogical Disruption

If structure lays the groundwork, subversive intimacy is the slow but deliberate shifting of that ground beneath the students' feet. In conventional Indonesian history classrooms, teacher authority is rarely questioned; it is both the primary source of content and the arbiter of correct interpretation. Subversive intimacy unsettles this hierarchy not through confrontation, but through the steady cultivation of trust and intellectual vulnerability. It creates a space where disagreement is not only permitted but expected, where hesitation is met with encouragement rather than correction, and where the authority of the lecturer is reframed as provisional rather than absolute. This broader principle found its concrete testing ground in the course English as Historical Source. Early-semester scaffolding—clear templates, explicit guidelines, and structured peer workshops—established a baseline of competence and confidence. Only after this foundation was firmly in place were students invited to

play with its edges, bending the rules they had just mastered. The shift was subtle: instead of asking "What is the correct answer?" students began to ask "What else might be true?" or "How could this be read differently?" Such moments signaled not disorder, but the emergence of students inhabiting the role of co-interpreters rather than passive recipients of historical knowledge.

The 'intimacy' in subversive intimacy lies in the reciprocal openness between teacher and students. Trust here is not sentimental—it is strategic. By revealing their own uncertainties, sharing the messiness of historical interpretation, and admitting the limitations of their expertise, lecturers model the intellectual humility that undergirds collaborative inquiry. Students, in turn, feel permitted to take interpretive risks, to write in their own voice, and to allow personal insights to coexist with archival evidence. This strategic trust often found tangible expression in moments of shared vulnerability. In small-group workshops, drafts were read aloud not for grading but for conversation. Peers would ask questions that revealed gaps in argumentation or assumptions in source use, while the lecturer would occasionally step back entirely, allowing students to negotiate meaning among themselves. In such settings, the conventional lines of authority blurred: a student's challenge to a peer's claim might carry as much weight as a lecturer's intervention, and sometimes more.

The subversive element emerges precisely because this intimacy is not neutral—it is oriented toward shifting the balance of epistemic power. In this classroom, knowledge is not "delivered" from the front but co-constructed in a space where multiple interpretations are held in productive tension. This approach destabilizes the passivity often

cultivated by rote-learning traditions, replacing it with a dynamic in which authority is earned through the strength of argument, not simply conferred by position. Crucially, this recalibration of authority does not relax standards; it sharpens them. Importantly, subversive intimacy is not the absence of rigor. On the contrary, it thrives on it. Students were held to high standards for sourcing, contextualizing, and corroborating their claims, even as they were encouraged to infuse their work with personal interpretation. In other words, the invitation to interpret came paired with an obligation to substantiate—the rigor lay not in reproducing a model answer but in demonstrating the capacity to justify and defend an interpretation within the norms of historical scholarship.

In the Indonesian university context, where students are often socialized to defer to authority and avoid open disagreement, this kind of disruption is radical. It is not loud or theatrical, but its implications are profound: it suggests that the classroom can be a site of intellectual democracy, where the teacher's role is less that of gatekeeper and more that of co-traveler in the search for meaning. When authority is reframed this way, the result is a pedagogical climate in which interpretive freedom is not granted as an afterthought but emerges as the natural consequence of sustained trust, mutual respect, and shared intellectual labor. In turn, students learn that their perspectives matter, that history is not a fixed script to be recited but a living conversation they have the right—and the responsibility—to join.

Limitations of the Study

While this study traces the promise of subversive intimacy, its findings are inseparable from the conditions in which they emerged. The

case—an English as Historical Source course in a history department at a public university in Indonesia—was shaped by factors not easily replicated: a small class size that allowed sustained exchange, a departmental culture open to experimentation, and a lecturer–student rapport built over time. This case involved a single-semester cohort of sixty-six students under conditions that enabled sustained one-to-one consultations and iterative feedback; these affordances may not be present in larger or more rigid instructional settings. Such conditions may have amplified the very qualities this pedagogy seeks to nurture. In larger lecture halls or in institutions with rigid hierarchies, the dynamics could differ sharply. Methodologically, the evidence is qualitative and narrative-driven—drawn from student writing, classroom dialogue, and reflective notes—allowing depth and nuance, but not statistical generalizability. The patterns described here are arcs of intellectual movement rather than standardized metrics, offering richness at the expense of quantifiable measurement.

Time, too, imposes its limits. The research spans a single semester—enough to observe the shift from scaffolding to interpretive autonomy, but not to track whether these practices endure, adapt, or fade in future academic or professional contexts. Moreover, the narrative emphasis privileges moments when the pedagogy "worked," while episodes of resistance or disengagement—though present—remain underexplored, requiring a different analytic lens. Recognizing these boundaries does not diminish the significance of the findings; rather, it situates them honestly as a partial map shaped by context, method, and time. Future research might test subversive intimacy's adaptability across disciplines, its

resilience in varied institutional climates, and its capacity to persist beyond the bounded space of a single course—revealing not only where it thrives, but also the conditions under which it falters, transforms, or gives rise to new pedagogical forms.

Reframing History Education in Indonesia

What emerges from this experiment is more than a course outline; it is an invitation to reimagine what it means to teach—and to learn—history in Indonesia. In this reframing, the classroom is no longer a conduit for delivering fixed narratives, but a laboratory for interpretive agency. Here, students are not passive recipients of "what happened" but active interlocutors who learn to treat sources as contested claims, theories as analytic lenses, and narratives as acts that are simultaneously intellectual and ethical-political. Put concretely, this reframing requires a curricular reorientation. The model deliberately draws into the center what is often relegated to the curricular margins: gender history (Fikry, Nadha), food history (Kaysa, Julian), postcolonial science studies (Shidiq), and political memory (Ahmad Ali). In this configuration, these fields are not supplementary "enrichment" topics, but engines for conceptual expansion—each offering students new ways of seeing, questioning, and narrating the past. As these threads move from the margins to the center, interpretive agency becomes practicable rather than aspirational.

Theoretically, the study extends the vocabulary of critical pedagogy by demonstrating that trust and disruption are not opposing forces to be balanced, but mutually reinforcing energies. When designed together, they cultivate dispositions essential to historical work: rigor without dogmatism, humility without passivity, courage without recklessness.

This conceptual insight is matched by a set of practical tools that translate the principle into classroom practice. On the teacher's side, these include rubrics that foreground interpretive reasoning, proposal templates that scaffold inquiry, and workshop scripts that model collaborative critique. On the students' side, rituals such as mapping ideas visually or working in responding groups become repeatable practices that foster collective thinking. Because these artifacts and rituals embody the same interplay of trust and disruption, they remain portable—adaptable for larger cohorts, hybrid classrooms, or fully online formats without losing their core intent. Reframing the classroom as a site of trust and disruption thus underscores that historical thinking is not only cognitive but relational, rooted in the courage to let authority and freedom unsettle one another. This trajectory also aligns with international evidence. A district-wide field study in U.S. high schools revealed that targeted lateral reading instruction improved students' capacity to evaluate online sources in meaningful ways (Wineburg, Breakstone, McGrew, Smith, & Ortega, 2022). Our findings resonate with these results, suggesting that similar pedagogical strategies can be adapted to different cultural and educational contexts.

Future work might explore these adaptations in depth—testing their effectiveness in different institutional climates, developing mixed-methods instruments to track growth in historical thinking over time, and tracing how such pedagogies might travel across disciplinary borders into sociology, media studies, or beyond. If sustained, such an approach can help shape a generation of historians who do more than write with evidence: they write with awareness of the political and ethical stakes of

their craft, and with the interpretive courage to keep history alive as a contested, evolving conversation.

CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion has traced both the possibilities and the boundaries of subversive intimacy as a pedagogical practice—acknowledging its contextual limits while envisioning its broader implications for history education in Indonesia. If the limitations remind us that such an approach is neither universally replicable nor immune to institutional constraints, the reframing affirms that the history classroom can be reclaimed as a site of interpretive agency, where trust and disruption work in concert to cultivate rigor, humility, and courage. In this light, the limitations outlined earlier do not diminish the significance of this study; rather, they illuminate where future inquiries might venture. At the same time, within the bounded space of a single semester, subversive intimacy—the intentional pairing of intellectual closeness with critical provocation—emerged as a potent pedagogical stance for reimagining history education as a dialogic, participatory, and transformative practice. Taken together, these threads clarify both the horizon and the contours of the argument; What follows distills these insights into closing reflections on the experiment, drawing together its theoretical, practical, and ethical threads.

In the English as Historical Source course, the architecture of structured freedom enabled students to journey from the security of scaffolded guidance to the autonomy of interpretive independence. Early supports—such as the Guidelines for Paper Writing, the Paper Topic

Proposal Template, thematic mapping workshops, and one-to-one consultations—functioned not merely as procedural aids but as methodological anchors. They cultivated habits of disciplined argumentation, rigorous source engagement, and purposeful theoretical framing. As these supports were gradually lifted, students began to claim their own scholarly voices—integrating theory and evidence with confidence, sourcing with precision, contextualizing with nuance, corroborating across genres, and taking informed, well-defended perspectives.

The findings suggest that subversive intimacy fostered the psychological safety necessary for students to take intellectual risks—whether experimenting with unconventional narrative forms, engaging politically sensitive issues, or working with complex theoretical vocabularies—without fear of trivialization or punitive judgment. Yet safety did not translate into lowered expectations. The subversive edge of sustained critique, conceptual defense, and textual rethinking ensured that comfort never ossified into complacency. Here, intellectual freedom was not the absence of structure but the culmination of its deliberate dismantling. Read in the wider frame of Indonesian history education, these dynamics point toward a curricular reorientation. This model holds particular promise for reframing history education in Indonesia: it reimagines the classroom not as a passive conduit for transmitting fixed narratives, but as an active arena where students learn to read, write, and negotiate history critically. In doing so, it also expands the historiographical horizon to embrace themes often marginalized in mainstream accounts—gender history, food history, histories of health

and environment, and popular cultural histories—integrating them into the center of scholarly engagement rather than relegating them to the periphery.

The contribution of this study to historical pedagogy is twofold. First, it offers subversive intimacy and structured freedom as a coherent, adaptable framework for cultivating interpretive agency—applicable not only to history programs but to any discipline requiring critical engagement with sources. Second, it demonstrates that deep theoretical integration is most effectively nurtured when embedded from the inception of a project, rather than appended as a final decorative layer. Looking ahead, future research could test the adaptability of this model in larger cohorts, online or hybrid environments, or interdisciplinary collaborations—probing its durability across different scales and contexts. Longitudinal studies could also examine whether the interpretive dispositions fostered here persist, evolve, or transform as students navigate subsequent academic or professional landscapes. Beyond technique, to teach history through subversive intimacy is not simply an instructional choice; it is an ethical commitment to humanizing the learning process. It affirms that behind every incisive historical argument lies the courage to question, the conceptual scaffolding that supports it, and the safe yet challenging space that makes such questioning possible. In the broader arc of educational reform, this approach is less a peripheral alternative than a vital necessity—if the goal is to shape future historians who are critical, creative, and intellectually empowered.

REFERENCES

[1] Abu Moghli, M., & Kadiwal, L. (2021). Decolonising the curriculum beyond the surge: Conceptualisation, positionality and conduct. *London Review of Education, 19*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.14324/LRE.19.1.23

[2] Allender, T. (2019). *Teacher talk within the history classroom*. In T. Allender, A. Clark, & R. Parkes (Eds.), *Historical Thinking for History Teachers: A New Approach to Engaging Students and Developing Historical Consciousness* (pp. 159–179). Routledge.

[3] Aman, A. (2019). History teachers' competence in implementing authentic assessment: A case study in a state senior high school in Yogyakarta. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 18*(10), 68–88. https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.18.10.5

[4] English, A. R., & Heilbronn, R. (2024). Decolonizing the curriculum: Philosophical perspectives—An introduction. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 58*(2–3), 155–165. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopedu/qhae043

[5] Fikri, A., Suarman, Isjoni, Sumarno, & Ofianto. (2025). Development of formative assessment in history lessons with research-based learning model to measure historical thinking skills. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal, 7*(9), 2025452. https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2025452

[6] Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.; M. B. Ramos, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1970)

[7] Głąb, K. M. (2018). History discourses and reconciliation process in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Politeja, 15*(56), 211–226. https://doi.org/10.12797/Politeja.15.2018.56.13

[8] Holdinga, L., van Drie, J., & Rijlaarsdam, G. (2025). Enhancing disciplinary literacy through integrated writing and process instruction: An intervention study. *Reading and Writing*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-025-10630-2

[9] hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge.

[10] Karn, S., Llewellyn, K. R., & Clark, P. (2024). Decolonizing history curricula across Canada: Recommendations for (Re)design. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation, 47*(4), 1090–1121. https://doi.org/10.53967/cje-rce.6583

[11] Purwanta, H. (2018). The representation of colonial discourse in Indonesian secondary education history textbooks during and after the New Order (1975–2013). *History of Education*, *47*(3), 349–361. https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2017.1384855

[12] Purwanta, H., & Novianto, V. (2022). The politics of history: Indonesian high school textbooks during the New Order period (1966–1998). *Social and Education History, 11*(1), 55–79. https://doi.org/10.17583/hse.9606

[13] Seixas, P., & Morton, T. (2013). *The big six historical thinking concepts*. Nelson Education.

[14] Stanford History Education Group / Digital Inquiry Group. (2022). *Civic Online Reasoning curriculum*. https://cor.inquirygroup.org/

[15] Vela-Rodrigo, A. A. (2022). CLIL for the teaching of history and English in secondary education: How to complete the existing materials. *Language Value, 15*(1), 1–29. Universitat Jaume I ePress. https://doi.org/10.6035/languagev.6413

[16] Wineburg, S. (2001). *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: Charting the future of teaching the past*. Temple University Press.

[17] Wineburg, S., & McGrew, S. (2019). Lateral Reading and the Nature of Expertise: Reading Less and Learning More When Evaluating Digital Information. *Teachers College Record*, *121*(11), 1-40. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811912101102

[18] Wineburg, S., Breakstone, J., McGrew, S., Smith, M. D., & Ortega, T. (2022). Lateral reading on the open Internet: A district-wide field study in high school government classes. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 114*(5), 893–909. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000740

[19] Yunus, H. (2018). The importance of student-centered learning (SCL) in Indonesian higher education. *The Asian Conference on Education & International Development 2018, Official Conference Proceedings*. IAFOR.

[20] Zurbuchen, M. S. (2002). History, memory, and the "1965 incident" in Indonesia. *Asian Survey, 42*(4), 564–581. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2002.42.4.564